

Poets to Come

A Poetry Anthology in Celebration of Walt Whitman's
Bicentennial

Edited by James P. Wagner (Ishwa)

Poets to Come

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Dedicated to Walt Whitman and the poetic legacy he inspired!

Foreword

*Poets to come! orators, singers, musicians to come!
Not to-day is to justify me and answer what I am for,
But you, a new brood, native, athletic, continental, greater
than before known,
Arouse! for you must justify me.
I myself but write one or two indicative words for the future,
I but advance a moment only to wheel and hurry back in the
darkness.
I am a man who, sauntering along without fully stopping, turns a
casual look upon you and then averts his face,
Leaving it to you to prove and define it,
Expecting the main things from you.*

~ Walt Whitman

In this poetic call of his, he urges the poets of the generations to come after him to pick up the torch and carry the tradition onward. What better way to celebrate Walt Whitman's 200th Birthday than put together an anthology celebrating the Poets who came after him?

The "Poets to Come" as Whitman himself so elegantly addressed are a very large, growing and talented group of poets of the current era. This anthology is a culmination of that vision, here to celebrate the poetic legacy of the current generation.

Containing poetry from well over 200 poets, *Poets to Come* is heartily represented by the contribution of poems from poets throughout the country, and in fact, the world. Several generations after Whitman, and poetry communities are thriving, new talent is being discovered and as is self-evident from this volume, the tradition is in good hands going forward.

It has been a pleasure working on this volume, and becoming familiar with the many "Poets to Come." I think it a fair assumption that Whitman would be proud that so many worthy wordsmiths answered his call.

~ James P. Wagner (Ishwa)

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Lloyd Abrams

a dollar and a dream

late afternoon in the bodega
a dozen or so hispanic men
sit around a makeshift table
wander around the aisles
lean against the glass door coolers
sipping out of paper-bagged cans
munching on cellophane-wrapped snacks
bantering laughing complaining
but keeping a wary hopeful
– perhaps desperate – eye
on the quick draw screens
on which twenty of eighty
possible winning numbers
are tantalizingly chosen
plus a multiplier
in case that *extra* option was purchased

landscapers and day laborers
restaurant workers and porters ...
they could win hundreds or thousands
if their picks come up ...
enough for a wide screen tv
enough for a second-hand toyota
enough for a down payment on a house ...
but the chance for a high payout is low

the odds are stacked against them
especially when a new game
comes up every four minutes
almost 'round the clock
and the dineros keep slipping away
faster than a new york minute ...
but *hey ... you never know*[®]

Lloyd Abrams, a long-time Freeport resident, is a retired high school teacher and administrator and is an avid recumbent bicycle rider and long-distance walker. Lloyd has been writing short stories for over thirty years and poems for almost a dozen years. His works have been published in more than three dozen anthologies and publications.
www.lbavha.com/write

Edward Ahern

Telling a Fortune

Come in, my dear, and sit in that chair.
What's that? No, no crystal ball, no incense.
Just a table, and two chairs, and you and I.
Before you pay me, I must give you a choice.
Choose between two fortunes--neither of them lies.

One lets you look in a mirror,
What you will do, who you will bed,
The future as others are able to see you.
Most are content with that.

The other? Ah, that's much more painful.
I will flay your image and look
inside you
At what you become and what you fail to be.
Your essence as it purifies or taints.

Most are unhappy with these revelations,
But recognize their truth
Even though they rarely change.
So which will it be?

Inner or outer, the money is the same.
My actions will not vary.

But I will be looking at you
Either dressed up or naked.

The procedure? Absurdly simple.
Your elbow on the table, fingers straight out.
I set my hands on each side of yours.
And pass them up and down, just not touching.

Your hand feels pressure and warmth.
Both are phantoms but not unreal.
Your focus is through your hand
As I begin to know you.

I ask no questions, that would be fraud.
Only begin to tell you
Of what you will have done
Or what you will become.

What's that? No, of course I understand.
Most people prefer to know
The course of their life rather than
The curses of their nature.
Shall we begin?

Edward Ahern resumed writing after forty odd years in foreign intelligence and international sales. He's had over two hundred stories and poems published so far, and three books. Ed works the other side of writing at *Bewildering Stories*, where he sits on the review board and manages a posse of five review editors.

Austin Alexis

Bulletin in 1988

You left the task to your wife,
the hellish duty, the Calvary
of telling your sons you had AIDS.
Your thorns became her thorns
became their thorns.
Though busy with hiding from yourself,
your responsibilities, your burdens,
you found time to picture your kids
faced with news that slashed them--
their faces never the same.

Slouched on a Riverside Drive bench,
your wife delivered your message,
like a midwife birthing a devil.
You imagine her tampering with the truth
then revealing its stark angles
without softening the razor edges.
Hidden behind curtains in your high-rise
you peek down on the family scene:

the shattered Madonna and muscular teen boys
not smiling in brilliant midday sun.

A minimalist funeral is what you wanted.
Sparse organ music, wistful as dawn.
A few close friends. A sprinkle of acquaintances.
With erect backs, your sons sat at the service--
frozen ferns in a frigid field.
Your soul smiled at their apparent strength.
The only angst your spirit felt
as you watched the somber ceremony:
your wife's spot in the front pew stood empty.

Austin Alexis has been published in *Barrow Street*, *The Journal*, *The Pedestal Magazine*, the anthologies *Suitcase of Chrysanthemums* (Great Weather for Media Press), *Poets 4 Paris* (Local Gems Press), and other journals and anthologies. His full-length collection is *Privacy Issues* (Broadside Lotus Press, 2014).

Joanne Alfano

Frozen Food

Nothing to eat here,
frozen dinners with additives,
frozen meats with freezer burn
frozen vegetables, pretty but not enough.

Let the freezer door close --
check to make sure it closed properly (it did)
and wander about the house a bit.

There is nothing like a meal
to nourish you or to kill time
but there's nothing here that works.

So I am defrosting poetry
that's been building up
and stored in me for weeks

it is not a gentle project --
it requires the zap of a microwave,
or some hours to thaw to ready.

The art is in the thaw
how you coax it off the freezer shelf into words, phrases
and punctuation that make sense somehow;

how you shape it as it thaws, how you find the shape in it
that's what happens
always the challenge
defrosting poetry for survival.

Joanne Alfano started writing poems as a teenager and never stopped. She has published several poems in *NoVA Bards* (2015, 2016, 2017) and *Poets Anonymous: 25 and Beyond* (all from Local Gems Press.) She is retired from a career in federal systems management, and lives with her life partner in Lakeland, Florida. Joanne's current occupation is partner, mom, nanna, sister, cousin, friend, and writer.

Donald E. Allen

I Thought I Saw

I thought I saw a rock in a brook
but then it moved
paddle-like feet came out the sides of the rock
then its head came up to breathe.
My first turtle.

I thought I saw a length of red and yellow rope
underneath the foot bridge
in the shade on a summer day.
I walked up to it slowly.
In a flash of color
it slithered away.
My first snake.

I thought I saw a pair of gloves
on the side of the country road.
Mostly black, a bit of white
I was closer when I saw the red
that is when I knew the animal was dead.
Then the wind changed.
My first skunk.

I thought I saw the berry bushes move.
So I got closer to see.

There was no nest in the branches
so what could all that brown be?
My heart stopped as a huge blanket of brown
flew six feet into the air
leaping over those berry bushes
giving me quite a scare.
My first deer.

I thought I saw a very big man
walking down the ravine in the rain.
So hairy could it be a bear
walking on two legs?
Or a man in a sniper's ghillie suit?
I froze and got no closer.
It froze, turned its head
to look back at me,
and then kept walking, thank goodness.
My first.....

Donald E. Allen is a member of the Bard's Initiative and The Academy of American Poets. Don has published three chapbooks of poetry, more are in progress. Don's body of work also includes several published works of fiction, and his screenwriting credits include The Poland Project, which took second place at the Orion Film Festival.

Linda Allocco

Blackbirds

Night snow weighs down willowy limbs,
Hemlocks bend,
Where are the Blackbirds at dawn?

Wind whistles a foreboding song,
Sky blanketed in grey corduroy tones,
Cloaking the day star.

Rows of forsythia stand, buds close-fisted,
Bare stems shiver,
Seed and salt frozen to the ground.

A court of Blackbirds gather,
Feathers fluffed,
Morning stomachs hollow.

Scratching the land with slender toes,
Snowflakes leap, soil loosens,
Blackbirds feverishly peck.

Crackling noise echoes,
Snow slips off highest tree tops,
Crashing to the ground.

Blackbirds freeze, breasts tremble, wings twitch,
Shadows dash across the sky,
Where have the Blackbirds gone?

Linda Allocco is a nature photographer who loves to write poetry, often marrying these two passions together. Linda's work has been published in *Long Island Literary Journal 2017*, *Poet's Domain Volume 32*, *Suffolk County Poetry Review 2018*, *Bards Annual 2018*, *The Poets' Almanac 2018*.

Sharon Anderson

Perhaps A Cardinal

There was no true blue
in your painting.
Lilacs bloomed,
reflecting in a pool
of rainwater,
but they blanched to lavender,
wept pale tears,
grayed the blue to ash.

Your sky appeared blue
at first notice,
awash with promise,
but it faded quickly,
melted into the horizon,
slipped into cumulus masses
which seemed white,
but were not.

There was a cardinal;
a crimson blur
among the branches
that you painted,
their limbs of supplication
reaching for the not blue sky,
or perhaps it was simply

a blood-stained afterthought,
an indication of your intent.

Your palette sported
indigo, cerulean, aquamarine--
colors for sky, for water,
but your brush
smeared the pigments
muddled the shades.

I study your painting,
my eyes fixed on that blur
that might be a cardinal,
avoiding the ashy lilacs,
the wallowing sky
that should have been blue,
wondering if, in the end,
all your regrets blended
leaving only a torturous gray.

Sharon Anderson has been published in many international and local anthologies. She received a 2014 Pushcart Prize nomination for her poem "Priorities." Sharon has four publications of her own poetry, *Sonnets Songs and Serenades*, *Puff Flummery*, *Chutes and Ladders*, and *The 12 Days of Chris-Mess*. Coming soon, *Taking Up Space, an unscientific look at the universe*. She serves on the advisory board of the Nassau County Poet Laureate Society, the advisory board for Bards Initiative, and is a PPA host at Oceanside Library.

Cassandra Angelo

Walking to Work at The Hartford Public Library

- for E.

I.

You whirled along Main Street,

heels clacking on the cracked sidewalk
the giant buttons of your red coat
gleaming, its glossy lining
billowing in the wind,
your hands embraced by a white fur muff.

Fresh from our attic flat, you composed yourself
before entering the house of books,
disguised by its drab brick exterior
save for the sensual marble relief of
Sibyl of the Written Word
at the building's elbow, a beckoning sign.

II.

Could you have imagined what this place would become
thirty-five years later?
Now your gleaming buttons are reflected in

all- encompassing glass walls, bending you to their will,
books and club chairs replaced by
computer stations and ultra-cold furniture.

Your long arms stretch to dust the spines
of the special collection, savoring forest green covers
with tiny gold titles,
dust jackets smudged with the prints
of hungry readers.

III.

Now, be still.
Hear the rustle of pages as you turn them,
the creak of the chair you rest upon,
the singing of language in your ears
and through your being.

Know that this is what will sustain you to the end.

Cassandra Angelo's work has appeared in *Beat-itude: National Beat Poetry Foundation's 10 Year Anthology* (Local Gems Press), in the anthology *Connected: What Remains As We All Change* (Wising Up Press), and the literary magazine *The Sun*. She is a member of the Meeting House Poets and lives in Glastonbury, CT with her wife and their cats.

Mary Jo Balistreri

Between Forest and Sea

a path winds through
tangled mangroves
interweaving fragrances:
forest breath of a summer day
heat and musk
air-born feathers
white fur of fox
A woman
inhales exhales
crossing through time
absorbing twists
sharp curves of wildness
and salty sea
like she did as a child
where distance
was not a concept
and she the earth's container
unmasked and transparent
She believes now
she's been ripening
all her life for just this—
a beginning
named old age
and finding
not ending
but abundance

Mary Jo Balistreri has three books of poetry published by Bellowing Ark Press and Future Cycle Press, a chapbook by Tiger's Eye Press. She is delighted to be part of the Walt Whitman celebration. For more information, please visit her at maryjobalistreripoet.com

Claudia Balthazar

Those Days

Somehow I no longer miss those days
when I wanted so badly to save you
that down the line I had forgotten to save me,
and I still don't even know how to swim.
I had so much hope for better days for you.
Not realizing that there were no better days for me,
In saving you –
Those days were vulnerable.

I almost was super girl
but now I'm just a broken girl.
I had so much life inside of me before
and you sucked it right out of me
without me even knowing you could.
All of you could.
Somehow I still crawl to you, weak as ever.
So weak to feel, even falsely, needed.

And I still don't even know how to swim.
Somehow I no longer miss those days.
When I was strong and fearless,
wanting to shine like a bright star.
Only to impress you really.

Really, it always was what is was,
Just as it is, now.
I remember needing you so much.

Bleeding of love for something I could only imagine.
Somehow I no longer know what it would look like anymore
and I'm still mad at every closed door
and at every little thing that's not meant for me
and at everything little thing that I wanted to be,
in this beautiful picture that I painted
with pastel colors, and colorful lies from you and me.
But the picture is slowly creeping away now.

I used to be so beautiful.
I looked in the mirror and I could see you.
This beautiful superhero.
I could feel you.
I could smell you.
You were strong and happy – you were elevated,
You were highly educated.
I remember you!

You had learned to love you –
A long time ago.
Your cape flew graciously behind your back.
Now you're just fighting to survive, right around 25.
Somehow I no longer miss those days
when I ruined a bit of me.
When after you hurt me, my answer was to hurt me.
A little more over here, a little bit over there.

Until the bruises were bone deep.
When the cuts were all I saw when I looked at me.
Is this all of me?
Is this what I am now?

Somehow I no longer miss those days.
When I was carefree – when I began my selfish ways.
Somehow, now,
all I need is today.

Claudia Balthazar is a lifestyle blogger and resident of Valley Stream. She graduated from Hofstra University with a degree in journalism and Political Science, and completed a Carnegie-Knight Investigative Journalism fellowship at ASU, where she wrote about gun violence in urban America. See some of her work here: cqbalthazar.com

Sybil Bank

Report from the African Front*

On the farms mid-morning and mid-afternoon
tins of cheap wine were handed out,
children not excluded, wedded to a life of semi-stupor.
The turtledove still sang shredded songs of hope.

Where are you now my trilling bird?
Amid the screaming rasp of early morning,
scavenger seagulls and pigeons
jostle for space on brick chimney tops,
slash their way through sea-salted wind
clutch the balcony rail with red-webbed claws,
baleful bloody stares.

Resting dates hide under the thorn-edged palm
wait to gleam their saffron clusters.
In the green park, protected by summer-leaning reeds,
a guinea fowl tip-toes the scrub, murmurs
its throaty *click-click*.

On the sun-baked lake metal fish mobiles
swirl in gathering breeze, plaintive songs
for the rainbow nation dragged down
by the Armani suited bureaucrats

in the spell of the golden calf,
who export coal, frack the thirsty land
dupe the crowd with noise,
while hunkering down in gated mansions.

I was in longing for the beauty of the land,
slippery kelp, twilight skies transforming
rock pools into reflecting lavender blue mirrors.
Nostalgia stripped, I see it again, a photo print
from the past, faded. I feel the fear,
electric security gates, sharp-toothed dogs.

The old man says to me *I will keep you safe.*
Let South Africa gather its scarred children.
The ring of migration turns, the uprooted
from the black basin -- Nigeria, Democratic Republic
of Congo, Somalia, Zimbabwe, run through
open gates, away from wars, strife, instability,
leave families, lovers cultures languages,
arrive in the churning South African stew -- free anti-virals
building universities, schools, new entrepreneurs,
start again, selling mementos, tourist thronging.
My turtledove lifts its song -- waiting, hoping
in the still guarded Botanical Gardens.

Sybil Bank is an award winning poet and prose writer, member of the Graphic Eye Poets Circle and of the Three Poets who present poetry programs and readings in Long Island libraries and other venues. Her work appears in *Long Island Sounds*, *Mobius*, *Oberon*, *Performance Poets Association Literary Review*, numerous anthologies and journals. Her first book *River Over Stones* was published in 2014.

Danny P. Barbare

America Says the Janitor

I am the janitor of America.

I have plenty to say.

Kindness is a yellow

bucket of water

and a mop.

It is a good broom.

It is mannerism, etiquette

and spirit

across the states like shiny

tiles

like hard work and challenges

the simple of it.

Danny P. Barbare works as a janitor at a local Y in the Upstate of the Carolinas. His poetry has recently appeared in *Red Earth Review*, *The Aurorean*, *La Presa*, and *Fine Lines*. He has a book titled *Poems* just self-published by Create Space.

Sam Barbee

Structures of Water

Search for heat lightning. Sun shower bruises the Devil's wife.
Water has good bones. Folding together like twin half-moons,
into full-glory.
Unifies with purpose, with inflection, not with afterthought as I.

Trickle

Winter's kiss opens crevice. Mystical
over cavern threshold, Snow-pack at spring.
Soft plants rumble from damp tingle.
Carnival of froth boiling forth.
Rasping banks. Shushing roots.
Peeling jag from stubborn stone.
Arroyo swells, potent into a river, set to douse.

Granite remnants. Blue-hearted outcrops. Verdant hardwoods
and vagrant stumps. Disheveled bends. Quick bluffs
downstream.
Pond whispers between reeds. Lagoon reflects from dawn.

Reservoir

The forest, the field. Earthen dam: grass
and rip-rap armor. Leaves coagulate. Silt to cover shore.
Ready to cool, to quench, cure swelter.
Osprey or loon, turtle or trout.
Nothing better than wading in, splashing about.
Sliced by outboards. Pricked with piers.

Quick boundary for the stale heart.

Foul spew from broken towns, sea of toxins.
Culverts and canals. Lochs and dams, crusted gates creaking.
Thick-thighed estuary and marsh, unchained at last to right
the keel.

Ocean

High tide arrives without grief.
Shore decodes the cacophony of breakers.
Ocean's breast: foaming saline and cold-blood.
Uprooted Seaweed bakes. A sorry, angry state.
Scrabble of conch and clam. Each briny life beached,
a rosary of the aggrieved, cast off,
ancient magma into sand.

Currents' simplicity. Final flow storming into balance.
Oasis blooms mirage. Waters gather to settle
our fight and flow.

Sam Barbee's poems appeared *Poetry South*, *The NC Literary Review*, *Crucible*, *Asheville Poetry Review*, *Main Street Rag*, *The Southern Poetry Anthology VII: North Carolina*; plus online journals *Vox Poetica*, *Sky Island Journal*, *Courtland Review*, and *Blue Hour*. His second poetry collection, *That Rain We Needed* (2016, Press 53), was a nominee for the Roanoke-Chowan Award as one of North Carolina's best poetry collections of 2016. He serves as current President of the NC Poetry Society

Marilyn Barker

My Friend Lee...

She was a true character
A Mia Farrow look alike
but worn tough and broke

A wicked sense of humor
honed from 25 years sober
She made me laugh hard and often.

She had a sad, rough life
Mother died at her birth
It never got pretty

Something about us clicked
She didn't with everyone though
One day she called real sick

In her hospital room I begged
please don't die, please don't go
I'm tired of losing love, friendship

She closed her eyes and flew across
the invisible valley of beautiful spirits
.....Gone too soon.

Dennis Barnes

Sacred Trees

I walk among sacred trees
that line this asphalt path
whose trunks form pews
in this outdoor church
and yet I can sense
what the congregation
felt minutes earlier:
your footsteps, your thoughts.

I sense that those feelings
must have dripped like rain
and caused this mist
and I need to share
except it is not possible
since these stoic trees
form confession walls
for only you.

I pray for guidance
yet the trees weep
among themselves
since a stranger now walks
your righteous path.
I am overcome with pain

since it is you they seek
and not this lagging lover.

I feel banished from
this sacred place,
the very core of you,
and while your walk continues
my hope for closeness
ends as this cold mist
suddenly freezes all
that could ever be.

Dennis Barnes graduated from Pennsylvania State University and eventually migrated to North Virginia area where he leads a not so quite poetic life. He was the 2005 recipient of the Baltimore People's Poetry *Done the Most to Advance Poetry* award. Mr. Barnes has had poems published in over forty magazines and anthologies including *Christian Science Monitor*, *Patterson Literary*, and *Manorborn*. *Shades of Light*, his first book of poetry, was published in 2007.

Jenny Bates

Fame Looks Both Ways

Melting ice strip pungent treetops,
rain down shards coursing with lurid
sounds — more than water.
Falling white tubes, empty as a monk's
robe before Matins.

Much like the reign of Nero, winter
has proven to be crazed, devastating.
Climate ballet dancer with vertigo.
Sinewy, confused footing — contrary to
its promise of landing blanket-peace.

When recognizable earth fails to be
the jewel of the universe, will it
turn to poetry?
Dead for a thousand years, may it be read
without light in the remote corners of space.
Satiric angels wearing ironic alien smiles,
marking our juvenile planet with strange readings.

Jenny Bates is a poet from the foothills of North Carolina and a member of Winston-Salem Writers. and the NC Poetry Society. She has two published books, *Opening Doors: an equilog of poetry about Donkeys* (Lulu Publishing, Raleigh, NC); and *Coyote with Coffee* (Catbird on the Yadkin Press, Tobaccoville, NC). *Visitations*, her newest collection is due out in Summer 2019 published by Hermit Feathers Press.

Antonio Bellia (Madly Loved)

I Am

I have traced
My origins,
Gone back and
Crossed the dark
Behind
Not remembrance.

I dared to look
Behind the forming
Time.
I saw past my
Mother's womb.

I was not blinded
By the splendor.
I looked with eyes closed.

I saw the splendor
That illuminates,
The light
That crumbles
The walls of darkness,
An expanding blaze
That like a ripple

Moving outward,
Dispelled gloom
With glare,
Broadcasting stars,
Planets, and living things.

I saw a flash
Of that light
Becoming my soul.

Michael Belongie

The Last Poem

When I write that last poem,
let the final string of lines
appear as creation evolved
from the big bang.
Creator of the cosmic arc,
illumine for me the minuscule
mite of dust simultaneously
with the black hole of consciousness.
Give me Whitman largess
and Hopkins' playfulness with words,
allowing timeless truth to appear
as only Emily could divine.
May that last poem
rest secluded as the
Dead Sea Scrolls,
awaiting rediscovery.

Michael Belongie has seven published poetry chapbooks, national textbook editing advisory experience, past president of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets, and contractor of readings by Billy Collins, Gwendolyn Brooks, Sharon Olds, and Frank McCourt.

Therese Craine Bertsch

Rain

Rain is like a steadfast gentleman
rain does not make a show of it

Present, wholly
tumbling down to announce itself

Steadily teaming
from every direction

Making its delicious noise
encompassing me, liberating me

In a solitude that joins us all
in the lament

Thérèse Craine Bertsch is a Doctor of Social Work and is a published author with a particular interest in recognizing the need for gender equality, and the development of women's voices. Her most recent essay was included in "Visions and Vocations 2018" by Catholic Women Speak, published by Paulist Press, and her poems were published in the recent *Suffolk County Poetry Review*. Therese is the mother of 5 children and grandmother to 8 grandchildren. Poetry is a way of giving voice to her faith, vision, and gratitude for life and relationships and service to one another as we find meaning in an ever evolving world.

Michael Biegner

The Space At The End Of The Earth

Climbing the pear tree, that porcupine reaches for the ovate fruit,
its quills quiver, its black eyes measure lengthening shadows.
There's no schedule. There's no sound except for jaws working
through the rock-hard pear.

Beneath the wide want of the dying sun, there is space for
everything:
for breath,
 for what is needed,
 and maybe for what hangs like these pears
 unexpressed in a moment.

Here, it's possible to be more still than light, a sunset, a mirror.

Michael Biegner has had poems published in *Blooms*, *Poetry Storehouse*, *Silver Birch Press*, *Silkworm*. His prose poem, "When Walt Whitman Was A Little Girl," was made into a video short by North Carolina filmmaker Jim Haverkamp, where it has competed at various film festivals around the world and is available for viewing on Vimeo. Michael most recently was a finalist in the 2017 Northampton Arts Council Biennial Call To Artists.

Bengt O Björklund

stifled by time
and its adversary
I the inhalation
of any course
case or fall
conclude that it is
all about assumption

“down” she said “down”
her whisper was like leaves
already soggy
groggy with annihilation
hoisting flags and drinking
to the end

The poet, artist, journalist, photographer, writer, musician, and editor Bengt O Björklund was born in Stockholm 1949. In 1968 he landed in jail in Istanbul for \$20 worth of hash and met a bunch of international artists, poets and musicians. It was then he embarked on his artistic voyage in many directions as well as learning to cook, do yoga, and generally get a life. The source of his inspiration in Turkey those early years were his Japanese friend, the artist Koji Morrishita and the Italian artist, poet, and Dadaist Antonio Rasile. The character Erich in the movie *Midnight Express* is based on Bengt. Bengt has published 8 books of poetry, three are written in English. His third English poetry was published by Middle Creek Publishing in Colorado.

Lorene Vorbach Bossong

Sauce Again

As I plunged a harvest full of tomatoes
into a pot of boiling water
I realized the last time our garden grew
enough tomatoes for sauce
my mother was staying with me
back in 2005

neither one of us knew what to do
but we managed the pulpy mixture
and made a semblance of something Italian
despite our estranged heritage
we even strained the seeds and
stored the sauce in the freezer

she and I never
cooked together since

this time
I added fresh herbs

Lorene Vorbach Bossong grew up in South Huntington and graduated from Walt Whitman High School. In tenth grade, she won a poetry prize from the local Walt Whitman Bank. Being a lifelong poet, Ms. Bossong's poems have been published in *Oberon*, *Whispers and Shouts*, *Bards Annual*, *Examination Anthology*, *Nassau County Poet Laureate Society Review*, and *Long Island Quarterly*. She is an English Department Chairperson and the adviser to a student literary art magazine in Valley Stream.

