



Universal Oneness

An Anthology of
Magnum Opus Poems
from around the World

360 poems by 360 poets from 60 Countries



Editor
Vivekanand Jha

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AUTHORS P R E S S

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An Anthology of Magnum Opus Poems from around the World

(360 poems by 360 poets from 60 Countries)

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To
The land and the people
of
Mithila, Maithili and Maithil
Where lies my root
Where lies my feat, my truth
Where lies my flop, my bogus
Where lies my magnum opus
Where lies the wind
of
my last breath.

An Invocation

O Supreme Being
the primordial seed
that you had sown
has grown up to a tree
that has blossomed
has borne fruits
has given shelter
has danced in the spring
has suffered the harsh winter
but has again become green
the cycle continues
and the tree
still evolving.

It's time we all
leave behind the past
seeking patterns
and trends
commonalities
and universalities
stop looking outwards
and look within
and look for a greater synthesis
Going Beyond
from the Heart of Darkness
to the Divine Light
through integration
and unification.

Seeking your blessings
O Supreme BEING.

— *Sudarshan Kcherry*

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Foreword

It is Dr Vivekanand Jha's privilege and enlightened vision to have gathered under two covers poets hailing from the four corners of the world. What we have here is a rainbow of hues and perfumes, of sounds and voices, which form a musical variety with which everybody can identify. He and she can change the partition to suit their mood or desire at any given moment. Even better than a potpourri concert made of great classical selections, where you politely have to wait till the end of the performance, whether you like a piece or not, this rich anthology offers you the possibility of jumping from one poem to another and to close the book once your thirst has been quenched, even if it means that you will feel the urge to go back to it ten minutes later. Although I love poetry, I'm not very fond of poetry readings – yet I admit that they serve a purpose and that it is good for poets to express themselves in front of an audience – , this is why I prefer to compare the pleasure of attending a live concert with the perusing of an anthology such as UNIVERSAL ONENESS. When I first turned the pages of this blockbuster I felt as light and free as a butterfly.

So, dear poets and readers at large, like a butterfly, I shall randomly land on some of the verses that adorn this anthology. I see it as a poetic ride, which promises a world of discoveries, with the softness, the ruggedness, the passions, the rage, or the sweet expression of motherly love that will accompany me in the coming days and months to come. It is like listening to Shubert or to Vivaldi when you want to be appeased, then to Wagner or to Rimsky Korsakov when you need a boost or a shot in the arm, for words definitely have their tempo. It is at the same time like admiring a painting by Monet or Renoir, filling you with a sense of plenitude and serenity, whilst Van

Gogh's and Edvard Munch's masterpieces force you to plunge into their tortured souls.

In this magnificent anthology you will have a taste of a gourmet hors d'oeuvre of verses, which I believe will whet your appetite and prod you to delve into the magic of Poetry. Savor it as you savor the delicacies of 'slow cuisine'. Bon appétit!

In conclusion, I'd like to offer these lines to my fellow poets, "Art is but a moment of happiness, it is like a lightning of bliss cleaving the never-ending horrors of our world. Inspiration is like delicious food that your taste buds remember, or a perfume you have long forgotten and whose whiff suddenly brushes your nostrils again, giving you pangs of nostalgia."

Albert Russo

Poet, Fictionist, Essayist & Photographer

Author of more than 85 books

www.albertrusso.com

Preface

The very title, *Universal Oneness*, of this anthology of 360 poems by 360 poets from 60 countries suggests that it is universal not only in the diversity and spread of the poets and their work but also in the spirit bonding it. When the poems called for, for the book, have been purposed to be the ‘magnum opus’ from the already published lot of “the best contemporary poets all over the world,” the resultant tome resonates with a cornucopia of themes, ideas, reflections, fancies, imagery, observations, perceptions, perspectives and styles. It is bound to generate a great deal of interest in the reading public, especially the poetry aficionados, academics, critics and reviewers. It would also act as a model and stimulus for the burgeoning breed of poetry learners and aspirants.

There could be many international anthologies of different genres of writing but this one is sure to make a mark for itself as one of the most ambitious – demanding a gargantuan effort in concept, contacts, collection, and curating. Editor Vivekanand Jha and publisher Authorspress deserve a rich bouquet of congrats. An interesting trivia is, the initial letters of the poets’ names in this anthology draw on all the syllables in the English alphabet, except O, Q and X.

The beauty of poetry is, it looks at things differently, with an intensity of feeling, more with heart than with mind, and treats them rather differently – conspicuously different from the non-poets. Poets are sensitive and so the way they treat the subjects strikes a chord with every sensitive person and even sparks off a flash of creative sensitivity in them.

This *Universal Oneness* is a product of the demand of the increased, quickened and ongoing globalisation – in the sense of a far wider and a much more frequent exchange and intercourse between people of different geo-national-racial-religious-cultural-spiritual backgrounds. Yet it pulsates with an underlying current of unity for the reason that the basic urges, feelings, emotions and responses of the people remain almost the same despite a spectrum of different milieus they come from. In fact, truth is one and we are all part of the same truth – *Ekam sat, viprababudhavadanti*; only, it is expressed in different ways, say the ancient Indian sages.

English has evolved into a major lingua franca of the world, and it has been facilitating the writers to reach across to an international readership, enter into meaningful transnational interactions, even as they (need to) retain and follow their respective national identities and cultures as determined by their respective geographical factors. Let a thousand flowers bloom. For example, Vivekanand Jha himself takes pride in dedicating this anthology, though international, to his nativity – Mithila, Maithili and Maithil. A pine reaches the sky, yet remains rooted in its soil. If the world is taken as a single behemoth tree, each and every corner of the world serves as a primary root adding to the tree's huge and intricate network of root system.

Well-meaning international attempts like this would, in whatever little measure, slowly and steadily contribute to a general détente, harmonise the zeitgeist and help in inculcating a weltanschauung. After all, the primary purpose of poesy or creative literature is universal weal – *Viswa-sreyah-kavyam*, according to the ancient seers of Indian poetics.

U. Atreya Sarma

Chief Editor, Muse India literary e-zine

www.museindia.com

Preamble

We're in the age of optimization of digitalization. In no more than a decade or two we have leaped towards a digicentric world which has played a key role in uniting and interlinking us. We commemorate the relationship established so far without touching and feeling each other in the flesh. To give further impetus, the need is felt for a universal poetry anthology which continues to help us in abating what divides us. Thus, the present book paves the path for peace, harmony and intimate acquaintance by offering a common platform.

The kernel of this anthology was planted when Mr. Sudarshan Kcherry, CEO of Authorspress (New Delhi, India) gave voice to his long conceived desire of publishing, someday, an international volume in which poets from all parts of the world are represented. He also expressed his longing for the book's title, 'Universal Oneness'. We planned to include the poets' most representative work in the anthology. Therefore, poets were encouraged to submit their magnum opus.

The call for submissions remained open for two years and above. I received a fabulous and incredible response. Besides listing at literary websites and portals I sent a general invitation to the poets through my mailing list. The poets represented are selected from the submissions in response to the general call, not through individual invitation. Since mass mailings are similar in content, they land in the spam folder of the recipients. So invitation through my mailing list was not enough. I needed every means to attract a maximum of quality submissions.

To attract more quality submissions I've had to spend a lot of money. I tried my hands at classified listings from The NewPages (www.newpages.com) and Facebook. The NewPages

certainly helped me in routing some high valued submissions while investment in Facebook was a waste of money.

I convey my heartfelt thanks and obligations to the owners of websites and literary portals for posting the call, for which they didn't charge anything. For such a great piece of literary benevolence I'm especially indebted to Birmingham Writers' Group (www.birminghamwriters.org), Cathy's Comps & Call (www.compsandcalls.com), Broken Pencil (www.brokenpencil.com), Duotrope (www.duotrope.com), Creative Writing Contests (www.writingcontests.wordpress.com), Creative Writing News (www.creativewritingnews.com), Literarium (www.literarium.net), Muse India (www.museindia.com), The National Association of Writers in Education (www.nawe.co.uk), Philippine Literature Portal (www.panitikan.ph), Poetry Flash (www.poetryflash.org), Poetry Ireland (www.poetryireland.ie), Sonoma County Literary Update (www.socolitupdate.com), The Ontario Poetry Society (www.theontariopoetrysociety.ca), The Poet by Day (www.jamiededes.com), The Poetry Kit (www.poetrykit.org), Synchronized Chaos (www.synchchaos.com), Writers' HQ (www.writershq.co.uk), and many more whose existence I ignored.

I'm no less grateful to several poets who accepted my request and forwarded this call to their fellow poets. Among them are also those who couldn't find a place in the anthology. To them I am also indebted.

It was a challenge to omit quality because of space limit. So, some fine poets could not be included. But I exercised other opportunities to accommodate them. After seeking permissions, we included their poems in our two literary journals – *Phenomenal Literature* and *Verbal Art*.

The numbers '360 poets' and '360 poems' are symbolically chosen as they're analogous to the 360 degree universe, and '60

countries' is akin to one degree which is equal to 60 minutes. Noteworthy is the term 'minute.' It has nothing to do with the angle corresponding to a minute on a clock: The word "minute" just means "little part".

The poets have been positioned in alphabetical order by the author's first name. This fact, I thought, is pertinent to mention as custom varies from one culture to another and, in other instances, names are arranged by the author's surname.

This anthology celebrates unity in cultural and geographical diversity. The poets included are from all parts of the world. They hail from 60 countries: Albania, Algeria, America, Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, England, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Scotland, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Wales, West Indies & Zimbabwe.

In the year 2013, I had edited *The Dance of the Peacock: An Anthology of English Poetry from India*, featuring 151 Indian English poets and published by Hidden Brook Press, Canada. This experience helped me a lot in honing the present anthology.

I convey my gratitude to Albert Russo and U Atreya Sarma for writing a terse but all-inclusive foreword for this anthology. Finally I would like to acknowledge the brave attempt that Authorspress made in bringing it out with the utmost sophistication.

Almost all the poets featured herein are established and award winning. It is, therefore, hoped that the anthology will not only

present a rich variety to poetry lovers but also serve as a touchstone and reference book for aspiring poets.

Once again I am thankful to all coveted poets for deeming me worthy of representing them.

Vivekanand Jha
Editor

A. D. WINANS

A. D. Winans is a native award winning San Francisco poet and writer. He edited and published Second Coming Magazine/Press for 17 years. His work has been widely published world-wide and translated into nine languages. In 2006 he was awarded a PEN National Josephine Miles Award for excellence in literature. In 2009 PEN Oakland awarded him a Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2015 he was the recipient of a Kathy Acker Award in poetry and publishing.

The TV Has Gone Insane

Strangers have taken over
my body, shameless homesteaders
who stake their claim
like old time California gold miners

The men are elderly with gray beards
and drive horse and buggy carriages
the women wear dresses that hug the floor
there are no children, no dogs
just one black cat with a pointed tail

The town crier keeps me awake all night
a court jester roams at will through my dreams
a king dressed as a queen winks at me
an army of red ants crawl inside my head

A monster hides under my bed
Waits to be fed
a midget woman courts my favors
offers herself in twenty-eight exotic flavors
the night collapses like
a home under the weight of a bulldozer

I'm summoned to appear before
a military tribunal
my good conduct medal called into question
A rip-tide tears at my brain cells
my landlord cancels my lease
my trial winds up in a hung jury

The bailiff writes down his cell number
tells me to give him a call
whispers he has a hot three-some
he thinks I might be interested in

The son of Frankenstein
shows me the way to the rooftop where
down below a faceless mob waits
with pitchforks and firebombs

A drummer boy from the civil war
works his way into my heart
Betsy Ross hands me a confederate flag

The President drowns in fake news
spreads lies like fertilizer
the public eats it up like
a leech feasting on a raw wound

The night an insatiable nymph
dines on my flesh leaves me
for a dead man
laid out beneath a sea of stars

AARON HOOPES

Aaron Hoopes is the founder of Zen Yoga and author of numerous books including *Reconnecting to the Earth: Reclaiming Our Connection to Nature and Spirit* (Ozark Mountain Publishing, 2019). His best-selling *Zen Yoga Daily Warm-Up DVD* has helped thousands of people integrate breathing and gentle movement into their lives. He is a Zen Shiatsu massage therapist and a long-time student of permaculture and plant spirit medicine. He runs the Dragon Mountain Kung Fu School and teaches Earth-based classes, yoga and qigong at the Zen Mountain Healing Centre in Vermont.

Too Busy To Relax

Too busy to relax they say,
Complaints, excuses everyday
They sound so weak, so stressed, so tired.
A mundane world in which they're mired
No time to sit and just be quiet
Their mind's a rush of thoughts, a riot
No chance they have to hear the sound
Of nature's wonder all around
Of birds and trees and clouds and air.
Too much work, it's just not fair
It really seems quite sad to me
So much to do, no time to be.

Breathe I say and move a bit
Then after that we can just sit
And watch the world at its own pace
There is no rush, it's not a race
And if it were, what is the goal?
Where are you going mind, body, soul?

Too busy to relax I hear
These words seem like they're based in fear.
Tired, weak and too much stress
How did our lives turn such a mess?
We don't need to look above
To find a place that's based in love
Turn instead and look within
Find yourself, it is no sin

Forgive, let go, open your heart
It is the only place to start
Think on that and you might find
Throughout your life you have been blind.

Breathe I say and move some more.
Run, walk, jump, stretch on the floor.
Move your body, get up and go
Feel the energy, let it flow
Don't get caught in the negative
Let it go, start to live?

Too busy to relax? Not true!
This hoax must end, it starts with you.
If all you do is just the same
You never will escape this game
Do something new, do something Zen.
Begin right now, not 'if' or 'when'
Do one thing different, or two, or five.
Change how you live, become alive.
Do or do not, there is no try
Step off the cliff and start to fly
Begin with this, you won't go wrong.
Remember to breathe, deep and long.

ABIR GHORAB

Abir Ghorab, born on November 16th, 1991 in Annaba (Algeria). Graduated from the regional school of music on 2010, and obtained a medical doctorate from the medical school of Annaba on September 2018.

Before Sunrise

Fairies, hexes, elves and pixies,
around my bed at midnight,
Come with us to discover mysteries,
and catch your breath in a flight,

Let's wing over the skies,
Drop your mind in a promise,
Swim between truths and lies,
live a whole life before sunrise,

We'll meet ghosts in their castles,
We'll sing, dance and play fire games,
We'll sit between angels and devils,
And watch the future through flames,

Let's ride horses to heaven,
Throw memory out the window,
Let's drink until losing break even,
and leave dreams for tomorrow,

then when the sun rises,
You'll come back to your routine,
Broken trusts and apologies,
With memories anchored in your skin.

ADELE C. GERAGHTY

Adele C. Geraghty, is author of the poetry collection 'Skywriting in the Minor Key', the Poetry Editor of *Gold Dust Magazine* and the Publishing Editor of *Between These Shores Literary & Arts Annual*. Her work is published internationally and has been performed on radio in both the US & UK. In 1987, Adele received The US National Women's History Award for Excellence in Women's Related Poetry and Essay.

The Knowledgeable Mermaid

She is well read,
surrounded by copious volumes,
pages adrift like anemones,
while she nourishes herself
on fact, knowing better than
most females of varying species,
Feline, Equine, Very-fine and Anytime,
how important were secrets
to a mermaid's homeostasis.
She knows how to employ
tradition with knowledge.
She knows when to play
and when to dive and more,
precisely when to leave.

She knows every glance,
every move holds power.
The special swish and turn and
twist of a tail, the baring of breasts,
easily, readily, always waiting
to entice or suckle or play
an androgynous game of chance.
The deep and timeless need of

diplomatically easing a hand
beneath a sinking head
as he descends to his small
and awkward death.
The pink shells of her nails,
skimming his skin.

She thirsts for truth, knowing
that only man could have written
the old myth, wherein a mermaid
pines for he who's left her.
No mermaid, especially not she,
would ever resign her rights or
exchange the dominance
of a multitasking tail for the limiting,
unreliable support of feet, so easily hobbled.
No golden lotus could surpass the allure
of the limitless freedom and motion
of her fluid tail but summarily,
the sadness of the myth is not its tragedy,
but its lasting lie.

*Acknowledgment: 'The Knowledgeable Mermaid' was first published by Prosopis
International Poetry Journal, India.*

AGNIESZKA FILIPEK

Agnieszka Filipek lives in Galway, Ireland. She writes in both, her native tongue Polish and in English, and also translates in these languages. Her work has been published internationally in countries, such as Poland, Ireland, India, China, England, Wales, Germany, Bangladesh, Canada and the United States. For more see www.agnieszkafilipek.com

Prostitute

on a bed made out of roses
I'll arrange my head
and tell a dream about suffering
thorns will pierce my heart
love will pour from me like blood
red petals will anoint my lips
so bitter from all your kisses
small leaves will envelop my breasts
never loved by anyone
and the memories of you will die inside me
I'll toss away withered blossoms
in the morning I'll wake up fresh again
for someone completely new

Acknowledgment: Poem 'Prostitute' was first published in Crannóg magazine.

ALAN CATLIN

Alan Catlin has been publishing since the 70's in magazine, small, large, obscure, unknown and well known. He has published dozens of chapbooks and full length books. His chapbook, *Blue Velvet*, won the 2017 Slipstream Chapbook Award. He is poetry editor of the online journal, misfitmagazine.net

Postcards In Pieces To Thompson Dec. 24 And After

I

That photo on the card could have
been my family. If my father wore a
cap and looked vaguely like Truffaut.
And if my parents hadn't divorced
well before this picture would have
been taken.

And if my mother was blonde, which
she wasn't, and hadn't been locked
away for two years in a nuthouse, when
I had grown to the age to be somewhat
like that smiling boy. Who was so like me:
the haircut and the round face and an only
child. I was so insular, even then, it is
difficult to imagine ever being happy.

II

Mother was the kind of person who looked
the wrong way for traffic before signaling all
clear and stepping off the curb. Who taught
her child how to drown by placing him in
the deep end of a pool and instructing him to swim.

Kids were born knowing how to do these things.
She just assumed all was well, because in her world,
it was. It was a fairy world like a Charles Kingsley
novel she based her thinking on.
So she read while her child sank in the clear chlorine
drowning pool, never once looking to see how
the lesson was going.

III

I recall a drive – in movie in the summer of
'53 or '54. We were on St. Croix, though
it is hard to imagine an actual outdoor theatre
there, then. What I recall was a vivid techni –
color movie I can still flash images of, those little
pieces of pointed glass images, like deeply
imbedded primal fears. I was scared shitless.
I remember, after, more fear in the shack
during an intense electrical storm. A woman,
not my mother, assuring me it was all right.
That everything would be fine. I was not convinced.
And I remember a fever. Not a dream, a high fever,
burning up in that place and being scared shitless.
Maybe it another time, after something else. I was
always scared shitless.

ALAN GARVEY

Alan Garvey was born in Dublin, Ireland, 1975. Awarded a MA in Creative Writing from The Poets' House, he is the author of three collections of poetry. He has been published in numerous anthologies and magazines. A stay-at-home dad, his fourth collection is due for publication in 2019. Recipient of numerous Arts Council grants to travel and work abroad, a poem of his came second in the Gregory O'Donoghue International Poetry Award, 2017.

Days Cannot Dull

after Miklós Radnóti

My good friend rose and so was shot again
for being cheeky (alive and moving).
The SS in his saddle tugs at the reins

of his horse, the sky darkens, a bruising
reflection of the scene below – a trial
where truth and justice are beyond proving.

We walk, no! limp and stumble, mile on mile,
while dogs bark at shadows in the distance.
I think upon the pages that they file;

with whom and where I live. Greasy pistons
hourly pass our home: lampposts guard our street.
Manila folders do their best to listen

in on words we breathe, close on the heart's beat
inside each other...though removed, remember
paths we walked together, fried food to eat

from one plate in Christmas markets. Render
the flesh from my bones though they may, this lurch
belongs (and always will) to you, my wife. November

days cannot dull this blade, or any forced march
through chill wind and rain. Please, do not cry
if I fail to return, and they build a church

of hate – *My honour is loyalty*, their daggers lie
but I stay true to the fact that though we die
this aching, wonderful world goes on – the work survives.

Acknowledgment: 'Days Cannot Dull' was first published in Crannóg magazine (Ireland).

ALARIC NAUDÉ

Alaric Naudé (Ed, PhD), Hwasong City, Republic of Korea, is a professor of linguistics and his poetry usually focuses on the human condition, this poem is a memorial to all those who have died in the mindless genocides of the 20th and 21st centuries.
Website: www.naude.eu

Self-Realisation

Silent whispers thunder through hallways of the citadel
A motionless wind in a forest of alabaster bones
Dark and cold fires burn the heart sable
A river of light flowing with righteous tears
Words unspoken, prayers unuttered like incense before a throne
When cherished hope has evaporated in the furnace heat
A soul filled to bursting with emptiness and derision
The maw of the void that devours light
Thirst that cannot be filled, hunger that cannot be satisfied
I am the shadow of one who once stood here
My fragile self-realisation is dancing in my mind, dancing, dancing

ALBERT RUSSO

Albert Russo who has published worldwide over 85 books of poetry, fiction and essays (35) and photography (50), in both English and French, his two mother tongues, and sometimes in Italian, (Italian being his 'paternal' tongue) – he also speaks Spanish and German and still has notions of Swahili –, is the recipient of many awards, such as The New York Poetry Forum and Amelia (CA) Awards, The American Society of Writers Fiction Award, The British Diversity Short Story Award, The AZsacra international Poetry Award (Taj Mahal Review – US\$ 500), the Books & Authors Award, several Writer's Digest poetry and fiction Awards (winner and finalist), aquillrelle Awards, the Prix Colette and the Prix de la Liberté, among others. His work has been translated into about 15 languages in 25 countries, on the five continents. Website: <http://www.albertrusso.com>

Know Your Body And You Will Love The World

if there is a god
he's created half beings
out of lassitude?

oh man, oh woman
how many enemies lurk
inside your bodies?

we have to fight
consciously or not to survive
for death is never far

isn't it our fate
to fill in all the loopholes
god has forgotten?

believer or not
you still have to wage inner wars
to remain alive

so, begin to learn
what makes your body tick
study a-n-a-t-o-m-y

you will find it
to be as awesome as it is
fascinating

a lifelong course
that will teach you how precious
our lives are

maybe only then
will humans understand that
wars are senseless

dangerous are
all those who proselytize
they vie for power

My body, my rebel, my berth
you superb and pernicious machine
cringing and yanking and twisting

lest I should forget the nature of our contract
We might as well make peace,
you irksome stranger, seat of my soul
Is a lifetime so burdensome
that you cannot spend a day
without stinging?

My body, my rebel, my berth
I envy your complexity
but for God's sake

if not for my own
love me else leave me alone
how pleasurable you can be,
so very sensual and moving,
my body, my rebel, my berth

ALEX DREPPEC

Alex Dreppec, born 1968 close to Frankfurt, German author with hundreds of publications (poetry and science) in journals and anthologies in many countries. He has been awarded the renowned “Wilhelm Busch” Prize for humorous poetry in 2004. In 2004, he invented the so called Science Slam which became very successful in Germany and spread to many other countries.

The Rearguard Of The Passers-By

The rearguard of the passers-by
pulls the debris
of its houses,
is subscribed to the gutter,
swings to bipolar bebop
on treeless mountains,
along walls at a
snail’s supersonic speed.

The rearguard of the passers-by,
isolated and scattered by
the past’s struggles, it seeks
full maintenance
in barren conversation,
seeks itself by talking to itself:
what we were in years gone by
and what we would be in years to be.

The rearguard of the passers-by
lies under umbrellas
with bent ribs in
the lamp shade: the patron’s
base, a dwelling
place without borders,

The cardboard on which they lie
may also be the roof felt.

The fog patrol
opens its eyes,
opens its mouths and

closes the hollow of its hands, slips
through below lower limits,
into windless corners, then
frost lies on the hair,
morning dew on plastic bags.

The rearguard of the passers-by
pulls the wreckage
of its rooms behind it
strung on cords,
remains until morning
under Augustan's canopy
in the undivided custody
of the asphalt.

Acknowledgment: The Poem, 'The Rearguard of the Passers-By' previously published in "Notre Dame Review", No. 42, Summer/Fall 2016.

ALEXANDER RAJU

Alexander Raju (b.1952), an Indian English poet, novelist and short story writer has many books to his credit. He is author of one short story collection, three poetry collections and five novels. *The Voice of Ethiopia* (2008) is an edited work and *The Psycho-Social Interface in British Fiction* (2000) is a critical work. Currently he is Professor of Literature in University of Gondar, Ethiopia.

To My Mother

In the coffin you're laid lifeless,
And as I stand nearby realize,
The true depth and width of your love
And sacrifice you made for me!

I was tired of travel to pay
You a visit at your abode;
You came to see me on the day
Of my arrival from abroad.

Perhaps you had an intuition,
You couldn't wait for me but hurried
To meet me; you came, sat with me,
We ate and talked for a long time
And, even stranger, you sat closer
To take the last 'selfie' together.

It seemed you were waiting for me;
The next morning you're admitted
In the hospital where we met
Just before your soul left this world.

Then I remembered many things
I wished to tell in your presence

And hoped to spend some more moments;
I thought you'd be forever with me.

Tears faded my eyes, I confessed,
My busy days prevented me
To serve you as much I desired,
And you gave a smile of pardon.

You gripped my hands as if afraid
To leave this world alone, perhaps,
You were dubious of a rebirth,
With me as your son, on this earth.

I was your first born, your dream child,
You broke your sacred virgin knot
To conceive me, I conquered your womb,
I settled, taking your life-blood,
Nay, you fed me with your fond dreams
As I grew annexing your body.

Perhaps your swollen belly turned
You ugly, with patience you bore
My weight and endured the travail
Of giving birth, to hopes cherished,
And became the first child to suck
Your breasts, slapping hard on your chest.

Weren't I a selfish exploiter?
It wasn't milk but true affection
You poured into me and I grew
To be able to stand on my feet;
You were giving me the energy
To face my long day on this earth.

Today, as you're laid down lifeless,
I realize how much you loved me;
I wish, if there's a second life
Give me a chance to serve you better.

ALEXIS RHONE FANCHER

Alexis Rhone Fancher is published in Best American Poetry 2016, Rattle, Hobart, Verse Daily, Plume, Tinderbox, Cleaver, Diode, The MacGuffin, and elsewhere. She is author of five books. Her photographs are published worldwide. She's is poetry editor of *Cultural Weekly*.

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 heliotrope 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.

ALICIA MINJAREZ RAMÍREZ

Alicia Minjarez Ramírez is a multi-awarded poetess, writer, singer, translator, university professor, broadcast radio and T.V. She was born in Tijuana Baja California, Mexico. Winner of the EASAL medal, European Academy of Sciences Arts and Letters, Paris France 2018; Awarded “Pride of the Globe” WNWU Kazakhstan 2018; Winner of a special mention and a medal in the International Poetry Prize NOSSIDE Italy 2015 and 2016. President for Mexico in International Writers Association IWA BOGDANI, Albania. Her poems have been translated into 14 languages and published in more than 125 international anthologies, journals and magazines around the world.

Breath Of Light

Mute allegory of clouds
feeling my cedars’ roots,
designing the path;
song of blackbirds and orioles,
stunned chimera permuting
fertile figs and pomegranates.

Musical waterfalls
permeate thick
alders and chestnuts,
ethereal decline;
Antioch’s legacy
rinses and distorts
coasts, olives and vines
over the Patara’s coastline.

Emir necromancer
descends from
bare meadows
revealing seeds
to quench the moon
in the subtle geography
of my own shadows.

Your eyes light up
the awoken clay
of jade and honeysuckle,
moistening poems
to clear the air
of the past hours.

Imprecise and concrete trail
upon the wind of days
that intertwines our dawn.
A brief breath of your light
is enough
in the abyss of my night.

AMANDA ANASTASI

Amanda Anastasi is an Australian poet and author of two poetry collections. Anastasi was awarded the 2017 Words in Winter Trentham Contemporary Poetry Prize and is a two-time winner of the Ada Cambridge Poetry Prize.

Newcomer

From beneath her blanket she writhes
like a cupped spider, as though aware
of her upcoming divergence from the intent
of the temporary god that holds her spoon;
of the bell that will end play, of the acceptable
poisons to be adopted, the rushes into sunlight
assuming permanence, the missed junctures,
the steps that will tread too carefully to invite
epiphany. Like the turns of her mind – later to
readily intersect with the unforeseen rebellions
of others – her curled, jutting feet suddenly
relax. There will be no freer moment than this:
the starting line, the undiluted view before
indoctrination begins its sly, steady seep.
Now a bundle passed from hand to hand,
she is years from spotting and unpicking
the expectations sewn into her birth. The spell
of lilting songs and happy-ended tales sets in.
It is the beginning of being carried and ushered
the way. Today, at least, she is yet to be named.

ANCA MIHAELA BRUMA

Educator, lecturer, performance poet, eclectic thinker, mentor with staunch multi-cultural mindset and entrepreneurial attitude, Anca Mihaela Bruma considers herself a global citizen, having lived in four continents. Her eclecticism can be seen in her intertwined studies, she pursued: a Bachelor of Arts (Romania) and a Master of Business Administration (Australia).

Togetherness In Solitude

Solitude... A mystery perplexed in veils,
with lost songs of Moons and nightingales.

I surrendered all my solitudes to you,
with grace painted in whites and blacks,
crossing all shadows of the dawns
the stillness of every speech and sound,
with imagined dreams in a committed life.

Your gazes rest upon my high shoulders,
two heartbeats, still sinking in oblivion...

My thoughts are filled with your presence
and utter solitudes shared together...

Solitude... A mystery perplexed in veils
with lost songs of Moons and nightingales.

ANDREW LAFLECHE

Andrew Lafleche is an award-winning poet and author of seven books. His work uses a spoken style of language to blend social criticism, philosophical reflection, explicit prose, and black comedy. Andrew enlisted in the Army in 2007 and received an honorable discharge in 2014. Visit www.AJLafleche.com for more information.

Another Drop Threatening Flood

the lake appears a puddle, shallow, muddied
raindrops strike the surface and disappear
like a grenade detonated, conical, only a pinprick
in the vast reservoir a lifetime of raindrops
took to fill – what can one drop really do?
except dampen a day or tease a thirsty crop
still, there are those who find pleasure in days
such as this – the same kind of people, I imagine
who live lives unmarred by the threat of eviction
wondering what to scrape together for their child's
paper bag lunch in the morning, where the next
pay check will come from, when it will arrive
why he left her and child in the middle of night
and how a mother could die after four years of chemo
one week before the start of that new trial
which promised a miracle and took six months
to get accepted into. yes. there are those who
enjoy a good rain, but I am not one of them.

Acknowledgment: First appeared in Montana Mouthful, Volume One Issue Three.

ANDREW SCOTT

Andrew Scott is a native of Fredericton, NB. During his time as an active poet, Andrew Scott has taken the time to speak in front of classrooms, judge poetry competitions as well as be published worldwide in such publications as *The Art of Being Human*, *Battered Shadows* and *The Broken Ones*. His books, *Snake With A Flower*, *The Phoenix Has Risen*, *The Path*, *The Storm Is Coming* and *Through My Eyes* are available now. Searching is his fifth poetry collection. Website: <http://andrewmScott.com>

Little Touch Of Grey

If I knew what I have learnt
through a little touch of grey
when I was young and innocent,
not sure that the paths taken
would be travelled if I knew.

The blindness of wild youth.
Feeling invincible at every corner
whether it is slippery or dry.
The same approach was used.

The looking back at what
may have happened to self
or what did actually happen.
The experiences with a grin.

The face is a little worn due to it
and the scars are tried and true
however it is all worn proudly
as not a thing should or would be changed.
Only now it is decorated
with a growing, little touch of grey

ANN CHRISTINE TABAKA

Ann Christine Tabaka was nominated for the 2017 Pushcart Prize in Poetry, has been internationally published, and won poetry awards from numerous publications. She lives in Delaware, USA.

And The Rains Came

The storm had passed, after raging for hours. A deluge of major proportions. Last evening the main road was a swift moving river. Now it was up to the ankles in slimy brown mud.

Everyone scratched their heads. What was to be done now? Even the dog from across the way stood frozen with concern, like some comical statue. He seemed determined that muddy paws were not to be part of his day. Mud baths being for swine, and not canine.

Shattered tree corpses caught up in the flooding, their branches emerging from the mud like a scorched forest. Reminiscent of a bizarre miniature landscape from an old science fiction film, barren and colorless.

Old folks tell of similar storms. They happened decades ago, or so it is said, memories being such as the area, stories cannot be relied upon from their retelling.

Looking up, the sky hung heavy and dark. More rain will come, adding to the already distressing situation. Even the birds are silent. No echoing songs from the woodlands. The dead quiet, an omen.

We all walked away knowing more mud
was coming, and for the moment, nothing
could be done. And then once again,
the rains came as if there was no end.
And, perhaps, there wasn't.

ANNA BANASIAK

Anna Banasiak is a poet, writer and occupational therapist. Her poems have been published in New York, London, Surrey, Australia, Canada, India, Africa, Japan, China and Israel. She is the winner of poetry competitions in London, Berlin and Bratislava. Her works have been published in books, magazines and anthologies. She is interested in art and psychology.

Varanasi

water like a mirror reflects faces of the dead
in the play of light and shade I melt

time has stopped in the flight to eternity
bodies sail in the cycle of birth and death

river accepts everything
it takes the memory of things

in tranquil breath of reality
I float on the other side

I can fly higher and higher
passing the limits

born from a drop of creation
in the last gasp of life I pass

ANNA CATES

Anna Cates is a graduate of Indiana State University (M.A. English and Ph.D. Curriculum & Instruction/English) and National University (M.F.A. Creative Writing). She is author of two poetry collections. She lives in Ohio.

The Girl Who Wished For Death

the girl who wished for death
imagined her confinement
a dark castle
a night of cold rain
the mountain steep

her body broken
rocks seeped with blood
buzzards busy
at her still warm flesh
waterfalls rushing
toward some abysmal plain

the girl who wished for death
heard the shutters rattle
and imagined every candle
blowing out
wax that burned
wounds that never heal
dried tulips that never return to life

her father always told her
some women have a chemical
imbalance in their brain
but she imagined real pain
legions of lemmings rushing
into the endless waves

Acknowledgment: Chrome Baby 73 (Oct. 4, 2018).

ANNA KEIKO

Anna Keiko, from China, is member of Shanghai Pudong Writers Association, President and Chief Editor of Pretty Breeze Literature Society and Vice President of Haipai Poetry Society in Shanghai. Her poems have found their way into more than 50 publications. Over 1,000 poems of hers have been published and some poetry reviews carried out in major national newspapers. For her brilliant works she has won many awards, and her poem collection entitled *The Language of Deep Sleep* has been broadcast on Shanghai People's Radio Station. She is also the authoress of dozens of proses, lyrics, essays, sketch comedies and plays etc.

If I Were...

If I were a star
I would wait for you at your window at night

If I were a cloud in summer
I would soften the sun above you.

If I were the wind,
I would gently blow your face when you sweat.

If I were a bird
I would sing for you by day and by night

But I am but an ant
longing to fly like an eagle
seeing you from the sky and settle close to you

If I were...

ANNA YIN

Anna Yin was Mississauga's Inaugural Poet Laureate and former Ontario representative for the League of Canadian Poets. She has authored six books of poetry. Anna won the 2005 Ted Plantos Memorial Award, two MARTYs, two scholarships from West Chester University Poetry Conference, two grants from OAC etc.

After Reading Ted Hughes' "Full Moon And Little Frieda"

I fall in love with you, Moon,
seeing you step back like a timid artist.
Listening to the night,
you come out, a pail lifted.

Moon, they are gone.
They left you watching over the river.
How many years since?
And you watch the small village
becoming a floating island in the dark.
Among rows of windows,
the night flows, and I wide awake.

How much I want to imitate Li Po,
dancing with his white sleeves,
a hum from his burning heart,
night after night inviting you for a drink!
The wine never drained,
yet he drowned in the silver river.

Moon, lift your bucket,
come out once again.
I won't make a sound.

Acknowledgement: One of the winning poems for Poetry Contest for National Poetry Month 2010 hosted by Cambridge, Ontario Canada, Later published in "Wings Toward Sunlight" (Mosaic Press 2011).

ANNETTE HOPE BILLINGS

Annette Hope Billings is an award-winning poet from Topeka, Kansas, USA. Her first book, *A Net Full of Hope* (2015), won Topeka's ARTS Connect ARTY Award in Literature. *Descants for a Daughter* (2016), a collection of affirmations, is her most recent publication. She also has work in online and print journals and the anthologies.

What You Allow, Lingers

What you allow, lingers,
and what you invite, stays put,
so speak rudely to discord
and its sullen sisters,
turn a cold shoulder to bigotry
in all its disguises,
ignore the doorbell when evil rings
and stop violence at the door
like a stranger.

Usher in joy
like a long lost friend –
take its coat, its hat,
entertain peace,
chat up passion,
pamper generosity,
give the guest room to justice.

Sweep the porch
and layout a welcome
mat for goodness,
and make your life poorly-suited
for anything except love
and when hate knocks, act as if you've moved!

ANNETTE LEBOX

Annette LeBox is an award-winning poet, novelist and children's writer. Her poetry has been published internationally in literary journals such as *Event*, *Poetry Canada*, and *The Southern Review*. Two of her picture books, *Peace is an Offering* and *Salmon Creek* won the BC Book Prize and her novels have been nominated for various awards. She holds a Masters of Creative Writing from the University of British Columbia and a certificate from The Writer's Studio at Simon Fraser. Website: www.annettelebox.com

The Kitchen Wife

'Stoves kill 4 wives a day' – Daily Telegraph

Laid out on a small cot, supple as a seedling,
New Wife waits for New Husband.
Entranced, she believes herself superior.
She is nothing but novelty.
Soon she'll wear thin.

She's a pouty girl with pointed breasts and pear-shaped hips,
scarcely younger than their own daughter.

Old Wife listens for his step on the stair.
She avoids mirrors now, her features lost in fissures of thickened
skin.
Charred fingers, sausage slabs, twisted, monstrous.

The surgeons saved her; a miracle she survived.
The authorities know; they close one eye.
'A row perhaps? A female indiscretion?'
'Economic woes,' her husband replies.
'I couldn't afford two wives.'

He hurries home, blames Agni the fire god,
savior of limp cocks, for failure.

Old Wife lives.
No relief in sight.
She chops chilies, prepares curried rice.
Her dark eye flails him.
Fists pound dough, resentments rolled thin.

Desire salts his tastes.
His mind stuck on the mango jelly, the girl dabs between her
thighs,
his tongue circling her nipples, hard as peach stones, plump fruit,
sweet to suck.

Paper-thin walls, bed creaks.
Kitchen shrinks in the swell of heat.
Sausage fingers rub mangled chin, half nubs of singed flesh,
slivers of skin slough off, bacon-crisp, pain a cipher,
undecipherable.
New Wife laughs at the old man's need.

Outside the sun sinks behind sky of pinks and reds.
Gloom descends into shadows.
Old Wife edges towards the door, her good eye pressed against the
crack.
She spies the old man's wrinkled buttocks,
pasty, doughy, rising and falling as ducks feed from the sludge of a
pond,
tail up, head under, beaks burble and quack.

Perhaps one day when the girl's body sags from childbirth,
the wives might become allies.
Perhaps over multiple cups of Chai, she'll tell her a tale of old
wives.
A dupatta dipped in paraffin, a shove from behind.
An eye blinded, blinking in flames.

*Acknowledgment: The Kitchen Wife was previously published in Which Fresh Witch
is That?*

ANNMARIE LOCKHART

Annmarie Lockhart is the founding editor of *vox poetica* (www.voxpoetica.com), an online literary salon dedicated to poetry, and *Unbound Content* (www.unboundcontent.com), an independent poetry press. A lifelong resident of New Jersey, she lives and writes two miles east of the hospital where she was born.

Kleber's Apples

The car smells like Kleber's sun-warmed
apples and Tom Petty is telling me
the waiting is the hardest part. I have
just spent two hours I will never get back
inside a windowless white room in a local
library listening to scholars who do not farm
praise the restorative nature of soil, ponder
what it is to be a spore of distinctive lineage,
ruminate on whether ghosts made love
on dragonfly wings in a far-flung forest.

These professors know the names of every
variety of bird. They speak of nuthatches and
tits, un-ironically. One tells of Dickensian
drowning women collecting stones to line
their pockets, pie weights on unbaked dough.
I feel the weight of two hours spent considering
the academic freight of agriculture, fairy love,
romanticized suicide and wish someone had
read a poem instead, risked ripping the scab
off a personal attempt at death or life or love.

Kleber's apples taste like sunshine, with a bruise
or two where they've bumped against the earth
and each other. Poetry sounds like friends eating
apples in a kitchen that has stood for centuries,
talking about past lives and next lives, charting
paths across New Jersey, dancing, writing,
waiting among neighbors, children, lovers,
and others while cows collect in the yard
and apples fall from trees under
the reborn August sky.

*Acknowledgment: Published in Sensations Magazine and Hobo Camp Review,
2018.*

ARNO BOHLMEIJER

Arno Bohlmeijer is the winner of the National Charlotte Köhler Grant, finalist for the 2018 Gabo Prize, finalist for the 2018 Poetry Matters Project, published in 5 countries (US: Houghton Mifflin, UK: Bloomsbury). Website: www.arnobohlmeijer.com

Reaching For Realness

Tomorrow can be
our borrowed minute
in the last or first resort.

Please, give us a time-out
of the present or henceforth
to help the world run quietly.

We could learn as we go,
carry luggage more lightly,
loosen the earth and take root.

Your hand requires an hour,
a fluff is tickling my wrist
and trying to replace you.

The fingers want a day
of my retroactive effort
and never-pausing chest.

Don't let us lose a month,
we can't be missing each other.
A year is gone merely in silly tales.

Forgive me, I misbehaved.
When you got hold of my soul,
I really believed in being complete.

Six of our senses are prickled
each time we appear down the field
and our knees find clovers of eight leaves.

Knowingly, I keep expecting you,
eating the treats for two, staying cool,
touched by others in some unusual mood.

On the bottom of your ocean are two pearls.
A stranger to me: 'Are you alone today?'
But our Sunday was a hundred years.

Fearing that you won't be here,
the fog is dense to everyone else.
Only the forecast may remain wrong.

Lying down, I stretch and think
that the sun's fingers will find my chinks,
while the wind slips kindly between my vest and skin.

In the heart of a land where no one believes,
I have been speaking about us, but alas,
they find you too good to be real.

I've rinsed my mouth with salt.
Should it by chance be necessary,
mention to nobody how you love me.

'From top to toe, and for better or for good.'
People keep saying: 'Write and get it off your chest.'
But they don't understand: you are always written *towards* me.

ART Ó SÚILLEABHÁIN

Art Ó Súilleabháin is an FLTA (Fulbright Scholarship Program) from Ireland, assisting in the teaching of Irish at the Catholic University of America in Washington DC. He is originally from Corr na Móna in north Galway. He held the position of Director of The Mayo Education Centre for sixteen years. Art now writes and fishes full time and has published children's poetry & story books in Irish. He writes for national Radio and poetry journals in Irish and English. See www.artosuilleabhain.com

The Horologist

Papers in the back of an old drawer
tied with a cracked rubber band
burst out of their bundles
when I found them,
almost bromide,
perhaps they were white once.

Dated in the early 1950s, weekly:
notes, diagrams, exercises,
showing jewels as axes,
rockers, springs,
steel or brass,
'how' to rewind or reset them.

Notched wheels fitted each other
snugly, turn and link, gearing
to mark time in the turning,
hands revolving
from spindles
within rounded or oval casings.

Teachings to repair small workings,
things to be read and practised,
work a correspondence,
a distance education
from your era,
your way up, your chance to shine.

But when the time came for exams
a trip to Dublin cost too much,
papers stowed, like learning.
He didn't go,
He stayed,
He saved the hay and cut the turf.

I remember him, eyeglass firmly set,
poring over the innards of another
time-pie that counted wrong,
in the cog-filled maze,
deciphered, fixed.
'That one is ready for Máirtín Tom.'

At the hall-end of the kitchen table,
he would pontificate, gathering
the specialised tools away,
'The more jewels
the better.'
All that is left is two boxes in the shed.

They could be my attempt at poems,
neatly arranged in plastic pockets,
bursting with archaic words,
when she finds them,
stuck together,
papers in the back of an old drawer.

ARTHUR POWERS

Arthur Powers went to Brazil in 1969 as a Peace Corps Volunteer and lived there most his adult life. He worked as an international lawyer, then he and his wife spent seven years in the Brazilian Amazon, serving with the Franciscans, organizing subsistence farmers in a region of violent land conflicts. Currently they live in North Carolina in the U.S.A. Arthur is the author of *A Hero For The People* (2014 CALA Award) and *The Book of Jotham* (2012 Tuscany Novella Prize). Website: www.arthurpowers.com

A Bag Lady's Body In The Financial District

That night when you were hungry, the smoke
of a passing cigarette smelled food
into your nostrils, warm ovens of good
golden bread above a fire stoked

red glowing with coal, where you stood
on the street shivering, a token
to the night, and a passing voice spoke
quickly to a friend sounding love

into your heart, warm golden cheeks above
arms that held you, then was gone
around a corner, and the canyon
of the street echoed the clicking heels

of retreating feet while distant wheels
hummed memories of life, and silence yawned
down toward St. Anthony's where Christ's
eyes pierced emptiness as the iced

wind bounced against him like a joke.
And snow started falling like a sheet.

Acknowledgement: First published in America.

ASOKE CHAKRAVARTY

Asoke Chakravarty, BOIMELA-UTSAV Award winner, is a poet, writer, artist, playwright, musician and humanist who is of Indian origin and has lived in Canada for 45 years. Chakravarty's work appears in 14 publications and has been translated to several languages. Chakravarty has exhibited at 19 solo art shows in three continents. Chakravarty is the founder-director of *Krittibas Literary Group* of Toronto and was the former President of *The International Festival of Poetry of Resistance* in Toronto. His collection of poems *Vaater thaalaai eto kaantaajhop* was nominated for the *Sabitya Academy* in New Delhi. He is an Engineer with an MBA and holds Fine Arts Diplomas.

Shiva, In His Own Kingdom

The man who fooled the public
Now wears a President's hat.
A trafficker of women
is the top gun of Women's lib.

A scientist was sentenced to death,
he was an atheist.
A poet was jailed,
he was a blabber-mouth.
A painter's fingers were chopped off,
he drew a nude.
Then, a donkey declared –
I bray never.

The leader proclaimed –
If you don't agree
you are against me.
A law was passed:
"To think – you need a permit,
in advance."
"However, the subject matter
needs to be approved."

A priest raped an adolescent girl,
and said – Praise the Lord.
A Socialist took a bribe,
a rambling house
as a small token of appreciation”.

A goon said – as of now
I take care of your security,
better pay my dues.

Hearing this, a raven crowed –
Keep your pencil sharp
no matter what.

A chaotic state prevailed, naturally.
Politicians started writing poetry
The poets became pimps,
goons politicians,
gangsters police chiefs.
For the sake of peace,
bribery was legalized.
The pigs from Animal Farm
roared and roamed
on the streets like tigers.

Thoughtless folks were sent
to the womb of dark mines.
They never came back.
The perplexed were assigned
to cut grass for the horses.
They got their reward.
Fast thinkers took control
of expensive chairs in a flurry.

Seeing all this, naked Shiva
went to customs
to deposit his only possession,
a worn-out torn tiger skin.
The public shouted in unison –
beat the hell out of this madman.

AVDHESH S. JHA

Dr. Avdhesh S. Jha is an author, poet, teacher and observer. Presently he works with EDI of India. With ten doctoral scholars, being awarded the doctorate degree, the guide and mentor to Ph.D. aspirants, has presented several papers on different topics at national and international seminars. He has written about more than 200 poetries in English and Hindi. Associated with institutes of national repute, he has organised seminars and workshops and delivered talks and lectures at various seminars, workshops etc. He is awarded with Charottar Gaurav and Bharat Excellence.

You Reveal

Whether I dream, I think, I see or I feel of you,
In the plain and plateau or in flora and fauna
With the blue sea, mountains or the green landscape,
The sand or stone, together or alone, it reveals AS IF IT IS YOU.

Endless, eternal, original, full of power and strength
Persistently, you bless us with your bliss of light;
In any form, in any expression, you are the worthiest tale,
Always passionate but without any strive to prove the might.

Marvellously, you reveal the existence of life,
The glory of sunrise, sunset, day and night;
With waves you seem to arise and disappear,
The constant companion; you ever fail to cease to exist.

Sometimes you let us hail and sometimes sail,
You are the spirit; the life; the life of each wave,
For the fact, you let live, each wave, a life;
To enjoy before it initiates towards the grave.

With life and death, you reveal the existence of other world,
Whether the completeness of the incomplete or
Incompleteness of the complete, it remains to explore
This moment, you reveal the completeness exists in you.

BARBARA ANN BRIGGS

Barbara Ann Briggs is a “citizen of the universe” who has devoted her life to spiritual perfection. She is the author of *Pilgrimage on the Path of Love*, a novel of visionary fiction. She is a poet, a graduate in philosophy from New York University, a teacher of Transcendental Meditation, a freelance journalist and a tanpura accompanist. She has composed over 250 poems. Many of her articles have been published in New Age magazines. She resides in India. Her website is: <https://barbaraannbriggs.com>

Alone

Because I stood alone
amidst the emptiness of space
and beheld your beauteous form
cast against the sky
Because my heart knew you
majestic – divine
knew the dance that you danced
in that twilight hour
Because I stood alone
as you quivered silently in the wind
how strong and tenderly you moved
how graciously you smiled
as I embraced you with my eyes
Because I can no longer move
outside the circle of your infinite light
because my eyes beheld you once
like a thousand suns
born and being born
Because my heart has been uplifted
and my eyes washed with visions of stars
you have become the universe to me
and all that I touch quivers with your life.

BARBRA NIGHTINGALE

Barbra Nightingale's poems have appeared in over 100 national journals and anthologies. She has eight books of poetry published by small presses, the latest of which is *Alphalexia* (2017). She lives in Hollywood, Florida, with her assorted menagerie of two and four-legged creatures. She is an associate editor for the *South Florida Poetry Journal*.

Ghazal For My Daughter

Each time we speak, my daughter
and I, atoms explode in my daughter.

There seems to be nothing I can do
nothing to say, nothing to save my daughter.

If I gave her the trees, she'd want the sky,
so great is the hunger of my daughter.

Words are waves eroding rock
over time, everything breaks my daughter.

Somehow, it's always my fault, still
my fault for not living only for my daughter.

The sun shines steady every day
but the moon waxes and wanes in my daughter.

Too strong, she says, too harsh, this sun, this
mother which warms then burns my daughter.

BASHABI FRASER

Bashabi Fraser has several poetry collections and has been widely anthologised. Her recent publications include *The Homing Bird* (2017), *Thali Katori: An Anthology of Scottish & South Asian Poetry* (2017) and *Letters to my Mother and Other Mothers* (2015). She is the Founder/ Chief Editor of the academic and creative e-journal, *Gitanjali and Beyond*. Bashabi's awards include Outstanding Woman of Scotland (Saltire Society, 2015) and the Word Masala Foundation Award for Excellence in Poetry, 2017. Bashabi is a Royal Literary Fund Fellow, Dundee University, a Professor of English and Creative Writing and Director of the Scottish Centre of Tagore Studies (ScoTs), Edinburgh Napier University. <http://www.scots-tagore.org> & <http://bashabifraser.co.uk>

This Border

There was a time when you and I
Chased the same butterfly
Climbed the same stolid trees
With the fearless expertise
That children take for granted
Before their faith is stunted

Do you remember how we balanced a wheel
Down dusty paths with childish zeal
Do you remember the ripples that shivered
As we ducked and dived in our river
Do you remember what we shared
Of love and meals, and all we dared
Together – without fears
Because we were one
In all those years

Before we knew that butterflies
Were free to share our separate skies
That they could cross with graceful ease
To alight on stationary trees
On either side of this strange line
That separates yours from mine
For whose existence we rely
Entirely on our inward eye
This border by whose callous side
Our inert wheel lies stultified
This border that cuts like a knife
Through the waters of our life
Slicing fluid rivers with
The absurdity of a new myth
That denies centuries
Of friendships and families
This border that now decrees
One shared past with two histories
This border that now decides
The sky between us as two skies
This border born of blood spilt free
Makes *you* my friend, my enemy.

BELINDA RIEHL

Belinda Riehl is a winning haiku poet, whose short stories and poems are published in *Medium.com*, *Sonoma Seniors Today*, and anthologies by Redwood Writers (RW) – largest branch of the California Writers Club. She writes fiction, memoir, blogs, and edits fellow writers’ work. She has contributed to the RW Board of Directors as Vice President and Membership Chair, along with numerous other volunteer positions since 2014. Most recently she served as Associate Editor of RW 2018 prose anthology *Redemption*. Belinda was awarded the RW 2015 Pullet Surprise (say it aloud) for her volunteer work. Her musings can be found at www.belindariehl.wordpress.com

Speak In Ink

Take care to speak in ink.
Spoken words cannot be erased – only forgiven.
Rough drafts laden with anger said aloud
are instantly published.
Apologies are hard to give
requiring humility, sincerity, remorse.
No real apology includes the word *but*.
Apologies are harder to accept
for they require grace.
You may choose forgiveness
with or without an apology.
Forgiveness is harder to give than to receive.
The gift is in the giving.

BEN NUTTALL-SMITH

Ben Nuttall-Smith is a Past President of the Federation of British Columbia Writers and member of 'The Writers' Union of Canada. Publications include several books of poetry, two novels, an illustrated biography, illustrated children's books and Haiku for children. Ben was the winner of The Surrey Board of Trade Special Achievement Award 2011 for work as a writer and for service to the writing community. He was also awarded an Honorary Life Membership by the Federation of British Columbia Writers, May 2013, "in recognition of extraordinary service and dedication to the ideal of Writers Helping Writers". www.BenNuttallSmith.ca

Crescent Beach Reflections

Great expanse of mud and sand,
a rocky bank and water birds,
joggers in the rain.
Brown ever turns to brilliant gold,
when sunshine dapples through the clouds,
to paint the trees with silver lace
and sparkle on the bay.

A stately conference of Heron
debate the gulls about the evening catch
and call the tide to shore.
Above the mottled pools, a pair of eagles glide
while crows protest the rumbly train
that groans and grinds its way
around the headland to the bay.

In early May, the children flock like ducklings,
with buckets, spades, boots and yellow hats.
They squat in puddles, tease the crabs,
and dig for oceans in the watery sand.
Along the shore, their minders sit on logs.
While they watch, they chatter, drink their tea,
and call in vain to stragglers in the pools.

As far as eye can see, paddlers wander out
on miles and miles of sand and weed,
through shallow pools, all shimmering
beneath the morning glare.
Gulls, white, brown, grey, squabble
at a hamper in the sand,
while wrappers gaily flutter in the wind.

A dozen kites swim hard against the breeze,
like minnows with long wagging tails.
One swoops to chase a crow;
and then its crosspiece snaps,
to meet stern justice on the rocks below.
Despite the angry stones hurled at its taunts
crow flaps down to strut and sound rebuke.

Blankets, chairs, umbrella, hamper, radio,
another gang of picnickers arrives by car,
to taste a summer day at Crescent Beach.
Through steamy miles of traffic horns
and roaring trucks, they've traveled far,
to sit upon the sand
and blare their choice of joy for all to share.

Acknowledgment: From Crescent Beach Reflections (Rutherford Press, 2017).

BENJAMIN KWAKYE

Benjamin Kwakye was born in Accra, Ghana. He is the winner of two Commonwealth Prize for Literature Book Awards for his novels *The Clothes of Nakedness* and *The Sun by Night*. Kwakye is also the author of other novels, a novella collection, a short story collection, an epic poem, and a collection of poetry. His other literary awards include the 2011 IPPY Gold Award for Adult Multicultural Fiction. He is the director of The Africa Education Initiative, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting science education in Africa.

Suspended Interview

This, the currency of despair:
Rejection letters piled on cluttered desk;
Rejections boomeranged to
Become necrophilic companion
Of fast-paced dying hope.

Was my heart forever the cuspidor
In which employers spat rejections?

Then came the unexpected call –
A jarring summons in surrender of quiet evening.
The perfunctory introduction followed, then:

*You have an impressive resume
And I have the perfect job for you.*

The announcement closed the distance –
This, the voice of an angel.

In this moment of miraculous kinship,
The world suspended its axial spin –
A miracle unfolding its mystery.
Here was the end of restless months
Of resumes dispensed in rubbish heap
Of mysterious cyberspace,

And mountain dustbins
Of moribund snail footed post.
But now this beckoning promise –
Sir, when should I come to your office
For the interview? I asked.

*That won't be necessary; A phone interview is sufficient.
As I have said, your resume has impressed me.*

So we spoke on, my experiences compressed
Into thirty minutes of questions and answers.

*You are so impressive. By the way,
Your name. I was wondering, Is it Polish?*

I paused, now on quacking ground, full of concern.
His question, what relevance to my ability?
Would my resume cease to impress in its quicksand?
No, sir, I said, it's African.

He paused, and I waited as
Silent seconds ticked into painful seconds
Into pause of misconceived pregnancy.
Then came the whispered voice:

I will call you soon. Deep stains in the air.

And then died the dial tone. Another hope miscarried?

I waited. I waited. I waited.

I will call you soon kept hope's memory alive.

But fifteen years have become its closing noose.
Still, whenever the phone rings, the noose shakes
As I wait for the ear of my absentee angel to ask:

Mandela left the walls of Robben Island,
Anan reigned over nations united,
Obama wore the face of a nation,
But you, sir, what took you so long?

Acknowledgment: From Soul to Song (Cissus World Press, 2017).

BENYAMIN BENSALAH

Benyamin Bensalah was born in Algeria, Rouiba. Later, he spent his childhood in Hungary which is his mother's native country. At the age of 21, he went back to his hometown in Algeria to continue his studies on the fields of English Applied Linguistics and Education. He has participated in a couple of poetry and short story contests and done publications, keeping the virtue of his life attached to literature.

Of Feather

Was it a divine sign amongst the creation –
A revelation so lightsome and pregnant –
That a blanching feather's unforeseen descent
Made my poetic soul blench for evocation?

Surely, t'was from some celestial spheres, –
Angelic wings of cherubs and seraphim –
So long been soaking in firmamental affairs
That human mental senses but morphine.

A feather if eatable, a matter of addiction –
Plucking and plucking without satiety –
If been drinkable, a matter of intoxication
Leading humans into ever inebriety.



O' glorious feathers who hover with mystery –
Over skyey dreams and unearthly visions –
Which land on the earth with vice and misery,
Lending the haver only vain aspirations.

O' one-time ornaments of the seven heavens –
Brightness and whiteness of all times –
Have you no shame on the dirt of your pens
Writing worldly prose and heretic rhymes?

By-the-way, your heaven is no heaven but a sky –
As well as not every brightening is holy –
Just as Icarus has fallen from and by your high
As others are mystified by your fake glory.



Whether art thou the sinister poker of Iblis –
Leading by a dancing feather in the hand –
Human arts like the one that let fall Ibn Idris
Calling with fair words to the Fallen's land?

Whether divine inspirations in form of an aura –
Blown on the poor's brow as enlightenment –
Art thou as the freshening science of soul and soma
Kindling the minds' muscles as a tea of mint?

Oh, Only God knows of Ma'at's Hall of gloom –
If one's deeds worth a feather morrow –
So, I seek only Deus' forgiving, life-giving plume
To pardon my feather on the mortal pillow.

BERNARD MANN

Bernard Mann is a landscape architect, novelist, poet and artist. He is the author of the historical novel, *David & Avshalom, Life and Death In the Forest of Angels*, published by Amazon in 2018, a semi-finalist for the Chaucer prize. His fiction and poetry have been published in various journals and anthologies. His fiction includes *Sea Change and Least Heard Sounds*, and other short stories. Non-fiction includes *Rivers in the City* (1973), a volume on waterfronts in Europe and the U.S., and *Groundbreaking, Riverfront Cities on New Frontiers*. He has won many prizes for his poetry, including third prize in the Margaret Reid Poetry Contest for Traditional Verse 2008.

Sunsets

Moored, unhappily, on the east-facing slope,
he grumbled endlessly over sunset deprivation,
how the house afforded no vista of the clashing clouds,
the titanic spills of mauve and gold,
that others see.

Now and then he'd remember
to run errands around the time of day
when the sun went down,
nudging and tweaking the hour spent
to get him to the Spicewood road
that ambled steeply down
the long west face of the hill that led
to the main road back,
and took his time, at that, raising tempers
in the cars behind him so that he would
descend the ridge to the beat
of the sun's own departing
song.