Emily Bowles

No-Peeking Chicken: A Family Secret

Families like yours have secrets,
said the tough bird hiding under aluminum foil,
his words drowned out by a full can of cream-of-mushroom soup,
carrot wheels like eyes staring at nothing, patiently waiting for
me to release him, serve him to a man who doesn't want to know
what came first. That bird watched me feed him while I starved
myself,
only lettuce leaves.

Emily Bowles is a poet and freelance writer in Appleton, Wisconsin. Her first chapbook, *His Journal, My Stella* (Finishing Line Press, 2018) explores the ways women's stories become lost—and how we can find ourselves in them. Her poetry has appeared in *Blue Heron Review*, *Bramble*, *The Literary Nest*, *Moon Magazine*, and *Page & Spine*.

John A. Brennan

The Essence

You will find me in the hedgerows among the briars and wild honeysuckle, safely hidden in the places where people seldom go. In the gnarled, knotted branches of the birches and oaks, covered by the vibrant, green leaves, I rest. Just above the surface of the water I hover with the twin-winged dragonfly and the swooping summer swallow. I leap the rocky waterfalls with the salmon as they return home and I nest down in the bower with the linnet and the bittern, singing the songs of life full throated and majestic. I ride on the winds that sweep across the dry, desert sands, and I roam with the nomads crisscrossing the vast, open tundra. I sway and caress the grasses that wave on the prairie and I dance and swirl among the leaves in the lush rainforest. I run with the wild horses across the wide-open plains and I soar with the eagle above the high mountain tops. I migrate with the herds, moving as one, along the time-worn trails across the vast savannah and rest with them at night beside the watering holes. I shelter down in the sacred canyons and weave in and out of the dark, dusty passages and underground caverns. I swim the oceans on a never-ending journey with the creatures of the deep and I fall silently with the snows that blanket the poles.

John Anthony Brennan comes from County Armagh, Ireland. He left his beloved, sacred green isle many years ago to explore the world and has been island hopping ever since. He has traveled extensively, visiting many of the sacred sites and incorporates his experiences in both his prose and poetry as he believes that a common thread connects us all. He has previously written a philosophical memoir, a collection of memoir style poetry, a book dedicated to the musicians who died before their time, and a book on the history of Ireland. He now resides in New Rochelle, NY

John Burroughs

Allen Ginsberg Wants You

Allen Ginsberg

You sucked

The cock of life

Drained the bulging bone of its marrow

Honed in on our howling

With your eye on the sparrow

And spit out godly children

A spectacularly spiritual spawn to carry on

Your sacramental work in our wordsick world

A fellatio facial

For earthfolk fine and fucked

Allen Ginsberg

Your poetic prick

Penetrated us

Probed the pettiness

Prettiness

Power and pride

Hungrily hardening inside us

Then withdrew to
Spew your gooey godliness
On the just and the unjust
Before turning wholly dust

John Burroughs is a nationally touring poet and performer from Cleveland and the author of over a dozen books including *Loss and Foundering*, *Water Works*, *Electric Company*, and *The Eater of the Absurd*. Since 2008, John has served as the founding editor of Crisis Chronicles Press, publishing over 100 books by some of the world's best writers. Find him at crisischronicles.com

Ryan Buynak

Elizabeth, Down in the Delta Dawn

the morning light likes her
very much
and that dress likes her skin
just as much
as I like her eyes
which seem to like me
only this day.

she lays in flowers
and quotes Walt Whitman
so casually that it stings
my poetic soul like the prick
of a stupid needle.

she shortens her name
and so I do too
in this poem
and on the streets of Chicago
where weddings crash us
and we dance near tables
not using protection.

her Southern drawl
decides to let me in her mouth
and one thing I can say for sure
is I could not love her anymore
besides a river and a reach.

Ryan Buynak has published 8 books of poetry, which all started when he read *Leaves of Grass* in a community college in Florida. He is thankful that it changed him. He also has a Walt Whitman tattoo.

Alice Byrne

Joy

What did I tell you about joy?
Laughter, joy, no kidding it's true.
Joy, where would I be without you?
Every cell is joyful partying in its own way.

If you can laugh at funeral imagine what you can do with a sunny
day! Imagine friends singing. It's true .
The soul can regenerate.

Alice Byrne is a mother, mother-in-law, grandmother, social worker, psychotherapist, LCSW CGP FAGPA. She has been writing poems since a little girl.

Carlo Frank Calo

Against The Tide

Crossing the boardwalk amidst the reeds alarms the hatchlings,
Fluttering with wings not ready, plodding through the creek past bottles
Abandoned with cans and bags strewn like bloated wildebeest carcasses;
but
Those waters of Africa provide life from the dead, while
These waters of home take life from the remains of the thoughtless.

Onto the beach looking east, fighting the breakers and sludge to reel in
the writhing fish with
Parasitic gills but still within the allowable limits of mercury and,
With the rest of its pool, each carrying enough metals and pesticides
Assessed at just the right containment and consumption levels to not
kill a family;
My family, your family, killing them, killing us and all the while,

All the while, as so many strive to deny tomorrow's truth and waste
today's bounty
Some of us fight on to save this land we call Earth with steps small yet
pure
As the water we haltingly drink, its melting levels rising and
Now, whether planting a tree or mailing a check or writing a letter or
Smelling rare wisps of green fresh air, I wonder which way the tides
will flow.

Carlo Frank Calo, the grandson of Sicilian immigrants, is a husband, father, and grandfather. He was born in Harlem, raised in the Bronx projects and is retired on Long Island. When not fishing, playing poker, counseling TBI survivors part-time, or babysitting his grandchildren, he enjoys writing eclectically. Google Carlo Frank Calo for publications, or email: 1170boy@optonline.net

Paula Camacho

It Reminds Me

Painting "Still Standing" by Ron Becker 2018

Worn, gray, wooden slats
barely support each other,
two broken windows, a depressed door
is all that remains of a house
that once was not abandoned.
Scraggy, anemic branches hang down
in front like wisps of hair.

It is a picture of my grandfather
or your grandfather, who wait for a visit.
Once young and determined to reach Ellis Island
they work in coal mines that darkened the lungs
like the black edges of the wood portrayed.
Only part of the house is visible.
Only part of their stories can ever be known.

Between the slats in its frail complexity,
I see the light blue of my grandfather's eyes,
the eyes that now look back at me in the mirror
as I comb back wisps of hair.

Paula Camacho is President of the Nassau County Poet Laureate Society, www.ncplsociety.com and moderates the Farmingdale Poetry Group. She has published three books and four chapbooks. Her poems have won awards and are published in many anthologies.

Michael Campagnoli

Fuoco

“And do you know what I said?” he says.

It’s a summer night and I’m very young.
We’re sitting in lawn chairs out back by his garden,
watching the shore traffic below on Route 61.
It’s hot and he’s drinking wine from a long-necked bottle.
I don’t like it. It scares me. My mother has filled me
with stories of what happens when men drink.
I have a Cott’s Cream Soda with ice, served in a tall
glass that once was a jelly jar.

“And do you know what I said?” he says again.

I know what he said. I’ve heard it a thousand times.
In the dark of night, the S.S. Anglia
glides past Battery Park, approaches
the Lower East Side.
Below decks, a young man
peers from black steerage
into the black of night,
his wife and infant son
huddled nearby.
Before them sprawls a catacomb
of tangled streets,
crowded tenements,
airless sweatshops,

a panoply of factories
belching heat and light.

They look at each other,
thinking of Dante,
as they enter the rain-wet *New World*.

“No, what did you say?” I say, pretending.

He looks off, far into the evening sky,
above rows of houses,
the endless lines of cars and grey exhaust.

“*Non so come,*” he says, “*si puo vivere
in questo fuoco.*”

And he waits, knowing that I will ask.
Does he forget that he’s told me so many times?
Or does he like that it’s become a ritual?
Our ritual.

“What does that mean, Nonno?” I ask.
He looks at me gravely.

“*I do not know how,*” he says,
“*it is possible. . .
to live in such fire.*”

He shakes his head
I shake my head, too.

Nonno Michele came to this country in 1908.
Educated. An artist. Did not believe the stories

of easy wealth and streets of gold,
but did believe, "*The Promise*."
What he found were jeers
of "dago" and "wop" and "greaseball,"
was handed a shovel,
called a "giny" ditch digger.
Eventually, he practiced his craft
But as a carver of gravestones, water fountains,
the sarcophagi of rich people's mausoleums.

My father told me
about the day he watched Nonno,
eyes fierce and brokenhearted,
tears cutting his cheeks like acid,
as the cold chisel edged the names
of his wife and only female child. A week apart.
A bleak December day.

Though America broke its promise to him,
he remained faithful. He pronounced it,
would always pronounce it,
"*Ah-meddy-ga*,"
with a certain gossamer lightness,
as if the word itself,
"*Ah-meddy-ga*,"
were dream enough.

Michael Campagnoli has worked as a waiter, fisherman, journalist, painter, and short-order cook. His work has appeared in *New Letters*, *Nimrod*, *Rattle*, the *Southern Humanities Review*, and elsewhere. He can be seen most mornings running somewhere along the coast of Maine with his mongrel dog, Yogi, and Anthony, his equally mongrel son.

Lynne Cannon

Airborne/Feathers

You hoped for a message
but I have been busy
soaring with angels
over the seas and the meadows
Fret not, for I am here on the wind.

I am the light grey sky
all around the world
moving amongst the mountains
and into the valleys
I travel like never before
see all, taste and smell
and love all
Here, traces of my wings
To greet you.

LynneRose Cannon lives on the north shore of Long Island with her family and the beginnings of an extremely small petting zoo. Editing other people's work and a return to college take up most of her time; seeking a home in the Vermont forests takes up much of the rest. Poetry and prose of her own take up the small spaces between.

Sylvia Cavanaugh

Ghost Trees

Seasons-worn silver gray
branches of fallen fir
emerge from October's bed
of forest fern.

I think for a moment
these bare branches are antlers
then realize the bleached
stalks are the remains
of an ancient tree.

Deer carry ancestor
trees on their heads.

Is this some post-
modern quirk
of ecosystem evolution,
the architecture of buck skull
referencing trees
in forest affinity?

What is identity
anyway?

Philosophers say our concept
of self is an illusion –
an illusion,
never even fixed
for long,
so easily engulfed
in mirrors, postings, and time.

Family trees sprout ghosts.
A Jewish family camouflaged
and a mother cloaked herself
in the dance of the double helix.

I emerged from her shadow
to walk among fern and fir.

She must have realized
how forgotten
she might become.
Today I roam the forest free
as I keep her ghost
anchored in my brain bone.

Sylvia Cavanaugh teaches high school cultural studies and has advised breakdancers and poets. A Pushcart Prize nominee, her poems have appeared in various periodicals and anthologies. She is a Contributing Editor for Verse-Virtual and has published two chapbooks.

Kimberly Chery

A Lost Child

It's dark and I can't see.

God?

Can you hear me?

I'm lost.

Can you please come find me?

I'm scared.

Can you please come save me?

I need you.

I trust you.

You're my only hope.

God? Please?

Save me from this prison?

I want to be free.

I want to be safe.

GOD?!

I NEED YOU!

CAN YOU HEAR ME?!

I AM CALLING YOU!

PLEASE GOD?!

SAVE ME?!

Save me from myself.

Cause I need you.

Jan Chronister

The Physician Attends a Poetry Event

It's a discussion of Ocean Vuong.
How he creates a new mythology with
animals & colors & bodies.
How father, lovers, pianos
provide a retreat. How he repeats on purpose so
we know what's important.

Red, white & blue sing of
violence, women, death.
Mouths & shoulders & eyes
open holes of escape.
Horses & deer know what
humans only guess at.

The doctor touches exit wounds
made by grenades, hunters in fields.
Rain falls too hard, bruises bodies.
A horse follows the blue
path home to the stars.

Jan Chronister is a retired writing instructor living near Maple, Wisconsin. She currently serves as president of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets.

Cathryn Cofell

Bread Is Just Bread

Calculate the odds of second chance.
A first life as aspen, python, gnat?
Tricks of the mind on cusp of REM or
hint of memory whispering loose?
Reincarnation? Utter bullshit,
you say. *This is it, baby, one shot,*
no mulligan, no instant replay.

Acid-trip flashbacks or lack of sleep,
neither explains the behind I feel
nibbling at today. I need faith,
evidence, H.G. Wells, a time-out

called like kids who stop mid-fight to pee
or run home to eat supper—tuna
fish casserole, white bread stacked (amen).
End is end, you say. Bread is just bread.
Liar, liar, pants on fire I
long to scream, but resist. I need a

miracle, Vishnu, valium, Zen.
Unplug me from my indecisions:
terrorist or terrified, hungry
stuff of Stephen King or James, not this

cold fish, human-heart casserole, this
heartbeat hypothesis, counting down.
Leave me my charade of karmic knives
entering the flesh again. Refrain,
refrain of ash to bloom, to ash to. . .

Cathryn Cofell is an Appleton poet with one full-length collection called *Sister Satellite*, six chapbooks, numerous awards and a music/poetry CD called *Lip*. www.cathryncofell.com

Joan Colby

Stand Up For The Stupid And Crazy

Give five bucks to the woman with the sign
And the four homeless children and the hungry dog
Even if it's a scam as everyone insists, it's still a hell of a way
To make a living.

And the guy wandering along the riverbank
Talking to himself. Let him be.
It's a free country and if he wants to throw himself
Into the river tonight, that's his choice.

If someone spends the grocery money
On a lottery ticket, let him. He just might win
And even if he doesn't he had that hope
Which is as good as hot dogs or Mountain Dew.

And if a girl is screaming in the restroom
Because her boyfriend killed her cat
Scream right along with her, you'll
Both feel better. Then help her kick his ass.

So go ahead and do something willfully stupid.
Buy that pot of flowers with your last ten dollars.
Forget the electric bill, who needs lights
When you can go crazy and samba in the streets.

Joan Colby's *Selected Poems* received the 2013 FutureCycle Prize and *Ribcage* was awarded the 2015 Kithara Book Prize. Her recent books include *Her Heartsongs* published by Presa Press and *Joyriding to Nightfall* from FutureCycle Press.

Lorraine Conlin

Blades in the Wall

A vintage medicine chest
sitting on the curb awaiting disposal
looks just like the one Dad hung
in our bathroom above the pink sink.

He'd fill the basin with lukewarm water
slap his face and neck to wake up
whiskers that grew overnight
Chipped cup in hand and a bristled-brush,
he'd slather soap back and forth until foamy

work the lather-laden brush
across cheeks and throat
cock his head from side to side
dragging the razor upward with small strokes
shaving stubble, shaping his side-burns
curling and scrunching his lips
to clear away delicate hair above and below.

Toilet paper bits he used to fix the nicks
and stop the bleeding
would cling to his face all morning.

He's d slip the spent double-edged blades

too dull for his what he called a *five o'clock shadow*
into the depository, a slot in back of
the metal cabinet marked ***Razor Blades***
out of harm's way.

Rusted remains of countless shaves
buried in forgotten walls,
resurface today.

Lorraine Conlin is the Nassau County Poet Laureate Emeritus (2015-2017). Her poems have been published both nationally and internationally in anthologies and literary reviews.

Marcia Conover

Earth's Day

A tapestry of water colors on display
Rising slowly in the east this way
Each stroke timed and perfectly placed
Hues of purples, yellows and pinks are laced
Earths awaking of yet another day
Clearing to a vibrant blue bouquet
Seemingly dotted with tufts of cotton
So blissfully unique it's never forgotten
The sun has traveled from east to west
Where once again the sky's refreshed
Spray painted darker shades this time
The moon begins its wayward climb
Beautiful ending to yet another day
No promises of tomorrow's array

Marcia Conover, born in Indiana, resides with her husband on a small rural farm. Some of her poetry and essays have been published in *Indiana Voice Journal*, *Spirit Fire Review*, and numerous anthologies currently available on Amazon.

Yolanda Coulaz

When Locust Last In My Backyard Bloomed

When locust last in my backyard bloomed
and the summer sun hung low in a haze of sky
and cardinal called out to his mate
in an August afternoon,
where neighbors once would smile and wave *hello*
there I would all but shed a sea of tears.

Where wood and leaf and pulp of beating heart
had petrified and felled at neighbor's hand
there I did stand and mourn the loss
of solace and of shade.

There where the cardinal circled open sky
in search of chick or egg or empty nest
my once almighty muse of wood and thorn
lay dying, bleeding sap into the earth.

A fool was thought of me as I did grieve
for loss of something lacking breath and flesh.
To some this may be trite and meaningless,
but here in a barren backyard lies the grave
of a once bold and robust black locust tree
that brought such pleasure and such pain to me.

Yolanda Coulaz is a poet, photographer, editor, founder of Purple Sage Press, and co-owner of Outrider Security. Her first book, *Spirits and Oxygen*, has been acquired by SUNY Stony Brook for an advanced course in poetry. She edited and published the anthology *For Loving Precious Beast*.

Terry Cox-Joseph

Beautiful Words

Exquisite, this Monte Blanc.
The barrel, onyx and gold,
platinum coil and clip. Nestled
between pad of thumb and first
digit, pleasant meld with flesh.

Then, consider the Meisterstück,
18-karat gold nib with rhodium-
coated inlay. Observe the way it
skates across pages with precision.

Or the balletic approach and ephemeral
appellation of Aurora Ipsilon. (The cost
is more bearable, as well.) Trace your
roots with Visconti Homo Sapiens Steel
Age Black Lava with Steel Trim, its
stainless marine steel combined with
basaltic lava derived from
iconoclastic Mt. Etna.

Enough of lavish descriptions!
Come now to matters of import.

What to pen with such formidable strength? Such valuable minerals? Such rare beauty? Where to begin, except with a mere scribble, or, alas, signature on a bequest? And is one's script practiced enough, crafted with caution and care, crossbars, descenders flourishes just so?

Calm the trembling hand, exhale, lean into it. Craft a love letter. Better yet, a poem—a ballad— tale of love and loss, pulp and ink, embraces and partings, each letter, every word exquisite, worthy.

Practice. Become one with the implement, the Zen-like ink of creation.

Terry Cox-Joseph is a former newspaper reporter and editor. From 1994-2004 she was the coordinator for the Christopher Newport University Writers' Conference. She has been published in *Chiron Review*, *Avocet*, and *Red River Review* among others. Her first chapbook, "*Between Then and Now*," was published by Finishing Line Press in 2018.

Barbara Crooker

The Mockingbird On The Stone Urn

decorated in grapes and lichen says *What have you got for me baby? Something to add to my bag of tricks, my slick and non-repeating repertoire, my way with the ladies?* He's screeching at the wind vane for constantly turning. The mockingbird on the urn says *Music is my life; I stitch together songs like Mennonite ladies at a quilting bee: a scrap of cardinal, a remnant of jay, nine patch of Carolina wren, threaded with the metallic strands of oriole and wood thrush.* This is a bird who struts his stuff, knows how to display his gray and white, a flag-twirler in a stadium, soaking up the crowd's applause. The mockingbird on the stone knows that life is long, art short, or is it the other way around? He is one acquainted with the night, wailing in the light of the full moon. He thinks I might need another glass of wine, preferably a Gevry-Chambertin. Then mousse au chocolat. Everything dark belongs to the night, including him. The mockingbird flaps up and down, shakes his tail feathers, hurls himself into another arioso. He doesn't know the score or play the score; he *is* the score. He's putting on his top hat, tying on his white tie; brushing off his tails. He's putting on a blitz-kreig of sound. And fury. So don't mess with his head, but follow his lead: *sing sing sing.*

first published in *Miramar*

Barbara Crooker is a poetry editor for *Italian-Americana*, and author of nine full-length books and twelve chapbooks of poetry, with *Some Glad Morning* coming out in the Pitt Poetry Series in 2019. Her awards include the WB Yeats Society of New York Award, the Thomas Merton Poetry of the Sacred Award, and three Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Creative Writing Fellowships.

Jane Mary Curran

Indiana Boy

Evening of July 10, 1863

Mr. Walt Whitman walks the wards of Douglas Military Hospital,
Washington, D.C.

From a row of beds a young face, ghostly white in the dusk,
turns toward the sound of Whitman's steps.

Two eyes dry with fever, two hands clenched in pain,
one leg beneath the blanket.

Mr. Whitman sits down beside Union Private William March.

He's a boy from Indiana and knows it's time to bring in the hay.
His mother called him for supper but he can't remember if he ate.

Mr. Whitman hands him a tin cup of water.
With a shaking hand William takes the cup,
gulps the nectar, clean water drunk down.

Cool air of twilight flows across his flushed face.
He tells Mr. Whitman his story.

Our officers believed the Rebs would attack our center, they'd
come just after dawn but it was afternoon before we saw them,
marching across the low land from their ridge to ours. Tens of
thousands in waves like wheat. As though every soldier in the

world was moving toward us.

We were sent to the right of the cemetery and told we must hold. They called us the Gibraltar Brigade, steady and unyielding as that great rock. We looked at each other and resolved to hold, no matter what came.

The Rebs walked into the valley of death. They had no hope. We held the high ground.

We fired and fired, almost without pause. I heard their screams as they lay wounded and dying.

They kept reforming and coming and we kept shooting. They came to us in flocks and died.

I hunkered down behind the stone wall and tried to make all my shots hit home.

I knew it was kinder to kill than wound and leave men to lie in the summer sun.

I heard one Rebel cry out for his mother. As he wept and died, I saw my own mother's face and in that moment a bullet entered my thigh. I felt my bone shatter. Just then the weather broke.

The last sound I heard was thunder. I woke with rain hitting my face. My leg lay open and the Gibraltar men were shouting. I knew victory was ours. We had held our line.

I felt little pain but my teeth chattered with cold. Lightning split the air around me. An artillery of thunder crashed over my head and I knew no more.

When I woke up, my leg was gone.

Will you write to my mother, Mr. Whitman? Ask her about the crops, the new foal. Tell her I am healing and please not to worry. Tell her I miss them terribly and will be home soon.

Night of July 12, 1863

In his fever William dreams of tiger lilies
blooming by the kitchen door,
great orange spotted blooms on tall green stalks.
Litters of wild tumbling kittens play their hunting games
upon the lilies, until torn and bedraggled,
blossoms lie flat, beauty shredded for a summer, a year.

Evening of July, 13, 1863

William Marsh longs for home,
his words rambling, slow and slurred.
Mr. Whitman sits beside him.

. . . around the beginning of May the weather turns soft
as though the walls of my house disappear
and scents drift in
of purple clover
fresh turned earth
the old lilac bush in flower
all together in a single breath . . .

Evening of July 14, 1863

William receives a visit from his grandmother who died before

he was born.

Hollyhocks nod in the dusky air
in a row by the smoke house
where the fence used to be.
Their stalks bend with the weight of flowers
like the backs of old women bent over a hoe.
A warm wind stirs and his grandmother stands
where the fence used to be.
A starched sunbonnet shadows her face.
She bows her head and leans into a spade,
turning the earth for a new row of beans,
layered in time, anchored to place.

William's heart pounds, racing to feed his body
but he takes no notice.
Roaring pain is lost to memory.
His heart quiets, he sinks into stillness
without screams or fevers,
rifles or rain.

The last light fades and the stars come out.

On July 15, 1863 Private William Marsh, 14th Indiana Infantry, died of wounds sustained on the third and final day of the Battle of Gettysburg, where his regiment valiantly repulsed Pickett's Charge up Cemetery Ridge thus breaking the Confederate line and ensuring victory to the Union Army.

When the bottom land has turned to dust
and creeks run thick with flowing dirt,
we shall eat the golden grit,
swallow its heat in every grain.
With mouths open to the invisible sky
we shall wail and beg for a drop of tears.

Who will bring the hay in now?

Jane Mary Curran lives in Asheville, North Carolina. She is retired from all kinds of wonderful work, including a college professorship in piano and a second career as chaplain with hospice. Now in her third third of life she returns to an old love and savors the joy of words, pen and paper.

Ron Czerwien

Winter Solstice Dream

I danced like a cow on ice
trying to stomp out something
vaguely Russian in rhythm,

with my arms spread apart
I began to shuffle around
like a hapless drunk or prisoner

in leg irons, as if my every move
was dictated by someone else
who was unseen and in control;

so I believed, as did the others who
slashed that length of darkness
with their bright blades of thought

and in that shortest of moments leapt,
embracing uncertainty like a child,
into the coming year's divide.

Ron Czerwien sells used and rare books online under the name Avol's Books, LLC. His poems have appeared on the internet and in a number of print journals. His chapbook, *a little rain, a little more*, was published in November 2018 by Bent Paddle Press.

Tom Daley

Engraving of Whitman

(by Samuel Hollyer, frontispiece, *Leaves of Grass 1855 edition*)

A slouch. A warrant. An assurance.
Poignant and cocksure angle of the hat.
Plait and wrinkle. Unbuttoning.
Cotton bracelet of the cuff.
An igneous lassitude. A granite condescension.
Goatee fraying, rimmed with salt.
Left hand wears left pocket. His hat
shadows his seduction. About to amble,
at rest from shuffling.
Cool, like old sweat.
Roughneck's poise,
plaint of a penitent.

[originally published in *Archipelago*, Volume 7, Number 2]

A machinist for over twenty years, Tom Daley leads writing workshops in the Boston area. His poetry has appeared in *Harvard Review*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Fence*, *Crazyhorse*, *Witness*, and elsewhere. His first book: *House You Cannot Reach—Poems in the Voice of My Mother and Other Poems* (FutureCycle Press).

Lori Desrosiers

Poem with a line from Whitman

*Oh you whom I often and silently
come where you are that I may be with you
as I sit by your side and find
your strong and calloused hand*

you may divine my constant fire for you
despite the mundanity of days
though seldom do you sit across from me
at table, your green eyes meeting mine

instead, as we flit from screen to screen,
from home to work and back again
let us find a moment in our days
of mortal flurry, of hurried flight

to pause, discover one another once again
in nature's quiet and unfailing light.