He missed the Merrimack, where his home
had perched on the river's edge,
and bends on east and west caught the sun's
chromatic crescendos at first as it rose
and then as it set.

And glorious displays on Cape Cod's souging shore,
and other lands' ends.

But now he grew older with every night's hello,
longing for the celestial furnace
that once kept him younger with every day's
goodbye.

BERNICE LEVER

Bernice Lever, a writer, editor and teacher, creates prize winning poetry on Bowen Island, BC. Her 10th poetry book was *Small Acts*, Black Moss Press, 2016. She edited *WAVES*, Fine Canadian Literature, at York U., Toronto, 1972-1987. Her grammar & composition book (now a free PDF) is *The Colour of Words*.

Peace Is Possible

PEACE is possible when you're still at home
with smiling parents or caring siblings, having sweet dreams
as a fed and loved toddler, in a house of laughter,
in a garden, on a beach or pond, or by window herb shelf.

When you're not eluding fists of school bullies,
nor judgemental sneers of juvenile fashionistas.

When you're not dodging dagger-edged words:
old bag of bones, tar baby, dumbo, junkie, slut!

When you're not running from crumbling cement
or flaming wood buildings, or from foreign gunfire,
or torpedoes, or home made cluster bombs.

When you're not evading horrible gagging
from breath-ending spray, or foaming with toxins
when being poisoned by warring dictators.

When you're not dying of thirst and hunger,
not frying on desert mountains of sand,
or slipping on icy floes or endless mud slides.

War orphans know war – its life of endless fears!
These young refugees don't know nor learn other definitions:
that this opposite of war concepts is peace.

Peace begins inside,
easing tense heart muscles or rigid brain tracks,
enter your quiet centre, when in Life's races: you won or lost,
just begin sharing justice through acceptance and love of all.

Make Peace with ourself, then reach to soothe those around you.
When your core is at peace, thankful for life
and this amazing universe, gratitude and joy flow freely.

Now you can believe PEACE is possible.

Acknowledgment: Previously published in summer 2018, World Poetry Almanac in Mongolia by Editor: HADAA SENDOO with 116 Poets from 77 countries.

BETTY SCOTT

Betty Scott is the author of *Central Heating: Poems of Love, Loss and Planet Earth* published by Cave Moon Press in Yakima, WA. She is an award winning poet whose work has appeared in publications and anthologies in Vancouver, Canada, and the Pacific Northwest. She also collaborates with guitarist, singer, songwriter JP Falcon Grady who puts many of her poems to music. She is currently writing a third book of poems, and a collection of short stories. Her website is <https://bettyscottwriter.com>

My Dog Barks

She's an old lady now,
our silent talks and walks numbered.
Soon I will miss her long stretches
the arc and arch of her spine

her struts to the back door, tail up
curled nails against sliding glass
black nose pointed toward grass
her return, the scrape and scamper

and later, her warm body
against the middle of the night
even her littering rights.
Exigencies of living—with the art

of her in starts and stops
her leash and release of me.

BEVERLY MATHERNE

Beverly Matherne is the author of six bilingual books of poetry. She is professor emerita of English at Northern Michigan University (in The United States), where she served as director of the Master of Fine Arts program in creative writing and poetry editor of *Passages North* literary magazine. She has received seven first-place prizes, including the Hackney Literary Award for Poetry, and four Pushcart nominations. Widely published and widely travelled, she has done over 350 readings across the U.S., Canada, and France and in Wales, Belgium, Germany, and Spain.

Pink Geraniums

I remember the first time
I saw them, in December,
pink geraniums in her office window,
hot pink, the only color against
limestone, snow and gray clouds.

The flowers grew all winter,
shameless of their opulent blooms,
their large, circular leaves,
the way they filled the window,
as if to say "Take me, take me,
I'm yours."

In those long stretches at 10 below,
I would take the short cut from the library,
through Denison, to Eisenhower,
time my treks with her office hours,
stop at her open door,
throw a "Hello, how goes?"
and bow like an old coot
from the Old West.

In my Ford pickup, I took her to Scheu's Café,
to chamber concerts, auctions in
Council Grove, Emporia, where
Flint Hills swell and dip, where
farmers and their wives unload
Bavarian crystal, Lunt silver, antique
Steinways and head south.

In spring, when purple crocuses
pushed up from the snow, I took her
to my wheat farm, threw
a table cloth on the barn floor.
Her shivering under me, straw
mingled in her black hair, I kissed
full on the lips, smelled her woman,
smelled tractor grease, the earth, and gave
her my mother's double row of diamonds.

Today, her long dead, and me 90
among white sheets in my hospital bed,
I seek pink geraniums, hot pink, the only
color against limestone, snow and clouds.

Acknowledgment: This poem first appeared in Uncommonplace: An Anthology of Contemporary Louisiana Poets, ed. Ann Brenster Dobie. Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in The United States, 1998.

BILL COTTER

Bill Cotter lives and writes in Victoria, Australia. Eight collections of his poetry and a historical novel have been commercially published. He has won a number of literary awards, including the International Library of Poetry competition and the Melbourne Shakespeare Society's sonnet competition.

Exercising The Mind

I remember them well. The ghostly sheep,
New shorn and bearing the moon on their backs.
Complete as continents and tossing heap
On heap of hay, Hereford cattle. Tracks

Mud filled or dry we followed. Clouds we turned
To cruisers or canyons. Make – believe troops
Of Nazis we ambushed. Bracken we burned.
Chickens we harassed and chased from their coops.

At a school assembly the two boys killed
By falling bricks. Time, when mother fell ill,
Spent on a bustling wheat farm, each day filled
With bristling heat and a child's voiceless will
To be home. All carefully filed away.

But don't ask where I parked our car today.

BOB DCOSTA

Poet, author and consulting educationist, Bob DCosta is a maverick who elopes with travel, honeymoons with fractured sunsets and sleeps with dusk but is married to words. With several published books and giving poetry readings at gatherings at home and abroad he was former Associate Poetry Editor of Eastlit, a literary journal published from Thailand. Bob is a member of Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature (FOSWAL), the SAARC Apex body. He can be reached at www.whatabook.in and <http://www.amazon.com/author/bobdcosta>

Favourite Number

Number thirteen keeps me alive
I seem to keep living only for it.
The sky tumbles in my bucket
when the water has flown down
the way your head lolls and in slowness touches the sofa's backrest.
That is the time your brain
slides into sleep.
The train always journeys backwards
and that is where the adventure lies.
The handcuff smirks at your innocent wrists
my body twists in sleep
and that is the straight form it takes
for Judas says I am your friend
whether it is Friday or number thirteen.

BRIAN GERARD D'ARCY

Brian Gerard D'Arcy was born in Rossendale, England. His Irish grandparents had migrated from their homes in Counties Mayo and Sligo in the west of Ireland after the Irish famine in the nineteenth century. Brian retired from teaching in Sheffield Hallam University in 1995. He lives in Sheffield with his wife Debjani Chatterjee, who is an internationally known poet. He has two surviving daughters: Michele in Idaho, USA, and Andrea in Lancashire, England. He also has seven grandchildren.

Remembering Anne

(Sojourn on Haworth Moor)

Yes, thou art gone! and never more
will feel the wild wind fresh against your face,
nor see the skylark rise above the moor,
nor treasured childhood memories retrace.

Yes, thou art gone! and never more
will pause, and in that quiet interlude
find respite from the clamour and the roar,
and dream again your dreams in solitude.

Yes, thou art gone! and never more
will race beneath descending winter skies,
nor mourn discarded leaves that summer wore,
nor hear the moor-land's melancholic sighs.

Yes, thou art gone! and never more
will wander where bright waters catch the sun,
nor see the beauty that you saw before.
But here your spirit stays – though thou art gone.

Note: *This poem is based on the opening line of 'A Reminiscence' by Anne Bronte: "Yes, thou art gone! and never more."*

BRIAN J. RANCE

Brian J. Rance is the author of *Finding My Place, Walking my Patch* and *A Journey through South-East England*. Three guide books for long distance walks in the south east of England. Website: <http://www.brianjrance.co.uk>

A Rock To Call Our Own

As I staggered home from the pub
Bowed by the burden of the beer
Turning the corner of the street
Trying to stay upon my feet
I saw spring catkins strewn around
Emerald carpet on the ground
And, wallowing in that parlous state
I had a vision of our fate.

Imagining this verdant sward
Carried away by countless rains
Run off down inefficient drains
Combined with all our toxic waste
Festering slowly in the depths
The very noxious effluent
Of our tenuous existence
The sludge of civilisation.

Eventually, many aeons hence
Flushed down polluted waterways
Sedimentary under seas
Compressed and compacted, thence,
In distinctive multi-coloured strata
Left with a plastic signature
A new geological period
We might have rock to call our own.

Wondering if homo sapiens
Would still be flourishing, extant,
Or whether some other species
Would be concerned to dig it up
Examine it curiously
As morbid archaeology
Much as we are fascinated
With the plight of the dinosaurs.

BRONISLAVA VOLKOVÁ

Bronislava Volková is a bilingual poet, semiotician, translator, collagist, essayist and Professor Emerita of Indiana University, Bloomington, USA. She authored some twenty books of poetry, two books on linguistic and literary semiotics (*Emotive Signs in Language* and *A Feminist's Semiotic Odyssey through Czech Literature*), as well as a large anthology of Czech poetry translations *Up The Devil's Back* (with Clarice Cloutier). Her poetry has been translated into twelve languages. She has also received a number of literary and cultural awards. More info at: www.bronislavavolkova.com

Absence

I sow into the fields which are as the sea
vast and sewn from transparent matter
with days too distant from human streams
and dreams that burn on the lips
of landscapes
once upon a time

BRUCE HUNTER

Bruce Hunter, born in Canada, is the author of five poetry books, the short story collection, *Country Music Country* and a novel, *In the Bear's House*, about a young deaf boy raised in the wilderness, which won the 2009 Canadian Rockies prize at the Banff Mountain Book and Film Festival. In 2010, his selected poems *Two O'Clock Creek* – won the Acorn-Plantos Peoples' Poetry Award for Canada. In 2017, he was the Calgary Public Library's Author in Residence.

The Scottish Grandmothers

And the long ago love of them,
the grand grans, sloshing from the bus stop
in their galoshes lined with bread bags
stooped under their Hudson's Bay shopping bags
weighted with cinnamon buns for all seven of us.

Their little houses
smelling of broth and camphor.
Refrigerators full of squirreled bits,
cups of bacon grease.
and in fishing season, red jars of salmon eggs
tobacco cans of cutworms.

Their calfskin Bibles
and fishing tackle
in the top of the hall closet,
the only opulence in their dour lives:
above jugs of root beer fermenting from things
gathered on the prairie. An old world recipe
that exploded once or twice.
Glass in everyone's shoes,
among the pious names of the prophets

passed from Bible to children, the psalms
and epiphanies slightly scented with root beer.

Those small defiant women
whose generosity came from austerity.
One of them rolling her smokes,
“Hell, cheap? We were poor.
And when Maggie wrote home
from Calgary to Mum in Paisley,
she said, ‘it’s cold here – don’t come.’
I did anyway.”

Their white-knitted brows warned us,
their burred voices and glottal rattles:
“Wee Brucie, yull not want to be goin’ out
on a night like tonight.
Have ya not got eyes.”
Always questions that brooked no guff.

And whatever gifts given them at Christmas
always returned to the sender at birthdays
or other Christmases.
Not a white glove among them,
their chin hairs and eyebrows
never tweezed until the undertaker got them.

Their stories come back now in mine
– all the long lines of the Scottish grandmothers
Bearing tea boxes of shortbread,
wicker creels and tobacco tins
over hills of gorse and heather,
the wind scented always
with cinnamon and root beer.

BRUCE LADER

Bruce Lader is the former Director of Bridges Tutoring. Lader's books include *Fugitive Hope*, *Embrace*, and *Discovering Mortality*, a finalist for the 2006 Brockman-Campbell Book Award. A 2015 Pushcart Prize nominee, he won the international 2010 Left Coast Eisteddfod Poetry Competition and has received a writer-in-residence fellowship from The Wurlitzer Foundation.

Soul Dreamers

voyage the archipelago
of a pomegranate, explore
the parallel universe
of a water globe,
map the topography of Mars and Io,
undersea chasms
deeper than the Grand Canyon,

soul dreamers, like dolphins,
dare to wander and
weave blue holes through space,
make the most of time, the effort to span
peacekeeping bridges,
alleviate troubles,
imagine traveling anyplace,
without checkpoints –

soul dreamers understand
when a fisherman
reels the catch out of a sea,

where the water and fish
originated is unimportant,
what's the difference if a man
or woman, friend or enemy,
lends a hand?

Acknowledgment: Previously published in Harbinger Asylum (Transcendent Zero Press, 2017).

BRUCE MEYER

Bruce Meyer is author of more than sixty books of poetry, short fiction, non-fiction, photography, and literary journalism. He is professor of Poetry at Victoria College in the University of Toronto and professor of Creative Writing at Georgian College in Barrie, Ontario.

McLuhan's Canary

Taj texts me as I lie down to sleep.
He says the sunrise over Mumbai
is goldly ancient with *muezzin* voices,
and his day begins as mine is ending

with moths buzzing on my window,
and the voice of a small world
crying in a dream I must bring to life.
Morning light on the Arabian Sea

is the colour of *azaan* filling the heart,
calling the world to its singular truth
as I pray that I will wake tomorrow.
The world lives one everlasting dawn

where time is only an illusion.
We no longer dwell in day or night
but in the eternity of a creative mind,
that instant when we think and speak.

It's a small world, my not so distant friend,
and we are brothers across beliefs.
A canary sings in a perfumed garden,
and Taj asks if I can hear it.

It sings a daybreak that will not cease,
in a world that cannot stop its turning.
I text him back that I hear the bird,
the song of a planet in search of itself.

BRUCE TAYLOR

Professor Emeritus, University of Wisconsin, USA, Bruce Taylor is author of four collections of poetry and editor of eight anthologies. He has awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, Bush Artist and Fulbright-Hayes foundations. <https://people.uwec.edu/taylorb>

Foreigner

See him grunt and point.
See him with his big cold
body grunt and point.

Listen to him try
to talk like a person,
the way our words turn
to rubbish in his mouth.

Who could love him,
his face, a moon, his skin
the belly of the carp.

He walks like an ox.
He looks at the smallest thing
as if it were a miracle.

What a world that must be
the world that is his
where you can't ask for food
or tell a woman she's beautiful

where you can't pray or sing
or speak drunk to the dead
or cry out in the night for help.

C. J. PRINCE

C. J. Prince is author of the poetry book *Mother, May I?*, a novel, *Camus Angels*, and *Twenty Four Houses*, a chapbook. Her work includes pieces in *Leaning into the Wind: Women Write from the Heart of the West*; *Last Call: the Anthology of Beer, Wine & Spirits Poetry*; *56 Days of August*; *Peace Poetry, Volumes I & II*; *Four Hundred and Two Snails*. Prince received the Distinguished Poet Award from Writers International Network Canada, is a co-founder of World Peace Poets.

Dear Peace

My yearning for you
began in some free-floating
sense of spirit luxuriating
in the pre-birth dawn.

Always you are
in tree roots, places of quiet
nature. Can I ever
remember what you feel like?
If I pound a letter on my old Smith Corona
to the president of the United States,
does that help peace?

When I march with the ACLU
or the women,
am I peaceful or angry?
What daily irritation
upsets the internal
seismic restlessness?

Peaceful non-violent
protests might earn
the hard bite of handcuffs.
Does voting bring peace?

Where do I find
the vertical connection to spirit?
Moving meditation, planting

bulbs in fall, making
a snow stegosaurus
after a blizzard.
Tiny moment of precious peace.

When a seething subterranean
fury flies underground, ripping
into headlines, separating the sexes,
enhancing the us-vs.-them mentality,
where are you?

Lightning strikes, splits, digs into earth,
erupts where you least expect it.
Forests burn, a crazy,
uncontrolled explosion of wild energy.

Each person, every woman, every man
and all 27 gender expressions,
will decide how to bring us
into a more peaceful global unity.
Rage never produces peace.

I envision the seven generations
following me, those who will carry
the consequences
of our current actions.
Action. Reaction. Consequence.
What is my action?
What is the consequence?
Where is my peace?

C.L. WILLIAMS

C.L. Williams is an independent author from central Virginia. He is a writer of poetry and fiction. His latest releases are a poetry book titled *The Paradox Complex* and a horror novella titled *Dream Awake*. C.L. Williams is currently gearing up for his first romance novella titled *The Next Step*.

Homecoming

The maker called, he's ready for me to come home
I just wanted to tell you, you'll never be alone
I have much to tell you, I'm not guaranteed tomorrow
The maker has called, my time here is now borrowed
One thing I must tell you, always believe
I know it will be difficult since I'm about to leave
But you have to be strong, at least for the others
All of the family, even your sisters and brothers
If I only have time to say one thing, I know it would be
No matter what, I don't want you to cry for me
I know you'll want to since my time here is through
You'll understand better when the maker is ready for you
So I say this, do not cry because my time here is done
Because my life isn't over, it's only just begun

CALVIN OLSEN

Calvin Olsen is an internationally-published poet and translator originally from Idaho in the United States. He holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Boston University, where he received a Robert Pinsky Global Fellowship, and work has appeared in *The London Magazine*, *International Poetry Review*, *AGNI*, *The Interpreter's House*, *Tampa Review*, and many others. He lives in Chapel Hill, NC, USA, where he is the poetry editor for *The Carolina Quarterly*.

Game

Pheasants burst from the field like the outside edge of a splash,
their wing beats stepping on and over each other
almost like applause. From far away,
each one is lost in the scatter,
the flock or what is now becoming
the flock veers in the bob and weave of panicked flight.
It has worked for generations, why not now?
After the gunshot's interruption runs its course
they return more annoyed than afraid
to the ground, no nostalgia, nothing remembered.
They hop from place to place or stick and swivel earthward
to turn the tiny clods that may be hiding dinner.
How long does a bird stay full?
It is important for the hunter to know
where they concentrated before.
Where they have been and are not now
a carcass lies. It must be stuck and gutted, dried and smoked
before the sun goes down, before the flock grows
wary of the dusk and tired of flight,
before the gather and the hush,
the barrel's humming tip cool to the touch.

Acknowledgment: First published in Nashville Review.

CAROLE GLASER LANGILLE

Carole Glasser Langille is the author of four books of poetry and two collections of short stories. She has been nominated for The Governor General's Award in Poetry and The Atlantic Poetry Prize and The Alistair MacLeod Award for Short Fiction. She lives and teaches in Canada.

Blaze

I believe the Commandments.
If those I love have left,
that does not mean they're not here.
The most powerful memories
are the ones I don't share. Sky blazing at sunset,
firefall of water,
purple rocket bursting roadside –
a summer explosion.
Oh love, that you are in the world.
We are all the burning bush.
Whether the prophet approaches or not,
is only part of the story.

Acknowledgement: First published in Grain Magazine, Saskatchewan, Canada Vol 46, Number 3.

CAROLYN KREITER-FORONDA

Dr. Carolyn Kreiter-Foronda, Virginia Poet Laureate Emerita, has co-edited three anthologies and published eight poetry books, including *The Embrace: Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo*, winner of the 2014 Art in Literature: Mary Lynn Kotz Award. Her poetry, along with that of other Virginia poets laureate, is featured in two art installations as part of the Washington Metropolitan Area Authority, Art in Transit. An abstract artist, Kreiter-Foronda's paintings and sculpture have been exhibited widely.

Lately I Have Been Too Wrapped Up

in things, new job, new books,
new paints for the canvas, to let
the thoughts go until they settle

on something startling: this world,
for example, how it might be
otherwise if there were no colors,

if what came to us as the sea
were not blue, but a series of lines
you had to shape into swirling waves

to understand their essence.
I would cut fishline, tape it
to glass, then as a child might,

look through the surface
to the bottom. There would be Venice,
mosaic-goddess of the world,

found hundreds of years from now
at the bottom of the sea,
and in St. Mark's Square: a cathedral,

its walls and ceiling lined with stones,
faceted, ornamental stones in the shape
of Byzantine heroes. I would paint

the mosaics with water, let the Adriatic
Sea lap over their frosted surfaces.
On a day such as this, I do not need

to know colors to appreciate the property
of things. I can take a piece of string,
draw a basilica, look through its roof

to the inner walls where figures
touch one another and come to life
without the sun that lies

at the center of things
waiting to come to us
as coral, yellow, blue, or gold.

Acknowledgment: "Lately I Have Been Too Wrapped Up" first appeared in Poet Lore.

CATFISH MCDARIS

Catfish McDaris won the Thelonius Monk Award in 2015. He's been active in the small press world for 25 years. He's recently been translated into Spanish, Italian, French, Polish, Swedish, Arabic, Bengali, Mandarin, Yoruba, Tagalog, Italian, and Esperanto.

Paris

Painted hyacinth and saffron with
brushstrokes of scarlet sulfur
peacocks in a raspberry sky,
green sleeping ducks by the
cattail forest and melodic stream

Rainbow cutthroat trout leaping
for the gnat hatch, fat frogs burping,
loons and cranes on stilts hunting

Vincent thought about the dancer
at the Crazy Horse and how she'd
asked him to steal a Van Gogh,
he painted her one instead.

CHANDRA SHEKHAR DUBEY

Chandra Shekhar Dubey is a poet, translator, researcher and teacher. He is Associate Professor in the Department of English, Shaheed Bhagat Singh College (E), University of Delhi. He has published books, poems, reviews, short stories and research papers. He published three books of his poems. His poems have been widely anthologized nationally and internationally. He edited the translated version of *Ramcharitmanas*, Richa Publication, New Delhi, 1999.

Earthen Urn

I gathered the ashes
from the cold pyre
smeared them on my forehead
sprinkled on my body
and rest gathered in the earthen urn
to set afloat in the Ganges
running across valleys, villages, cities
and green patches where animals eat grass
and lie to sleep on bare patches.
Whose ashes were these?
The ashes of the brave soldiers
who lost their lives on duty
in Naxal attack?
Or some loved one?
Or soldiers bravely facing
the enemy's bullets?
Whose bodies are torn
and have a hundred patches?
They are blessed persons
whose self and soul are immersed
in the love for country.
I salute them whose sacrifice
reminds us –
they courted countless troubles, even death
so that we could live in peace.

CHARLES BANE, JR.

Charles Bane, Jr. is the American author of three collections of poetry including the recent *The Ends of the Earth: Collected Poems* (Transcendent Zero Press, 2015) and *The Ascent of Feminist Poetry*, as well as *I Meet Geronimo and Other Stories* (Avignon Press, 2015) and *Three Seasons: Writing Donald Hall* (Collection of the Houghton Library, Harvard University). He created and contributes to *The Meaning of Poetry Series* for The Gutenberg Project. Website: <http://charlesbanejr.com>

And Then At Times

And then at times
the dips of our marriage are
no different than the falling
into love in Richmond Park
before we started home, and I
wrote every day until the motion
of the ship made me certain that
for every berth going out,
new souls put in, spit from
foam. If I could read Greek or
understand the errand of the
cardinal we watch for with coffee
in our hands, I could make poetry
on the tips of fence spears where
he stops and the fire of you would
go urgently from land to land.

CHELLA COURINGTON

Chella Courington is a writer and teacher. With a Ph.D. in American and British Literature and an MFA in Poetry, she is the author of six poetry and three flash fiction chapbooks. Her poetry appears in numerous anthologies and journals. Originally from the Appalachian South, Courington lives in California. For more information: <http://chellacourington.net>

Eurydice

Women have cried over my confinement
in hell by a husband who loved me so
he could not turn away
could not abide the caveat.
These long dark days
underground
breathless
I have not lived yearning for him.
I'm fine.

Did you really believe he wanted me
on earth with him?
Orpheus?
The beloved singer?
What would he sing if I were there?
For his song he needed me
buried beneath the crushing ground
star-crossed love that could never vanish
because it never was.
He didn't desire a woman
bloody with menstrual rituals
whose body once luminous would be taken by time.
Orpheus could not accept such a betrayal.
He wanted me as nymph, not crone.

Even more than age
he feared my voice.
Afraid it would rise above his.
What did he know of suffering and forgiveness?
I was the one severed from the sun
shut in subterranean darkness
barely enough oxygen.

He could have joined me the day I descended.
A knife to his throat, a serpent to his breast.
But he did none of these.
Came to me later by other hands.
I have no use for him.

CHRISTIAN LOID VALENZUELA

Christian Loid Valenzuela, also known as iamloid, is a Humanities and Social Sciences Senior High School graduate from the Philippines. He is an independently published author, a three-time National Novel Writing Month winner and a World Youth Essay Competition 2018 Finalist. As of now, he is a Senior Engagement Ambassador at Wattpad, a Social Media Specialist at 8Letters Bookstore and Publishing and taking up Bachelor of Secondary Education – Major in English.

The State Of Nothingness

When I was younger,
 I wish everyone would be a butterfly.
Not only being able to fly
 but with the capacity to have chrysalis.

I started to write emotions
 for people who need it.
I started to inscribe words
 to their hardened hearts.
I started to put life
 for their lost souls.
Because I want and I can.

Seven books earlier,
 I'm just a wanderer who loves
 to crossroads and just be somebody.

Then I met my muse
 and it made me realise
 that I can be a catalyst itself –
 for I can change my pain into purpose
 purpose into freedom
 freedom to change.

With my words and works,
I can influence people
 give them advises
 stories they will fall in love with
 poems that will reflect their souls
 book that will make them exist.

For I am a writer,
 not just only writing
 but creating –
 creating something out of nothing.

CHRISTINA LOVIN

Christina Lovin's writing has appeared in over one hundred literary journals and anthologies, as well as five volumes of poetry. She is the recipient of numerous poetry awards, including the Kurt Brown Scholarship from AWP, *Passager* poet of the year, Southern Women Writers Emerging Poet, and finalist in the 7th Juried Reading at the Poetry Center of Chicago. She continues to receive writing residencies, fellowships, and grants, most notably the Al Smith Fellowship from Kentucky Arts Council, Artist's Grants from Kentucky Foundation for Women, and the Elizabeth George Foundation Grant. Website: www.christinalovin.com

This Day In Particular

September 11, 2002

You mowed the mares' field yesterday
because the sky was clear, the air dry,
and would be so for days to come, or so
the Farmer's Almanac had claimed.
Today, the baler swept the field of loosely
mounded timothy and clover, swirling
up and over, tidying the strewn field,
leaving only stubble. "I haven't cut
the feet from off one rabbit," you say. I hear
the echoes of your mother's hills
in the modulation
of your voice, as you tell me of the time
a sucker snake was caught up, bound
into a bale, dying there, and how the hay,
pressed around the rotting flesh, would have decayed.
So, you spread and fed it fresh to mares and foals
that leaned the fence beside the barn. You tell me
that too many horses spoil a tract of grass:
their droppings soil the hay,
rendering it inedible and sour.

You say there is a man you know who
sheared the legs from off twin fawns.
Hidden in the tall grass, startled to a run,
they skittered from the tractor's wheels, only
to meet the mower blade eight feet
to the side. How he didn't have a gun,
but in plain sight of his grandsons, seven
and five, he hammered the deer skulls to death's
mercy. But today, not one rabbit, snake, or fawn.
No small child to witness. Only firm, fresh
bales that wait to be unbound and split
to ease winter-hungry bellies of animals
held stamping in their stalls or snowbound
in the fields. And in that cold
the fragrance of September's grass
will rise like prayer and you will not remember
this day in particular – just the rest that comes
at the end of the sweat, these blameless bales
in godly rows, towering to the haymow's
rafters, the sacred smell of the living
creatures, the blessed soil.

*Acknowledgment: First appeared in Come Together: Imagine Peace (Bottom Dog Press
Harmony Series, 2008).*

CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

Christopher Buckley lives in Santa Barbara, CA, USA. Recent books are *Star Journal: Selected Poems* Univ. of Pittsburgh Press; *Chaos Theory*, Plume Editions; and *Cloud Memoir: Selected Longer Poems*, Stephen F. Austin State University Press. *Agnostic* will be published by Lynx House Press in fall 2019. He is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, two NEA grants, a Fulbright Award in Creative Writing, and four Pushcart Prizes. He has edited many books. <http://www.christopherbuckley.com>

Poverty

*la colera de pobre
tiene dos rios contra muchos mares.*

— Cesar Vallejo

Vallejo wrote that with God we are all orphans.
I send \$22 a month to a kid in Ecuador
so starvation keeps moving on its bony burro
past his door – no cars, computers,
basketball shoes – not a bottle cap
of hope for the life ahead... just enough
to keep hunger shuffling by in a low cloud
of flies. It's the least I can do,
and so I do it.

I have followed the dry length
of Mission Creek to the sea and forgotten to pray
for the creosote, the blue salvia, let alone
for pork bellies, soy bean futures.

Listen.

There are 900 thousand Avon Ladies in Brazil.
Billions are spent each year on beauty products
world-wide – 28 billion on hair care, 14 on skin
conditioners, despite children digging on the dumps,
selling their kidneys, anything that is briefly theirs.

9 billion a month for war in Iraq, a chicken bone
for foreign aid.

I am the prince of small potatoes,
I deny them nothing who come to me beseeching
the crusts I have to give. I have no grounds for complaint,
though deep down, where it's anyone's guess,
I covet everything that goes along with the illustrious –
creased pants as I stroll down the glittering boulevard,
a little aperitif beneath Italian pines. But who cares
what I wear, or drink? The rain? No, the rain is something
we share – it devours the beginning and the end.

The old stars tumble out of their bleak rooms like dice –
Box Cars, Snake Eyes, And-The-Horse-You-Rode-In-On...
not one metaphorical bread crumb in tow.
Not a single *Saludo!* from the patronizers
of the working class – Pharaoh Oil, Congress,
or The Commissioner of Baseball – all who will eventually
take the same trolley car to hell, or a slag heap
on the outskirts of Cleveland.

I have an ATM card,
AAA *Plus* card. I can get cash from machines, be towed
20 miles to a service station. Where do I get off penciling in
disillusionment? My bones are as worthless as the next guy's
against the stars, against the time it takes light to expend
its currency across the cosmic vault. I have what everyone has –
the over-drawn statement of the air, my blood newly rich
with oxygen before the inescapable proscenium of the dark,
my breath going out equally with any atom of weariness

*Acknowledgment: 1st published in FIVE POINTS Magazine, 2008: © by
Christopher Buckley.*

CHUKWUEMEKA AKACHI

Chukwuemeka Akachi is a poet who lives and writes in Nsukka, a beautiful town in Nigeria. He is the current editor of *The Muse*, a journal of critical and creative writing.

Blooming Loneliness

(After Ed Sheeran's "Perfect")

Tonight

Another bow is fingering a violin
I have all my lovers in my arms
I have done this before: called ghosts to my centre table
mostly after I get honourable mentions at dying contests
Old man gets to the dance floor
Stretches his arms
She takes them
I'm the only one who sees his claws digging into her waist.
She holds him like storms hold fishing boats
Wikipedia says he is the fifteenth cemetery she has wandered into
The fifteenth man to hold on to the Titanic of her body
There is an old typewriter moaning in the room
A boy's fingers clicks away
He climaxes
It's a break-up poem for the next boy he would kiss
I can tell. I have done it before.

The old couple sway.

Her gown is soaked with blood.
Hundreds of boys reach orgasm at the typewriter
the music stops.
I am still here: a character in a little girl's sandcastle
The psychiatrist said this would happen: the hallucinations.

CLAUDE CLAYTON SMITH

Professor Emeritus of English at Ohio Northern University, Claude Clayton Smith is the author of eight books and co-editor/translator of two others. His own work has been translated into five languages, including Russian and Chinese. His poem “Until” won first place in the *American Aesthetic* Sonnet Competition in 2016, was included in *Nuclear Impact*, a 2017 anthology of poems by Shadbda Press, and his 2017 micro-chapbook, *Seven Sonnets*, by the Origami Poems Project. For further information see his website: claudeclaytonsmith.wordpress.com

Until

Until the day that all the stars collapse
upon themselves in clouds of light and dust
(or raise their fissile mushroom heads, perhaps),
as quantum physics proves what physics must –

Until on Earth the oceans split and flood
the poles as if old Moses bade them to,
and cities lie awash in salty blood –
I’ll bide my time and concentrate on you.

Apocalyptic visions slip and slouch
through history to leave us in their wake,
but not a damnéd one, in truth, can vouch
for Truth. Imagination fails. Forsake

the future, then, for *this* – the day we share
with atoms that bombard the very air!

CLAUDIA PICCINNO

Claudia Piccinno was born in Lecce, Italy in 1970. Operating in more than seventy anthologies, she's a former member of the jury in many national and international literary prizes. Her awards include an honorable mention in the Paris 1st Word Literary Prize and a 3rd prize in Lugano, Switzerland, 3rd prize in Albania; She has been the first Italian poetess to be awarded with The Stelae of Rosetta, World Literary Prize in Istanbul on November 2016. She will be conferred with the most prestigious award "World icon for peace" for Wip in Ondo city, Nigeria, on April 2017. She is Italian editor for the international literary magazine Rosetta World Literatura in Turkey and for Atunis Magazine in Albania. She is now continental art director for Europe at world festival poetry.

The Kid Of Paper Planes

Mercedes, apache, Rolex
Racehorse, hangars,
to discover a part of you
that least belongs to me.
I love the child who is in you
the brat of paper planes
of the flights at the airport.
Eyes staring at the sky
wondering about the logic of flight.
Take-off and landing
abandonment and return
tears and mending
molecules and atoms gone crazy
in the missed caresses
immortalized in this list of rarefied words
in the air of December

knocking with arrogance
in the interstices between soul
and skin of my curiosity
who is quiet and regenerates herself
in the latitude of your arms.

CLAUDINE NASH

Claudine Nash is a psychologist and award-winning poet whose collections include *The Wild Essential* (Kelsay Books, 2017), *Parts per Trillion* (Aldrich Press, 2016) and the chapbook *The Problem with Loving Ghosts* (Finishing Line Press, 2014). She has also edited three anthologies of poetry, most recently *Epiphanies and Late Realizations of Love* for Transcendent Zero Press (2019). Widely published, her poetry has earned numerous literary distinctions including Pushcart Prize nominations and prizes from such publications and artistic organizations as Artists Embassy International, Thirty West Publishing House, *The Song Is...* and *Eye on Life Magazine* among others. Website: www.claudinenashpoetry.com

You Wasted Nothing

You wasted nothing.
You breathed energy
into the ozone,
recycling atoms of
spent oxygen
into pockets of
positively charged air.
Micro moments
were deemed
thrilling things,
snow and sand
flecks of thin but
wondrous matter.
You savored
day's existence,
wiping clean
near empty slates,

prizing every
piece of light that
wrapped around
each eyelash.
You didn't spend
an instant nursing
anything but
exuberance,
spilling anything
into the atmosphere
that wasn't cut
from love.

Acknowledgment: Previously published in The MOON Magazine.

CLEBER PACHECO

Cleber Pacheco is a Brazilian novelist, short story writer, poet and playwright. He has 17 books published in Brazil and he has contributed to various poetry collections in Canada, India, UK, US and Ireland. His book of poetry *Mysteries* won a contest in US. His play *INTIMACY* has received two awards.

Anamnesis And Diagnosis

My body has symmetry
And Greek golden ratio.

My bones obey
The Gothic architecture.

My veins follow the flow
The shoals of red blood cells.

My organs are healthy
Like fruits shining in the sun.

The pain I feel started
The day I was born.

CLINTON INMAN

Clinton Inman was born in England, graduated from SDSU in 1977 BA in philosophy, is a retired high school teacher in Florida where he lives with his wife, Elba.

Song Of Ulysses

Of greatness and glory let us speak
For all things rich and noble
In proud ships tall let us seek
Again where only men are able

Tired we grown of glitter and gold
The constant curse of the market place
Let us dream of Delphic days of old
That Poseidon's rage could not erase

Come, arise, my men, arise
For tomorrow we shall sail
Again under bluer Aegean skies
There to find newer walls to assail.

Circe's song had made us weak
For we have slept too long and late
Now for greater joys let us seek
Knowing we are the masters of our fate.

This woeful world is much too remiss
But only in such a world as this
One without comfort, joy, or bliss
Dare we dare climb the steps of Olympus.

Come my men, let us venture
Into the depths of the setting sun,
There we'll find newer worlds to conquer
Long, long after this day is done.

COLIN MORTON

Twice winner of the Archibald Lampman Award for poetry, Canadian poet Colin Morton has published a dozen books, ranging from visual and sound poetry (*Printed Matter; Two Decades*) to historical narratives (*The Merzbook: Kurt Schwitters Poems; The Hundred Cuts: Sitting Bull and the Major*). His other work includes a novel, an animated film, and many reviews and essays. He has collaborated with poets, artists, and musicians in the poetry performance group First Draft and with film-maker Ed Ackerman in the award-winning animated poetry film *Primiti Too Taa*. Website: www.colinmorton.net

Night Walking Between Centuries

Somewhere between ends and beginnings
alert to the scuff of a shoe in the shadows
a block away, I walk the night streets
of this city midway through self-demolition
– half-metamorphosed half-decayed –
passing shadows of my former self
on streets where storefronts have shifted,
signs altered, brick facades from another century
caught in a bank tower's funhouse mirrors.

And turning a corner I sometimes glimpse
the virtual, the becoming city
as near in time as this red brick
though barely imagined here at street level
where for years I've crossed against the light
and soon the first transhumans will cross,
become one with their devices.

At the edges of vision they pass like shadows
eyes never meeting, as if they don't see me
or if they do, do not see me as forebear
– flat-footed, astigmatic, fatally flawed –
an X of flesh in a world of unknowns
caught in reflection between walls of glass.

CYNTHIA SHARP

Cynthia Sharp is the author of *Rainforest in Russet* and the editor of *Poetic Portions*, an anthology honouring Earth Day. She has been published and broadcast internationally, with over 130 poems in anthologies and literary journals, and nominated for the *Pusbcart Prize* and *Best of the Net Anthology*. She is a full member of The League of Canadian Poets and Haiku Canada and on the executive of The Federation of British Columbia Writers.

The Summer We Never Had

In the summer we never had,
there is time,
for endless evenings
of coffee and poetry
amid the spark of fireflies
in the city heat.

As voices from late night
gatherings on porches
drift in open windows,
I no longer pretend
you are in my room
just to study.

We are no longer pending
on outside approval,
only the potential
we elevate
in each other.

In the summer we never had,
I don't have to be
anything more than I am
and it doesn't matter
that my hair finds its way
into dreadlocks.

There is red wine and passion,
daisies that last the night—
my single bed is luxurious enough
and I never have to get over you.

I taste forever
how it would have been
and never let you go.

*Acknowledgment: The poem, "The Summer We Never Had," was first published in
Toasted Cheese magazine.*

D. C. CHAMBIAL

D. C. Chambial (b. 1950) is PhD in Indian English Poetry; Trilingual (English, Hindi and Pahari of Himachal Pradesh) contemporary Poet, Critic, and translator. Has been published and anthologized in India and abroad. Poems translated into Spanish, French, German, Nepali, Bangla, Hindi, and Pahari. Three books of criticism on his poetry. He is a recipient of several awards including Michael Madhudan Academy Award, Poetry Day Australia Gold Medal, Lachian Art Letters, Campbell, California, Lifetime Achievement by Intercontinental Poets Academy, and others. Ten books of poems to his credit. More than 15 interviews published in various Journals and On-line journals/magazines. Edits Poetcrit (estd 1988).

Seeds Of The Kind

The bed's been made,
Weeds removed,
Manure blended,
Seeds sown in sevens,
In rows half a score.

Curious to see
The seeds to sprout,
Heat and moisture
From sun 'n' dew enough.

This morn I saw
The sandy soil
Steadily stir
And tender bud
Peep out into the sun.

Then a host of them
Stirred like warriors in sleep
In perfect rhythm
Valiantly arrayed in field.

In my fancy I find
Green buds turn red,
Full of season's hue.
Sparkle in morning dew.
In my little dream bed
Seeking seeds of the kind.

DALLEL SARNOU

Dallel Sarnou is an associate professor (at the English department, Mostaganem university, Algeria), poetess and academic researcher. She has already published a number of articles, two monographs and a series of poems in international anthologies. Now, she is working on the human crisis and the de-humanization of non-white minorities.

Now That She Is Gone

She was thundering in pain and in despair
Knowing at last the end is closer than ever
Stuck there in that corner fleeing nowhere
The ache, she had, seemed to last forever
Standing by the wall watching the horror,
I was powerless, aimless and unable to roar
To help her fight that pain I couldn't understand
And to wash her tears away as if it cuffed my hand
A moment you die a thousand times to never live again
Scenes that dig in your heart grief, misery and pain
Forever becomes senseless, so are life and death
Now while alone, I live to die as I am dyeing when still alive
Now that she is gone for good, I ever drown in wrath
Knowing not how –without her-to live, how to ever strive

DAN GEORGAKAS

Dan Georgakas' poetry has been anthologized in works such as *31 New American Poets* (Scribner's), *A Fine Frenzy* (McGraw Hill), *The Insistent Present* (Houghton-Mifflin), *Abandon Automobile* (Wayne State U Press), *The Now Voices* (Scribner's), *Campfires of the Resistance* (Bobbs-Merill), *Always Begin Where You Are* (McGraw-Hill), and *Millennial Portals* (Walt Whitman Association). He has published two poetry chapbooks: *And All Things Their Children* (Shameless Hussy Press) & *Three Red Stars* (Smyrna Press). He has also edited *Prison Poetry* (NJ State Council of the Arts) & *Z* (Smyrna Press).

October Song

They who never ruled before
poured from their factory districts
across the bridges of Petrograd
to make October
The moon was so startled
all global tides
shifted.
The lights went on all over Europe.
Nothing
can ever be the same.

DANIEL DE CULLA

Daniel de Culla, is a writer, poet, and photographer. He's member of the Spanish Writers Association, Earthly Writers International Caucus, Poets of the World, (IA) International Authors, Surrealism Art, and others. Director of *Gallo Tricolor Review*, and *Robespierre Review*. He participated in many Festivals of Poetry, and Theater in Madrid, Burgos, Berlin, Minden, Hannover and Genève. He has exposed in many galleries from Madrid, Burgos, London, and Amsterdam. He is moving between North Hollywood, Madrid and Burgos, Spain. His address is in Burgos, just now. He has more than 70 published books.

Modern And Ancient Scorpion With Its Sting

Modern and ancient scorpion with its sting
How little everything has changed!
Saints of yesterday are today pedophiles priests
And devout men
That with kids they play a lot.
Yesterday's nuns are lesbians today
That give kisses and hugs
To their adopted children.
Old military men have to cut their tongue
And serve it between two plates
For the young bisexual sub-lieutenants.
Boy or girl tells to their parents:
The child: Dad, mum: I'm a girl!
The Girl: Mum, dad: I'm a kid!
The State and its Governments
Modern and ancient, only know how to punish.
Yesterday's criminals and rapists
Are reflected in the murky waters of today's rivers.

The ancient lard Jack
Sticks out the tongue to the modern exhibitionist
That is located at the doors of children's schools
Or at one subway station.
Of the sticks where the Inquisition, yesterday
Burning witches, agnostics and atheists
New inquisitors make chopsticks
For the mighty' teeth.

Demons are always at the cross of the roads
Looking for arriving the visionaries
That crash with their cars
To, on wings, raise them to no one sky.

Yesterday like today
There are the same crazy ones that govern us
Throwing wax to the submissive and subdued people:
Eternal repression returns
The same laws and its terror.
From World War I and World War II
Lords of the Crusade War
Bandits of oil and power
The modern and the ancient criminals
Have made cakes so that today's Arabs
Distribute to themselves
Taking their mortuary box
And, as immigrants, kissing it.
Yesterday they were slaves traveling in chains
From the Old Continent
To the new one of the Americas.

DANIEL MANY OWITI

Daniel Many Owiti is a Kenyan creative writer. He participated in the inaugural Nyanza Literary festival (NALIF-2016) where he was a first runners-up. He is the founder of Eldoret Poets Association.

Doomsday Will Not Fall On A Fool's Day

The day of doom,
Will not coincide with the day of the fool,
On that day, two men will be drinking in a bar,
One will be taken and the other left,
The one left will say to self,
“He is playing a prank on me.”
But the day will not be April first.

The day of doom,
Will not coincide with the day of the fool,
On that day, two women will be grinding at a mill,
One will be taken and the other left,
The one remaining will say to self,
“She is trying to play hide and seek with me.”
But the day will not be April first.

On that day, two will be lying in bed,
One will be taken and the other left,
The remaining one will console self,
“Maybe she is trying to fool me.”
But the day will not be April first.

On that day, the dead will hear a voice calling,
One to resurrection of life,
The other to resurrection of condemnation,
The condemned will encourage self,
“Maybe there is chance for an appeal.”
Only that the day will not be first of April.

On doomsday,
Fools will say it is fool's day,
Not until they start weeping and gnashing their teeth,
Will they curse the April first that was not to be.

DANIEL THOMAS MORAN

Daniel Thomas Moran, born in New York City in 1957, is the author of ten collections of poetry. His eleventh collection, *In the Kingdom of Autumn*, will be published by Salmon Poetry in Ireland in 2019. In 2005, he was appointed Poet Laureate by The Legislature of Suffolk County, New York. His collected papers are being archived by The Department of Special Collections at Stony Brook University. He is a retired Clinical Assistant Professor at Boston University's School of Dental Medicine. He is Arts Editor for *The Humanist Magazine* in Washington, DC. He and his wife Karen live in Webster, New Hampshire.

The Wind

We will always
recall days, when
a phone would ring.

Death, seeming again,
near enough to touch.
The sound of it
becoming the scent,
Its apparitions hanging
over us in the trees.

It seems the nature
of this brittle living.
Rooms must be bared,
memory slipped into
a pocket over the heart.

As the sojourn continues,
It lives in our sleep and
navigates through our dreams.
Neither starlight, nor dawn
can eclipse that night.

And yet, if we are
willing to embrace it,
It teaches the true reach
of a moment, and the
wealth in a single breath.

DANIEL WILLIAMS

Daniel Williams is a poet of the Yosemite and Sierra Mountains in California. Several of his poems are found in Yosemite's time capsule to be opened in 2040. A haiku of his is imprinted on the MAVEN Mars explorer which will orbit the red planet for the next 3 billion years or so. He was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in Poetry by College of the Redwoods in 2015.

Bears In Snow

One spring an early warming made the
streams begin to flow white water over rocks
boulders giving voice to a change in the weather

I was out in the snow enjoying it for the simple
white pleasure it was so cold and so pure
when the silence was broken by a bear sound

I could see a sow and her cub through the branches
of a lithe fir and so watched from a distance as
she tried to teach her cub about snow

First she would charge up a steep hill large divots
of ice springing from her running claws
arriving at the top she would turn and await her cub

The little bear would do its best with tiny feet to
follow in its mother's claw steps and make it
almost to the top before slipping backwards

Then it would bawl for its mother and mom would
wait at the top patiently until another run was made
then the little Sisyphus bear would almost do it

Before slipping backwards once again
on the third attempt however the mother bear
reached out and cuffed her cub up the hill to her side

Sunlight sparkled off the snow all around and turned
the shadows under oaks a lovely blue it was a splendid
day to watch a creature teach her cub about their world

DARIUSZ TOMASZ LEBIODA

Dariusz Tomasz Lebioda, PH. D. (1958) is Polish poet, writer, literature professor, translator and editor. He is the author of more than eighty books of poetry, short stories, novels, diaries, essays, scientific monographs of European romantic poets, contemporary Polish poets and world novelists. He is the winner of a lot of Polish and international literary prizes. He is the President of European Medal Of Poetry And Art – HOMER.

A Beggar – Woman In The Temple Of Tao

A tiny woman with traces of beauty on her
wrinkled face had been here long before
my birth

–always near by a Tao shrine, always
in the shadow of plane tree
and a poplar

She had a husband, he died, and children who
Left her – she met people, they forgot
About her

Now she stands on the steps leading
to golden elephant statue asking
for some holy juans

People give her notes and coins,
Take pictures and for ever leave

She stays on with her sadness
and a warm smile

For her, in a while, old China
will go blank

soon, on the altar of destiny,
the last wisp of incense

will burn down

DAVE KIRBY

Dave Kirby is a prolific author and poet. He is author of 12 books. He lives in Sheffield England and writes poetry about love loss and football. He blogs daily. He is currently working as a lecturer at Sheffield College. <http://hairyd.com/writing>

Brief Encounter

I've always wanted to run after a train;
Like they do in the movies.
You know the sort of thing

A chocolate box station.
Verdant hanging baskets festooned with pinks and pansies
Trevor Howard and Celia Johnson hold chaste hands
A uniformed guard cries 'All aboard!
His shrill whistle pierces the pregnant air.
They primly kiss.
Passengers scramble into the carriages
Celia leans out of the window
The train begins to move away
Cold iron wheels turn slowly on cold iron track
Their pace increasing
Trevor runs alongside the train to the end of the platform,
The train gives a forlorn *Toot!* on its whistle
And suddenly, there is no more platform
Forcing him to a halt
I love you, he cries daring only now to say the words he truly
feels.
He curses the cowardice, which, for the last week has left
him mute.
She mouths *I know*, a solitary tear on her rosy red cheek.
And as the train disappears down the track

They shout their undying love across an ocean of lavender
scented steam.
Not knowing if they will ever meet again
To consummate their undying love.

But this is not my world.
The forlorn toot and the pinks and pansies
Never happen.

A whistle blows.
A door slams.
You are gone
And I am alone.

DAVID ALPAUGH

David Alpaugh lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. More than 100 literary journals have published his poetry, essays and plays. His first poetry collection, *Counterpoint*, won the Nicholas Roerich Poetry Prize from Story Line Press, and he has been a finalist for Poet Laureate of California. <http://charlesbanejr.com>

Rollfast

What we did that summer evening
was turn our bicycles upside-down
so the seats were on the ground
and the wheels in the air –
then we twirled the pedal round and round
till knuckles and fingers were white
and we couldn't make out individual spokes:
just a silver blur and an incremental hum
as the wheel sang the song of its appetite.

What we did next was feed the wheel flowers,
flowers not worth putting in a crystal vase
– Trifolium, Dandelion, Queen Anne's Lace –
flowers that thrived on parental neglect
in the unkempt grass by the utility shed
as if to affirm Britannica on weed:
any plant growing where it is not wanted.

Who would be afraid of an idle wheel that spat
out handfuls of ragtag flowers, already half dead?
And the bleeding stalks left a stinging answer
in the summer air: perfume we'd count on ever after –
to keep coming at us stronger than before.

Lynne Slaughter went first; she thrust in dandelions;
then Bruce Edwards, a single budding clover:
the only sign we'd get that his own tousled head
would test the metaphor's might just two weeks later
when wheels would screech and metal do its work
a few miles west of Willow Pass road.

It was starting to get dark on Mount Diablo.
We flipped our bicycles right-side-up
and raced around the cul-de-sac like maniacs,
or Dante's damned, or Milton's falling angels,
getting high on the last drops of Daylight Savings
until parents cried, *Allee, allee, in-free*.

Later we fell asleep thanking Schwinn,
Rollfast and whatever gods may be
for the night, the mountain and the wheel
within a wheel – like love, like magic,
like a spell to help us keep our balance,
and make up for bald tires,
as we cycle to the valley floor.

Acknowledgment: Originally appeared in the poet's book Counterpoint (Story Line Press, 1994).

DAVID GROULX

David Groulx was raised in Ontario, Canada. He won the 3rd annual Poetry NOW Battle of the Bards. He has published eleven books of poetry. His book, *The Wabigoon River Poems* was nominated for the Archibald Lampman award in 2015. Was the Writer-in-Residence for openbook.com Toronto for November 2012. His poetry has been translated into French, Ojibwa and Cree languages. *Red River Review* nominated his poetry for the Pushcart Prize in 2012. *One Throne Magazine* nominated his poetry for the National Magazine Awards in 2014. His poetry has appeared in over 180 magazines in 15 countries.

A New Death

I have found a new death
of which, there are many

a death of childhood
a death of youth
and finally the death of old age

an incomplete suffering
a narrow ugliness

that breaks the alter.

DAVID J DELANEY

As a poet, and recently a memoir/short story writer, David J Delaney has had wonderful support, in Cairns, Queensland, Australia and worldwide. His love for writing and the impact it has on everyday people, has, definitely been an inspiration to him. To date he has published 4 books, won several awards and has had his works published in many anthologies worldwide.
<https://readeasypoetry.wordpress.com>

My Home Australia

This is Australia my home,
where beast and human freely roam,
where termite mounds have stood for years
and country pubs serve ice cold beers.

Where droughts seem like they'll never end
while in the sky some hawks descend,
then pick the bones of calf or lamb,
they died where once was a full dam.

Where farmers kick the dust and rock
how long can they stay on their block?
and pray one day the rain will come
then hardships might be overcome.

Where with the rains the landscapes change,
from dry salt pans to mountain range,
the waterways they now disperse,
within a country so diverse

Where fingers stretching through this land
are filling all the beds of sand,
and soak the ground right to its core,
the channels come alive once more

Where gathered by the creeks and streams
comes forth the noise of howls and screams,
from pink galahs and cockatoo,
some dingoes, flocks of emus too.

Where flowers wake from their long sleep
soon through the cracks they'll slowly creep
and show their reds and orange hues
with yellows, whites and varied blues.

A sea of colour all around,
A festive scene is all about,
then rest beneath a starry dome,
This is Australia my home.

DAVID JAMES

David James has published three books and six chapbooks; in addition, more than thirty of his one-act plays have been produced in the U.S. and Ireland. He teaches writing at a community college in Michigan.

A Will For My Children

(5/29/01; revised 9/5/18)

I leave behind
my ignorance of anything mechanical – cars, pumps, generators;
my lingering fear of electricity; my two left hands
around wood or wood by-products.

I leave you
with my distaste for arguments,
my reluctance to confront or push
my way through life, my trials with the minor truths.

I leave behind
a few good cigars for special occasions.

Now that I'm gone
I can easily say this: I love you, I love you, I love you.
I was there when each of you came out
of your mother and something gave way in my heart.
A piece of me was set aside forever.
I did what I could for you, what I thought best,
though I know I could have done more.

I confess I had my fair share of faults,
doubts, fears. We all do. I was afraid to succeed.
I was afraid to fail. I was afraid
and tried to cover it up for you.
I shouldn't have, and hopefully,
you saw through me.

I lived well by most standards,
I won't argue that. I enjoyed myself,
I accomplished a few things, I helped others when I could.
I loved those closest to me and I felt loved.
And since I'm no longer here, perhaps my words
will carry more weight. Remember this:
you can all do more. You can all love more.
You should open yourselves wide
to every day, every hour, minute.
Nothing – not work, not your lawn, not money,
not the future, not the past – nothing means more
than this moment
and what you do with it.

DAVID LOHREY

David Lohrey's plays have been produced in Switzerland, Croatia, and Lithuania. His poetry can be found in *Otoliths* (AUS), *Tuck Magazine* (UK), *Terror House* (Hungary), and the *Cardiff Review* (Wales). His fiction can be read online at *Dodging the Rain*, *Storgy Magazine*, and *Literally Stories*. David's collection of poetry, *Machiavelli's Backyard*, was published by Sudden Denouement Publishers (Houston, 2017). He lives in Tokyo, Japan.

Solitary Confinement

Crows are fine and interesting, but
no more so than dandelions.
Feathers or seeds float or pirouette, blown by the wind:
dead or alive; surface events scarcely count
as much as luncheon with the Queen. After all,
we are not ants; how fast or slow we crawl
is of no consequence. Just tell me what she said.

The retinue is the hive; the bees relate the story.
It's my goal to join in the tête-à-tête. It's all revealed
in the buzz; but it depends on whether HRH is in.
The Queen's presence quiets the din. The hive hums.
It's the same for humans. We're all heading for the box;
we know the way, by instinct. We just want someone
to tell our story: yakkity yak.

Walter Benjamin once said the best way to fill
a bookshelf is with a pen. Get to work. One's library
card is an excuse. It's better to commit it all to memory,
as in Fahrenheit 451. Telephones are the same as whiskey.
Human contact is fulfilling; it is better to withdraw.
Don't lose your thread. We only get one heart;
it'd be foolish to break it.

DAVID STONES

David Stones is a poet, performance and spoken word artist, residing in both Toronto and Stratford, Ontario. He transformed his first book of poetry, *Infinite Sequels* (Friesen Press, 2013), into a one man show of the same name. Hailed by London Free Press as a “brilliant and beautiful piece of theatre,” Stones performs *Infinite Sequels* throughout Southern Ontario. Stones’ poetry has appeared in numerous print and on-line journals. He is the recent winner of the Brooklin Poetry Society prize and is readying two manuscripts for publication.

You As Lacuna

Your awayness
has become a presence now

a space
you’ve somehow filled with space
your shape on the bed
still rosy with your fragrance.

Filling the house
the clock ticks

the only moving thing
resolute
as a pallbearer’s boots.

In the afternoon
clouds roll in
before cold fists of rain
staccato the windows.

On the flowered bedspread
the cat finds
your shallow grave
to inhale your sleep
rhythmic as the rain.

Even the cat's breathing
is audible
on this day
as time passes
on schedule
and without consequence.

Acknowledgment: First published in Infinite Sequels (Friesen Press, 2013).

DAVID SUPPER

David Supper, poet and artist, founded a poetry group, Serpent's Tooth, soon after moving to Nottingham in 2007, which involved a bringing together of local poets to learn from each other and to pursue a greater understanding of the medium. David's work has featured in local, national and international publications including *Cornwall* – a poetry anthology, Poetry London, Lucidity Poetry USA.

Storm Over The Brisbane River

The sultry air lies softly, suffocating;
hazy tops of hills blur and merge with a dark sky,
in the warm, firm wind, leaves blow like streamers
at a Chinese festival, rustling expectantly,
suddenly escaping, one bid for freedom
before diving to join the tinder undergrowth.

Lilac flowers ripped from the Jacaranda tree
splodge the ground with indigo stains,
to match deepening purple across the valley;
peeling bark from eucalypts, soft to the touch,
like parchment, striated, light greys giving way
to pale golden browns, lie strewn on the ground.

At the Crossings, where the river widens, bends,
caught in a sudden shaft of sunlight,
a black and white heron flaps lazily,
gliding low over the muddy, tidal river;
from the graph of a dead branch, a small bird
dives, returns, then dives again – over and over.

A lone black swan buffeted by waves,
drifts with the current, blown downstream
and out of sight; a white duck nestles
at the foot of a stunted pine, feathers ruffled,
its blood red face, peering, waiting,
raucous crows wheel, screaming warnings.

Flights of Butcher birds form angry squadrons,
screeching, darting this way and that in perfect formation
as the black, threatening clouds gather themselves
to release a torrent of rain, and flashes of lightening
accompanied by low rumbles of thunder;
soon the sticky heat returns, deadening sound and spirit.

DAVIDSON GARRETT

Davidson Garrett is a poet, actor, and former New York City taxi driver living in Manhattan. His poetry has appeared in *2 Bridges Review*, *Xavier Review*, *The Stillwater Review*, *First Literary Review East*, *The New York Times*, *Impossible Archetype*, and in *Podium*, the literary journal of the 92nd Street Y. Davidson is the author of the poetry collection, *King Lear of the Taxi* published by Advent Purple Press, and three chapbooks, *To Tell the Truth I Wanted to be Kitty Carlisle and Other Poems*, published by Finishing Line Press, and *Southern Low Protestant Departure: A Funeral Poem* and *What Happened to the Man Who Taught Me Beowulf*, published by Advent Purple Press.
<http://www.davidsongarrett.com>

O To Sing At The Teatro Colón

In dreams, I tango with ego, to Opera's gilded temple
Imagination transcends gender and vocal technique
A fantasy début as the Druid priestess Norma
Like Callas inside the crown jewel of Buenos Aires

Imagination transcends gender and vocal technique
Before thousands of panting Argentines
Like Callas inside the crown jewel of Buenos Aires
My silvery soprano soars over coloratura hurdles

Before thousands of panting Argentines
Tigress eyes flash beneath a swirling puffed bouffant
My silvery soprano soars over coloratura hurdles
Cape-flinging and statuesque arm-crossed breasts

Tigress eyes flash beneath a swirling puffed bouffant
An ethereal *Casta Diva* – blessed by perfect acoustics
Cape-flinging and statuesque arm-crossed breasts
Lyrical death on the funeral pyre – earns lusty *bravas*

An ethereal *Casta Diva* – blessed by perfect acoustics
A fantasy début as the Druid priestess Norma
Lyrical death on the funeral pyre – earns lusty *bravas*
In dreams, I tango with ego, to Opera's gilded tem

DC REID

DC Reid is a past president of the League of Canadian Poets and the Writers Federation of BC. His most recent awards are the National Roderick Haig-Brown Award for sustained environmental writing, and the Somewhere My Love Anthology, gold prize winner for poetry. His literary sites are: <http://poetrydcreid.blogspot.com>, <http://sandria.ca> & <http://dcreid.ca>

Canada

We are the land and so we come to each other
from far away. The eastern slope has maple leaves,
the crash of wave on new found land. Mes amis, our
question is this: what does speaking in foreign tongues

mean? Pretending to be a people in the largest country
never fought in and for itself? Never a pogrom, nor a
gulag? But our reservation comprises death untraceable
for those found here by the Harpers of the nation,

the Bordens, the Mulroneys, the Chief with his
jowly nation of Saskatoon, that sweet prairie fruit
that stained my hands from their picking on the cliff
where falcons stooped to knock me off. The falcons

called me twice each time they spoke, echoes booming
sandstone rock. I fancied only I could hear their
calling, and Alberta mountains with flakes round their
feet, the Yamnuskas, Kananaskis. I hear the names

Sarcee, Ponoka, the Trudeaus, and Stanfield, bagpipes,
their instrument of colonialism, and France where our
grands-peres died of the opening up of mustard gas;
we know of it in our placid land as how to make the water

pure. O my distanced friends, we have no other words than
what our mouths form on tongues. Those with teeth say:
Tsartlip, Muchalet, Tsawassen. Lakes are our only precious
thing: the open eyes of our country, Lake Winnipeg,

its hanging wave smacks our middle ground, Ukrainians,
the Mennonite, people with olden clothes, olden carts,
on way to olden towns, anywhere on our CP grid
flatness, then Banff Springs, Hell's Gate, Fraser

and Thompson. Canada's flesh drains itself of tears
to our western shore, where trails between green cedars
last millennia. The wooden heartbeat we know,
the way we cannot keep our feet within their

shoes, not Huckleberry, not Tom or Brautigan, but
Canadian. I sing the land relentless. We search for
the native drum that is this Canada. We start
so far away you cannot hear us coming.

Acknowledgement: Previously published in These Elegies (Ekstasis Editions, Canada, 2018).

DEBBIE AMIRAUT CAMELIN

Debbie Amirault Camelin is a prize-winning poet and 8th generation Acadian with roots in Nova Scotia, Canada. Her poems are described as transporting readers through time and space on a journey both emotional and geographical. Recent anthologies her work has appeared in: *Beyond the Sea: Tranquility*, Eber & Wein Publishing 2014; *Saving Bannister*: Niagara Poetry Anthology, Volume 29 2014; *Expectations*, Ottawa Arts Review 2015; *Dr. William Henry Drummond Poetry*, 2015 & 2016; *Passages* Carleton University 2016; *Waiting* Ottawa Arts Review 2016. Debbie published her poetry book, *Light in the Mist*, in January 2019.

Authorship

I want to be the author of my life,
pen, punctuate and polish my story,
pull sentimental sediment from the gut,
probe beyond my ever-present head.

I want to chronicle this fervid narrative
that turns in my mind like a gristmill
whetting impediments bit by bit
into a fine composition of the heart.

I want harmony and chaos to chronicle the journey
like Gordimer's *Vera* blending righteousness
and realism into a knowing
that transcends old embodied remains
and seeks out life in a new form.

This is the story I want to put this into words.

Acknowledgment: Earlier version previously published Expectations: Ottawa Arts Review 2015.

DEBJANI CHATTERJEE

Debjani Chatterjee has been called a ‘national treasure’ (Barry Tebb). She grew up in India, Japan, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, and Egypt, before settling in England. An international poet, children’s writer, translator, arts psychotherapist and Olympic torchbearer; her awards include an MBE, Sheffield Hallam University’s honorary doctorate, and Word Masala’s Lifetime Achievement Award. A former Chair of the National Association of Writers in Education, she is Patron of Survivors Poetry, and De Montfort University’s Royal Literary Fellow. She has had notable poetry residencies, including at various universities. Her 65+ books include: *Namaskar: New and Selected Poems*, and *Masala*. More at www.dchatterjeeewriter.simplesite.com

Smiling At Leopards

(For fellow meditators at the Centre for Mindfulness Based Life Enhancement)

It was our monthly day-long mindfulness event.
The weather and bank holiday weekend saw off
all but a blissful handful of mindful faithful.
The ‘smiling meditation’ was my favourite.
My serene Buddhist teacher pronounced: ‘Let’s smile
at all sentient beings, starting with ourselves.’
Like chicken and egg, we smile when happy, it’s true,
but smiling makes us happy too – the first lesson
of laughter therapy. Buddha’s belly ripples
jokeless laughter; we love his rotund jollity.
We even enjoy Krishna’s silliest antics.
Gods and saints, clowns and holy fools, show us the way.
I made a mental note to smile more every day.

Smiling is infectious: it spreads from face to face,
it is a universal gift-exchange language.
Towards the end, we received laminated cards.
Birds and beasts, there were two of each, like Noah's Ark –
an aid to pairing up for mindful discussion.
Estelle and I played Snap with handsome leopard pics.
She said: 'Our leopards are smiling at each other.'
So they were, with gleaming canines that made us smile.
'They look so well content,' I noted. 'I'm afraid
they'll have just dined on some poor sentient being!'
That made us laugh. Then my kindly partner observed:
'They must eat. Leopards too are sentient beings.'

I made a mental note to smile at all leopards.

*Acknowledgment: Previously published in Smiling at Leopards by Debjani Chatterjee
(Hedgehog Press, UK, 2018).*

DENNIS HASKELL

Dennis Haskell has published 8 collections of poetry, most recently *Ahead of Us* (Fremantle Press, 2016) and *What Are You Doing Here?* (University of The Philippines Press, 2015) plus 14 volumes of literary scholarship and criticism. He is the recipient of the Western Australia Premier's Prize for Poetry, the A.A Phillips Prize for a distinguished contribution to Australian literature, and of an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from The University of Western Australia. In 2015 he became a Member of the Order of Australia for "services to literature, particularly poetry, to education and to intercultural understanding". <http://dennishaskell.com.au>

One Clear Call

Holidays, the bush, dusty Coonabarabran
and out of the blue your friend has rung
you, caught on the hop; an engineer
who never looks at a book, whose father's died.

The service is soon; and he wants to read
something – not scriptural – literature perhaps:
the skilled academic that you are,
you suggest – a good choice – "Crossing the Bar".

"Where can I buy it?" he asks, "and quickly?"
"I know it," you say, down the glistening, impersonal wires,
"I'll repeat it, slowly". He waits, still, fingers
at the ready, for the first poem he's heard since school.

So you start, inexpressively, enunciating each syllable,
"Sunset and evening star,/And one clear call for me",
into a vast tide of silence at the end of the line,
the unmoving pen you cannot see, foaming at the words

until his wife picks up the mouthpiece, and the pen,
and you are Tennyson's mouthpiece, shaken a little
and wondering now, as you begin again
before a face you cannot see: "Sunset and evening star..."

until she is choking too, and her wrist falters
across the lines, registering the scatter of words
as they lift from Tennyson's dead mouth and your own voice
where they have lain like subject matter of no-one's choice,

that past sensation of syllables sweeping you and your friends
across the bar of technique, of grieving, of consolation.

Note: Coonabarabran is a fairly remote town in New South Wales, in the eastern part of Australia.

Acknowledgment: From Abracadabra (Fremantle, Australia: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1993).

DIANALEE VELIE

Dianalee Velie is the Poet Laureate of Newbury NH. She is the author of five books of poetry and a collection of short stories. She is a member of the Vermont Branch of the National League of American Pen Women, the New England Poetry Club, the International Woman Writers Guild, the New Hampshire Poetry Society and founder of the John Hay Poetry Society. <http://www.dianaleevelie.com>

Metanoia

*.... To make injustice the only/measure of
our attention is to praise the Devil.*
Jack Gilbert

Talismanic rosary in hand,
I watch the breath of morning rise.
Warm mists, drifting upward
from the cold waters of the deep lake,
ascend into heaven. New clouds,
baby clouds form, from water to air,
a mystery unfolding before me.

Wafting east toward Mecca,
aglow with the rising sun,
they become angels with outstretched
wings, joining hands to worship the dawn.
Diminutive dots of dew descend upon
my cheeks, mix with a trace of tears,
uniting me with this celestial scene.

After all our sorrowful wailing,
are we not, after all, mostly water?
Infused with this infinite power
of transformation, my soul billows
with them; we are all one spirit
and permanence only a physical illusion.
The full moon still accents the shifting sky,

and day and night are one, until
a dove coos, cracking this scarlet code
of dawn. Then reality returns.
This simple reality: somewhere in a cell
your murderer still breathes, his breath
commingling in the atmosphere with ours,
until all our bodies eventually evaporate,

join as one. This unshakable reflection
acknowledges that these temporary
vessels we call home are merely swells
in an incalculably deep ocean,
so that even through tidal waves of griefs,
we must allow the longest night
to pull us back into the light,
risking forgiveness in our search for peace....

DIANE FRANK

Diane Frank is author of seven books of poems, two novels, and a photo memoir of her 400 mile trek in the Nepal Himalayas (Nirala Publishing, 2018). Her new book of poems, *Canon for Bears and Ponderosa Pines* (Glass Lyre Press, 2018) received a Pushcart nomination. *Blackberries in the Dream House*, her first novel, won the Chelson Award for Fiction and was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. Diane lives in San Francisco, where she dances, plays cello in the Golden Gate Symphony, and creates her life as an art form. She teaches at San Francisco State University. Her website is: <http://www.dianefrank.net>

Requiem

For Edie

The door opens on Tuesday.
On Friday she walks away from the world.
I saw them at the Symphony,
Brahms and one hundred voices around them.
He was wearing a black suit with a top hat,
she in a long silk evening gown,
his arm softly around her shoulder.
They waved at me from a high window
and then they walked into the stars.

Nobody else could see them
but they waved at me
from a high box in the air.
In the fortissimo,
low pedal tones of the organ

vibrated the ceiling and the walls,
and in the quiet moments
one hundred voices hummed
the chord of the earth
as it turned.

In another world,
she is skating on a river
in the rose pink of sunset or dawn.
A fox fur hat around her face
keeps her warm, sheltering her
as a cottonwood tree from thunder.

These memories comfort as a soft pillow,
green and cool, a meadow
glowing with wild irises and daffodils,
the path through the forest where you walked,
where the leaves of your life
glow like rhapsodies at your feet.

Acknowledgment: "Requiem" was previously published in Swan Light (Blue Light Press, 2013).

DIKE OKORO

Dike Okoro, poet and essayist, was shortlisted for the 2016 Cecile De Jongh Literary Prize for Poetry. His publications include two poetry collections, *Dance of the Heart* (2007), and *In the Company of the Muse* (2016), a book described by *World Literature Today* as “a work of substance in which the poet deploys versatile techniques to express his experiences in a controlled form.” He is the recipient of a 2017-18 Newberry Scholar-in-Residence Award from the Newberry Library, USA. His poems have appeared in major anthologies and literary journals.

Obi Wali

The day the cock ready to crow flapped its wings,
Opened its mouth but could not crow

The day the sun shone a deep orange red and yet
Nobody noticed the brightness in the sky

The day the town crier beat a gong all over the city
Of Port Harcourt and nobody heard his message

The day the fisherman stood tired and yet waited,
Hoping to take home the reward of a heavy net

The day the hunter came face to face with death
While trying to separate a buffalo from a deathtrap

The day the thief stopped to trace from a familiar path
The road to the execution party of his own father

The day the bushfire claimed the forest despite the
Sudden downpour that filled the gutters and drains

The day the redneck lizard jumped off a wall and landed,
Forgetting to engage in head nodding

That was the day assassins stole into your bedroom, Obi,
To rob a generation of the gifts of your heart songs.

Note: Dr. Obi Wali, of Ikerre ethnic nationality, was murdered, butchered, and dismembered in his bedroom by hired assassins on 26 April 1993. A respected Senator in Nigeria and one of the founding fathers of Rivers State, he is the author of the highly acclaimed and controversial essay, "The dead end of African literature."

Acknowledgment: Originally published in: Okoro, Dike. In the Company of the Muse, Milwaukee: Cissus World Press, 2015.

DILIP MOHAPATRA

Dilip Mohapatra (b. 1950), a decorated Navy Veteran is a well acclaimed poet in contemporary English and his poems appear in many literary journals of repute worldwide. He has six poetry collections to his credit so far all published by Authorspress. His website may be accessed at <http://dilipmohapatra.com>

Untitled

I sit on the tall stool in my studio
in deep concentration
as a beam of tangerine yellow
bathes my last night's labour
the nude on the easel
with her come hither looks
and the bee stung lips with
a surreptitious pout
her proud protrusions defiantly
daring the lech who may stare
and the slope of her belly
sensuously dissolving
into the vanishing point.

I wonder if I had been too bold
with my brush strokes
driven by the unseen voyeur within
to create what I did
and which surely would
evoke the wolves' whistles
but if it would ultimately lead to
me with the label of
the dirty old man.

Then I pick up my calliper
and with a cartographer's precision
measure the distance between
the titillating tips
and with deft strokes of my brush

paint a stream of translucent muslin
flowing from the left shoulder
through the hills
between the peaks
down to the delta
to add the artistic aesthetics.

Then I add a mirror to her hand
and make her admiringly look at herself
with a Narcissistic gleam
in her eyes
yet looking as provocative
and sumptuous
as I desired her to be
and satisfied with the camouflage
that I created
I think of a title.

The first word that comes to my mind
which could cover my lascivious footprints cleverly
is 'Vanity'.

But then
the question looms large :
hers
or mine?

Note: Inspired by John Berger's quote on Vanity

DINA KAFIRIS

Born in Sydney to Greek parents, Dina Kafiris travelled to Athens at the first opportunity to study philosophy. She was a regular member and collaborator of the prestigious Corais group of the literary magazine *Nea Synteleia*, (New End of the World), under the eminent Greek poet Nanos Valaoritis. Her poetry collection *The Blinding Light Circling Elpida, in one act*, was published in 2014 by the British publisher, Original Plus, and is part of the forthcoming trilogy entitled *21st-century Modern Greece: The First Decade*. Until recently, she was Writer in Residence and Guest Lecturer at Kingston University London.

Tree Of Misfortune

It was inevitable that the sentiment of love
would fade from the widow's eyes,
the harm inflicted upon her was irreparable
once sorrow put down roots
and buried the loss in the core of the cortex,
allowing the deceased to resurface
at her beck and call.

Circumstance transformed a character
the locals spoke fondly of
into a woman whose grief had overtaken her,
and rightly so.
Daily, she fought to hold onto
the measly portions of affection that still persisted
to prevent her turning into a dying animal
feasting on the disappointments of others,
seeking pleasure from the wounded.
For this reason alone, she was understandably excused
when outbursts of uncontrollable resentment
poured out of this housewife collapsed in her chair,

perched like a statue where time, expression, and goodwill,
had been simultaneously frozen.
She despised all when her dearest Emmanuel was taken ill,
not long after he was made redundant from a job
he had remained committed to right to the last day.
'A shortage of doctors,' staff explained,
cautious about offering expressions of sympathy
to this grandmother who had anticipated retirement
with her loving husband.
She had planned to accompany him to Meganisi,
his childhood playground,
a secret peering through the hidden curtains of Lefkada:
the island where music metamorphosed into words
that balanced like thirsty leeches on poets' lips,
words that enticed skilful and willing hands to record
histories, tragedies, and prophetic visions.

The countryside grew damper after his premature farewell;
it stopped the anguished wife
from speaking further neighbourly words.
How disheartening the economic crisis was to the romantic,
and to the optimist who imagined a different horizon,
with the passing of each falling star exhaling the sky.

Note: The poem was written in Athens on 6/10/10.

DJ TYRER

DJ Tyrer is the person behind *Atlantean Publishing*, was placed second in the 2015 Data Dump Award for Genre Poetry, and has been published in *The Rhysling Anthology 2016*, issues of *Cyaegha*, *Carillon*, *Frostfire Worlds*, *Illumen*, *The Pen*, *Scifaikuest*, *Sirens Call*, *Tigersbark* and *California Quarterly*, and online at *Makata*, *Three Drops from a Cauldron*, *Bindweed*, *Poetry Pacific*, *Scarlet Leaf Review* and *The Muse*, as well as releasing several chapbooks, including the critically acclaimed *Our Story*. Website: <http://djtyrer.blogspot.co.uk>

Change Everything

Be true to yourself
She tells herself
Casting aside the past
The identity that pains
Wrong body
Wrong face
Change everything
Abandon all that
Become someone new
Someone true
Not him
But her
Finally
Who she really is
Acceptance
Truth

Acknowledgment: Originally published in California Quarterly.

DONNA PUCCIANI

Donna Pucciani, a Chicago-based writer, has published poetry worldwide in such diverse journals as *Acumen*, *Shi Chao Poetry*, *Poetry Salzburg*, *Journal of Italian Translation*, *Gradiva*, and *The Pedestal*. She has won awards from the Illinois Arts Council, the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, and other organization, and is a 7-time Pushcart Prize nominee. Her most recent book of poems is *Edges*.

The Discipline Of Gratitude

I am told to be grateful
as I wake each morning
wrapped in the unfolding blanket of dawn,
shake off the moon, dying stars,
and taste the beige-gray breath
of incipient day.

Grateful to whom or what?
To the rain that coats the pavement
with its timid sheen, the birds' silence
in the settling damp, the bodies
of neighbors rising, reluctant,
in boxes of houses that line the street
with woe and weariness?

Let me drink strong coffee,
toast my bread with dailiness,
uncurl myself to a day lit only
by a hidden sun. I might have been
rich or famous, cured cancer,
saved the world. For now,
let me watch butter
melt as a golden flower.

Acknowledgment: First published in The Christian Century.

DORIS HAMBUCH

Doris Hambuch, raised in Germany, is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of English Literature at UAE University. Her publications include essays on Caribbean literature, ecocriticism, film analysis, and trans-cultural feminism. She is a contributor to the Greenwood *Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Studies* and to the Routledge *Who's Who in Contemporary Women's Writing*. Her poetry has appeared in *Fait Accomplit*, the magazine of the Comparative Literature Association of the University of Alberta, and in *Women's Voices*, the journal of the Women's Center at Western Illinois University.

Going Back

Not yet gone,
thinking about
coming back,
knowing that later
excitement succeeds.

It's them over there
I haven't seen
and those over here
I will see again,
missing always some.

So much to tell
them
in the other place,
so much to then
bring to this one.

Not yet gone
looking forward
to go,
looking forward to
coming back,
to be able to
go back again.

DOUG BOLLING

Doug Bolling's poetry has appeared in *Posit*, *Water-stone Review*, *Isthmus*, *Aji*, *Bangalore Review*, *The Missing Slate* (with interview), and *Poetry Pacific* among others. His poems have received Best of the Net and Pushcart nominations and several awards, recently the Mathiasen Prize for his poem "Body and Soul" published at the University of Arizona. He holds the MA and PhD from Iowa and has taught at Colleges in the Midwest and elsewhere. He is working on a Collection and lives in the environs of Chicago.

Unknowing

The being of the flower
Uncompromised, pristine,
Such beauty outcalling the
Invention of beauty,
Sovereign as earth before any
Presumptuous naming by the
God-boy, inviolable as
Itself unseen,
A stillness and an
Unknowing.

Forever I've loved irises
Remembering them now
Bordering the spiraea hedge
Beside the catalpa tree and
Sandbox and Mother standing
In her yellow dress long to the
Ankle and white leather belt,
Eyes darkened by illness but
Binding things in a child's
Untaught dreams.

Yet all of this words arranging
Memory, arranging as one might
Blooms sheared and coffined
In a coveting vase where mind
Has its sway,
A conjuring, quest toward
Quidditas but failing, a
Witnessing more of absence

Than innocence of being,
Blue petals and yellow
Voiceless in a solitude
Belying even the wooer's
Signifying scythe.

Such pondering of irises then
Seeming more text than truth,
Clumsy as numbers spectral
Calculating a rainbow in spring.
Even poetry less than its prey
Leaving grounds perhaps for
Sorrow, caution or
Grace of silence.

DRAGICA OHASHI

Dragica Ohashi is based in Aichi, Japan. She participated in “Ashita No Hon” project (JBBY Japan), illustrated a story “The Biggest Bubble” (written by Rachel Wilson) for American School Elementary Library in Tokyo. Ohashi participate in many festivals and art projects for children and her poetry is included in anthologies. Works and cartoons were published in *Artissimo Catalogue* (Hungary), *Palatifini Cartoons* (Italy) *Catalogue*, *Book ILL FEST Catalogue*, *Carp Tale Newsletter SCBWI* (Japan), *Asahi Haikust Network Issue*.

Tanka Poem For Peace

Just another sky
tanka poem about Peace
waiting to be read
over the Rainbow of hope
Earth with Heaven harmony

DS MAOLALAI

DS Maolalai recently returned to Ireland after four years away, now spending his days working maintenance for a bank and his nights drinking wine. His first collection, *Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden*, was published in 2016 by the Encircle Press. He has twice been nominated for the Pushcart Prize.

Shit About The Theatre

the trouble wasn't
so much
that i talked shit about the theatre –
she seemed to like that
actually:

it was that i talked a whole lot of shit like that
and then
when she introduced me
to all of her actor
and director
friends
i didn't spit wine in their eyes
and snap off their breasts like taffy with my fingers,
call them nancies, paulas
and frauds
and pissed in the avacados
and shat on the grapefruit,
but instead was so
damned pleasant
and feathers
to them
that i lost all salt in
her eyes:

my beret and goatee
fell off into the mashed potatoes
my cheekbones fell to pieces
like a sheet of cardboard left out in the rain

and i became just another
soft

and skinny
boy
writing poetry.

DUANE VORHEES

Duane Vorhees divides his time between Thailand and the US. Among his projects is a daily webzine devoted to poetry and other creative arts, duanespoetree.blogspot.com, which features artists from around the world. Hawakal, in Kolkatta, recently published his most recent collection of poetry, *Love's Autobiography: Selections from The Many Loves of Duane Vorhees*.

Clipped, But Then Clipped Again

The rose that winds:
life is like four aces in a gambler's hand,
the last oasis in a scrambled land.
Any dawn transforms a man (Amen)
from prime to corpse to youth again.
And all the women were virgins once
despite the destinies of their cunts.

The man with a future
living it up /
the man with a past
living it down.
We keep safe crackers in the keep
for the safekeeping of us crack ones,
while crack sellers keep safe
in the cracks of our cellar
because Judas hanged and gutted Jesus....

The goose is in the sage/the sage is in the goose.
But the hand that rocks the cradle cradles the rock:
 Judas, hanged and gutted – Jesus!

The sly quicksilver alters to quicksand
 and then there are no aces and a scrambled hand,
 a lost oasis in a gambler's land,
 and the winds that rose.
CLEAVED, AND CLEAVED YET AGAIN

DUSTIN PEARSON

Dustin Pearson is the author of two books of poetry. He is a McKnight Doctoral Fellow in Creative Writing at Florida State University. The recipient of fellowships from Cave Canem and the Virginia G. Piper Center for Creative Writing, Pearson has served as the editor of *Hayden's Ferry Review* and a Director of the Clemson Literary Festival. He won the Academy of American Poets Katharine C. Turner Prize and holds an MFA from Arizona State University. <http://dustinkpearson.com>

To The Sons

When your dad starts following you into mirrors,
you'll try to ignore him. To full resolution he'll creep
an outfit of the whole skin you wear,

and from where within you'll breathe over the years.
Underneath, you'll reach for slight evidence
that you're alive and separate.

Outside the mirrors, you'll notice.
When your body swells, it will swell like his,
and when it wilts, it will wilt like his,

and when it sags, and when it's sick.
You'll think how sound it would've been
having it all prefaced, saving days
trying to picture how you'll both perish.
Try not to take badly when somebody tells you
how you look. Nice. Like him. There will be a world

of people doing it. Try your best
to say thank you, to give something back.
Don't expect them to understand.

When you lie in bed, it's him
you'll go to sleep with. When you eat,
it's his lip that will curl around the food,

though it will be your body he nourishes.
Try to dodge mentioning how when you smear
your hands across your face to wash it,

you imagine the spread of your features as his,
that when you've blotted out all the mirrors,
even the darkness you inherit is his.

DŽENEDINA MUŠANOVIĆ

Dženedina Mušanović was born on 29.06.1993 in Zenica (Bosnia and Herzegovina), where she finished Philosophical Faculty (Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian Language and Literature). At the moment she is studying for master's degree. She is a member of several poetry groups and was a participant in various events.

Mint Tea

I saw you in the cup of tea
this morning.

You were laying down
on the leaf of mint
so calm.

I wanted to touch
your eyelashes.

I poured boiling water into the mint.

ED WOODS

Ed Woods was born in Toronto and now lives in Dundas, Ontario. Ed has self-published chapbooks (11), and creative writing in many anthologies and is a member of Tower Poetry Society, The Ontario Poetry Society, World Poetry Group, and Hamilton Artists and Writers.

Time Tattooed In Memory

humming power guiding the long truck hood
smooth between highway lines into darkness
interrupted by occasional sets of headlights
coming to glare bright until passed
beautiful night weather and celestial display
car lights after car lights approach in a steady flow
then depart reflected in blackened mirrors

the next set of lights looks lonely
as if in a hurry to destination or destiny
it won't take long for them to pass
so close and fast in a time
about to be tattooed in my mind

abruptly this car crosses into my lane
time is hollow as it disappears
into the slant vision vacuum
ahead of the hood of my truck
I lift out of my seat sensing full collision
activating all braking methods
including the deathbed lockup system

impact is heavy – engines die
rubber screeches life and motion to a stop
sounds and smells of emergency break the night

into a path of speckled glass and debris
leading to a wreck on the ditch embankment
paralyzed in stunned disbelief I step down shakily
to begin a jittered tip-toed walk toward no sign of life
among ominous unrecognizable automotive litter

stilled mannequin driver figure fixated stare
hands locked onto the steering wheel
– still alive, thank God she is still alive-
I remove this youth from disaster by fire
amid a swirling fog of fluids unable to survive

– shocked only, thank you God, she is shocked only-
stress of youthful priorities overpowered
by a parental demand to get home to study for school
instead of socializing with friends

enroute streaming tears and ranting
gave in to losing the will to live
... I'll show you, all of you
you will be sorry now, Mom,
for I am going no farther than
the front end of this oncoming truck

EDWARD MORIN

Edward Morin is from Chicago and has degrees in English from University of Chicago and Loyola University. His poems have appeared in *Hudson Review*, *Ploughshares*, and *Prairie Schooner*. Collections of his poetry include *Labor Day at Walden Pond*, *The Dust of Our City* and *Housing for Wrens* (Cervena Barva Press, 2016). His co-translations of Arabic and Chinese poems have appeared in *Iowa Review*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, and *Asymptote*. He edited and co-translated *The Red Azalea: Chinese Poetry since the Cultural Revolution* (U. of Hawaii Press, 1990). He co-hosts the Crazy Wisdom Poetry Series of readings and workshops in Ann Arbor.

Tinting Celery

Clad in jeans, blond – how gorgeously she limbered
across the waxed tile, dropping three gallons
of paint with a receipt onto the counter.
Blue eyes salvoed her voice's steel complaint:
"I picked celery, but your clerk mixed it wrong –
this silly green's no use, so tint it right."

Veterans had warned me not to tint by eye:
*Follow the numbers in the book, and if
they don't like what they bought, sell them new.*
Too many lonely summer days I'd spent
listening to crickets fiddle in the stock room.
Here was a challenge, and perhaps a friend.

We stirred a can, squinting into the vortex,
then brushed the mixing stick. "You know," I said,
the real paint and its color on the chart
sometimes aren't exactly in agreement."
Cleavage showing beneath her shirt's top button
brought on a taste for celery soup – I blurted,

“You wanted golden plume and got pascal?”
“Don’t get smart,” she said, “I know my celeries!
This is a green they use in institutions.”
“Sorry you feel that way about it. Colors
aren't words. Factory scientists brew their hues,
then marketeers think up some names: *vermouth*,
toluidine red, *moonlight*, *Ibsen gray*.
What's in a name? I'll get you the right color
by mixing new cans.” She wouldn't pay twice—
I couldn't give three new gallons away.

Celery on the chart resembled pale yellow
in leaves of variegated hostas blooming
outside the plate glass window. “I can't change
these cans into celery.”

“Sure you can.

I don't expect a Miracle of Cana.”

Guessing what my predecessor had mixed,
scaling the quart formula to a cup,
I poured small increments of yellow pigment,
painted samples of each one, jotted a record.
Just before the last trace of thallo green,
she told her name, admitting with delight
that this pastel was good enough to eat.
Once I'd tinted all three of her gallons,
she bought a roller and a brush, then left.
Two grasshoppers drunk on burdock came break –
dancing through the front door, left partway open.
We celebrated until closing time.

Acknowledgment: From Edward Morin, Labor Day at Walden Pond (Roseville: MI: Ridgenay Press, 1997).

ELISABETH MURAWSKI

Elisabeth Murawski is the author of *Heiress*, just published by Texas Review Press, *Zorba's Daughter*, which won the May Swenson Poetry Award, *Moon and Mercury*, and two chapbooks. Recent publications include *The Yale Review*, *FIELD*, and *Southword*. A native of Chicago, she currently lives in Alexandria, VA. For individual poems she has won the Gabriela Mistral Poetry Prize (2016), the University of Canberra's International Poetry Prize (2015), the Mudfish 11 Prize (2011), Phyllis Smart-Young Prize (2011), *Shenandoah's* Graybeal-Gowen Award (2011) and the Ann Stanford Poetry Prize (2006). She has received ten Pushcart Prize nominations.

Abu Ghraib Suggests The Isenheim Altarpiece

Arms behind him shackled to the wall,
Jamadi's knees buckle. He lands on air.
Let us reposition him to stand erectly,

homo sapiens, place the irons higher up
on the window bars. When again he falls
forward, hangs like Jesus from his wrists,

call it faking, possum-playing. Persist.
Lift him up on legs that ragdoll-sag
into a third collapse, the effect

grotesque as Grunewald's Christ: bones
about to pop from their sockets. The silence
curious, raise the hood that hid a face,

asphyxiation, wag a finger past the eyes.
It has begun, the turning of the skin
to purple, the indigo of Tyre and Sidon. Note

as he's lowered to the floor, the stunning
rush of blood from nose and mouth,
the Red Sea. In this heat, let us blur

the time of death, pack the flesh in ice
like fish or meat, pretend he's merely
sick, hooked to an I.V., a patient

on a stretcher. Destroy the crime scene.
Throw away the bloodied hood. It stings
with the quality of mercy.

Note: This poem is based on material in "A Deadly Interrogation" by
Jane Mayer, *The New Yorker*, Nov. 14, 2005.

ELIZABETH P. GLIXMAN

Elizabeth P. Glixman is the author of four chapbooks. You can read her poetry, fiction and interviews (she was the interview editor for Eclectica.org for many years) in numerous print and online publications. <http://elizabeth-inthemoment.blogspot.com>

Why I Dream About Dirt And Seed

It isn't the fruits the tomatoes or zucchini
the buoyant I need salad dressing tipped romaine
the kale to roast I dream about
as much as the hot sun on my cold hair
the dirt under my moon curved fingernail
the crunch of soil under my sneakers
It is the wind and the breeze on days the air is mustered
It is the water stream irrigating pebbled dirt
the smell of lavender the odor of green of pepper
the red strawberries and blue blueberries
the sunflower's height and the nasturtiums orange
It is the way the sweet potato vines grow over the earth
low growing skyscrapers with orange rooms inside

It is the crow flying by in the gray dawn
the monumental sun crossing the garden in an arc
I could not draw on paper unless it was paper as large
as the circumference of the unimaginable sky
It is the coolness of trees near the garden at dusk
the blue golden dark pink red and purple of sky
the water from the rain barrel
drenched shoes soggy mud stuck on soles
bugs and earth odors
bites that's swell like tiny mounds of earth
dirt I smear on my forehead brushing my warm hair away
Creating horizontal line like the three lines
on a holy woman's face as she kneels in prayer.

Acknowledgment: The poem was published online in Issue of Visual Verse Vol 2.

EMER DAVIS

Emer Davis a poet and writer, grew up on the west coast of Ireland. She has lived in London, Ireland, Abu Dhabi and New Delhi. Kill Your Television, a collection of early poems was published in 2010. Over 60 poems and several short stories have been published in Ireland, Mexico, UK, USA and the UAE since 2009. She ran the Drogheda Creative Writers Group and Poetry in the Park in Ireland and organised a Poetry Trail in August 2018.

Raqqa Bowl 2017

A blue bowl
From ancient times,
Bare hands gathering clay,
Wet fingers moulding it into shape,
A paint brush dipped in blue,
Glazed in a hot oven,
A blue bowl
For receiving friends,
A blue bowl
Held by many hands,
Infused with their secrets,
This empty blue bowl
The colour of the Aegean sea,
A small raft drifting listlessly,
Wet fingers holding on,
Grasping for life,
Their hands outstretched,
Their stories washed away
In the deep blue sea,
This blue bowl
Immersed with memories of the past,
Invisible to the shrouded figures
Drifting to the unknown,

Their tired faces
Drenched and withered,
Hands clasped around a begging bowl,
This blue bowl
Sits as a museum piece,
Locked in a glass case,
Empty promises left unanswered,
The silent screams of this huddled group
Sink deeper and deeper
Into a sea of blue,
This blue bowl
Untouched for years.

Acknowledgment: The poem Ragg Bowl 2017 was runner up in the 2018 Poetry Ireland Trocaire Competition.

EMMA MIKLÁŠOVÁ

Emma Miklášová is 17-year-old student from Slovakia. She is very interested in psychology, poetry, and reading. This is often reflected in her poems, as most of them are connected to her feelings and mental hardships. She likes this poem, *Petrified*, the most because she feels like it sums up her feelings very well.

Petrified

Sleepless night
Tired eyes
My demons haunting me
Always on my mind
Just a big abstract blob
Filling my mind with an endless void
Taking in all that's good and right
Bending it, making it look poisonous
And when I close my eyes
Lightning bolts appear
The back of my eyelids
Is never quite clear
But the darkness, oh
It's consuming me
With all the power that it wields
It's eating me alive
Swallowing me in one big bite
And then comes the freezing morning
Wakes me up with a cold shower
Full of ice and spikes
The hair on my body stands
And I'm petrified

EMMANUEL UDOMA

Emmanuel Udoma is a Nigerian creative writer and poet. He was longlisted in the Top 100 category of the Nigerian Students Poetry Prize 2017, longlisted in the September 2018 edition of brilliant flash fiction contest, shortlisted in the June 2018 edition of Creative Freelance Writers Contest and a runner up at the Brigitte Poirson Poetry Contest (BPPC) July 2018 Edition. He resides in Uyo, Nigeria where he pursues a bachelor's degree in Medicine and Surgery.

As The Clouds Gather

"Memories are sad sighing graves"

Joe Ushie

When the pellets of rain glint,
my mind flashes to the puddles of tears
heaven sheds when the snow-white veil
that leads to my temple
was torn into shreds,
a myriad of crimson splashed.

With every piece of my innocence,
I trusted.
Until he thrust
finding the path to my priced jewel.

At dawn, I wake questioning my existence
in a world of monsters
with honey-coated tongues
who sing melodies that gladden the soul,
and present presents that melt glaziers.

The roots of loneliness creep in
hushed at dusk
my heart slowly sinks
and my mind shelves
the scars and pains in silence.

The wounds may heal
but the scars remain
of a seedling, pruned at its sprout;
a sun, eclipsed before its rise.

Boxed in this boundless cage,
I bow to norms
feigning that smile: "I'm fine,"
though the guilt deepens
and the vacuum widens.

As the clouds gather
coalescing their wishes
in deep, quaking, grunts and roars,
then rain: a reminiscent of memories
I wish I lost.

ENESA MAHMIĆ

Enesa Mahmić (1989) is a Bosnian travel writer, poet and feminist. She is a member of PEN Center. Her work has appeared in various journals, as well as anthologies. Her poems have been translated into English, German, Italian, Turkish, Slovenian, Albanian and Hungarian.

The Washerwoman By The Gagnes River

I walked long to the bridge leading to Haridwar
There was no sound except the murmur of water
And muffled voices of washerwomen
At one time
It seemed as I was running in the same rhythm of water
And that water flows through my whole being

Then
Washerwomen extinguished lanterns
Water has become black and resinous
Kali – the whole life in the circle of light and darkness

ERIC PAUL SHAFFER

Eric Paul Shaffer is author of seven books of poetry. More than 500 of his poems have been published in national and international reviews in Australia, Canada, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, and the United Kingdom. Shaffer received Hawai'i's 2002 Elliot Cades Award for Literature, a 2006 Ka Palapala Po'okela Book Award, and the 2009 James M. Vaughan Award for Poetry. Shaffer teaches composition, literature, and creative writing at Honolulu Community College. www.ericpaulshaffer.com

All There Is

an epithalamion for Jon and Thierry

Winter in paradise this year is dry enough to call a drought.
The grass isn't green and isn't growing in the season

we call the rainy one. No clouds color sunrise,
and every night, stars deepen the sky. Ancient light rains
from cloudless darkness. If there were enough for everyone,

the rays wouldn't travel so fast. Light is a constant
reminder of the yearning between stars and all the worlds

spinning in darkness, like this one, the one we love.
For this brown grass and the open space between stars,
there's not much rain. Never will there be too much

or even enough, so we celebrate and celebrate fiercely
all there is. When the rain finally comes, I'll stand

in the storm with my face raised. When the night comes,
I'll lift my eyes to the light and take it in. Rain will grace us,
and stars will burn. Light flies through the night,

and rain finds the earth for no reason we know, yet we leap
to drink our fill of what falls from above to sustain us.

ERIK ONDREJIČKA

Erik Ondrejička was born on May 1,1964 in Bratislava, Slovakia. He is an author of 7 collections of poems for adults and 2 books of verse for children. Joint ventures with prominent artists resulted in a number of bibliophile collections of poems and pictures. Erik Ondrejička takes pains to be communicative in his poetry, while striving for aesthetic and ethical quality. He combines a sense of time-transcendence with a contemporary vision of the world. By mastering classical poetic techniques, he seeks to rehabilitate traditional instruments of the poetic art such as rhyme and the music of verse.

In Pencils And Needles

Would you like these
colours
shapes aromas tastes
each in some new tone
specially mutates

they contain springs summers
autumns wintertimes
in pencils and needles
honed as sharp as rhymes

In a dream
where we can
join the story's sum
and carve out of emptiness
something that will come

as when on someone's palm
fortune's plain to see
changing the possible
to something that will be

And the countless notes
that ever-change and teem
when substance is dreaming
its substantial dream

fly with the dream somewhere
and vanish as they came
and what are we to call them
world shall be their name

EVA BELL

Eva Bell is a doctor by profession but also a writer. Her articles and short stories have been published in magazines, newspapers and anthologies. She is also a published author of several novels and non-fiction.

Web: www.evabell.net;

Blog: <http://muddyloafers.blogspot.com>

To A Flower

I plucked you little yellow flower
Because you looked forlorn among the thorns;
I wanted friends to fill my lonely hours,
For those I loved had left me and were gone.
I held you gently with my fingertips
Lest I should hurt your slender supple frame,
And then I pressed you softly to my lips,
A speck of life to me you now became.
But then you slowly hung your pretty head,
Recoiled from me as if I were a knave,
You should have smiled and nodded but instead,
Rejected all my love with one sad wave.
Your head you drooped and closed your heart to me,
You didn't speak, but perished and I knew,
That had I left you there among the leaves,
You might have seen tomorrow's dawn anew.

EVELÍNA KOLÁŘOVÁ

Evelína Kolářová is a young, emerging writer from the Czech Republic. Her poems have been previously published in poetry journals, such as *Really System*, *The Gambler Mag* or *Genre: Urban Arts* and in an international anthology – *AIPF di-vêrsé-city Youth Anthology 2017*. She currently studies at the University of South Bohemia.

CXCIV

i have been thinking about this number a lot recently, i don't know why. i have dreams, dreams where i hear my voice saying one hundred and ninety four but what does it mean?

C.

one hundred and ninety four shadows or one hundred ninety four bunches of forget-me-not flowers?

X.

it may be just one random rational number making fun of me, so be it. but what if it does have a hidden meaning?

C.

what if it means the number of days i still have to wait for you, what if it means the number of days that are counting to my very last breath?

I.

it could just be the apartment number or this date could be the most important date of all times. for all i know, it can also represent the amount of freckles on your face that i could and might not have been counting

V.

why am i so obsessed with rational numbers? i both look forward to and fear the day i will know because there is a slightly big chance of a mind-blowing plot twist, just as big as the threat of feeling satisfied and having no reasons to live with the answer i long to see

since one memorable May afternoon. i fear that i will have nothing
to do. i would be able to breath normally as the teacher says: turn
to page one damned number and that's exactly what scares me

the emptiness left in my head, the space that used to have a regular
guest
and it's empty

*Acknowledgment: This poem has been previously published in the AIPF di-vêrsé-city
YOUTH ANTHOLOGY 2017 in print and online in The Gambler Mag (House
Wins Edition, June 4, 2018).*

FALEEHA HASSAN

Faleeha Hassan is a poet, teacher, editor, writer, play writer born in Najaf, Iraq, in 1967, who now lives in the United States. She is the first woman to write poetry for children in Iraq. She received her master's degree in Arabic literature, and has now published 21 books. Her poems have been translated into more than 15 languages. She has received many awards in Iraq and throughout the Middle East for her poetry and short stories. She has also been nominated for Pulitzer Prize in 2018.

After Forty Years Of Snow

Do you remember the watch you gave to me wrapped in a poem?
It is still bound to my soul's meaning
The more time passes
The more the letters jump into my heart artery
My heart is now pumping flirtation
How many times I have wished
That if my city were not surrounded by graves
Then like a little girl
I would wait for you in a secret garden
Come on!
Take off this thick absence
As thick as a New Jersey coat in the wintertime
Melt off the snow that has stacked on the lines of your messages
Mow the grass that has grown on your tongue
Don't save a sea of tears for me
I am not a mermaid
Make yourself present with words
Woo me
Let me stop demanding my rights
And thrive by the touch of your fingers as they play with my hair
Let me fool myself again
And see you as center of my universe

FARIDEH HASSANZADEH-MOSTAFAVI

Farideh Hassanzadeh-Mostafavi is an Iranian poet, translator and freelance journalist. Her first book of poetry was published when she was twenty-two. Her poems appear in various anthologies. She is the author of *Eternal Voices: Interviews with Poets East and West* and *The Last Night with Sylvia Plath: Essays on Poetry*. In addition she has translated Selected Poems of various coveted poets. Her new book is *Footprints of Cats in Poetry, Stories, Paintings, Politics, Religion, Medicine, Cinema and Science*.

Pen Pal Romance

(For: Sina M. Khozeimeh)

*More than kisses, Letters mingle souls
– John Donne*

We never met each other.

I never saw you in pyjamas,
brushing your teeth just before sleep

and I never got a glimpse of your soaking head
out of the shower as you'd yell:
"I forgot my comb, will ya please give it to me?"

I never saw you limbering up
 early in the morning;
or at night, when you are snoring
and water is oozing out
 from the corner of your lips...

I never had the fortune
 to iron your shirt
or serve you a bowl of hot soup

and cover you up at nights
when you catch a cold.

In the cold of midnights
our bodies never made each other warm;

But imbued with fabulous lies and dreams
our letters and poems

more beautiful and innocent than pure truth
announced us husband and wife
formally.

And our children were the love songs
Immortal in the rains of bombs
Invulnerable, against the curses of Gods.

FEDERICO FEDERICI

Federico Federici is a physicist, a translator and a writer. He lives between Berlin and the Ligurian Apennines. His works have appeared in many journals and anthologies. Among his books: the long poem in English and German *Requiem auf einer Stele* (2017), the collection *On a certain practical uncertainty* (2018) dedicated to W. K. Heisenberg and the asemic album *Liner notes for a Pithecanthropus Erectus sketchbook* (2018), with a foreword by SJ Fowler. In 2017 he was awarded the Lorenzo Montano Prize for prose. Website: <http://federicofederici.net>

The Place

The place we've never visited
in the time we'll never spend
the aim of the tools at hand
the next step beyond reach.

The always deserted room
the one no one enters twice
the threshold silence seals
the word that over us looms.

The name uttered once
drawn out of pools of dark
the name that nothing names
the wear that cut the thread.

The path from where we are
to where we are to go
the span to fill between
the not yet and the not again.

Known things against its landscape:
the blank buds back in place
the clay where all tracks stop
the cracked fields the river eyes.

The hallways held in memory,
the hollows of the dark, the walls,
the grip, the gaps, the first false
move and the next after that.

To have had enough of inaudible dust
in the fabric of light, of rattles of thought
encased in the skull, of shoring up
sleeplessness under a burden of eyes shut.

Unguarded threshold of the closest door,
forged key of all silences, goddess
not questioned but answered.
The point on the map
where tracks run out.

Last blink through the lens.
Last frame of the shot film
finally exposed to the sun.

Acknowledgment: First published in Office of the woods, Zoetic Press chapbook, 2018.

FELICE PICANO

Felice Picano is the author of more than thirty books of poetry, fiction, memoirs, nonfiction, and plays. Among the latter is his 1995 prize winner, *Like People in History*. His first book of poems was *The Deformity Lover and Other Poems*. His second, *Window Elegies*, received the Poetry Association of America's Chapbook Award. His most recent poetry, including "Elegy For W.H. Auden," has appeared in magazines and anthologies. Website: <https://www.felicepicano.net>

Envoi

It is not precisely as a whisper falls
Seducing the dim air, there, where the inlet
Pretends to be morning; no, nor the soft calls
Of coins as they glitter in a goblet
You let smash. It lives quiet between the bright
And the black, teasing your grasp, misted
Like a mirror a dying man's spite
Makes sigh, an imprint that barely existed.
It is not an obvious loss, as though each day's lining
Were unwound, each hair strung on a thread
Blemish unfound, cache discovered in dread.
No. It is an address vanished, a name past divining
A costlier pain than you ever thought to possess:
Aeons could not explain its sharp hold, its caress.

FERNANDO MARTINEZ ALDERETE

Fernando Martinez Alderete is a writer, poet, theater actor, radio producer. Born in Leon Guanajuato Mexico on April 21, 1977. His poems have been published in 63 anthologies in thirteen countries around the world and he is author of two books, one of poetry and another of short stories.

Radiography

I am not a man of total steel,
Many people in society sanctify me
for being in a wheelchair desensitized
like a trunk that only breathes casually.

There is a weakness in the interior that drives me crazy
for the woman and her fragile intrinsic seduction,
I believe I am a knight of inexorable respect
without silencing my delight for muses, although married.

I do not avoid eroticism if it is delicately shown,
nor to the temptation of revenge when they invade
those who imagine that because I am gentle I am helpless,
forgiveness prevails, but what is learned remains.

I will never be steel because I am limited in movements,
If you do me a deep X-ray, you will see my hell,
Mysterious sweetnesss capable of overflowing bones
when the rhythmic syncopation of an idyllic is ensued.

I'm glad that I was born human but I do not walk,
lover of meat, pasta, cheeses, fruits and chocolates,
flying over any stone or mountain that crosses.

FRANK FINALE

Frank Finale is the author of *To The Shore Once More, Volumes I-III*, which contain his poems, essays, and art work from local artists. He has co-edited two poetry anthologies: *Under a Gull's Wing* and *The Poets of New Jersey* and has written three children's books, *A Gull's Story parts 1-3*. Frank was poetry editor for *the new renaissance* from 1996 until its end in 2012. Website: www.frankfinale.com

A Living Thing

After my wife died, I kept our two cats,
fed them, did their litter boxes,
paid money for the vet to find out what
ailed them. I blossomed with their purrs
but soon they passed, too. Her philodendron
that latched its roots onto the fireplace
grew up on its crossed stick,
eventually dried out, went, too. One summer
I rose earlier than usual, went
downstairs, flipped on the kitchen light and jumped back
away from a three inch centipede
that lay still on the coffee ringed counter.
I banged the counter with the heel of my slipper
till the vibrations sent all its legs slithering
into a dark crack behind the toaster.
It's been two summers since and I
have not seen it again. Yet, each morning
I search the counter for it and wonder.
I was that lonely.

Acknowledgment: "A Living Thing" was published in LIPS, Forty Six/ Forty Seven, 2017.

FRANK JOUSSEN

Frank Jousen is a German teacher and writer. His publications include two selections of his poetry, one of them being a bilingual collaboration with Romanian poet Ana Cicio. He has edited two international anthologies of poetry/fiction in India. His poems and short stories have also been published in a variety of literary magazines and anthologies. His works have been translated into German, Romanian, Hindi and Chinese. Frank is a peace activist with “Pax Christi”.

Tell Yourself A Story

tell yourself a story
while you're walking
down the street,
say to yourself: this is
not a slum in Madras
nor a favella in Sao Paulo

this is not a street at all
but a non-existent road
which you're turning into
an existing one
till the snow covers
your footprints again
and you struggle to return,
all the way down
from the top,
because these are the mountains
so maybe this is Chile,
or Kenya or Tibet,
it doesn't matter
all that much

tell yourself:
this is not a busy street
filled with too many people
each indifferent, at best,
to the crippled leg
or the military boot
next to them

this is solitude, not loneliness
and when you reach
the half frozen man,
wounded yet numb,
you might as well
kill him, take his things
and run
but you couldn't

and you wouldn't,
after fighting the bloodlust
of the beast for so long

finally the images blend:
the old friend in the snow
melts into the unknown beggar
in the blazing city dirt
and vice versa –
their very sick or dying
eyes shooting sparks
of recognition.

Acknowledgement: This poem was first published in Dr. K. Srinivas (ed.) POET, Vol. 46, No. 2, Chennai, India, February 2005.

FRANK WILLIAM FINNEY

Frank William Finney's poems have appeared in over 100 publications. He has taught literature at Thammasat University (Thailand) since 1995 and currently lives in Bangkok.

Cynthia

Sliding under
the black satin sheets
of our tremendous waterbed
Tongues as foils
duelling to the depths
we'll surface to melt on the brine-soaked rock
while the boats bounce with the beams upon the waves
and erase – if we can – that troubled look
from the face of the moon
Whose barren, dry seas belie their names:
Humorum, Fertility, Serenity, Tranquillity
No fish, No dolphins, no sea snakes coupling
No quiet rain from your Sea of Clouds
No room on our rock
for your dead Latin seas
No stable for your mares: Crisium and Frigoris.
No room tonight for even a sip of sleep.
No room tonight in the old gypsy's chest
while pirates' eyes feed upon your breasts
and a world full of wolves
howls in vain.

Acknowledgment: This poem was previously published in the UK by Orbis International Literary Quarterly, and in France by Paris/Atlantic.

GARY BECK

Gary Beck has spent most of his adult life as a theater director. He has 14 published chapbooks. His original plays and translations of Moliere, Aristophanes and Sophocles have been produced Off Broadway. His poetry, fiction and essays have appeared in hundreds of literary magazines. He lives in New York City.
www.garycbeck.com

Abandoned

Abandoned in the desert
I dream rescues,
while the smiting sand
strips the shimmering flesh
from my rejected bones.
Where is the guide?
Wagon master of the soul's journey
fording rivers,
repelling ambushes,
then leaving me behind,
a companion to the voyage
who turned the wheel
harder than anyone,
but questioned the road.

GARY YOUNG

Gary Young has been awarded grants from the NEA and the NEH. He is the author of several collections of poetry. He is winner of the James D. Phelan Award; the Peregrine Smith Poetry Prize; the William Carlos Williams Award; and the Shelley Memorial Award. He teaches creative writing and directs the Cowell Press at UC Santa Cruz.

Because I Didn't Speak Japanese

Because I didn't speak Japanese, they sat me with the children who were talking to a priest. The children asked him questions, and when they laughed, the old man laughed as well. The screens were open to the temple garden on two sides of the hall, and a butterfly, black as the priest's silk robes, flew in and out of view. A trickle of water entered a length of bamboo, which filled and then emptied itself with a hollow chime; was filled and emptied again, so that time was marked by that slow beat. When the priest had finished talking, my friend said, the children were asking him about death, and where children go when they die. The priest told them, if you believe in heaven, you'll go to heaven. If you believe in hell, you'll go to hell. But really, he said, there is no heaven, and no hell, and when children die, they just move from one place to another. The bamboo in the little stream clacked behind us, righted itself, and the water began filling it again.

Acknowledgment: "Because I didn't speak Japanese" originally appeared in the journal Miramar. It won the Lucille Medwick Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America, and appeared in That's What I Thought, winner of the Lexi Rudnitsky Editor's Choice Award from Persea Books.

GEMA BOCARDO CLAVIJO

Gema Bocardo Clavijo, from Spain, is Lawyer, writer, journalist and storyteller. Many of her poems and stories have been published in literary magazines and in collective anthologies as: *Banco de Maridos Defectuosos*, *Viejos Amigos*; *Diez Voces de la Poesía Actual*; *Palabra Viva (Alive Word)*; *Sed de Mal*. Some of her literary prizes: Prose: *Ars Creatio* (2012), *El Dinosaurio* (2013), *Marçorelatos* (2013), *Aste Nagusia* (2014), *Biblioteca de Godella* (2015), *Aldaia Cuenta* (2015), *Ángeles Palazón* (2015), *Pasión por Leer* (2016), *Concurso Literario "Por la Igualdad" del Ayuntamiento de Burgos* (2017), Poetry: *Picapredreros* (2012), *Aseapo* (2013), *Tamarín* (2015), *La Nucia* (2016), *Bullas en Verso* (2017).

Fashion

You ask me which clothes are fashionable
this year.

Believe me:

I don't give a damn.

I only know in the world are fashionable
soldiers' military costumes;
burkas;
rags.

Saris in the leprosarium;
holed shirts because of the hitman's gunshots;
swollen bellies by famine;
Guantanamo orange jumpsuit.

And children's sordid nudity
when they lie in bastards' bed
who paid for their parents
to spend a good time.

GEORGE HELD

George Held writes poems, stories, translations, and book reviews for such periodicals as *American Book Review*, *Home Planet News*, *Two Cities Review*, and *Transference*. A winner of three Performance Poets Association haiku contests, he has also received ten Pushcart Prize nominations. His new children's book is *Under the Escalator* (2018), and his 21st book will be *Second Sight* (2019).

Website: <http://georgeheld.blogspot.com>

Poets

Poets are gardeners –
Planters, pruners, gleaners –
Till they are mulch.

GEORGE PERREAULT

George Perreault's most recent collection, *Bodark County*, features poems in the voices of characters living on the Llano Estacado. He has received awards from the Nevada Arts Council and the Washington Poets Association, and has served as a visiting writer in New Mexico, Montana, and Utah. His poems have been nominated both for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net, as well as selected for 16 anthologies and more than 80 journals. Website: www.georgeperreault.com

Spring Training

sun skin wind same as walked
Uncle Joe's service, the world
still dressed gray and brown

but almost as if soft rain
had tumbled down the night,
a gate swings open and you

among the throng tasting
not yet a bud or shoot and sure
winter could drop by again

but only to visit, so sit with
your brothers, oil the stiff leather,
catch in the backyard, fresh

ball whiter than sea gulls, no
outs or errors on the page,
pepper and fungoes laughing

these friends forever so far
undefeated, the season seeping
inside and rising like Eden

GERMAIN DROOGENBROODT

Germain Droogenbroodt, is a Belgian poet, translator and promoter of international poetry. He received many international awards and is yearly invited at the most prestigious international poetry festivals, nominated in 2017 for the Nobel Prize of Literature. He wrote 13 books of poetry published so far in 29 countries. Thachom Poyil Rajeevan compared his philosophical poetry with the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore whereas in Spain his poetry has been compared with Juan Ramón Jiménez. According to Chinese critics his poetry is TAO and ZEN. Several of his books, two written in India, are illustrated by Satish Gupta.

Peaceful Morning In The Himalayas

It appears
as if the previous night
has quenched every thirst

The day comes with light
and voices of birds
strange to the ear

In the distance
the wavering sound
of a reed flute:

a morning prayer
for Shiva, for Buddha
or for whatever god.

So peaceful appears this morning
as if after so many ages
humanity were at peace
finally at rest.

*Acknowledgment: From: "In the Stream of Time, Meditations in the Himalayas",
POINT Editions.*

GERARD SARNAT MD

Gerard Sarnat MD's won the Poetry in the Arts First Place Award plus the Dorfman Prize; has been nominated for Pushcarts plus Best of the Net Awards; authored *Homeless Chronicles* (2010), *Disputes* (2012), *17s* (2014) and *Melting The Ice King* (2016); and is widely published including by *Oberlin, Brown, Columbia, Virginia Commonwealth, Wesleyan, Johns Hopkins, Gargoyle, Margie, Main Street Rag, New Delta Review, Brooklyn Review, Los Angeles Review of Books, San Francisco Magazine*. Mount Analogue selected KADDISH for distribution nationwide Inauguration Day. Poetry was chosen for a 50th Harvard reunion Dylan symposium. www.gerardsarnat.com

Brushing The Stars

Shimmering winter back in Redondo,
frost shadow thawed, unmoored offshore,
I cloud walk on a pair of bouncy new sneakers.
As our sun emerges from the mist, it squints my eyes,
turns crystal into ocean turquoise twilight pink.

Below on the Esplanade trudges a family
whose young lead their matriarch's Guatemalan
rainbow skirt and blouse. The ten-gallon mustachioed
silent screen patriarch tucks a pearl snap cowboy
shirt over the horizon of his jeans' paunch.

Beauties in saris bloom like tide pool moon gardens.

GIDEON SAMPSON CECIL

Gideon Sampson Cecil was born in Guyana. He is a college lecturer and freelance journalist. His poetry was published in numerous journals and anthologies worldwide.

Poetry Is My Sugar By Gideon Cecil

Poetry the sugar in my
tea I drink daily
as I go
to sleep at nights
to dream of my
muses hidden
in the invisible
roof of my soul.
My muses come
like a sudden
shower of rain
writing in the blank
pages of my immortal memory.

I drink a Shakespearian
Sonnet;
A Dante's Tercet,
A Homeric Ode,
A Virgil's Epic
And a Milton's Blank verse;
As 'Poetry Sugar' into my tea
that set's my soul free
invoking my muses to
write in my fragile mind
so free.

Modern inventions
brings terror to
our souls; hatred of nations
bombing of the innocent

hacking into banks
spying us like an invisible
God in our homes.
Poetry is the sugar
In my tea
The balm of my soul
The mirror of your
Eyes that shows you the
Destiny of your life
In the garden of your
Soul.

GILLIAN LYNN KATZ

Gillian Lynn Katz immigrated to New York from South Africa as a teenager in the 1960s. In 2012, she won Second Place for the poem *Midnight* in the Greenburgh Poetry Contest, and Finishing Line Press published her chapbook *Kaleidoscope*. Her poetry has appeared in *Inkwell*, *Epiphany*, *New York's Best Emerging Poets of 2017*, *Austin International Poetry Festival 2017*, and *Across the Long Bridge Poetry Anthology*. Website: <http://www.gillianlynnkatz.net>

Midnight

As a teenager, when the nightshades
were drawn and I needed
to speak to my mother,
I peeped
through her bedroom door.
It squeaked open.

My mother, propped up in bed
on plush pillows
held her finger to her mouth
with one hand, and waved me away
with the other.

I raised my hand,
a white peace flag, but my mother
motioned for me to crouch.

Johnny Carson's silent image
flickered on the television,
attached to her ear
by a long white cord.
I raised my face:
I needed questions answered.

A growl, a groan, a cough
from the other side of the bed,
a figure turning under the bedclothes –
a voice from the silence:
Who's there?

GLENNA LUSCHEI

Glenna Luschei has published *Solo Press* magazines for 50 years. Luschei is the author of many chapbooks, special editions and trade books. In 2016 she released *Singing and Dying*, published by Penciled In, which received the Nebraska Award Book Prize in 2017. Recently, she was named a “Literary Treasure of the Mid-Coast” by the Ventura County Arts Council. Luschei is Vice President of *InterlitQ*, an international literary journal published online.

My Last Poem To Grief

At last I take off my shoes
enter the blue Mosque
with its six minarets.
You begged me to come to Istanbul
with you, to this mosque
where in days of the Sultan
the attendants all wore blue.
Once blue carpets covered the tile.
The umber stained-glass windows remain.

All blue.

In my airport dream
I see you passing through security
with your excellent posture.
You carry my blue suitcase.
I release the baggage now.
We're both pilgrims,
both safe. I send up my hymn to grief.

Outside in the Hippodrome Turks play
on the pipes, offer raki to the tourists.
The cobras rise.
I, Kokopelli
let the songs burst forth from my haunch.
Poems coil into sweet air
from the Rio Grande to the Bosphorus.