Lori Desrosiers' poetry books are *The Philosopher's Daughter* (Salmon Poetry, 2013), a chapbook, *Inner Sky* (Glass Lyre Press 2015), and *Sometimes I Hear the Clock Speak* (Salmon Poetry, 2016). A third full-length book, *Keeping Planes in the Air*, is due out in spring of 2020. She edits *Naugatuck River Review*, a journal of narrative poetry, and *WORDPEACE*, an online journal dedicated to social justice.

Anant Dhavale

Perplexed

Days I have wasted
In contemplating
Thinking it over
Making sense of

A thousand algorithms laugh at me
Pikes
Trees, homes
A whole gamut of things. But I am
Not as perplexed as I was --
Let's say back in my twenties

Dewdrops of culture
And playful age
And abundance
Bounce around me
In a maze of,
Rather
A string of sub-cultures,
Subterranean seas
A sub kind of a social
Paradigm
Underneath,
Beneath everything

Homes are warm, away from the
Winterian wrath
Restaurants bubble with people
Color floats around
Dark of the night
Darkening further
Things with color
Touch and melt --
All around.

Anant Dhavale has been writing poetry since his late twenties. He attempts to explore the intricacies of human mind and the cultural milieu that it breathes in, through a conversational style of poetry. His poems seem to emanate from an urgent and pressing need to ‘word’ the abstract. He blogs his poems at <https://newagepoems.blogspot.com/> and has been publishing poetry through numerous social media groups. Anant lives in Herndon, Virginia and can be reached at anantdhavale@gmail.com

David Dickman

The Prompt was Wild Violets

Among the immaculate green
of uniformed lawns marching down
this suburban street you will find
my patch of non-conformity.

Deep in its jungle of willful
defiance, among the clover
and the dandelions, hides
the purple majesty of the

Wild Violets.

David Dickman is a native of Long Island, and wrote his first poem in the early 1960s, which has (hopefully) been lost permanently. His interest was rekindled in as a freshman in high school and it has been a nuisance ever since.

Linda Trott Dickman

Because of Queen Kapiolani – 'He Nae Akea*

For Mikahala Roy, former Kahu of Hawai'i, who sang for us.

For Elizabeth Thunderbird Haile, who danced for us all.

I feel it still on this island
of Paumanok.
When the air shifts.
Hints of honeysuckle, plumeria
pikake leis on the salt air, recalling
the ghost rain, your voice
which moves me still.

*Here on this island
of Paumanok,
another used her gifts
to honor her King.
In white buckskin,
always looking to Him,
Turning her hands
the cups of her palms
facing Him, reflecting light.*

It was late in the day,
just before closing.
You, the *Kahu of Hawai'i*, welcomed us into

Hulihe 'e, the summer palace.
As we ascended the sweeping koa staircase,
we five met the spirit. You felt it too,
“I don’t know why, I feel I must sing.”
You sang the Queen’s own song.

“Chee Chee” worshipped
She was the instrument of the dance.
Her steps gave birth to a tradition
that opened many a Paumanok Pow-wow,
always offering her best to Our Father.

The notes drifted over us
to the *mahiolo*, the *'Ahu 'ula*
helmet and cape feathered
with honeycreeper and honeyeater.
The room, the singer, the hearers
tapu draped and crowned
with the sacred song.

**Hawaiian for bound together*

Linda Trott Dickman has been writing poetry since her first sleep-away camp experience when she was ten years old. She is a recently retired school librarian and loves God's children. She likes the turn of a phrase, the music of words, and singing the text in such a way that music and verse are one. Linda is the author of *Robes: The Art of Being Covered* and *The Air That I Breathe*. She is the current Bard's Laureate 2017-2019 for the Bard's Initiative and serves on its board. She is the coordinator of poetry for the Northport Arts Coalition (Northport, NY).

Susan Grathwohl Dingle

Big Sister in the Promised Land

Bring me your broken stuff. I will hand out slick prayers and wristbands.

I drive into a tree at 90 mph and walk away. I am made of steel

densely packed as any molecule on the surface of Mars.

People look at me like I'm crazy. I hand out leaflets on how to be grateful.

I took the laundry down to the washer, set it on fire, then called 911.

It is embarrassing when dinner guests ask what happened to the tablecloth.

I know you didn't mean it. It was all my fault I did not see the silver lining.

You are always so positive, like when the wind blew the roof off the house and you say

now we can see the stars. I said in a hurricane there are no stars.

Now I am sorry

I stole your dream and instead you got diabetes. You were so hooked on

sugar, you kept an extra refrigerator in the living room,
you couldn't throw anything away, two of us patched together with
bleeding prayers.

At last I tell the truth and it will set you free, but it is too broken to
make any sense.

When the language betrayed us, this is how I cry, this is what it
looks like

after 40 years in the desert when you see the promised land.

Susan Grathwohl Dingle, a graduate of the Program for Writers at the University of Illinois at Chicago, has won a first place in a Performance Poets Association competition, and has been published widely. She is the co-founder of Poetry Street, a therapist in private practice, and a student at New Brunswick Theological Seminary.

Jack Donahue

The First Drop of Rain

The first drop of rain on my arm
reminds me of his touch,
the special needs man on a leash,
tethered to the ticking clock,
a record of the time he has to live
a difficult life.

Think how easy *your* life is now
with no one to care for, not even an animal,
the hollow places of the heart
so easily repaired with airtight plugs.

Then the second drop falls, the third, the fourth,
signifying a change in the weather:
eye-piercing wind, wet with dust,
cannot see
what logs lie in the road ahead,
torrents, floods, rescue teams
drown in sorrow.

There is no one left to save on the island,
evacuated, each given their last dying kiss,
an invisible vapor
rising above
what's left on earth.

Numerous short stories and poems written by Jack Donahue have been or are soon to be published in journals such as: Local Gems Press *Beat-itude*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Laldy* (Scotland), *Prole* (U.K.), *Poetry Salzburg Review* (Austria), *Armarolla* (Cypress). He is married and resides on the North Fork of Long Island.

John Donley

Just Wandering

I've heard it sometimes wondered
What became during the storm
Of that bit of irish turf
Erosion had waterborne

Raging of the soothing surf
Bloody breakered it apart
Greenest grass that ever was
Withered as its palate parched

As drifting on the surface
In both wind and tide exposed
Searing sun and salty sea
Sorely scarred its celtic soul

Stringy roots once steeped in peat
Dangled just beneath the air
Drowning as they swallowed tears
Longing life before held dear

They watched the piecemeal sinking
Of the loam they used to love
As it silted down below
With them dying bare above

Circling round an eastern skirt
Ebbing then with moonlight west
Faring so with ghosts of eire
Haunting who once drew its breath

The sweetest earth when was born
Best forget that is no more
Sea pieces of the bottom
Not there waiting on the shore

Castaway up on a beach
Waking to a foreign bed
Fingers digging for a grip
And a taste of daily bread

Warming of a yellow sun
Feasting free from swilled saline
Drawing up a well of life
Drinking deep and growing green

John Donley lives in Amissville, Virginia with his wife, Regina, and grandson, Tyler. Having retired from laying brick and stone, he attempts to use words, in much the same way, to construct verse that can stand on its own. He has been published in *NoVA Bards 2017, 2018*; and *The Poet's Domain Volume 32*.

William Doeski

The Last Blue Pigeon

The last blue pigeon has died,
leaving a hole in the sky.
Once the air darkened with bruise,
stifled by wingbeat. Now the cries

of filthy children suffocate
the distance from here to the sea.
You want to pose on the shore
with blue pigeons circling above—

their song a solo high note
that carries a friendly threat.
You want to rake the guano
from rocks above the tideline

and sell it to perfumeries
advertising in *Vogue* and *Elle*.
Blue pigeons were big business
in our childhood when the rivers

stank of acid and dyes from mills
churning out cottons and woolens
we wore to school, church and dinner
with our parents' creepy friends.

The last specimen died of lust
naked air couldn't fulfill.
It fell from the sky like a bomb
and exploded in depths of science

the intellect hadn't yet plumbed.
The hole in the sky looks large enough
to stick our heads through to see
daylight stars brimming with pride.

Maybe if you stood on my shoulders
you could reach that hole and look
into both the past and future
where the latest colors evolve.

William Doeski has published three critical studies and several collections of poetry. His poetry, essays, reviews, and fiction have appeared in various journals. He has taught writing and literature at Emerson, Goddard, Boston University, and Keene State College. His new poetry collection is *A Black River, A Dark Fall*.

Peter V. Dugan

The Shadows Of Suburbia

This is a montage of snapshots, two dimensional images lacking depth, pop stars, and politicians, athletes and entertainers, false gods and goddesses framed in the chalk silhouette of a fifty-inch television set held in place by weight and gravity. It is a stream of consciousness that blurs the line between art and entertainment, echoing the etchings and scribbled graffiti scrawled on the building's walls. "We're playing God" is painted in black and white, red and blue, sometimes colored green or covered with an aura without substance. Reality complete with choreography and script. This is about a wide-eyed blank stare planted on the American Dream weaned and preened, bigger, better, faster, stronger, with its wrinkle-free, smooth skin injected and perfected by Botox, stream-lined and fat-free. It is a poem that ends in an ellipsis, a self-perpetuating pantoum of circular logic and lifestyle lacking any punctuation, but packed with a collection of love and memories, an enduring struggle, clinging to life, with its roots twisted around a slab of granite. This is a comedy, tragedy, and drama rolled into one, a patch-work of shade, shadow and sun, angst and ambiguity, raw, flawed and unpolished. The game that cannot be named is being played, eking out existence one day at a time. It is the story of a mutant middle-class, black, white, yellow and brown, blue-collar

workers mixed with the white-collar crowd. A culture spawned in a Petri-dish, the descendants of the first urban refugees to homestead the Promised Land and subsequently programmed with chronic attention deficit disorder to forget the squalor and suffering. It's all a reflexive response, a ritual of existence, pestilence, and death, the stripped shells, carcasses of Lincolns and Caddies at the corner of 5th Ave and 51st St. This is a pebble making a splash in the puddle of mankind, the ripples become waves crashing on a beach. Human overflow in a mass exodus from eddies, pools, alcoves, niches and side streets, past factories and apartments, buildings and junkyards, flooding front lawns and backyards, spilling over picket fences and rows of hedges, reaching the heights of spires and steeples of churches and synagogues. The towering tombstones, giant mausoleums cast shadows under the glow of the night light, a big, juicy slice of orange, swirling, twirling, spiraling around and anchored in the clouds hanging over the skyline. It is the eternal moment of paradise, cut short by the haunting wails of a saxophone down in the dark, as paw-prints dance across the carpet and a cloud of pigeons begins to flap and flutter. While soccer moms and little league dads drive home in s.u.v.s and min-vans. They cling to the belief of their own invincibility and immortality. This is the stain of original sin on their souls, condemned to dangle between heaven and earth, blinded by the reflection and refraction of halogen streetlights on a cul-de-sac off of Main Street. It is no longer about pointing fingers or throwing stones. It's about seeing things the way they are . . .

and writing poems.

Peter V. Dugan, Nassau County Poet Laureate (2017-19), has published six collections of poetry and has been published in numerous anthologies and magazines both online and in print. He co-edited and formatted the *Writing Outside The Lines* and co-edited *LI Sounds 2015* poetry anthologies. Mr. Dugan has received Honorable Mention from the American Academy of Poetry, awarded the LI Bards Poet Mentor Award by the Bards Initiative, and had two poems nominated for the Pushcart Poetry Prize.

Eduardo Duran

Variations of a Theme

I wish you could hear
the music when you're around
the rhythm provided by
the beating of my heart
like a classic jazz riff
ever changing
it thunders like
a heavy metal song
when we argue
as smooth as
a love ballad
when we make up
there's always a
rock and roll beat
when you're here
and looking
at your face
I realize
you hear it
or at least
a variation
of the theme

Eduardo Duran began writing poetry in seventh grade. He has a poem published in *BEAT-itude: The National Beat Poetry Festival 10 Year Anthology*. Due to some of his poems' brevity and directness, he has earned the sobriquet Dr. Succinct.

John Dutton

God's Cathedral

God's Cathedral was not made by man's hand,
It was made by the wind, the sea, the sand, and the soil.
There is no time table or tools required to build this house of worship,
The only item required to raise this holy house is time.
Time's toolbox cannot be contained!
Thunder, lightning, wind, rain, surf, sand, snow, and hail --
Tools that toil the earth constantly crafting its beauty.
No one who worships here wears their Sunday best or waits for the
Sabbath.
No offering is collected --
The only tribute paid is the sweat running down one's back
and the solace one finds in contemplation after challenging oneself to
venture outside.
The choir consists of waves breaking upon the shore.
The creatures chirp and chatter the sermon endlessly.
The breeze rejuvenates the congregation
who, when ready, rise to continue onward deeper into the forest.

*Written on 7-20-18 at Thunder Hole, Acadia National Park,
Maine, as I watched the kids rock climbing*

John Dutton has nineteen years' experience as a teacher; he's currently teaching middle school language arts at Beville Middle School in Prince William County, Virginia. He is the founder and host of Spilled Ink, an open mic for writers, poets, and scribblers, at Jirani's Coffeehouse in Manassas, Virginia. More information on Spilled Ink, please see his website, www.SpilledInkVA.com

Alex Edwards-Bourdrez

In The Eye

To learn how to love,
look no further than in the eye—

Really look: you'll see

vulnerability quivering
on the tear duct ledge;

fear—or desire—floating
in gleams where the light of life
transforms the world beyond;

tiny vessels that carry threads
of pain—or weariness—
across the fragile globe;

intricate—infinite—possibilities
laced through the iris wreath
around the dark pupil well—

Look harder: you'll see

invitations in the pristine lake

that fills the lonely crater;

mirrors reflecting
mountains—and clouds—glacial
or fleeting, like your own formations;

even the air that bathes
the strong invisible membrane
protecting this precious creation;

nothing unchanging,
all in silent motion seeking
its meaning in your contemplation.

Currently working with people with developmental disabilities, Alex Edwards-Bourdrez has had careers as a teacher of French literature and a public relations executive. His poetry has won prizes in Long Island competitions, and he has been published in *Bards Annual*, *Performance Poets Association Literary Review*, and *Long Island Sounds*.

Barbara Ehrentreu

A Walk Down The Path of My Memories

I walked today upon the often trod path
it's wooden slats once so comforting to me
in a time when my world had turned on its end
and I was searching for an answer to the pain
The vista surrounding me—a comfort for
my aching soul

I remembered standing near the railing
looking down at the scene below in the water
of the comings and goings of the sea birds
for whom this was home
and I was an interloper along with the
massive buildings and boats clogging
their access to the shoreline

The memory of one particular day before
I lost him and before I had lost hope of
ever seeing him in his old self
when I wandered onto the connecting
boardwalk with tears ready to be shed
and gazed into the depths of blue gray water
below me — hoping for a way to get through
the misery and praying for an answer that
would make him whole again

No answer came and I didn't know it then,
but the bubble of the dream we had together
was soon to pop and its pieces would scatter
as the ashes must have done when the Coast Guard
placed them into the depths of that bay in New Jersey
on a chilly October day when they handed me the flag
under which they had buried him and a framed map
of the place of the ash's burial

But today was warm and sunny as spring finally
peeked out from under its winter blanket
and I was able to walk the path twice
re-exploring the newly lain brick near the
restaurants where happy strangers
took advantage of this first day of fine weather
And I was thankful that though it is almost four years
that he is gone, my legs are stronger and my heart
has been patched enough to enjoy the day and
not succumb to sorrow as I passed the place
on that path where benches lined the small inlet
where I used to watch the egret as you did
your *New York Times* puzzle
content to rest as we enjoyed the last moments
of peace — though I was ignorant that they were.

Barbara Ehrentreu grew up in the United States in Brooklyn and Queens and currently lives in Stamford, CT. She has a Masters Degree in Reading and Writing K-12 from Manhattanville College. Ms Ehrentreu has published two YA novels: *If I Could Be Like Jennifer Taylor* and *After*, a poetry book, *You'll Probably Forget Me: Living With and Without Hal*, and her poems are published in several anthologies online including *Our Poetry Archive*. Her short screenplay, "The Kiss" has won awards at Action on Film and Indiegathering; she has a blog, Barbara's Meanderings, hosts a radio show, Red River Radio Tales from the Pages monthly, and she belongs to Greenwich Pen Letters and SCBWI.

Karl Elder

The Unclimbing

The living
dwelling
but a rung
or few
down
the ladder,
why deny
loss up top
stalks, too,
a rock dove
circling our
backyard
clearing

(flutter
and stop,
flutter
and stop,
its rush
of wings
on hinges
of rust
haunt
like an
oil-starved

wheel
on a cart)

as if trapped
in an aviary
over the spot,
that oval
of pulled
feathers
ashes
of its mate—
grackles
still
squawking,
flocking,
hastening
away,
awhile,
the hawk.

Karl Elder is Lakeland University's Fessler Professor of Creative Writing and Poet in Residence. Among his honors are 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.

Joanne Esposito

Choices

Is what we are doing right?
She questioned me
Eyes full of pain
Emotional and physical

I look back to my crossroad
For a moment I was stunned
My own Breast still “under construction”
From the perplexing choice I made
Do I live without my breast
An emptiness
Two large gaping holes come to mind

I am a woman
Loving, caring, nurturing
I am sensual, sexy
Cancer won't rob me!
Am I empowered or Am I vain?
I WANT my Breast

My answer is mine
Your answer is yours
We are united in a battle that makes us one.

*She knew she could do anything because her strength came
from Him. Phillipian's 4:13*

Joanne Esposito is a breast cancer survivor writing about her journey through treatment and the awesome healing power of God's love. Join her as she explores how this illness and reconstruction affects her mind, body, and soul, as well as her relationship with the world around her.

Sasha Ettinger

Written by Myself

I was born in the midst of hurricane winds,
winds wrapped in a winter that had only begun.

I was born to a beginning that hid in the forest
of crackling branches and bare limbs.

I grappled poems of chance, electric words
that pricked twilight with pebbles of pain.

I was born with my eyes closed yet knew secrets
worn like skins of loneliness,
buried in the walls of memory.

I dreamed darkness in a now that is not quite now,
vacant night, silent witness to clouds that roamed,
clutched sky's paraffin cloth.

I was born innocent in the farthest reaches of stars,
stars that melted into oceans, into spirits of prayer.

I am your sister and your brother, your mother
and your father in this carnival of mirrors.

I summoned angels before I could kneel,
before I could crawl into the cacophony of life.

Sasha Ettinger, former Special Education teacher, founding member of The Three Poets, Advisory Board member of Nassau County Poet Laureate Society, member of the Poets Circle. She is an award winning poet with many publishing credits, among them, *Oberon*, honorable mention, East Coast 1st place winner *Persimmontree Journal*, *Avocet*, *Bards Annual*, *Long Island Sounds*, *Paumanok Interwoven*. She will publish her manuscript of Zuihitsu poems shortly.

Yvona Fast

First Grade Escapade

Turned upside-down,
we leave town
on a train.
New faces.
Strange places.
We float
on a boat.
Little remains.
My world upsets.
Two suitcases.
Two continents.
Two languages.
Two alphabets.
Just one parent,
Only one me...
What will be,
will be...
Lonely
first grade
escapade.

Yvona Fast's poetry chapbook, *Adirondack Blue Seasons*, was published by CWP Collective Press in 2018. An earlier chapbook, *Different*, was published by Foothills in 2017. In 2015, she brought *PoemVillage* to Saranac Lake. Her poems have appeared in *Farming Magazine*, *New England Memories*, *The Poeteer*, *Oswego Alumni Magazine* and several anthologies. The author of 4 books, a weekly food column running continuously since 2005, and over 200 magazine articles, she lives in the northern Adirondacks, where she's a member of the Adirondack Center for Writing and The Poetry Group. More at www.wordsaremyworld.com.

Melissa E. Filippelli

Tapestry

You and me
We're like a tapestry;
Made by pattern and design.

Knit by knit we are spun;
Without our consent
The beginning has begun.

Line by line we are built.
Layer by layer, piece by piece,
Color by color, thread by thread.
With each stitch we must learn
Not to hold tight, but to release.

Mistakes are made along the way
And we must be undone
In order to move forward
In the Knitter's vision.

Beginning is never the easiest.
Continuing makes us who we are.
Ending isn't always the sweetest.
Surrendering is the greatest of them all
By far.

Melissa E. Filippelli is a Long Islander, born and bred. She writes for the sheer joy of it and has always found comfort and camaraderie amongst words and their meaning. Melissa enjoys delving into both the mystery and simplicity of the human condition and how our words so often reflect the many facets of the heart.

Robert Fleming

A text went forth every minute
The first letter inserted into the text,
became part of the text.
Letters next to each other,
And on the same line,
sometimes formed a word,
And became part of the text.
When letters and numbers were insufficient,
to express what needed, to be expressed,
the texter inserted an emoji,
that became part of the text.
The texter who became the sender,
was grateful,
that they could not see, nor hear, the receiver,
but that did not become part of the text.
When the texter, clicked on send,
a lot of zeros AND ones went forth to a receiver.
And the text was happy to have gone forth,
to connect the sender and receiver,
who were happy to have texted,
Alas, to be in different places
and be SILENT.

Robert Fleming survived writing poetry for > 30 years. He lives in Arlington, Virginia, USA. He has been published in *Poet's Domain*, *NoVA Bards*, *Spoonfed*, *Radical Fairy Diary*, *The Watch*, *California Quarterly*, *Dekalb Literary Arts Journal*, *Catalyst*, and *American Poetry Anthology*. His poetry masters are William Shakespeare, Robert Frost, E.E. Cummings, Dorothy Parker, and John Berryman.

Kate Fox

Time

Is a luxury
Not afforded
To all
An unrelenting
Master
Unwilling
Unable
To bend
Time
Shows no
Mercy
To those in
Need
Time
The only
Currency
We cannot
Cash in
Time
Is a gift

Long Island poet, Kate Fox, is a mother, breast cancer survivor, and award-winning author of the collections *My Pink Ribbons*, *Hope and Liars*, *Mistruths and Perception*, and *Angels and Saints*. www.katespityparty.com

Shawna Galvin

The Quiet Smell of Rain

The quiet smell of rain
Leads me to the roots of my brain
 Oh so entwined
The years that have passed
Showing me what I have learned
While living for the moment
Not knowing what is next
The causal-nexus of my essence
 I have not lost my identity—
I will not lose me
Lost so many times before,
in the thick of the brush.
Thorns that jab me
along the way continue
to show the blossom after
the initial pain.

Shawna Galvin lives in Southern Maine with her husband and son. <https://www.shawnagalvin.com/>

M. Frances Garcia

Swapping Out

Late afternoon in February
cold day races
to completion;
bright sky offers
deep coral frenzy
in exchange for
muted darkness
surrounded by
tall, proud pines.

M. Frances Garcia, M.A., is a contemplative poet and photographer. She is inspired by nature and the healing beauty it offers.

Michael Gaspeny

Vigils

The MacMansion's attic window chills me,
above the brick wall of a gated enclave.
Below, the lord of the fort rolls cans
past shrunken shrubs to the curb,
beefy shoulders straining navy blazer.

He never looks out the window.
His wife and son do, mother in the morning,
bleary heir in the afternoon. The wife's drawn
to the wall, where fungus in the bricks
spreads like eraser streaks. She recalls
puffs of chalk dust, the chuffing wolf.
The milk-faced manchild, thirty-five, feels
the drag of failure in his bones. Shifting
meds have never fixed his drifting mind.

Years ago, I knew a guy named Bill who lived
at the picture window of his father's house,
taking meals at a card table with a rotary phone
and a coaster for his Schlitz. Bill's father condemned
his loafing and devotion to six-packs, which the angry sire
mispronounced "sex-packs," arousing Bill's cackle.
When Bill spotted a neighbor driving home, he waited,

dialed, and squealed, *This is Beel. I saw you go by.*

I have been the father admiring his gold-buttoned sleeves.

I have been the mother and son, hands gone to sleep on the sill.

The difference between Bill and us is how long we waited to call.

Michael Gaspeny is the author of the chapbooks *Re-Write Men*, which appeared from Finishing Line Press in 2017, and *Vocation* from Main Street Rag Publishing Company in 2013. He has won the Randall Jarrell Poetry Competition and O. Henry Festival Short Fiction Contest.

Dan Giancola

Curveball

On the broadcast ex-pitcher
David Cone claims
So many variables exist in the strike-zone
& one is the count

to which ex-slagger
Paul O'Neill replies
I don't get it—a ball
is a ball, a strike a strike

& so we hear Bohr
again at loggerheads with Einstein

& no physicist yet to explain
how a curveball curves

Dan Giancola teaches at Suffolk County Community College. He's the author of several poetry books, most recently *Exit Strategy* (Bullhead Books, 2018) and *Here's the Thing* (Street Press, 2016). He occasionally reviews for the East Hampton Star.

Tina Lechner Gibbons

A Better Time

Summer is a better time
for the end of a
love affair
If you are cold and
alone ~
the sun can wrap
its rays around you
and warm your soul.
But the winter, ~
It is so lonely.
The trees are bare,
the songbirds are still.
The chill runs through my bones,
and there isn't even a
falling leaf to
keep me company.

For over 50 years Tina Lechner Gibbons' mind has been swirling with poetry and prose. Having filled many a notebook with her musings on love, loss, and most especially heartbreak, she has recently felt brave enough to share her innermost thoughts and feelings with others. In addition to writing, and working at a synagogue, she is also a passionate amateur genealogist.