GLENNISE AYUK

Glennise Ayuk is a final year student of medicine at the University of Buea, Cameroon. She's also a writer and spoken word poet. Her works are published and/or forthcoming in *Parousia*, *Munyori Literary*, *Aaduna*, *Verbal Art* and several local blogs and journals. She is currently working on her first novel. Glennise has a thing for flowers. She is also a sexual/reproductive health blogger at www.pregcompanion.com

Daytime Shadows

I'm writing a poem,
one I have the courage to show only myself.
You see, I burned our love into the flesh
of my heart,
it wasn't chalk-writing on a board,
I can't just erase it off.
Burnt flesh stinks, how do I wash you off?
I want to blame and curse your gut,
for giving up on us,
but I think I still love you
and who can ill-speak of the drum their heart beats to?
Do you know
I have daytime shadows of all we used to be,
haunting me?
and that it really hurts
but I'm striving to be duly strong?
Because I know
I have to hurt the pain out and cry it dry.
Do you know (*this surprises me*)
but I'm ready to spend those nights alone,
hurting over the heart you broke.

Yeah, and to go on that not-so-easy journey
to the realization
that maybe it wasn't meant to be,
and that this maybe is an open door for me?
through which I'll rise
to embrace my worth again,
and savour the beautiful you failed to see.
Where I'll disbelief your opinion of what I deserve,
and what I have to give.

Do you know?
that these shadows will slowly disappear,
and time and peace and God will carry me on their wings
to a place of less pain, then stale nostalgia,
then nothing of you at all?
Do you know, that I forgive you
more each day?
Do you know? Oh do you know,
that someday, I will love again..

GLORIA KEH

Born in the Chinese year of the Dragon, in 1952, Gloria Keh is based in Singapore. She was a journalist and editor for 20 years, before leaving the workforce to focus on charity work. In 2008, she founded Circles of Love, a non-profit charity outreach programme, using her art and poetry in the service of humanity. She has published several books on art, poetry and prose that are sold 100% to support charities. She has won three international writer's awards from PATA, an American travel association, for her stories on Nepal, Malacca and Langkawi, Malaysia. <https://www.gloriakeh.com>

Looking

She looked at her body
and remembered the bliss.
All the pleasures it enjoyed.

She looked at her body
and remembered the sorrows.
All the pains it endured.

She looked at her body
and remembered the faces.
All the relationships it survived.

She looked at her body
and saw the scars of failed affairs.
The wounds
invisible to the eye
of regret and disrepair.

She looked at her body
and saw a relic
left from years gone by.

She looked at her body
and was thankful
it was still there.

GLORIA SOFIA

Gloria Sofia was born in 1985 in Praia, Cape Verde. Majored in engineering and Environmental Management at the University of Azores. Develops various activities cultural áreas. Nominated as a candidate for the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. She has muzicalized poems. Young Poet Festival in Istambul, 2017. She is author of 10 books.

Suffering To Have You

Sun explodes in the sky
Burning the moon
Destroying the eternal blue
Germinates in my womb
Star packed with music
It hurts everything
Swollen mother
Wrapped stomach
Blushing breasts
My undulating body
It's just the blanket that covers a river
Blanket wounded by the shadow of music.
My feet step on the mud of the world.
With the weight of a child in the womb,
Fear steps my soul In a new dawn
How I suffer to have you!

GONAPRAGASEN NAICKER

Gonapragasen Naicker AKA Danny was born in Kwa Zulu Natal South Africa in 1946, and is a descendent of Indian Indentured Slaves brought from India to work in the British Colonial Sugar plantations of Natal. He has been writing poetry since his early boyhood and has always held a great fascination for all genres of poetry. He has performed his works at various forums including, at the open day session of the Poetry Africa Festival in South Africa. He was the Convenor of the Live Poets Society from 2008 to 2015 a group of poetry lovers from Durban, the City where he lives on the east coast of Natal South Africa.

I Will Not Kill

This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness. (Dalai Lama)

I choose!
to be a secular human being
that is my choice, that is my right
you label me an infidel
you call me an unbeliever
an agnostic an atheist
you throw these descriptions at me

I refuse! to conform to your norms
to practise your beliefs
accept as true your doctrines
praise some supernatural being
I have never seen, I have never heard
I have never witnessed
the miracles you claim,
through your god

although I am despised
I will not submit to indoctrination
I refuse to be brain washed
you can murder me, you can kill me
in the name, of your Inquisitions
in the name of your fatwa's
I will not brandish a sword
against my kind, In the defence
of any manmade religion

you may murder me, you may kill me
I refuse not take up arms
In the name of any crusade or jihad
against my kind in praise and glory
of a supernatural being I don't know

I will lay down my life
for truth and freedom
which are beyond the narrow precincts of your rigid dogmas

I will give up my life
for truth and justice
for they are sacrosanct to all our lives
I will not kill in the name
of Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva
I will not kill in the name
of Jehovah, Jesus, Allah
I will not kill in the name of the Buddha
nor in the name of Krishna

you that want me to kill
how can I kill in the name
of these revered pacifist, great avatars
whom you, have yourself proclaimed
are the messengers
of peace, love and truth
are all forgiving and merciful
and abhor man's inhumanity to man

GOPAL LAHIRI

Gopal Lahiri was born and grew up in Kolkata, India. He is an earth-scientist by profession. Besides, he is a bilingual poet, writer, editor, critic and translator and published in Bengali and English language. He has authored seven volumes of poetry in Bengali and nine volumes in English and jointly edited one anthology of poems in English. His poetry is also published across various anthologies as well as in eminent journals of India and abroad. He is the recipient of the Poet of the Year Award in Destiny Poets, UK, 2016. He can be reached at glahiri@gmail.com

Autumn Muse

Under the Chinar tree the shadows can
now map the contours of tiny cruelties,
screen every breath but the Jhelum river
with its soft palms crumbles the mystery
and silence one by one.

The deadly real and sublime fantasy
infect each other over the years
and there are no whole stories,
yet it's a place of solace for the
survivors counting years and centuries.

Behind the mountains the light is
spreading and the ageing valley is
baked into a libretto,
red and purple flowers drink
the morning blood in mystic silence!
white lilies in the Dal lake
resonate only the solitude!

Every stone is a story teller in Lalchak
and stubborn enough to talk about
the empty nest of the birds, bullets
and unbelievable sobs

The autumn wind drums in the night
in repressed anger and in the distance
the stars bunch on the very edge
of the bank lulled by the swash
and welters of the falling leaves.

GRETA ROSS

A graduate of Medicine from Sydney, Australia, Dr. Greta's love of language has accompanied her around the world. Now retired, she lives in England and is an active member of 'Save As' Writers in Canterbury. Greta has poems published in print and online, including a collection, *Facts of Life*, and has been a 1st prize winner and commended in several international competitions. Many of her poems address the beauty and mystery of the world around us, and have appeared in over 30 anthologies.

Eternal Transitions

Within each cell we carry the world.
Together we are Life as through eons
we share our carbon with Nature's beings
and breathe afresh the same yet different air.
In my blood runs the Nile and the Yenisei,
Babylon's fountains and the salt bite of oceans,
in yours the singing green of trees in Spring,
or the snow that powers cascading waters
down mountains once primeval seas
where the amoeba's atoms now find life
in the body of the eagle, elephant and beetle,
or perhaps you were once a silkworm's thread
spun for Scheherazade's wedding shawl
and I the clay for Bashō's bowl of ink
to portray the passing world in haiku.
Fractals of leaves weave infinity in skins
and a myriad hearts beat Time's rhythm
of unity in our eternal oneness.

GRETCHEN FLETCHER

Gretchen's poetry has been published in numerous journals and anthologies including *Upstreet*, *Chattahoochee Review*, *Inkwell*, *The Mid-American Poetry Review*, and *Poetry as Spiritual Practice* by Robert McDowell. She won the Poetry Society of America's Bright Lights, Big Verse competition and was projected on the Jumbotron as she read her poem in Times Square. One of her poems was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Her chapbooks, *That Severed Cord* and *The Scent of Oranges*, were published by Finishing Line Press. <https://www.poetgretchen.com>

The Sand Women

The sand women of Mali
practice their trade in Araouane.
Six days by camel north of Timbuktu,
they bear bowl after bowl of encroaching
sand away from doorsteps, lest homes and
mosques be buried under a constantly shifting
Sahara. But as swiftly as they clear away the portals,
the wind brings back the contents of their bowls. The
women grit their teeth and pit themselves against the desert
relentlessly battling it with wooden bowls whose surfaces are
sanded as smooth as the women's skin, constantly abraded by the
same grains that sift into their nostrils and lips and form rows of
ridges on the desert floor down which continually trickle small
pieces of the desert in their inexorable trek toward the doors of
the sand women, one hundred sixty miles north of Timbuktu.
"Poor primitive women," say their sisters in their cities, "doomed
forever to perform tasks that will only need repeating. Why don't they
just give up?"

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GUINOTTE WISE

Guinotte Wise writes and welds steel sculpture on a farm in Resume Speed, Kansas. His short story collection (Night Train, Cold Beer) won publication by a university press and enough money to fix the soffits. Four more books since. A 5-times Pushcart nominee, his fiction and poetry have been published in numerous literary journals including *Atticus*, *The MacGuffin*, *Santa Fe Writers Project*, *Rattle* and *The American Journal of Poetry*. His wife has an honest job in the city and drives 100 miles a day to keep it. Some work is at <http://www.wisesculpture.com>

Railroad Crossing

Driving in to the post office, I cross the state line
and a railroad track. I slow at the track just in case
though it is rigged with arms and alarms, and look
both ways, see the rails to the left speed off into a
clean infinity, slicing along defining the ground in
a linear vanishing point where sky and earth meet.
Geometry it says. Move along. Nothing to see here.
But the rails to the right – there lies mystery. They
curve into tree growth, jungle, tracks of my youth.
This is where the boxcars stop and make cars wait.
Test the doors around that curve out of sight of
authority, one opens, empty of cartage but full of
dusty adventure, motes of foreign air on beams
you just let in when you cracked the sun-warmed
handle, heaved the panel back on creaky channel.

No one sees you on this curve. It's safe to get on,
toss your duffel aboard, climb on after it, look out
the square of daylight, then around your rolling
home for thirty miles or two hundred. Check the
canteen for weight, yes it's half full or more and

there's enough light to read if the scenery repeats
itself too much. A jolt, another, the boxcar rocks
then squeals and chunks, you steady yourself, a
hand upon the rough wall, then sit on duffel bag.

A horn honks behind me, I wave and move ahead,
the wave for the boy I was, have fun, write when
you get a job, stay out of jail, keep your nose clean.
In the post office I pay a dollar nineteen for first
class to Paris Review, six poems, an envelope for
their rejection if that happens, and a boyhood hope
for acceptance and adventure, fame and fortune.

HADAA SENDOO

Hadaa Sendoo is a Mongolian poet and translator. He is author of 15 books. He is editor-in-chief of the *World Poetry Almanac*. He has won several awards for poetry including The Mongolian Writers' Union Prize, The Poet of the Millennium Award; World Poetry Prize for Distinguished Poet; The Pinnacle of Achievement Award for poetry; Visionary Poet Award; Poetry prize of DOOS group; The Highest Award of the Eurasian-All-Russian Literary Festival & Matthew Arnold Award. He is also the recipient of *The Lifetime Achievement Award*, *World Icon of Peace Award* (2019).

The Wind

Coming in naked
Going out naked
When we were born
there was only the wind
When we die
there will only be the wind

In my dreams
you have stroked my dry hair and
passed through hopeless
stone markers of national boundaries

Absent, you pass across the land
and kiss the quiet sky
roaring your contempt

Where will the fragrance of the wind go?
Where will its retribution come from?

We know nothing of
the weeping wind
the wandering wind
the singing wind

HELEN BAR-LEV

Helen Bar-Lev was born in New York in 1942. She holds a B.A. in Anthropology, has lived in Israel for 46 years and has had nearly 100 exhibitions of her landscape paintings, 34 of which were one-woman shows. Her poems and artwork have appeared in numerous online and print anthologies. Six poetry collections, all illustrated by Helen. She is the Amy Kitchener senior poet laureate and was nominated for the Pushcart Prize in 2013. She is the recipient of the Homer European Medal for Poetry and Art. Helen is Assistant to the President of Voices Israel. She lives in Metulla, Israel. www.helenbarlev.com

Two Zinnias

Two zinnias in a glazed vase
clipped by nuns' careful scissors,
are the only decoration in this spartan room
in a convent in Jerusalem
but it is clean, the mattress comfortable
flagstone floors, yellow- and red-ochre,
have been polished to a gleam by passing shoes
these one hundred years, even more

I have returned to Jerusalem
after an absence of some months –
a jittery city, it is more intolerable than ever
horns constantly honk, faces do not smile
congestion and pollution, agitation,
congregate in its centre together with beggars,
street musicians, Jews, Arabs, priests and monks,
an incongruent conglomeration
which beckons in a manner I cannot fathom

and repulses with vengeance,
as though one reaction triggers its opposite,
a contradiction of emotions
that is disturbing considering I lived here
for so long and loved it with passion,
wrote love poems in dedication,
painted its landscapes from every angle
until my ability wilted and the brush
could no longer respond to my commands

So that earlier today when I walked
through this city in the heat of its summer
and watched dusk extinguish the gold from its stones,
I noticed a nostalgia for it – for the once-Jerusalem,
almost expecting the present
to disappear behind a curtain
and lo! enter the Jerusalem of old,
the city I knew and yearned to return to,
smaller, happier, more beautiful

These are my thoughts now, late,
in this sanctuary amidst the city's insanity,
this secluded quaint convent,
where quail and jay and gay flowers reside,
whose energies are lovely, light,
a place that does not disturb
nor disappoint my memories

While the two zinnias in the vase
blink red and pink
in the heat of the night
and soothe me

HONEY NOVICK

Honey Novick is a singer/voice teacher and poet living in Toronto, Canada. She was awarded the Canada 150 Outstanding Neighbours Award in 2017. She has 9 chapbooks of poetry and 8 CDs. She was one of 4 artists selected to pay tribute to Leonard Cohen at Toronto's Reference Library. www.honeynovick.com

One Voice

One Voice is many voices: the silent and the loud,
the outrageous and the proud
the soother, the betrayer,
the mother and father combined

One Voice speaks in tongues

One Voice explains the mysteries of the universe with clarity

One Voice lives in me and you and in each heart beating

One Voice gives strength, while another is blinded by the light

One Voice is yours in friendship and mine in agreement

My voice is yours in love

Your voice is mine in spirit

One Voice sings and another voice draws pictures

One Voice lies in ignorance while another voice fears for its safety

One Voice dances in courage while another hides in shame

One Voice tells a story and another voice documents history

One Voice drums a heartbeat while another sells it short

One Voice is soft and another brings grief

One voice keens and another wails

One Voice is beautiful, mellifluous, another voice is raspy and hoarse

One Voice shines like a multi-faceted diamond while
another voice will steal its thunder
One Voice teaches and another voice preaches

One Voice is truth
each voice is expected to decide for themselves what that means

One Voice is a gift
another voice is shrill, a shill, a trill, a still, brewing an elliptical
ellipsis

One Voice is silly, another not so much
One Voice is stern while another gazes at the stars
One Voice is colourful and different and choppy and lovely and
everything necessary to tell you that your voice is my voice and my
voice sings
in your voice and we are all interconnected and we are different and
we want acceptance and we don't want just to be tolerated and
we love and want to be heard in all of the ways that
ONE VOICE becomes the thunder that is
the ONE VOICE OF US ALL

*Acknowledgment: "One Voice", an exhibition showcasing works of Canadian women
artists sponsored by Artists to Artists Foundation, 2013.*

HUGUETTE BERTRAND

Huguette Bertrand is a French-Canadian poet and editor. She has published 37 poetry books from 1985 until 2018, a few of them with artists. Her poems have been published in printed and online reviews in Quebec, Belgium, France, U.S.A., Wales-U.K., Romania, India, also in international anthologies. She is the Canadian representative for the Immagine & Poesia Movement. Website: <http://www.espacepoetique.com/poete/poete.html>

Invitation

Come

come close to these words
gentle they won't hurt you

flying above arguments and rumors
together they are called poetry
and could grab your imagination
and play tricks on your mind
letting you feel like a bird
standing on the branch of an old oak
or maybe near a pond
watching frogs croaking
and even like a poet watching the blue sky
while downstairs people are crying
like hell on the roads
nothing to eat no shelter
and some picturing the whole agony

since these words are only pleading
for peace and a good night sleep
come
come closer
the trick is over

IAN SALVAÑA

Ian Salvaña, 22, is a faculty member of the Sociology Department of Ateneo de Davao University in the Philippines. He has a political science undergraduate degree and is halting his graduate coursework in development studies at the same university after having been accepted and granted scholarship for an MA in Political Science at the Central European University in Budapest and Vienna. He edited *Atenems*, among others, has received various fellowships from leading Philippine universities and has published works in numerous journals and anthologies in his country and abroad. As a peace advocate, his literary works heavily illustrate the violent conflicts in Mindanao. The poem below, an ekphrasis to Jose Rizal's poem of the same name, first appeared in *The Brown Orient* and is nominated by its editors for the Pushcart Prize.

To The Flowers Of Heidelberg

You remain tall, petal colors astonishingly bright,
in the quiet creeks of a White city. It isn't Tondo that

looks at you with great sin, and you do not seek
anymore the life of the slum besides black, brown,

black. Tomorrow, you will blossom near the pond
overlooking the kissing of clean buildings and fresh

air. It isn't Luneta that looks at you with great prize,
the stone people only barely move, frustrated that

your kind hides in utopia. In Bagumbayan, the future
seeks you to nourish the past, and the past seeks to

make sense of your belongingness. Once you maximize
your wandering off the coast of an unknown Pacific

archipelago, remember Dapitan, and for the last time,
smell the absence of revolt, of hiding from untimely
bullet holes speared through chests of fallen soldiers
resting in Libingan ng mga Bayani. Here, your sisters,
chrysanthemums and other white plants, lay bare their
own dirtiness – no matter their beauty – when they are
overlooked in seeking justice for lives missing, lives lost
in the history of our independence. Look at how we
fought in the changing games by strongmen in position
and despise monuments built after their death. Look at
islands in isolation, they seek the souls of guerillas
filled with hatred, from then to now, from dawn to
dusk. Luckily, you were born to forget your own
colonial past. All you do now is remember the quiet
water behind where you sit pretty, gushing towards
a stream that hasn't tasted blood in a long while.

J.P. CHRISTIANSEN

The writer is Danish, the poet isn't. The writer resides in America, the poet doesn't. The writer is of this place, then is of that place, everywhere looking for the poet.

In The Dark Void Of Origins

At the far edge of a distant cloud
sounds exaltation, jubilation, frustration,
as swirling in the dark void of origins
Mother Earth oscillates in joy and sadness.

Cradling life in cycles of birthing and dying,
she withstands forces of dissipation into Chaos
as yet again she offers her children the rising sun
in the warmth and light to which we awaken.

As dreams fade in seduction of entropic inevitability,
souls seek refuge in time's forgetting.
In the silence of cosmic forgiveness,
warriors survey the carnage of long, cold nights,
and lovers reap fruit for new beginnings.

With resignation she bares her bosom.
Her sustenance of life is the reaction of all causes
in which the fusion of positive and negative justifies.
In a void of diffuseness and unlikely probabilities
she calls for her children to gather.

J. TARWOOD

J. Tarwood has been a dishwasher, a community organizer, a medical archivist, a documentary film producer, an oral historian, and a teacher. Much of his life has been spent in East Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. He has published four books and his poems have appeared in magazines ranging from *American Poetry Review* to *Visions*. He has always been an unlikely man in unlikely places.

Just For Me

Waking to puke and shit,
I walk her drunken bones.
There's a soft spot on her skull:
blood's found a way
to muddle into air.

My biceps tighten:
anger's as good as a workout.
I hose her twice and bed her down.
She could be a sick horse.

She won't remember word or touch.
This memory's just for me.

Acknowledgment: The poem was previously published in Two Hawks Quarterly.

JACK GRADY

Jack Grady is a founder member of the Irish-based Ox Mountain Poets. His poetry has been widely published and has appeared either online or in print in Ireland, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, France, Indonesia, and Portugal. He read in Morocco at the 3rd annual *Festival International Poésie Marrakech*, as the poet invited by its committee to represent Ireland, and he was invited to represent Ireland at the 3rd annual *Poesia a Sul*, in Olhão, Portugal. His poetry collection, *Resurrection*, was published by Lapwing Publications in October 2017 and was nominated for the T.S. Eliot Prize.

Resurrection

I have a dream that one day ... the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

– Martin Luther King

I have a dream that one day
armies will shoot with songs instead of bullets
generals will shed uniforms for the saffron hues of Hare Krishnas
Buddha will hold conference calls between New York and Geneva
St. Francis will cradle again the birds of Assisi
and even insects will have no reason to fear us
Lao Tsu will return to expound on rivers and mountains
and tell us that freedom never crowns conquest
never plants flags beyond borders

The dead will rise to expose
those who killed innocence and blamed the innocent
those whose lies hatched our hatred and turned us into murderers
those who will hear their sneering laughter silenced
by their own spontaneous cries of confession

Machiavelli will erase *The Prince* as a fraud
Wolfowitz will tell us all Neocons
are trapped in the chaos of the clueless
the Kennedys will unmask their assassins
and spend a week granting absolution
to plotters who never imagined it possible

Isaiah will weep with joy as Israel abandons Dimona
and its shell is claimed by sands of the Negev
Wahhabis will intone the poems of Rumi
Shia and Sunni will greet each other with kindness
while sabres of rage remain sheathed
and lions purr as they sleep with lambs
and shepherds in a world redeemed

Nuclear arsenals will explode with a pop
harmless and hilarious as clouds of balloons bursting
we will at last hear the trees speak
tell us why they are rooted
and how their quiet peace
resurrects flowers and leaves

Gandhi will walk with Jesus on water
and they will hail a resurrected dreamer –
Martin Luther King –
while he hauls into his boat
constellations of fish
with silken nets of starlight

JAMES G. PIATT

James, a retired professor, and octogenarian, lives with his wife in California. He has had poems nominated multiple times for pushcart and best of web awards, and has had three collections of poetry, *The Silent Pond*, (2012), *Ancient Rhythms*, (2014), and *Light* (2016), over 1,165 poems, four novels, and 35 short stories, published. He earned his BS and MA from California State Polytechnic University, and his doctorate from BYU.

Universality

All colors of eyes have tears,
All colors of skin feel pain,
All colors of people feel sorrow.

Every human has dreams,
Every human has hopes,
Every human has needs.

All people hunger and thirst,
All people dream and hope,
All people yearn for love.

Every creature is our brother,
Every creature is our sister,
Every creature needs others.

We are all together,
In this small lonely
Place called earth.

Acknowledgment: Previously published by Word Catalyst Magazine on November, 2009.

JAMES RAGAN

James Ragan has authored 10 books of poetry and appeared in 30 anthologies and 15 languages. Honors include 3 Fulbright Professorships, 2 Honorary Ph. D's, the Emerson Poetry Prize, 9 Pushcart nominations, a Poetry Society of America Citation, London's Troubadour Int. Poetry Prize finalist, and the Swan Foundation Humanitarian Award. He performed for 7 international Heads of State, the U.N, Carnegie Hall, and audiences in China, Japan, India, France, Sweden, Brazil, Russia etc. Ragan's play *Commedia* has been staged internationally. He is the subject of the documentary, *Flowers and Roots*, the Platinum Prize winner at the Houston Int. Film Festival.

The Tent People Of Beverly Hills

Faceless on the Boulevard of Mirrors,
north along the flats of Rodeo Drive's
stripped bald head mannequins,
they come treading on the fears
of high fashion, tents on their backs
and on their cheeks the beach
black tar of tasteless chic.

As if to dress were not enough,
we would have them wash
our backhand slap
from their Rimbaud faces.

And all through the supple stick lash
wands of their eyes, all
through the wind whiskers of fishbone
and sour cream curdled by fame,
they see along the fruit stalls and deli box bins
of Wilshire Boulevard,

the world in the room
of their small walk-space.
They are never certain
whether they are merely asked
to fill a role like memory
in some thoughtful dream of place
or live always short of major
in some dying minor sort of way.

As if to live were time enough.
We would have them end
beyond their means.

Hours long they scabble onto walls
and mirrors the words they would like to leave us,
the haunted prints of thought-falls
drifting out of mind's possession
like nostalgia or grief.
The world has lost its face.

There are no hobo kings or pioneers
late to live by. When they lie
above the windy steam of sewer grates,
dream-still and all-mind gone,
they warm their body holes to sleep.
They wake to be awake. In the dreams
of many who never took the road
to gypsy sorrow, breathing is enough.

It is a mistake to feel themselves alone,
to fill their sky holes up with dark.

There has never been a need
for crying, the dying always say.
Once we move within the final
inch of breath, there is no other.
There are a million tents in the universe
with holes we mistake for stars.

JAMES WM. CHICHETTO

James Wm. Chichetto is a priest-scholar and a professor of Communications at Stonehill College (North Easton, Massachusetts, USA). He has been published over 300 times, often with the aid of NEA, NEH, and other grants. He is author of 09 books.

Blind Veteran

He can tell where he is by the echo on the lake,
his paddles brushing against pickerelweed,
the air giving him its own path
over the entire water.

He talks of battle, of those long dead
far beyond the hearing of the other ears –
browsing one summer at dawn,
each soldier taking a step forward
until something happened
and across their clothes blood had grown out
of all they had done.

He calls out to my aunt at dusk,
above the heads of birds, above shore fowl
and land far back into the rocks.
And she calls back to him from a small wharf,
she'll holler him back to shore

in a healing of so great a pain
with too much to carry
to lessen the wound.

Acknowledgment: "Blind Veteran" was first published in The Colorado State Review (currently shortened to The Colorado Review), Volume X, fall, 1982.

JAMIE LYNN HELLER

Poetry is Jamie Lynn Heller's caffeine. She is a mother, wife, and teacher who gets up before the house starts to stir to write. Her second collection, *Buried in the Suburbs*, was released by Woodley Press in May of 2018. Her chapbook, *Domesticated, Poetry from Around the House*, was published in 2015 with Finishing Line Press. A Pushcart Prize nominee in 2014 (*Little Balkans Review*) and Best of the Net nominee for 2016 (*805 Lit + Art*), she also had pieces selected for honorable mention awards in the Whispering Prairie Press Writing Contest 2012, and the Kansas Voices Contest 2017 and 2011. <http://jamielynnheller.blogspot.com>

Seashell

When the day surges,
tugs at my ankles,
laps at my thighs,

I escape to fields
of cracked clay,
sun bleached bones,

and hide from the shelter
of a passing cloud.

Even in this place I carry
the sound of the ocean
with each breath.

The roar of its waves
caught in a seashell
lodged in my throat.

JANET BURROWAY

Janet Burroway, awarded the 2014 Lifetime Achievement Award in Writing by the Florida Humanities Council, is the author of essays, poetry, children's books including the classic *The Giant Jam Sandwich*; eight novels including *Raw Silk*, and most recently *Bridge of Sand*; plays including *Sweepstakes*, *Medea With Child* and *Headshots*. *Writing Fiction*, the most widely used creative writing textbook in America, appeared in a tenth edition from U. of Chicago Press in 2019. Her novel *The Buzzards* was nominated for the 1970 Pulitzer Prize. She is Lawton Distinguished Professor Emerita from the Florida State University. She now lives and writes in Chicago. www.janetburroway.com

Airport

For Tim

I keep stepping on the ugly nap
of all our local comings and disappearings;
dingy – yellow, is it? – or I suppose
they call it “gold,” with, surely, “garnet” flowers
or suns, whatever, and so do the tired arrivals
with their carry-ons, and the pickers-up
in their tanks and wrinkled shorts
and their carryings-on, the helium balloons
and welcome signs;
and us in our wrinkled shorts, already tired
to death of the, welcome, however, visitor –
he is not unwelcome, whoever he is, or she –
over the same carpet, from the same planes,
to the same luggage endlessly riding round
and round the creaking carousel.
And you,
arriving every time with him or her,

arriving every time
on your bouncing step
over the golden not-so-dingy-then,
and the luggage smelling leather-fresh,
and the carousel fresh-installed,
and your helium eyes
and your careless grin
into the wrinkled arms of my
welcome home.

Acknowledgment: The poem, "Airport," first appeared in Prairie Schooner in Fall 2006.

JASON CONSTANTINE FORD

Jason Constantine Ford is from Perth, Australia. He has over a hundred publications of poetry and fiction in various literary magazine, ezines and journals from around the world. Edgar Alan Poe and William Blake are his main influences for poetry. Phillip K. Dick is his main influence for fiction.

My Love In The Spring

My love awakes as filled with firmest hope
for joy to come upon her face complete.
as spring reveals its face in purest scope,
my love is moving to a lake with eyes discrete.
As she is staring at this lake, her features show
a soul which radiates with strongest glow.
I come to see my love as standing at the lake
as she is offering a smile for virtue's sake.
Her smile is breathing through the flowers that release
their scent into the air as I am standing here.
As I am breathing sweetest smells which never cease,
I see a beauty breathing in my love as clear.
My love awakens me to gifts which spring contains
As one reflection shows a face which reigns.

Acknowledgment: First published in Decanto Magazine / Anthology, Issue 48, August 2010, p 47.

JAY FRANKSTON

Jay Frankston was raised in Paris, France. Narrowly escaping the Holocaust he came to the U.S. in 1942, became a lawyer and practiced on his own in New York for nearly twenty years, reaching the top of his profession, sculpting and writing at the same time. In 1972 he gave up law and New York and moved himself and his family to Northern California where he became a teacher and continued to sculpt and write. He is the author of several books and of a true tale entitled "A Christmas Story" which was published in New York, condensed in *Reader's Digest*, translated into 15 languages, and called a Christmas Classic by many reviewers. <http://wholeloafbooks.mcn.org>

Squandered Hope

GOD has left the premises.
He has moved to another galaxy.
He left a note for us on the mantelpiece.
I'll read it to you:

GOODBY! I'm leaving.
I am really disappointed in you.
I gave you a world full of beauty,
with sunsets and dawns, clouds and stars,
flowers and butterflies, colors and sound.
And what have you done with my gifts?
You've become greedy.
You are obsessed with your possessions
always wanting more.
You feel innocent and righteous
but you know what you must do and you don't do it.
And you know what you mustn't do and you do it.

You ignore the poor, the sick and the downtrodden.
You make excuses for yourself. "I need the job".
"I have a mortgage to pay". "I'm too busy"
or "I haven't got the time".
You manage to blame "them" for all your ills.
"Them", the politicians, the corporations,
the blacks, the Jews and Wall street.
The other fellow in any case.
And you are blind to your participation.

You spoil the air you breathe
and defecate in your own garden.
You travel far and wide
to massacre women and children
and blame me for not stopping you.
You wreak havoc upon the world
and ask me for help in restoring some order
from your chaos.

Goodby! I've lost faith in you.
If you manage to survive your abuses,
if you come to your senses before it is too late,
I may return to your world
and bring back the hope you have squandered.

JAYANTA MAHAPATRA

Jayanta Mahapatra (b. 1928) is a physicist, bilingual poet, editor, translator and essayist. He holds the distinction of being the first Indian English poet to have received the Sahitya Akademi Award (1981) for the book of poetry, *Relationship*. His other major awards include SAARC literary Award, Allen Tate Poet Prize and Padma Shree Award from the President of India. He is the author of 36 books which include 18 volumes of poetry in English.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jayanta_Mahapatra

Hunger

It was hard to believe the flesh was heavy on my back.
The fisherman said: Will you have her, carelessly,
trailing his nets and his nerves, as though his words
sanctified the purpose with which he faced himself.
I saw his white bone thrash his eyes.

I followed him across the sprawling sands,
my mind thumping in the flesh's sling.
Hope lay perhaps in burning the house I lived in.
Silence gripped my sleeves; his body clawed at the froth
his old nets had only dragged up from the seas.

In the flickering dark his hut opened like a wound.
The wind was I, and the days and nights before.
Palm fronds scratched my skin. Inside the shack
an oil lamp splayed the hours bunched to those walls.
Over and over the sticky soot crossed the space of my mind.

I heard him say: My daughter, she's just turned fifteen...
Feel her. I'll be back soon, your bus leaves at nine.
The sky fell on me, and a father's exhausted wile.
Long and lean, her years were cold as rubber.
She opened her wormy legs wide. I felt the hunger there,
the other one, the fish slithering, turning inside.

JAYNE FENTON KEANE

Jayne Fenton Keane (JFK) is a multi-award-winning poet who has been delighting, inspiring and challenging audiences all over the world with her mix of performance art, music, song, readings and improvisation. Founding Director of Australia's National Poetry Week (2002-2007), JFK explores poetry as a personal and social medium for living. She was shortlisted for the Griffith University Medal for her doctorate in poetics and has three published poetry books in addition to CDs, radio plays, sound poems, performance pieces, music compositions and essays. She is particularly interested in collaboration and animal communication.

Partition

Light pools coin-sized beneath her footprint.
Above her ankle a small tattoo, slightly altered
with kohl (blue-black charcoal from a spent fire
she uses to spontaneously render the initials of a man)
its ink seductively poised above her left astragalus
with the ambiguous beauty of the incomplete.
Her presence occupies the space between gazes
of 15th century explorers who traded pepper
and saffron, whose faces hang around lounges
at certain angles, with eyes that follow every move.
Men imagine their initials on her anklebone,
and gossip about how she walks high on daylight
that spills through the arches of her foot
to cast lines across the floor in *i-ching* patterns
that only scholars of the heart and purse can decipher.
“He will arrive as a tree with three branches at sunrise
when the moon borrows light from the sun.”
Panicking, she stumbles. He thinks himself lucky

to catch her and inhales the musty sandalwood
between her breasts, while slipping her sari's perfect
folds to one side – enough to catch the scar
in the centre of her chest, where bones appeared
cleaved and sutured with wire. He courts
the fabric deftly to her shoulder and lingers.
A parabola of sunlight flashes underfoot to bind him
momentarily to a future palisaded by darkness.

“Scatter the mist and gather the tails of swallows.
To produce the rose, you must first water its thorns.”¹

Note:

1. *Variation on an African proverb*

JEFFREY ZABLE

Jeffrey Zable's poetry, fiction, and non-fiction have appeared in hundreds of literary magazines and anthologies. Recent writing in *Mocking Heart Review*, *Awkward Mermaid*, *Ink In Thirds*, *Tower Journal*, *Uppagus*, *After the Pause*, *The Bitchin' Kitch*, *Chrome Baby*, *Former Cactus* and many others. In 2017 he was nominated for both The Best of the Net and the Pushcart Prize.

How Much Further

Yes, I understand how you can knock a glass of water
onto the floor and feel like committing suicide.

It's not the water, the mop, the broom, and the dustpan
you'll have to use to clean up the mess.
It's that it all reminds you of your life:
How tired you are of the struggle.
How you're just going to die anyway.

And while cleaning up the mess you think about all your relatives,
friends and acquaintances who are now gone.
Even your favorite writers, artists, and movie actors
who are now just names.

It comes as a shock, as if realizing for the first time:
every life, no matter who you are, comes to a conclusion.

You consider turning on the television, reading a book,
or taking a walk in the neighborhood,
but realize it won't make any difference.

You've spent your life trying not to think about
what has always been with you side by side.

You pour yourself another glass of water
and hold it carefully in your hand,
wondering how you got this far...

how much further you have to go...

Acknowledgment: First appeared in Third Wednesday, 2015.

JENNIFER FOOTMAN

Jennifer Footman, originally from India, spent most of her life in Edinburgh and is a graduate of that university, coming to Canada in 79. Her poetry and fiction have been in most Canadian literary magazines and many US and UK ones. She has four collections of poetry, has won several competitions including the Canadian Authors Okanagan Award, the Envoi poetry award, the LNN short fiction award and the Alumnus\Scotia McLeod Award. She has a collection of poetry, short fiction and four novels looking for publishers.

Calling The Kettle Black, Nevada

I amble round Reno bus station
waiting for the bus to the airport.
Cops float, loose hands on holstered guns;
drunks shamble to the edge of the pavement
in a mist of alcohol; a couple of men interrupt a conversation
in Spanish to shout in English that they hate whites, man, they hate
whites.

To this pale northerner they look as white as white
as the insipid snow that will be waiting for me
when I return home.

I sit outside on a cool stone wall.
A woman joins me. I guess she too, is Hispanic
because of her black, black hair,
so rich it could be the glittering body of a raven.
She's about thirty and God, so beautiful
I have to force myself not to stare, not to worship.
She shines, golden-skinned,
ripe as a persimmon about to burst;
her lips bud full, juicy, red without any lipstick;
her eyes glisten a clear, pure, innocent emerald green.

The kind of beauty that is without sex, but is just alive.
A rose in the morning, fresh, mature at the same time.

When she smiles she shows rotten stumps
and three decayed teeth in the upper.
This grey woman, when she smiles, show perfect white teeth
given to her by luck and the National Health Service.
Though I'm a familiar of the stink of poverty

I enjoy the teeth of the wealthy. The lady in That Play,
she too, knew the acrid fumes as she scrubbed her hands,
scrubbed her hands, scrubbed her hands, trying to erase
the prints of murder. Smile, the world's a happy place.

We chat about buses and her job, her two children
and how buses come, sometimes they don't,
how the evening is the nicest time in Reno.
She says it smells sweet, as honey-like, as golden, as good sex,
the Reno evening. Candied by flowers and night.

The bus arrives in a haze of diesel. We have nothing more to say.
She sits in the front and talks to the driver and I sit in the back.

*Acknowledgment: Published in Kitchener Public Library Collection 2012 as winner
of their Canada Wide competition.*

JEROME TEELUCKSINGH

Jerome Teelucksingh is a lecturer in the Department of History at UWI, St Augustine, Trinidad. His poems have been published in anthologies such as *People Poetry*, *Meanderings: A Collection of Poetic Verse* and have also appeared in the *Trinidad and Tobago Review*, *Taj Mahal Review*, *Poui*, *Caribbean Intransit*, *In Search of Fatherhood*, *Caribbean Voice*, *Yatra*, *Journal of South Texas Studies* and *Diálogos*.

Hope For humanity

Another dishonorable act forgiven, another hurtful
word is delayed judgment and then forgiven.
A sick mind relents for forgiveness; mistakes made in
moments of drunken weakness, await forgiveness by the victim.
The incarcerated pleads for society's forgiveness,
whilst the forgiven refuse to forgive.
Some fail to realize that for every fault
there will always be forgiving hearts;
and amidst death and dark veils,
there will be an avalanche of solace and care.
For every injury, there will be an extra pair of caring hands;
for the pain we experience, there will be comforting friends;
and for each doubt that prevails, there will be
an ocean of truth waiting to be discovered.
For every disease, we will not rest until a cure is found.
For every act of injustice there will be a sea of voices demanding
fairness.
For each storm of pessimism and gloom there will be rainbows of
optimism;
and for every doubter there will always be a flood of faith and
hope.

JERRY BRADLEY

Jerry Bradley is University Professor of English and the Leland Best Distinguished Faculty Fellow at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas. He is the author of 8 books including 4 full-length poetry collections. <http://www.jerrybradley.net>

I Never Think Of My Father

I never think of my father as young
though the photos prove otherwise:
here posed in a sleeveless undershirt
and khakis, a teenager already three years deep
in the Army but no kid, just another
Kentucky hard baller smoking his way
down the road to Depression and World War.

In another he kneels in front of several Chevrolets,
smirking as if he'd spent the whole evening
chasing moonshine with his loony pals
and trying to embrace the night's fat ass.

I never think of my father as old either.
Dead at sixty-two, he was smileless
long before the hospital, durably stern
and disapproving as if he suspected everyone
had been pissing off the porch.

*I want to bear nothing but silence,
and plenty of it, he scolded all my youth.
He has likely had his fill of it now.*

I think of my father forever somewhere
in the middle of middle age, burning
between flame and frost like Dantean hell,
his heart the equator of a world
he could not hold together or a polar ice cap,
an imaginary line, geographically absent
and remembered, whenever I think of him,
only in a poem, frowning. Sometimes
not even the memory of happiness will do.

Acknowledgment: "I Never Think of My Father" originally appeared in The Importance of Elsewhere (Ink Brush Press, 2009).

JERRY RATCH

Jerry Ratch published 17 books of poetry, and 7 books of prose including the novel: *Wild Dreams of Reality, and the Memoir: A Body Divided*, the story of a one-armed boy growing up in a two-fisted world. His work can be purchased through the author's website: www.jerryratch.com and as kindle books on amazon.com. Also, recently published, an online partial novel, *The Great San Francisco Poetry Wars*. He lives in Oakland, California with his wife, artist Sherry Karver.

When We Lie Down

When we lie down
Under the wind
The trees swaying
Looking out over the fields

Soft cobweb of a brain
Exposed to hail
Exposed to snow

Trying to back away from it
Unable
Knowing the earth
(The face it will take)

Our names fluttering loose
And sleep spreading over the planet –

The wind that makes a
Candle flicker
And the flame
Go to hell –

The full moon will rise
On this gust
And swerve over the
Horizon

Trees will know
The names of women
(The ones we knew)

There will be hilarity
Among machine guns
Daggers become ribbon
Bullets
The worm we love

Bridge river trees

When we are in our grave

The saucer will rattle
And the teacup dance

JEVIN LEE ALBUQUERQUE

Jevin Lee Albuquerque grew up in California, on the local pier in Santa Cruz, fishing for Striped Bass. He recently completed his third full-length novel, *Hangfish*. A semi-finalist in the 2014 Faulkner-Wisdom competition and recent Pushcart Prize nominee, his prose and poetry have appeared in numerous literary journals.

A Poem For Us

Snow blinding eyes, far above ground
staring down to earth, searching for
fox prints, patterned in snow

Outfoxed, winter's cold touch, yours
beneath sheets, sweet-sweaty-paws
committed, ravaged, wounded

Against God's willing
to love, night after night, entwined
tendrils of the heart, hissing

Poetic feast, Christ-missed, family
hound-missed in heart shaped rhythm
our pure-honey-mead

Yellowstone hymns in Grizzly's breath,
danger is ours, the hound
who crossed rivers without looking back

Tangled is memory, hearts
in the chatter of rocks, creeks, bodies
getting over, again and again

Skinned lovers, spirit, blood,
guts out there, exposed
in the mountains, deep
in the mountains, a set of fox prints
Angel's feet, on the horizon, sun

Acknowledgment: Previously published in Foliate Oak Literary Magazine, 2015.

JIM LANDWEHR

Jim Landwehr has three poetry collections and two nonfiction books. His works are published in various journals and anthologies worldwide. Jim is poet laureate for the Village of Wales, Wisconsin. Web: <http://jimlandwehr.com>

Car Hunting In America

– with respect and reverence to Richard Brautigan

The first car of my broken automotive dreams
looked like a waffle maker with acne
and cost the equivalent of
eight thousand four hundred sixteen
bussed tables in a black tie restaurant.
Its redheaded owner
who had lost her appetite for waffles
originally quoted me
at six thousand three hundred twelve bussed tables
but after the realization that
my teenage heart was set on
scrap iron waffles like murder
in a Quentin Tarantino film
she added those couple thousand extra tables
for her own good measure.
The steering system of the waffler
handled like a day old jelly donut
and took me places I never asked to go
like a rickshaw in Toronto
or a New Jersey golf cart
and when I got to these places
I had lunch with a lady who wore
a shawl made of peacocks
and we shared a
pastrami and cheese sandwich
with mayonnaise.

Acknowledgment: Previously published in Reciting From Memory, by Jim Landwehr.

JO ANN LORDAHL

Jo Ann Lordahl, PhD now lives in Florida after 14 years in Hawaii and is a published author, poet, workshop leader and speaker. Her psychology background, research and tenacity have produced a breadth of published work, including prize-winning poetry, a lyric play *Four Women Speak*, and over 20 books [9 non-fiction, 5 novels, 6 romances, 6 poetry, 2 memoir]. <http://joannlordahl.com>

A Lost Child

I never think of a child
who might be seventeen.
Yet as today's hot sun heats
Florida's blue skies a voice
as thin as a forgotten miracle
calls to me and wishes to speak.
It is a baby I wanted from a man
I wished as father
so curious to see what
our genes would contrive,
so eager. I think of that year,
sex by prescription never quite
losing a blue fascination.
I think of the experts
and of elation rising like wild air
and the haemorrhage.
The end. Except for my breasts
for days in the shower
still making milk for the child.

JOAN E. BAUER

Joan E. Bauer is the author of *The Almost Sound of Drowning* (Main Street Rag, 2008). With Judith Robinson and Sankar Roy, she co-edited the award-winning international anthology, *Only the Sea Keeps: Poetry of the Tsunami* (Bayeux Arts and Rupa & Co, 2005). In 2007, she won the Earle Birney Poetry Prize from *Prism International*. In 2018, she was a finalist for the John Ciardi Poetry Prize from BkMk Press. For some years, she was a teacher and counselor and now divides her time between Venice, CA and Pittsburgh, PA where she co-hosts and curates the Hemingway's Summer Poetry Series (www.hemingwayspoetryseries.blogspot.com).

Dream Of Wholeness

The architect knew perfection:
a *grand cercle* window, two-arms wide.
Beyond, the dark breast of canyon
inseparable from sky. Nearly midnight.
Goats graze on the scrub grass.
Are they restless, bleating at the moon?



Last month, I visited Vivienne.
She's grown reclusive. A shuttered house:
boxes everywhere. She tried to clear a path.

I thought of her today when a gift arrived
from cousin Charles. His late wife's name
printed on his checks, after thirty years.



Consider: the wall-circled Eden,
the sublime halo. Clock & compass.
Only a fool prays for certainty.

I think: We are ill-fitting fragments
that only sometimes hold together.
Why do we think that will change?



My lover is sleeping. His arms are pale,
but still I feel the strength in them.
I wander the house, then finally to bed.

Through the portal: a bounteous moon,
a floating canyon & half-forgotten planets
hurtling through the fog.

Acknowledgment: Previously published in Cider Press Review.

JOAN MICHELSON

Joan Michelson's poetry book publications include: *The Family Kitchen*, 2018, The Finishing Line Press, USA, *Landing Stage*, 2017, competition prize publication SPM Publishers UK, 2017, *Bloomvale Home*, 2016, Original Plus Chapbooks, UK, 2016, *Toward The Heliopause*, 2011, and *Letting in the Light*, 2008, Poetic Matrix Press, USA. Her writing has been selected for British Council and Arts Council anthologies of New Writing and a number of her poems have won prizes: the Torriano Prize, the Bristol Prize, the Hamish Canham Prize from the Poetry Society. Joan teaches creative writing to medical students at Kings College, London. www.poetrypf.org.uk

Williams Pear

The pear that nestled in my grandma's dresser drawer
to ripen for relief of her constipation, glimmers

like the goblet that she saw her father bless and lower
to her mother's fevered lips before her mother died.

The child that was my grandma saw, or so it's told,
the wedding goblet, which was crystal, struck with light,

a sign that God had sanctified her mother's death.
My mother, who didn't believe in the Old God,

told this story squinting, as if she saw the light
I imagine in the blinding brightness pouring

through my kitchen window here in London.
My grandma's light bathes the pear I bought this morning.

It stands on my pinewood table ripe and glowing.
I close my eyes and breathe in the sweetness.

Acknowledgement: 'The Family Kitchen', 2018. The Finishing Line Press, KY, USA.

JOE WILLIAMS

Joe Williams is a former starving musician who transformed into a starving writer and poet in 2015, entirely by mistake. He lives in Leeds, UK and appears regularly at events in Yorkshire and beyond. He has been published in numerous anthologies, and in magazines online and in print. His debut poetry pamphlet, *Killing the Piano*, was published by Half Moon Books in 2017, followed by the verse novella *An Otley Run* in 2018. He won the prestigious Open Mic Competition at Ilkley Literature Festival in 2017 and was runner-up the following year. www.joewilliams.co.uk & www.anotleyrun.com

Killing The Piano

We tried to save you with small ads.

Free to good home, must collect

but nobody called.

We tried schools and churches,

community centres,

but none were prepared to accommodate you.

No room for the past,

no use for tradition,

and each back turned

was another key condemned.

Once we dragged you a hundred miles north,

and later a hundred back,

my faithful friend as I learnt how to play,

from *Three Blind Mice*

to *Für Elise* and the *Nut Rocker*.

But for years you stood,
lid down, barely touched,
except by the clumsy fists of children,
bashing a blind fortissimo,
untroubled by rhythm or melody,
unaware that every good boy deserves favour.

For years you stood,
an obstacle,
an inconvenience,
silently slipping out of tune.

It fell to me to strike the killing blow,
consign you to the fate we'd tried to swerve.
Behind the crack of splintering walnut
I could hear a heart
breaking.

JOHN ALLMAN

John Allman (1935 –) has published 8 books of poetry and two collections of short stories. His first book of poems, *Walking Four Ways in the Wind* (1979) was published by Princeton Univ. Press in The Princeton Series of Contemporary Poets, and reissued in 2016. He has been awarded 2 Fellowships by The National Endowment for the Arts, and a Pushcart Prize in poetry, as well as the Helen Bullis Prize by *Poetry Northwest*. He has just finished work on his 9th books of poems, *Deep Breath: New & Selected Poems 2004 – 2017*. His most recent books are *Algorithms* (prose poems) 2012 (Quale Press) and *A Fine Romance* (2016) (Quale Press). He retired from teaching in 1997.

Surfaces

Say a thought touches its real-world object.
A verb clinging. A noun deep down with just
enough air to breathe, outer now inner.
We're skin to skin, fingertips glowing.
These words a sinuous folding and un-
folding, Adam and Eve's garden
a paragraph within us after all,
all this syntax of delight, where breath spells
the minutes, with time sliding down our arms
like rain. We see it darken a glossy
hardwood floor, even as we leave prints,
a past, a memory of things abrasive,
or smooth, or prickly, each year more of us
touching each other here and here and here.

JOHN B. LEE

Poet Laureate of the city of Brantford in perpetuity and Poet Laureate of Norfolk County for life, John B. Lee is the author of nearly one hundred published books. His work has appeared internationally in over five hundred publications and he is the recipient of nearly one hundred prestigious international awards for his work. His book *MMXVII: Sesquicentennial Poems* in collaboration with Richard M. Grove was published in a bilingual English with Hindi translations by Sanbun Publishing. He lives in a lake house on the south coast of Long Point Bay where he works full time as an author. <http://www.johnblee.ca>

Two Strangers – Perhaps A Prayer

in the somber beauty
of a shadowless morning
I walk this broken road
set straight upon a ridge that runs
between two ditches trenched
where leaf-black water flows
in shallow ease scattered about with human trash
all waxed-cup whiteness stained with autumn life
and there beyond the thorny branches brambled
close at hand
the swale is thick and brown with winter weeds
like dried remains of dead bouquets
somewhere the denizens of hollow stump
and grass-thatched houses
sleep on or rustle
like a lazy hand within an itch
of tattered lace
and so a single shaft of Aaron's rod

stands guard
against the sheltered wind that shocks
the seed-wigs of a dozen powdered French-parlour courtesans
what of this shivering scene
stirs up
the frisson of my inner life
the rutted clay
and shards of tarmac
rough beneath my tread
the earth that longs to lift itself against

the gloomy sky
responds as darkness will
when light withdraws
and if the world will have me
I'll be had
two strangers *God and I*
await a greeting from the friend within

JOHN CASQUARELLI

John Casquarelli is the author of two full-length collections: *On Equilibrium of Song* (Overpass Books, 2011) and *Lavender* (Authorspress, 2014). He is an Instructor of Academic Writing at Koç Üniversitesi in Istanbul. He received his MFA in Creative Writing at Long Island University – Brooklyn. John was awarded the 2010 Esther Hyneman Award for Poetry, 2016 Kafka Residency Prize in Hostka, Czech Republic, and a 2017 residency at the Writer’s Room of The Betsy Hotel on South Beach. His poems have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies.

For Those Who Fell Aside

“We are made of all those who have built and broken us.”

Atticus

My inner-Persephone creating spring.
A blossoming, earth fruit nectar
running from lower lip to ecstasy.
Am I the goddess bearing a torch,
divine and bathing in shadows and
broken ribs? The Spartan heart like
a sleepless bell tower, grasping for air.
I will rise scarred, but an emerald
in an underworld of my own choosing.

On the one hand it’s the idea. On the other
a map fused in poetry salt and illusions.
I remind myself to be careful with
the institutions that I trust too willingly.
For a moment, I clench my eyes shut.
Our clothes sweat-soaked, churning through
dirt barricades and that all-consuming
universe of misconceptions. Maybe home is
more than meatloaf or an Orpheusian song.

But what can I do? I'm only one thread
in this ball of yarn in the blue hour.
We're perpetually meeting in that place
between familiarity and strangeness,
overlooking miles of damp clothes and
weeping muses. Pity is often greeted
with smiles, a kind of empty fire
burning skin, crackling pores,
epidermis spasms on yesterday's stain.

I once believed the key to immortality
was to avoid static thoughts. I spent
hours chasing butterflies in sunflower
fields, transcending in perfect calm,
dreaming in song, opened like pomegranate,
decadent and cultivated. A time will come
when the fourth act of this operetta concludes,
and another Offenbach composes my myth
and the myths of so many like me.

JOHN DI LEONARDO

John Di Leonardo is a visual artist and poet first. His chapbook *Book of Hours* was published in 2014. His poems have won numerous awards in over thirty poetry anthologies. He is a Director with The Station Art Gallery in Whitby, ON, President of the Brooklin Poetry Society, Editor of *Verse Afire*, The Ontario Poetry Society Publication. He writes and paints in Brooklin, Ontario, Canada. You can visit him at johndileonardo.ca

Horse And Train

(Inspired by Alex Cobille's painting, Art Gallery of Hamilton, Oil, 1954.)

A black horse hangs
fixed on a white wall
she is ill, gone wild.
It is Spring, past starlight
in Sackville
below an elaborate cobweb
of clouds.
A wild horse gallops
towards the steamy light
to a sleepless train.
In minutes the broken
mare will die
again –
With a kind of beauty
that invades our dreams
colliding each morning
on waking alone in the dark,
lower lip quivering
against the passage of light.

Acknowledgment: Second Place Award, Dr. William Henry Drummond Poetry Contest Anthology, 2015. Second Place Award, The Cranberry Tree Press, 2015 Poetry Chapbook Contest.

JOHN HART

John Hart of San Rafael, California, has found the climbing experience to be the live wire of his poetry, often sparking into poems ostensibly on other subjects. His poetry collections are *The Climbers* (Pitt Poetry Series, 1978) and *Storm Camp* (Sugartown Publishing, 2017). He edits the international poetry journal *Blue Unicorn*, published since 1977 in the San Francisco area. A graduate of Princeton University, Hart makes his living as a non-fiction writer on environmental subjects, with fifteen prose titles to his credit; recognitions include the David Brower Award from the American Alpine Club.

The Skeptical Climber Awaits Rescue

Our messenger departed days ago
Seeking that rumored country far below
Where water is a liquid; where there are things called trees
To boost their rich and vulnerable leaves:
Where you can talk into the wind and walk
The streets at noon with an unshielded eye.

I have my doubts: it seems to me
That what we know is the reality:
This wind and whiteness, stonefall, the genuine sun
The high hostilities to be depended on
The forecast all of storm.

It's true than when the clouds out west permit
You can just make out some humps of darker hue
And points of brightness that might not be snow.
The apparition is quite distant, though,
And who can read this milk and metal sky?

There was a map
That had “Seattle” on it, words like that,
But the universe it showed was too elaborate
And level to be quite acceptable.
I smell a hoax. The world is not flat.

The beauty stands around us, hopelessly,
And we will not survive this injury.
When we’ve used up our rations, we will die.
God fashioned food and fuel for six days
And rested on the seventh; so will we.

This hill of ours with its steam of stars:
This is the spring of clear water where, to drink,
The avalanches and the heavy angels come,
Leading their tall blank horses with dim eyes.

Acknowledgment: First appearance: The Midwest Quarterly 48, no 2 (Winter 2007), 271.

JOHN MCFARLAND

John McFarland has published poetry, short stories, and critical essays widely including in *The Isherwood Century: Essays on the Life and Work of Christopher Isherwood* and *The Book Group Book*. He is author of 03 books. He lives in Seattle, Washington, USA. <https://johnmcfarland.wordpress.com>

What I Like

Discontinuities, unsettling shifts
of storyline,
Appearance, disappearance and reappearance
of characters pell-mell,
Modern, unleashed and mysterious
Verbal waves crashing on my shore,
Words over words washing up illumination.

Dreamlike, subterranean, cosmopolitan,
Byzantine, public-place, mattress-bound,
Hoydenesque, willy-nilly, pre-prandial,
Motion of the ocean, quotient of the lotion,
Lesson of the blessing, the end of a line.

Acknowledgment: "What I Like" was first published by The Pegasus Review, May 1998.

JOHN REINHART

Awarded the Dark Poetry Scholarship from the Horror Writers Association, John Reinhart's poems and short works have been published internationally. Reinhart's seven books to date span a wide range, from dark sci-fi to humorous scenes of his family life, experimental word compositions to serious social commentary. Website: <http://home.hampshire.edu/~jcr00/reinhart.html>

Supernovae

i want
to be a dandelion
cracking through the asphalt
yellow sun in black hole
radiating mischievous power

i want
to grow old and gray
standing tall, knowing
the wonders of morning and night
whistling in the wind

i want
to die quietly on the breeze
sowing future promise lightly
exploding supernovae into space
little yellow suns between the cracks

JON DAVIS

Jon Davis is the author of five chapbooks and five full-length poetry collections. Davis also co-translated Iraqi poet Naseer Hassan's *Dayplaces* (Tebot Bach, 2017). He has received a Lannan Literary Award, the Lavan Prize, the Off the Grid Poetry Prize, and two National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships. He taught for 27 years, then, in 2013, founded the MFA in Creative Writing at the Institute of American Indian Arts.

The New Americans

They are rising from duckweed shoals on slippery haunches, front
feet changed into grasping hands, thumbs and forearms
thickened for commerce, mouths too bony for kissing.
They will breathe through their skins.
Their eyes will be keened for motion.
They will be maculate, stricken with appetite.
They will lunge with purpose, long tongues speaking the language
of capture, shouting the single verb of longing in the
dialect of hunger.
They will grunt and snore nightly in the tall grass.
While gods, made in their image, bellow beside the river of heaven,
they will jockey in the weedbanks.
They will turn, nothing human in their eyes, just the hard measure
– the precision, the unswerving focus.
They will be mystics wired to the gods' wishes.
They will leap before they know they are leaping.

JOSEPH HART

Joseph Hart has a BA in psychology. For several years he has had poems published in small magazines, and was twice nominated for a Pushcart. His favourite poets are Keats, Millay and Robinson.

Lines

“God is love,” the prophets said,
In spite of death and pain.
All life responds to love. Instead
The people go insane.

But animals will only live.
And Man is not above
Kittens who, although they give,
Don't make a God of love.

JOSEPH HUTCHISON

Joseph Hutchison, Colorado Poet Laureate (2014-2019), is the author of 17 poetry collections, including *The World As Is: New & Selected Poems, 1972-2015*; *The Satire Lounge*; and *Marked Men*. He has edited the poetry anthology *Legions of the Sun: Poems of The Great War* and co-edited *Malala: Poems for Malala Yousafzai* and *A Song for Occupations: Poems about the American Way of Work*. At the University of Denver's University College, he directs two graduate-level programs, Professional Creative Writing and Arts & Culture Management. Hutchison lives in the mountains southwest of the city with his wife, Iyengar yoga instructor Melody Madonna. www.jhwriter.com

Touch

“... as though all life were death.”

– Ferdowsi

I

“If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail.” Say it: Implements speak. Thus guns whisper to ruptured psyches: *Touch me all over. Feel how I quiver with the fire damped in us both. Hold me*, breathes the gun. *Trigger our one desire – and I will raise you up.*

II

A street punk fucked my friend's son up for his wallet and a thrill. *Pop-pop*. Everything bled out: past, future, Furies, gods. The gun barked, and the stars forgot how to speak, and silence poured down on my friend like fire as he reached out for what he could not touch.

III

Have bloody entertainments murdered touch?
Facebook bullying? Torture by proxy? Look up:
the sky that seems so empty is, in fact, on fire
with being. We imagine emptiness in everything
to break the shackles of desire, the longing to speak,
to *be*. Emptiness absolves as it thunders from the gun.

IV

*Mailman, mailman, where's my gun? My gun,
my flex-tip ammo, my 30-round mags.* (A touch
of manic cunning's trained him not to speak
such litanies out loud.) Who can say what's up?
Even the scheming shooter can't grasp everything
he aims to do; but he'll at last feel real when he fires.