Shilpi Goenka

The Sand-Artist of the Ocean

How that little creature,
right at the very bottom of
the ocean depths, works tirelessly,
with the fish-eyed focus
of the blindfolded Arjuna who
shot the arrow straight into
the fish's eye target,
centuries ago in the mythology,
a skilled artisan and warrior,
the little puffer fish,
in its frenzy to attract her mate
goes circling on the sand
making exquisite shapes
with its dangling fragile fin,
other big fishes would bully her
but she would not care.
She is sort of, also, releasing
her stress and ocean-worldly sorrows
like the Zen gardening,
the true Japanese in her core...
creating hills and ridges
with a human-eyed focus,
the circle of life
reflecting ups and downs...

a Masterpiece
is born;
where she unites with her mate
right in the center of the circle.
She is the ocean-witch casting
her fiery circle of protection,
a love-spell mysterious and mystic,
a bed for the wedding night,
a sacred union no less than human divinity....

Isn't art also
about releasing stress,
and attracting
love and beauty?

*(The poem is dedicated to the unique Japanese puffer fish
found deep in oceans)*

Shilpi Goenka is an avid artist, poet, writer and spiritualist. She was published in *Bards Annual 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017*; *Suffolk County Poetry Review 2015, 2016*; *Poets Almanac 2016*; and finalist for *NaPoWriMo contest 2016*, finalist for *Nassau County Poetry Laureate Society (NCPLS) Contest 2016*, and published in *NCPLS 2017*.

Justin Goodman

Rooftop of Hell

No one in the purgatory of the mind
Deserves the purgatory of the mind:
Hearing *farfalla* for the first time,
Bella, before dull deafness descends.
The end of humanity waits there duly.
Soft jabberwocky rasped from wings.
My body aspiring to the unbaptized
Settling in inadequate baths, stale milk
Down the gullet, wireframe weeping.
Have mercy on the misery novice
Deep settled in the sediment of hell
Without the sentiment of blossoming.
The undeserved rooftop where *farfalla*
fall upon vorpal petals of beaten flowers.
Words I know only from secret whispers.
What we most don't know, I've preserved,
Becomes the fundament of our ascension;
When last was the ascension of another?

Justin Goodman earned his B.A. in Literature from SUNY Purchase. His writing--published, among other places, in *Cleaver Magazine*, *TwoCities Review*, and *Prairie Schooner*--is accessible from justindgoodman.com. His chapbook, *The True Final Apocalypse*, is forthcoming from Local Gems.

Jessica Goody

Memory

Everything he loves about her is gone.

Her face is frozen, blank as new paper, the smooth dark curves of brow faded to whiteness, the narrow, elegant mouth rimmed with the pinpricks of dimples drags now,

the dimples no longer flickering in the curve of her cheek.

Her skin is slack now and creased with wrinkles, the joints stiff and swollen. Her long fingers are gnarled and crone-cold, her legs etched with blue veins mapping their decades together.

Every day he visits, waiting to see some spark of memory in her eyes, the knowledge of his presence, forgotten yet familiar. He holds her cold hands, scrubbing them between his own to warm them, and links their fingers, stroking her knuckles with his thumb.

Jessica Goody is the author of *Defense Mechanisms: Poems on Life, Love, and Loss* (Phosphene Publishing, 2016) and *Phoenix: Transformation Poems* (CW Books, 2019). Jessica's writing has appeared in numerous publications, including *The Wallace Stevens Journal* and *Reader's Digest*. Jessica won the 2016 *Magnets and Ladders* Poetry Prize.

Tammy Green

The Handsome Murderer

The feeder hangs in the yard
To succor the wayward.
Seeds gape from the net stocking.
It proclaims, "Food for all."
"But not the Grackle," you say,
"And not the Blue Jay."
"Mobsters," you call them, "Bullies."
They chase the smaller birds away."
Yet when the Cooper's Hawk
Fixed its sharp talons on the perch and stared,
Prepared to poach the unwary,
You let him fill his regal beak.
"He visits for a week and is gone,"
You say, "Let him carry on."

Tammy Green is an award-winning poet and playwright whose works have appeared in *Bards Annual 2018*, *Long Island Quarterly*, and *Long Islander News*. Tammy hosts a workshop at Elwood Public Library, and co-hosts Readings at Urban Coffee in Greenlawn, NY. You can find her plays at <https://newplayexchange.org>.

Annette Langlois Grunseth

Olly, Olly, Oxen Free

As Baby Boomer kids we played Robin Hood
in the trees across the street from our house
along the road to the old folks home.

We trampled those dirt paths, poked sticks in the water,
hunted frogs, exploring like Davy Crockett
in our own wild frontier.

We spent hours along Lillie Street acting out
plays we made up in the
wooden gazebo on Zirbel's Point.

We climbed the rafters to watch bats sleeping,
brushed spiders out of our hair,
screaming through the cobwebs.

On hot July afternoons
we girls braided long silk scarves together
pinned them to the back of our short summer hair,

and like National Velvet rode our bikes,
(which we said were horses,)
on paths we made in the field across the street,
hot wind blowing through the tall grass and our long, silky braids.

We rushed through dinner to run back outside for games:
“*Red Light, Green Light...hope to see a ghost tonight,*”
Kick the Can, SPUD, and Statue. As it grew dark

my mother blew her whistle three times calling us home,
we kids chased each other in the twilight,
gasping to escape the ghost as street lights flickered.

“*Olly, Olly, Oxen Free!*”

Annette Langlois Grunseth, Green Bay, WI, earned awards with Wisconsin Academy Review, Wisconsin People & Ideas, and Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets. Her poems have appeared in *Midwest Prairie Review*, *Ariel Anthology*, and *Soundings: Door County in Poetry*. Her chapbook *Becoming Trans-Parent, One Family's Journey of Gender Transition* (Finishing Line Press) was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Learn more at www.annettegrunseth.com

Atar Hadari

The Wound Dresser

Soft, late at night,
by the late star light,
you can see the wound dresser

going round the camp,
tallowy lamp in his hand
and its flame leaf yellow,

opening tent stays
with his silken paws—
the camp men say he has the softest fingers

of any nurse you'd know—
as he makes his slow
rounds, beard gold as the pissed-on snow.

He has linen bands stretched out in his hands,
cut from fringes of Dixieland
dresses of long ago

ladies' sashays round the ballroom floor—
he has the finest dress sense
of any bandager you ever saw.

Where he found dresses—out on the field since Vicksburg—
or where he finds clean tables
to cut gowns on, who in hell knows—

you seen a bench since Vicksburg
that didn't have the blood in each joint
deep inside its every piece of wood?

I haven't seen a surgeon
could find a plate to lay a saw on
or a needle to sew belly since before Bull Run.

He comes, he shows the soldiers
pictures of the stars and rivers
he tells them his songs and shivers
with them—till they cry.

He leaves sometimes at first light,
goes on to the next bedside,
the lamp in his palm near doused
by the sky so bloody with the night.

He turns sometimes at first cock
or looks as first clouds break rank
and let the dawn shower pay back
ground for all the blood put in the rain.

He turns and he sees sunrise
unfold from some soul's dead eyes

that open as the wetlands
flower underneath his empty hands,

with nothing left but flowers
in the soldier's open blank stares
as the daybreak leaves them beauty but no breath.

He turns and you see murmurs
cross his mouth like fixed battalions,
those ragged crossing lines at Vicksburg
marching toward the maize.

He turns and he walks sunrise
out to cornfields with the bedpans,
and he empties all those hours

of the night into the flowers
beside the camp with words so soft,
so soft, of what he heard them wish.

Atar Hadari's *Songs from Bialik: Selected Poems of H. N. Bialik* (Syracuse University Press) was a finalist for the American Literary Translators' Association Award and his debut collection, *Rembrandt's Bible*, was published by Indigo Dreams in 2013. His Pen Translates award winning *Lives of the Dead: Collected Poems of Hanoch Levin* is just out from Arc Publications.

Maureen Hadzick-Spisak

Listen to the Trees

Trees are budding, offering themselves to us
It is time to align our rhythms
With the rhythms of the trees
Trees slant this way and that
Some as fragile as flowers
Some with the strength of steel
Trees in faraway fields
Lean forward and begin to mutter
Each one a temple of thought
Let yourself be drawn to one
And learn its secret power
Place your palms along the trunk
Feel roughness beneath your fingers
Smell the scent of woodland
Listen as its tongue of sap rises and falls
Sit beneath your chosen tree
Feel the soft edge of peace
Don't be afraid to ask a question
Wait in silence, the answer will come
When you are ready, stand
Place your hands on the bark
Sending thanks from your heart

Maureen Hadzick-Spissak is a retired Reading and English Teacher, an award-winning poet, and author of two poetry books: *A Bite of the Big Apple* and *Yesterday I Was Young*. Her poem have appeared in over fifty anthologies. She is a member of the Farmingdale Creative Writing and Poetry Groups, Bards Initiative, and the Smithtown Poetry Group. She enjoys sharing her poetry at local venues.

Nick Hale

Voices to Come

Who are we to judge
past voices history
without halos
reaches forward
grasping time
to justify itself with
voices to come
sing songs of themselves
to empty halls
find God in everything
fill books with
empty faces

the priest and the astronomer
debate exchange objections
many as the leaves on
autumn air
strike them down in
a book of miracles
but this is no miracle
this cloth we return
dashed upon their rocky shore
to voices singing perfect
miracles voices

which come
reach back through time
for inspiration
justified in their own
existence who were they
to judge our voice
or we to judge
voices to come

Nick Hale is the founder and leader of NoVA Bards and the Northern Virginia Poetry Group. He is a member of the Poetry Society of Virginia and a co-founder and current vice president of the Bards Initiative, a Long Island based poetry nonprofit. Nick is a publisher, editor, and author with Local Gems Press and has worked on several anthologies including the best-selling *Sounds of Solace*. In addition to writing, editing, and performing poetry, Nick enjoys teaching poetry and has given several seminars, panels, and workshops on various poetic topics. Along with James P. Wagner, Nick co-authored *Japanese Poetry Forms: A Poet's Guide*. He is the author of *Broken Reflections* and three upcoming chapbooks.

Heidi C. Hallett

Taawa (Native American, Hopi) = Sun

Living from October
Wood, hide, adobe walls
Respecting different gods
Harboring similar hopes.

Content eyes until
The unknown of foreign ways slips.
Certainty comes
Igniting ancient eyes.

Experience blends and
Eyes start to see
Why snow falls.
But a fierce fire
Burning with potential
Still smolders.

Winter came quickly
And lasted long,
But heat with time
Gradually melts snow and ice.
If not to summer,
At least to a spring.

Heidi C. Hallett sees creative expression through poetry as a way to collaborate and converse with others. She finds that poetry enables us to examine and appreciate life, and she enjoys working with the imagery in poems to explore an idea. Heidi is a small animal veterinarian who paints with oils as well as words, often using these two mediums to complement each other. To find out more, please visit www.aquaartideas.com.

Bob Koshin Hanson

Man, I feel comfortable today...

It's quiet in here,
For now, can't hear the heavy doors close
As people are let in and not out.

Know where I am?
In a prison, in a place where the
Buddha's come and just sit.
That's right, no bull shit, just Dharma,
Just the teachings, and sitting.

For a moment it's quiet now,
I wonder sometimes
How can one be comfortable,
in a place where you are
brought in for unskillful means?
Listening to your breath, quiet,
finding yourself, and letting go.

Are you comfortable wherever you are?
Think about a cell now, not this one, here behind bars,
but the cell we all live in,
at least it feels that way some time.
What does it mean to let go and be free in the cell?
Not free from the cell but in it?

Freedom oh yes, freedom

Bob Koshin Hanson, retired, writer and poet, influenced by the Beats and the Summer Writing Program at Naropa University, grandfather of twelve and a resister!

Leigh Harrison

Walt Speaks

I have slept too long, oh you hordes of men
I have let dreamless rooms overtake me too long,
 oh you modern city-dwellers
I have wished for the companionship of your rugged hands
 and our clumsy vernacular, for the dull ache of Death to
 slip away,
 for us to be born again into a kind of new truth

Come, let us stride out into the present, let us let our hope
 take flight on this American soil
Let us strike out into the unknown of the Twentieth Century
 of this vast throbbing city
Let us once again trod into the teeming schools where
 children fling their yearning minds into tomorrow

The doors of the school district beckon, I see the mayor
 of New York badger the state for school funding
The doors of 65 Court Street call to me, I will cast myself
 once again
 into the lurching bureaucracy of the Board of Education
The doors of the classroom that once suckled our visionary
 hearts loom large, piles of textbooks lie sprawled atop
 dirty desks, amid chewing-gum-strewn chairs

But lo!, they are castigating me in their textbooks!
They are condemning me for my homosexuality!
They are spitting on my allusions, my masculine rhymes,
 my hearty tropes, my inimitable style!
They deride my "barbaric yawp!"
They scowl at my many young men, whose flesh I have adored,
 they are making venomous comments behind my back!
They are remembering that even Emerson came to me with
warnings, saying, "Walt, you've got to temper your work a bit!"

They laugh at my constant repetitions, my lines echoing
 ad infinitum (do they claim, perhaps, ad nauseum?) the joys
 I have known

They smirk at my mentions of bodily functions, the freedom
 of my voice to speak of lust and flesh and copulating
I see them point their bony fingers at my daring prose, I hear
 them bellowing: "traitor!"

I hear the cry of the principals in the morning: "philistine!"
I hear the yelling of the teachers in the afternoon: "sodomite!"
I hear the screams of the PTA in the evening: "iconoclast!"
I hear the bullets of the students' Uzis careen past trees in
 the school playground—they zing and whistle: "pacifist!"

I would go out on the road, but the grave has rotted my boots
I would spend myself in exuberant couplets, but the willows
 that weep upon the highways know that isn't my style
I would learn the ways of the hypocrite, but the endless journey
 of the sun speaks to me of moonlight's endless changes
I would try to obtain a new teacher's license, but they swear I
 cannot even be offered a substitute position with my record

Back into the musty grave, whispers my soul
Back into the tired earth, insists my body
Back into the cobweb realms of sleep, suggest the minions
of Time
Back into the memory of those who understand those naked
passions, argue the ghosts of history
Back into the breathing body of Poetry, directs the finger
of Criticism
Back into the churning gut of Language, answers Eternity

But, comrades – I offer my words to your eyes!
I offer my songs to your prayers!
I offer my language to your questing soul, my poems to
ease your naked pain, my honesty to dance with yours!

Do not weep for my seeming unemployment –
The schools will rot in the gristle of their own stupefaction,
yet my words will ever find their mark like arrows in the tunnel
of Time,
Men, women, all who love unashamedly will embrace in
my name,
Visionaries, dreamers, kick-ass schoolboys, punk babes
will hear my words and know my spirit,
My ghost will inhabit the body of Language for all Eternity!

Leigh Harrison: poet, short story writer, book reviewer, songwriter. Creator of the Pentina poetry form; her poems have appeared worldwide in translation. Books: *Tour de Farce*, *Our Harps Upon the Willows*, and *Finding Sermons in Stones*. Music CDs: *Eclectic Chanteuse*, *Oh, Wow!* and *BlueBird At My Window*.
www.leighharrison.com

Colin Haskins

Lubec A Love Poem

Take off that
Fog dress
Show me your
Lupines on wild
Sunny fields
Kiss me with
Goose tongue greens
Touch me with
Snowshoe Hares
Open to me
Your scallop shell
I kneel and
Taste Atlantic salt
Your kelpy curves
Slowly unhurried
Inwards buried
Between your rocks
Your majestic cliffs
With seals laid out
Also in love with you
Fairest and fiercest
Gracious and trying
Highest in tidal grace

Beloved bejeweled

Be always

My chosen

For Maine

Colin Haskins is a writer, poet, published author of 7 books. Colin is Co-Owner & Founder, National Beat Poetry Foundation, Inc. He has spent 30+ years creating venues for artists, locally, nationally, and worldwide. He lives in Litchfield, CT with his two dogs, a cat, and a rooster.

George Held

On a Lock of Hair

(Walt Whitman Centennial Exhibition)

Browsing the holographs & letters
Stopping to peruse parts of them
Reading the neatly typed Public Library cards
Accompanying the displays in the glass-covered cases,
Admiring the bound books, the dark green
Binding the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*,
Studying the photographs of the poet
Growing from young dandy to young old man
To the white-bearded sage of Mickle Street,
I come upon the lock of hair he sent
In his “73d year” to H. Buxton Forman
“Folded into a sheet of the poet’s yellow writing pad
And accompanied by a second sheet autographed four times”:
“Walt Whitman / Oct. 29, ’91--America.”

And I think, “So this is how that famous head
Of hair looked: grey and white strands intermixed
In ringlets like this one, about four or five inches
In circumference and two or three in diameter
And soft as the hairs of a milkweed seed.”

No pious Christian ever prayed to touch a saint’s digit
More than I desired to touch this holy relic

(Remembering, “Who touches this, touches a man”)
The oldest human hair I’ve ever seen
My baby locks from ’38 closer in age to Walt’s
Than my sparse hairs today, 101 years later,
As I try to catch him who waits for me.

A ten-time Pushcart nominee, George Held publishes poems, stories, book reviews, and translations in various journals across the US. He divides his time between NYC and Sag Harbor. “On a Lock of Hair” is included in Held’s chapbook *The Art of Writing and Others*.

Gladys Henderson

Holding Anchor

In that black, a thousand bad dreams, deep soprano sounds of the tide slapping the cheeks of the skiff, a foghorn savior just out of reach calling, *Be-Lieve, Be-Lieve*, summoning us to step out of the light's safety, make our way through the inlet without moon or stars, find our way home in total blindness, follow like disciples with only sound to guide our way.

My brother the Captain, who wears his tightened chin and teeth like a life preserver moves to the wheel as though the wood itself had memory of the harbor, knew what he did not know.

What does a younger sister understand who venerates even the wool shirt he wears in full summer; does she ask if he knows the way, has he taken the coordinates to find home? His twelve years senior allows none of that, I await his commands, make another pot of coffee, hope someone hears the gurgling of our engines in neutral.

Anchored off, we swing in arc, fuel enough for now, running lights hold us in the falsehood of artificial day. A full delicious shine bathing the fish that splash their soon to be lost lives in our buckets, and we have sandwiches of ham and cheese, lots of cold beer, wine.

We are somewhere off Eaton's Neck, fog and night having come quickly; the excitement of fishing for fluke almost willing to jump into our boat intoxicating, and we are without chart of cove or home, adrift like children whose parents might someday recognize their talents, march them around town as the gifted ones who know everything, but for now we are not,

and as always, my brother and I float the obscure darkness like the old familiar nightmare she is, anchored down until someone finds us, sees our strobe lights through the encircling black-fog, or hears the diesels drinking away our fuel, the snap of beer tabs opening, our noisy ship to shore staticing news from sailors not lost at sea, but for us, we sit and wait for dawn or rescue, my earrings flashing in the spotlights, their vigilant veneer soothing the long night's passage back to home.

Gladys Henderson's poems are widely published and have been featured on PBS Channel 21 in their production, *Shoreline Sonata*. She was named Walt Whitman Birthplace Poet of the Year in 2010, and was chosen as the Poet Laureate of Suffolk County 2017-2019. Finishing Line Press published her chapbook, *Eclipse of Heaven* in 2009.

William Heyen

The Beat Generation

I'm in the middle of reading *Jack's Book*, about Kerouac & all that
dissolute crowd,

Neal Cassady & William Burroughs & Neal Cassady & Allen Ginsberg
& Neal Cassady,

& it started out pretty good but now is just the same kinds of travel
& triplicate sex

& everybody's generally down & out wherever they are, who cares,
nobody's got

a real job, the maryjane is smoking their brains out, some writing *is*
getting written,

I'm starting to skim pages of on-the-road exhaustion & tertiary
characters
sliding into & back & forth ...

to Joan Burroughs in New Orleans getting up at maybe 4 a.m.
in confused moonlight

where there's, & I quote, "this dead, ghastly tree, covered with lizards,"
so she'd get up

to rake them because she needed something to do, the lizards got
back up into that tree,

they'd be there for her next time, it doesn't matter what kinds of lizards
inhabited that tree

that partly blocked haunted moonlight that partly got through to her,
& to all of them....

*Coda: A game of William Tell at a party in Mexico City. Apparently
Joan balanced*

*a champagne glass on her head & ordered Bill to fire. He did. A lizard
exited her head.*

William Heyen, who was first Poet-in-Residence at the Whitman Birthplace, has won Guggenheim, Fulbright, American Academy of Arts & Letters, NEA, Pushcart, and other awards; he has been a National Book Award Finalist. He is the author of more than thirty books, and the editor of *September 11, 2001: American Writers Respond*. Raised on Long Island, he now lives in Brockport, NY. His book *Yawp: Heyen's Whitman* will be published in the spring of 2019. wheyen@rochester.rr.com

Eric Machan Howd

Beard

He lets it grow, curling around dimples and smirks and the places where his father slapped regret into his cheeks. Whorls of silver strands gleaming in the few days of sunlight left before the cold and dark. To be healthy it must be fed regularly; almonds, avocado, carrots, pumpkin seed, spinach, broccoli, and salmon keep it strong, while various oils and balms save the skin beneath and coax new growth. Sleep makes for strong roots. Hair is dead. He hides behind it, covers scars and pox left by shingles and a father who roofed too much. The mouth is grown over. He parts his lips, strokes aside grey fly-aways and blond wisps with thumb and index and makes way for fork, cup and spoon. How difficult eating becomes. A bowl, for instance, must be held outstretched from chin to avoid dipping, it demands attention with soup and cereal, and faith in the steady hand. Pope Honourable III, to disguise his disfigured lip, let his grow, and Saint Peter's was dedicated to the name of Lutheran churches. Leo the III was the first shaved Pope. He avoids plastics and statics, the electric charge that kills what is already dead. Thomas Edison used beard hair when searching for the strongest filament for his bulb. Someone's hair brightened the room then burnt out. Combs of wood and horn smooth growth, a natural progression. Soon his lips will disappear. His beard will cover his heart and reach for ground and grave. He is already invisible to some, seen and not heard. Doors are not held for him. He grows it because he doesn't want to be seen

while speaking, because he wants to forget his bugler lips, rusty embouchure, what connects him to his father's strict rhythm. Small seeds of protein gather in little pockets below the surface, form roots that steep in blood vessels. Hair breaks the skin, passes glands that soften and shine, and by the time it emerges the hair is dead. By the time it reaches his knees he will be alone and sing to the many shipwrecks sunk in it and speak to the dead that rise from its darkness at soul's midnight. The story of hair growing after death is a myth, it is the skin that retracts from the follicle that gives the illusion of growth. He finds Saint Peter's beard is now a fabric pattern, Warhol repetitions of his holiness, dead but in-stock across the world. Friends ask if he grows it for religious purposes. He answers *somewhat*.

Eric Machan Howd (Ithaca, NY) is a professor of professional and technical writing at Ithaca College. His poems have been seen in *Nimrod*, *River City*, *Yankee Magazine*, and many other journals and magazines. He is currently an MFA in Creative Writing candidate at the Vermont College of Fine Arts.

Kristie Howerter

Church

Quiet, cloudy, pastel ceiling
Dusty road and wind
That makes the grass and my hair travel
Let us worship God.

Office bricks and windows
5th Avenue walls,
Electric ads and taxi cabs.
Smoky, crowded air,
Let us worship God.

Subsided fears and nightmares ending.
Every hope that was answered,
And every smile that snuck up on us,
Let us worship God,
Amen.

Mark Hudson

Stuck in a Suburban Bubble

I'm stuck in a suburban bubble,
I guess it keeps me out of trouble.
In the suburbs, I have nowhere to go,
like Jim Carey on the Truman Show.
I live near Chicago, the third biggest city,
I sit in my apartment and feel pity.
Every time I leave my humble abode,
I step back onto the road.
My bed a magnet, summoning me back,
an adventurous spirit is what I lack.
I live the secret life of Walter Mitty,
but I'm too lazy to go in the city.
Besides, they carry guns and knives,
these are the worst days of our lives.

B: It could be worse

Of course, if I lived in a one-horse town,
I'd stick out like Bozo the Clown.
I'd have a big adventure to Wal-Mart,
just to get one box of pop-tarts.
The greeter would greet me with surprise,
"Wow! You are a sight for sore eyes!
we haven't seen a human being before,

what on earth brings you to the store?”
I’d say, “I’m a city boy, I downsized,
so why are you acting so surprised?
In the city, the rent was expensive,
so sorry if I’m on the defensive!
The only thing in this town I’ve seen so far,
is Wal-mart, a gas station, and a bar!
Where does one go to have some fun here?
Is there a wet and wild water park near?”
The greeter looked at me with suspicion,
as if I believed in superstition.
“You’re not from these parts, are you stranger?
I’m going to report you to the forest ranger!”
I thought the man was cold-hearted as an icicle,
so I left the town on my getaway bicycle.

3: Relocating

So the rural life will not suffice,
even if things are a lower price.
New York is more costly than the Midwest,
and the buildings have cockroaches that infest.
And you can go hang out in Manhattan,
and people will yell like General Patton.
Voices coming out from head to mouth,
so you decide to take a trip to the south.
You think you’ll join the Confederate,
and you smoke a Virginia Slims cigarette.
You drink Southern Comfort by the OK Corral,
and wear cowboy hats to boost morale.

You try your hand as a country-western singer,
but you just end up being a gun-slinger.
So the post office puts up a wanted poster,
you see it and become a big boaster.
“That’s me on the wall! I’ve got fame!”
But you don’t get caught, they got the wrong name.

4: Outro

So back in the mid-west, you go back to hiding,
isolating, there’s no battles you are fighting.
California has fires and earthquakes,
where I live, I got the lake.
I heard that last weekend, three kids drowned,
unfortunately, their bodies were found.
That’s what my friend Barb told me,
then she said someone got killed by a tree.
A California fireman was fighting a fire,
and a tree toppled over as he perspired.
The tree crushed him to death, a tale of woe,
you never know in what way you might go.
I don’t want to die like the rest of the sheep,
I want to die peacefully in my sleep.
Of course, I might choke on my own phlegm, snoring,
as long as my outgoing dreams aren’t boring.
But chances are, my final dreams will be nightmares,
and they’ll probably be about this—I am here.

Mark Hudson is a frequent writer who appears in Local Gems books. He is particularly excited to be in an anthology about Walt Whitman, a pioneer voice in early American poetry. His poetry can be found online at Illinoispoets.org

Cheryl Huneke

Haunting cries of yesterday...