V

As a kid I watched Davy Crockett by the campfire:
coonskin cap, possum stew, his muzzle-load long gun
propped against a Hollywood pine. How everything
glowed! How fondly the frontier king would touch
Old Betsy, slowly swab her barrel, then snatch her up
to kill some red marauder with nary a line to speak.

VI

They bleed in theaters, temples, schools; they speak
no more, love and dream no more. The same fire
kills them in cubicles, parking lots, alleys, up
in the boardroom, down in the lobby. Only the gun
doesn't bleed, exists to penetrate what it won't touch,
what the shooter won't touch – which is everything.

VII

Touch matters. Say it! Tears well up in everything.
Touch them. Strokeskin, not steel. In the mirror, touch
the Other's face – a fire that will never speak from a gun.

JUDITH BARRINGTON

Judith Barrington's fifth collection of poetry, *Long Love: New & Selected Poems* was published in 2018. She is also the author of *The Conversation* (2015), whose title poem was the winner of the Gregory O'Donoghue International poetry award. Her *Lifesaving: A Memoir* was the winner of the Lambda Book Award and a finalist for the PEN/Martha Albrand Award for the Art of the Memoir. Judith also wrote the best-selling *Writing the Memoir: From Truth to Art* and was a faculty member of the University of Alaska, Anchorage's MFA Program. She is co-founder of Soapstone Inc. <http://www.judithbarrington.com>

The Conversation

...And they, since they

We're not the one dead, turned to their affairs.

– Robert Frost, "Out, Out –"

It's not that I blame them: how often have I too turned
back to my living life, leaving the dead to hover
around in dreams or pop into sight as a back view
walking with a familiar gait towards the park?
Just because I'm dead now, I can hardly ask them
to hang out nearby, lost for language,
lost for gesture, lingering just to show willing.

It's not even as if I have somewhere to go:
I've told them often enough: the end is the end,
so off you go to affairs of state or of the heart,
to money worries, doctors' offices, children
who threaten to turn out all wrong – or so you say.
Anyway, what would we do if you stuck around here?
It's too late now for that conversation we never had –

though it's interesting to discover that I still wish
I'd found a way to get it going. The end may be
the end, though some piece of me, not quite finished,
has kept the words that belong in that talk
stuffed inside my mouth which is firmly closed
like my eyes, though my lids are no longer
weighted with coins – bus fare into the next world

which, of course, doesn't exist. But what if a bus
should come along or a rowboat to cross the river
or even a cruising yellow cab? Would I get on board –

curious to find out where they're headed, take a tour
like on that cold, cold bus in Granada that stops
at Lorca's family home where on August 18 they came
to arrest the poet. A day later he was dead, going
nowhere except into history, no transport required.

*Acknowledgment: First published in Southword. Winner of the 2013
Gregory O'Donoghue International Poetry Prize.*

JUDITH PACTH

Judith Pacht's *Summer Hunger* (Tebot Bach), won the 2011 PEN Southwest Book Award for Poetry. Her earlier chapbooks, *User's Guide* and *St. Louis Suite* were published by Finishing Line Press. Two collections, *A Cumulus Fiction* and *Infirmity for a Private Soul* will be published this spring, 2019 by Finishing Line Press and Tebot Bach. A three-time Pushcart nominee, Pacht's work includes poems published in *Ploughshares*, *Runes*, *Phoebe*, *Nimrod* and translated into English, *Foreign Literature* (Moscow, Russia); her poem *Undelivered Mothers' Day* took first place in the Georgia Poetry Society's Edgar Bowers competition and her poems appear in numerous anthologies. Her chapbook, also her first poetry collection, *Falcon* (Conflux Press), was published in 2004. www.judithpacht.com

Bird

A slice of sheep cheese with apple

you were saying
when the window shook

– or was it the whole wall –
and on the ground a wren,

beak and needle talons
in barest motion,

obsidian eyes
dazed, fooled by light

seeming air, seeming
endless as sky.

Who hasn't flown
too fast and high,

song full
in the belly

sun-warm after a rain,
the sweet taste

dazzling. Sometimes
it ends this way,

a blind fracture
after a moment

of so much
so complete,

that fullness under
wild-streaked feathers.

Feel her, she's still warm.

Acknowledgment: Bird, first published by Tebot Bach press in Summer Hunger.

JUDITH SKILLMAN

Judith Skillman is the author of sixteen collections of poetry and a 'how to,' *Broken Lines – The Arts & Craft of Poetry*. Awards include an Eric Mathieu King Fund grant from the Academy of American Poets. Her recent collection is *Kafka's Shadow*, *Deerbrook Editions*. Her work has been nominated for Best of the Web and Pushcart prizes. Visit: www.judithskillman.com

Field Thistle

Herb and spine,
the flat-fisted dream
of stars and dew
formed when he walked
with his telescope
through grasses spotted
by the spit bug.

A raucous noise,
the dawn of great beauty
and he with his tripod
matting the grasses as he walked.

I never saw him dead
on a bed of white down.
Never heard past
the death rattle,
and so, for me, he lives
there in the ragged, noxious weeds
that make up North America.

He with his freely creeping root system,
milk-juiced,
the most persistent
of all my fathers
on arable lands.

Acknowledgment: Heat Lightning, New and Selected Poems 1986-2006, Silverfish Review Press.

K PANKAJAM

K. Pankajam is a bilingual poet and novelist retired from BHEL as Dy Manager/Finance with eighteen published works to her credit including ten books of poems and one translated into French. Two of her poetry collections have got reviews in the Journal of Commonwealth Literature 2016. Her poems have been discussed in the book *Femininity - Poetic Endeavours*. A scholarly article on her poems has been published in *JOELL August 2015*. Her poems, book reviews and articles have been published/anthologized widely. She is the recipient of Oriental Poetry Award 2016, 3rd winner in Viswabharathi Research Centre Poetry contest 2017, one of the winners in Bharat Award for short story International and Rabindranath Tagore Award for Poetry – International for 2017 and 2018, Shree Atal Behari Vajpayee Award 2019 and Rock Pebbles National Literary Award 2019.

A Word From The Girl That She Was Once

Much like the notes from a piano fading slowly
while passing through a desolate lane at dusk
where one can't stop or even slow down
her girlhood vanished
with the readiness of a woman
and the girl in her grieved in silence
like the groves that grieve
losing their last leaves in winter storms.

She shed her cherished girlish gown
spun with layers of blissful dreams
and shrunk to the shell of the new calling
as the slowly surrendering sun.

The knight who stood
at the threshold of the sacred shrine
of her budding youth
swirling his sword of birth
made a pact with her singing flesh
to bless her with motherhood.
The ones whom she nurtured
along the bay she strode
had eyes on greener pastures
and moved on with booming pursuits.

While summer smiles down
sorrows queue up to deprive her
affirm their focus, empty themselves
as snakes into the tumbled leaves,
cast pearls of grief at her
that speed up the inevitable plummet
at which her feminine features, simply great,
meet with sudden doom,
leave the glowing face with lines,
neck with folded skin,
iris grey, coated with white fumes
and a slowdown in the contemplation of judgment
with the citadel of decrees stumbling.

Stares fogging into oblivion
she may soon dissolve as a statue in dusk
and fortunes denied may come back to her
for which 'Time' has set negative price tags.

KANWAR DINESH SINGH

Kanwar Dinesh Singh is a poet, storyteller, critic and translator based at Shimla. His publications include several volumes of poetry in English and Hindi, besides books in literary criticism. He is the recipient of the 'Himachal Pradesh State Sahitya Akademi Award' for poetry. Currently, he is Associate Professor of English at a Government College affiliated to Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla and Editor of *Hyphen*.

They And I

Morning.

I am the rising sun.
They bow to me,
They even shower
Offerings,
For I have light for them.

Noon.

I am the scorching sun.
They look down on me,
In warmth I requit
Their offerings. They can
Little make out.

Evening.

I am the setting sun.
They turn away their faces,
For now I have least for them.

Night.

I hide myself from them
To save my own skin,
For now I have
Nothing for them,
I am shorn of both
Light and warmth.

Acknowledgment: The poem was first published in Muse India (Oct-Nov, 2005).

KARL ELDER

Karl Elder is Lakeland University's Fessler Professor of Creative Writing and Poet in Residence. His honors include: the Christopher Latham Sholes Award from the Council of Wisconsin Writers; a Pushcart Prize; the Chad Walsh, Lorine Niedecker, and Lucien Stryk Awards; and two appearances in *The Best American Poetry*. His most recent books of poems are *Gilgamesh at the Bellagio* from The National Poetry Review Award Book Series and a chapbook, *The Houdini Monologues*. Elder's novel, *Earth as It Is in Heaven*, appeared in 2016 from Pebblebrook Press. www.karlelder.com

Ode In The Key Of O

Kudos unto the code and to the mind
behind the hand that moved not out of need
but what must be acknowledged as a thought
nonpareil – stone turned wheel no exception –
the crude scrawl in ashes, sand, and soil
with stick or staff that which it did not know
to call symbol, yet would bring to recall
the awe uttered as o on the rounded
mouth below the eyes of one fixed upon
the moon's shape, if not in worship, wonder.

Yea, as if a remnant of gods gone ghost
gleaned from the air by the hand of a mime,
like approximation of perfection,
that diminutive orb wholly without
substance rolled from the tongue, made corporal
by yet another eidolon, the line –
call it divine insight when the pupil
of the mind's eye eclipses iris to
highlight, through swift abstraction, the concrete.

Ought it then not be, after the grand span
of five hundred generations, given
the cuneiform-like illusion of form
born of the fact of annularity,
all alacrity to the degree it
has not atrophied to hilarity
at the writ of the clock is – while more
minute each minute – worthy, too, of praise?

For value in its purest form is less
a matter of matter than the marriage
of light and shade, their interdependency
in the sense, say, male and female were one
from the beginning – no little arrow
on the o of that embryo, no foe,
target, cross, or stickman Atlas below.

Lo, behold: lift like Sol's soul o from *god*
there's no g. d. (or even dad gummed) thing
to which we cling if not – a la lingua
franca more so than the thing itself, life
buoy or lasso – awe, the ineffable
grasped as we're pulled, gasping, through h. to o.

Thus, as it's said, at the apogee of one's
gestation there is the crowning; there is
as well the splash, and there is the circle
of attendants, the cry, the swaddling,
the mother's embrace, infant to her breast.

Yet, birth is life's twist: in time time doesn't
exist, now flanked by nothing of the past,
no word of the future when, alas, love's
orismo's most fierce in fear of life's loss.

O, of the holes in the whole of our knowledge
we say miracle, though the miracle,
mother of miracles, is we say it.

As for love's spell – phallic l, mellow o
vis-à-vis *Eve's* cleft v v. snake eye e –
is it not awe to which we owe our awe?

KATHRINE YETS

Kathrine Yets lives in St. Francis, Wisconsin and works as an English teacher. She recently received the Jade Ring Award from the Wisconsin Writers' Association for her poetry. Her works also appear in *River & South Review*, *Fish Food Magazine*, and *Fickle Muses*.

Skinny Dipping In Ottawa

It was dark.
Every longing star in the sky
reflected on the placid water,
begging to be touched.
I stepped into this galaxy-
as quiet as you would expect it to be-
sending a ripple through the moon.

Water trickled off my skin.
Liquid wind chimes,
each drop had its own note to play.

I moved among the stars till I was submerged;
a part of this sky but distinct from it.
I let the water take me,
hold me up between two worlds,
float between two skies.

KEITH INMAN

Keith Inman's favourite lit class was in Ireland; best reading, a cafe in Spain; coolest invite LA; most interesting editor, from Malta (NY based). Keith's work has won a handful of awards and grants. His books can be found in major libraries in North America and Europe. Home is Thorold, Ontario, Canada, where huge ships climb the continent. 'That Sweet Fermenting Nectar' won The Ontario Poetry Society's 2015 Poeteer Award for its extreme rhyme, a new style called the Mirette.

That Sweet Fermenting Nectar

Butterflies cue in the ears of flowers.

Black-eyed Susan withers
in the corner.

Other flies move in
and the air sours.

KITTY JOSPÉ

Kitty Jospé, MA French Literature, NY University; MFA, Pacific University, Oregon. After retiring from teaching French language and literature, she has been teaching poetry appreciation and is a docent at the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester, NY. She is author of 5 books of poetry. The poem, *Twilight Venus* appeared in *Atlantic Review* v. 23, no.2, 2017 Spring-Summer.

Twilight Venus

You are *Phosphoros* – bringer of light –
emerging from a gold disk
to circle and thread
light behind you
and you are *Hesperos* –
star of the evening,
although we know you are not a star,
and more than planet
orbiting within our planet's orbit
close to our sun.

I want simply to rise like you,
one arm attached to a tendril of dusk
spiraling behind what could be
both dawn, twilight...

Oh, you've caught me.
Of course

I want
everything and its opposite
and want it all to balance
to have you, goddess of love,
embrace us with sensuous poise,
possibility, innuendo.

Everyone wants to be
wrapped by love. I imagine you
touching each person's wanting.

KUM KUM RAY

Prof (Dr) Kum Kum Ray is a Senior Cambridge, Honors Graduate from Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi University. She was awarded the best thesis award for her Ph.D. Degree on Henry Louis Vivian D, the first Anglo Indian Nationalist Poet. She is an Educationist and Poet Activist. With forty-two years of experience in teaching. She is the Founding Director at Amity School of Language Amity University Uttar Pradesh Lucknow Campus, who was instrumental in the drafting of the Course Curriculum for English/Communication Skills/Buss Communication for, Value Added Mandatory Courses at AUUP. Her 4 books for children: *My First Step Book – 1, 2, 3, 4* was published by Macmillan in 2000. She is a certified experienced Writer on 'Power of the Pen: Identities and Social Issues in Poetry and Play by University of IOWA (USA). 'Flow Free Breathe Free' is her first anthology has been published by Notion Press. <http://www.profkumkumray.com>

SAT CHIT ANAND

Why do you shed tears?
Mourn my death!
I may not be in flesh and blood
'Dust', I was and dust have I become.
But not my Soul;
I delve in the thousands deeds of kindness
I shine in the blades of Golf-Greens
I live in the knowledge scattered around
I remain in the counseling and uncalled for advices
I flower in the bowers of trees
I float in the aroma of ripened fruits
I swell up in the emotions of my siblings, kith-kin and dear ones
I am sung on the lips of 'Shaairs'
You can feel me in the embrace of friends
I live in the 'Sanskar' of nephews, nieces, all my children

You see my legacy in my three offspring.
Why do you shed tears? Mourn, Lament my death
I am 'SAT-CHIT-ANAND'
I may not live in flesh and blood but I am the wind beneath your
wings
I may not live in flesh and blood...
I am
SAT – Eternal
CHIT – The complex of vision and knowledge
ANAND – Pure awareness of eternal bliss.

LALITA NORONHA

Born in India, Lalita Noronha came to the U.S on a Fulbright travel grant and earned her Ph. D in Microbiology /Biochemistry. She is a research scientist, science teacher, writer, poet, and editor for *The Baltimore Review*. She is the author of a short story collection and two poetry books and has received two Individual Artist Awards (fiction, poetry) and Pushcart prize nominations (poetry and creative nonfiction), and featured on National Public Radio. Website/blog: <http://lalitanoronha.net>

Forty Years Later: What I know

Let me say this about immigrants who burrow through the earth
to swim in rivers whose names they lisp,
Mississippi, Missouri – so many esses, hisses, misses,
the Grand Canyon they fly over with paper wings.

I love the way they step off a plane or boat into a silky twilight
towing belongings – prayer beads, bamboo flutes, jute bags –
scraps of this and that, passports and photographs,
leaving behind scorched chimneys, banana leaves,
monkeys hanging by their feet from trees.

But here is what they do not say –

We will never be whole again.

We cannot, in truth, uproot.

We will grow fins, wings, scales, tails, water-colored third eyes.

We will use our arms as legs, heels as fists, bellies and backs as floats.

We will fill our mouths with ash.

We will chill our teeth

drink the acrid wine of separation

and sleep through occasions – birth, death, days between –

for this one chance to awaken

grateful, still surprised.

LANA BELLA

A four-time Pushcart Prize, five-time Best of the Net & Bettering American Poetry nominee, Lana Bella is an author of three chapbooks, *Under My Dark* (Crisis Chronicles Press, 2016), *Adagio* (Finishing Line Press, 2016), and *Dear Suki: Letters* (Platypus 2412 Mini Chapbook Series, 2016), has had poetry and fiction featured with over 450 journals, *Acentos Review*, *Comstock Review*, *EVENT*, *Ilanot Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Rock and Sling*, & *Lampeter Review*, among others, and work to appear in *Aeolian Harp Anthology*, Volume 3. Lana resides in the US and the coastal town of NhaTrang, Vietnam, where she is a mom of two far-too-clever-frolicsome imps.

Doppelganger

Light spills from beneath the awning,
nets in a puddle of tattooed air as it
travels over her pale features. A face
grows in concentration. Follows by an
exhaling of tangled peals. Searching
for escape. Dizzy from the pull of swift
release and jarring hysteria, she unfurls
those long fingertips. Reaching for the
buoyant silhouette. Dovetailing with the
flutter of its yellow haired river. It nibbles
at the fingered suspension. Soft eyes, one
in a surprise caught, and the other veils
in shadow, leaning back into itself. Doubt
latches on to the skirt of the percussive
energy, sluggish. Like a naked dandelion
head floating awkwardly with broken stem,
empties through of downy plume. At the
sudden stir of air passing over them,

recognition shapes. In condensation and
smoke. Where the light is enchained and
acoustic vignettes tote along to shoulder
the notes of memory over. It knows what
she knows. It feels the same impressions
of her sensibility and riddled dreams. Atoms
dance across twined fingers. Breaths fusing
at the nubs in an ever curving flow of ions.
Twin bones. Twin fates. Forging into one.
Into an alphabet of matter and light.

Acknowledgment: Previously published with Of Zoos Magazine.

LANI O' HANLON

From Ireland, author of *Dancing the Rainbow* (Mercier Press 20017) dance and movement therapist; Lani O' Hanlon has an MA in Creative Writing from Lancaster University. Her poetry chapbook *The Little Theatre* was funded by Artlinks and her poems have been published in *POETRY*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Msllexia*, *The Irish Times*, *Southword*, *The Stinging Fly*, *The Moth*, *Skylight Poets*, the Anthology *Halleluiab for 50ft Women* (Bloodaxe) and broadcast on national radio – RTE's Sunday Miscellany. Her poetry has won, been highly commended and/or shortlisted for many competitions including *FISH*, *Msllexia*, *DiBiase*, *Poetry on the Lake* and *the Bridport Poetry Prize*.

A Copper Basin In Florence

The owner smiles as if she knows me
and pulls out a chair. Beside the doorway
a copper basin lies on its side. Nana Ross had one
just like it, in the kitchen, behind the grocery shop.

As a child I imagined my soul was that color
and sanctifying grace was red, dripping
rosary-like, a kind of divine sweat that smelt
of frankincense, myrrh, milk and straw.

By age nine I had committed a mortal sin,
let Nicki Walshe touch me there and didn't tell,
made a bad confession, took communion
paper thin and white on my black-spotted tongue.

Nana sprinkled us with holy water,
gave me a blessed rosary from Lourdes,
all blue and purple it was, but I lost it
like I lost the library book, sins mounting up;

the row over contraception with a priest
in the confessional box in Stillorgan.
Sister Anne, white musty face, those thin lips
“How dare you, a girl, question holy men.”

Lying bare-breasted in the long grass with Ciarán,
drinking Guinness followed by Harvey Wallbangers,
vomiting it all up on Pearse Street,
a guy from Tuam holding my forehead.

Walking away from my father’s house, my marriage,
my job, to dance barefoot in a circle of women
who prayed with wrists, hips, feet and drums,
bellies painted gold, Magdalene red.

In the Duomo di Firenze the air stinks of old blood,
paintings heavy with pigment and suffering.
I rinse my mouth with the Signora’s wine
and that copper basin is only a basin, a thing.

Acknowledgment: This poem first appeared in POETRY Source: Poetry (Oct 2016).

LARAIN KENTRIDGE LASDON

Laraine Kentridge moved to the United States in 1974. She was born in Johannesburg, South Africa and moved to London, UK to study Drama, Music and Dance. Her love of writing and poetry came from working, as a student at the Royal Library of London, happily scouring the stacks and shelves of this institution. In Austin, Texas, Laraine devotes her time to supporting the Arts and is the founder of Poets and Friends, a monthly creative poetry group. <https://austinmarketing.biz>

Bat

There are times when my breath is short,
I pump the bellows of my lungs, frantically
adding air to the heated sponge and calling
on the teachings of Master Nicklaus for elucidation
as to what would happen if my journey up the mountain
towards the dark cave of my destination,
would drown my soul or create a drought so
dry that the very vitality of my life – dust unto dust,
would wither and every lobe so perfect a host
for anger, love and peace,
then calm those very passions
would deny my heart its beat.

My purpose is strong, my temperament firm.
I feel a guardian protecting me from harm.
Although my soul's defenses are weak and puny
surrounded by madness and massacres of Jews.
Yehudi, the word ricochets around the world,
reminding us we are human, Yehudi. Yehudi.
Jew means thankful.
But still I must reach the cave pushing uphill
through scrub and scabbed bush as if

forty days and forty nights must be endured,
by Pharaoh's orders, through roiling sun,
alone, for where will help come from?

I feel an onslaught – the depths of despair
bereft for six million plus eleven to add to the roster
of people who need
our care need our grief for centuries of prejudice

with no justice, redemption, or peace.
But what about the single heart, my heart,
whose shadowed
soul craves the inky black cave.
To hang upside down
in nature's sleep, not seeing the
funerals, pine boxes, and small bodies in white shrouds
or hearing the scrape of the shovel lift earthly mud
to lovingly begin the physical end
and begin a life of memory and pain.

I feel a slim cry, vibrating, ascending, at a pitch so high
it can only be heard by Adonai and I.
I find the God of the Caves who hears sacred prayers
from supplicants and applicants and bearers
of good luck mixed with tears.
Part bat, part human Camazotz rules his caves,
where I long to be safe in the belly of the earth,
letting go of these fears, preferring rebirth.
Bat hearts beating offering hope, dispelling dread,
emerging renewed each night, no myth of the dead.

I wish I was a bat with a millionfold community
to blot out the day, then, in total harmony,
as the day ends and all, as one,
swoop out to greet the setting sun.

LARRY D. GRIFFIN

An Oklahoman, Larry D. Griffin has one book of short stories, eleven books of poetry, and more than four hundred poems, hundreds of essays, and three dozen short stories in journals to his credit. His most recent books of poetry, both published in 2016, include *Jane Complete* (Mongrel Press) and *Cedar Plums* (Lamar University Press). His art appears in private collections in Africa, Australia, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America – he now searches for a venue in Antarctica. Last year he serves the American University of Malta as Professor of English. He presently retires to Flint Creek in the Delaware District of the Cherokee Nation in the Failed State of Oklahoma.

All My Life

When I was a young man, I thought I had never known a kiss,
but after my dear Valerie, my life changed into how I miss
her sweet laughter and her heart filled with hers and my tears,
what we found in our lives in our happiness and in our fears,
whether France or America. She was the right one, I, the man
only try to become always better in being than what I can.

I longed for Valerie after I lost her my whole life through,
I, so ineffective, she so absolutely all anything any man who
ever found himself there in her arms in that sweet Amiens,
a so long ago, hopes in this simple sonnet to make amends.

All my life, since I first met Valerie, I wait for her,
and now an old man, I long for her faster, finer, whirr
into what all other lovers, future and present, feel in the past
when they know quite simply their love would forever last.

LARRY L. FONTENOT

Larry was a Juried Poet at the 2005 Houston Poetry Fest and a Featured Poet at the 2000 Fest. A chapbook, *Choices & Consequences*, was the winner of the Maverick Press 1996 *Southwest Poets' Series Chapbook* competition. In 2007 his poem "Mowing Deconstructed" was chosen for honorable mention in *The Weight of Addition*, an anthology of Texas poetry published by Mutabilis Press. His poem "Lost Birds" was selected for inclusion in the 2012 Austin International Poetry Festival (AIPF) Anthology, *di-verse-city*. Larry's latest chapbook, *Wish I Could Dance*, was published by the Dallas Poets Community Press in 2009.

Just As You Are I Am

You cross 60 years,
back to home-town limits,
gravel roads, hardscrabble yards
thick with aromas of barbecue.
You spot a boy squatting behind a screen door.
He might be you back then,
but he's black, his ebony dreams
buried in the white heaps of America.
His stare turns you back to the car.
You drive away from that first home
where your mother knew no better
than to stay and suffer defeat,
where the fields beyond the yard
were filled with diesel beasts
mired in summer mud
waiting for fathers to ride
their lumbering frames
into the last dignity left standing:

work until there was no work,
die when it was all done.
The life left there leaves you hostage
to memories of hunger and thirst,
tongues keen for drops of rain,
white skins waxed dark by the sun,
children evaporating into colors,
the stuff of imperfect rainbows.
You always were and always will be
a ghost scattered across the years.

Acknowledgment: Published online in Ilyia's honey, Fall 2013.

in this small lot – hedged, hidden,
with its offerings of fruit
& shade & song. So that later,

when evening embraces all
you just praised,
you slip back into the night garden

to be blessed that way too.

Acknowledgment: "Night Garden" appeared in These Many Rooms (Four Way Books 2019).

LAVERNE FRITH

Laverne Frith, a widely published, award-winning poet, lives in Sacramento, California, USA. He is co-founder of *Ekephrasis – A Poetry Journal*, established in 1997. He has been published in such journals as *Verbal Art*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *Memoir*. His most recent full-length collection is *Estuaries Of The Mind*, AuthorsPress, winner of a 2018 Artists Embassy International Golden Seal Literary Award. <http://lavernefrith.com>

Somewhere In The Estuaries Of The Mind

fertile thoughts reside, waiting
for the right time for their germination,

for the wash of waters to complete their cycles.
I have an idea it might be soon. I have seen

the clouds register their findings, combine
messages into codes. But I have learned

enough about patterns not to be deceived,
all the while knowing that every nook

and cranny has its time. And in the tide pools
the conscience of the sea awaits,

having its own collusion with time, always
needing to have an ally on its side.

The tide pools hold some of the sea's secrets:
the broken shells, fragments of Echinodermata,

hapless kelp, and every kind of algae without
a home, as the sea continues to tell its stories,

if for nothing more than to free itself, to return
every iniquity it has had to hold.

Acknowledgment: Previously published in Verbal Art: A Global Journal Devoted to Poets and Poetry.

LAWRENCE T. O'NEILL

Lawrence T. O'Neill is poet and Vietnam war veteran, tree farmer. Home is Charlestown, RI, USA. He is author of 04 books of poetry. His first poem was published in 1973. Small press publications gave him acceptance and publications. He is listed in The Directory of American Poets and Writers. Prizes Won: Third prize in Light of the Stars Poetry Contest, 2016. Perry Terrell Publishing 2016 Poetry Contest, 6th prize.

Transformation

crawling through the leaves
eating my fair share
I wiggle into tiny curves
and feel the warm sun
the bars of light make me blind
with my many legs pushing me
I hold the belly of the tree
and feast like a king to be
the others fly about transformed
free and easy and different
gliding between sunlight and shadow
like a colorful gypsy moth
and I move slowly by
in this long green ugly shell
the trees are turning colors.

I feel tired and groggy
I want to sleep and rest
I have these dreams of flying...

LAWRENCE UPTON

Lawrence Upton (b.1949) is a poet as well as a graphic artist, sound artist and curator. He writes and performs in a wide range of styles, including sound and visual aspects; he may take almost anything as his starting subject. Much of his writing is of the inner city; but a substantial amount reflects his family background of Cornwall and Scilly. He has performed and shown work throughout Britain and in Sweden, Germany, Holland, France, USA, Canada, Chile and Brazil. He taught English, Theatre and History at Secondary level in the 1980s; and he was Head of Academic Computing at a London F.E. for some years in 1990s. Nowadays he is a professional writer and artist. His recent solo exhibition of 2d and 3d at St James Hatcham was well received. He is a Visiting Research Fellow at Goldsmiths, University of London. <http://lawrenceupton.org>

Noah's dove

Noah's dove, being perceptive, did know
that, if it started telling him the truth
(there is land, but no God)
they could not disembark
in agreement with scripture and inspiration.

Instead, it dropped the twig
hanging lopsidedly heavy
from its beak, and sang,
making its song a lie.

LEIGH HARRISON

Leigh Harrison is a poet and short story writer whose books include *Tour de Farce* (a collection of comic poems and parodies), *Our Harps Upon the Willows* (poems regarding faith and doubt), and *Finding Sermons in Stones* (poems about nature and the four seasons). She has edited numerous books and poetry magazines; her poems have appeared worldwide in translation. Her music CDs (*Eclectic Chanteuse* and *Oh, Wow!*) include her original songs. She sings with a duo (*BlueBird*) and several NYC bands, and has produced concerts featuring female musicians. She created the modern poetry form, the *Pentina*. www.leighharrison.com

What I Know For Sure

“Write about what you know about,” they always told me in writer’s workshops... and I’m, like, “Yeah, right – you want the Holographic Lie concocted by Time and Space (Born: Whenever, Died: Often) or the crunchy, undraped, improbable TRUTH!?” Because, the fact is, you and I know it isn’t really like that, is it? Reality and illusion are but functions of one another, and besides, I know you’ve stroked the grey beard of eternity, pierced the spinning shell of atoms, walked among sullen tigers, been resurrected in purloined love via stolen kisses. You’ve bitten the sacred fruit, murdered the dove... like you, I’ve glided sapphire seas, on ships with milk-white sails, consulted with mermaids, translated obscure kite songs written on the breeze. I’ve trod islands with naked cannibals, eaten the flesh of missionaries, of buffalo...captured a unicorn, wandered wild blackberry roads where the wind howls your name out loud, stalked the Hydra on sultry nights while the parsonage burst into guilty flames and truth lied.

I swam with porpoises in silver streams, cradled pythons against my bosom, tore the living heart from my mother's breast. I've been stabbed by shrieking pencils, written soliloquys in honor of beloved oblivion, licked absinthe from your navel, and hemlock from golden chalices, screwed trees, kept time with radioactive clocks. In our stormy souls, didn't we sing songs that had mute words and silent chords, spit dark notes from clandestine fingers, write shimmering theories we later joyously refuted? Didn't we steal fire from Apollo, weep diamond tears together? ...Lay with monk and derelict, spew flowers from each orifice? ...Put Death on trial, slit Reason's throat...? I can personally describe what it's like to ride a raindrop to its spattered commingling with the sea, to be abducted by aliens, to sizzle like lava on burning hillsides, shatter like broken glass, melt, condense, evaporate.

I've been rollerblading the rings of Saturn, gone ice skating in Hell, played poker with God and bluffed. Any time I want, I can try on your face, meld with your body, steal your dreams, swallow continents whole, have sex with Godzilla. Naturally I've been keeping cool, man – real cool – ever since that fire-breathing dragon I'd been using as transportation to the writer's workshop broke down... yeah, I've been laying low, but in case you're interested, I *have* heard there's this train leaving soon (you dig?) bound for The Farthest Horizon, and I just happen to know Somebody who knows Someone who has this Friend, see, with two free tickets to the Absolute Elsewhere....

LES WICKS

Les Wicks, over 40 years Wicks has performed widely across Australia & internationally. Published in over 350 different magazines, anthologies & newspapers across 29 countries in 14 languages. Conducts workshops around Australia, has edited various projects over the decades, latest being *To end All Wars* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2018) & runs Meuse Press which focuses on poetry outreach projects like poetry on buses & poetry published on the surface of a river. His 14th book of poetry is *Belief* (Flying Islands, 2019). <http://leswicks.tripod.com/lw.htm>

Wind Instruments

I honestly believed that the world was about to come to a crossroads, where money, war and society were all about to be forever altered. In the face of that absolute inevitability, the most logical thing seemed to sing. After all that time I've yet to come up with a better idea.

Robin Williamson

We still look for Licorice McKechnie.

After the band broke up
of course she went to America.
Could be dead but almost certainly
somewhere west, the tumbleweeds
of faith curl the sands –

but Leena & I were there, she didn't show.
We called across arroyos
wrote in highway dust.
There was only a little cash.
Summer howled its blues, haboobs
had been practicing... the slide –
that puke & grit assail the dunes like murder.

Our hungry cars chewed on beetles,
hopes went to shade & assumed a passive menace.
We couldn't approach her most likely hangout,
the laneway was too damaged.
Perhaps Licorice had the love's dementia,
Arizona does that
to any mild holiness.

So much smoke for just a few coughs of poetry.
Our irrelevance is durable,
effortless to maintain.
Freedom actually is free, but hazardous.
An email came in from Joshua Tree, California.

Backroads were renamed after decades
or abandoned, overgrown.
Joan is still busy. Jansch has gone. & Martyn.
Sting has a vineyard in Tuscany.
Arlo votes Republican.

For myself, I try
to put out a *collector's item* every three years –
more feathers come in than royalties.
I have no complaints
while I search for Licorice McKechnie.

LIDIA CHIARELLI

Lidia Chiarelli is one of the Charter Members of Immagine & Poesia, the art literary Movement founded in Torino (Italy) in 2007 with Aeronwy Thomas, Dylan Thomas' daughter. Installation artist and collagist. She has become an award-winning poet since 2011 and she was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation from The First International Poetry Festival of Swansea (U.K.) for her broadside poetry and art contribution. Pushcart Prize Nomination in 2014, 2014, 2016 and 2018. Her writing has been translated into different languages and published in *Poetry Reviews*, and on websites in many countries around the world. <http://lidiachiarelli.jimdo.com>; <https://immaginepoesia.jimdo.com>

An Evening Sky

*A slash of Blue! A sweep of Gray!
Some scarlet patches – on the way –
Compose an evening sky...
– Emily Dickinson*

So sweet was
the scent of those evenings
when
our steps invented long distance routes
in the summer gardens

when
slowly the lights were lit
and competing with the moons and the stars
formed parabolas of light
on the opaque stones of the paths.

Then, life
just begun
seemed to reveal
– just for us –
a sky of unreal colours.

Countless images
(fragments of old memories)
that
today
recreate and break
in the weary kaleidoscope
of the mind.

Note: Poem in memory of my father Guido Chiarelli, head engineer for the lighting projects in Torino, Italy 1956 – 1968.

Acknowledgment: Winner of Il Meleto di Guido Gozzano Award, 2012. Previously published in: Lidia Chiarelli, Immagine & Poesia, Cross-Cultural Communications, New York 2013.

LILIJA VALIS

Lilija Valis, author of *Freedom on the Fault Line*, is an award-winning poet whose work has been published in literary journals and e-zines and included in nine anthologies. She reads her work solo or with a musician, at literary, musical, dance and philosophical events, in Greater Vancouver and the United States. She has participated in two Fringe Festival group performances. She hosts poetry readings and literary festivals. She is a member of the Canadian Authors Association, Royal City Literary Arts Society and is on the Board of Directors at Writers International Network. <http://www.lilijavalis.com>

Ancient Connections

We walk on the thin floors of the present
at risk of collapsing into past worlds
holding it up. Rumi and Stalin are still
telling us how to live. Take your pick.

The closest families harbour strangers.
We find professionals to help us translate
what our mother or son are saying.
Yet a stranger may reach our heart
with no effort – a cellular connection.

I know a Baltic woman who used her DNA
to trace her ancestors and found
herself among nomadic Tartars
and further east, in ancient China.
She was shocked

but I could see
the Tartar in her and the Chinese
in her mother's face. A Norwegian
who moved to live in Greece told me
he felt more at home there than in Norway,

Family members scattered among strangers
and strangers placed in our families.

Have you ever visited a land you've only
heard about and had your skin vibrate
with the thrill of reconnection?

The words we use have also travelled
thousands of years through different lands
to reach where we are now.

Lithuanians have many Sanskrit words
in daily use but the original connection
between two cultures separated
by thousands of miles remains a mystery.

Ancient Celts believed the mystical forces
shaping our lives become strongly felt
in certain times and places.

Recognition of stranger in family
and family in stranger blurs the lines
we draw to divide.

We don't have to like the stranger
to recognize family.
Meal sharing is expected.

We're required to cross a flooding river
carrying the debris of destroyed civilizations.

Each word, like each face, has its own culture
and a past that links us forever.

Families scattered among strangers
and strangers placed in our families.

LINDA LEEDY SCHNEIDER

Linda Leedy Schneider is a psychotherapist in private practice and poetry mentor. She received The Contemporary American Poetry Prize awarded by Chicago Poetry. Linda has written six collections of poetry including *Through My Window: Poetry of a Psychotherapist* (Plain View Press). A former faculty member at Aquinas College and Kendall College of Art and Design, Linda facilitates workshops nationally including The Manhattan Writing Workshop which she founded and has led since 2008. She was asked to conduct a workshop, Poetry Therapy, for the National Association of Social Workers' Annual Conference.

I Reclaim

I reclaim the orchard.
Tear down the houses.
Plant trees.
I reclaim buds, blossoms and bees.

I reclaim milk in glass bottles
left in a tin box, frozen cream
that rose to the top
broke open the seal.

I reclaim the lid I slid
off popping corn
to delight my dog
who ate the evidence.

I reclaim my father's lap,
towers of blocks built
for the thrill of their crash,
being able to rebuild
over and over.

I reclaim myself from rows of wooden desks,
crayons I must not peel, arithmetic facts,
surplus apples, and names on the blackboard
under “We do not talk in work period.”

I reclaim the live monarch
I had to impale and spray
with fixative for Miss Mason
whose wall of breasts fed no one.

I reclaim the girl who finally refused
to kill a frog for the biology teacher.
I reclaim that girl and the right
to rebuild any tower
over and over again.

*Acknowledgment: Published in Rattle Literary Magazine, Summer, 2006. Winner
of the 2012 Contemporary American Poetry Prize awarded by Chicago Poetry.*

LINDA NEMEC FOSTER

Linda Nemeč Foster has authored eleven poetry collections including *The Lake Michigan Mermaid*, *Talking Diamonds*, *Amber Necklace from Gdansk*, and *Listen to the Landscape*. Her work has appeared in anthologies in the U.S. and U.K. and has been published in journals such as *Georgia Review*, *Witness*, *North American Review*, *Nimrod*, and *New American Writing*. She has received awards from the Arts Foundation of Michigan, YMCA's National Writer's Voice, Academy of American Poets, and Dyer-Ives Foundation. Foster was the first Poet Laureate of Grand Rapids, Michigan (2003-05) and founded the Contemporary Writers Series at Aquinas College. <https://www.lindanemecfooster.com>

Contour Of Absence

(after the painting "Provincetown in Winter, 1918" by Gerrit Beneker)

Is this what the new world has given us?
A place of broken ice, its center of negative
space devoid of real color except for the dream-
like mauve, teal, and red of boats locked
and listing in their quiet sleep of winter.

Half-way into the continent, in a place of factories
not boats, my mother is being conceived
by her immigrant parents. Not for love
or passion or longing but to erase the contour
of absence: the silhouette of two daughters
who died the previous year. By illness
or accident, it makes no difference. The death
of a child releases one soul and enslaves

all others. The mother forgets to brush
her hair for weeks. The father can barely
remember how to walk down his street.

But how can my mother know this,
starting the thin journey to her life?
And how can the winter with all its snow and ice
mask true sorrow when everything
in this frozen universe hopes for spring?
The two boats leaning into each other
as if in unmarked graves. The sky,
gray and calm, waiting to be born.

*Acknowledgment: "Contour of Absence" was previously published in Talking
Diamonds (New Issues Press, 2009).*

LISA DORDAL

Lisa Dordal (M.Div., M.F.A.) is a Pushcart Prize nominated poet whose work has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies including *Best New Poets*, *Ninth Letter*, *Cave Wall*, *CALYX*, *The Greensboro Review*, *Vinyl Poetry* and *New Poetry from the Midwest*. She is the recipient of an Academy of American Poets Prize, the Robert Watson Poetry Prize, and the Betty Gabeheart Poetry Prize. She teaches in the English Department at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee and her first full-length collection of poetry, *Mosaic of the Dark*, is available from Black Lawrence Press. For more information, please visit <https://lisadordal.com>

Pretty Moon

Pretty moon, everyone said.
Before the noise, before

the fire. Two cars
and the cornfields idle

on either side. Like the eggs
of monkfish, emerging

a million at a time, knitted
into a gauzy shroud,

forty feet long, buoyant,
built for dispersal – the veil

between us and them,
thin. My cousin,

beautiful at sixteen,
dead at seventeen.

Pretty, pretty moon.
And me, at five, mouth open

not to a scream or even
to a word. Just taking in air,

quietly as a spider
entering a room.

Acknowledgment: First published in Rave Poetry, Spring 2015.

LLOYD SCHWARTZ

Lloyd Schwartz is the Frederick S. Troy Professor of English and teaches in the MFA program at the University of Massachusetts Boston. A Pulitzer Prize-winning arts critic, he is also a leading authority on the poet Elizabeth Bishop and has edited the Library of America *Bishop: Poems, Prose, & Letters*. His poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *The New Republic*, *Poetry*, *Paris Review*, and many other journals and have been selected for the Pushcart Prize, *The Best American Poetry*, and *The Best of the Best American Poetry*. He is the author of four poetry collections, the latest of which is *Little Kisses* (University of Chicago Press, 2017).

Crossword

You're doing a crossword.
I'm working on a puzzle.
Do you love me enough?
What's the missing word?
Do I love you enough?
Where's the missing piece?
Yesterday I was cross with you.
You weren't paying enough attention.
You were cross with me.
I wasn't paying enough attention.
Our words crossed.
Where are the missing pieces?
What are the missing words?
Yet last night we fit together like words in a crossword.
Pieces of a puzzle.

Acknowledgment: Originally published in The New Republic.

LOLA HASKINS

Lola Haskins' thirteenth collection of poetry, *Asylum, Improvisations on John Clare*, is due from Pitt in Spring, 2019. She serves as Honorary Chancellor for the Florida State Poets Association. Past honors include the Iowa Poetry Prize, two NEAs, two Florida Book Awards, and the Emily Dickinson prize from Poetry Society of America. Her website is www.lolahaskins.com.

In The Stark Lands

there are no trees to slow the wind.
Creatures underground come out only
with the stars. There are no other lights.
The distance to the horizon is a fierce
happiness. This is a portrait of my heart.

Acknowledgment: Originally published in Georgia Review; included in Asylum: Improvisations on John Clare (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019).

LORETTA DIANE WALKER

Loretta Diane Walker, an eight-time nominee for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net for poetry, has published four collections of her work. Her fifth collection, *Ode to My Mother's Voice and Other Questions* is forthcoming in 2019 from Lamar University Literary Press. Her poetry can also be found in the anthology of 60 Texas women poets entitled *Her Texas*. Her manuscript *In This House*, published by Bluelight Press, 1st World Publishing won the Phillis Wheatly Book Award for Poetry. Her manuscript *Word Ghetto* won the 2011 Bluelight Press Book Award. Her work has been honored many times and has appeared in numerous publications. <https://sites.google.com/ecisd.school/loretta-diane-walker/home>

Two Birds Break The Dam

"If the day was not your friend, she was your teacher."

– Kimberly Nyogi

of my eyes; trickles of tears flow at first
when I stumble past the lifeless robin
fate leaves at my front doorstep.

Work requires a seven-thirty a.m. sign in;
it's seven-fifteen.
My darkened porch light delivers hours long eulogy
before I shovel the sealed beak and stilled wings
into a bucket,
the only way I know to honor the fallen soprano
in my chorus of morning crooners.

My hands are woozy with sadness
when I take my evening walk,
find an orphaned baby sparrow
flitting on the sidewalk, tiny wings too weak
to propel it above my ankles.

A waterfall of tears covers my face;
the sparrow is a dot in the distance now.
Somewhere between the first and second laps,
I wear guilt like a pair of shoes.
I backtrack, scoop up the fearful orphan
put it in the grass, convince myself
the ruffle of branches is the mother
beating gratitude against oak leaves.

What if the heart could grow lilies?
What if we were lilies growing
in each other's hearts?
What is this day trying to teach me?

On the walk home, yards of orange rickrack
baste the long skirt of evening.
Night is armless, cannot cover what I try to conceal;
I am an open wound in the palms of the universe.

LOUISA CALIO

Louisa Calio an internationally published, award winning author : 1st Prize “Bhari” City of Messina, Sicily (2013), Words of Gold (2016), 1st prize “Signifyin Woman” Il Parnasso” Canicatti, Sicily (2017), Connecticut Commission of the Arts award for individual writers (1987), finalist, Poet Laureate, Nassau County (2013), honored at Columbia Barnard, as a Feminist Who Changed America (2006). Directed Poet’s Piazza at Hofstra University for 12 years, co-founder and Executive Director of City Spirit Artists, Inc. New Haven, Ct. Latest book, *Journey to the Heart Waters* Legas Press (2014). See Facebook Louisa Calio poet, writer and performer and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louisa_Calio.

Come Eat My Roses

I’ve known the horrors of the wasteland yet to come
The famine spoken of and thought I was bound to them
Repeating, repeating in generations, the horrors.
Cruel acts of a mad race spawning atrocities.
In my gloom I sought to abort human life
Vowing to bear no seed to carry on this nightmare.
But frustration screamed rivers, rivers running through my
bloodstream.
Ferocious as a forest fire in high wind, I seering, seering SEE
Nothing is made better by speech... Alone.

Consciousness is not a constant thing, though a continuous vigil.
Ours is a time of sewer landscapes,
Removed as we on these concrete shores,
From the truths nature teaches.
Pounding shower thoughts burst forth forest greens
Into my eyes to tease, to taunt.

I've tried to cut out the sensuous landscapes within
To fit what lies out here, but Visions rush blood into my eyes.
Leaves, thick with sap, stick together to haunt me
Eternal sperm, living, living yet.

To see you, to see you clearly
To see you in peace or to see you in war.
I see you at the crossroads. You may go the terrible way
By the light of the blood burning sun,
We may become scorched earth
If you deny the forces of water, if you kill the rain making powers
The sources of moisture. Clouded by your monstrous machines
You could set this world on fire!

Paused at the brink, you are the final link caught in reason
Dying to believe only what you see in concrete, a masculine bias.
The total epic has been told and retold
Before the Hebrew or the Greek
Through time in other weaves and languages
Sounds the same struggle.
See me, as I have seen the masculine side
Trying in my childish soul to be the man,
Believing as I was told that he had all the powers
Now I am my role and not. No more just a mother.

The door is opening, come, watch me weave.
I am mending as my grandmother used to
Will you join me with your tools in this woman's labor?
Each new weave better teaches us the old.
Let us unravel the soul. We are the insides of the story told
the doubles: twins the ancient guides
meeting of extremes: not extremes inside.

There will only be wars before the revolution
Don't be afraid, come take the passion fruit ripe and ready
Come eat my roses, dive into the face of love
Touch the blood of passion, as it drips from the cup.

LUCAS ZULU

Lucas Zulu is a South African writer and poet whose work has appeared in many anthologies in Africa, Europe's, and United States of America and recently in Asia. He lives in Kwa-guqa, Emalahleni, Mpumalanga Province, where he writes and work at the Department of Social Development.

Perhaps

There's no need for crossfire apart from this one
We are bickering over a trivial matter perhaps our differences
Has nearly pushed us far, I wonder if they will ever drive us

Back to our common ground perhaps we might get a hand
Somewhere than to resort to punches and bruises
Perhaps a panacea might come out from our own peaceful efforts

Every violent word remind me of Molotov cocktails burning
Bridges perhaps one of us has grown tired of listening to kicks
And other one is wearied of talking about deep scars

Perhaps we talk less and argue more.
One thing that remains the same we bottled up everything,
We don't like to taste and spew out the bitterness when we flew

into a fit of rage over the smallest mistake. Perhaps there's
a patina on the surface of our welded joint, maybe both of us
requires a white vinegar to scrape off the rust.

Perhaps our love is not big enough to carry us together,
Not roseate enough to stir a whirlwind romance,
and not strong enough to last longer than a cheap cologne.

M SHAMSUR RABB KHAN

M Shamsur Rabb Khan is an Assistant Professor, Language and Translation department, King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia. His short stories are published in *Muse India*, *The Statesman*, and *The Children Book Trust*. He has also written six books, several research papers and articles for journals.

The Threat

The threatening black clouds
hovering over, shooting fires
through pillar like burning hands
that catch fire to devastate
the milieu into smithereens.

Death and horror – the bloody trails
leaving pains and sorrows behind
and the unending shocks, the sustained fear
forcing the little birds fly away, away
to the land of clean sky and clear sun.

Animal or men? That's the question
the shivering lips ask, teary eyes
meet the ferocious black clouds
the crowd, they say, are nameless
yet so cruel and daring.

Why is it that the sun does not
take away the black clouds
from our peaceful land
or vaporize them into nothingness
or drink the poison of their wrath?

Because some of us love to nurse
the menacing clouds I see, even plead
to cover up the terror with terror
threat with more threats, and
killings with more killings.

Will it have an end? I question
to the suns of my lovely land
who are disunited, clouds are not
randomly speaking hither and thither
will not serve the grand purpose.

M.S. ROONEY

M.S. Rooney lives in Sonoma, California with poet Dan Noreen. Her work appears in journals, including *Leaping Clear*, *Ekephrasis*, *Heron Tree*, and *Naugatuck River Review*, and anthologies, including *American Society: What Poets See* (Future Cycle Press), edited by David Chorlton and Robert S. King, and *Ice Cream Poems* (World Enough Writers), edited by Patricia Fargnoli. Her work has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

I Was Afraid For So Long

that you would come for me,
that you would not come for me,
and now I begin to see
that you do both and neither.

When do we begin
to pretend not to know
the vast tenderness
seen in the eyes of newborns
and glimpsed again and again –
in the glint
of a blue wing against a blue sky,
in the flash of a stranger's eye
on a winter evening –

pressing us gently, gently,
to open
without limit,
without destination.

Acknowledgment: "I was afraid for so long" was originally published in Soul – Lit.

MAKI STARFIELD

Maki Starfield was born in Japan, where she studied English and American literature, teaching and business, with further work in Canada. She has published poems, haikus and translations in JUNPA publications (<http://www.ama-hashii.com>).

In A Field Of Stars

something is glistening..

the eyes of a snake, perhaps?

shadows on the grass
playing all day long

a butterfly rests on a flower still trembling

the clap of wings –

a bird flies off into the distance

listen!

sap rising in the trees

tomorrow's silvery dew
is not far away

and some drops reached the clouds,
the heavens

and now roam the earth

one drop fell on a rose
another is on a leaf –
the breath of autumn

entering the waterfall
of your silence

now, the first rays of morning sunlight fall
on your body

I am the wind
that shakes the barley

clouds hide the moon beloved,
where is your face?

moonlight

softly creeping into a cave

sparkling stars

above the weight of life

I wander in a field of stars
one lonely firefly

MARI HILL HARPUR

Writer and photographer Mari Hill Harpur grew up on a farm in the American Midwest surrounded by pastures, oak savannas, and livestock. Later she studied at Bishop's University in Canada and graduated in 1971. Her professional life has been divided between property management and the arts. She moved to New Zealand in 2000 and began farming on the South Island; 'as far from the sea that anyone could be in that country.' The station, (farm) was tucked beneath the Southern Alps; a large extended snowcapped mountain range. She lived beside a braided river fed by the snow's waters. It was there she wrote this poem.

www.marihillharpurphotography.com

www.seawintersalmon.com

Mick's Lullaby From The High Country

Quiet now; quiet now baby
You move on cushioned feet
The sound that calls to all
Will rock my baby to sleep.

The quiet sounds with the moonlight
Are rising over the shore
They whisper the songs of tomorrow
Their footsteps are at your door.

They call you; they call us in whispers
They say you are crying in tears
So dry your tears and calm your fears
Come sing the sounds of song.

The quiet light of the sunshine
Is rising over the shore
The song of the morning chorus
The bird calls out for more.

Today they hide at the river
Tomorrow they fly by your door
Their footsteps follow the pathway,
Along the braided shore.

Their message is clear and quiet
On wings that sweep the air
High above they fly toward the sky where the wind,
Yes...the wind will find you there.

Go wash your feet in the water
While the chorus shouts out for more.
Life will call, as life will come
Knocking at your door.

The birds fly about in the morning
On wings that lightly soar
I'll find you and you'll find me
Knocking; knocking at your door.

The early morning has taken
you away from the deep.
Turn your face toward the wonders
Cast off all thoughts of sleep.

Baby goes to the High Country
Baby cries the blues.
He sees those mountains rising
Baby learns their tunes.

MARIA EVELYN QUILLA-SOLETA

Maria Evelyn Quilla-Soleta, from Philippines, started writing poems since she was six. Though, not a regular contributor, she used to submit her poems to local women's magazines many years ago. In 2000, she published a book entitled *My Twenty Poems*. It is a collection of simple and honest-to-goodness feelings of her heart most specially as a mother and wife. She is hopeful to be able to publish another book in the near future.

A Mother Was Born

I am a Mother who was born
On the same day when my babies were born.

I was born
When I held those helpless beings
Warmly against my breast.

I was born
When I looked into those eyes
Counting their thin breaths.

I was born
When I stroked their gentle lips
To softly brush my cheek.

I was born
When I touched their little fingers
And kissed their tiny feet.

I was born
When Heaven's door opened
To enter my most-awaited guests!

I am a Mother who was born
On the same day when my children were born.

MARIA SEBASTIAN

Singer/Songwriter Maria Sebastian has earned 18 Music Awards, mostly in Western New York, including three Global Music Awards, and teaching awards at Niagara, Erie, and Genesee Community Colleges where she teaches undergraduate English, Communication, and Public Speaking. She began writing poetry in 2011 and has since been published in many journals. More at www.mariasebastian.com

From A Western Woman To A Middle Eastern One

I wonder when you last noticed autumn
crouched behind walls of sandbags
window enough to fit your rifle through
figs and pomegranates ripening with war
only a sack of soil weighs me down
unlike your burden all of Mecca to shoulder
my rake your shovel
my garden your burial ground
I'll cozy into my car turn up NPR
tune out enough to take in
flowerpots flowing with mums
spiced lattes I'd let you shoot me for
daydreams of slackening your grip
to savor sweet reminders in a dark hush
if only my path could reach you
share forgotten fruits like those
dropped by friends in a flash
how do you distinguish their steps

*Acknowledgment: Originally published in author's self-published chapbook, *The Stoppies* (2017).*

MARIKO SUMIKURA

Born in Kyoto (Japan), Mariko Sumikura is poet, essayist and translator. Chief-in-editors of online international journal “*Poetic-Bridge: Ama-Hashi?*”. Award: “*Mina wo Tonaete?*” (“*Uttering Her Name*” by Gabriel Rosenstock) won the Translated Irish Literature Award by Ireland Literature Exchange in 2012. The first prize at the festival Pannonian Galeb festival for poetry book translated in Serbian in 2017. Milos Crnjanski Prize in International Literature Festival-Wien 2017, Naji Naaman Literary Prize (Honour) 2018.

Cross Section Of The Heart

A big gray stone was displayed
in a show window
It was cut in half

I saw the section and held my breath
That seems to be a warped annular ring
Beautiful colors stacked densely and sparsely

The layers are blue-green gradations
There are some ivory rings
There are also red purple rings

It is the section
Which I will not be tired of
Forever

And here
Walking quietly is
An elder poetess

In her heart
Thick layers of words
Might be piling up

I am sure that
I saw the section of
The poet's heart

MARION PALM

Marion Palm is an internationally published poet and singer. She is the founding director of Poets Under Glass, a writing consortium that was incorporated as a not-for-profit in 1987, which has published chapbooks, a newsletter, anthologies, appeared on radio, television, cable, and in print (with funding received as awards and grants.) Marion is bi-lingual in Swedish, but sings in ten different languages. Her poetry is admired for its musicality and universal themes. She is a frequent featured reader on the NYC poetry readings circuit. In 2017, she was inducted into the ANA (Alumni of Notable Achievement) by the dean of liberal arts at the University of Minnesota. Her most recent book is *Reflections of an Urban Poet*, a 30-year retrospective.

Where Are The Bees?

No weapons, no corpses, no bees!

What has become of our bees?

Did they fall into a rapture?

Is this the end of pollination, as we know it?

In the moment, it's the vanishing bees

That captures my attention.

Bees, those seers, our canary in the coalmine, collapsing

In their colonies, I see myself in you

Even though I've despised how you came

To barbecues and picnics despite not being invited.

What if there are no bees next summer, no bees

To navigate using vibrations in the air, or no air?

I miss your dance, your symbolic language,
The choreography when you swarm.
I even miss
My human responses of fright, the excitement
When you buzz close to my ear and fly by the back of my neck.

Are we all powerless
Or committing a willful civilization-scale suicide?

I lie awake at night
With visions of our apocalypse,

And form for myself
A kind of awe, an intuit of end days
And then I set these bad dreams aside.

Asleep,
I consult bee-death obituaries, look for corpses.
Crawl among the rocks and around the trees,
I'm in a state of worry. I need your honey,
I need to know you are out there.
I'm craving something sweet and sticky.
Feeling that your absence is worse than your sting.

Note: Inspired by an article in the June 15, 2015 issue of New York Magazine about a merchant ship discovered in the Azores in 1872, called Mary Celeste, (a ship found without a single passenger on board.)

Acknowledgment: This poem has appeared in the Alumni magazine of the University of Minnesota and in an anthology fund raiser for Doctors Without Borders. It is included in Reflections, a thirty year retrospective of poems best received while reading on the New York City poetry reading circuit.

MARIUM NESHA

Dr Marium Nesha is a retired doctor and mother of two, who divides her time between Rotherham, India and Bangladesh. She is a bilingual poet in Bengali and English, and has contributed to a number of anthologies, including *Sweet & Sour*, *Daughters of a Riverine Land* and *A Slice of Sheffield*. She is a member of: Bengali Women's Support Group, The Healing Word, University of the Third Age, and Bharat Integration Group. Her interests include travelling and crafts.

Cotton Buds

I remember cotton buds flying
in my village, reaching for the sky.
Falling like snowflakes: pure, white and free
from bondage, without any worries,
and melting into infinity,
bearing my childhood dreams of freedom.

Acknowledgment: 'Cotton Buds' was previously published in Spinning a Yarn: Weaving a Poem edited by Debjani Chatterjee, published by Sabitya Press, Sheffield, in 2018.

MARK J. MITCHELL

Mark J. Mitchell's latest novel, *The Magic War* just appeared from Loose Leaves Publishing. A full length collection of poems will be released next year by Encircle Publications. He studied writing at UC Santa Cruz under Raymond Carver and George Hitchcock. His work has appeared in the several anthologies and hundreds of periodicals. It has also been nominated for both Pushcart Prizes and The Best of the Net. Two of his chapbooks – *Three Visitors*, and *Lent 1999*, – and the novel, *Knight Prisoner* are available through Amazon and Barnes and Noble. He lives with his wife, activist and documentarian, Joan Juster and makes a living pointing out pretty things in San Francisco.

Soren Kierkegaard Witnesses An Execution

"What it means to die of course Adam cannot conceive."

– Soren Kierkegaard

The Sickness Unto Death

I looked around the square and I saw fear
and trembling. Cold bites. Fur collars drawn tight
against comfortable throats. Some stood all night
to be close enough for blood, to be near
enough for that quick ring of axe on block.
It's not the sort of death we Danes know well.
Mostly, we slip away in bed, revealed by a smell
or owed bill. We're trained. We die by the clock.

My father went like that so I built my grief
into a castle stronger, more remote than this prison.
And when I left her, or rather her soul
left mine, I gave it all over to the pen, again,
and a pot of cold ink. I became as hard as that

straight-edged block they've raised above this square.
As always, I've slipped the subject, like my feet
slipped on the cobbles, walking through pre-dawn gloom.
There he is – he's no Isaac, bent under wood,
obedient to his father. He's an ugly man,
shivering beside the priest, out of choices, out of time.

It feels profound – that there is no question of choice
for him, for us. We could have slept later, I suppose.
or I could have stayed home, like all of those
who think they're better than this. That's my choice.
In England, they hang. He would leap into darkness and fall
into empty air. He would jump outside of time
instead of into it. Curious. I wonder if I'd mind.
Look – the black hood. The axe glistening. It falls.

Acknowledgment: The poem was previously published in J. Journal.

MARK SABA

Mark Saba is the author of 9 books of fiction and poetry. His work has appeared in many literary magazines and anthologies around the U.S. and abroad. He is also a painter, and works as a medical illustrator at Yale University. Please see <http://marksabawriter.com>

A Poem For Joan

Please keep the world from floating
away, the air from chilling my body,
the ground from shaking.

Take care not to pass by the market;
bring nothing with you today.