I woke last night in the stillness of the dark, and thought I heard
your faint but distinctive cry
coming from the other room.

I sat up in bed and listened for the cry to come again, but only
silence filled my ears and I remembered.

And as I listened even harder for a cry I knew would
NEVER come,

tears fell from my cheeks and wet my pillow with painful
memories of the past.

How will I ever be able to let go of the baby I loved and lost?

Will all of the memories of that horrible night that he (my son)
died EVER fade in my mind?

Not knowing the answers, I lie back once again, close my eyes
and TRY to sleep a peaceful sleep,

until the next time

I am awakened by the memories of my son.

Cheryl Huneke was born, raised, married and continues to live on Long Island with her husband, Artie. She shares her life with her children, their spouses, and her grandchildren who all live nearby. She enjoys reading, writing poetry and short stories, along with drawing, painting, photography, music, sewing, and designing quilts. She is inspired by friends, family and nature.

R.J. Huneke

Coffee Eyes

The caffeine and sugar can't get me back
Eyes burn, char, ash piles up to the sky
When such burning
Burnout
When such burning takes place
The lids become heavier than
Two suffocating pillows
Drifting
 O
 f
 f
The page
Consciousness
Awake
Or
Asleep
Or
Something else
Dead and heavy and ashen
Just don't burn the damn coffee.

R.J. Huneke (rjhuneke.com) continues to master his art endeavoring in new fiction, photography, film, comic books, non-fiction, poetry, and drawing. He has had poems published in numerous literary magazines and books, including Ed Stever's *Unleashing Satellites*, *Suffolk County Poetry Review*, and *Bards Annual*.

Athena Iliou

Theme of Emotions

Impromptu acting scenes
Powerful of expressing
Theme of emotions
Is no longer serving us
Sharing light within
Storyteller of narrator
Expressing herself, our selves
Verbally...spoken words of strength

Hand prompting where on
Her body, she is feeling
Emotions of
Uncertainty...pockets
Various forms of feelings
Connects unique emotions

Teacher repetitively expressing
Her feelings of emotions within
Modules steps

Pressure of head, In our
Mind of storing thoughts
Travels directly to our bodies

Absorbing memories

Connecting soul...souls within

My inner self...our inner selves

Receiving powerful energy

Brings balance, light

Be observing

Sending myself, ourselves a

Reminder note within our

Higher energy souls

We are strong women

Maria Iliou

Faith

Conquering

New things

Representing

Formalities of changes

Sensory overload

Time to process and

Reminder to breathe

Through accordance

Challenges of life

New directions

Designing an original

Achieving and accomplishing

Your goals...plans in steps

Visualize in

Corner of your mind

Be intuitive

Faith store within

Your soul

will shine light

Repetitively or
Redirecting

Sensing the
Angels sitting upon
Your shoulder

Whispering perfect wording
Echoes in your ears
Wings opening
Embraces you in a hug

Observing

Vicki Iorio

The First Time I Saw a Live-Oak

After men landed on the moon, my father's job took us to Florida. Our backseat air conditioning was a scotch plaid cooler filled with ice. My sister and I each put a leg in the cooler, hers long and slender, mine short and stubby. My father drove with his left hand out of the window, his right hand held a creased map with a red line from Long Island to Cape Canaveral.

The first time I saw a Live-Oak was in Georgia. The Spanish moss hanging from the limbs was witch hair. Hansel and Gretel were tangled in the miasma. My sister didn't see the Live-Oaks, but the chain gangs in prison stripes picking up garbage along the highway. Sixteen, hot in the backseat, she leaned out of the car, her lacy rib tickler waving like a flag. My mother pushed her down and rolled up the windows.

When we arrived at the Florida border, the toll takers gave us free cups of fresh squeezed orange juice. Ron Jon billboards followed us along the coast to our new home. In the park across the street from my house, rotting wooden signs designating water fountains for coloreds and whites were hidden under Spanish moss. The water in the fountains was warm and rusty for all. August, I started sixth grade. The Live-Oak outside my school languished like a southern belle. My friends back home were still on summer vacation. Even though I

made new friends, I missed them and the hint of cool weather after Labor Day. I never understood how being in the heat of Florida had anything to do with the cool skin of the moon.

Vicki Iorio is the author of *Poems from the Dirty Couch*, Local Gems Press and the chapbooks *Send Me a Letter*, dancinggirlpress and *Something Fishy*, Finishing Line Press. Her poetry has appeared in numerous print and online journals including *The Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Rattle*, *poets respond on line*, and *The Fem Lit Magazine*.

Tony Iovino

His Island

My Island is millions of people,
Houses shoulder to shoulder,
Built so close a passing sparrow must fly sideways,
The roar of gardeners' mowers and blowers
Drowned out only by engines on the roads
And in the skies.

My Island calls an acre of cultivated plantings a wood
And the squirrel and raccoon exotic wildlife.
My Island has millions of voices,
Too often loud, too often angry,
A cacophony, a dervish of movement,
Except on choked roadways.

But at night at the beach,
I sit
Alone
Beyond the parking lot's lights
And the tide's reach
And I can see his Island.

The last gull that glides a final lap on the evening breeze, and
The waves, that roll and reach up the sand

They know not the decade,
And the first star that pierces the blackening sky,
Started its journey long before man walked these sands upright.

Here, in this moment, however briefly,
Alone with the sand and the sea and the sky,
My Island is Walt's Island.

Tony Iovino is the author of the novel *Notary Public Enemy* (Diversion Press, 2011), a murder mystery set on Long Island. He is the founder and host of the Summer Gazebo Readings, an acclaimed outdoor series featuring readings by distinguished poets and authors each Monday in June, July & August in Oceanside, NY.

Larry Jaffe

The Secrets of Trees

I am told that trees
do not keep secrets well
I beg to differ as trees
have always been my best friends
they have kept my confidences
close to their limbs

Trees have a righteous outlook on life
as they stand so majestic
mighty and strong
and they tend to exude calm
you can trust trees
and look up to them

Trees appear to be filled with solitude
but that is simply an illusion
to those that cannot hear them
Trees happen to be rather gregarious
if one were to simply listen
to their almost silent murmurings
with their fellow trees.

Trees listen with a hearing so acute
that it is no wonder that some folks

take exception to their role in life
many run by them scared
that their own secrets
will be revealed
falling to prying eyes or ears

But as I said
trees keep secrets perfectly well
they retain what we tell them
and never question your authority
or sit in judgment of your beliefs

Personally
I prefer trees to most people

Larry Jaffe was the poet-in-residence at the Autry Museum of Western Heritage, a featured poet in Chrysler's Spirit in the Words poetry program, co-founder of Poets for Peace (now Poets without Borders), and was awarded the Saint Hill Art Festival's Lifetime of Creativity Award, first time given to a poet.

Alyssa Jewell

The Grand

All the shouting in that river is just St. Francis in the belfry
blessing

the Church into restoration--some modest miracle bending

unto the wings of the blackbird that plunges its aggression
and protection and fear

into the hair and scalp of each passerby. I hold out my hand.

I spread my good will up and out toward its black tear body
like Whitman admiring the rebirth of the leaves. I am dim
among the trees.

I move by the churning inside me, move by the mallards
and geese pecking

at silt and around cardboard, the plastic yellow tape and all
the parades

of the city street shredded, drifted, and settled into the current
and rocks

after the crowds have gone home. In this weathered loneliness

is the cause of my sorrows. Every morning, from the blue bridge,
I shed layers of friends whom I call beloved, cast them down
like a spell

that I might grow iron and sunflowers in my bones, stand straight
and bolted to the concrete to join the susurrus in coronas of
green and gold.

(first published in *Colorado Review*)

Alyssa Jewell is a recent graduate of Western Michigan University and coordinates the Poets in Print reading series for the Kalamazoo Book Arts Center. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Best New Poets 2016*, *Colorado Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Lake Effect*, *North American Review*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Quarterly West*, and *Sugar House Review*, among other publications. She lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan where she teaches college level ESL and poetry courses.

Catherine Katey Johnson

Spring/Sprung

Sometime when
you watch those seeds fly
loose from their branches
high
and fall
whirling
like helicopter blades
and land
on fresh green lawn
ask me how old my son was
the last time I watched him toss
one in the air
and smile as he watched it fall—
was he high when he did that?

Then ask me how many beats
my heart will
tick off
til he
gets out
of prison.

Others have sons with degrees of degrees
and some have good marriages—the best

of families.

Ask me to explain my pride
when he calls me and tells me he's about through
writing it all down
in his first book
he dared to remember
and to feel it all.

*Published in *New Plains Review, The Woman, Volume 3, Number 1*, University of Central Oklahoma, 1997 and Printed in Korea, *Sung in Printing America, Inc.*

Catherine Katey Johnson is a published author, a Woody Guthrie Poet and Beat Poet whose works are included in films, books, anthologies, literary journals, and chapbooks. She has earned degrees from Rose State and the University of Central Oklahoma. *Fifty Shades of Gray Hair, a tangled collection*, is her latest book.

Richard Johnson

Canyon Tryst

holy holy
heart truly
benediction art
sing eulogy
leave or never leave
devil in the day
angel in the night
windswept dust
current water
sculpting rock
our of time

Richard 'Eric' Johnson is a graduate of Indiana University and holds a B.A. in Germanic Languages and an M.S. in Education. Eric has four published volumes of poetry: *Of Museums, Monsoons and Mausoleums* (1998), *Schemes Of Consciousness* (2003), *Memoir Poetic of a Naked Cop* (2013), and *Watching Angels Dance By Candlelight* (2019). Eric served in Viet Nam and West Berlin with the U.S. Army before beginning a career in law enforcement as a road patrol officer in Indianapolis, Indiana. After retiring from the Marion County Sheriff's Department and traveling overseas with his wife for her career, Eric and his wife moved to Arlington, Virginia where they happily reside.

Debra Johnston

Oh, Gentle Traveler

As you make your way,
know my love is with you.
Be strong across broad water.
Journey the length of the great river.
Find me in the glow of each sunrise.
Feel my strength in the tall pine and
my tender kiss in buttercup and hyacinth.
May clear crisp winds surround you,
shelter you always.

Deb Johnston is a retired educator and writer living in central Wisconsin. When she is not writing she enjoys family campouts, visiting lighthouses, and encouraging young writers. She has been published in Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets calendar and various chapbooks.

Ryan Jones

Silent Gray Winter Winds

It sweeps away any illusion of warmth
Freezing the flesh, bone deep
It is a silent assailant striking fast
Uncommon for its kind
Dealing its blows under long overcast skies

The skies, embalmed in gray that ever reaches
Hiding the winter sun
Dully warning of what is not long to come
Rushing forth icy wind
The master lashing you with a whip of frost

The endless gray above leeches all colors
The environs fade out
Even the most vibrant hues blend into gray
Camouflaged in bleakness
Still visible yet difficult to notice

Thus would the bare husks of trees be overlooked
Gray as their barked trunks are
If not for their branches wavering about
Under the frozen sway
The quiet wind soundlessly shaking them down

So too are the evergreens in such motion
They appear here and there

Interspersed with their naked cohabitants
No longer evergreen
But subsumed into a mass of ever-gray.

All is without sound, and vision is hampered
Sharp gusts dry out the eyes
Resulting tears blur glimpses of endless gray
Wind speeds numb the senses
Unneeded in surroundings awash with gray

When the horizon swallows the hidden sun
All gray becomes all black
No sign of the wicked wind is seen or heard
Yet stinging skin reminds
It dominates all outdoors, awash with black

Revelation after night has passed on through
Winter's promise is here
Skeletal tree branches are no more astir
Proof that the mute wind passed
Its task complete, leaving all awash with white

Ryan began writing at an early age and believes it to be the best way to express one's thoughts and ideas. Ryan's topics of interest include nature, human and natural history, mythology, and personal and collective experience, all of which are influential to his writings. Ryan holds a bachelor's degree in English with a master's degree in childhood education, and works with children by profession.

David Jumonville

Canadian Geese

Canadian geese, a-glow,
Fly in formation,
Low into the setting sun,
Between the French Provincial rooftops,
As Snowy Egrets,
Inked pink by the time of day,
Sink silently into the twilight shadows
Hunting the shallows,
For frogs,
At your pond's misty edge.

David Jumonville is an alumni of the National Writing Project associated with Southeastern Louisiana University. He currently lives in Costa Rica with his husband, Ricky, having decided that the climate in South Louisiana was too cold for him.

Nancy Keating

The Problem With Gratitude

Not to get all Debbie Downer on this, but the problem with gratitude is that it's such a should, meaning my life is so great I don't get off complaining about anything at all. Oh, I know I should be grateful for being married to a mensch, despite the fact that he's deeply eccentric – as in, he wears a fakey yacht-captain cap while capsizing his catboat because, guess what, he's a bad sailor, which he'd be the first to tell you. So he calls 9-1-1 and the entire South Shore bay patrol, and a couple of village cops and Good Samaritans come to save him. Hello. The bay is mostly three feet deep. Did he tell everyone he's married to me? Of course he did.

At least now and then we get an invitation to something where I can wear a cocktail dress. I'm grateful for that. So, gratitude. I guess deep down I'm shallow. Thinking about fashion when refugees are spilling out of rafts. I can't think about that. Where's God in all that? What can I do? I watch the news and boom, I'm complicit. I'd march, but there are never enough bathrooms. See how ungrateful I am, always saying "but" instead of "and." Bring on the self-flagellating guilt. Something I'm really good at. Not sure if this is a gift I should be grateful for.

You don't really want to go around being grateful--
it's kind of Facebooky, kind of braggy, like that parable
where the Pharisee thanks God he's so successful and generous
while right there next to him, the bar owner begs the Lord
over and over to forgive him and the point of this story,
as Jesus asks us rhetorically, is who does God like better,
Mister Smug or Mister Humble? I think we know.
My takeaway? Flaunt your gratitude and God may smite you.

Nancy Keating's poetry has been published in several anthologies and literary magazines including *New Letters*, "Poetry Daily," *Southwest Review*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *The Southampton Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Potomac Review*, *Crab Creek Review*, and others. A two-time Pushcart Prize nominee, she is pursuing an MFA at Stony Brook University.

Diane Kendig

Request To Walt Whitman While I'm Trapped On The Subway

*And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are more
to me and more to my meditations than you might suppose.*

--Walt Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"

Dear Walt Whitman, tonight--

for reasons the driver has given up shouting
indecipherably over a public address system
programmed with tympanum-splitting static--

While the D train avoids its usual ferry across

"the gladness of the river and the bright flow"
to stay an hour now in the wrong tunnels
with no air conditioning nor operable window

And while the men and women in this generation thence

stand, the oldest angry at the empty seat
foisted upon him by the merely older man,
the largest man fidgeting hyperkinetically,

And while "everyone disintegrated yet part of the scheme"

sits pouring sweat over the *Times* they've given up on,
poring over subway maps that circle, confirming
they could conceivably never cross the river:

Could you please not fathom us quite so deeply?

Diane Kendig's recent collections include her poetry *Prison Terms* and the anthology she co-edited, *In the Company of Russell Atkins*. A recipient of Ohio Arts Council Fellowships in Poetry and other awards, she has published poetry and prose in journals such as *J Journal*, *Under the Sun*, and *Wordgathering*. Her website is dianekendig.com

Alexis Kennedy

Spark

There's a fire.

A fire that's inside of me.

A fire that you can see in my eyes.

A fire that shows strength and passion.

A fire that is big and bright and beautiful.

Then life rained on me.

My fire was slowing down.

My fire kept getting weaker.

My fire eventually went out.

I couldn't find a spark to re-light my fire.

There was no spark to follow.

There was no spark to be seen.

There was no spark to save me.

But I noticed something about the rain.

The rain made me realize the windows were dirty.

The rain washed those windows.

The rain created a new vision for me to see.

But I couldn't see much.

I saw that my fire was out.

But I saw other fires that were dull too.
And I saw that I was not the only one stuck in the darkness.

I needed to do something.
I wanted to feel the heat radiating from my fire again.
I wanted to watch others build their fires and succeed.
I wanted my fire to spread.

And that's how I found my purpose.
I learned that with the help of others, I could re-light my fire.
It wasn't something I could do on my own, but that's nothing to
be ashamed of.

I can start a fire that lights the way for others, that maybe starts
someone else's fire,
that maybe helps someone see the light.

It took a little rain to show me how bright my fire could be.
I may only be a spark, but I will fight to help light everyone's fire.
And I will continue to provide light in the darkness that others
may feel stuck in.

Alexis Kennedy is a youth advocate giving young people facing mental health struggles a voice. She is the Author of *This is What it Feels Like*. She enjoys taking photos and making art, you can follow her on Instagram at @bruises.to.butterflies

Daniel B. Kerr

Are We Still in Good Hands?

Growing up in the 1960s,
I watched a lot of TV with My Family.
Ed Sullivan introduced us to the Beatles,
and Walter Cronkite brought the Viet Nam war into our
living room.

There was Bonanza, and the Wonderful World of Disney,
but it was the colorful characters from the commercials that
connected Star Trek to the Two-Light Zone.

No matter how chaotic the world became,
We were always “In Good Hands with Allstate.”

As the world turned,
whatever happened to all these angels of commerce?
Did the Lucky Charms Leprechaun,
retire to the Valley of the Jolly Green Giant?
Did Josephine the Plummer,
ever run into the Tidy Bowl Man?
Did the children singing Bum, Bum, Bumble Bee Tuna,
ever hang out with the kids that wished they were an Oscar
Mayer Weiner?
Did Ricardo Montalban ever give the Frito Bandito a ride in
his Cordoba;
did he describe the beauty of Corinthian leather during the ride?
Did Aunt Jemima ever hook up with Uncle Ben;

did they settle down on Colonel Sander's plantation?
Did Mister Clean ever come out of the closet,
did he discover that Ajax laundry detergent was stronger
than dirt?
Did El Exigente ever have lunch with Juan Valdez,
did the whole town celebrate their meeting?
Did the Coca Cola choir singing on the mountain in perfect
harmony,
ever invite GI Joe or the folks that ate the cereal shot from guns
to join them?
Did Charlie the Tuna ever meet Morris the Cat;
what did they talk about?
Is the Alka-Seltzer talking stomach,
still arguing with the guy that ate the pepperoni pizza?

The World has changed quite a bit since the 1960s,
The Marlboro Man died of lung cancer long ago.
As I flip back in forth between MSNBC and Fox for my news,
it seems both sides may need a Nice Hawaiian Punch.
Baby Boomers can argue with Millennials,
over who has better advertisement characters.
The Geico Lizard, the Aflac Duck, and Flo may all be good
insurance salesman;
but I still rather "be in good hands with Allstate" than ride
around with some guy named Mayhem.

Daniel Basil Kerr, CPA, Ph.D. is a cross-cultural consultant focused on helping people and organizations work across borders; his work has been recognized by the UN (Doing Business in a Multicultural World) and the Steinhardt School of Education at NYU (2009 Business Education Alumni of Year). He teaches accounting at Stony Brook University, St. Joseph's College, and Suffolk County Community College.

Sarah Key

Fairy Rings

uprose from secret circles
petaled round my feet in full
camouflage or bold-feathered
as a peacock sports its eyespots
peer through their disguises

know these decomposers
bursting bright as suns
upon the forest floor where
nothing was the night before
while I slept I never dreamt

how fungible colors can be
flashy as fishes in a coral reef
were I working like an ant
would I shelter under velvet
of the many fungi moons.

Sarah Key has written eight cookbooks, essays on the *Huffington Post*, and numerous poems in journals such as *The Georgia Review*, *Calyx*, *Poet Lore*, and *Tuesday; An Art Project* as well as several anthologies including *Nasty Women Poets*. Having studied poetry at the Frost Place, Cave Canem, and the Unterberg Poetry Center, her favorite teachers are her students at a community college in the South Bronx.

Debbie Tosun Kilday

The Forest

The forest is many things

Sun filtering through
a canopy of green
creating ambiance and warmth

Fronds of ferns
curling tightly into balls
as dewdrops lay upon them

But as nightfall descends
shadows aren't always what they seem

Trees stay silent
Songbirds sing softly
as they fall into slumber

Frogs chirp in unison
as fog creeps in
providing cover from predators

An owl silently descends
A unsuspecting meadow vole
Becomes sustenance for its young

Deer stroll to the river bank
quenching their thirst

A skunk's perfumed plume
keeps others at bay
while it digs the soil for grubs

For some it is their home
For others a meditation
A contemplative peaceful place

The forest sometimes beautiful
Sometimes brutal and ominous

I wish for the forest to continue
Undisturbed by those
who destroy its peace and its purpose

Debbie Tosun Kilday is an award-winning writer, published author, nature photographer, artist & illustrator. She is Co-Owner & Co-Founder, National Beat Poetry Foundation, Inc., Past President and Special Events Director of (CAPA) Connecticut Authors & Publishers Association. Debbie is owner of Kilday Krafts. She lives in Wolcott, CT in an old farmhouse her grandfather built.

Lois Kipnis

Library's Closing

library's closing the ceiling announced
to hell with time the poets denounced
we'll not heed your time the poets decreed
adjusted the mic, proceeded to read

of time sublime erotic exotic
exquisite idyllic rhapsodic
of time eternal, themes universal
mystical mythical whimsical

ten minutes 'til closing the ceiling announced
to hell with time the poets denounced
time is eternity, that's our creed
An oral breed -- they proceeded to read

poems iambic trochaic spondaic
dactylic heroic epodic
satirical lyrical metrical
allegorical metaphorical

five minutes 'til closing the ceiling announced
to hell with time the poets denounced
we will not concede the poets agreed
in free verse and rhyme proceeded to read

of things chivalrous synchronous scandalous
preposterous pentamorous amorous
of time present, past, time everlasting
challenging the ceiling whose time was passing

three minutes 'til closing the ceiling announced
to hell with time the poets denounced
one after another they defied time
with haiku limericks couplets and rhymes

they read dramatically emphatically
melodiously mellifluously
of gathering rosebuds, seizing the day
of a time to be born to die to pray

one minute to closing the ceiling announced
as a poetess to the podium flounced
noticed the custodian jangle keys
increased her speed but continued to read

library's closing the ceiling announced
library's closed the custodian pronounced
he scanned the room like a cop on the beat
refrained from bouncing them out to the street

warned them, *tempus fugit, one more poem*
hightail through that exit door, hie thee home
it's a good thing you read poems not prose
he winked at them as the doors shut close.

Lois Kipnis is a creative arts consultant with forty years of experience as a drama teacher and arts administrator. Her publications include *Without a Script: A Caregiver's Journey*; *Together We Can Improvise*; and a one-act play "Things Can Always Be Worse!" Her stories and award-winning poems are included in anthologies and magazines. www.loiskipnis.com

Charlene Knadle

Podded Peas

Yes, they all had families,
heritage through genes and
customary acts, traditions
different from each other's.
Yet, as a teacher, she knew
they shared unrecognized
traditions, too, for
she herself was part, for them,
of the sap that ran through
silent limbs in their “human
family” tree. We are all one,
some say, but she, a soldier
of their learning, knew we are
all *won* and they, for her, were
hers to win for common culture,
human values, future breakthroughs
in knowledge and accomplishment
and, mostly, decent character. No
child of hers would be a criminal
in the future; no child of hers
would ever be inhumane. She had
them now, a scant school year,
but that would be enough.

Charlene Knadle holds Bachelors, Masters, & Doctoral degrees, Founder of the Dix Hills Writers Group, member of WWBA & other groups, she is active in LIPC's weekly workshop. Her prose & poetry have appeared in national & local sources.

J.T. Knoll

At the end

At one point the whole entryway
was a loud, intoxicating mix of conversation,
cologne, perfume, reefer and beer.
Suits, white shirts and neckties
to beer shirts, cutoffs and flip-flops.
Bankers, roofers, plumbers, teachers,
carpenters, secretaries, bikers, janitors, and nurses
(most all of them inked)
came teary-eyed or full of false bravado
to hug and hear in his eulogy about how
Duke never met a stranger
and once got Tiffany out of jail
so she could be with her kids on Christmas.
At the end, I helped carry flowers and plants
to his daughter's truck, roll his casket
back behind the partition,
and gather up the visitor sign-in book.
Some of the signatures were cursive, some printed.
Several signed one name only: Braxton, Ike, Chapi,
Jeremiah, Mad Dog, Digger. One just a squiggly line
that drifted lazily over half the page
before angling sharply to the bottom corner
like a dove shot out of the blue Kansas sky.

J.T. Knoll is the author of *Where The Pavement Ends* and co-author of *Ghost Sign*, a 2017 Kansas Notable Book. He lives on Euclid's curve in Pittsburg, Kansas with his wife, Linda, and dog, Arlo the Labradorian.

Alan Koban

Poetry In Motion

In Chinese and Japanese
prostitution is
referred to as

“selling spring,” (売春),
a phrase I
first encountered

at a whore house
in Indonesia.

Waiting at the bar
for my mate to
do his business

an elderly
Chinese-Indonesian
came over and
explained the

expression of
his mother tongue,
adding,

“It’s true,
For every time
I come here
I feel like
I’m sixteen years old again,

the springtime of life.
Now, isn’t it an apt phrase?”

Indeed.

The Japanese phrases
for the results
of buying spring
are equally poetic.

Syphilis
is known as
“plum poison,” (梅毒),

and gonorrhea
is accurately labeled
“the lonely sickness,” (淋病).

I could go
on and on
with more

examples of
charming felicity

of expression,
but we don't
have all morning
to discuss poetry,

or do we.

Alan Koban was born and raised in Memphis, worked various jobs while away for 20 years including cannery work, fruit picking, waiting tables, farm work, selling paintings door-to-door, English teaching and translating; now baking and selling bread at farmer's markets around town. He has been writing for a long time and has had a few poems published.