Let appointments fall by your feet;
keep only the unspoken.

Take this poem away from me.

Do not come intruding
into my life: become
my life.

Make me unaware of my body
unless I am with you.

Let our spirit reside
with or without bodies.

Let all histories bow down to ours:
the news of our planet cannot compare
to one life lived in another.

*Acknowledgment: First appeared in *Painting A Disappearing Canvas* (Grayson Books, West Hartford USA, 2012).*

MARK SCHEEL

Mark Scheel was born in rural, east-central Kansas, USA. After graduating from the University of Kansas in 1967, he served overseas with the American National Red Cross in Vietnam, Thailand, Germany and England. He later took graduate studies and taught at Emporia State University, and following that was an information specialist with the Johnson County Library in Shawnee Mission, Kansas. His stories, articles and poems have appeared in numerous magazines, and his 1997 book *A Backward View: Stories & Poems* won the J. Donald Coffin Memorial Book Award. His most recent book is titled *The Pebble: Life, Love, Politics and Geezer Wisdom*.

Rain

I remember the green pickup,
coming home in the rain.
From the barn to the house
my father carried me piggyback,
beneath his oil-skinned slicker,
below his wet straw hat.

Cocky as a squirrel,
I looked out across
his shoulder at the dark, wet world
and breathed the smell
of damp straw and
manly sweat, felt the closed-in
warmth of blue cotton against
my arms, the certain rhythm
of booted steps in mud, confident
and steady, and I knew
no pelting rain could fall on me.

He might have warned me, “Son,
listen, other rains will come,
pounding shut your eyes
on highways you’ll never ask
the name of.” (And the miles of rain
I’d know would prove
it true.) But no. Not then.
He gave instead the gift of silence –
bursting like a young oak, fragile
as a bee’s wing – as I
rode blue-cotton warm above
my father’s booted feet, steadfast
in where we chose
to go and how we meant
to get there.

*Acknowledgment: Originally published in Nostalgia magazine and recipient of the
1990 Nostalgia Poetry Award.*

MAROULA BLADES

Maroula Blades is an Afro-British poet/writer living in Berlin. She received a High Honourable Mention in the 2019 *Stephen A Dibase Poetry Contest Awards* and was the first runner up in the 2018 *Tony Quagliano International Poetry Award*, the winner of *The Caribbean Writer 2014 Flash Fiction Competition* and the *Erbacce Poetry Prize* 2012, her first poetry collection *Blood Orange* is published by Erbacce-press. Works have been published in *The London Reader*, *Stories of Music 2*, *Thrice Fiction*, *Volume Magazine*, *So It Goes: The Journal of the Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library*, *Theories of HER anthology, Abridged*, *The Caribbean Writer*, *Trespass Magazine*, *Words with Jam*, *Blackberry Magazine*, and by *The Latin Heritage Foundation* and *Peepal Tree Press* and other anthologies and magazines. Her poetry/music programmes have been presented on several German stages.

Mandala

I choreograph myself to the situation,
creating maps of inner and outer worlds,
pentagrams, circles, compact shapes,
houses of pure air for the mind to breathe in.
No cages.
Freethinkers and the morally bankrupt are welcome.
No painful extractions from the mind.
I softly go behind, touching the deepness,
the unknown factor
where demons flee the details, the yellow fog.
Meditative art.
Like a battery I work off the positive and the negative,
every shade holds a secret that is pivotal to life.
A dominion of ages,
a universe,
listening to dark and light tones,
easing down the slave lake of life.

I brush away cobwebs from the corners of thoughts,
stored in cryogenic rooms at the base of memory.
Wade in my maternal peace,
paint the joys and the pains,
use the spaces in my sphere; make my body pregnant with colour.
Let the colours bleed,
it's my wish,
as every tint is vast and beautiful,
every line infinite,
climbing frames, leading upwards and outwards.

Where I exist,
freedom has a place to grow, free of a hunched back
to flow brightly back to the source, the light.

MARY ANN MULHERN

Mary Ann Mulhern is a Windsor poet. Seven books have been published by Black Moss Press. Her first book, *The Red Dress*, received National attention when she was interviewed by Mary Hynes, host of *Tapestry*, CBC radio. *Touch the Dead* and *When Angels Weep* were short-listed for the Acorn-Plantos award. Presently, Mary Ann is writing poems about the Donnelly tragedy in Lucan, Ontario.

Halfway Down A Grave

sometimes when my father
is halfway down a grave
a pilgrim comes through cemetery gates
seeking answers from a priest
with a shovel in his hands
a man who keeps maps of the dead
dates of birth and death
all the words between
lost or forgotten
white pages of silence
spread across the cemetery
ghosts with stories to tell
only a gravedigger to listen
to see the imprint of sunken graves
crush of coffins
on bones over hearts
gone hollow with grief

MAYY ELHAYAWI

Dr. Mayy ElHayawi is an Assistant Professor of English Language & Literature at the Faculty of Modern Languages, Ain Shams University, Egypt. She has held several educational and training positions at different universities and enterprises in US, Canada, Asia and the Middle East. She is the Ex-Leader and member of the Fulbright Humanities Circle in Egypt, a Fulbright Alumna at Stanford University, and a Guest Speaker at different universities including: Yale, UC Berkeley, UC Merced, Stanford, Florida Atlantic University, San Francisco State University, and the University of Texas, Kingsville. She has published a book and a number of articles in international journals.

Talented Actress

They thought she's tough,
unbreakable and will definitely endure,
will overcome all obstacles,
and conquer every fear,
will pursue her dreams
no matter how far or near.
Limits for her are limitless,
and limitations are easy to gear.
They were mistaken though;
She's just a talented actress
skilfully managing her tears,
hiding agony within a smile,
burying misery in damp pillows,
and tucking loneliness under cold bed sheets.

MBIZO CHIRASHA

Mbizo Chirasha, from Zimbabwe, is a poet, writer, publisher, creative arts projects catalyst and a citizens' justice activist. He is the instigator of the Zimbabwe We Want Poetry Campaign. His poetry, writings and blog journals are widely published across the globe. Chirasha is also the Founder and Creative Director of Girl Child Creativity Project. He is the Zimbabwe Resident Coordinator of the 100 Thousand Poets for Change-Global and the Women Scream International Poetry Festival. He has led a number of Creative Interventions and Arts-based projects. He was the Poet in Residence of the United Nations Information Centre, Zimbabwe (2001-2007) performing and reading Poetry at annual United Nation Days and other reputable UN events, Young Writers Delegate of Zimbabwe International Book Fair to Sweden (Goteborg Book Fair, 2003).

<https://mbizothelblackpoet.wordpress.com>

Kongo

Your past is a mint of blood and tears
Daughters tearing their way to decay
Sons castrated by poverty and superguns,
Kongo, a dream battered and bruised
Your conscience poliorised by oppressive – dans
Highways clogged with hatred and vendetta
Gutters donating stench and typhoid
Kongo, let my poetry feed your withering dreams for guns,
insult the tired memories of voters.

MELANIE FLORES

Toronto-born Melanie Flores divides her time between working as an audio book narrator and editor/proofreader and writing poetry and short prose. Melanie has been a contest winner in several national poetry competitions, including 1st place for “Final Moments” in Polar Expressions’ 2017 National Poetry Contest. Melanie’s poetry has also appeared in *Fresh Voices*, the Fem Caucus newsletter and the literary journal, *The Prairie Journal*.

Final Moments

When death branded your eyes a milky white
There was no turning back.
Terrified that you would hear me
I sat motionless as they moved you from stretcher to bed.
What empty words could I offer you? Everything will be alright?

The unmistakable smell of tuna sandwich
Emanated from my shoulder bag,
Betraying my presence.
Your head turned blindly in my direction
For a questioning second, before settling on the pillow.

I watched you in silence
And lamented losing you and, in effect,
Losing myself – for I would never again
Be somebody’s daughter –
Just a woman of questionable origin.

Finally as your breath came settled and steady
I made my escape from your death chamber,
Like a creeping coward
Afraid to face the truth of life –
Comforted by blinding tears.

I didn't know it then
But the day of dying came.
Meandering the aisles of Dollarama
Looking for things I did not need,
I bided my time before I went to you.

In the final moment
I decided not go.
Fearful that my mind would play tricks
Like when the subway tracks called to me
With twisted promises.

I stopped at a pile of lavender towels
Dissolving into a deluge of tears.
At that instant I felt you go.
You had waited for me to come
And only left when you knew I wouldn't.

My phone rang shocking me into now,
Into bright lights and synthetic smells.
A strange voice told me my mother had passed
A lavender towel absorbed my primal scream.
An electric shiver passed through me – your final embrace.

Acknowledgment: "Final Moments", won 1st place in Polar Expressions' 2017 poetry contest and was published in a collection of Canadian poetry entitled "Let's Fly Away" ISBN#978-1-926925-59-2.

MERRYN WILLIAMS

Dr Merryn Williams is a Cambridge graduate, now living in Oxford, England. She has published four collections of poetry and several critical studies of Thomas Hardy, women novelists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the poets of the First World War. She was the founding editor of the *Interpreter's House Magazine*. Her 'New and Selected Poems' will be published in 2019 by Shoestring Press. <http://mwilliams.webeden.co.uk>

Surfing

Some people drop into a sly black hole.
I surf the net, find young good-looking men
I knew years back, now bald and gross, and some
others there were, I cannot find at all.

Some names are quite unusual; though I spell
them right, there's no response; they're either dead,
or stunned by beer and pills, or lost abroad;
and some I've quite forgotten. Just as well.

I count them out, those who were young with me.
There's the night sky, now slowly turning grey,
some few bright stars still burn at break of day;
behind them, multitudes that you can't see.

I type my own name in the flattened square;
A hundred thousand references appear.

METIN CENGİZ

Metin Cengiz, from Turkey, is poet and writer. He established the Şiir den Publishing House in 2005, in collaboration with his friends, to publish poems and essays concerning poetry theory. And since 2010 he publishes Şiir den Dergisi/Poetry Magazine (every two months). His poems are translated into several 30 languages and published in foreign magazine. Poetry awards: – Behçet Necatigil Poetry Award (one of Turkey’s most prestigious award) in 1966 with his book *Şarkılar Kitabı (The Book of Songs)* – Melih Cevdet Anday Poetry Award (one of Turkey’s most prestigious award) in 2010 with his book *Bütün Şiirleri 1 (Collected poems 1)*, *Bütün Şiirleri 2 (Collected Poems 2)* – Tudor Arghezi International Poetry Award in 2011 (Romanya). – He received the Literature Prize of the city of Mersin in 2014, one of Turkey’s most prestigious award.

A Comfort

Come let us stretch down to the waters
Our clothes the very air we breathe
Let your skin sing in my arms
We shall shift time through a sieve.
Let us peel this shell from you
And die in each other’s arms
Lowering the danger of love into us
Let it be our drifting dust.
Let this deep valley of humanity
These our poor hearts draw comfort
As we make love in the womb of god
In the soul of the holy books
Making love, this draft of water,
Making love, this great ode.

Acknowledgment: The Poem, 'A Comfort' has been translated into English from Turkish by Neil Patrick Doherty.

MICHAEL H. BROWNSTEIN

Michael H. Brownstein has been widely published throughout the small and literary presses. His work has appeared in *The Café Review*, *American Letters and Commentary*, *Skidrow Penthouse*, *Xavier Review*, *Hotel Amerika*, *After Hours*, *Free Lunch*, *Meridian Anthology of Contemporary Poetry*, *The Pacific Review* and others. In addition, he has eight poetry chapbooks including *The Shooting Gallery* (Samidat Press, 1987), *Poems from the Body Bag* (Ommation Press, 1988), *A Period of Trees* (Snark Press, 2004) and *What Stone Is* (Fractal Edge Press, 2005).

After The Moon Fills Itself With Milk

the lightning bug tree
in the middle of the grove

the sand break
in the middle of the river

the blackened angel cloud
in the middle of the noon sky

the stone and red leaf,
the driftwood and oyster puddle

the cold rain of winter,
a brown bear waking to the snow

a track along the ice
in the middle of the storm

December, the drought ending,
rain washed trees bleeding their color

and one quarried house
at the edge of the great swamp of snow

MICHAEL KESHIGIAN

Michael Keshigian, from New Hampshire, had his twelfth poetry collection, *Into The Light*, released in April, 2017 by Flutter Press. Recently published in numerous national and international journals including *The Oyez Review*, *Red River Review*, *Sierra Nevada Review*, *Oklahoma Review*, *Chiron Review*, he is a 6-time Pushcart Prize and 2-time Best Of The Net nominee. His poetry cycle, *Lunar Images*, set for Clarinet, Piano, Narrator, was premiered at Del Mar College in Texas. Subsequent performances occurred in Boston (Berklee College) and Moletto, Italy. *Winter Moon*, a poem set for Soprano and Piano, premiered in Boston. Website: <http://michaelkeshigian.com>

What to Do With Intangibles

Early morning, a little snow
teases the outstretched branches
with the help of the wind.
It is cold, but inside the stove's warmth
cradles the recliner in the lamplight
where he reads poems.
His fingers, thick and calloused,
flip pages enthusiastically
as he notices the shape of his nails,
much like his father's,
no moons rising,
And like his father had done,
it's time to contemplate departure.
One day, the stove unlit, will dispense
the damp aroma of creosote,
the book will lie closed
upon the arm of the recliner.

One day, a relative will enter
and acknowledge
that the house is empty,
no warmth, no breath, no poetry,
an indentation upon the seat
next to the book.

The change will go unnoticed
by the snow, wind, ice, and
those few crows meandering
for morsels upon the buried landscape.
He returns to reading,
the words delight him.

What would become of these joys,
he wonders.
Someone should take them.

MICHAEL LEE JOHNSON

Michael Lee Johnson lived 10 years in Canada during the Vietnam era and is a dual citizen of the United States and Canada. Today he is a poet, freelance writer, amateur photographer, and small business owner in Itasca, Illinois. Mr. Johnson published in more than 1072 new publications, his poems have appeared in 38 countries, he edits, publishes 10 poetry sites. Michael Lee Johnson, has been nominated for 2 Pushcart Prize awards poetry 2015/1 Best of the Net 2016/2 Best of the Net 2017, 1 Best of the Net 2018. <http://poetryman.mysite.com>

Alexandra David-Neel

She edits her life from a room made dark
against a desert dropping summer sun.
A daring travelling Parisian adventurer
ultimate princess turning toad with age-
snow drops of white in her hair, tiny fingers
thumb joints osteoarthritis
corrects proofs at 100, pours whiskey,
pours over what she wrote
scribbles notes directed to the future,
applies for a new passport.
With this mount of macular degeneration,
near, monster of writers' approach.
She wears no spectacles.
Her mind teeters between Himalayas,
distant Gobi Desert, but subjectively warm.
Running reason through her head for living,
yet dancing with the youthful word of Cinderella,
she plunges deeper near death into Tibetan mysticism,
trekking across snow covered mountains to Lhasa, Tibet.
Night time rest, sleepy face, peeking out that window crack
into the nest, those quiet villages below
tasting that reality beyond all her years'
vastness of dreams.

MICHAEL LEVY

Michael Levy the author of 16 inspirational books including *Cutting Truths*, *That's Rich* and *The Joys of Live Alchemy*... Michael's poetry and essays grace many websites, newspapers, journals and magazines throughout the world. He is a prominent speaker on health and wellness maintenance, stress eradication, wealth creation and development, authentic happiness and inspirational poetry. <http://www.pointoflife.com>

“I”

I – said; “You will reap what you sow,”
They said; “So what”
I – said: “You think of me, so I must exist”
They said “Your philosophy is unsound
We cannot hear, see, touch, taste or smell you”
I – said; “but I am invisible, I create form”
They said; “Sorry it's inadequate... in-formation”
I – said : “I am the cause of creation”
They said: “effect my bank balance”
I – said: “I give you unconditional love”
They said; “Bugger off, you talk Crap”
And then they were cut off and
could no longer communicate with “I”
So they struck up a match with stress
that ignited cigarettes and booze.....
Ah! The joys of
reminiscing in a cancer ward

MICHAEL MIROLLA

Born in Italy, raised in Montreal, Michael Mirolla lives in Oakville, Ontario, Canada. He is the author of four novels, a novella, four short story collections and three poetry collections. Publications include three Bressani Prize winners: the novel *Berlin* (2010); the poetry collection *The House on 14th Avenue* (2014); and the short story collection, *Lessons in Relationship Dyads* (2016). The short story, “A Theory of Discontinuous Existence,” was selected for *The Journey Prize Anthology*, featuring the year’s best short stories in Canadian magazines; and “The Sand Flea” was a Pushcart Prize nominee. Website: <https://www.michaelmirolla.com/index.html>.

The Art Of Walking

The roadkill rises, eyes rimmed in red.
The raccoons, the rabbits, the rats. And you.
We dwell on the edge of somewhere. Like angels perhaps
flirting between possibilities. Like angels maybe
licking each other’s wounds.
A gaunt cow stands knee deep
in a sub-divided field. Stares out in the fervent hope
of slaughterhouse. That quick clean cut to the jugular.
Here, the signs come fast and furious.
Oops! You’ve just missed Camelot.
An exclusive enclave. For the millionaire. In each of us.
Sheep manure for sale. By appointment only.
Call Art.

The highway leans hard into the wind, its dull roar
like a grinding machine for the future. It spits out
godliness
detached housing
luminosity
evergreen rugs.

One-legged flamingos stalking the elusive fast-food wrapper.
Cars snapping at the heels of brittle corn stalks.
The highway leans hard into the wind. Behind it,
civilization's stubborn convoy.
Impressions of faces against taut plastic.
Crucifixes around the necks of mourning doves.
Vacuum-sealed.

In the distance,
The hills continue to ovulate.
The trees strain against their leashes.
The windmills ride off half-cocked.
The snakes, the skunks, the squirrels are rising. And you.
We live on the edge of nowhere.
In a quiet cul de sac.
We reside on the edge of nowhere.
In a quiet cul de sac.
The sign at the end of the street:
Roadkill ahead.

Acknowledgment: Originally published in Penumbra, Vol. 15 (2005).

MICHAEL R. LANE

Michael R. Lane is author of 9 books of mystery, suspense, fiction and poetry. He has studied English Literature and Creative Writing at a variety of universities in order to hone his craft. He has had poetry and short fiction published in numerous literary publications. <http://www.michaelrlane.com>

This Is Not A Rap

This is not a Rap –
it is a poem
a simple leaf of eloquent liquid word expression
endeavoring to articulate, communicate and elaborate
upon that which is and is not
utilizing language on paper and nothing more –
no plugs, no outlets, no power supplies;
electrical currents powered only by the mind
minus a droning backbeat or narcissistic performer,
absent blatant marketing or manufactured muse.
Not essential are rapid-fire deliveries or brusque attitudes
to drag its meaning into the light –
my voice and appearance are not significant to its purpose
vanity is not at the core of its claim
mixers and microphones are not compulsory
no crew or cast or concert is prevalent
you do not have to put your hands up
you do not have to extol your appreciation
with shouts, yells, whistles, cellphones or applause;
you can read it for yourself by yourself
derive your own cadence and melody
or absorb its verses in silence if you choose;
broker from poetry what it humbly offers
and leave what remains for others
to decide for themselves
in their solemn hearts
in their intimate souls
what truth it may hold.

MICHAEL SKAU

Michael Skau is an emeritus professor in the Department of English at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, USA. He studied under Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, and William S. Burroughs at Naropa Institute (Boulder, CO) in 1975. Skau was named Winner of the 2013 William Kloefkorn Award for Excellence in Poetry, and his collection of poems *Me & God* was published by Wayne State College Press in 2014. He founded the Imaginary Gardens Reading Series in 2014. His chapbooks *After the Bomb* and *Old Poets* were published by Word Tech Editions in 2017 and 2018.

Cranes

The sandhill cranes will soon return
to the braided river among the fields
of corn stubble and shifting sandbars.
They will gather in throngs or pairs, or some
will stand alone, among the grey
red-capped tens of thousands as they stretch
their wings in dance or bob to feed
on grain debris. At twilight, safe
from predators, on spindly legs,
they will tiptoe in raucous gawkiness
through shallow water and marshy sands.
I have traveled to the Platte three times,
once with two friends, both of them now
dead, twice with lovers who later left
me. Come March I shall drive there alone.

MICKEY KULP

Mick is a writer and father who is not allowed to buy his own clothes. His creative nonfiction, fiction, and poetry have appeared in numerous consumer magazines, newspapers and literary journals. He is author of three books of poetry. He is a member of the Gwinnett County Writers Guild and founding member of the Snellville Writers Group. In 2018, he created a quarterly reading series to benefit the local food co-op. He lives with his wife and a dozen larcenous squirrels in Atlanta, GA. His next book is coagulating nicely. <http://www.mickeykulp.com>

Allen Does Tai Chi

He's in the kitchen
wearing white pajamas,
secretly preferring
to be entirely naked but,
alas, he's a good jewish
buddhist down deep
where modesty wags its
fickle finger.

Flutes and dirty windows
mute the traffic growl
of unhappy horns and
the rampant capitalism
churning just below a
fine vintage layer of good
old American smog.

Books on shelves watch
the poet rise, raise, push, grasp.
The sparrow outside watches

Hopi lightning on the wall,
or is it a reflection from
Allen's thick glasses?

He turns and sees a desk
awash with too many
letters left unanswered;
he is old enough to know
that he may never get
to some of them.

He turns away, but the
exotic oriental motion does
not salve his wandering
conscience.

He really needs to open
those letters. What if one
is from Walt in the afterlife,
telling him to rest his liver
and watch for bombs?

MIKI BYRNE

Miki has had two poetry collections and a pamphlet published, plus over 500 poems included in poetry magazines/anthologies. She was a finalist for Gloucestershire's Poet Laureate and a nominee for the Pushcart Prize. Miki has read on TV and on Radio many times. She also ran a poetry writing group at The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury. Miki is disabled and now lives near Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, UK. www.mikibyrnepoetry.co.uk

Returning

A metallic maw opened.
Discharged returning men,
to a windswept airfield
near a market town.
Uniforms were clean.
Coloured like sand and stones.
Berets jaunty, boots shined.
In her arms the shift of muscle
felt the same.
Brought joy.
As did the familiar height,
his own special scent,
the touch of long-gloved hands.
Inside his hug she revelled
in this homecoming,
of husband, father, friend.
Offered a brilliant smile.
Saw dark depths within his eyes.
Knew that not all of him,
had returned.

MILAFLORE GARCIA BARRERA NAVARRO

Milaflore Garcia Barrera Navarro, is an American Filipino poet, residing in the U.S.A. A nurse by profession, she has been writing poetry for four decades. She has published her first book of poetry in Amazon entitled *Elusive life* to which this poem belongs. It describes her sufferings and traumas inflicted during the WWII when Japanese forces invaded the Philippines. She is married to novelist Manuel Lasso and still has more poetry books and novels in preparation.

Walls Of Infinite Seclusion

Walls of infinite seclusion
Where I could pour my pain
And bury my sorrows.....
If, I who love, but can't be loved by anyone;
This life with countless sorrows
And yet, to live a hundred years
Of pain and anguish.....
How could I or how should I address
This world in my great disgrace;
I, who won't be remembered or cared
By people, whose love I shared;
Would be senseless thoughts
To go on living, to see the sky
With twinkling happy stars, and why,
Should a person live
To aspire to be loved
When no one could have
Given, nor think of giving
Precious is the life? When loomed
With bitterness and pain?
Ah, ha! At last I could live in peace
Inside these muted walls
Release my pain in isolation
My world..... in seclusion!!

MINA MOUSAVI

Mina Mousavi was born on April 6th, 1985 in Sari (north of Iran). She began composing English poetry in 2006. She studied English Language and Literature in university for BA and MA. Her translation of a Persian poetry book named 'pour your eyes in me' was published recently.

Metamorphosis

Your arms are the warmest shelter at night
And your glance is the most loving imagination of recklessness
When your voice touches the weightlessness of my soul
I metamorphose
Frenzy compresses the bits of my existence
And I become an essence in climax of nudity

MONSIF BEROUAL

Monsif Beroual is a Multi-awarded renowned poet from Morocco, winner of the Neruda medal award 2017. Awarded with the Pentasi B. World International Poetry Award Africa, Ghana 2016. Awarded with the Pentasi B. World Hyderabad Poetry Award India 2017. He is Cultural Ambassador for Morocco in Nigeria, 2018. His poems have been translated in 12 languages and published in more than 120 international anthologies, journals and magazines around the world.

Counting The Words

We fill the poem
With so much words
Love, hope and God
And we close the book after
We inspire them through our words
Our poetic lines and sometimes is normal.

A letter for humanity
For generation
But after we close the book
And we turn the page to fill other page
With words and nothing else just words
Without deeds or change
Only to count the books we wrote.

MOYA RODDY

Moya Roddy recently published her debut collection *Out of the Ordinary* which was shortlisted for the Shine Strong Award. She was shortlisted for the Hennessy Award in 2017. Her poems have appeared in the Irish Times Saturday slot, Stoney Thursday and Boyne Berries among others. Her novel *The Long Way Home* was described in the Irish Times as “simply brilliant” and her short story collection *Other People* was long-listed for the Frank O’Connor International Short Story Award. She also writes for stage, radio, TV and film and is currently working on an adaptation for the screen.

Curtain Call

My mother sat in so many hospital waiting rooms,
making a home among tattered magazines,
piped music –
listening for her name.
Sometimes I went with her,
saw the pleasure she took in those imperial summonses –
picked at last!

All her life she had passed unnoticed,
tending husband, children;
washing sheets that grew thinner and thinner,
as she herself grew wafer-thin,
wasting away in a hospital bed –
waiting to be called.

The day the consultant made his final prognosis,
she opened her arms to him –
sang.

MÜESSER YENIAY

Müesser Yeniay was born in İzmir (Turkey), 1984; She has won several prizes in Turkey. She has books on poetry and poetry criticism. She has translated the books of many world poets. Her poetry books have been translated and published in USA, Hungary, France, India, Colombia, Spain, Vietnam. She studies Phd in Turkish poetry.

Apple

God set borders
between you and me

you can't pass behind that line
just before this line is yours

and he put a binocular made of flesh for your body
and for mine a little cave

he had separated us
with a sharp knife

your seed was left in me
my peel was left in you

now that God dissociated us
why is he trying to unify again
by setting fire of desire
at our feet

MUNIA KHAN

Munia Khan is a poet and short story writer. She is the author of three poetry collections. Her words are inscribed on a Memorial Monument in Newry, Ireland (beside Newry Canal: one hundred meters from the town center in honour of all the Irish victims of Hannah shipwreck in the year 1849. Her work has been published in several anthologies, literary journals, magazines and in newspapers all over the world. <http://www.muniakhan.com>

Answered By Silence

(A Sonnet for my father)

The northern star had changed its position
When the moonlight was on that vacant bed
Somewhere there was a stilly submission
An aching void infinitely spread

His arms upon the arms of his black chair
His finger tips on the sash of window
Then all faded into the lifeless air
Air left to breathe for his woeful widow

Stranded silence strangled the cold blue night
There it was like an unuttered fable
But no miracle came to pass the light
Through half glass of water on that table

Memory replaced his sacred presence
And all the tears were answered by silence

NAIDA MUJKIĆ

Naida Mujkić (1984) is Bosnian poetess. She holds PhD in Literature. She won first prize at literary festival *Slovo Goržina* – the most important award to young poet in the collection of unpublished poems in her country (2006). She was a guest artist at Q21Museumsquartier Wien (Austria, 2016.) and Goten Publishing (Macedonia, 2017). She published 5 books of poetry.

Crucifix

I wanted to come in, but mother
pulled my sleeve which was a sign
to stay
by the invisible line, next to fallen fruit
that we used to make fig schanpps.
Father brought ten wooden sticks and halved them
With his knee. I added him every one of them
But the first one. Then, with his hands, he pressed them
Into the earth.
Moisture was absorbed by the ropes that I cut
That morning before water for the coffee got boiled.
We tied it up on all sides. Mother told us
To watch the leafage. I used
The moment, when she and father
Started to stretch it, and
Threw two into my dress.
Now, I had to be even more careful.
I fixed a ribbon around my waist. They squirm
In my navel like the sentences that I was tying
Around pegs.

NATALIA FERNÁNDEZ DÍAZ-CABAL

Natalia Fernández Díaz-Cabal, born in Suria (Spain). Professor of International and Intercultural Communication & Intercultural negotiation and resolution of conflicts at the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona and at the University of New Haven in Barcelona. Ph.D. in Philosophy of Science and in Linguistics. Translator of 9 languages. Poet since she was a child. Writer, author of several books and articles on language, media, history of translation, history of diseases, and intercultural/ international communication.

Sarcoma Offspring

Borderlands are not there to be sown,
but to avoid rifles rusting and let the blind walk their walk.
They, tamed as they are, seem to go
hand-in-hand with the schizophrenia of hymns.

They have sent seeds into exile
and no human or bird
noticed the disaster
– let's cancel this waltz, please let make someone turn off
this sound that drains our lungs.
The bell tower, like myself,
unties scars...and light
steps full of confidence into puddles.

Forget bitterness. That's just
a handful of knives for which
memory didn't set the table...
We must offer wine,
not posthumous worms.
Who cares if truth is little
more than a metastasis...

It grows dark
in the sadness of your guitars.

Walk, vagrant, try to reach
the shore before it rains,
it's already raining now – the sky
is full of straightjackets-
and the border doesn't provide
shelter under its rickety eaves.

Those who don't see us,
those who become crazy due to the language,
those who encourage the rhetoric that condemns us...
They are also the life, our life,
that spasm similar to fire,
that bowl containing our memory
and some late larval lucidity.

“Under the current circumstances you were lucky”,
“the most important thing is not to sink”...
Sarcoma is a fictitious invoice.
We don't repay our debt – and we will not –.
We not even know our creditor.
Time stops at the border,
just at the point where a rusty sign
announces the name of a town
that can no longer be read.
Let's come all of you, sarcoma militants,
let's occupy the exact three centimeters
by which we are considered heroes or losers.
In the amputated land where everyone has given up
to bequeath seeds,
some black flowers peek through,
dazzling beauty.

NDUE UKAJ

Ndue Ukaj (b. 1977) is an Albanian writer, publicist and literary critic. His poems have been included in several anthologies of poetry, in Albanian, and other languages. He has published several books, including *Godo is not coming*, which won the national award for best book of poetry published in 2010 in Kosovo. He has also won the award for best poems in the International Poetry Festival in Macedonia and another prize. His poems and texts are translated into English, Spanish, Italian, Romanian, Finnish, Swedish, Turkish and Chinese. Ukaj is member of Swedish PEN.

The Girl Who Loves Poetry

She was born in a day when it was not needed,
The city had a bad smell
And birds had fallen in quietness.
The smell of flowers was engulfed by the smell of piss.

Only the noise of airplanes was felt.
Only the noise of airplanes was heard
And whispering of a time's choir,
Where are found politicians with pockets full of banners.

Within ourselves right on top stays your life
Dreamed every night.
And we, confused, look at her eyes, just as they are depicted on
every night.

Those spread memories just as ruined hair
And then we lay many questions,
Questions that lack answers,
Where there are men with cloudy view
And raised hands to the sky begging piety.

Oh God,
In her city, there is much noise.
There is much noise.

She loves poetry, but does not read patriotic tales
She drinks black coffee, but with a glass of wine.
She has a dark skirt, but her brain is white.

Oh God, what predictions is she listening with open eyes
And the storm's eyes that see beyond her walls?

Then quietly looks for the end of objects without meeting the road
of exit
Just as words are exhausted through the mind of a poet,
She wants to build babel's tower
In one day when bricks are hitting through her fingers.

NELS HANSON

Nels Hanson has worked as a farmer, teacher and contract writer/editor. His fiction received the San Francisco Foundation's James D. Phelan Award and Pushcart nominations in 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016. His poems received a 2014 Pushcart nomination, *Sharkpack Review's* 2014 Prospero Prize, and 2015 and 2016 Best of the Net nominations. He lives with his wife, Vicki, on California's Central Coast.

My Sister

Ah Sister, First Child, I forget
and remember and forget and
remember you always, your
shadow of a shadow at my
shoulder these long years
since you died at six months
two years before my birth.
Mother had German measles
and your heart, your hearing
and eyes were bad, at delivery
they isolated you a month
and she could not see you
though she heard the small
town's rumors of a neglected
infant crying at night in a closed
nursery, of a misshapen child
kept hidden from the world.
Your funeral was the largest
any could remember, a crowd
of the curious. I saw the picture,
you wore a pretty bonnet to hide
the autopsy scar. I remember
and I wonder as I aged did you

age too, learn to speak and walk
and live a life? Are you still
younger or older, or as some
mystics believe did you grow
to be 30 and not a day more, so
finally when we meet face to face,
lost sister and brother, I first
must shed time like leaves until
we're the same age forever?

NICHOLAS DAMION ALEXANDER

Nicholas Damion Alexander is a Jamaican writer living in South Carolina, USA. His works have been featured in online and print journals and blogs in Jamaica, the wider Caribbean, USA, UK, Europe and the Pacific. In 2008, he became a fellow of Calabash International Writers' Workshop and in 2015 he served as Red Bones Blues Café's Poet of the Year in Kingston. He has been interviewed recently by Hamline University's Lit Link blog and also on local TV in Jamaica. Website: <http://nicholasdamionalexander.blogspot.com>

Inside

Inside a leaf, there's a star,
Inside a star the reflection
Of leaves glittering silver droplets of rain.

Inside the snail's shell a world
Of mystery unfolded, a mystery
Of esoteric secrets unlocked.

Inside the lizard's trombone, the battle
Cry of victories established
Upon the war grounds of history.

Inside a pebble, the pain
Of generations dead, dying
And still unborn to a world of suffering.

Inside the mist, the purity
Of nature floating over nature,
Unpolluted by the smoke of cities.

NIELS HAV

Niels Hav is a Danish poet, the author of six collections of poetry and three books of short fiction. His books have been translated into many languages including Portuguese, Arabic, Turkish, Dutch and Farsi, and his poems and short stories have been published in a large number of journals, magazines and newspapers in different countries of the world. He has travelled widely and participated in numerous international poetry festivals Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America. He has frequently been interviewed by the media. Niels Hav today resides in the most colourful part of the Danish capital, Copenhagen.

Epigram

You can spend an entire life
in the company of words
not ever finding
the right one.

Just like a wretched fish
wrapped in Hungarian newspapers.
For one thing it is dead,
for another it doesn't understand
Hungarian.

NILAMADHAB KAR

Dr Nilamadhav Kar regularly writes on various areas; besides scientific articles in the field of medicine, more specifically mental health; he also writes poems, stories and articles for public education in English and Odia (an Eastern Indian language). His articles have been widely published in many countries. He has authored and edited few medical books, an anthology of Odia poems and two books of translated poems from Odia to English. He is on the editorial board of a few medical and literary journals. His literary articles often portray complexities in human relationship, compassion and are mostly inspirational. By profession he is a psychiatrist, based in the UK.

Pack Up, If You Can

How can you pack a life
A whole life
Just in a few months, weeks or days,
Or even moments...

How can you live a life
In counted words of a poem
Or in thousand proses
In pages put together just
That may not make a sense

You never understand this, until
You walk through the path
Yourself ..., and
Listen ..., look within and realize

That your days are numbered
It's already the time
You may make a bucket list
And better, if it isn't too long

Even though you try to live
Everyday as your last
But wishes you do carry,
As if you would never pass away

You know, wishes are heavy
They drown you in the sea...
When actually you need to float
Rather fly..., and grasp the last rays
Before it's dark, too dark

You know it's coming, but
You're never prepared enough for it
Even if it's at the door, calling
You would still hear it as a routine

Whether you stay or not
The routine goes on ...
Postman, milkman, newspaper boy
All make their rounds
Even the sun, moon and the seasons
As usual, as if nothing has happened

You wouldn't even make it to the local news
Your neighbours, wishing you may still return
From a long holiday, may know eventually
That you wouldn't...

NINO PROVENZANO

Nino Provenzano was born in Castellamare del Golfo, Sicily, Italy. He is Vice President of Arba Sicula, an international organization that promotes Sicilian culture in the world. Nino has recited his poems in various Universities in the United States, Canada and Italy. He has done translations from English to Sicilian for the movie *MAC*, directed by John Turturro, and did work for Spike Lee and the actor John Leguizamo in the movie *Summer of Sam*. Nino also trained the Emmy award winning actor Michael Badalucco for the movie “The Man Who Wasn’t There” by the Coen Brothers. Nino has published three anthologies of poetry.

Majestic Tree

What difference
does it make to a tree
who savors its fruits?
The tree does not care! It follows

nature’s order, which is
delivering gifts of beauty and
high nourishing purposes.

One wonders: Is it the soil, the sun,
the air, the water? The tree nods in the wind.
But, it is the human
that appreciates, who hungers,

that goes back for more,
gazes at the tree, and with his eyes speaks
without uttering a word:

“Majestic tree, greater than any artist!
You hide the main source of your nourishment.

Your roots skirt stones, rocks,
and filter the wet earth.

Oh! If poets could unlock your secrets
on how to transform mud into branches,
the green of your leaves,

and just like magic unleash
oxygen, colors,
the fragrance of the flowers,
the lusciousness of your fruits.

Majestic tree, divine artist,
poets envy you!!!”

P C K PREM

P C K Prem (p c katoch of garh-malkher, palampur, himachal, a former academician, civil servant and member psc hp, shimla) is an author of more than fifty-five books. A post-graduate (1970) in English literature from Punjab university, Chandigarh, he is associated with several social/literary organizations. He has brought out eleven volumes of poetry besides five books on criticism, four on ancient literature, six novels and three collections of short fiction. Creative writings in Hindi include twenty novels, nine books on short fiction and a collection of poems. A recipient of many literary awards including HP state Guleri & academy awards and *Bharat Hindi Rattan* award, he is an Indian poet, novelist, short story writer and a critic in Hindi & English and lives with his wife at their farm in Palampur Himachal.

Dreams & Peace

I

To enquire into the options of peace,
disturbs as if an eel and a mystery glide over
the wise intellects and withdraw as men of power
and trust yearn for world peace but fail to find the gist
and essence, the core of times and utter chaos,
even as violence stalks and in silence, registers frequency,
explodes and destroys men and material,
amidst cries, wailings and futility and speaks of peace
and harmony, a tragic phenomenon.

II

The saint in man dozes, roars and catnaps in dreams,
and visits and flies over the ruins of forts, castles,
and floating cities, uncertain congress to spread peace

on anarchy infested man and earth,
and the minds of power-drunk animal in man,
who talks of peace but nurtures violence and creates
bombs of contests, challenges, contrasts and rivalries,
of annihilation even though holy men of state patronage
guide to *Abura Mazda* the lord of Light
and the *Yama* of Darkness teach harmony,
love and warmth, fashioned in five-starred slimy
and foul bedrooms with glasses of stimulants endless.

III

Lethal stay dreams as I visit the foreign lands
with the holy men not so sacred yet declare wildly
the phantoms of hopes and peace.
I do not know why I fly and dream of the sea
and feral inferno, I cannot bless a fire god to eat forest
and tell *Indra* to defeat *Krishna* and *Arjuna* in the background
of modern anarchy and stock up peace fervently.
I know I live in peace times of dark region where
I eagerly search the god of light find none and so I regret
as the pleas for harmony defy logic.

IV

I wait for the oracle in the noise of silence of solitude
and of absolute loneliness, for it will herald the arrival
of world peace and harmony.
Yes, a voice tells me to avoid clamour
of wealth, of slogans and of material joys
not me only but the whole world and everyone will live
in peace and the suggestion questions.

PAMELA PORTER

Pamela Porter's work has earned more than a dozen provincial, national, and international awards, including the Canadian Governor General's Award, the Canadian Library Association Book of the Year Award, the *Our Times* Poetry Award for political poetry, the Texas Institute of Letters Young Adult Book Award, and was a Jane Addams Humanitarian Award finalist (New York). She is the author of 13 books – nine volumes of poetry and four books for children and young adults, including two novels in verse. Pamela lives near Victoria, British Columbia, Canada with her family and a menagerie of rescued horses, dogs, and cats.

Photograph: Svetlana Stalin And Her Father

She is seven and smiling, caught
in the crook of her father's arm.
His hand cups her chin,
 his sleeve envelops her,
and she must believe, as small girls do,
that he is close to God,
 the sun bright as a watch
 he keeps on a chain.

Behind them waits a regiment of trees,
and behind the trees a wide field, geese,
a lake white with swans,
and beyond in the far city,
 verdigris domes
where, inside, candles flame,
because the day has turned to winter
and there is a sound of boots in the streets;
because the trains are full
 and hunch across the snow
into the open mouth at the edge of the world.

It is what small girls learn, curled
toward sleep in their beds:
a man brushes past his daughter
and without kiss or touch, goes out
into darkness, a door
shut quiet behind him.

If I could light a lantern
and show her a photograph of her future,
the dead refusing silence,
trains rusting under snow and the blighted
circle of the moon,
and she carrying his name like iron,
all the questions would remain the same:
who is God? And what is love to do then?

Acknowledgment: Previously published in The Malabat Review, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Winner, The Malabat Review 50th Anniversary Poetry Competition, Spring 2013.

PATTY SOMLO

Patty Somlo's most recent book, *Hairway to Heaven Stories* (Cherry Castle Publishing), was a finalist in the American Fiction and Best Book Awards. Her previous books, *The First to Disappear* (Spuyten Duyvil) and *Even When Trapped Behind Clouds: A Memoir of Quiet Grace* (WiDo Publishing), have been finalists in the International Book Awards, Best Book Awards, National Indie Excellence Awards, and Reader Views Literary Awards. She received Honorable Mention for Fiction in the Women's National Book Association Contest and had an essay selected as Notable for Best American Essays 2014. <http://www.pattysomlo.com>

If She Could Only

she could almost see her breath in the room
speaking to herself

he peeled her like an onion
until she wept

the taste of his tongue was it
mint or juniper
the precise moment the wave balanced
precariously in air
shivering
before it fell
her fingers on his chest

perhaps she could recall
lamplight
spreading across his face
shadows replacing eyes

watching him leave his breath

warm on her neck watching him
pull up a chair
the round wooden table his mother's kitchen back home
in Mexico
sitting over the steam rising from the soup
his favorite soup hot and red
the prawns still wrapped
in their transparent skins

Acknowledgement: Previously published in ONTHEBUS, Bombshelter Press, Los Angeles, CA.

PAUL ABDUL WADUD SUTHERLAND

Paul Abdul Wadud Sutherland immigrated from Canada, 1973; since then an UK resident. He has fourteen collections published and been involved in editing a range of others. He's founding editor of *Dream Catcher magazine*. He's been engaged in many projects over decades, receiving awards for his poems and grants to run workshops etc. His *New and Selected Poems* published, 2017 (Valley Press) was listed by Poetry Book Society. His work is being archived by the University of Lincoln. He offers private tutoring for up-coming writers. He turned freelance in 2004 and became a Sufi Muslim. He lives with his wife in Lincolnshire, England.

The Beloved

I asked a scarecrow to speak, if it could, about
the Beloved: it turned its straw head and said:

*Beyond what pain is un-understandable
no further torture exists, not burning bars
but the Beloved's arms ready to welcome.
Be confused – who's beloved, who's you.
Can't separate; then accept, be bewildered:
a holy state, the blessedness that follows grief.
The Beloved already is approaching to hold
you between sense and nonsense. Be empty
as my straw legs and head, easily on fire.
Give up on reason, don't fantasise
you can out-smart the Eternal One
or keep your individual pursuits.
The Beloved will use you like a rag
to change the world you now despise.*

*What's beyond indiscernible sorrow, is Love.
Sniff it when you see the blank wall bloom
and try not to name it – rose or jasmine –
just say YOU over and over to the Beloved.*

PAUL CASEY

Paul Casey's is the recipient of three writing bursaries from Cork City Arts Office. He edited *A Journey called Home* (Cork City Libraries, 2018), an anthology of poems and stories from immigrant writers in 20 languages. He also edits the annual *Unfinished Book of Poetry* for secondary schools and promotes poetry as the director of Ó Bhéal – www.obheal.ie

Quiet Calf

Wring us out, stretch us taut upon the gray bone frame
Scrape us down lunellum-thin as the wide moon blade

For we are codex and caesar, the offspring of mechanical gods
Inflections pressed in virtual folios we are to each cow its calf

Carry the jasmines; the saffrons of our time, calcite prophecies
emblazoned in the cockled ranges, gilded in continental divides

Under a fallen pejung moon white buffalo spirits pound to crush
the hard harmonics of history in us, down to a form of raw time

They amplify the faded velleities that cling to its valley walls
as *calligraphy* the word (and true consort of vellum) – elegant

to pen as *alfalfa* – is all flair and flourish in the nourished nib's
unending congress. In streams of ink-song, tear-strewn tendrils

fall from the gyre-eye drumhead skies, the bodhrans and banjos,
timpanis weave, interleave our celebrations, the flint of our lives

Bear too the wildfire children tapping *céills* on the counterhoop
absorbed in the patience of elm, loose-bound for gatherings yet

to come. Flexed, each breath is an age of song deep-stitched
into wrinkled silence, where cockleshells pucker from under

ancient sand. Outroam the Runicus quiet one, deliver whole
these few sweet heartbeats, these glimpses of humanity

Acknowledgment: First published in New Eyes on the Great Book (Southword Editions, 2014).

PENN KEMP

Poet, performer and playwright Penn Kemp has been lauded as a trailblazer since her first Coach House publication (1972), and a “one-woman literary industry” as London’s inaugural Poet Laureate and Western’s Writer-in-Residence. She edited Canada’s first anthology of women’s writing. She was the League of Canadian Poets’ Spoken Word Artist, 2015. Her 2018 books of poetry are *Local Heroes* (Insomniac), and *Fox Haunts* (Aeolus House). Two new plays published in 2017 about local hero Teresa Harris followed her previous books of poetry from *Quattro*, *Barbaric Cultural Practice* and *Jack Layton: Art in Action*. See www.pennkemp.weebly.com, www.facebook.com/pennkemp and www.pennkemp.wordpress.com

Belief...

In the space of a year she has learned to sit,
to stand, to walk, to totter forward in a run.
She has seen one full round of the seasons.
She wraps her family round her finger.
Now just before dusk we stroll hand in hand
to witness the pelicans’ evening beach patrol.
Gliding over the sea in formation, skimming
just overhead, flapping slow time, in synch.
She studies the procedure, dropping my hand
to edge forward, neck outstretched, arms aerodynamically angled.
She flaps and flaps along the sand,
following the pelican flight, ready for that sudden lift.
Again, again, till the last pelican has flown.
Dragging her heels home,
She braces her body against the rising breeze,
bewildered that she too can’t take off to sky
but game to try again tomorrow.

PETE MULLINEAUX

Pete Mullineaux lives in Galway, Ireland and has published four collections: *Zen Traffic Lights* (Lapwing 2005) *A Father's Day* (Salmon 2008) *Session* (Salmon 2011) and *How to Bake a Planet* (Salmon 2016). He's been interviewed about his work on Irish national radio and published widely in Ireland, UK, USA, Europe and as far afield as India and Japan. His poetry has been described as 'sensitive and profound' 'gorgeous and resonant' and 'grimly funny', while stylistic comparisons have been made with Roger McGough, John Clare, Pete Seeger and John Cooper Clarke. 'A gem'. (*Poetry Ireland Review 123*).

Small Hungers

Your bare foot beneath the table brushes mine;
a moment ago they were kicking sand along
the beach – but now we sit in a café,
our heads at rest against a rise of pebbles,
the surf pulled up to our chins –
gulping back the raging sea, each wave
an onslaught of wet delight; clinking of cutlery
like loose metal fastenings on ghostly masts.

In truth it had been a grey affair: low-tide;
cold, misty – the pebbles laced with tar,
so instead we have the comforting heat,
clear water in a jug; having made short work
of the starters, we mull over the main course,
the glare of the white cloth blinding
us to reason – our ravenous toes
scuttling to make sideways love
on the ocean floor.

PETER EVERWINE

Peter Everwine (1930-2018) published seven collections of poetry, including *Listening Long and Late* (2013), *From the Meadow: Selected and New Poems* (2004), *Figures Made Visible in the Sadness of Time* (2003), and *Collecting the Animals* (1973), which won the Lamont Poetry Prize in 1972. Everwine was the recipient of a Pushcart Prize, a National Endowment and Guggenheim Fellowship. His poetry was featured in the *Paris Review*, the *American Poetry Review*, and *Kenyon Review*. He also translated poetry from the Hebrew and Aztec languages. Everwine taught at the California State University, Fresno, and Reed College. He lived in Fresno, California, until his death in late 2018.

At the Hermitage

This morning before light, the voices
of the monks at matins lifted the sun
into one more day of the Creation.

Now, the headlands lean
into haze, the sea milk-blue and motionless.
In silence the hours drowse.

Only a small dun-colored bird
rummages in the underbrush, hunting
for something I can't see.

I have been reading Po Chü-i. Unencumbered,
but for the years he carried, he chose the path
of solitude into mountains much like these.

The clear sound of a bell from the mist,
a heron lifting from a pool of water – solace enough
for him and, sometimes, for me as well

but when I turn away from my book
the old disquiet shakes and frets at my sleeve,
and I can find no peace.

Sit in your cell, St Benedict said,
and your cell will teach you.
The hours drowse, the dun-colored bird

with his fierce appetite for the present
is hard at work, the gentle Po Chü-i is gone,
and under words, under everything is silence.

O Lord of Silence, I can no longer tell apart
what was abandoned, what gained or lost –
so much, so many lives tangled into years,

and how would I not carry them with me
Even to the border of your Kingdom
And beyond it, if I could?

PREETA CHANDRAN

Preeta Chandran is writer and poet, and the author of the books, *The Painted Verse* and *The Portrait of a Verse*. Preeta has been featured in International and Indian anthologies. She has won awards from literary journal *Muse India* and her haikus have won the best haiku prize in The Hindustan Times Brunch Haiku contests. She spoke on the fusion of art and poetry at the Kolkata International Book Festival, which was featured on Doordarshan. She is a former AVP (Genpact) and currently, CEO at eWandzDigital Services. She is a B.Sc (Hons.) Chemistry, an MBA, and is pursuing a PhD in Management. www.preetawriter.com

The Butterfly

Daintily perched on a daffodil,
Delicate little wings of yellow bright,
Folding, unfolding,
Making the toddler squeal in delight,
Flitting, from flower to flower,
The little one in pursuit.
His tinkling laughter,
Making her quiver with joy,
The game continuing,
Till he, tired, sated,
Flops down on the grass, and she,
Finding her chance to enjoy a siesta,
Settles down on a yellow-white flower.

The mother arrives,
Gathers her bundle of joy into her arms,
Unable to fathom,
Why he doesn't snuggle up to her bosom,
Till she perceives wonderstruck eyes,
Gazing at the butterfly,
Perched on the daffodil,
Poised for flight.

Acknowledgment: This poem, The Butterfly, was featured in 'The Painted Verse' and also won honourable mention in UGC-approved literary journal, Muse India.

R. A. ALLEN

R. A. Allen's poetry has appeared in *RHINO Poetry*, *The Matador Review*, *Amuse-Bouche*, *JAMA*, *The Penn Review*, *Gravel*, *Amaryllis* (UK), and elsewhere. His fiction has been published in *The Literary Review*, *The Barcelona Review*, *PANK*, *The Los Angeles Review*, and *Best American Mystery Stories 2010*, among others. He has one *Pushcart* nomination for poetry and one *Best of the Web* nomination for fiction. He lives in Memphis, a city of light and sound. More at <http://poets.nyq.org/poet/raallen>

Erosion

The winds that make the waves in amber grain,
and waft those poppies in Flanders fields,
and bend the leaves of grass, and whispers in
the willows and the reeds, are mere breezes,
benign in our mind's eye. Poetic zephyrs.

And there are winds that score the steep rock walls,
sculpting limestone and sandstone and granite cliffs
toward an outcome known only to Nature. Timeless,
they will grind the Himalayas down to dust.

Lately the winds have changed for you and me.
Scorching Santa Anas and gelid williwaws
howl between us. Mistral of recrimination
etch scars in our lives like creases in an old face,
and bury the light of our love in the rubble
of what might have been.

RAAD KAREEM ABD-AUN

Raad Abd-Aun is a Faculty member at the University of Babylon (Iraq) with a PhD in English literature. He teaches English literature there. He has been writing poetry in English since 1994.

Iraqi Sati

He left me
with four mouths to feed
& nothing else

i have no education
my father believed it
improper for a girl to go to school
and get education
a girl belongs to the house

i can make no livelihood
my father did not want to
“dishonor” himself
by making his women work
he works it’s enough
& when a girl marries
her husband works

i was given
to the highest bidder
so to speak
his father was a close friend of my father’s
he had no education too
and worked as a taxi driver

from work in my parent’s house
i moved to work in my in-laws’

the time i had to spare
i talked to my other sister in law
my husband brother's wife
who was not any different from me
or watched TV & envied the free women i see

then came the first child
then the others
work increased
less time for talk
less time for TV
less time for sleep
(children & husband)
My life was like no life

one Wednesday
he left for work
but never came back
there was no body to burry
he was burned inside his car into ash

he left me
with four mouths to feed
& nothing else

i wish i had been burned with him

Acknowledgment: Winner of the First Prize, Muse India, The Literary eJournal, May 2010.

RAJA NAND JHA

Dr Raja Nand Jha (b. 1946) is a poet, lyricist, multi linguist and award winning translator. He retired as a professor of English from L.N. Mithila University Darbhanga. He is a bilingual poet and writes in both English and Maithili. He is the author of 15 books of Maithili and English Literature. He is the recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award for Translating Bengla Novel, *Kalbela* into Maithili.

Husband-n-Wife

Man draws woman
Woman man.
Lotus draws bee
Bee lotus.
Life's not gambling
It's a cart,
Man and wife
Under its yoke
If either shirk
The cart would come
To a stop.

RAJIV KHANDELWAL

Rajiv Khandelwal is an Electrical Engineer by education and is now a business man by profession. Rajiv Khandelwal has published 4 volumes of Poetry – *Conch Shells and Cowries* – published in 1998, *Love is a Lot of Work* and *A Monument to Pigeons* both published in 2013. 4th poetry volume titled *A Time to Forget* – published 2017. Rajiv has been awarded “Literary Creative Award” by Naji Naaman’s Foundation for Gratis Culture, of Lebanon in which the Foundation had 2371 participants in their 2018 competition, from sixty six countries and has declared/rewarded 64 prize winners. Rajiv is one of the prize winners. <http://yourproductfinder.com>

Mother’s Mothering

The small cobbled pathway
Of our ancestral house
Was lined with tall trees
On one side of the walkway
Where both me and the Gulmohar
Were reared from sapling stage
With love and attention

Gulmohar’s scarlet flowers
Remind of swollen, stiff long fingers
Working passionately with trowel
Weeding out lawn weeds from healthy grass
Where
Greek marble sculptures
And others
That lined the garden and the drawing room
Were

Meticulously dusted and cleaned
In ways
That would put a modern maid to shame

In the kitchen
Where the dish washer
Still sloshes and whines
And the ultra violet water purifier buzzes
The emanating overpowering
Pungent rotting onion smell of asafoetida
Warm, penetrating aroma of smoky cumin
Sweet, spicy, uplifting smell of cinnamon
Still survives in senses

And jogs the recollection of the ailing octogenarian
Whipping up food for her son
Whenever the daughter in law was away
And the maids on a surprise vacation

Though my wife mothers me
My daughters nurse me
Still
Sometimes with an addict's craving
Sitting in my smart home
I hanker

For my mother's
Mothering

RAJNISH MISHRA

Dr Rajnish Mishra is a poet, writer, teacher and blogger born and brought up in Varanasi, India and now in exile. His city has shaped his psyche and his work originates at the point of intersection between his psyche and his city. His blog has his poems and musings on Varanasi: rajnismishravns.wordpress.com. He edits PPP Ezine: poetrypoeticspleasureezine.wordpress.com. His poems can be found at [instagram@poetry.mishra](https://www.instagram.com/poetry.mishra).

Old Order

All old order is subject to decay,
they say, and when fate summons,
old ways free fall. Heart-held loves,
friends, hatreds, foes: all. Yes, all
give way to mighty time's sway.
Bright, fearless, grand, green youthful years
With each passing year grow
thick wisdom layers, while marching on its way,
time fills with fears the cup full of joy
and life eternal. Wisdom and fear
almost lose their powers when time is stretched
and moments go eternal. For lost is that fear
overhead that hovers, and wisdom unwanted
unused lies there, where heart burns deep
sans flames infernal.

Acknowledgment: The poem, 'Old Order' previously published in Peacock Journal.

RAM KUMAR PANDAY

Prof. Panday, born in 1946, did M.A., M.Ed. under Tribhuvan University, is a reputed writer of Nepal. He writes in Nepali and English. He has published a dozen Poetry Books. Poet Panday is President of different literary organizations including PEN International Nepal Chapter and Traditional Poetry Writers Association of the World Nepal Chapter. He has written modern poem, ballade, children's poem, Gazal, Haiku, Sijo, Muktak, humour and satire. He has promoted haiku and sijo poems in Nepal. Emeritus Professor Panday has published about hundred books of different genres of fiction and nonfiction. He is a famous writer of Nepal.

Save The Soul

You talk about climate change
I am indifferent, I talk on human climate
You say, there are animals endangered!
I say, there is endangered 'human smile'
I see people are not smiling – in beautiful earth!
no time to smile and laugh loudly
O God! man is loosing your bless.
Man gave brain to the machine and machine is handling head
Man is loosing hands and legs
Man is loosing eyes and looking self-made desert
Beauty already crossed horizon, garden already extinct
I look myself what remained in my body – only polluted brain?
That also exploded in atomic attack-man is becoming brainless
Attitude changing and morale destroyed
Outer touch taken away my inner love
and living together brought uncertainty
Mobile taken away my time and talk to meet between hearts

People are polluting soul killing human culture
Opening wants without skills-anger attacked
Exposed needs and load of interest so heavy!
How to save from dissatisfaction and infinite demand
Encouraged misdeeds in bringing nightmare
As a man, I am unable to sleep because my soul is hunting me
My habit derailed by the change of climate
not of the nature but of my own body and thoughts
O God ! how to save my soul ?
and get sound sleep till the death bed.



Buddha taught me – how to get peace?
Byas taught me the complicated world!
Ramayna taught me ideal life and beauty hidden inside
Geeta the wisdom to guide life and activities
Yes, wisdom starts from the head as Krishna exercised
But there is heart also to feel chest – Buddha shouting peace
There are paths to get pleasure but anger blocked it!
There is stomach down thinking Marx the hunger materialism
Yes man has weak metabolism so strong as Sigmund Freud
psychoanalysed
But man is moving from legs as speed of Einstein in the world of
relativity
Nobody talked and gave thoughts on modern man
wired with complicated problems on integrated life
I prayed the God but could not take out anger and change attitude
All stroke in the soul which is beyond control so free!
Loosing peace and prosperity with polluted soul
How to clean it? O God! I am listening you inside
'save the soul' yourself pinching from your own wicked acts
yes I realised and trying to control climate change of my needs,
wants and work
Yes I am achieving something new to get happiness, peace and
prosperity of life
save soul from all polluted things yourself to keep clean
Save the soul and enjoy life!

RASMA HAIDRI

Rasma Haidri grew up the American South with a father from India and Norwegian-American mother. She now makes her home on the arctic seacoast of Norway. She is the author of *As If Anything Can Happen* (Kelsay Books, 2017) and three college textbooks. Her writing has appeared in literary journals including *Nimrod*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Sycamore Review*, and *Fourth Genre* and has been widely anthologized in North America, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. She holds a M.Sc. in reading education and is a current MFA candidate at the University of British Columbia. She serves as a reader for the Baltic Residency program where she was a poetry finalist. Other awards for her work include a Vermont Studio residency, the Southern Women Writers Association emerging writer award in creative non-fiction, the Wisconsin Academy of Arts, Letters & Science poetry award, and a Best of the Net nomination. More at www.rasma.org

Lottery

Everything my mother needs can be found
at Woodman's: cigarettes, milk, unsalted
rice cakes, six black bottles of diet cola.

I want to buy a lottery ticket,
she adds, weaving stiff-kneed, half-blind,
to the far end of the store, near videos
and packaged liquor.

Neither of us knows how to go about it.
I fumble, rubbing in the dots from numbers
she has scribbled on a scrap of cardboard.

I look at her familiar cursive, wondering
what they are – not our ages, birthdays,
not her wedding anniversary.

That's six and a half million a year for life,
she says of the man who won last winter,
and I don't ask how they figured the years left in his life.

Nor do I ask if the money could buy back
her teeth and eyes, her strong bones and lean flesh,
buy back the summers she played squirt guns with us,
and caught fireflies we froze and sold to science
for thirty cents a hundred.