Laurie Kolp

Survivor's Guilt Cento

As I walk these broad majestic days
wandering at morn
in paths untrodden,
I sing the body electric
a song of the rolling earth,
of the terrible doubt of appearances
that shadow my likeness,
my legacy.
Here the frailest leaves of me,
leaves of grass,
of the visages of things
unfold from the folds—
flag of stars, thick-sprinkled bunting
bathed in war's perfume
ashes of soldiers,
the bravest soldiers
by the roadside
roots and leaves, themselves alone
as I walk these broad majestic days
as a strong bird on pinions free.

Laurie Kolp's poems have recently appeared in *Southern Poetry Anthology VIII: Texas, Stirring, Whale Road Review, concis, Up the Staircase*, and more. Her poetry books include the full-length *Upon the Blue Couch* and chapbook *Hello, It's Your Mother*. An avid runner and lover of nature, Laurie lives in Southeast Texas with her husband, three children, and two dogs.

Carissa Kopf

Breathtaking

I look into your eyes
You take my face in your hands
Your body on mine warms me inside

Our embrace has captured a magical moment
But it's the invitation you give, by parting your lips
That sends me into eternal bliss

My tongue slides on yours, you explore mine
Our kiss becomes stronger
My breathing deepens

Clothes in a trail
From the living room
To the bedroom floor

Fingers dance on each other's skin
In, around, between and under
Lingering on the most sensitive spots

My name escapes from the back of your throat
I answer with moans of pleasure
Creating a perfect harmony

Thrusts of passion
Turn to slow rocking
Our bodies moving perfectly together

We lay in each other's arms
You graze my neck with gentle kisses
I trace your spine with my fingertips

I want to savor this intimate sensation
For this is more breathtaking
Than you'll ever know

Carissa Kopf is an inspiring poet who has published a number of her poems along with a romance novella called *Time For Me*. Carissa enjoys writing at coffee shops, beaches, parks, and or right on her patio where she loves to garden.

Leonard Kress

Whitmania

I wanted to celebrate Whitman's birth
by walking across the bridge named after him,
stopping by his two-story row house
on Mickle Street in Camden, New Jersey, a stone's
throw from the Delaware River, where a band of kids
gathered, gazing and pointing, poking at some body

floating face-down in the water. It was not Whitman's body,
of course, who died a century earlier, but the berth
it made in the wharf, that enthralled the kids,
who tossed sticks and flowers, chanted an improvised hymn
based on nursery rhymes and church, then got stoned
and left. I loitered back to Whitman's house,

its only visitor besides the guide who doubled as house-
keeper, who showed me the metal tub he soaked his body
in, too small to contain it, filled to the brim now with stones
saved for renovation. And a few sentimental things from birth
or soon after—christening gown, spoon, family hymnal—
quaint beside bearded portraits and folios bound in kid

skin. I once tried to teach Whitman to middle school kids,
substitute teacher, they wouldn't get the *why's* or *how's*

of his greatness. Why name all those things after him—
high school, hospital, hotel, wildlife habitat? His body's
buried nearby, and he's had favorable rebirths.

I'm sure we've passed, *city of orgies, walks, and joys*,
cobblestones

unremoved. His mausoleum with its imported stone
seems less garish now than then, but he wasn't kidding
about his own magnitude and the secure berth
he'd hold in the pantheon. His Mickle Street house
is a reliquary for his bloated, abscessed, tubercular body
pageant. Pensive and I silent I proclaim my love for him,

my unashamed, possessive, acquisitive thralldom of him,
till I get halfway across the bridge, as I fling stones
from the grave into the river. Ways to lighten the body,
I'm always seeking, like a mother dropping a kid
from her womb, how this creates an ever-expanding house
of poetry, the only thing that can sustain continuous birth.

Leonard Kress published poetry and fiction in *Missouri Review*, *Iowa Review*, *American Poetry Review*, *Harvard Review*. Recent collections: *The Orpheus Complex*, and *Walk Like Bo Diddley*. *Living in the Candy Store and Other Poems* and his translation of the Polish Romantic epic, *Pan Tadeusz* by Adam Mickiewicz published in 2018.

Michael Kriesel

Leaves of Grass Lipogram

Vale of legs.

Ass galore.

Eagles fall.

Frogs roar.

Love levels all

false selves.

Leaves fall.

Grass soars.

“Leaves of Grass Lipogram” first appeared in *North American Review* Fall 2017

Winner of *North American Review*'s Hearst Prize and past President of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets, Michael Kriesel is the poetry editor of *Rosebud* magazine. Pebblebrook Press published in his full-length collection *Zen Amen: abecedarians* in 2019. His work appears in the 2017 anthology *New Poetry from the Midwest*.

Mindy Kronenberg

Paper

Once, a luxury
Papyrus rolled into epic tales
And stored in ancient libraries,
Alexandria's shelves breathing against time
And tension of the human heart,
The world's voices gasping as they go up in smoke.

Pressed from clay and pulp, reams of white
Paper sit in my cupboard, slip quietly
Through the clenched teeth of my printer
And slide out humming a lyrical utterance,
Perfect ideographs of primitive urges,
Ziggurats piously squatting across my floor.

Mindy Kronenberg is a widely published poet, writer, and professor at SUNY Empire State College. She edits *Book/Mark Quarterly Review* and *Oberon* poetry magazine, is the author of *Dismantling the Playground* (Birnam Wood), *Miller Place: A History* (Arcadia Press), and the chapbook *Open* (Claire Songbirds), and has contributed work to the international Ekphrasis Project by Artist Joost de Jonge.

Chris L.

To be a bird

Funny how easy birds fly...
Spread their wings jump to the sky...
Hawks soar and glide spirited on the wind...
shriek their call so the mortals below can look up in envy...
Free to roam tied to no one.

But birds are fragile...
One wrong move
one bad choice
the damage is done...
Never has there been a happy bird
now bound to ground like the mortals he once shrieked at below.

Oh but to be a bird...

Chris L. is a native of Baldwin, NY. He is an avid bird watcher, an antiques collector and boat connoisseur. Currently he works for a construction corporation and he resides with his loving wife in Suffolk County. He hopes sharing his poetry will allow others to grow and learn about themselves and he hopes it will inevitably encourage others to write.

Paula J. Lambert

Blood Feather

Old enough, wise, Feather lets go. Young and broken, he bleeds.
What's in between is hollow channel, filling need: we breathe,

we grow, we flounder, we fly. We are fed what we need. And
when we're not, who suffers most but Sky? The greatest wound

is often the same as the greatest gift. But not always. There are
times a wound just bleeds, its own gaping. Loss on loss.

When a broken blood feather calls, hold spirit in your hands.
Don't let go. Don't even breathe till you've come to know this:

breath is bird is sky is hand is wound is love is you is me is bird.
We are all gaping, all wound. We are all channel, filling need.

We are all Feather, whole and healed. We are all wise enough
to know when to hold on, tightly, and when, at last, to let go.

Paula J. Lambert author of four poetry collections, has received Individual Artist grants from both the Ohio Arts Council and the Greater Columbus Arts Council. She has twice been a fellow of the Virginia Center for Creative Arts. The focus of her work in her two most recent collections has been the anatomy of birds; she is deeply interested in the intersection of poetry and science.

Billy Lamont

self interview/self portrait
[a postmodern dada]

For R.S. Pearson

self interview-
the problem of suffering
<—pascal talk some sense into me
—>franz kafka is stalking me
—>baudelaire mind is thinking me
<—need to wash my mind with The Holy Bible
<—and then dry it with r.s. pearson's philosophy

I woke up dreaming of Christian reformation
senses reeling with andre breton's *surrealism manifesto*
went drinking with martin luther and bono
discussed theology in the corner pub
pints of ale and irish whiskey
clashing with The Holy Bible in my soul
like holy rock and roll—
we shared belly laughs
and prayers for the common man

I stepped outside into the cool fall air
alone
lit a miniature cigar from santo domingo

and took a slow drag
soul of sky was masked by a nuclear cloud
did someone cut me?

 didn't realize I was slowly bleeding
did you warn me?
 sorry I wasn't listening

~stoic survival~

like a wound with a new stitch
like a nervous twitch
I've been living on the border of an unfulfilled wish
the local town's church bell rings out
faithfully, as it always does
every hour
The Spirit is the same
but the times sure have changed

mirror perspective
a photograph
I am an outsider amongst outsiders
a rebel amongst rebels
never could find the outside of society for me
in this subculture of conformity
<—The Holy Bible is the message guiding me
<—kierkegaard's writing like a lamp illuminating me
<—escher's lines keep redefining me
<—Lord have mercy

self portrait– ^
GOD is... I am...
GOD is... I am...
GOD is my dada JESUS is the wonderful I AM

I think you like picasso, all perspectives at once
[bet this is how GOD sees it]

feel you passionately like van gogh
[I know this is GOD's holy passion]

love and kiss her like klimpt's "the kiss"
[know GOD's desire for us through this]

I see JESUS THE CHRIST's cross like dali
[awakens me to GOD's higher view; JESUS's amazing power,
infinite love and humility]

have I expressed this like jackson pollack's paint drippings?
[oh to be a unique splash of color in God's expressionistic
masterpiece!]

I AM
IAM
JESUS IS the magnificent I AM!

Billy Lamont is a multimedia poetry performer who has performed on national television a number of times, including MTV and Joe Franklin Show, toured and performed with rock festivals such as Lollapalooza, and appeared on major radio stations across the US. He has three books of poetry and eight poetry with music CD/digital download releases. His latest book of poetry *Words Ripped From A Soul Still Bleeding* is available at Barnes & Noble and Amazon as a paperback or as an eBook. Lamont currently lives in Suffolk County and gives Poetry Workshops for elementary, middle, and high school students through BOCES.

Jim Landwehr

Quiet One

He was a man of few words
whereas most people just blurted forth
words tossed around in his head
like a brain salad of consonants and vowels
waiting for a chance to form themselves
into bold, assertive sentences of wisdom
but never quite finding the right
time, opportunity or audience.

To him the unspoken thought
was as natural as
putting on pants or making coffee
only with considerably less effort.
Plus, he thought there were enough words
being spoken in the world
without adding his to the glut
bringing the value of all of them down
and there's some truth to that.

Because of this affliction
or character defect, or gift
depending on how you look at it
people assumed that when he spoke
his words were filled with wisdom.

They weren't.
He was just releasing word pressure
from his salad spinner because it hurt
and even a man of few words
has opinions now and then.

Jim Landwehr has five books: *Dirty Shirt*, *The Portland House*, *Written Life*, *Reciting From Memory*, and *On a Road*. He has been published in multiple journals, anthologies, and magazines. Jim is the poet laureate for the Village of Wales, Wisconsin.

David K. Leff

Season of Scents

Fresh cut grass, grilling backyard
steaks, the sweetness of soil
rising to the nostrils as rain begins to fall,
summer is the season of smells.

Moist floral hay-scent in a waist-high
meadow, smoldering campfire aromas
and the stink of trash and roadkill
hang like mist in thick humidity.

Seaside salt-air, fried fair dough,
tomatoes plucked from the vine,
and the pungency of hard-worked sweat
are memories inhaled with each breath.

Summer always returns by the nose,
and braided with time embeds itself
in muscle and soul, deepens remembrance,
brings childhood closer the longer we live.

David K. Leff is an essayist, Pushcart Prize nominated poet and former deputy commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. He is the author of six nonfiction books, three volumes of poetry, and two novels in verse. In 2016-2017, the National Park Service appointed him poet-in-residence for the New England National Scenic Trail (NET). David's journals, correspondence, and other papers are archived at the University of Massachusetts Libraries in Amherst. His work is available at www.davidkleff.com

Tonia Leon

In Walt's Town Some Years Later

Song of Myself
I sing of myself
 and Myself
 and Myself
 and Myself
and Me

Tonia Leon is a bilingual poet and translator who has published poetry and prose in English and Spanish in journals, anthologies, and newspapers here and abroad. Her chapbooks are *My Beloved Chaos* (2013) and *Slow-Cooked Poetry/Poesía a fuego lento* (2017). She has presented her poetry at festivals, fairs, and readings in NYC, Long Island, and Mexico. She currently teaches Latin American Studies and bilingual education at CUNY.

Yevgeniy Levitskiy

Five Horses

A scene from a screen,
I return to watch the beginning
and the end collide in
what must seem like wish
fulfillment to the nameless
participant, namely me.

The content continues
without lapse in judgment or taste,
but at any particular moment
it can end and most likely
you'll be satisfied.

Perpetual malaise soon settles in,
like a bird building a nest and
using your thoughts for twigs
and your fears as leaves of grass.

The pleasure doesn't last, but the
beauty of the moment, of the act,
stays with you and keeps you company.

In trying to capture perfection, there is
no now and no then, only here.

And here is where we stand.

Yevgeniy Levitskiy has a B.A. and M.A. in English Education from Brooklyn College. He has been published in *The Books They Gave Me* (Simon & Schuster), *Spillway*, *Bare Fiction*, *So It Goes: The Literary Journal of the Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library*, *Storm Cycle 2012: The Best of Kind of a Hurricane Press*, *The Rusty Nail*, *Unwrapped: The BareBack Anthology*, *Found Patrick: An Anthology*, *Retail Woes: Poetry From Both Sides of the Counter*, *Pavor Nocturnus: Dark Fiction Anthology (Volume II)*, and elsewhere.

Steve Levy

Where Elephants Hide

Just outside Brooklyn
On a nameless stretch of road
I remember traveling with my mother as a boy
And she mentioning to me
How here, the wild grass grows ten feet high
So each trip we took outside the auburn city
I was torn between looking up high at the towers of the sky-scape
Or with searching the grass for elephants
To look where I was born
Or where I belong
And even though I've never seen one
I saw the grass moving on a windless day

Steve Levy works as an Earth Science Teacher by day, and as an amateur wrestler with his 5 year-old son Dylan by night. On the long commutes to the city on the Long Island Rail Road, much of his time is spent grading papers, napping, or if the stars align, with writing. He is currently working on several first novels, and a collection of poetry. He has been published in several Bards anthologies, and various other local collections. As always, he would not be able to do what he does without the love and support of his wife, Kelly.

Joel Lipman

While Talking To Walt

Anything will do. The self
and superimposition of the world,
old poems or observation, deep
water and genderless agitation,
my own loveliness.

As for the State, the State
is generally shit. My recommendation:
avoid the State, its crap and cruelty,
each asshole's bombast and blast –
just get out of the way.

But I'm self-aware, selecting words
politically, articulating "negro," "terrorism,"
"Supreme Court decision," "Guantanamo,"
"mass destruction," "morning after."
My keyboard's bugged and blinking.
My typer's keys tingle with bone chips and DNA
scraped from dirt and flesh.

My Congress, what Constitution – bastards and shreds.
My wife's strong braid unwinding.
A long drink of water from the dust of this subdivision.
Your mama's butt,

your mama's hairy, wrinkled old double chin,
her eyelids and teeth, the stink
of your mama's funky feet as she stares at the street.
The poop and splash of comedy and death.

This day in 2018, its crash of blood and brick.
This day one-hundred years ago and its crash of brick.
My family photographed.
Each child's eyelids photographed, my mama's sigh
and each sigh's aftermath.

Redact: Bush, Ladin, Pootin, NATO, Ngo,
Slobodon, Amin, Stroesz, Dondon,
cho min mihn basha lupica, sklee
martiq, torris orque – all that's
meaningless and toxic, remnant
as carbons lift and ash trees drop.

Tinkerbelles and the biochemistry of slaughter
each morning when excesses of poetry
and insufficiencies of language make me rigid and weak.

Mistakes of meaning, missing limbs, lousy acronyms
that slip from the tongue – begones and hellos.
The harsh naturalness and raw desire
as I open the paper to the day's obits
specks of dust flutter in the light
just above the page.
If in a chair, you are in a chair.

Once seven of us debated
around a kitchen table in discursive nothingness
whether knowledge is power or bliss ignorance.
Statistics rushed over the newscast
and I turned away to talk to Walt.

Appointed the first Lucas County Poet Laureate (2008-2014) by the County Commissioners, University of Toledo Emeritus Professor of English Joel Lipman co-founded the Toledo Poets Center and is a five-time recipient of Ohio Arts Council Individual Artist Fellowships. Examples of his work can be found at poetryfoundation.org. He splits residency between Toledo (Ohio) and Belfast (Maine).

Mary Lux

Transmuting a Text

*Consider the lilies of the field, how they
neither toil nor spin, yet our Heavenly Creator takes
care of them.*

Or why not the Bindweed,
a more hardworking cousin,
its graceful green tendrils threading their way
through the asphalt's cracks
along the methadone clinic's parking lot,
its morning-glory blossoms triumphant
in the 9:00am sun?
White, seamed with purplish-pink,
wide mouths like antique Victrolas
blaring out the music of their beauty
this Monday, redeeming the
noxious engine vapors and cigarette smoke
drifting around the vehicles grinding in and out.
Dancing in the breeze like pinwheels on their stems,
or quadrilles of cinco de mayo girls
with insouciant lifting of skirts,
their paneled pleats translucent in the light.

Lilies of a new age, by a dilettante Creator
for a new clientele: today's blind beggars, lepers,
abandoned widows. All morning the forsaken

tumble out of their beat-up cars, pick-ups, and
welfare vans, plastic fluorescent skeletons hanging
over their dashboards, reflections of themselves in the mirror;

with their washed-up lives and roughed-up hearts,
struggling out of chaos, slouching into the clinic
for the pink elixir of salvation in metal boxes,
side-long glances taking in all the single-parent kids,
family members and friends waiting through the
monotony and terror with them, in all seasons.

Small tendrils of hope curl upward
somewhere inside them, with the cigarette smoke--
persistent as the Bindweed's unrelenting,
probing struggle through the dry pavement cracks,
to erupt into fully-formed, shining flower.

Mary Lux is a Milwaukee poet and long-time member of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets, published often in their "Poets' Calendar" and is in a number of Midwest anthologies and other publications. Her Irish, Scotch, and English ancestors settled in the U.S. in the 19th century, and she enjoys their histories and pioneer stories, and has always honored especially the figures of Lincoln, Whitman, Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville and Dickinson.

Katharyn Howd Machan

The First Thing I Picked Up in Brooklyn

A skewer. Seven inches long.
It gleamed on the late May sidewalk
outside my grown son's gate.
Even though my fingernails
were newly painted, I picked it up.

A man's pink shoes.
They told the eyes around his wheelchair
I am loved.
These hands that guide and push
know summer morning because of me.

A mermaid with shells upon her hips.
At Dead Horse Bay she whispered to me
We're actually in Queens.
Then she held up sea-glass bottles
a thousand drunken ghosts had flung.

A rose named Carla. In 1963
her color uncurled into our world
so orange every other orange
defined itself as her lost sister
seeking sharp shadow, long hot light.

Birds next to birds beside birds within birds,
one with a shriek like rusty scissors,
a baby brown-headed cowbird (I learned)
wailing for food from a far-flown mother
where a window opened in high old brick.

A golem. A jinni. Dropped book:
tin sheets for baking macaroons
Jews and Arabs might share when night
dims the edges of their separate towns
to join earth and fire in fiercest love.

A golf ball where no one can swing a club.
An old metal sign: *Insurance.*
Personal Service. The Widow's Friend.
Pale empty nest salvaged from wasps
to balance beside two porcelain dolls.

That skewer. I washed it.
Organic lavender soap.
It fit perfectly
in my little orange suitcase.
I pulled the zipper, went away with hope.

Katharyn Howd Machan is the author of 38 published poetry collections, most recently *What the Piper Promised*, winner of the 2018 New Alexandria Quarterly Press chapbook competition. Her poems have appeared in numerous magazines, anthologies, and textbooks. She is a professor in the Department of Writing at Ithaca College, emphasizing fairy tales.

Marjorie Maddox

The Night I Cruised Past Walt Whitman

There were rods of rain on black pavement,
on the Buick's windshield,
everything striped like the screen
of a broken T.V.

Every half mile, I saw him
contained between his hat and boots,
hitchhiking his way along I-70.
Looking thinner than usual, lazier,
he dripped wet in the wrong century.
His magic-markered sign cried ink,
cried, "Walden!"

He confused his directions,
his destinations,
songs he sang of himself,
not Holmes, Thoreau, Lowell,
those who would not have him.

There beyond Long Island's concrete,
he bemoaned his brothers:
dead, incompetent, crazed with syphilis;
a mother who wailed for herself;
Lincoln--
or was it the rain,
the whirl of traveling fast?

I am not sure;
I do not know.
There beyond himself,
he hauled man, woman, child in a backpack
and stuck out his thumb to the future.

Sage Graduate Fellow of Cornell (MFA) and Professor of English at Lock Haven University, Marjorie Maddox has published 11 collections of poetry; a short story collection; children's books; *Common Wealth: Contemporary Poets on Pennsylvania* (co-editor); *Presence* (assistant editor); and over 550 stories, essays, and poems in journals and anthologies. Please see www.marjoriemaddox.com

Kerry Maiorca

Mosquito-tick

She is only three
but dying
she will--
sweet silly singer
pincher of belly fat--
she will die
the red ring on her sweet calf
circling parental failure
the tick knowing better
revealing too easy trust
in good fortune thus far

She's so far gone
when my husband calls from urgent care
to say it's just a mosquito bite
a bad reaction
I've already mourned her
memorialized her incredible aliveness
fleeting as it is

I thank the mosquito-tick
for revealing the mortality
of the girl named for her ability to defy

her push for life
determination to be here
though we didn't know we needed her

This is being a parent
to watch your child die
hundreds of times
if only in your heart
so you may better see them
and never have to actually
see it

A yoga and meditation teacher for over 20 years, Kerry Maiorca considers writing to be as much a mindfulness practice as anything else she does. Kerry received an MFA in writing from University of San Francisco and her work has appeared in *Pleiades*, *Huffington Post*, *elephant journal*, and *MindBodyGreen*, among others. Originally from Chicago, Kerry and her husband recently moved to Boulder, CO to reconnect with nature and see how it transforms their three city kids. The verdict so far...success!

Joe Maldonado

Shadow of the City

The city stands awake at night
Watching the island weep
Promises of suburban paradise
Whose were they to keep?

The city, she growls
The island barely peeps
No escaping her jowls
The city, she's a beast

So forget that train under water
Turn east! Turn east!
Don't change at Jamaica
Lest the city take ya

Come meet me in Montauk
We'll lie next to the stars,
The city, she don't sleep,
The darkness, it is ours

Joe Maldonado is a writer from Long Island, NY. He is the author of the poetry collection, *Subterranean Summer*.

Lynda Malerba

Sakura

The cherry blossom's pink flowers surround my feet
Another season has past,
the spring air envelopes me but the Sakura only stay for a few weeks

Each flower cascading off the branch brings with it the bittersweet
flashes of life;

 security and love, hope and innocence, loss and longing

I've never looked forward to something that brings with it pain,
gut wrenching, twisting pain

The blossoms sky dive from the tree and land on the sharp green grass

It is the beauty of nature that can heal abrasive thoughts and quell the
mind for a while

A quiet respite from stirred up emotions

Oh Mother Nature how you never cease to amaze me, your glorious
images stay in my mind forever

Lynda Malerba has been writing for over 30 years. She likes to explore different topics in her writing and she is open to inspiration from limitless sources.

Maria Manobianco

If I Met Walt Whitman

If I met you, I would ask –
“What were your thoughts at five years of age
as Lafayette lifted you over the crowd
and as an adult did you still hold
to that moment
did it increase your motivation
to achieve great things?”

If I met you, I would ask
about your dreams
”Did you remember them
record them, act upon them
were they coded words used
within your poems?”

And if I met you, I would tell you
how your portraits
hang heavy in my mind
your eyes piercing my imagination
beyond limits of time and space.

Maria Manobianco's poetry books are, *Between Ashes and Flame*, *The Pondering Self*, and her Young Adult fable, *The Golden Orb*. She was the Archivist for Nassau County Poets Laureate 2007-2015. Maria received a Pushcart nomination in 2015 for her Sonnet, "On Meditation." She has a BS degree from NYU and an MA from Adelphi U.

Patricia Martin

The Pulse of Life

Tree says
embrace me
the pulse of life flows through me
the pulse of life is seen and unseen
all flows through me
I am a prayer
I am a visible prayer
a tangible homage to the creator

The pulse of life is light
The pulse of life is light
it asks no questions
for it needs no answers
for all that it is, is enough

Tree says the pulse of life streams through all
branches, trunk, roots, leaves
through all the seasons, day and night
as it streams through you, as well

Tree says give me your heart
give me your heart
give me your fears

they dissolve at once
melting into the pulse of life that is you
the pulse is you and me

You are a manifestation of me
and I of you
I flow in you, as you flow in me
Pulsing with life and love
breathing with the universe
our inhalations and exhalations rhythmic perfection

To know me
is to know the universe
to embrace me
is to embrace yourself...
embrace yourself

Be at One with the Creator...
be at One with the Creator...
be at One

Patricia Martin is an author, poet, performer/actor, and freelance writer/communications professional who has been featured at numerous venues, including The Museum of the Imagination, The Howland Cultural Center, The Dissident Arts Festival, The Woodstock Fringe, The Byrdcliff, Theatre, and The National Beat Poetry Festival's "Kerouac Café." Martin has been heard on The Woodstock RoundTable/WDST and Women of Note/WKZE, is a monthly guest on "She's Raising the Bar" radio show, and has been published in a number of periodicals and anthologies. A member of the Author's Guild, Martin created and hosts "SpeakEasy," a monthly poetry/spoken word series, is the author of six books, and recorded a spoken word and music CD with composer/producer/musician Gus Mancini. www.patriciamartin.com.

Cristian Martinez

Unanswered Questions

Do you ever wonder why events happen?
Maybe to help the rich but it hurts the poor
But there is so much more
Only if we could imagine
How words can impact actions
Maybe they all want a war
What if you are pushed down to the floor?
Just like a Dragon with his fire that brings you to your knees
Maybe they are out to hurt our feelings
Or is there something going on in their minds
These are the unanswered questions
Being hurt has many meanings
We just need to take one day at a time
Love each other, just choose to be kind!

Cristian Martinez is a 12-year-old 6th-grade student at Ronkonkoma Middle School. He has been published in *Bards Annual 2018*, won first place in the Princess Ronkonkoma Awards for his poetry in 2018 & 2019 and for his prose submission in 2018, and had two haiku recently published in Mankh's *Haiku Calendar* for 2019. Recently he was awarded for his poem, "Glimpse of Tomorrow" recognition as the Grand Champion for the Walt Whitman Birthplace Contest and will be published in their anthology. He has been mentored by Robert Savino for the past year which has helped Cristian fine-tune his craft. Cristian also loves to play soccer.

Louis Mateus

By the Blackbird's Song

By the twofold year to the blackbird's song,
men confess their enjoyment to have
ladies in tight fitted social garments slurp
the talk of their shame; and their gratification
to blow in loose lipped giddiness, ladies'
labia, thrumming like a poppy's petal.

Originally published in *Skidrow Penthouse, Edition 15*.

Louis Mateus started to share his poetry publicly after many years of cultivating the craft of poetry privately while launching his career in the mental health field. He has been published in various publications: *The Federal Poet*, *The Listening Eye*, *Skidrow Penthouse*, and *NoVA Bards*. He is an avid reader of poetry, believing this to be the key to good writing, and is very much interested in the therapeutic properties of poetry, in study and practice.

Clare Mazur

Chalk Artists

She crouches on the blackened canvas,
pavement void of color, unblemished
except for fallen leaves
and crawling ants.

Her head bends in concentration,
her hand clutches the pastel yellow
poses midair for mere seconds
before scrawling a citrus sphere,
rays extending from the edges.
Then yellow is cast aside,
replaced first by pink then green
making rosy florets appear
and giant blossoms dance
unashamed of dwarfing her smiling sun.

With cap tidying a head of curls
he kneels a few feet away
scrawling a repertoire
of blue puppies,
summer snowmen with sapphire eyes,
green trucks and letters so large
they resemble roads the trucks might follow.
Side by side the artists toil
creating vast squiggles of color,

a child's tapestry of imagination
unbridled until morning wanes;
hunger calls for triangle sandwiches,
and the two weary artists
lay down their chalk to take a nap.

Clare Mazur's work has appeared in *Spirit of the Horse: An Equine Anthology* (Finishing Line Press), *BEAT-itude National Beat Poetry Festival 10 Year Anthology*, and the *2018 Connecticut River Review*. She is a member of Glastonbury, Connecticut's Meetinghouse Poets. Her greatest inspiration comes from nature, her wonderful family, and what often goes unnoticed.

Janet McCann

Laughter of Heaven

The total absence of humor from the Bible is one of the most singular things in all literature. ~ Alfred North Whitehead

The Bible rarely smiles or laughs.
Three smiles in Job, but only in the future.
No shouts of laughter in the halls of the divine.

Bible laughter is mostly irony,
a sense of superiority over bumps and jars
or mockery. Hoot of disbelief or scorn.

A friend posted a laughing Christ on Facebook,
mouth open wide in a ho-ho-ho,
other standard Jesus attributes as usual.

Readers were angry, found in blasphemous
to portray the Christ transported with glee—
was he laughing at the Creation?

If God gave us laughter, He has it.
Maybe He bounced the planets around
enjoying their different colors,

or chuckled at the baby animals,

or at the thought of Adam
looking confusedly around Eden.

Divine laughter would be beautiful.
It would be the ultimate hymn,
the last thing in Pandora's box

floating musically upward after Hope.

1989 NEA Creative Writing Fellowship winner, Janet McCann taught at Texas A & M University from 1969-2016, is now Professor Emerita. She has published eleven books and chapbooks. Most recent poetry collection: *The Crone At The Casino* (Lamar University Press, 2014).

Michael McCarthy

Breath

soft
hardly noticed
quieter than a whisper

rhythmic and regular
like the pulsation
of my dancing heart

it's a good thing
this easy air
slowly mixing with the lifeblood inside
vitality overfloweth

in the moment
this only moment
catch your breath
and see the world.

Michael McCarthy resides in Port Jefferson, NY with his wife, Toni Ann. He teaches theology at the Mary Louis Academy in Jamaica, Queens. He is a lifetime explorer of the sacred and the author of *The Ways of Grace: A Book of Poems* (Goldfinch Publishing, 2016).

Thomas M. McDade

I Picture Walt

On the Jersey Turnpike
near the Whitman Service
Stop I pass an antique
Cadillac cruising
at forty, a shiny pacer
and sulky gracing the hood
like a galleon figurehead.
On my way to convert
software for the millennium,
thinking about years anyway,
I pick 1862. There's an ambulance
wagon full of soldiers
Walt will nurse and console.
A sergeant argues the Union
won't see tomorrow
never mind the century end.
The ark is tailgating,
prow talisman catching the sun
like a New Age crystal.
It's 1885 and there's a horse
and phaeton for the ailing poet,
donated by Mark Twain and others

as Walt's paralysis worsens.
He's still autographing and
dating photos, an apostrophe
makes writing the year easier.
Eldorado sailing past
me like I'm rowing
I picture Walt
whispering assurances
to the doubting sergeant.
"We'll make the century turn
and so will the Union!"
The poet's practicing
1900 on his lap rug
with a finger and I use
dashboard dust
like a prophet of doom.

Thomas M. McDade is a 73-year-old resident of Fredericksburg, VA, previously CT & RI. He is a graduate of Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT. McDade is twice a U.S. Navy Veteran serving ashore at the Fleet Anti-Air Warfare Training Center, Virginia Beach, VA and aboard the USS Mullinnix (DD-944) and USS Miller (DE/FF 1091).

Megan McDonald

Let Poetry Be the Gate

If there be walls let poetry be the gate
that opens both ways.

Acceptance of others
words from we, the poets
people, strangers joining
to state

we will not

Listen

Heed

Repeat

Follow

The white sepulcher lies
from imbedded fallacy.

Let poetry be a butterfly
morph
from the world of chaos
to spread wings of need words.

This may not be a time of joy
but with resounding words

Stand up

Speak out

In verse

In truth.

Let poetry be the gate.

Megan McDonald started writing in a junior high school creative writing class in Hawaii, but other than yearly Christmas poems did not start writing for twenty years. She credits her restart to poetry to an article in the *Washington Post* about a long running Virginia poetry venue. After attending a meeting of Poets Anonymous in 1995 she generated two poems and has been writing ever since. She has been published in *Poets Anonymous* (Virginia) anthologies, *Poet's Anonymous* (United Kingdom) anthology, *Poetry Just for you*, *Event Horizon*, *Poets Domain*, and *NoVA Bards*. She currently is a co-host of Poets Anonymous, a long running Northern Virginia open reading.

Robert McKenna

Robin Red Bricks

Having arrived early, I parked, watched and waited
in a working-class neighborhood, mid-week at the end of the day.
Across the street, bricklayers having finished the day and half a
long wall
clean up against an approaching night. They walk the side lawn
and gather tools.
As a robin, falls like a stone in silence, dead, among them, with-
out an ounce of self-pity.

After a pause and in stride, the youngest bricklayer with gloved
hands picks up and
spreads her gently on a prominent herring bone turret and
proceeds with the clean-up.
Once the truck and trailer are neatly nearly packed, with only
a rubbish bin left to store
the gloved bricklayer returns with a spade, and with a bowed
head, he stops and sighs.

At the center base of the wall, where it turns quarter-circle to the
drive, he pierces the turf
scoops out a bit of dirt, folds the still soft robin into the ground,
under a blanket of grass.
With a few words in a foreign tongue, possibly a prayer, he turns,
disappears into the truck
embarrassed by his own kindness.

Robert Mc Kenna resides in Glen Oaks, NY. He is married for 26 years to his lovely wife, Angela. Robert is an avid hockey player, having played since he was 3 years old. His latest poetry book is *Stolen Poems carried by Canoe to Blind Man's Bluff*. He enjoys Guinness.

Steven McKennon

Pockets turned inside out

It's different for everyone,
but I could always
smell the rain coming.

Could see how the leaves
expanded slightly, tensing
in expectation like a child
excited by what comes next.
Like a child, oblivious that
excitement brings with it
the chance to be torn loose,
thrown down, and lost.

Standing on ancient walls,
I can look down on a
city's crumbled dreams.

Flooded by a jealous king,
"if I can't have you no one will"
on a grand scale, their thoughts
collecting with dust in my ears.
... *will I* ... no I can't ... *I know* ...
there was ... *but yes there must* ...
yet only if ... won't we maybe ...
maybe one day ... *maybe never* ...

This collected knowledge is unwanted,
destined to be discarded like the contents
of an attic acquired in a short sale.
Hear me, please ... please, hear me ...
The very soil cries out that we are not
the first, nor will we be the last to watch
everything around us crumble away.
Please, hear me ... hear me, please ...

I once heard a woman laugh,
although I can't remember if it
was in Frankfurt or Baltimore.

The sound was filled with
traces of hope and longing,
but it was also bitter and jaded
and made me feel sick as I smiled.
Bitter and jaded, it hung cancerous
in the room, but its gentle qualities
allowed it to attach itself to each
conversation or unuttered thought.

Walking through empty streets
I can see the ghosts of burn marks
where fire scorched frescoed walls.

Scattered across the ground nearby
had been empty cups that exhaled
dank breaths tinged with the scents
of beer and anise and pomegranate.
Something unsettled still hangs to
the silence left floating where the
screams of multitudes once split

the air to leave a permanent void.

This collected knowledge is unwanted,
destined to be discarded like old clothes
left to discolor and be eaten by moths.

Hear me, please ... please, hear me ...

The very wind cries out that we are not
the first, nor will we be the last to watch
everything around us crumble away.

Please, hear me ... hear me, please ...

I once crawled through a long
dead mind on a field of words
in a book with a rotting spine.

Within the first few pages was
the etching of a man whose
face has reappeared through
history no less than 16 times.

Reappeared, without self-
awareness, most recently
on a poet in the 1800s and
a ski instructor born in 1993.

Squinting into the sunlight
I can feel the despair of leaving
home never to return.

Queued up to the horizon hundreds
of feet trudge away from the drought
that squeezed life from this land,
steps coalescing into an eerie rhythm.

Giving birth is an act of separation
as every creation must exist apart

from its creator, freed to move away
and grow distinct from its source.

This collected knowledge is unwanted,
destined to be discarded like a beer can
tossed into a ditch to rust and fade.

Hear me, please ... please, hear me ...

The very sky cries out that we are not
the first, nor will we be the last to watch
everything around us crumble away.

Please, hear me ... hear me, please ...

Steven McKennon is a former surf punk that grew up, got married, bought a house, and became a Costco member. He can be described as a morally grounded and rather optimistic nihilist, and he has been featured in many exhibitions, often writing and performing under the *nom de guerre* TropicalSnowstorm.

John F. McMullen

A Poet's Question

November 16, 2018 – Hudson Valley Writers Center

Cold Night

First Storm of the Winter

Just the same

A big crowd for the Open Mic

Some newbies

Nervous

Other veterans

Chomping at the bit

No audience criticism

You just read your work

Thank you

And sit down

You think

What you read

Was good

But was it?

John F. McMullen, “*johnmac the bard,*” is the Poet Laureate of the Town of Yorktown, NY, a graduate of Iona College (*BA – English Literature*) and the holder of two Masters degrees from Marist College (*MSCS – Information Systems & MPA – Criminal Justice*), a member of the American Academy of Poets and Poets & Writers, the author of over 2,500 columns and articles and eight books, six of which are collections of poetry (his most recent *Live At The Freight House* is available at Amazon in both paperback and Kindle formats), and is the host of a weekly Internet Radio Show (*over 250 shows to date*). Links to the recordings of all radio shows as well as information on Poet Laureate activities is available at www.johnmac13.com.

Joan Mc Nerney

9 ways of viewing the Brooklyn bridge

- 1 from far away as if
a child drew 2 bright
triangles in the sky
- 2 empty newspaper truck
rattling over violet bridge
- 3 rain sweeps through giant
silver spider web
- 4 obscured by N train
its metal doors reflect freight
boats and painted containers
- 5 tipping from side to side
listening to loose tracks
- 6 passengers huddled in tight circles
woolen gloves around steel pole
- 7 1 square of sunset
in the sticky window

- 8 orange ball bounces beside
bridge...slides into blue water
white waves
- 9 black sky black sea
yellow moon climbs
over buildings
3 foghorns

Joan McNerney's poetry has been included in numerous literary magazines such as *Seven Circle Press*, *Dinner with the Muse*, *Moonlight Dreamers of Yellow Haze*, *Blueline*, and *Halcyon Days*. Four *Bright Hills Press* Anthologies, several *Poppy Road Review Journals*, and numerous *Kind of A Hurricane Press* Publications have accepted her work. Her latest title is *Having Lunch with the Sky* and she has four Best of the Net nominations.

Gene McParland

Falling Leaves

A leaf buds.
Tastes the air;
grows;
reaches for the sun;
sways in the breeze,
rejoices in the rain;
laughs in the light;
dances in the wind.
Heart opens to other hearts,
nurturing the soul;
being one with the flow
of the Infinite.
And in growth
wisdom,
sharing;
offering home and shelter
to others.
It journeys through the seasons;
expands,
experiences,
transforms.
And in time it takes on
the colors of Autumn.
A bursting forth

of brilliance;
from the heart
flow colors of life.
And in sharing
it opens its spirit.
Then, as the chill of evening approaches,
one final dance;
Partnered with the wind,
free,
moving to the music
of the Infinite;
a dance of life;
wild abandonment.
Then in the final movement,
the ballerina falls,
collapsing in slow motion
to the ground.
Even in death,
Life,
returning to the soil
to nourish
the next generation of souls.
The Tree of Life continues to grow.

Gene McParland (North Babylon, NY) is a graduate from Queens College and also possesses graduate degrees from other institutions. He has always had a passion for poetry and the message that it can convey. His poems have appeared in numerous poetry publications over the years. He is the author of *Baby Boomer Ramblings, a collection of essays and poetry*. He is also the author of *Adult Without, Child Within*, a collection of poetry celebrating the child within all of us. He also acts in local theater and videos, and has written several plays.

Daniel McTaggart

On Slow Summer

On slow summer
days beneath shady
trees, I watch

beads of condensation
race each other down
the side of my glass.

I give them names
like “Fernando's Chance”
or “Shoeless Joe.”

Sometimes I lose track
of who wins,
but not to worry,

another race
will be starting
soon.

Daniel McTaggart is the Beat Poet Laureate of West Virginia, the editor of *Diner Stories: Off the Menu* from Mountain State Press, and author of *Midnight Muse in a Convenience Store* from Venetian Spider Press. He exists wherever coffee cups leave rings on long counters.

Wayne Mennecke

Anti-Sense

The classroom whiteboard
informs students

Today is Wednesday.

It makes sense
the way activated genes
express physical traits
reflected in morning mirrors;

DNA's intent.

I delete the y of *Today*,
frame-shift my message
one character to the left.

Today sW ednesday.

Missense. Mistakes heckle
the products of alleles—
cause mutations, errors,
cellular confusion so common

seventy-five percent of all conceptions end
in zygote mortality. I ask students

to pat themselves on their shoulders
in thankful choreography: they are
the survivors of heredity's brutal edge.

My final message on the whiteboard reads
nonsense. The premature termination
of genetic codes curtail a trait's production;
the anticipated protein hangs

like a thought unfinished
except this day

when happenstance
and environment introduce beautiful gasps
from the class, united in random mutation:

Today is.

Wayne Mennecke is a science teacher at Islip High School. He is part of the Seatuck Writer's Group and the Sunday Grind Writer's Group and has had poetry published in the *Fracture* anthology as well as other online and print journals. His chapbooks, *Pencils Down* and *Hypochondria*, use poetry to explore fatherhood and his career as a scientist and teacher.

Susan Michele Meyer-Corbett

Momentary Recall in Two Stanzas

Moment by moment recall deconstructs this life
in syncopated spaces, like geometric patterns
on a quilt standing in resplendent variety.

See some figures recur, like hearts entwined, circles,
connecting with whirling paisley flair ~ recall a
Mother Goddess, beaming phrases like Tagore's:
'Meditations upon Mountains under azure sky—
Forehead, nose, lips, chin and chest quiet
greetings in dreams of clouds.' So memory
ushers epiphany, reframes simple things in
brave colors, salvaged fabric for a wild carpet ride.

Be still and linger in memory, find new layers of Intention,
Intervals to sum up a marriage, a job, friendships that trackle,
here and gone. While us, always like birds: Doves, Wood Larks
Proverbial Sparrows, Robins maybe, Blue Jay, or Spotted
Grackle remain.

Friends, of infinite variety, reflecting patterns, a dance of being
together, forming new rings (that hold us up) like handmade
Quilts— with Stars, blue hexagons on fading white backgrounds.
Adrift in a Sea of harmonies, every little life is a map flowing
In the seven seas of our mighty blue-green Earth swaying.

Poetry is a lifesaver for Susan M Meyer-Corbett, a multi-cultural writer and Holistic educator. A graduate of Hunter College and Stony Brook University, Susan's career in social services deepened her compassion for humanity.

Bradford Middleton

Life Is For Living

Too much sleep causes earlier death
But do I care? Of course I don't because
I been ignoring advice like that all my
Life.

You smoke too much
You drink too much
And now they could say I sleep too much

Why can't it be something I don't love doing
That could be bad for my health
Wouldn't it be better if they told me
You work too much
You don't drink enough
You don't smoke enough
Go home to bed, get a good 16 hours rest

But right here all they want are drones
Work all the hours the boss wants you to
Leaving precious little time to get to the
Bar, my dealer, my bed so you know what
I say, it's simple.
Life is for living not for dying through!

Bradford Middleton lives in the seaside resort of Brighton on England's south-coast after having been born in London during the summer of 1971. His work is dotted all over the internet, in various magazines and in a number of poetry chapbooks, most recently *Flying through this Life like a Bottle Battling Gravity* from Analog Submissions Press. If you want, find him on Facebook (bradfordmiddleton1) or on Twitter @beatnikbraduk.

Anne Mikusinski

Definition

Art is debatable
At best
If civility is your
Aim
For the discussion
At worst
It's
Raised voices
And various opinions
Expressed
In sitting rooms
Or noisy bars
Or sometimes
Outside venues
Where people wait
Together
To see the same event
But come away with something
Different.

Anne Mikusinski has been writing poetry and short stories since she was seven years old and most probably making them up long before she could hold a pen or pencil in her hand. She finds inspiration in music and art, and sometimes, even little things that happen every day. Her influences range from Robert Frost and Dylan Thomas to David Byrne and Nick Cave, and she hopes one day, her work will inspire others in the same way these writers have been an inspiration to her.

Joseph D. Milosch

Great Uncle Tierney

In an old photograph,
he stands next to
his front porch with
its whitewashed rail.
Behind him is the left
rear fender
of a Model-T,
placing him
in the 'Great Depression.'

His large hands appear
weathered, and one
holds his hunting rifle.
The other holds a rabbit
by its rear paws.
His straw hat is tilted
and reveals
the deep lines
in his face.

The picture draws
me to those lines,
and I sense the spirits
of the deer, the beaver,

and the badgers gather
in the ravines
of his cheeks,
enabling him
to smile.

If I lean in, I can
almost hear him
breathe.

I can nearly
make out the raft of
his hardships,
riding
the river
of his breath.

Joseph D. Milosch graduated from San Diego State University. His poetry has appeared in various magazines. He has multiple nominations for the Pushcart and received the Hackney Award for Literature. His books are *The Lost Pilgrimage Poems* and *Landscape of a Hummingbird*.

Lisa Mintz

Inclusive

Birds serenade me
Every size, shape, and color
Singing in unison
From high in the treetops
Mellifluous flow of melodious music
Singing with candor and joyful abandon
Creating a song of universal harmony
Welcoming all who join in the chorus
No judgment
No anger
No exclusion...
Just acceptance and welcome
To every new neighbor
Each song unique
And contributing greatly
To
The
Whole

Lisa Mintz is a multi-media artist in the fields of writing, photography, and pottery, with the common goal of inspiring others on their own journey. She has led professional development workshops to promote focus and mindfulness through creativity. She lives in Dix Hills with her husband, and is the mother of three and grandmother of one.

Mary Sheila Morrissey

Desk

I am an old roll top desk at which
good work was once done.

Many cubbies and dusty nooks
need a thorough cleaning.
Oil and rub me smooth.

More good work,
be it writing or keeping life's ledgers,
may yet be done on me.

I could be beautiful and
useful again.

Mary Sheila Morrissey grew up in Kings Park and now resides in Northport. Her poems have been featured on Hofstra's radio program, "Poems from People Like You." Her poem, "Leaf," will appear in a Spring exhibit in Waterford, Michigan as well as its commemorative volume. Mary has published five poetry collections and is writing her first novel.

Joseph Munisteri

In the Footsteps of my Mentors

In the footsteps of my mentors I stand.
Their shadows now replaced by my own.
My shadow now towers over another,
Guiding them,
As my mentors guided me.
Yet my shadow is still guided by a light.
The light of my mentors,
Shining brightly through me.
I stand in the large footsteps I create,
Never forgetting the shoes my mentors gave me.
The path I run may be my own,
But the road I run on was paved with their help.
Now as I give shoes to another,
I remember how my mentors passed their torch to me,
Now, as I promise to guide others,
I will always remember how they once guided me.

Joseph Munisteri is the author of the book *Butterflies in Space*, which is available for purchase on Amazon.com He also has a blog that documents the adventures of his traveling sketchbook www.unlockcreativity.org You can follow him on Instagram at @ButterfliesIn.Space

Keith Munroe

**A Poem About Some Ideas That Came To Me After Watching
A Movie With My Friends**

Driving home through a night painted in the mists of some de
spondent and quiet interest of the forest with her lingering
inspirations as she watches me wander down highways
lost in the mystery of her veiled youth
I think of the time I spent with my friends as we spoke of desire,
loneliness and love
and view through the eyes of men and women
whose shoulders lean into the mouth-less avalanche of blades, the
passion of Being John Malkovich
and I know as I say
“I wish I would have seen this movie long ago”
and she asked
“Why?”
and I said
“Because it would have saved me a lot of pain”
but the truth is I did, and it didn’t
so why pant into the dark the lie some lesson could have saved me
from the behavior of an ass
that to his soul makes man a stranger.

I had no other book beside me back then but a list of endless
jealousy.

Now, I don't look to find myself in the eyes of any mortal man
or woman
nor do I seek in immortality the image of some truth the world
left behind.

There is no sadness but the sighs of those who walk with reason
like a dog who heels by their knees
and makes them weak with envy as they try to make God happy
that she keep their company
despite the fact that they take council from the devil and give to
the stars an opera of flame
as it shimmers like the sacred waters of some ancient river
I wait for patience and know it will not come
because there is no way to pass the time in expectation of the
dawn,
words give light to despair and make men the meaning of what
pride will to his limbs give clothing
and see him, though faith would call him evil, the shepherd of ill
winds,
as if to find glory one must make of things your average man
would say are evil,
with their un-prosperous cruelty of shadows,
a purpose to overcome their sorrow yet in their uncompromising
need to take your hope hostage
you see meaning in your adversary if nothing else the point to
wake from sleep and stand,
a breath against all purpose and pray, not for nothing as people
know that word
but the equivalent of an affirmation that means nothing except
to say

“I live as a welcome to my enemies and give them bread because I find philosophy in sorrow.”

To stand, to overcome, not to conquer but to breathe the air
of kings
as the world cares not to know the mysteries of your heart or how
you came to be,
yet there is nothing in sadness other than the will to carry on
and if one can see clearly as light becomes the enemy of wisdom
then in darkness
one discovers the passion of angels
and I see those I love most clearly when I’m driving home at night
alone and in the wilderness of my will with which I want to know
the unknown and see through the eyes of some other soul
the hours of eternity.

But it is because we don’t know each other,
because time will pass us by and not make us brothers, sisters and
sons and daughters of the earth
that through our loneliness do we master fate and from fear
discover the grace of haunted lands
whose subtle shades of evening give to the heart its motive to see
in the cold
those who their breast will hold the night and see in hell the
paradise of wolves.

This may not sound like it has anything to do with Being
John Malkovich
but believe me any man who thinks that by what eyes he sees the
dawn will give to him a foreign insight into the agency of love

by which a man seeks to see himself through the eyes of a lover
born to make from jealousy
a scholar of wisdom
will fall from grace and find no other soul to love him for his sins
as perhaps there is no evil
but he who seeks to make from what he wants the justice of the
stars.

And so he will wage war against whatever man, woman, crown of
wisdom
or the empty solace of idle children playing in the shade of trees
find him with his religion
whether it be of God the devil or the meaning of their absence that
makes him small
and wish for all things to end whether they be kind or cruel it
doesn't matter
as he perhaps like me is lost in a sea of answers to questions
never asked
yet to him they are an oblivion of arrows because they have no
cause to cease their mindless advance and to him her passive
charity
and let words end in tears
but I will walk no more in fear of loneliness as to be alone, if one
accepts it, is to look on those you love and need them not to stand
in faith beside you
and whether faithless or the shepherds who herd their flocks be-
low mountains the advance of things, of people, of beasts and of
birds in peril by comparison
is the conscience by which eternity makes a fellowship of sorrows
and gives to all men and women whether or not they suffer for the

injustice of the world
a way to be a parent to their destiny,
is if all things we decided by a child, starving with insects in
its belly
and weeping for all the beauty of the world,
a shadow into the dawn.

Gloria g. Murray

My Daughter Gardening

when I see her
bony knees burrowed in soil
wide straw hat an umbrella
over straight chestnut hair
so unlike the dark wild curls of mine
slim fingers risking the thorns
of his roses, I think how much
she is her father's daughter

the same angled face
Irish skin turning pink
even under sunscreen
the way her small lips tighten
as she tugs at the weeds that dare defy her
how she communes even with birds
their feeders swinging with ribbons
she twines around them

while I sit here in the swing
fringed canopy my hat, writing this poem
as if these words were roses I picked
from the tangled vines
of my unpruned garden

Gloria g. Murray's poetry and prose have appeared in *The Paterson Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Bardic Echoes*, *Third Wednesday*, and others. She is the winner of the 2014 first prize Anna Davidson Rosenberg award, *Poetica Magazine* and third prize recipient in the 2017 Writer's Digest Poetry contest. She reads at various venues on Long Island, NY.