No one has claimed it, she whispers,
as if everything is still possible.

Acknowledgment: First published in Prairie Schooner: Special Poetry Issue, 1998.

RENÉ VAN DER KLOOSTER

René van der Klooster is multifaceted. Besides an author of poetry and plays (in Dutch and English) and prose (in Dutch), he practices visual arts, including drawing, painting and sculpting, moreover, formerly he worked as an architect and in that capacity he is currently designing lamps. The writing and the arts mainly originate from a vast dream world, a certain grip on the subconsciousness and frequent mystical experiences. These qualities have made him to see himself, with some caution, as a contemporary mystic. René van der Klooster lives and works in The Netherlands. www.renevanderklooster.com

The Road

the road is made out of
time and skulls
travel travel
lonely soul

who shouts
it is different for you?
the skulls the skulls

who whispers
you will perish not?
the time
the time whispers

who puts you on the balance?
the balance
the balance proclaims
you will perish not

among the skulls
the skulls deliberate
in secrecy
hush hush
hoping you will never be
whispering among them
fleshless
black eyed

and they read you
lonely soul
unnoticed

and they explain you
saying that
silent was your behaviour
your behaviour became our soul
to shush us

only then you reveal
that every road ends
this is how the road ends:
no more language
hush
hush

RICH QUATRONE

Rich Quatrone is the Artistic Director of The American Poetry Theater. His novels include *Outside the Fascist Church*, and *The Magic House*. His plays include *The Bottom of the Ninth*, *Birth Canal*, *Criminal Schools*, *The Bombing of Flint*, *New Clay*, *Pop Art*, *Great Balls*, *Sarah's Wedding*, *Owed To Joy*, and *Sappo and Bagoni*. His poetry books include *Specious Skies*, *Chinese Keys*, *Love in the Last Year of Earth*, *One Month*, *The Jannetta Collection*, *A Vision of the Golden*, and *Loving Thuy-Duong*.

If They Come For Me

Tell them I was here a while,
that I loved some good women,
but that the ones I loved best
left.

If they try to break down my door,
tell them I wrote a lot of poems, too many,
perhaps, and some plays, and two novels.
Tell them none of this paid my rent
or bought me clothes or paid
the bills.

If they try to come through a window,
tell them I came here when I was young
and handsome with a dark beard and long
hair. Make sure they know I was a good
teacher who gave his best to his
students, but that this was not
what the authorities wanted
from me.

If they manage, somehow, really manage,
to finally get in and take me, tell them
I broke every law that was unfair, that I
needed to find a way to live, to be a father,
to keep myself sane, to eat, to sleep,
and on occasion to make love.

And if that's not enough, tell them
to go fuck off, because there will be nothing
else to say to
them.

Acknowledgment: "If They Come For Me" was previously published in Spare Change News.

RICHARD D. HARTWELL

Rick Hartwell is a retired middle school teacher (remember the hormonally-challenged?) living in Southern California. Like the Transcendentalists and William Blake, he believes that the instant contains eternity. He has been published in: *Phenomenal Literature*, *Scarlet Leaf Review* (nominated as *Best of the Net*, 2016), *Birmingham Arts Magazine*, *The Cortland Review*, *Mused: Bella Online Literary Journal*, *Dual Coast Magazine*, *Everyday Poets*, *Poppy Road Review* (selected as *Best of the Net*, 2011), *Torrid Literature Journal* (inducted into the *Hall of Fame*, 2013), *Synchronized Chaos* (nominated as *Best of the Net*, 2013), and others, both print and online.

Woodshed

Mossy wooden shingles on a peaked roof,
naked and exposed on the underside with
no ceiling, concrete slab for a floor, probably
poured in the late forties or early fifties,
about the same time as the eight car garage.
Chipped, weathered, forest-green exterior;
long, narrow, and moodily dark interior.

This woodshed, east of the upscale house,
home of black widows and tarantulas; a
place of creation and repairs, seduction,
molestation of memories, and misery; a
place of reconsideration of nightmares.

She used to tame the tarantulas; taught them to climb her arms,
transfer
hand over hand, fascinating me, transfixed by her dexterity and
calm.

Once she also shaped, sawed and
carved, a toy sailboat for me,
with brass eye connections for
mast and boom, shrouds and stays,
all manner of tackle, and cloth sails.
Those were days of creation,
days of joyous youth spent there.

The days of seduction, molestation, and
misery were days when only she was
there to receive what she could not
combat, too young to refuse or refute;
a frequenter to the shed for discipline.

Cliché of spankings in a woodshed was all too real; carried too far
by her adoptive
father who went from slaps behind to caresses before; from her
correction to despair.

She never spoke of this sin against her,
she did not need to, her clothes and glum
demeanor disavowed our summer;
I, though much younger than she, could see
beyond dead tarantulas and broken spars.

Tortured toys, stabbed spiders, and reconsideration of nightmares,
ended by an open beam: her avenue of escape from hurt and
shame.

*Acknowledgment: Originally published, in slightly altered form, by The Camel Saloon,
(now defunct), in September 2012.*

RICHARD G. BEYER

In 1968 Richard Beyer became founding president of The Alabama State Poetry Society, serving a two-year term. He also served as Vice President of The National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Inc. 1970-1972 and President of the Alabama Writers' Conclave from 1979-1980. He helped found the Northwest Alabama Creative Writers' Workshop and helped develop the Beymorlin Sonnet. He conducted poetry workshops, spoke to student groups, civic clubs and literary organizations, gave poetry readings, won frequent prizes in state, regional and national poetry contests and served on the editorial staffs of Deep South literary magazines.

Other Seasons

hold memories
of bright and pleasant days
but springtime always takes me in
with dark and solemn ways...
where endless crosses line the green
that gentle rains now bring
and lead my April heart once more
to Shiloh in the spring.
There bitter shot and shell and smoke
bloomed crimson death for days
and muskets flowered deadly fire
that thundered through the haze...
from Shiloh Church to Water Oaks
and down to Pittsburg Landing
the gruesome savage slaughter scene
eludes all understanding.

The Hornet's Nest, the Sunken Road
such place names here are spoken
and tell our saddest history
of thousands torn and broken...
upon these fields the combat raged
the carnage and the stench
and corpses by the hundreds placed
into each burial trench.
The groans of men who met a fate
too ghastly now to think
who dragged their way to Bloody Pond
to seek a final drink...
the surgeon's tents all drenched in blood
the screams of amputation

with morphine gone the wounded shrieked
the birth pangs of a nation.
Yet still their glory blossoms
whose youth was blown away
like dogwood petals on the breeze
one bloody April day...
now past the call of earthly care
their memory let us sing
as reborn days burst green again
at Shiloh in the spring.

RICHARD HAGUE

Richard Hague, a native of Steubenville, Ohio, USA, is author of eighteen collections of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. His *Milltown Natural: Stories and Essays from a Life* was a National Book Award nominee in the USA, and *During The Recent Extinctions: New & Selected Poems 1984-2012* won the Weatherford Award in Poetry. His latest collections are *Studied Days – Poems Early and Late in Appalachia* (Dos Madres Press, 2017) and the prose collection *Earnest Occupations: Teaching, Writing, Gardening & Other Local Work* (Bottom Dog Press, 2018). He is Artist-in-residence at Thomas More University in northern Kentucky, USA. Website: <http://www.midlandauthors.com>

What The Elephants Are Doing

*Elephants often bury the dead,
including dead elephants,
other dead animals they find,
and even dead humans
they have killed.
They cover the bodies
with earth and vegetation.
A group of scientists and park officials
working on a cropping scheme
in Uganda collected the ears and feet
of the dead elephants
to sell later for making
handbags and umbrella stands,
and put them in a shed.
One night a group of elephants
broke into the shed
and buried the ears and feet.*

– found poem from *Portraits In The Wild*, Cynthia Moss, 1975

Blessed are the buriers,
for theirs is the kingdom of dust.
At night, the elephants enter

even the tiniest cubbies
of the dreamhouse,
hearing themselves calling
for themselves
from the remains:
O ears, harken.
O feet, find the way.

They answer in behemoth dark,
working silently, though their heat
sets fire to huts.

Under the moon
their vast undertaking, their
ponderous requiem,
raises a cloud of dust
that from far off looks like storm,
the approach of all souls.

Their bodies sway back and
forth, back and
forth, wrinkled caravans of blame
and recollection,
their ears grand sails
bellied with the winds of grief.

*Acknowledgment: "What The Elephants Are Doing" was originally published in
Mid-American Review.*

RICHARD M. GROVE

Richard M. Grove, known to friends as Tai, 1953, Hamilton born, lives in Presqu'île Provincial Park in Ontario, Canada, is photographer/writer/editor/publisher. His art and photographs are in over 30 corporate collections across Canada. He has 16 book titles to his name and his images have been used as cover art for more than 40 books. Find his blog at B&B at: <http://www.hiddenbrookpress.com/hbp-artists-retreat/>. Find his Writer's Blog at: <https://richardgrovewriter.wordpress.com>

Morning Comes With Its Slanting Light

We had our first frost of the season last night.
It dropped from a glorious +12°C to – 11°C
within hours. It was the start of our journey past
the rising full moon, to black-armed
naked trees, rustling leaves in tall grey grass.
We are now past the first snowfall and have arrived
at the moment of now, waiting, watching
the drifting dull of winter that keeps on coming.
We hear the chattering ice-lined waves that never stop,
never stop on our journey to the now of forever
even in the slanting light of morning.

Acknowledgment: The poem title's is taken from James Deahl's poem, 'The Jack Pine'.

RICHARD W. HALPERIN

Richard W. Halperin is an Irish/U.S. dual national living in Paris. His longer collections are published by Salmon Poetry Limited, *Cliffs of Moher: Anniversary* (2010); *Shy White Tiger* (2013); *Quiet in a Quiet House* (2016); *Catch Me While You Have the Light* (2018). His shorter collections are via Lapwing Publications, Belfast; the most recent of these are *Prisms* (2016) and *Tea in Tbilisi* (2018). A ninth Lapwing collection, *Lunar Moth*, is to appear in 2019. Mr Halperin's works are part of the University College Dublin's Irish Poetry Reading Collection Archive, including videos of him reading eight poems.

Even The Dying Light

Even the dying light is light. Even
Love's last molecule before indifference
Begins is love. Even warped sense is sense.
Immense the nouns. Immense their tense. Years happen,
And adjectives wash away. At the end,
Not, I was happy; but, I was. Not, she
Was radiant; but, she. I, she, we – lovely
Without lovely. And adverbs – our big pretend:
He thought well, he thought dully; the miracle
Is, he thought. The miracle is, he wept;
Not he barely wept, or wretchedly. Who,
What, not when; is, loves, finds, not how – these buckle
The spectacle. Beautiful you, decrepit
You, is you. You! Even dead you is you.

Acknowledgment: Copyright Richard W. Halperin © 2010, Anniversary, Salmon Publishing Ltd, Cliffs of Moher, Ireland.

RICHARD WEEKLEY

Richard Weekley is an internationally published poet and the author of 15 book or chapbooks of poetry including *Already There* released under his pseudonym Zen Nam. He was named Teacher of the Year for the Hart School District, co-published VOL. NO. Magazine 1983-2000, and coordinated many poetry festivals and readings. He resides in Newhall, California, USA.

Killer Mildness

Southern California, January 6th
T-shirts, bare feet, eighty degrees,
This is winter and

The mildness is killing us.

Pleasure is our only language and
The comforts are driving us mad. We slump
Like sloths before our electric visions
Having more channels than rivers,

Hardly anyone stoops over seeds or
Rejoices at sprouts of leaf. We have
Forgotten the songs of morning,
Sun glasses blot up the light.

We wander by each other
In stereophonic alone-ness. iPods
Pierce our ears. We live
With artificial rivers

The Jungle Cruise,
The Caribbean pirates in Anaheim.
We build our lives
On special effects.

The night no longer stings, smothers, or
Sticks to the cheeks but is
Blasted neon red and green. The streets
Swell with artificial blues
Guitars become as moons.

More common than not children are born
In smooth electric cradles, rocked
In electric boxes – their visions made
3-D, and

This is winter 2019 where the skateboards
Clamor for more good times, boys
Wheelie their life away, girls
Pamper their curls and giggles

Life is so uneventful we invent tragedy
Punch strange needles into our lives, and
The reason is this winter

The mildness is killing us.

RITA ANDERSON

Rita Anderson has an MFA Poetry and an MA Playwriting, and she is a longstanding member of Poets & Writers and the Academy of American Poets. She is an award-winning writer, and Rita's work has appeared in almost 100 literary publications. Rita was poetry editor of the literary journal at University of New Orleans, and both of her poetry books: *The Entropy of Rocketman* (Finishing Line Press) and *Watched Pots (A Love-Song to Motherhood)*, have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Contact Rita at her website: www.rita-anderson.com

Baptism Of Desire

*The church recognizes
the will to change
as change.*

With the first itch, it is summer, the private
school girls still parking down the street.

Eating melon, we watch the moon and plan a week
at the beach. Next door, music rattles the gutters.

Every night, it's the same song: *he will kill her
before he'll lose her.* A woman falls off her bike

into the street, her foot still in the stirrup,
her partner struggling to remove her helmet.

Phoning for help, I recall the swimmer's cap
Sister brought to class to reenact the tale of a woman,

dying from shark attack, who had begged her fiancé
to baptize her with ocean water from her cap.

How to imagine is not to shape, except in faith,
which is as close as I have come to understanding love.

How desiring perfects us. As the ambulance pulls off,
I study the cyclist's face between flashes of red, fear

shaping his love, and I think of the swimmers:
Would he have loved her as dearly had she lived

to disappoint him? You insist I come in out of the rain,
and I hear Sister, urging us not to sleep with men

we will marry, until we *have*.

ROBBI SOMMERS BRYANT

Robbi Sommers Bryant's award-winning books include a novella, 4 novels, 5 short-story collections, and 1 book of poetry. Published in magazines including *Readers Digest*, *Redbook*, *Penthouse*, college textbooks, and several anthologies, she was also editor in chief of the Redwood Writers 2018 anthology *Redemption: Stories From the Edge*. Robbi's work was optioned twice for television's *Movie of the Week*, and she appeared on TV's *Jane Whitney Show* to discuss her article, "A Victim's Revenge." Past president of Redwood Writers, her professional focus is developmental editing, content editing, copy editing, and proofreading. She is also a writing coach. <http://robbibryant.com>

Reflections

The mirror's never been my friend
or hers,
or hers,
or hers.

Images glare back at us.
Traitors that we always trust –
annihilate and demonstrate
the parts of us we fear.

When did we learn to hate our curves
our bellies round
our full behinds?
Our psyches break with every bite
our confidence a wayward kite
that lifts then fractures
in the wind
under a broken sky.

Must we vomit
starve ourselves,
like models thin and movie stars
for us to feel desirable,
and sexily inspirable
in a society that holds regard
for a woman with no shape?

We promise to avoid the scales
become compelled, it never fails –
addicted like a ruthless sleuth,
the facts are clear
we hate the truth.
A simple pound can change the day
from joyful to despair.

Food is the enemy –
betrays us on mere sight.
Our warriors, drunk on pleasure
have lost the will to fight.
An endless diet
That's our lives
Our futures fat and bleak.
Our appetites
bring switchblade thoughts
Why do we even eat?

ROBERT L. GIRON

Robert L. Giron is the author of seven books of poetry and his poetry and fiction have appeared in numerous publications. He also founded the Ventura Valdez Poetry Contest at Montgomery College for students who write in English and Spanish which ran for 30 years. While at Montgomery College, he founded *The Sligo Journal* and is currently an associate editor for *The Sligo Journal* and *Potomac Review*; he is professor and chair emeritus of English, ESL and creative writing at Montgomery College, Takoma Park, Maryland. Giron is the founder and publisher of Gival Press and editor-in-chief of *ArLiJo*, a literary journal based in Arlington, Virginia. <http://www.robertgiron.com>

Like Crystals From The Sky

A full red moon casts its shadow –
I look up and see blood dripping
from the sky, not now –
later I'm awoken by the smell,
not here – there
confused I turn and fall asleep
once again – then
once, twice, thrice
they come like crystals
from the sky,
landing upon the landscape
imploding like water balloons
on someone's big day,
but these are not those.

They burn upon hitting the sand –
jewels cast glittering the land,
no cries, no whispers –
all frozen in time –
then a warm glow
melts all into the sand.

ROBERT L. MARTIN

Robert L. Martin's writings have appeared in *Mature Years*, *Alive Now*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, *Poets' Espresso*, among others. He won two "Faith and Hope Awards," Published two chapbooks, and appeared in six anthology books. He is also a jazz pianist and the organist at First UMC of Wind Gap, PA for 25 years.

Melodic Paradise

Music, thou slaver from the highest authority,
Thy strapping arms that engulfed me,
That threw me into an exotic paradise
With thy melodies that freed my inhibitions,
That planted a seed in my imagination,
Anointed me with spirited oils,
That took me into the wilds
Where I ran with the lions,
Played with the grizzlies,
And answered the calls of the birds,
Thy soft hands that massaged my heart,
That beat outside my chest,
That traveled down my spine,
Into the home of the spirit,
That played upon my feelings
And turned me inside out,
That stripped me naked
And sent me into a paradise,
A look into the heart of heaven
That left me bewildered from
A magic that no one can decipher,
A riddle that no one can solve but I,

A believer that heaven can speak
And heaven is manipulative,
Standing in awe in reverence
To the power of music,
A captive in its invisible arms,
Luxuriating in its strength,
And lost in the forest
Of its dominion,
Stand convinced of its power.

ROBERT MADDOX-HARLE

Robert Maddox-Harle (aka Rob Harle) is a writer, poet, artist and reviewer. His work is published in journals, anthologies, online, and in books. He is on the editorial board of a number of international art and literary journals including Leonardo. His current work is concerned with restoring the “mysterium tremendum et fascinans” which postmodernism has all but destroyed. www.robharle.com

Behind Closed Doors

The abandoned building beckons
paint flakes the wall
falling like downcast eyes,
an eerie dull light seeps insipidly
from a crescent moon,
a flickering dull-bright from
the cracks beneath the antique doors.

Shadows engulf me as I enter,
the long hall intimidating,
muffled sounds and screams
escape from behind locked doors,
sentinels to unknowable lives.

Damp musty scents waft over me
the presence of coal gas menacing,
somewhere a clock ticks loudly
reinforcing the curse of mortality,
broken glass litters the cracked floor
jammed with bits of ambitious rust.

Ahead a door swings carelessly,
pushing my way into the fading yellow light
an owl shrieks in my face,
penetrating eyes perched atop a broken harp,
twisted strings entangle the future
like the tangle of a psychotic mind.

The room curves sharply,
in the dim gloom a figure sits aloof
she raises her withered arm and rings a bell,
the tolling muffled by a discordant dirge
the broken harp incessant,
pushing aside the cobwebs and homeless dust
a naked hermaphrodite appears from the damp gloom,
s/he moves a chair and beckons,
I sit uncomfortably
torn cane pushing into me like needles.

Welcome to the House of Herculine Barbin
croaks the ancient crone,
a scythe tattooed on her forehead,
the stone in her necklace pulsates
a sinister laser-like beam, bluish
hypnotises me, seduces me.
All dreams are possible,
a distant voice echoes towards me
all dreams are possible,
all dreams...

ROBERT NISBET

Robert Nisbet is a poet from Wales, in the Western part of the United Kingdom, and a graduate of the Universities of Wales and Essex. His work is published in roughly equal measures in Britain and the USA.

Beginnings

Just as the Pacific rolls into
southern California, into Long Beach and Malibu,
and this is the beginning of America,
and just as the Gulf stream runs warm
to beaches and harbours on the Pembrokeshire coast,
Dale, Solva, Barafundle,
and this is the beginning of a green, fertile country,
and just as the Mediterranean laps
on ports along North Africa, Casablanca, Tunis,
and this is the beginning of Africa,
where whole peoples, under a near-incessant sun,
wait for deliverance,
just so,
in Carthage and Catalunya and Samaria,
in Clerkenwell and Cumbernauld and Swansea,
when the bully boys have been and there've been
hurt and hate, some kid's been kicked
and some other kid has found him, said, *You all right, son?*
helped him, dusted him, and they've agreed,
Yeab, they're bastards, shared the moment,
the sorrow, maybe shared a chocolate bar, a fag even,
agreed again, *Yeab, they're bastards*,
this is the beginning
of decency and the hard world's hope.

Acknowledgment: First published in Dream Catcher #28 (UK).

ROBERT WOOD

Robert Wood is interested in place, relationships and ecology. He is the author of *History and the Poet*, and, *Concerning A Farm*. Robert is the Chair of PEN Perth in Western Australia and has family in Singapore and South India. Website: www.robertdwood.net

Redgate

Where carrots and cabbages
and ships hauled over sand and sound

where they remarked that
the colour was always green, somehow, and
the mushrooms were never found

where the twilight was molasses
because we lost our matches,

that was where they came to
and we knew, somehow, that their bones and wings would be laid
there
when all the world found out.

ROBERTA GOULD

Roberta Gould's work has appeared widely in poetry magazines and anthologies. She is the author of the thirteen books, the most recent: *Woven Lightning* Spuyten Duyvil Press, 2018. She lives in the Hudson Valley, New York and studies ants.
<http://robertagould.net>

Arrival

I arched my back
against its forward inclination
like a high diving queen
on a board
I sprang meeting my feet
and rolled like a wheel of flesh
over the land
touching myself
like a snake
time gone
(ouroboros)
we the same
mother earth
and this turning
No yesterday
No time at all

Free of my high reach
I was beetle
I was turtle
a simple cardinal
finding seed
This was arrival

No question
This was me

ROCHELLE POTKAR

Rochelle Potkar is the author of *The Arithmetic of breasts and other stories*, *Four Degrees of Separation*, and *Paper Asylum*. A few of her works been nominated or have won awards. She blogs at <https://rochellepotkar.com>

Biscooti Love

Memory is... images of a prepubescent boy cycling home,
Parag milk packets in one of his arms,
feeding biscuits to a stray gaggle of brown dogs, wagging their
shins.

Large half-moon eyes, kind salivating tongue,
his smile showed no cookie-crescent as he fed them all;
he was my first love.

More than the girls, the calves and canines knew his way home,
this small-towner of a bygone *Bhaarat* who found humans in
animals,
he grew hunger in me.

Now in this morphing, super-quick India, his animals are
holographic.
His love fades cookie-slim into the sun of many states, tastes, time
zones.
He has not one trail from work to home, but ten homes.

He, the colour of chocolate, almond-abdomened,
he found love in many cities,
technology-girls,
animals in liberated women,
who fed off his glucose, milk, sugar, marmalade;
they never grew thin.

Over the trail of his virgin-white honey, the scent of *shudh desi*,
Old world in new crackling wrapping,
always with a 30% improved marking.

Bearing the saccharine of my bites and goosebumps,
he now breaks under my neurotic granular breath.
chai mein dubha hua – tea-dunked, wafer-thin, milk crux-ed.

My Pickwick, Marie, Parle G, Tiger,
Oreo, Bourbon, mall-shelved Belgian,
online baked-and-ordered
same old-same new,
premium cream-crunched love.

Acknowledgment: This poem is from the book Four Degrees of Separation (Paperwall, 2016).

RON CHARACH

Ron Charach is a poet, essayist, novelist and practicing psychiatrist. Born in Winnipeg, he has lived in Toronto since 1980. His poems are featured in two world anthologies of physician poetry, *Blood & Bone* and *Primary Care*. His most recent books of poetry are *Forgetting the Holocaust* and *Prosopagnosia*, and his most recent novel is *cabana the big*, a Canadian response to all things Trump.

Psychiatrists On The Subway

One rarely spots psychiatrists on the subway
rubbing the haze of a long day's sessions
from their lean temples,
or thumbing through paperbacks that deal
with anything-but.
Wouldn't they like an update on who's
in the world and how they're doing?
Or would the ridership be wary of men and women
whose briefcases rattle with the *tic tac*
of pills, whose ears perk
like armadillos' at conversations
two seats over?
More likely we locate them in a bad joke,
in a wing-chair beside a firm couch,
a suicide statistic, a product seminar
with deli sandwiches courtesy of Pfizer or Roche
or Eli Lilly;
perhaps on the beach of a convention hotel
with a panorama of beach-blanket beauties
who seldom talk revealingly.

Before bed a psychiatrist sets his ears
on the night-table
and prays for a night of long silence
from a god who prefers

to listen.

RON SINGER

Ron Singer read this poem at a memorial for poet-activist Dennis Brutus in Durban, South Africa, in 2011. *Look to Mountains, Look to Sea* (2013), a collection of Maine poems, was one of Singer's four Pushcart nominations, and was also the 2014 Editor's Chap/Book Choice for *The Aureorean*. His eighth book, *Uburu Revisited: Interviews with Pro-Democracy Leaders* (Africa World Press/Red Sea Press, 2015), is available in approximately 100 libraries around the world. Two new books are scheduled for publication by Unsolicited Press: *The Promised End* (2019), a collection of stories; and *Gravy* (2020), a mixed-genre collection. www.ronsinger.net

Listen Hard Enough

(for Butchie Maxwell)

The quiet seems absolute
but, if you listen hard enough,
you can hear children's voices
from the other side of the world.

It is a beautiful day,
weather "like it used to be."
Clouds roll through a dark-blue sky,
wet snow in a dog-less city,
so white, so heavy, so clean.

The wind, of course, you can hear
without trying. Crickets, birds, too.
But, if you listen hard enough,
certain sounds from deep in the woods
seem a mingling of children's voices.

Picture these kids, if you will,
begging, selling petty goods,
running in and out of traffic
on a teeming African street,
or perched high on a garbage hill
in the heart of some *favela*.

One looks up, perhaps, and sees
wet, white clouds in a dark-blue sky
and, who knows, he may be listening
to you. He hears your distant heart.

Acknowledgment: Originally published in New Works Review, 2007.

ROSALY DEMAIOS ROFFMAN

Rosalyn DeMaios Roffman taught courses in creative writing and mythology and started a myth/folklore Studies Center at Indiana University of Penna. She has co-edited many books. She has collaborated on 23 pieces with other artists and has been published in many journals and anthologies. The recipient of a Distinguished Faculty Award in the Arts in Pa., and of National Endowment Grants, she was brought to England by the BBC for an interview and taping of work categorized as the “wild and the sacred.” She has read her poems in Mexico, Israel, Ireland and Greece and believes in the healing power of poetry.

Love As A Way In The Universe

When the storms settle
in the voices of trees
you can hear if you listen
love as a way in the universe

And in the way that whales come
smiling, not as offended victims
but with knowledge past hunters,
love is that way in the universe

When you see the trust of a child
in words she uses the first time
asking for help, knowing help is coming,
love is a way in this universe

And if we had to wish for a color
and time to give all children in this world
what we call history, it would be the history
of love as the way in this universe

Move towards each other today
in celebrations of music and what is kind
and loveliest in men and women, ask for
love as a way in this universe.

ROSEMARIE WILSON

Rosemarie Wilson a.k.a. One Single Rose™ is an award winning poet and playwright, spoken word artist, singer, actress and filmmaker from Detroit, Michigan. One Single Rose™ performs nationally and internationally wherever her words are welcomed. For more information, visit www.onesinglerose.com

Love Rose

A rose grew up from the concrete;
burst through earth like a Phoenix
standing tall,
poised perfectly to flourish in sun
or shade.
Its beauty seared into psyches of creatures
that supposedly find love at first sight.
Petals soft as cotton
emit fragrant aromas summoning visitors
that bear peace offerings to woo secrets away
from inside the rosebud's walls.
Great Pretenders fake the funk
exposing their true colors once the rose blooms,
deflowering its innocence
by clipping just above that fifth leaf.
Roses eventually wilt if left unattended on a shelf,
but bounce back resilient to breed new life on the vine.
Thorns hidden in the bush prick unwelcomed guests
leaving marks demanding respect,
never to be forgotten,
as thieves don't ever leave their presence unscathed.
Even beautiful flowers possess defense mechanisms
which is why I don't cut roses from the garden anymore.
They too deserve a chance to flourish
happily
ever
after.

RUSS GOLATA

Russ Golata is a central Florida poet. A member of the Florida State poets and a founding member of Orlando Poetry Ensemble. He can be seen running open mics in various locations. His last book *Fragments of Other Worlds* the 4th book in the Fragments series is on Amazon. Other Fragments titles soon to follow.

Interventions

It is never like we plan it
Foundations crumble everyday
We ride along these roads
From yesterday's into tomorrows

As our path becomes clear
Fate bends all the rules,
Lost, like a babe in the woods,
We cry out for answers?

As seasons move past,
The music of birds,
And the smell of flowers
Open our eyes, to all that matters

With the moon overhead,
And a choir of insects
All abundant life is right now!
Waiting for you to notice

Break out of your rhythms
And create a new song
Nobody can make your music
The way only you can hear it.

S. L. PEERAN

S. L. Peeran hails from an illustrious family of erstwhile Mysore State. His great grandfather was a renowned Arabic, Persian & Urdu scholar & poet and was bestowed with a title of ‘Siraj-ul Ulma’ (Sun among Scholars). His grandfather received the title of ‘Moin-ul-vizarath (Pillar of Ministry) from late Maharaja of Mysore for his services to the State. His father was an Engineer and also Sajjada-Nishin of Darga of Saint Hz-Qader awaliya Srirangapatna. Peeran has been deeply interested in Sufism, in study of human growth & development, Urdu & English Poetry. Poets International Bangalore has also nominated him as “Best Poet for 2003”. International Poetry Academy, Chennai has also awarded him with “Best Poet” award for 2009. He has won Literary Prize 2017 of ‘Naji Naaman’ of Lebanon.

Ever Existing Life

Life and death smoothly flow in the veins
Gathering as it moves strength
Or weakness, to survive or to whither.
The clock of four seasons move within.
Rays of Sun, Moon, Stars, Radio, Cosmic waves,
Free flow of electrons, protons,
Electricity, light and thunder
Sustains life or its intensity breaks it.
Evolution and dissolution is constant.
Moving in its own rhythm, clicking
Its own clock, leaving a trail behind.
There is a constant harmony, rhythm
In all forms of life between
Material and immaterial objects.
Play of song and music.

In silence of one's mind is nonstop.
A scheme is laid, microns, DNA, RNA, work
From ions, gathering waves and waves
Of information, stored within our mind
Wisdom, experience is awakening
Of the consciousness, becoming aware
Of inner self in harmony with outer self.
Hear the Divine vibrations of music
Rhythmically playing in the inner ear drum.
Time your mind to the cosmic flow
Of life in a peaceful non agitating
State, unmindful of imaginary
Failures of your schemes for profit
And loss in the movement of life.
The journey breaks, the outer shell

Of organs, muscles and skeleton
Dissolves it but the solar life lives
With its cosmic songs by tunings
The inner consciousness into subtle light.
Light merges in light.
A union with solar light to live forever.
Electricity, energy and light is life.
Life is light with vibrations of constant music
Played constantly on the horizons of cosmos.
Like mother suckling a new born baby.
A bird taking within its wings
The eggs to hatch it to bring new life.
And the process lives on forever.
Life flows uninterruptedly till eternity.
So long as benign Sun exits.

SARADA PURNA SONTY

Dr. Sarada Purna Sonty from Chicago USA is one of the foremost thinkers and writers in the field of Art Traditions of India, a poet, scholar, published author of 24 Books. She has received a Doctoral degree in Telugu Literature, a Second Doctoral degree in Sanskrit, submitted Thesis for D Litt from Berhampur University Odisha. Sarada received Honors as one of the “Top Ten Living Telugu Legends of USA”, Paul Harris Award by Rotary, 2017 “Top 15 Women of Excellence Award”, Life time Achievement by US Congressman Danny K Davis, 2018 First Hindu Woman Service in Ministry Commissioner of Board Dr. Tony Pretwinkle. Sarada is founder SAPNA ‘Sri Annamacharya Project of North America’ a 501 c (3) not for profit organization, ‘Director for Center for Telugu Studies, Owner and Editor for ‘Brahmi ‘Literary Journal, Sonty Publications. www.drSaradaPurna.com

We... We Oneness

‘You and I’ mighty phantom as can be
In this complex maize of Nine way house
Blown We are high of each other’s feet
‘Function’ and ‘virtue’ resurrect in front
Match Makers pawns in ‘Barat’ process
Bride’s father stand on head as groom glee
First night is filled with gloating romance
Who hand cuffed the couple tying tight
Racing towards the lasting last night
Moon light peaking from Horney throne
Cupid’s naughty arrows in billions thrown
Did ‘you’ and ‘I’ wed out of Love and Lust
Your labor and my deep desire in comfort
Bring ‘life’ in bosom of starry milky ways

My sweetness 'we' see each other constant
Is 'Yoga' the long preface to saga that end
We join, you and I shall be one continued
Together both reel down with equal speed
Reinforcing V – Blest loops are in lead
Obscured first consent 'you' or 'me'
Unloading ports of weekly ships in row
Virtue whines and Function pout red
Crashes through 'Gates of 'Lock – at-work'
Echo rings loud struggling mind of foolish
Numbers myriad on pages Antique Book
Matrimony in gold embosses front page
You are the sheen green of life and love
We two, 'soul and suit' Countless shapes exhibit
I hold you in my tact wooden pole safe
Vince's brush and Potters Rheum fingers
Stroke and Chisel to etch life lines and curves
Together we sing the tongues of leaves
The swing is still to still the orange Sun.

Note: ('baarat' – Pre wedding procession, 'Yoga' Union, 'Nine may house' 'soul and suit' – Human body, V-blest – Venus blessings).

SARAH BROWN WEITZMAN

Sarah Brown Weitzman, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellow in Poetry and twice a Pushcart Prize nominee, was a Finalist in the Academy of American Poets' Walt Whitman First Book Award contest. She is widely published in hundreds of journals and anthologies including *New Ohio Review*, *North American Review*, *The Bellingham Review*, *Rattle*, *Mid-American Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Miramar*, *Spillway* and elsewhere. Her books are available from Amazon.

October Valley Journey

The creek swept cold and straight
 where I turned to mount the hill path
running all the way to reach the crest
 and take sudden the whole shock
of that autumn valley in one sudden sight
 dogwood's scarlet spread to maples
the purpled ash, elms exactly orange
 fire, among the birch one golden oak
apples ruby late upon the branch
 and pines that do no turning
as though this quarter meant to hold
 all hues of man's seasons from green
to full fruit and in between in this last
 flamboyant protest against dying
but brought to me stealing from homework
 and after-school chores that bond
all may share through beauty.

But then running through fields of weeds
 tingling my town legs, past flurries of bees
and brown butterflies, all wooing and winged
 like myself I fling down the hill

into apple air and musk of old baywood
 some hand had sawed not far from potatoes
unearthed to dry to where straining against the fence
 there were the farmer's four horses.
Not the first untouched crystal of winter
 nor spring's green sameness nor even
summer's academic freedom ever pleased me
 as much as that October valley journey
in memory now become not journey but an end.
 The farmer died. His family moved to the city.
That ground soon grew nothing humans eat.
 The horses were sold for glue.

Acknowledgment: First published in The Nassau Review, 1999.

SARAH LIPTON

Sarah Lipton has written three volumes of poetry, three volumes of short stories, a play, a children's book, film scripts, song lyrics and educational textbooks. She is completing her first novel: *14 Bensham Grove*. Her poetry has been published in twenty-two anthologies. Her poem, 'Stagnation,' was shortlisted in 'The National Anthology Poetry Competition' in 2005. She received a 'Poetry Society' award for some of her poems. She was awarded commended and honours certificates for some of her poems at 'The Richmond Music Festival.' She was 'The Featured Poet of 'Bareback Lit Magazine' in 2012.

Autumn

The sun weakens and the days shorten,
Leaves turn from green to a golden brown,
Flies die and flowers begin to wither,
Buzzing bees are nowhere to be found,
Animals decide to hibernate,
And birds decide to migrate;
But it is the time of the harvest,
The season when fruit explodes with ripeness,
Churches have a harvest festival,
While in the park ducks still swim on the pond;
The long school holiday has ended,
It is dark in the morning at seven,
Birds no longer twitter in the trees,
Leaves fall to the ground and perish
As they are trodden on by heavy feet,
Conkers plonk from the horse-chestnut
And children throw them at each other,
Orange flames from an open fire,
Kill the chill in the large sitting-room,
A bowl of soup warms the body,
While outside a lady shivers,
And trees begin to look so forlorn,
And will only feel joy when spring is born.

SARAH M. SALA

Sarah M. Sala is the author of *THE GHOST ASSEMBLY LINE* published by Finishing Line Press in 2016. Her poem “Hydrogen” was featured in the “Elements” episode of NPR’s hit show Radiolab. Sarah’s awards and honors include: an Academy of American Poets Prize, the Marjorie Rapport Award for Poetry, An Avery Hopwood Award for Nonfiction, and a Roy W. Cowden Memorial Fellowship. Her poems appear in *Atlas Review*, *The Stockholm Review of Literature*, and *Poetry Ireland Review*, among others. Her debut poetry collection *Devil’s Lake*, was a finalist for the 2017 Subito Book Prize. Visit her at <http://SarahSala.com>

Tanager Street

Home after dark
I listen for the electric
pierce of the television,
for her slipper shuffle.

I wait to hear the tumble
of clothes in the dryer,
the kettle whistle
from the stove.

Not even a vacuum
disturbs the silence;
I am late and want
to be forgiven.

Acknowledgment: First published in Poetry Ireland Review.

SARAH SUTRO

Sarah Sutro, a painter who has focused recently on ink drawings and watermedia, earned a BFA from Cornell and Yale, and an MFA from University of the Arts, London. A recipient of a Pollock Krasner Grant, she has been a resident at the American Academy of Rome, MacDowell Colony, Ossabaw Island Foundation, Millay Colony for the Arts, Blue Mountain Center, and Art Dulcinium, Montenegro. She has been a faculty over many years at colleges and universities in the area, including Emerson College, AIB at Lesley University and Mass College of Art and Design, and now lives and works in N. Adams, MA. She is the author of a book of poetry, *Études*, published by Finishing Line Press. She is also a poet and writes articles and reviews for *American Arts Quarterly*. Her book, *COLORS Passages through Art, Asia and Nature* is in its second edition (2011). www.sarahsutro.com

Where I Lie

deep night embroidered
with stars
sweep of lightning,
sea of sound:
cricket, owl
dark jacket
of rhinestones
all aglow –
illuminates a tapestry
so huge,
thoughts of boundaries
hurt the soul

SARALA RAM KAMAL

Sarala Ram Kamal is a bilingual (English/Malayalam) poet/translator from Trivandrum. She works as a freelance graphic designer and also as a DAISY Technology Trainer for the visually challenged. She has published a book of poems called *The Unfurling: Wordflies and other poems* and translated a book of short stories into Malayalam. Her poems have appeared in many national/international anthologies like *The Indo-Australian anthology*, *The Scaling Heights*, etc.

I Am A Poetess

When I was a newborn
I wrote poems with my four limbs
Throwing them up in the air
Only God knew what I wrote

When I was a little bigger
I wrote poems with my lips
In an unknown lingua franca
Only my mother knew what I wrote

When I was a school girl
I wrote poems on the river water
Which flowed westward
Maybe Arabian sea had them all

When I was a teenager
I wrote poems on the western sky
With my dreamy eyes
On the golden canvas where the clouds rested in many a shape

When I got married
I wrote poems with the broom

On my new home's floor
They were very dark

When I was pregnant
I wrote lullabies with my breath
Hearing them my baby kicked
And I knew it liked them all

When my child started walking
All my poems I wrote till then
Came back once again
Through those little feet, with their new steps

Now, when the kids are up and on their own
Poems come to me, I pick pen and paper,
Write them; the alphabet is known to the world
Many reads, likes, dislikes ...

All poems written in my life till now are there
Lingering in my breaths, sighs and inside the dreams
They are so sweet with all spices mixed in the right proportion
I am a poet, still writing, may be will be writing through my death

Acknowledgment: 3rd prize as The Poetess of the Year 2018 contest by the international poetry group called Poetry 24/7, with a prompt "I am a Poetess", and The poem of the month of December, 2018 by Destiny Poets UK.

SCOTT HASTIE

Scott Hastie is a successful British born poet and writer, who has been commercially published in the UK for over twenty years now. He currently has over ten titles in print, including a novel and five collections of poetry. In recent years, the revealing spiritual tone in his work is starting to draw acclaim from an increasingly worldwide audience, especially in the U.S. Asia & the Middle East. Published in both print & e editions in 2016, *Threads* is the definitive collection Scott's poetry to date, featuring many of his readers recent favourites, as showcased on <http://www.scotthastie.com>

Whenever

Whenever you can conjure
The stillness to notice,
There is a sense of the ancient
Hanging in the air.

A lingering spiritual fragrance,
Full of knowing,
That dresses
Contemporary journeys
Like ours.

And always set against
Such a broad tapestry,
Long woven too
With telling details
That confirm who we are,
Albeit still as raw
And naive as any infant.

All the more so
When stood, toe to toe,
With the luminosity
Of days gone by.
And embarking,
As best we can,
On the benevolent opportunity
Of one thin slice
Of a chosen life,

However glorious,
Or loaded with pathos
This eventually becomes.

No chance of tragedy
Here though!
For we truly are,
As we come to recognise
Ourselves to be,
Mere receptacles.

Gilded chariots
That our spirits ride out,
But for a hallowed moment in time.

The merest splash of presence
In the serried halls of wonder.

SCOTT THOMAS OUTLAR

Scott Thomas Outlar hosts the site 17 Numa.com where links to his published poetry, fiction, essays, interviews, reviews, live events, and books can be found. His work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Outlar was a recipient of the 2017 Setu Magazine Award for Excellence in the field of literature. Selections of his poetry have been translated into Afrikaans, Albanian, Dutch, Italian, French, Persian, and Serbian. He has been a weekly contributor for the cultural newsletter Dissident Voice since 2014. His most recent book, *Abstract Visions of Light*, was released in 2018 through Alien Buddha Press. His show, Songs of Selah, airs weekly on 17Numa Radio.

Revelations In The Marrow

The vastness of your scope
as I stare into the sky
reveals itself here and there
with glimpses into the absolute glimmer,
yet the mystery remains ineffable
in a context beyond that which
my primitive consciousness can grasp,
and I'm beginning to understand
that the seduction of your existential aloofness
is part and parcel
to the inherent romance in this experience of life.

I cannot come to know you fully
in the spaces of my mind,
but I can feel you in my guts,
in my heart, in my veins,
through my blood, in my bones,
down to the marrow.

These two open eyes
cannot gleam your greatness,
but when they are closed
I can see dimensions
beyond this physical plane of existence,
and I can sense the raw power
which pulses from your source
as it radiates outward
to be divined by those who truly seek.

The names which you have been called by
throughout the ages
mean nothing to me at this point –
simple words babbled from broken tongues
cannot capture the purity of your meaning;
it is your essence
to which I am addicted,
and I will never cease
reaching toward your unconditional love
until every urgent craving in my soul
has been satiated by your presence.

SCOTT WIGGERMAN

Scott Wiggerman is the author of three books of poetry, *Leaf and Beak: Sonnets, Presence*, and *Vegetables and Other Relationships*; and the editor of several volumes, including *Wingbeats: Exercises & Practice in Poetry*, *Bearing the Mask*, and *Weaving the Terrain*. Poems have appeared recently in *Softblom*, *Ocotillo Review*, *The Ghazal Page*, *bosque*, and *Allegro Poetry*. He lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico. <http://swig.tripod.com>

Formations

A quiet field of punctuation marks
becomes a murmur: first, the lift,
despite a brutal wind, and then the shift
across the sky, from right to left in arcs
that sail in folds, a hundred wings as one,
apostrophes in sync, an aerial
display of feathers, beaks, and last, a pull
back down to earth, this sudden dance undone.

Our lungs inflate. Our breathing bellows cells
in movement: rising, falling. That's a fact.
My own heart murmurs, beats its wings the same
direction – over, over – casts its spells,
abandons them. And so... expand, contract:
it's how the world began, how we became.

Acknowledgment: "Formations," a sonnet first published in Hobbie Creek Review.

SEÁN MAC FALLS

Seán Mac Falls is an Irish poet. He has published four books of poetry. His first collection of poems, *20 Poems* (2001) was praised, first from Oxford University don, John Carey, who compared the poet to W. B. Yeats and later by Yale critic Harold Bloom. Several of the poems were Pushcart Prize nominations and were reprinted in major UK magazines such as *Agenda*, *The London Magazine* and *Stand Magazine*. He published a second book, entitled *The Blue Falcon*, in 2005. He lives in Port Angeles, Washington.

Body Of Ocean, Milk And Sky

Body of ocean, milk and sky,
We are tangled in the hope of night.
The lips of the milky way, creaming us,
Stains and is tart with a taste keening;
All is creation. My meteors crash
Into your ruptured Earth. I flame
Upon your must and moisted furrows
And my toes are locked, rooted in yours.

Body of ocean, milk and sky,
In the deserts of the day you are true
Oasis. The curves and waft of your sands
Seethe and sodden my barren plains,
Are erasing all my wandering memories
Of an endless sky and now your eyes
Are the only stars I know, and your skin;
A sheet that holds the heavens shimmering.

Body of ocean, milk and sky,
Your breasts are the heaving of grasses
And wind, loft and laden in the rounded
Hills, a hoard of yeasty bread, bountiful,
Ripe and strange. Your hair is an endless
Savannah, your valleys are gold and honeyed
With milk, seared, filled by my penetrating sun.
In passion we play; low on earth and deep in sky.

SEVARION NADIRADZE

Sevarion Nadiradze was born on October 11, 1962, in Tbilisi, Georgia. He graduated from Tbilisi State University, philological department. His literary activities started from young age. His poems were published in Georgia and abroad. In 1989, he published the first book of poetry, *Two Shores. Monologue of Winter*, another book of poetry was published in 2002, which consists of three poems: “Abel, Cain’s brother”, “Star and Magi”, and “Starting in Our Hearts and Finishing in Love”. In 2003, his first novel, *The way of Flour*, was published. It followed by the collection of poetry *Poems Left in Shadow* (2005). The second novel, *Khaki Color Yashmak*, appeared in 2008. The latest poetic collection, *A Poem, White Chit*, dates to 2013. In 2009, Sevarion Nadiradze was awarded with the Prize of the First Lady of Georgia, Sandra Roelofs, as a winner of contest “Shotaoba?”. The magazine *Our Writers* named Sevarion Nadirdze the Poet of the Year.

A Clown

He will make faces and tousle hair,
Will present his heart as an easy toy to youth,
Will never call for monsters from darkness,
Dotard, a master of hurly-burly.

Maestro wrapped in colorful rags,
Bending, and smiling to circus fans,
Chandelier lights snatch away his eyesight,
He faces his destiny as a prodigal son.

He will perform a lowly pauper,
Remind Adam’s folks about the human pride,
He will arrange his rags, stand straight,
And count ten on his shaggy fingers.

Children will guess what the old man is about,
No need to search the idea’s depth,
When the lame performs his farewell dance,
The mask-men cheer a man wearing a mask.

SHAKWAT SADI

Shakwat Sadi alias Md. Shakwat Hossain is a poet, novelist and working in the field of technology. He received Master of Commerce in Business Management. He studies in the University of Dhaka. He also completed Business program from the Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto, Canada and he is the inventor of biometric enable banking system. He completed Supply Chain Management from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology. He also designed and developed software in demand forecast of Supply Chain Management and working as co-author of flow casting The Retail Supply Chain Management. He has been living in Ontario, Canada over a decade.

I'm Going Back

I'm going back to you
Leave the city of civilization.

Here's the cloud dialogue covering the skyscrapers.
The sound of the unknown device comes to the sound of rain
E-waste covered face of masks
Living inside the machine.

I'm going back to you
Leave the city of civilization.

Here is the hippocampus of my head of the device
In the through reading barometer of laser eyes
Unknown seen in the eye of eye browser's.

I have never learned any kind of maneuver
I don't have any technique of training to protect
No algorithm of unnecessary mechanical technology
There was only love in my heart;
Poet's has only the illusive of back ward
and what could be, say!

Even though the mechanism of the civilization of blood bath
the scenario of hallucination
In the account of currency notes
Poetic economic
People fight with people.

I'm going back to you
Leave the city of civilization
I'm going back...
I'm going back...
I'm going back.

SHARMILA RAY

Dr. Sharmila Ray is a poet and non-fiction essayist, anthologized and featured in India and abroad. She has authored nine volumes of poetry. Her poems and non-fictional essays have appeared in various national and international magazines and journals. She is an Asso-Prof. and Head of the Dept. of History, City College, Kolkata. Her poems have been translated into many languages. She also writes on Art. She conducts poetry and translation workshops and has been reading her poems in India and abroad and participates as a panelist in various seminars organized by Universities and private institutions.

I've Forgotten How To Write A Love Poem...

I've forgotten how to write a love poem...

Wistful in autumn, leaves strewn on the ground, the poem is no longer a part of me. But like all things also a part of my diverse memory.

I've forgotten how to write a love poem...

It was there in me long before the tempting *Apple* happened. It belonged to Lorca and Jibananando and came down to me riding the slopes of dawn.

I treasured its metaphors and cadences, weaving and interweaving with leaves, coffee and lipstick. I desired its delicate shape and offered it like a prayer.

But then, that was then...

I've forgotten how to write a love poem...

It has hidden itself in the snows of Gulmarg, escaping the horror lurking in the pine forest.

Some things are lost, possibly forever, yet they remain in that curious dim-labyrinth between your blood moon and mine.

SHARON CUMBERLAND

Sharon Cumberland's poems have been published in many literary journals, including *Ploughshares*, *Iowa Review*, *Image*, and *Beloit Poetry Journal*. She won Kalliope's Sue Sanial Elkind Award, The Pacific Northwest Writer's Association's Zola Award for Poetry (2007, 2013), and the Writers Haven Press Bright Side Award. Black Heron Press publishes her full-length collections: *Peculiar Honors* (2012) and *Strange with Age* (2017). Her chapbooks are *The Arithmetic of Mourning* (Green Rock Press), *Greatest Hits 1985-2000*, (Pudding House Press) and *CCausmwbeelrlland* (Floating Bridge Press). "The Day No One Died" appears in *Strange with Age*. She is Emeritus Professor of English at Seattle University.

The Day No One Died

There are seven billion people in the world.
Every second – every millisecond – thousands die
like drops of water rushing together
over a vast falls.
But on this particular day,
the old ladies gasping on mats in the corner of huts
or in hospices and hospitals, and the old men gazing at the ceiling
from their death beds, lived to see the sun rise once again.
Pedestrians walked safely down the sidewalks of the world,
and drunk drivers plowed into snow banks or hedges
instead of people or trees. Skiers also avoided trees,
and no boys hoping for paradise wrapped themselves in dynamite
to haunt the market places of Afghanistan or Syria
or Iraq. Mothers all over the world selected apples and coconuts,
mangos and pomegranates to take home on what seemed like a
normal day.

But on this particular day, the epidemiologists had a few more hours to unravel the secrets of Ebola, HIV/AIDS, malaria. The little boy, alone in a sterile room in Liberia could look through the plastic window at his mother for one more day.

No one noticed this miracle – the ICU nurse simply noticed that all of her patients seemed to rally a little, and the hospice volunteer went from bed to bed smiling into the quiet faces of those who waited, some with hope, others – on this particular day – with less resentment than usual.

City morgues caught up on their backlogs because, as sometimes happens, there were no murders on this particular day, and no kids falling out of windows or into ponds or out of cribs, no Dads slipping on ice or falling off ladders stringing lights or clearing gutters. Firemen ate lasagna and were grateful for an uneventful day. Far away, in those places we send soldiers but never go to ourselves, everyone seemed to just sit down and smoke a cigarette, or a pipe, or a hookah, and have a cup of coffee. They all seemed to be waiting – waiting for something all of them wanted. On this particular day, everyone lived.

SHEIKHA A.

Sheikha A. is from Pakistan and United Arab Emirates. Her work appears in over 100 literary venues, both print and online, including several anthologies by different presses. Recent work has been in *Uppagus*, *Mobius*, *Pedestal Magazine*, *Visual Verse*, and elsewhere. Website: <http://sheikha82.wordpress.com>

Doubt Not

the evening carries an aromatic familiarity
of macerated memories swindling peace
from an already thieved destiny, hollowed
when trespassed to seize as your residence –
no terms or contracts to validate ownership
but like steadfast charms impinging on
sheltered skies of a damp midday solitary
siesta of dreamless adventures, you walked
right in. The clutches of your ebullient
curiosity swathed me in a new brand of hope
I began to farm in age long untended soils;
the palates of which I indulged with water
from wells you bore that have now run dry
from quenching your gyrating quests. I
house in this paradise we built, your scent
gradually falls off my walls of waiting
but I wait, like a hermit bankrupt
of her own faith.

SHEILA BELLO

Sheila Bello writes poetry, creative nonfiction, and short fiction. She is inspired by nature and human interactions. She is a member of The Ontario Poetry Society, Haiku Canada, Tanka Canada, the Scarborough Poetry Club and Scarborough Arts. Sheila was born in Trinidad and immigrated to Canada in 1972. She lives in Scarborough, Ontario.

The Universe Is A Poem

While gazing at sunset
my imagination took flight
on the wings of a bird.

It landed on a maple tree and stayed
for a while, joining other birds in song,
chatter and branch hopping,
before ascending with wings flapping
above treetops and buildings, then towards
the descending orange glow in the horizon.

It anticipated a rising moon and twinkling stars,
still flying as it merged with the deepening dusk
and became a speck of dust in boundless sky
like a grain of sand dissolved in the ocean
ebbing and flowing in waves that are
in constant motion.

It took a path that swerved and turned
then glided in the widening space,
that space between earth and the vast sky.

It saw that the universe is a poem; one
with vivid imagery that invokes powerful emotions;
one with an infinite number of words, lines and stanzas;
a poem in which the moon, sun, earth, and stars
are among its countless stanzas; a poem
in motion that speaks and sings; one which
cannot be confined or defined as this or that
yet, one that encompasses narrative, dramatic,
and lyrical components; a poem with rhymes,
rhythms, free flowing verses, moments of insight,
and much more; such it is,
this dynamic poem that is the universe.

Propelled by elements from the visible world
and the invisible beyond, my imagination
kept roving. It filled me with creative fire.
I felt inspired to find expressions
that could convey my perceptions and reactions,
and imprint them as imitation lines
from the original poem, the universe.

SIGHLÉ MEEHAN

Sighle Meehan, an award winning poet from Galway, Ireland, has been published in many journals and anthologies. She won the Imbas Celtic Mythology short story competition (Australia); is the author of *Maum*, a bi-lingual play professionally produced for the Galway International Theatre Festival; and writer and co-producer of *Brighid*, a drama documentary broadcast by TG4 (Irish language television station) several times 1998-2016.

New York, It Had A Ring To It

the way the words fell in his head
a place his mother was, near the pier, maybe,
where he was not allowed to go
or somewhere people went in cars,

the way the words grew like sand in his throat
would not pass his mouth
the whispers telling him they were bad
the way his granny spat them out,

the way he walked for days to get there
out of bed at night
the guards with the words behind their eyes
his granny shouting “you’ll not take him”

telling him “your mammy’s gone”, her arms
tough and hard about him, hot milk,

sleeping in beside her, walking with her
up to Grogan’s for one of Bessie’s pups

he built a fort inside him to hold
the words, an island, a long island,
a statue bigger than Our Lady in the chapel,
the sky across Lough Swilly

got lost beyond Buncrana to a place
where buildings scraped it; he learned to count
to one hundred and forty nine, the way
when he'd be big he'd count the streets and find her

SMITA AGARWAL

Smita Agarwal is a well-known cultural personality and Indian poet writing in English. Her poems have received awards and residencies from the British Council, the Arvon Foundation and the Charles Wallace Trust. She is the author of *Wish-granting Words, Poems* (New Delhi, Ravi Dayal, 2002) and *Mofussil Notebook* (Calcutta, Sampark, 2016). She is the editor of *Marginalized: Indian Poetry in English* (Amsterdam and New York, Rodopi, 2014). Her critical articles have appeared in *Poetry Review*, *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* and *Plath Profiles* (of which she is also an editor and translator). She is a professor of English, and Director, Centre for Women's Studies, University of Allahabad, India. She is a professional singer with samples of her songs available at <http://www.beatofindia.com>, YouTube and Sound Cloud.

Earth Day

The river's been packed in a Samsonite. Folded,
Like the pleats of a saree, doubled up and shut;
Mountain ranges have been dismantled
And sent to jail.
Grasslands are being forced to migrate
As they follow a different religion.
Trees are subjected to lashings.
They stand around doing nothing, lazy buggers...
Flowers, if they survive the smog of persecution,
Will be dyed pale by this establishment.
Fruit and vegetable are put in straightjackets
Then injected with arsenic.
Butterfly and beetle are being
Transported to gas chambers.

Cows and buffaloes are greeted
With bouquets and classical music,
Then invited to a sumptuous lunch.
All large animals have been
Successfully radicalized to commit *jaubar*.
Peacocks, because they are celibate
And spiritual, are being considered
For a rise in pay.
Oxygen has been convinced

It's Carbonmonoxide.
It must exit the planet.
Finally, women are being conditioned to say,
"We love to be groped and raped".
And Love, that smart aleck, is on his way
To a newly discovered galaxy which supports life.

He'll settle down there, self-fertilize,
Produce, yet another army
Of callous progeny.

SOLOMON AU YEUNG

Solomon AU YEUNG, from Hong Kong, is currently an in-service teacher, working for a local primary school in Tai O, Lantau Island, this is his third year serving in the school. Some info. about my publication of poetry lately: Three of my non-full-length works, *Mong Kok, A Fashion Show – River* and *Three Poetic Collection* are going to be included in the OROBORO Issue 1 under the Death Rattle Writers Festival, the Anapest June Issue under the Paragon Press and the Origami Poems Project respectively.

The Field In Front Of The Melbourne Museum

greens and yellows intercepted,
making out in the
lightest exotic greys below a winding bush,
being stepped,
by an untold story, sprung,
then bouncing back to a perfectly elastic collision
at the heart of those unchained melodies, thereby
massaging an acoustic tone,
right from the underneath, thus I said...

it's now 4:30 pm,
landed just at the periphery of
Melbourne Museum, was an
unusual shred of sparkling light, streaming my dirt
and rolled me over like a washing machine,
until dusts mostly were dispatched, I then dared to walk out
with a gig to prepare my physique
for an ultraviolet scan from right above, quickly approaching

luckily, I managed to pass and move forward,
on the way laid some undressed souls
stretching their wings to warm the massive lands,
naked were those piles of gems which I hardly ever mastered,
like Ulysses and Howl etc. seeing them rumbling on the edge,
some turned into genies, in bubbles...

some just like me,
catching the sun's shades, while sneaking in,
becoming that fragile moves
written within a subtle score

in hindsight, we might have
danced intellectually all along;& we might have
even booked you down in the exhibition of mankind,
right across this a denser Melbourne air,
& now a cooler time, preparing for entrance

SORIN CERIN

Sorin Cerin (born November 25, 1963 in Baia Mare, Romania) is an important existentialist poet from the 21st century, quoted next to Sartre or Kierkegaard, philosopher, – the creator of Coaxialism, – compared to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein. Sorin Cerin is particularly sought after by the great public for the 11,486 structured aphorisms in 14 volumes of thoughts previously published in various publishing houses, and then to be reunited under the aegis of a monumental volume called *Wisdom Collection*, a title that brought him celebrity and international recognition, for which he is considered to be one of the most representative thinkers of the aphoristic genre in the world, and the thoughts of this work are selected in various prestigious publications or world anthologies. Also, the essays and novels should not be ignored because it recommends him as an essayist and novelist as deep as his poetic, philosophical or aphoristic works.

Making The World

It was tired of so much Nothingness
even and the Endlessness, it understood,
for the first and last time, that it needs of, finite,
thus the Existence was born,
as the Unique Happening, Non-incidentally,
that is, the face of God,
which, once, existing, he felt so alone,
that he wanted for him a Mirror in which to admire himself,
giving birth to the Happening, Non-incidentally,
namely, the Universe of Illusion of Life.

God wanted that His inner light,
to runs over the spaces that have received spirit,
of dedication from Self and time, of Knowledge for Self,
becoming Aware of His being, in order to make
to exist the thought of Creation from the mirror
in which he wished for him increasingly more.

Then God understood,
that, the stars in vain shine romantically,
on the heaven of His thoughts, if it is not love.

He summoned the spaces of the endlessness
and the times of eternity, to counsel himself
with them, what it can mean to love.

They answered him, the Finite,
which, it lean on, the Infinite,
for to decide the Destiny,
suggesting to Him to seek his answer,
in his own mirror.

Could be the love the sky lit,
by the fire of the stars that are burning,
just for self?

He realized that even the sky,
he needs an earth of his,
no matter how insignificant it may be,
in the eyes of the Universe,
through which God saw Himself.

And the thought of God, saw the first flower,
given to Heaven from Him,
but in order for it to exist, she needed water,
and the water of clouds, and, the clouds, of rain,
and so the oceans, plains, and mountains appeared,
everything so that the God to be able to gives,
through love, on He Himself.

Then he realized that the self-love,
is a primitive narcissism,
far of what can be the love of the neighbor,
passing all his thoughts in a Word of Making,
on which he whispered him,
to the magic Mirror of the Happening, Non-incidentally,
creating the world of Illusions of Life,
with all her marvels and sufferings.

SOUMYEN MAITRA

Soumyen Maitra was born in West Bengal, India; and settled in England. A Surgeon by profession, he retired 7 years back. He is the author of several novels in English and his mother language, Bengali. A lot of his poems were published in various magazines; mostly in *Forward Book of Poetry*, and *Dance of the Peacock*. He participated at Library Art festivals in Liverpool, and Regional Art Councils, reading poetry and short stories. At present, he devotes most of his time writing and painting in multiple media.

Seven Agitated Crows

Seven agitated soot-suited crows perch on a tree
Wing-jerking fidgety on a starvation diet
They play-fight all the time. Coffee mug in hand
I watch them from a top balcony with interest.

Crows only have one thing in mind: fight
Grab a fish-bone and run. They jump, shift sideways
And flap wings. One stabs at a milk-tub foil
Another sips coke from a throwaway squashed can.

Their jittery wings twitch, they become airborne
Bubbly dark eyes swing in and out, heads shift
Constantly reshuffling their wings they watch every
Trash piled at road-side to attack and clean up.

With coffee mug bottoms up I watch them play-fight
Each bond to instincts moving in a herd, crowing like
Asthmatic patients; until they discover a new-found spot.
Blakie, beak to tail, they've survived through ages.

As scavengers, they de-litter the earth, clearing
Pavements with rotting food and throwaways
We care a hoot about keeping our cities clean
And unruffled by overflowing city dustbins.

STANLEY H. BARKAN

Stanley H. Barkan, born in Brooklyn, in 1936, is the editor-publisher of Cross-Cultural Communications, a small literary art, noncommercial press focusing on bilingual poetry, which has, to date, published some 400 books and 300 broadsides & postcards, in 50 different languages. His own work, which has been translated into 25 different languages, has been published in 18 different collections, several of which are bilingual. Among the many honors he has received, he most treasures he 2011 Korean Expatriate Literature Association award “for his contribution to the promotion of the globalization of Korean literature through exchanges of Korean and American poetry” and Peter Thabit Jones’s special 2014 “Stanley H. Barkan” tribute issue of the Swansea, Wales-based international poetry magazine, *The Seventh Quarry*, published with a gathering of poems and interviews and photos and art by the many poets and writers and translators and photographers and artists Stanley has worked with during the last four decades. His most recent award, 2017, is the HOMER European Medal of Poetry & Art. Website: www.crossculturalcommunications.com

As Yet Unborn

Oh to be Adam
again
with all his ribs
yearning for a woman
as yet unborn,
mouth free
of the taste of apples,
ears without

the hiss of snakes,
mindless of
nakedness and shame
in the garden
of gentle creatures
waiting for a name.

STELLA VINITCHI RADULESCU

Stella Vinitchi Radulescu, Ph.D. in French Language & Literature, is the author of several collections of poetry published in the United States, Romania and France. She writes poetry in English, French and Romanian and her poems have appeared in a variety of literary magazines in the United States, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Romania. Her last collection of poetry *I scrape the window of nothingness – new & selected poems* was released in 2015 from Orison Books Press. A new book of translations (by Luke Hankins) of her French work *A Cry in the Snow & Other Poems* is forthcoming in an international edition from Seagull Books. At the present she lives in Chicago.

Teaching Death To Fourth Graders

I teach death to fourth graders, I start
with *A* – the *Apple* – the madness
in the Fall:
worms,
sweetness coming from inside,
I want them to touch the crisp, the pouring
autumn light

: this is Adam, I say,
his blood,
his hunger & thirst – I am a two-legged
phenomenon
diving in the space we have,
the white whale
who lost her way to redemption

I teach the smell, the bad seed, the rotten
smell of words:
Sep-tem-ber say it until you hear
the angel :

my child still to be born
sugary sap drips in his bones

I teach colors long gone colors
& sounds
hummingbirds, peonies, ashes and rain –
strip & don't move, your mother
will come to you
with white baskets apples the crop
for years to come

I teach eyes, open eyes, closed eyes,
eyelashes, lips,
hands to grasp and hands to let loose
a couple of things –
late night feeling of something we haven't
done something
we haven't lived

*Acknowledgment: From I Scrape the Window of Nothingness – New & Selected
Poems, Orison Books 2015.*

STEPHANOS STEPHANIDES

Stephanos Stephanides is a Cypriot-born author, poet, translator, critic, ethnographer, and documentary filmmaker. He is a former Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Cyprus. His early migration from Cyprus to the United Kingdom and subsequent work and travel in many countries has shaped the transcultural character of his work. As a lecturer at the University of Guyana, he became deeply interested in Caribbean cultural expression and his fieldwork with the descendant of Indian indentured labourers in Guyanese villages and sugar plantations gave rise to various projects including two documentary films: *Hail Mother Kali* (1988) and *Kali in the Americas* (2003). He was awarded first prize for poetry from the American Anthropological Association, 1988, and first prize for video poetry for his film *Poets in No Man's Land* at the Nicosia International Film Festival (2012). He has held residential writing fellowships at the University of Warwick, the Bogliasco Foundation, Italy; JNU, India; and the International Writers Program of the University of Iowa. He was awarded first prize for poetry from the American Anthropological Association, 1988, and first prize for video poetry for his film *Poets in No Man's Land* at the Nicosia International Film Festival (2012). He was a judge for the Commonwealth Writers Prize (2000, 2010), he is a Fellow of the English Association, and Cavaliere of the Republic of Italy. His most recent book is *The Wind Under My Lips* (To Rodakio: Athens, 2018). www.stephanosstephanides.com

Jaya Devi

Goddess, tonight you are dreadful
Last night you enticed me
In your watery blue
Even the moon was blue.
Why tonight do you shake and pump my body
Until filth flows out from all my orifices.

On my knees I heave and puke
And beg you wash me clean
With warm liquids
Laced with turmeric and neem.
Instead you shower me
With a deluge harsh and cold
I shiver and you throw me down
An empty shell.
Why Devi?
I know I am your baby and
Don't I know your pestilence and stench?
And how often have I seen you dance in burial grounds?
I also know your lotus touch.
Heal and let me sleep.
Tomorrow I will speak.
If you want I change my voice

Don't show me all my shit and muck
Just prod me a little more gently
And again I'll sing your praise
Jaya Devi Jaya

Acknowledgements: 'Jaya Devi' was first published in Blue Moon in Rajasthan and Other Poems (Kochlias: Nicosia, 2005). The poem was first drafted in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi, 2004.

STEVEN HEIGHTON

Steven Heighton is a Canadian novelist, short story writer and poet. He is the author of fourteen books, including three short story collections, four novels and six poetry collections. Steven Heighton's most recent books are a novel, *The Nightingale Won't Let You Sleep*, and a poetry collection, *The Waking Comes Late*, which received the 2016 Governor General's Award for Poetry. His novel *Afterlands* has appeared in six countries, was a *New York Times Book Review* editors' choice, and was cited on year-end lists in the USA, the UK, and Canada. His short fiction and poetry have appeared in various journals and several editions of *Best Canadian Poetry*. Heighton also writes reviews for the *New York Times Book Review*.

Address Book

Bad luck, it's said, to enter your own name
and numbers in the new address book.

All the same, as you slowly comb
through the old one for things to pick

out and transfer, you are tempted to coin
yourself a sparkling new address,
new name, befitting the freshness of this clean-
slating, this brisk kiss

so long to the heart-renders – every friend
you buried or let drift, those Home for the Aged
maiden relations, who never raged
against the dying of anything, and in the end

just died. An end to the casualties pressed
randomly between pages – smudged, scribbled chits
with lost names, business cards with their faded
bold-fronts of confidence, solvency. The palimpsest

time made of each page; the hypocrite it made
of you. Annie, whom you tried two years to love
because she was straight-hearted, lively, and in love
with you (but no strong-arming your cells and blood);

Mad Carl, who typed poet-to-poet squibs in the pseudo-
hickish, hectoring style of Pound, all sermon fire
and block caps, as AINT FIBRE ENOUGH HERE, BOYO,
BACK TO THE OLE FLAX FIELD... this *re* a score

of your nature poems. When he finally vanished
into the far east, you didn't mind the silence.
Still, this guilt, as if it weighs in the balance,
every choice – as if each time your pen banished

a name it must be sensed somewhere, a ballpoint stab, hex-
needle to the heart, the treacherous
innocent *no* of Peter, every X
on the page a turncoat kiss...

Bad luck, it's said, to enter your own name in the new
book – as if, years on, in the next culling,
an executor will be leafing through and calling
or sending word to every name but you.

SUKRITA

Born and brought up in Kenya, Sukrita held the Aruna Asaf Ali Chair at Delhi University till recently. Formerly, a Fellow of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, she is also Fellow of the prestigious International Writing Programme, Iowa, USA & Hong Kong Baptist University. Honorary faculty, Durrell Centre at Corfu, Greece, she has been a recipient of many prestigious fellowships and residencies. Her most recent collections of poems are *Dream Catcher*, *Untitled* and *Poems Come Home* (with Hindustani translations of her poems by Gulzar). Amongst her critical books are *Narrating Partition*, *Conversations on Modernism*. Her latest co-translated novel, *Blind*, has been published by HarperCollins India. A guest editor of journals such as *Manoa* (Hawaii) and *Muse India*, she has held solo exhibitions of her paintings. Many of her poems come out of her experience of working with the homeless, the street children and tsunami victims. Her poems have been translated into many languages.

The Woman With A Baby

Lilacs and tulips sprouting
From the slants of her eyes
Her yellow face
shimmering in white sunlight
Her body, a luminescent garden

Life within life dancing on
Featherfeet
The rising belly, a tight sponge
Puffed into lightness

Her hands going in circles
Caressing the baby inside,
On the cozy pathway
Whispering history in Portuguese,
Lingering pasts

In the ruins of the fortress at Macau,
Pasts hanging with roots
from old branches
of Banyan trees;

Whiffs of future blowing
from the citadel of the present,
Singing the song of her body
The woman walked
Through smoke and dust

Our eyes met,
Chinese with Indian,
Entwined in maternity
Not mediated by English;

Tiny movements rising
in our bellies,
fish churning in the ocean,
birds flapping wings through the skies
and eyelids, drooping and batting heavy,
to enter
or exit the bliss of sleep.

SUNIL SHARMA

Sunil Sharma, Mumbai-based senior academic, critic, literary editor and author with 19 published books: solo and joint. Recipient of the UK-based Destiny Poets' inaugural Poet of the Year award – 2012. His poems were published in the prestigious UN project: Happiness: The Delight-Tree: An Anthology of Contemporary International Poetry, in the year 2015. Sunil edits the English section of the monthly bilingual journal *Setu* published from Pittsburgh, USA. For more details, please visit the blog: <http://drsunilsharma.blogspot.in>

The Waste Picker

The tall and thin man
With a faded cap, grizzled head

In old sandals
Rummages through
The putrid garbage

With a hook held in
The bare, gnarled hand

Searches for rags, plastic
And paper and other tit-bits
In that urban waste piled up
In the open
Beside the passive street
At six in the morning;

A ghost that moves silently
In the thick Delhi fog

Moves around knee-deep
In the repellent slush.

His life revolves around
Those putrid wet garbage mounds
Source for him and others
Of his ilk:

His frugal lunch
And maybe – dinner

If he is lucky to scavenge
Some rags, glass or bottle
Before others arrive at the
Dismal
Third-world scene
That Victor Hugo had seen
In his
Impoverished Paris
In an earlier age.

SUPARNA GHOSH

Suparna Ghosh has published three books of poetry – *Sandalwood Thoughts*, a collection of poems and drawings; *Dots and Crosses*, a prose poem with CD, and *Occasionally*, comprising free verse and ghazals. Suparna was short-listed for the *Montreal International Poetry Prize*; her poem, *Unlimited*, was published in their *Global Poetry Anthology*. A grand prize winning poem was choreographed and staged in San Francisco. She has exhibited her paintings in Toronto, New York, San Francisco, Seoul, Mumbai, New Delhi. www.suparnaghosh.com

Unlimited

it's a monolith, thought the gull
alighting on her shoulder

a monument, mused the spirit
whistling through her walls

a pillar, whispered the wind
twirling 'round her limbs

a village, revealed the crier
surveying her space

a forest, roared the storm
swirling about her hair

a poem, sang the song
hearing a lute in her hum

a damask, decided the novel
etching a tale on her skin

with the sky in one eye
and the ocean in the other

she decides she's
the gut of the earth

SUSAN P. BLEVINS

Susan P. Blevins, born in England, lived 26 wonderful years in Italy, where she wrote a weekly column for an international newspaper, 14 in New Mexico, writing about gardens and gardening, and now lives in Houston, Texas, publishing essays, fiction and poetry in various literary publications based on her travels, adventurous life and philosophy. She knows with absolute certainty that the only things that matter in life are love and service, and to that end she hopes to spread light and love to everyone she meets, one smile, one laugh, and one hug at a time. We are one.

Arid Land

I

Harsh and empty blue sky,
brown and burned up land.
There is no green thing as far as
eye can see. No bird wings across
the sky, nor clouds scud where I stand.

I am alone.

My feet sink slightly into dusty earth.
I want to move, but can I?
Do I really want to?
Besides, where would I go?
Inside I'm like my burned-up dry surroundings,
body hollow and transparent, yet strangely leaden.

I stand,
I wait,
And yes, thank God,
I hope.

II

And still I stand and wait.
eternity has passed, will pass,
my empty eyes see nothing,
my numbed body feels nothing.

Yet something in me stirs,
stirs to life. I am astonished,
disbelieving. I bring my sight
back to sightless eyes and look.
This time I see.

Within a crack of hardened clay
springs one small, green,
infinitely tender plant. How rash,
how courageous, what exuberant
expression of joy, of life itself.

My heart begins to live again and
rustily resumes its eager tick. A
cloud floats by, promise of the rain
the land and I both need,
parched and pained.

Now in truth I can reach my arms up
high in ancient salutation and reverence.
I am restored once more to life,
to my humanity.

SYED ALI HAMID

Syed Ali Hamid (Professor of English, Kumaun University Campus, Almora, Uttarakhand, India) has published four books of poems. His poems have also appeared in several journals as well as anthologies. His Urdu translation of Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* was awarded by Uttar Pradesh Urdu Academy in 1990. He also translates Urdu/English poetry.

That Night

(Ghazal)

I've come a long way, from your arms that night
Why did I leave, the mystery of your charms that night?

Give me your hand, I'm still groping my way
After that lightning, deafening alarms that night.

I turned from the mosque, towards the tavern
A sinner, but I had no qualms that night.

Such hypocrisy, your avowed believers, O God!
Elsewhere I had to find the balm, that night.

The storm within my bosom raged
Clouds thundered, but the sea was calm that night.

You didn't come when I called out to you
I had to return, Almighty, without your alms that night.

All along, fate has played its tricks with me
Bruised and torn, even He wouldn't darn, that night.

Between your thighs was nectar from Paradise
I drank and knew, death could do no harm that night.

He addressed the pious, power-dressed in those robes
Only a sinner like me knew, he was spinning yarns that night.

Hamid, who understands, who can listen to your uneasy heart
Not even one, who imprisoned you for life, in those arms that night.

T. VASUDEVA REDDY

T. Vasudeva Reddy (b 1943) is a poet, novelist and critic in English. His poems have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies in India and abroad. He has authored twelve collections of poems, two novels, three critical works, one collection of short stories and a grammar book in English. One volume of collected poems from all his poetry collections 'Pulse of Life' has been published by Modern History Press, USA. Four critical works have been published on his poetry, two from India and two from USA. His poems have appeared in French journals in Paris and in a recent anthology in Canada. Many critical articles and research dissertations have appeared on his poetry. He is now Hon. President of GIEWEC (Guild of Indian English Writers Editors and Critics). His poems are translated in many languages. He is a retired Principal and formerly U.G.C (University Grants Commission National Fellow and Visiting Professor in English from Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh.

Dignity In Exile

Let us confess that Great Walls and Pyramids,
towers and Taj structures that stand as giants
are in fact not great wonders of ancient peace
or prosperity, people's dignity, glory or grace;
built with whips and cudgels and spears
on pools of sweat, tears, blood and broken bones
on the bonded labour and collapsed bodies
of thousands of unlettered slavish sub-humans
they stand now in veiled shameless gory glory;
Still we feel proud of these wonders
that stand on the glittering glassy pages;
Our existence is an hourly struggle, a challenge
in the midst of all-consuming exploitation,
cut-throat competition and speeding death

lurking and waiting in multiple forms and ways.
As long as we feel content with rituals and gestures
as our school children carry lifeless flags
in the polluted lanes sweating in the sun
and our greedy leaders hoist helpless flags
as a matter of vanity food for media,
as long as our temple priests and officers
give special *haratbi* to new-hatched chicks
in golden fields, tinsel stars and cricket stars
and these idle priests worship matinee idols,
and media crew toe the same sordid path
true dignity cannot set its foot on this land
and there will not be place for true values;
solemnity sinks and cleanliness goes in exile.
Only when average hands reveal their tender touch
with their kind and compassionate healing aura
we can boldly cross the threatening gulfs of chaos
and devouring divisions dubiously dark and devilish,
commotions, cold contradictions and convergences
and make this land tolerable for the average man;
These are not the days of miracles and oracles
Let all the miracles and wonders of the world
revolve round the axis of 'Live and let live'
or we will miss the rapture of the rainbow
and the blinding brilliance of the lightning,
the thrilling splendor of the Niagara Falls,
the enchanting beauty of the Luray Caves,
the rejuvenating unearthly eternal aura
of the gushing waters of the sacred Ganga.

TANGINA ANN

Tangina Ann started writing years before she finished her first book but because of family and work she wasn't able to find the time until 2013 she found herself unable to walk for a short time not willing to just sit around and do nothing and now she is an Author of 5 books and enjoys writing Poetry and Wood art.
www.tanginaann.com

It Was

Bright and sunny day then it got dark and the sun went away.
Lightning came, filled the sky with rain,
Now I sit here and wonder why.
Who can I blame for all that rain?
This rain is a blessing so who am I to complain?

TARA L. MASIH

Tara L. Masih has won multiple book awards in her role as editor of *The Rose Metal Press Field Guide to Writing Flash Fiction* and *The Chalk Circle: Intercultural Prizewinning Essays*. She is also author of *Where the Dog Star Never Glows: Stories* and former Series Editor for *The Best Small Fictions* annual anthology. Awards for her work include *The Ledge Magazine's* Fiction Award, finalist standing for both the Glimmer Train and the Reynolds Price Fiction Prize, Wigleaf Top 50 recognition, and Pushcart Prize, *Best New American Voices*, and Best of the Web nominations. www.taramasih.com

Scent Of *Qahwa*

Because desperate men fight always to control something –
this time it is *ma'a*, the water as it disappears –
this girl will fight through leech-filled swamps,
forge the vast White Nile,
watch sisters go down in crocodile jaws.

She will survive on rainwater,
green flesh of shea nut,
salty porridge of tree leaves,
while skin swells with ticks and
shreds in Kono thickets.

This girl will reach the refugee camp on petrified feet,
find neither food, nor water.

She will stay, fight a kind of death
behind the camp's truck barriers,
wrestled down, voice smothered in tall grasses
by three militiamen.

She will not sleep,
must listen, listen for sounds of
helicopters, MiG's, and approaching *janjaweed*.

Under a Sahara-stained tent,
this lost girl will fight to remember
the scent of *qabwa*,
the vision of a mother's desert-dry hands,

dusted in grindings of clove and fried coffee beans,
offering her family their daily drink
in tiny clay cups.

TATJANA DEBELJAČKI

Tatjana Debeljački, born on 23.04.1967 in Užice, Serbia. Writes poetry, short stories, stories and haiku. She is member multiple literary groups. Up to now, she has published four collections of poetry. Her poetry and haiku have been translated into several languages. She is Editor of the magazine Poeta, published by Writers' Association "Poeta" <http://poetabg.com>. Her poetry and haiku have been translated into several languages.

Close To Me

Togetherhness disappears.
We are lost while leaving ourselves.
It's too late for finding symbols.
The expression is a form of research
at the entrance of voice ventricles.
We sacrifice slow reasons to the quick words.
Parting is a chronicler with no chronicles.
Interpretations are hinted in the meanings of values.
Let's not torture the lions with the inner space of the sky.
We have lost the gemstone.
The search is wasted effort.
We nurture the faith of case circumstances.
Cheek shows the traces of palms.
For too long we dream the threats of responsibility.
Ironic solution of doubting we have left for the end.
We demise traces for the orphans.
God was praised, unfortunately.
From the scriptures we take out when needed.
We did not realize that all is prone to cease.
And a deep gap between the kisses,
We did not admit.

TAYLOR GRAHAM

Taylor Graham is a volunteer search-and-rescue dog handler in California's Sierra Nevada, and served as El Dorado County's inaugural poet laureate (2016-2018). Her work has appeared in *The Iowa Review*, *New York Quarterly*, *Poet Lore*, *Southern Humanities Review*, and elsewhere, and she's included in the anthologies *Villanelles* (Everyman's Library) and *California Poetry: From the Gold Rush to the Present* (Santa Clara University). Her book, *The Downstairs Dance Floor*, was awarded the Robert Philips Poetry Chapbook Prize. Her latest book is *Uplift* (Cold River Press, 2016). Website: <http://www.somersetsunset.net>

River Mandala

You followed the monks as they unmade
what they'd done. A gesture of holiness. For days
in a borrowed room, they created a design
of this world, grain by grain of colored sand,
putting just one flaw in their creation.

Then quietly, soberly they filed down
to the river and uncreated; gave the mandala
to hysteria of up-canyon wind, down-current rapids.
Simply watching, you were cleansed.

Today I walked sand-waves
left by our river in its floods, unmaking, remaking
its bed, its path to the sea. Sand found a way
into my flawed old boots. Below ridges
ravaged by wildfire two years ago,
through fringe of willow to the river, I left
my prints for wind and water to undo.

Clear transparency rippled sunlight
in a pool that seemed motionless.
The river hummed in apparent stasis. I scooped
a sample of sand in cupped palms, shook it
under the surface as if searching for gold; let it go
with the current.

TEJDEEP KAUR MENON

Tejdeep Kaur Menon, police officer by profession and poet by passion, has published four anthologies – *Caught in A Stampede* (1995), *Five Feet Seven And A Half Inches* (1997), *Minnaminni* (2002) and *Oysters In Pain* (2003). Her distinctions include receiving the Charles Wallace Fellowship to the Cambridge Literature Seminar and Poetry Festival. Tejdeep's poems are in several international collections and have been transformed into theatrical dance productions.

Work Dance

I 'am the best, at home,
at work, at play,
the very best.
Tell myself, thank my mom-
You made me the best.
Valentine's, Mother's day, Birthday,
Every day, I tell myself – me, the best.

Buy six papers, can't read one.
Make sizzling hot dosas, seldom get one.
Just everybody has a project to rush to,
A right to report missing ties, cufflinks and
salad in their boxes.
Can't report 'missing' rest,
siesta too for the Spanish men?

Parents Day, today, tomorrow, all days.
The feeding bottles, vanished diapers,
miss my baby in my arms, his drool,
the gurgle, soaking up my incessant attention.
The scarce calls, apologies, outbursts
could kill Mother India.

Want to snuggle deep under his blanket,
asleep he is after a massage and hot water bath.
Awake I 'am to the thousand serpents
coiling up my cortex.
Need love and lots of it,
to dance at work and work at home
I'm the best, the very best.

Acknowledgment: This poem is published in the seminal work: New Paradigms for Gender Inclusivity: Theory and Best Practices, Prentice – Hall of India (2012).

THOMAS HEFFERNAN

Thomas Heffernan's latest book of poems is *Working Voices* (St Andrews Press, 2016). His awards for haiku include the Kusamakura Grand Prize (2006). His *Liam Poems* (Dragon's Teeth Press, 1980) received the Roanoke-Chowan Prize in 1981. He has published widely in the United States and Japan and given readings and other presentations in Italy, Ireland, Mexico and China. Heffernan has taught at universities in England, the United States and Japan. He received the Sam Regan Award for contributions to culture in 2009.

Remembering 9/11: Lines Written, Sept. 4, 2011

Now and then, during the last hour,
when I have glanced out the window,
the dove has been there, the same spot
on the same telephone wire,
a shade of gray, scarcely moving.
The color and the bird reminds
and doesn't remind of a day
when morning broke from blue to gray.

The dove on the wire is alone.
Uncommon, and odd: every dove
I've seen before was with a mate.
And something else I'd seen comes back –
a wire stretched between the towers,
the aerialist walking it
back and forth, the marvel of mind
and skill and maybe luck that wind

or misstep hadn't plummeted
him headlong down through breathless air,
another singular being.
He chose to occupy his time
doing what he alone could do.
He took a more visible way
than most, who, also, every one,
have one life, one time, that's their own.

This early September Sunday,
so near to the day of the tenth
year, I pray for those whose bodies,
in desperate courage not to burn
alive, plummeted; pray for all
who died; and hope for those suffering
loss and memory of loss, that they
have faith love did not die that day.

I look out the window. The dove
has gone, has flown. The words *mourning
dove* come to mind, and how, native
where accent sounded them alike,
as a boy I had wondered if
the bird's name wasn't *mourning dove*.
Now, both feelings are connecting:
I mourn; I'm glad it is morning.

TIKVAH FEINSTEIN

A widely published poet, Tikvah Feinstein is the founder of Taproot Writer's Workshop Inc. Recipient of a Jefferson Award for volunteerism for her literary contributions, she has also earned the Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award. Her short story, "The Purpose of Tears" won 1st place in 2017 from Westmoreland Arts & Heritage Festival.

Summer's Best Offering

It is summer and the sounds of
bare feet slapping the dirt path,
tamped smooth by hundreds
of pairs of feet – are mine.

Trees overhead, bird calls mingle
within the cooling breeze,
as my four-year-old self runs
joyfully toward the natural flowing spring.

It is Pittsburgh's West End, 1948, I plunge
my fingers into water, cool as the inside
of a melon, the deepest part of a cave.
I dip my chin and jaw into the cool sweet liquid
and I suck it into my mouth, swallow,
let it wet my shirt and run
down my chest, as I lift myself
up joyously and splash the sparkling wetness
over my sweaty body and screech
like a magpie at the hot meets cold sensation.

There is nothing that I have found in all my life better
than being four in summer, running
to drink and splash in water
of a spring flowing crystal clear and cool;
within that moment –
no greater pleasure.

Acknowledgment: First published in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 2011.

TIM HAWKINS

Tim Hawkins has lived and traveled widely throughout North America, Southeast Asia, Europe and Latin America, where he has worked as a journalist, technical writer and teacher in international schools. He has published more than 100 pieces of poetry and fiction and has been nominated for Best of the Net (2018), the Pushcart Prize (2011, 2017) and Best Microfiction (2018). His poetry collection, *Wanderings at Deadline*, was published in 2012 by Aldrich Press. Website: <http://www.timhawkinspoetry.com>

Ballad Of The Logos

Young Heraclitus stood hip-deep
in the roiling, raucous mountain-born stream
rushing seaward across the Ephesian plain.

As he filled a leather drinking flask
and mopped his dust and sweat-stained brow
in the cold, fulfilling promise of water

he noted the varied course it chose
on its annual journey out to sea
from hidden spring across the arid plain.

In the fading light, as the shadows fell,
when he knew he should be making camp,
a lynx crept down from out of the brush

on silent haunches, watchful as it drank.
He stood until the lynx had gone
and the evening birds resumed their song

from out of the violet western sky,
while a mad aroma arose on the breeze
of evening blooming, spring and moon-fed blossoms.

He stood transfixed, made careful note
of every feature of this sacred spot
and vowed to bathe here again the coming spring.

But he never found his way again
to refresh his mind and his aching limbs –
a year's hard rains transformed the river's path.

And all the while, in a state of flux
his heart had chosen its own varied course
and broke on the shore of a vast blue sea
called Permanence.

Acknowledgment: First published in The Flea: Broadsheet 1, May 2009.

TOM SHEEHAN

Tom Sheehan, in his 91st year, has published 37 books (the 38th is near, “Jock Poems for Proper Bostonians,” (from Pocol Press) and has multiple works in *Rosebud*, *Literally Stories*, *Linnet’s Wings*, *Serving House Journal*, *Copperfield Review*, *TQR Total Quality Reading*, *Literary Orphans*, *Frontier Tales*, *Rope & Wire*, etc. He’s received 16 Pushcart nominations, 6 Best of Net nominations with one winner, and other awards. He served as a sgt. in the 31st Infantry in Korea 1951-52, graduated from Boston College in 1956.

A Last Moment Caught

It comes again,
without prejudice,
in another millennium:

I know the weight of an M-1 rifle
on a web strap hanging on my shoulder,
the awed knowledge of a ponderous steel helmet
atop my head, press of a tight lace on one
boot, wrap of a leather watch band
on my wrist,

and who stood beside me
who stand no more.

TONY BARNSTONE

Tony Barnstone is Professor of English and Environment Studies at Whittier College and the author of 20 books and a music CD. In addition to seven books of poetry and a poetry chapbook, his selected poems have appeared in Spanish translation. He is also a distinguished translator of Chinese poetry and literary prose and an editor of literary anthologies, and the recipient of numerous national and international poetry awards. His forthcoming books include an anthology of Chinese and American ecopoetry and an edition of the collected poems of Mary Ellen Solt. His website is <https://www.whittier.edu/academics/english/barnstone>

The Audit

The time has come he never thought would come
when he sees her see in him just defects.
His little paunch, the touch that leaves her numb,
what once she thought was perfect she rejects.
She takes an audit of his qualities,
subtracts affection, multiplies distress,
and so, in sum, she takes his sum and sees
the countless reasons she should need him less.
She knows him better than he knows himself
so if she finds his love to be oppression,
and reads all the good years as years of lies,
then he must turn his mind against himself
and see, laid out in infinite regression,
his net and gross of failure in her eyes.

TONY REEVY

Tony Reeve is a David P. Morgan Award winner (2006) and a Pushcart Prize nominee. His previous publications include poetry, non-fiction and short fiction. Reeve spent much of his childhood in Socorro, New Mexico. <http://tonyreeve.net>

Stars Of Eger

I lift the window,
a hatch in the roof;
find stars, more stars
than waves on the sea.
Dotted over church,
castle: still
peace in the night.

The sill is hard, with
sharp edges; the air
chill and dry.
A clock chimes the half
of some single-digit hour.

Thousands died here.
The castle moat clogged
with muck wetted by blood.

I grip the sill harder,
the edge cutting my palm.
Learning the death of thousands
leaves no mark.

In the everyday turns
of this world
screams fade to flowers
pushing through the rocks.

TRACY REPCHUK

Tracy Repchuk, is an 8 Time #1 International Bestselling Author, founder of the Canadian Federation of Poets, founder of Poetry Canada magazine and Online Branding Strategist who helps authors to create an online profile that attracts and positions you as the expert and authority. She is an award-winning writer and entrepreneur since the age of 19 (including awards from The White House and President Obama). Tracy who has spoken in over 37 countries is also a featured expert for NBC, Fox, CBS, CTV, City TV, CBC, CW, ABC, HGTV and has appeared in 3 motivational movies.

Aim Higher

As a naive child fantasies devoured me with infinite possibilities
daring astronaut, persuasive president to poet laureate
money, education, discrimination, these weren't in my vocabulary
yet

it was a crystal connection to my soul that answered
those haunting words now a barren whisper in the cosmos

struggling with my homeostasis, enzymes explode
criticizing encouragement, the screams shock me
a telepathic reply of satisfaction with complacency
destiny screeches at me, annoyed I hum violently
my ears throb from the molecular commotion

I longingly fondle the destiny of this week's best seller
pristine pages freshly transcribed, omnipotent shell with flattering
text

envious of the authors biography, the sight of an ISBN aches
sacred desires flood uncontrollably, faster than I can refute
passion reverberates throughout my veins, I yearn for it to be mine

dreams become the most formidable test of the journey
drenched in escapism, their perceived qualities tease your psyche
fate, premonitions, signs, bombard with inferences of my ascent
continuous opportunities desperately beckon, holistic beacons
resonate
energetic transformations genetically implant the blueprint

releasing boundaries, I float to another plane only inches from
where I sit
refreshed, invigorated, awakened, my breath synchronized with
nature
limbs relax, except for the smile I can't control
overwhelmed by the peaceful realizations of my voyage
I resuscitate in life's currents

Christened in blessed waters
enlightened by osmosis
his echoing voice ignites, and I repeat the message
pen to paper the mantra is embraced
and I Aim Higher.

TRENT BUSCH

Trent Busch, a native of rural West Virginia, now lives in Georgia where he writes and makes furniture. His poems have appeared in many journals including *The Best American Poetry*, *Poetry*, *The Nation*, *Threepenny Review*, *North American Review*, *Chicago Review*, *Southern Review*, *Georgia Review*, *New England Review*, *Crazyhorse*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Northwest Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *American Scholar*, *Shenandoah*, and more recently *Notre Dame Review*, *Evansville Review*, *Agni Online*, *Boston Review*, *Sou'wester*, *Poetry Daily*, *Winning Writers*, and *Hudson Review*. Poem "Edges of Roads" was the First Place Winner of the 2016 Margaret Reid Poetry Prize, Published by *Winning Writers*. Poem "Aletha" won an Honorable Mention in the 2017 Margaret Reid Poetry Prize, published by *Winning Writers*.

Edges Of Roads

Of all country things, I suppose
I know best the edges of roads,
not berms where grass grows down to sides
of ditches, like on interstates,

or even where animals feed
at dusk, where cans congregate with
wrappers and the small dead are bounced
off below the cruising vultures.

I mean the trails behind the line
of woods and brush several yards off
where whatever watches can see
all that passes, not seen itself.

Hunters will know the place I mean
where on wet fall days they can move
silently, far enough from home,
but not in so deep they can get lost.

Lovers know it best, slipping off
on weekday afternoons or weekend
nights, pushing back convertible
tops, reaching for fragments of sky.

Seeing and not being seen are what
I want to say, not in hiding
but in league with fringes, knowing
what roads don't know of things that stay,

the way a child, who isn't lost, kneels
out of sight, urging with a straw
a beetle along, while through the town
anxious voices cry out his name.

TRICIA KNOLL

Tricia Knoll is a poet who retired after many years of communications work for municipal offices in Oregon. Her work appears widely in journal and anthologies. Her most recent book *How I Learned To Be White* received the Gold Prize for Motivational Poetry in the Human Relations Indie Book Prize for 2018. Website: <http://triciaknoll.com>

Bleached Prayer Flags

Today stuttered at faded white cotton prayer flags
over the garden gate. Children's hands
colored them with fabric pens.
Summer bleached them into ghost messages

to plants growing fine without aphorisms.
Perhaps I saw the faded faces of bees.
Bees of the doorway. Behind the flags, red spires
of amaranth and a wheelbarrow of gourds.

I lived to see the harvest of the seed.
Now I hang a line in my studio. A thin black wire
for small banners from rice paper and glue, snipped photos
from magazines, trimmed words like wood cuts.

They will not fade, nor tease me with Tibetan.
Done with one, hang another with tiny laundry clips.
When prayer goes dry and weathered,
wash and wring out another.

Yes, first the bees. Then smartphone photos of rudbeckia,
pearly everlasting and echinacea, spreading welcome
mats in the front garden. Next gray whales ride
the line with waves, blown surf and silenced sonar.

No forgetting what hung last week, the week before
when fall dryness came, aging that turns
the skin to leather, tough and scaled
begging for herb creams named for fairies.

When prayers dry up like a leaf
and decide to leave the tree,
a flag of gold dropped
dropped from the memory string.

*Acknowledgment: U. S. Western States Contest winner in Persimmon Tree journal,
2016.*

U ATREYA SARMA

U Atreya Sarma, from Hyderabad, is Chief Editor of *Muse India* e-journal. A bilingual poet, freelance editor, writer and translator (English/Telugu), he has authored a poetry collection '*Sunny Rain-n-Snow*'; edited/ translated/ collaborated on 15 books. Guest-edited a Feature 'India @ 70' for *Setu* e-magazine (Aug 2017); co-edited a feature 'Indian College Fiction' for *Muse India* (Issue 77); and as its Contributing Editor (Telugu), presented 4 exhaustive features on Telugu Literature. From Jun 2013 to Jul 2018, he presented poets through the Sunday feature 'Wordsmith' in *The Hans India* English daily. Official critic of *Metverse Muse*, an international p-journal of metrical poetry; Member, Advisory Board of *Teesta Journal*; recipient of "Setu Award for Excellence 2017"; and "Shambhabi Samman 2019" for 'outstanding contribution to literature.' www.museindia.com

Cloud's Sibling

No longer able to bear her watery babe in,
The slow and heavy bellied Cloud is eager
To be delivered of the Rain
But finds herself helpless
In the pitch-dark night.

Then Brother Lightning comes along
And helps her with his dazzling torch
As Ms Wind proffers to be the midwife;
And Mrs Earth, the foster mother,
Spreads out the downy cradle down under.

USHA AKELLA

Usha Akella, author of four books of poetry, one chapbook, and one musical drama, earned an MSt. In Creative Writing, from Cambridge University, UK. Her work is included in the Harper Collins Anthology of Indian English Poets. Her newest poetry book is due from Sahitya Akademi. She was selected as a Cultural Ambassador for the City of Austin in 2015. Widely published, she has participated in prestigious international poetry festivals. She is the founder of 'Matwaala' the first South Asian Diaspora Poetry Festival. She is the founder of the Poetry Caravan in New York and Austin which offers poetry readings to disadvantaged audience. She was selected as a Cultural Ambassador for the City of Austin in 2015 and 2019.

Yesterday's Poem

Be sure the day will not remember our shadow,
The night will forget our dreams,
The moon will forget our stories,
Be sure the dust will ring bells of welcome
in many languages.

Be sure we will pass each other by
as breaths pass by in the air
and meet in a leaf.
We will meet without knowing
of meetings and partings,

This will be called neither shore nor wave.

Be sure like disappearing fingerprints on pane,
an embryo of us will unfold in an invisible book.

UTE CARSON

A writer from youth and an M.A. graduate in comparative literature from the University of Rochester, German-born Ute Carson published her first prose piece in 1977. *Colt Tailing*, a 2004 novel, was a finalist for the Peter Taylor Book Award. Her second novel *In Transit* was published in 2008. Her poems have appeared in numerous journals and magazines in the US and abroad. Her chapbook *Folding Washing* was published in 2013 and her collection of poems *My Gift to Life* was nominated for the 2015 Pushcart Award Prize. *Save the Last Kiss*, a novella, was published in 2016. Her new poetry collection *Reflections* was out in 2018. She received the *Ovidiu-Bektore Literary Award 2018* from the Anticus Multicultural Association in Constanta, Romania. <http://www.utecarson.com>

Relinquishment

When years ago my mother-in-law
bemoaned the fact that
to stay steady on her feet
she had to exchange
her stylish heels for flats,
I shrugged off her complaint
as a small concession to growing older.

Now that it's my turn
to scale down to comfortable shoes
I realize that parting with my heels
is more than a minor inconvenience
and may be a kind of dress rehearsal
preparing me for my final leave-taking
which I will undertake unadorned.

VALERY PETROVSKIY

Valery V. Petrovskiy is an international writer from the Chuvashia region of Russia. His prose has appeared in dozens journals from around the world, and he is a Pushcart Prize nominee and a finalist to the 2012 Open Russia Literary Contest. He is the author of short story collection *Tomcat Tale* (Editura StudIS, 2013) and eBook *Into the Blue on New Year's Eve* (Hammer and Anvil Books, 2013). He has his poems published in Blue Lyra Review, Fine Flu Journal, The Missing Slate, Poetry Pacific, BRICK rhetoric. Valery lives in Russia in a remote village by the Volga River.

Listen To Me, Vadim

I'm typing in SMS: hi buddy
you are up there in heaven
and I'm here down

you should be feeling lonely right now
my mobile trembles while I key in your number
listen me Vadim it's a sunny day around
but up there must be so much cloud
tell me if any creek, stream or may be sea
could be seen from above...
frequently I take a stroll along the fields
when field engines are already gone
then on the left heaven I see
and to the right is a ravine

as a child I used to run barefoot along a brook
stumbled fell down then caught the skies with my eyes
old buddy you never visited my place
in spite I had asked you to come multiple time

The next door neighbor's nanny goat has a kid
he is snow white right like a little cloudlet in a pen
the lady wants some money for the goat's milk
still I don't believe her imp would add me more days
to meted out minutes seconds and beats

hello old boy let's sit still for a while
out clouds are like as if you do a cigar smoke
well that's enough for now I have to turn the imp out

VANDANA KUMARI JENA

Vandana Kumari Jena was a civil servant by profession and is a writer by inclination. While creativity took a backseat when she was in the Indian Administrative Service, she hopes to make up for the lost years now. She has published over 200 middles in all leading newspapers. She has published a novel *The Dance of Death* (HarAnand Publications 2008.); three collection of short stories, *The Incubation Chamber* (Lifi Publications 2014) the *The Future is Mine* (Ocean Books 2015) and *One Rotten Apple and Other Stories* (Niyogi books 2018) and a collection of middles, *In the Middle* (Ocean Books 2015). Her short stories have been published in 25 anthologies. Her poems have been published in several anthologies, including *The Dance of the Peacock*, edited by Vivekanand Jha (2013) *Suvernarekha* edited by Dr. Nandini Sahu (2014) *Songbook Circa 2011* edited by Karuna Sivasailam (2012) *Golden Thoughts* edited by Mohd. Fakhruddin (1999) *Poetry 2000 AD*, edited by Mohd. Fakhruddin (2000), and *She Expresses*, edited by Meena Nair and Nikita Goel (2018).

Wanting

No one can accuse you
Of a display of love
For you remain as forbidding
As ever
And yet when you walk in
The flame of the forest
Bursts into bloom
The wind chime flutters
And the cymbals clang
Fireflies dance around the trees
Butterflies cavort
Amidst the flowers
Crickets chirp in welcome

And ladybirds somersault
I drop the cloak
Of languor
Shaken by the adrenalin rush
As though you are
The magical pill
That can
Invigorate
Energize
Enthuse
And spill life
Into my somnolent desires
Put brush strokes
On the canvases
I left unpainted
Embellish the poems
I left unfinished
Complete the songs
I left unsung
And the sculptures
That remained half done
I yearn
For you with a physical ache
Debilitating in its intensity
And yet
Do not want
This yearning
To be assuaged
For the pain of wanting
Gives me pleasure
And this endless waiting
Is my salvation.

VAUGHAN RAPATAHANA

Vaughan Rapatahana lives across three countries – Aotearoa New Zealand, Hong Kong SAR, Philippines. He is widely published internationally in several genre. He won the inaugural Proverse Poetry Prize in 2016, the same year his collection, *Atonement*, was nominated for a National Book Award in Philippines.

My Father's Death

I watched my father die;
his lone last act
one anonymous evening.

there were no exultant angels
extolling;
no perfumed pearly gates
swinging wide their welcoming arms.

only
the young oldest son
there to witness
his shrivelled size,
the estranged demise
– astray the slim single bed,
in a spare back bedroom.

the final
sublimation,
the unique
death clatter&
an uncanny
vomitous
odour,

no poet could ever
limn.

VESSLAVA SAVOVA

Vessislava Savova was born in Sofia, Bulgaria. She has got four books published and is a part of many Bulgarian and international anthologies. Her awarded and honorable mentioned writings have been published in international magazines in nine languages. She is an editor of five books in Bulgarian and one in English language. Four books of Bulgarian authors have been translated into English by her, two of which have been published by Hammer & Anvil Publishing House in the USA.

Silence

silent night
no moon
no stars
no wind
a shadow
creeping on the wall
is dancing
with a raven

silent home
no gate
no window
no lock
a phantom
staying at the door
is waving
at a phantom

“come closer you
a cursed squid” –

the phantom says
in signs

but shadow rides
on the raven's back
and off they go
to heaven

silent phantom
no legs
no arms
no body

but heart
that cursed heart
is still in love
with the shadow flying
on a raven's back

VINITA AGRAWAL

Author of four books of poems, Vinita is an award winning poet, translator and critic. Recipient of the Gayatri GaMarsh Memorial Award for Literary Excellence, USA, 2015, second prize at the TallGrass Writers Guild Award, Chicago in 2017, two consecutive prizes in the Hongkong Proverse Poetry Prize 2017 and joint winner of the Tagore literary prize 2018, her poems have appeared in many international journals. She was co-judge for the Asian Cha contest in 2015 and for RLFPA Awards (International category) 2016. She conducts poetry workshops in colleges and institutions. www.vinitawords.com

Water Is A Lesson

For years I watched the river.
Its opposite banks like pages of an open book,
never closing.
Watched the lone fisherman
alone and adrift midstream
plagued with hunger until the next catch.
The shallow wooden boat, owning his life.
If there exists a constellation of pain
in my veins,
then it's the one that shimmers like light on water;
Here now, gone the next,
gripping darkness by the feet
in murky depths.
Angling for the warmth of sunlight
every time breeze ruffles scars.
True singularity
is to row to the middle of the catchment
at dawn, scan the horizon
see fire sluice it's face with water
hear the silence of fish
forget that your feet shall ever touch
dry land again
and know that the hazel planks of a damp boat
are all the ground you have.

VITTORIA REPETTO

Vittoria Repetto is a lesbian butch who grew up in NYC's Greenwich Village. She is the daughter of immigrant Italian parents. In 1995, she published a chapbook *Head For the Van Wyck* and in 2006, Guernica Editions published her first poetry book, *Not Just A Personal Ad*. Vittoria repetto was the vice president of the Italian American Writers Assoc from 1991 to 2016. She hosted a Women's & Trans' Poetry Jam from 1999 to 2018. Her poems have been chosen as "Editor's Choice" in the Paterson Literary Review for five times since 2003.

<https://vittoriarepetto.wordpress.com>

A Poem Of Thanks

in my 20's,
coming home
3 am from the dyke bar
i climb the stairs up from dekalb station.
a monarch butterfly flutters on the stair lights;
lost from its course.
thinking someone might hurt it,
i wait 'til it closes
its wings together,
softly grab the paired wings
wait for it to relax its legs;
once taught to me by the old Italian guy
who grew morning glories
next to the bocce court on Leroy
when i was a kid.
i cup the monarch in my hands like a prayer.
out on the street, 3 young guys
coming from where i need to go say
hey dyke!
where you going, dyke!

i figure i'm in trouble
then i remember
i still have the butterfly
and need it let it go.
i turn,
face my future beaters,
lift Buddhist prayer hands to my face,
open and push the butterfly away.
it flies towards their faces.
the 3 guys duck,
confused and startled.
as the monarch goes safely to its course,
i too
go safely home.

VIVEKANAND JHA

Vivekanand Jha, an Air Force veteran and a PhD (English Literature), is an Indian English poet, translator and editor. He has edited, co-edited and authored 15 books in the field of English Literature. His poems, essays and articles have featured in numerous journals and anthologies. Before this poetry anthology, he edited, *The Dance of the Peacock: An Anthology of English Poetry from India*, featuring 151 Indian English poets, published by Hidden Brook Press, Canada. He is the founder and chief editor of two literary journals, *VerbalArt* and *Phenomenal Literature* published by Authorspress, New Delhi. www.vivekanandjha.com

Falter And Fall

I write with ink of blood
to honour and give
a touch of eternity to it
but my poems falter and fall
in the poetry of the world.

I pluck words from
a flowery and ornate garden
and weave a garland of them
to adorn the world
but they trample it
under their feet
like they crush the stub
of the cigarette to prevent it
from catching the fire.

I discover the words
hidden in the unhaunted
recess of the mind
and juxtapose them
like an ideal couple
of bride and bridegroom
at bridal chamber
and turn my poem on new leaf
but they tilt their stony eyes
and turn deaf ears to it.

I infuse my heart and soul
into the poem
thinking it would be
the best and the last of my life
but they simply say:
Since it is the beginning,
you would learn by mistakes.

WEAM NAMOU

Weam Namou is an Eric Hoffer award-winning author of 13 books, a filmmaker, journalist, poet, and lecturer. She's a TV host and an Ambassador for the Authors Guild of America [Detroit Chapter], the oldest and largest writing organization in the United States. Namou is a graduate of best-selling author Lynn Andrews' 4-year course of study and training in the sacred healing arts and she's the founder of the Path of Consciousness, a spiritual and writing retreat, and Unique Voices in Films, a 501(C)(3) nonprofit organization. www.weamnamou.com

That Line

Who casts the vote on where the east and north end,
and the south and west begin?

Where is that line?

I search for it and wonder,

if it's pink, gold, silver, charcoal, or chocolate.

Does it feel like pebbles, sand, lipstick, chalk or rain?

I left Baghdad Airport, had my passport stamped in blue ink,
crossed over lands, jungles, farms, and oceans,
saw the Statue of Liberty before I flew into Detroit,
and drove on Highway 94, passing by that big tire
until I arrived at my new residence.

But nowhere did I detect a trace of that line.

Where is that line that is as perfectly drawn on the map
as the decorations of a wedding cake,

or the hem on my blouse and skirt?

If it's not visible on soil and grass

how am I expected to grasp it in my head?

Should I force myself to pretend it's alive, not dead?

Regardless of what is written or said,

lines do not exist in one's soul.

They have no place in the heart.

They cannot bring other countries closer or push them apart.

WILLIAM CONELLY

After military service, William Conelly took both Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in English under Edgar Bowers at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Unrelated post-grad work followed, before he returned to academia in 2000. Since then, he's served in both the US and the UK as an associate professor, tutor and seminar leader. The Able Muse Press published assortment of his verse dating back four decades in 2015; it's titled *Uncontested Grounds* and may be reviewed at their website or via Amazon.

Further Seasons

How promising the measure
a few simple words impart
to the subtle mind and heart
suffused with springtime languor:

measure of the budded trees
shading the screen portico
of the household where you go
to drift in a warming breeze –

for now, in winter, blossoms
may adorn the stony bough,
and cherry or plum endow
your reach with radiant sums;

and time's long lapse not derange
the clarity of your eye,
as further seasons wheel by,
as passions grow yet more strange.

Acknowledgment: Published in The Northampton Poetry Review, Issue #3, 2018.

WILLIAM DORESKI

William Doreski has published four critical studies and several collections of poetry. His work has appeared in various journals. He has taught writing and literature at Emerson, Goddard, Boston University, and Keene State College. He is author of 04 full length and 01 chapter books of poetry. His new poetry collection is *A Black River, A Dark Fall*. Prizes Won: Aesthetic Poetry Prize 2010, Clay Potato Fiction Award, 2004, Poet Lore Translation Prize, 1972. <http://williamdoreski.blogspot.com>

Angles / Angels

The angle at which our bodies
meets our souls has stiffened high
in the upper atmosphere where
birds petrify and enter orbit
with a minimum of squawks
and cackles. From ground level,
peering without binoculars
into a great sweep of sun-drift,
we conclude that the mating
of distinct philosophies has failed.

Morning bristles. Woodpeckers
hammer the suet cakes we placed
in locations shielded from hawks.
Wild turkeys scratch for grubs,
their poults fuzzy as fiddleheads.
Bumblebees fluster hydrangea.
We keep looking up although
we can't see but only infer
those orbiting fossilized birds
that may, in fact, be angels.

Angel or angle, the plain
trigonometry that shapes us
locates itself on paper maps
no one can read anymore.
We lack the proper instruments
to resurvey familiar scenes,
so we drink coffee the color
of the recent floods in Texas
and discuss whether our lack
of future has calmed or numbed us.

The news every day is bad.
Crashes and fire kill neighbors,
politicians scandalize sex,
Antarctica breaks off in chunks.
The smell of decaying wood
rises from clammy forests
and from sultry city basements
to deter angels from alighting
and to further splay the angles
at which our variations meet.

WILLIAM HEYEN

William Heyen is Professor of English/Poet in Residence Emeritus at the College at Brockport. He has published more than 30 books of poetry, memoir, criticism, has been a Finalist for the National Book Award, has won Fulbright, Guggenheim, Academy of American Poets, and other awards. His work has been published in hundreds of anthologies and magazines.

Emancipation Proclamation

Whereas it minds its own business
& lives in its one place so faithfully
& its trunk supports us when we lean against it
& its branches remind us of how we think

Whereas it keeps no bank account but hoards carbon
& does not discriminate between starlings & robins
& provides free housing for insects & squirrels
& lifts its heartwood grave into the air

Whereas it holds our firmament in place
& writes underground gospel with its roots
& whispers us oxygen with its leaves
& so far survives our new climate of ultraviolet

Whereas it & its kind when we meet beneath them
shade our sorrows & temper our prayers
& their colors evoke our dream of beauty
from before we were born into this hereafter

We the people for ourselves & our children
necessarily proclaim this tree
free from commerce & belonging to itself
as long as it & we shall live.

WILLIS BARNSTONE

Willis Barnstone is author of eighty-one books with university and trade presses. He was born in Lewiston, Maine, and educated at Bowdoin, Sorbonne, SOAS, Columbia and Yale, taught in Buenos Aires during the Dirty War, and during the Cultural Revolution he went to China where he was later a Fulbright Professor at Beijing Foreign Studies University (1984-1985). Former O'Connor Professor of Greek at Colgate University, he is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Comparative Literature and Spanish at Indiana University. <http://www.willisbarnstone.org>

I Wear A Time Stone Necklace

I wear a necklace of time stones I pick
Up on the road in 4 rough continents
And 9 decades. I recall them and stick
Their memory in words when they make sense.
I also make pearl necklaces to give
To family and friends. I am a stone.
Even my birth chisels me a barn stone,
But when I drop below the grass I'll live,
Should I, in words, and if lucky they might
Hang on as ink to readers' eyes. You see,
My necklace of time stones is real, but slight,
More metaphor for hope than a famed sea
Of tales, poems, drawings. Hero William Blake
Dies obscure. Me too. What can my stones make?

YEŞİM AĞAOĞLU

Yeşim Ağaolu was born in Istanbul, Turkey. She took her undergraduate degree from Istanbul University in Art History and Archaeology, then a Master's in Radio, TV and Cinema. Her poems have appeared in various anthologies and her published book of poetry have been translated into many languages. She frequently participates in international literary and poetry festivals, as well as gaining recognition internationally as a contemporary artist. Prizes: 5th International Azerbaijan Poets day (by the honour of Azerbaijani poet, Mikail, Müşvik, 2013), Baku, Azerbaijan & 2015-2016 Coburg Rückert Prize Nominee, Coburger, Germany. <http://yesimpoeetry.blogspot.com>

Forty Keys

she has forty keys
that open forty different doors
some wood, some iron and some portals of saints' shrines
her doors have forty different knobs
some silver some bronz some mother-of-pearl
her doors open on evil-eye-spells and sorcery
on stained glass windows and marbled-drawings
golden glints flutter at her fingertips
african violets bloom
while under the shadow of shameless miniatures on the walls
murders are done in the harem
she has forty rooms
forty courtyards all opening on wrong directions
some on jail screams some on gardens of love
mostly on her very own wrongnesses
she has a forty rung staircase
leading up each and every time
to her own sorrows and her own solitude

YUAN CHANGMING

Yuan Changming published monographs on translation before leaving China. With a Canadian PhD in English, Yuan currently edits Poetry Pacific with Allen Yuan in Vancouver; credits include ten Pushcart nominations, the 2018 Naji Naaman's Literary Prize, Best of the Best Canadian Poetry, Best New Poems Online and nearly 1,500 others across 43 countries.
<http://yuanspoetry.blogspot.ca>

Awaiting

There is a long wait of the passengers
For the detouring and delayed bus
And the wait of the wintry grasses

The wait of the legendary lion king
Before it preys upon a real baby zebra
And the wait of the summer sun deep in the nightmare

The wait of the orchid on the window ledge
The wait of the diamond in an unknown mine
And the wait where you stop and watch

And there is a wait of this darkness
Which you are going to compress into words
A wait that is to spread out thin on the blank paper

Unlike winter stars holding their light in light-years
The wait after you finish writing
And the longer wait then

Acknowledgment: First published in Dalhousie Review, later included in Best of Canadian Poetry (2012), and Best of the Best Canadian Poetry: Tenth Anniversary Edition (2017).

YUGO GABRIEL EGBOLUCHE

Yugo Gabriel Egboluche is a Nigerian born multidisciplinary writer and development practitioner. His poems have appeared in chapbooks and various webzines. He translated a collection of more than fifty Haiku's into his native Igbo language. In 2017 his poem featured in the Best New African Poets Anthology published by Mwanaka Press, Zimbabwe. He has edited and co-authored numerous community development texts and guidebooks, while his short stories have been published in two Trans-Atlantic Anthologies and available on Project Muse. He is also a lyricist and scriptwriter with up to four adapted screenplays in the public domain. His first poetry collection, *Under African Skies* is expected to be out before the end of 2019.

Delusion

the sea won't say,
a thing it knows,
the many dreams ferried
through its raging waters

the sea won't say
a thing it knows,
the many dreams buried,
beneath its blue waters

the sea is a culprit!

ZACHAROULA GAITANAKI

Dr. Zacharoula Gaitanaki, born in Athens, writes poems, articles, short stories, essays, novels and review of book. She is also a translator of books of poetry. She is a life member of the “World Academy of Arts and Culture”/“World Congress of Poets” (which awarded her the title of the Honorary Doctor of Literature) and of the IWA (International Writers Association). She is a member of the “World Poets Society” and of the “Association Mundial de Escritores – A.M.E.” of Spain (No 3299). Member of “Poetas del Mundo” (Poets of the World). She has published a good number of books. <https://zaharoulagaitanaki.wordpress.com>

The Poets

Poets do not struggle
with bullets and knives,
they write verses, sing
and extend their hands.

They yield in inspiration
in the hours of loneliness,
they count with verses and strophes
fine weathers and storms.

Poets do not love
simply for love.
They write verses for naked bodies
before they touch them.

They are absorbed by love and swim
in love’s depths
and after, they write poems
for “the moment” that is lost...

ZAHRA RAMEZANI

Zahra Ramezani (born February 24, 1989 in Tehran, Iran) is a poet writing poems in English. She is also an artist and a translator working for Iran TV channels. She has BA in Tourism Management from Allame Tabatabaei University, but her enthusiasm and interest in English literature and art led her to publish a book *Shadow of Darkness* first collection of her English poems translated into Persian and started drawing and painting after graduation. In 2016, one of her poems was published in *VerbalArt* poetry journal. And in 2017, she translated *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* into Persian. It took her a long time to master in drawing, but it has always been a very personal passion for her. She finds writing poems and drawing as a way to vent her feelings about human and contemporary complicated life.

The Tale of Phoenix

fierce wind blowing heaven flame out
cursed dagger is on thee, then shout
thy trembling voice reviving thy sore
Inner glare of thine eyes faded afore
wherefore moaning? for a bitter end
old torn satan's clothes, thou wilt rend
a symbol of greatness, dignity, thou art
over throwing dissension, it is thine art
through the cage's bars, tread conspiracies
identity of a nation, thou hast all delicacies
sans panic, sans distress, utmost pluck
thy imposing eyes, becoming ash thy luck
new reckless phoenix fresher for fighting
and afresh the new tales for narrating



It is Dr Vivekanand Jha's privilege and enlightened vision to have gathered under two covers poets hailing from the four corners of the world. What we have here is a rainbow of hues and perfumes, of sounds and voices, which form a musical variety with which everybody can identify. He and she can change the partition to suit their mood or desire at any given moment. In this magnificent anthology you will have a taste of a gourmet hors d'oeuvre of verses, which I believe will whet your appetite and prod you to delve into the magic of Poetry. Savor it as you savor the delicacies of 'slow cuisine'. *Bon appétit!*

- Albert Russo

Poet, Fictionist, Essayist & Photographer

Author of more than 85 books

www.albertrusso.com

Well-meaning international attempts like this would, in whatever little measure, slowly and steadily contribute to a general détente, harmonise the zeitgeist and help in inculcating a weltanschauung. After all, the primary purpose of poesy or creative literature is universal weal – *Visva-sreyah-kavyam*, according to the ancient seers of Indian poetics.

- U Atreya Sarma

Chief Editor, Muse India literary e-zine

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