Amy Murre

We Will Ride

It is dark in the tiny rooms where we write on sheets of purple paper. It is quiet in houses where troubled children finally sleep. Between mind and page the tongue twitches and flexes in the mouth as the words pass silently through, not as in pronunciation, but as in a kiss.

In the dark we pause at the ends of phrases and feel our flesh absently, somewhere dustily noting a new lump, a new line. And we forge ahead, breathing and tasting.

If there is one truth about the endless nights,
it is that they do not last forever.
Recall that moonlight is bright only in the dark.
We construct, we are the vehicle that will take us beyond
and out and back and beyond again.
We will ride our poetry
out into the light.

Amy Murre lives and works near the shores of Lake Michigan in southeastern Wisconsin. She writes poetry and prose, creates art, tends to family and animals, and teaches at the Milwaukee School of Engineering (MSOE University). Her poetry has appeared in *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *We'Moon*, and *Stoneboat*, among others. For the curious, *Murre* is pronounced like *Murry*.

Marsha M. Nelson

Gift Bearers

In the short confluence of time—
Heaven kissing earth.
They leave discarded vestiges
of themselves.
Progenitors of a past—
rooted firmly in soil
rich with their flesh and bones.

We stand erect—
Bearers of the gift
under shards of light.
Vermillion, apricot skies.
Pennywort, California Poppies,
Succulents and Wildflowers scent
the velvet night air—
of surf and salt.

Our branches extend
as we pirouette into
a kindred dance of syntax—
Cleverly crafted words.

Each session, we walk the pathway
of the Pink Palace—
Diane's San Francisco
writing retreat.

Marsha M. Nelson, playwright and award-winning poet is the author of two poetry books, *Night Visions* and *All Rise - Stand Up Holy Gates*. She was nominated in 2018 for the Blue Light Press Pushcart Prize for her poem, "Hairpins and a Box of Chocolates."

Carolyn Nemec

Nurse and Poet

(For Kathy Donnelly)

She possesses a certain strength,
as if somehow, she's grabbed a hold of
the shores of this island,
with its dunes and thickets and brambles
(yes, even the cliffs)
and pulled it all inside.

When she gets up to read a poem,
her words transport us to a hospital room.
Cold. White. Difficult.
Here she tends to a man motionless on a gurney,
his face badly burned, his mouth
so charred and black he cannot speak.
She does the talking, uses simple words,
comforts him, tells him his family is on the way.

She stays in the room.
Checks his vital signs.
Gives medication for the pain.
Holds his hand.
Makes sure he isn't alone.
Anything she has she bestows.

But when his pulse becomes thready,
she knows his family won't arrive in time.
He closes his eyes. There will be no
oil to the forehead, no clicking of rosary beads.
Holding his almost dead hand, still real and palpable,
she says a prayer for him.

The monitor is now a flat line
but she is sure he is alive and well somewhere.
Grass and trees, it all continues—
every green sprout tells her this is true.
Still, she wishes she could have saved him.
Later she tells his family
he died peacefully.

The injured. The dying. The dead.
Then the injured arrive again.
Grief is a season that never ends.
We each suffer burns and amputations.
Covered wounds bleed through bandages.
What really matters is how we help each other
make it through the pain.

And what happens at the end?
If we are lucky enough
we hold hands with someone who cares.
From our fingertips
tiny flowers will appear in the grass.

Carolyn F. Nemec, M.D. lives and works in Cleveland, Ohio. She is the author of *Cherry Cheesecake: poems filled with love and hope for women with breast cancer*. She is inspired every day by her patients.

Elliot Nicely

To America

America,
strutting along
your crumbling sidewalks, drunk
beneath your banners, your cold cheeks red
with contempt, you've forgotten how
sore your feet are.

America,
you are yet to know
the truth found in
the quiet at the river's edge.
If only you would sit for a minute
and let the sunlight warm you. If only
you would pause for a moment
and listen to
these streaming waters that give rise
to the words beneath their ancient stones.

Come, rest your feet here with me,
and listen.

Elliot Nicely is the author of two chapbooks: *The Black Between Stars* (Crisis Chronicles Press, 2017) and *Tangled Shadows: Senryu and Haiku* (Rosenberry Books, 2013). He resides in Lakewood, Ohio in the United States.

Cristina M. R. Norcross

Leaving the Room

I hear the bloom of my youth.
It quietly steps outside for a cigarette—
even though I was never a smoker.

I'm leaving the room.
Who wants to go with me?
I'm leaving behind
regret, shame, blame, should have,
and could have.
I'm replacing *not enough*
with *glorious*.
I'm climbing the mountain
and taking rest stops
to enjoy the view.
I'm not staying here
one more moment,
without my stride.

I'm leaving the room
because I have become invisible,
like Wonder Woman's plane.
I am scanning the universe,
with nothing but a few stones in my palm.
No one can see me leave.

No one can hear me singing the highest note.
No one can see me dance with abandon.
I am content with this superpower—
an invisible cloak.
If I sway back and forth
long enough,
maybe this hidden hammock
will take me places
I have never dared to go.
It will wish me into the next room,
where rolling waves wash over the day—
where my knees bend to my chest
and I hold it all—
all of the love the world has to offer.
I will gently rock it back and forth—
a cradling of what once was
and the careful procuring of faith
for what is to come.

Cristina M. R. Norcross is the editor of the online poetry journal, *Blue Heron Review*, and the author of 8 poetry collections. Her latest book is *Beauty in the Broken Places* (Kelsay Books, 2019). Cristina is the co-founder of Random Acts of Poetry and Art Day. <http://www.cristinanorcross.com>

George H. Northrup

Poetic Flights of Fancy

After the weather and the sports
our local radio station broadcasts
an original poem every hour,
paid for by the Bureau of Dithyrambic Services.
“So what if we had to sell a few buses?”
the mayor explains, “Poetic transport
is more vital than getting to work.”

“Before I begin the State of the Union Address,”
the president announces,
“I’d first like to read *The Odyssey*, in Greek,
with my own translation.
Yes, it consumes valuable air time,
but we can finance it with
targeted cuts in the defense budget
because, as we all know,
poetry is our only real protection against war.”

In heaven (if you believe)
all those harps you heard about
accompany Seraphim reciting sonnets.
Ascetic saints indulge free verse,
martyrs favor elegies.

God Himself, if not roiling the oceans
or swallowing the moon,
intones His anapestic side,
cracks the holy minions up
with saucy limericks, while St. Peter
passes judgment on the meter.

George H. Northrup has been President of the Fresh Meadows Poets in Queens, NY since 2006 and was a Board member of the Society that selects the Nassau County Poet Laureate from 2009-17. In recent years, his poetry has appeared in more than 30 journals and anthologies. His chapbook, *You Might Fall In*, was published in 2014 by Local Gems Press.

Holly Norton

Chestnuts

Somewhere in Michigan
We stop at a farm stand
Walk through the mud to look at crookneck squash
Wart-covered pumpkins
Imagine them as grumpy old men
Jack-o-lanterns lit from within
The woman at the stand offers us chestnuts
Miniature buckeyes to us
Shows us how to scrape away their skin
Reveals the creamy yet crunchy flesh within
Tells us we can eat them raw

She tells us we can pick them ourselves
Leads us to a grove of trees
We walk past a group gathered by a fire
Filled with foil-wrapped packets
They have brought lawn chairs and coolers
Set up tables
They laugh and chat in Chinese

We see the ground covered with tiny hedgehogs
Spiny creatures that scream, Don't touch me!
We pick them up, can't imagine how to crack them open
Without lacerating our hands

Walk back to the woman, confused
Ask if we need to use gloves
She chuckles, looks chagrined
Leads us back to the grove
Shows us how to hold the burr between our feet
Step lightly on it to crack the pod open
Pick out the nuts like roe from a sea urchin
Throw the husk on the ground

We start to hunt
Check for ones that still have nuts
Not just discarded husks
They ripen and fall from the trees as we speak
We crow when we score one with multiple nuts
Try to keep from pricking our fingers as we pry the chicks
From their nests
Search until we've filled the bottom of the basket
Wonder aloud what brought us to this task

Holly Norton is a professor at the University of Northwestern Ohio. She teaches composition, literature, and communication courses as well as a course about women rock musicians. Her chapbook *Letting Go* was published in 2017 by Finishing Line Press.

Susan Notar

Outside

Suddenly it is autumn.
In the garden
where just yesterday
hot weather ladies
hibiscus, magnolia
lifted their petals languidly on display
perfumed their wrists
for trysts with moonbeams
now, save the sparrows
the leaves from nearby oaks
sodden, crushed
like me, is alone.

Susan Notar's work has appeared in a number of publications including *Penumbra*, *American Literary*, *Joys of the Table: an Anthology of Literary Verse*, *NoVA Bards*, and *Beyond the Frame*. She is a member of the Poetry Society of Virginia and works at the U.S. State Department on human rights in the Middle East.

Barbara Novack

We, In The Words

On this mother of beaches, we seagulls
soar,
messengers, merciful,
our listing litany, lost souls found
in the words
in the words;
our truths revealed
in linearity that swells,
we sea birds in
salt-scented air;
land life lived long
leaves this earth
our days, nights
changed,
never to be the same
because of
the words.

Barbara Novack, Writer-in-Residence at Molloy College and a member of the English Department, founded and hosts Poetry Events readings on campus and, off campus, conducts highly regarded creative writing workshops. Recent books: poetry collections *Something Like Life, Do Houses Dream?*, *A Certain Slant of Light*, and the novel *J.W. Valentine*.

Carl Palmer

Had Walt Whitman written a Pantoum

This moment, yearning and thoughtful, sitting alone,
it seems to me there are other men in other lands,
yearning and thoughtful.

It seems to me I can look over and behold them.

It seems to me there are other men in other lands,
in Germany, Italy, France, Spain.

It seems to me I can look over and behold them,
or far, far away, in China, or in Russia or Japan.

In Germany, Italy, France, Spain
talking other dialects
or far, far away, in China, or in Russia or Japan.
It seems to me, if I could know those men,

talking other dialects,
yearning and thoughtful,
it seems to me if I could know those men,
this moment, yearning and thoughtful sitting alone.

Carl “Papa” Palmer of Old Mill Road in Ridgeway, Virginia, now lives in University Place, Washington. He is retired from the military and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and is enjoying life as “Papa” to his grand descendants. Carl is also a Franciscan Hospice volunteer and former Pushcart Prize and Micro Award nominee. MOTTO: Long Weekends Forever!

Carlo Parcelli

Poem for Walt Whitman's Final Centenary

O Walt, Evangelizer of thy 'Self'!
Of all hidden and longed for!
Of your Cock-Eyed Dialectics
And prolix altercations with tedium.
The trope of your heterodox,
In mortal danger from the very 'comrades'
You cruised with your words.
Did you really believe that by rhetorical comity
You could get those that tarred
And feathered you, the Southold pederast,
To forego themselves for poetry?
This dispatch is for all the mewling progeny
You fathered but never had,
For all of your neglected imaginary bastards
Abandoned to a self-promoting brag,
As you gnashed on your toothpick and
Hiked up your belt, boasting
Like some wanton sod buster
Sowing lies sooner than seed.
What beast bred before you
That so many had to die to 'right'
The Leaves, the conjugal burial site.
There were no passionate kisses from a comrade
Lying broken and twisted on the field,

Were there Walt? Just your onanistic fantasy
That the tractable cobble with tokens and signs.
You hedged the rough trade of a sinister country,
 The lynchings, the Native genocide.
Denied the Negro franchise as ‘unfit and lazy,’
 Even as you styled yourself the ‘loafer,’
The pale Minstrel, heartless,
 And bled out with desire.
Union busting by Lincoln’s self-same Pinkertons
More attuned to the dollar than sham holiness
 Or any care of ‘Western Stars’;
The newsstand screams Credit Mobilier, Black Friday,
 Star Route, the Whiskey Ring, Robber Barons
Ad nauseam but for your advertising dollar.
And on your afternoon walks, the bodies
Of the destitute strewn in your path
 like fallen apple blossoms,
Reminiscent of the honest, bloody spillings
 Of more courageous men;
 Now Thomas to their simple sacrifice;
An offertory that aroused your gothic onanisms;
That you struck brass as gold in hopes of smelting
 An alchemy of the cock.
Where’s the fucking upswing, the rhythm,
 But of Death’s scythe?
 O how we Americans relish our conning!
Such that our greatest poet lies to a grateful nation
 For naked ambition’s sake.
Lies with violent, banal ubiquity;
 Masquerading as egalitarian, supping otherwise,

Your lure wriggling just below the surface.
O Walt, I will not take the bait.
Your neediness bares your fraud,
Your cock-eyed dialectics; your Evangelical.
P.T. Barnum, Bernays Hucksterism;
Concocting pseudonymous letters to the press
To pump your tone-deaf ‘Self’ up;
To fabricate a bad-boy repute.
Embracing naturalists but far more so industrialists
Who gladly ripped out the throat of Nature
At ‘the going rate.’
O lauded, defrauded egalitarianism!
Equality, fraternity, democracy
And all of the other jingo you have propheted by!
We Americans hold sacred your swindling.
We have indeed embraced those prairies
And woodlands, and crushed them
Like the snakes we are; that those above ambition,
Of a deeper spirit know us to be.
This bloody new fraternity born long passed hope;
Avarice made Manifest as Destiny!
We have indeed embraced those mountains
And rivers, and laid them waste, as we have laid
The native peoples to waste,
And all the world’s peoples,
And the fucking planet itself.
Shall we audit your progeny?
Pound, your lie was verbatim Walt’s,
Was the lie of nations. “Barbaric yawp”?
Coarse asterisk for a consummate poser?

O Ezra, if it were that simple;
 Some mewing wolf in a trap.
No, Walt's lies, of necessity or no,
 Of 'Self' from sorrow;
 The negation of men's hearts;
Of care and caution, of urges and parts,
 Has become an art's first lie,
Our Madison Avenue of verse; Our Book;
 Our Revelation, our shame and our curse.
Base. For based on a false 'Self,'
 No inheritance could be worse.

Carlo Parcelli is The Beat Poet Laureate of Maryland. He is currently working with Homer, to resurrect the ancient Greek master's lost comic epic, 'Margites or the Triumphant Fool.'

Marlene Patti

Cliché

They say love poems are cliché
but my love for you
is like breathing
like eating
reminds me of chocolate
it's fulfilling
similar to paradise
it's a reason to be better
I feel complete.
Is all of that a cliché too?

Marlene Patti was born in Chile and currently resides in Selden, NY with her husband, Daniel, and her sons, Frankie and Tommy. She is a disability rights advocate and Real Estate Salesperson. She is excited for release of her first chapbook titled *A Mother's Poems* set for April 2019.

Joseph S. Pete

Song of My Selfie

I celebrate myself and photograph myself
Extensively, exhaustively, exhaustingly,
For every atom belonging to me belongs to Instagram.
I prim and preen against a backdrop of silken summer grass.
My tongue, every atom of my blood, yearns for likes.
Born online, and bred online,
I, now thirty-seven thousand posts in,
Hope to cease not until universal virality.

Phones and feeds are full of images, the apps are
Crowded with carefully curated visages.
I breathe the narcissism myself and know it and like it.
It would intoxicate anyone.
The atmosphere of self-adulation and self-aggrandizement
Is ubiquitous.
It is my puckered duck lips forever, I am in love with myself.
I will go by the bank by the wood and search
For dramatic, well-lit backdrops.
The spotted troll swoops by and accuses me, he complains
Of my bling and my bravado.
I am not a bit tamed, I am eminently shareable,
I sound my barbaric yawp through all the Instagram stories of
the world.
The last share of day holds back for me,

It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the
Social media wilds.

It coaxes me to the content and the feed.

I stop somewhere for my likeness loos'd to the

Full-noon till of the untrammeled phone time,

To the song of the scrolling,

To the eddies of the likes and the deadening quietude,

The brick of a thankless phone that wouldn't chirp.

Joseph S. Pete is an award-winning journalist, an Iraq War veteran, an Indiana University graduate, a book reviewer, a photographer, and a frequent guest on Lakeshore Public Radio. He is a Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominee who was named Poet Laureate of Chicago BaconFest, a feat that Geoffrey Chaucer chump never accomplished. His writing and photography have appeared in more than 150 literary journals. Like Bartleby, he would prefer not to.

Lisa Poff

My Mother's Hands

Sun spots, veins and bones,
all the fat of youth gone.
“My hands are never
gonna look like that,”
I thought to myself,
some twenty years ago,
when I took pride in
the fact that my bitten
nails had grown.

I kept them painted
every shade of red,
from tomato to ruby and blood,
with fancy names like
“Big Apple Red-headed Stepchild.”

Sign me up for the degree needed
to name lipstick and polish.
I imagine them sitting around
some conference room table
laughing and drinking Starbucks.

I used to slather my hands in Vaseline,
and wear white cotton gloves to bed

like any good Southern woman.
My skin was soft as Snow
White and laced with crimson.

After years, dish soap, kids, sun,
and such lack of time
to even put on lotion,
I glance down upon
them and remember,
“My hands are never
gonna look like that.”

I had been so sure.
But now I see...
They've become hers.

Lisa Poff is a grad student and single mom of two children, one with a rare medically complex condition. She wears a lot of hats—literally and figuratively. Lisa’s poetry has been published in the *I Am Strength* anthology, *Alexandria Quarterly*, *Crosswinds Poetry Journal*, and is forthcoming in the *Indian River Review*.

Farin Powell

The Ultimate Art

My mentor told me:
“Painting is the ultimate art”;
doesn’t need words to describe it,
or a language to draw it.
I agreed; I was sixteen.
Hundreds of poems later,
and thousands of words
dancing on pages of my novels,
I still believed in *the ultimate art*,
envied the painters,
until the pain began.
Searching for a lost soul,
never finding an answer,
never learning why,
I needed the words
words to replace the tears
words to heal the wounds.
I wrote to my mentor:
“You can’t paint the pain.”

Farin Powell's poems have been published in more than a dozen anthologies including two sponsored by the Northern Virginia Poetry society. Her book of poetry titled *A Piece of Heaven* was published in 2009. She's in the process of publishing her second book of poetry. She is the author of three novels: *Two Weddings*, *Roxana's Revolution*, and *The Judge*.

Kelly J. Powell

Everyday Hero

(for Sean King and all of our Fallen)

He was the one who was everyone's hero. And when I say everyone, I mean everyone. Everyone from the garbage man to the Principal.

From mailman to Marine. We all knew from Kindergarten. In the way that you just do sometimes. It's like that. Until his last

friendly post on Facebook. Wishing us all a goodnight. With a once in a lifetime photo of a once in a lifetime, beautiful, tropical,

Full Moon. Sent out to childhood friends, and his mom and the two guys who survived him on that last day. On the day

a little mist in the fields, fields made of lava from a volcano. Turned into a fatal mist. And it carried him home, like he did his brothers. On

and off the school bus. Or out of the dust on the playground, after a fight. Picked everyone up from the ground when they had

fallen. Where they had fallen as they had lived.
Like a hero. A simple, everyday hero.

~ *Miller Place High School, Class of 1984*

Kelly J. Powell is a graduate of SUNY @ Binghamton's Literature and Rhetoric Program. She is the proud, single mom of a double major, honor student from SUNY @ Stonybrook. And has finally had time to finish her book, *Posthumously Yours*, with love, coming to and from libraries everywhere for everyone.

Pearl Ketover Prilik

Summer People

He was coatless as a boy should be
cutting slices through the summer air
thinking of games until finally his sneakers
touched their walk and he ran to the front
door at the end of the road side-stitching,
breath in happy panting already feeling the
touch of Emily – her family would be in the
kitchen as they were every summer– a pitcher
of cold lemonade with actual slices of lemon
floating -- sugar crystals rimming the lip and
he would say “*Hi*” and the summer would ...

But – it was all wrong – anyone could see it
the path weedy – the daylilies dead – the flag
not flapping on the rusty pole over the door –
the house sagged with that empty feel that
unbodied places get – He slumped for a long
while against that kitchen door picking at the
flaking paint – the sun sank – his mother would
have dinner on the table and be looking out
the window for him – as vocabulary words tumbled
– “*incredibly, apparently, evidently, inexplicably*” –
they were not coming – there was no envelope
nattily fixed to the door with an explanation –

and never would there be – they were summer-
people after all – their lives as far flung-twinkling
as stars – seemingly set forever only to flicker, flash
and without warning slice across the sky burning
bright, and out and irrevocably over.

Dr. Pearl Ketover Prilik is a poet/writer/psychoanalyst, who believes poetry is a form of human expression that eludes linear language. Her writing is varied including several nonfiction books, editor/participant of a post-doc psychoanalytic newsletter and two international poetry journals. PKP has been writing poetry since early childhood and is widely published in print journals and collections. Living on a barrier island on the south shore of Long Island, NY with DJ, her husband extraordinaire and Oliver, the humanoid cat, she continues to write today for an unknown tomorrow. More about PKP and her writing can be found at: “Imagine” <http://drpkp.com>.

Sandra Proto

Generations

Three generations:

Mother–Daughter

Daughter–Mother

Grandmother–Granddaughter

Each is at peace

From their splintered lives

I sit and think about them

And what each has meant to me

The two daughters:

My maternal mother whose harsh

Scorpion sting

Paralyzed me

When I was growing up

Turned weak and softened

When I became a mother

My second mother

(By the way of sisterhood)

Was my best friend and protector

Who cradled me with her
Invisible Cancerian claws
Ever so lightly
As we whispered and laughed
In the darkness

And then there was my grandmother
Who was feisty and an inch in a half taller
That I always butted heads with

But she did shoot her Sagittarius arrow
And pierced my stubborn
Capricornus heart with kind words

They all are gone
And left an emptiness in me

An emptiness that can not
Be filled with neither a husband
Nor children

I know this feeling shall pass

But right now, it is hard to jump
The hurdles of loneliness

I feel myself splintering away
Exposing my rough rawness

I am left to be the lone woman

In my daughters' lives

I miss and need them

To sand away Life's warpness

To make me pliable again

Sandra Proto is a poet, fiction writer, playwright, blogger, and an essayist originally from South Jamaica, Queens and Rockaway. She is the editor of *Move Over World, Mary Is About To Holla! Poems by Mary Overstreet* (2012) and has published three volumes of poetry: a full-length collection *Wrapped Up In Life with Omniscient Eyes* (2011) and two chapbooks *Spring's Tepid Breath* (2014) and *Sketches: An Exphrasic Journey* (2016).

Phyllis C. Quiles

Revolution

I've revolved repeatedly
in the same orbit,
a gaunt galaxy
where I will no longer dwell.
I will swim the sea
and wash ashore
on the beach of a
new universe
where an infant orange sun
uses the horizon
as a boost
to rise.

Phyllis C. Quiles is a poetess endeavoring to express our shared human experience through her words. She hopes others can relate to, enjoy, and find solace in her efforts.

Kevin Rabas

Leave a Tip

In the yellow hotel lobby light,
the pianist ends his set and lifts
his hands from the keys,
nods, raises his glass
of red wine to you,
takes a quick sip, and walks off.

The feeling overtakes you, the joy
you've been given, the notes like
rice, like soap bubbles, in the night air,
and you riffle through the bills in your wallet,
leave two tens in his jar, and also buy
the pianoman another shining glass of wine.

Poet Laureate of Kansas (2017-2019), Kevin Rabas teaches at Emporia State University, where he leads the poetry and playwriting tracks. He has ten books, including *Lisa's Flying Electric Piano*, a Kansas Notable Book and Nelson Poetry Book Award winner.

Stuart P. Radowitz

Peconic

At night I relive my life in dreams.
All the people I know wake early or
late, get up go out, sit around.

All day a golden light, last day
together. The light comes from within.
I steal glances at the ocean, the bay

try to explain, try to touch you.
The ocean laps at the shore.

On our backs in tall fields
green trees form a canopy. Yellow
leaves float down between

hundreds of oak and elm.
A sliver of sun filters through.

Stuart P. Radowitz is an instructor in the English Department at Molloy College, teaching creative writing and critical reading classes. His work focuses on the wonders of nature and has been published in various literary journals including: *Ascent Aspirations*; *Bards Annual 2018*; *Blue Moon Literary and Art Review*; *Calliope*; *Cold Mountain Review*; *Dappled Things*; *Ginosko*; *Nassau County Poet Laureate Society Review Volumes III, V, & VI*; *Otis Nebula*; *PPA Literary Review*; *The Avocet*; and, *The Molloy Literary Journal*.

Shirani Rajapakse

On a Saturday Morning

Earth is saturated. She can't drink anymore.

Little drops of leftover rain congregate
in groups to plan their next move.

Turning faces skywards they
pray for guidance, but the new clouds
all clean and washed puff themselves up making
fun of the rains' predicament.

Passing overhead leaving only momentary shadows
they peer into the raindrops' eyes
to check on their reflections.

Birds come out of nests to offer advice.

Traffic hums low in the distance.

Branches shake themselves like dogs
after a bath scattering showers
adding to the fluster below.

Leaves giggle and dance with the sudden wind
waltzing through. Stretching necks down
they cheer a few bold youngsters leaping off
the higher branches to dive into pools below
creating ripples of discontent.

A car careens over a puddle sending water

flying in all directions.

Raindrops jump as far away as they can
screaming obscenities.

Some land on the car and hang on tight
afraid of falling off or being blown away.

The remaining raindrops regroup warily
burrowing down deep into the bottom of the puddle
while some cling to the sides to avoid
a further run with a vehicle.

A flock of birds divert their flight path to drop in
for some well-deserved rest and relaxation.

Swooping into ponds they wash weary wings
chatting with the birds on branches about
things they have seen, places visited.

A curious worm sticks his head out and is
immediately turned into a juicy snack.

A noodle slinking on the damp grass,
the birds argue over who gets the best pick.

The marmalade cushion on the window sill purrs
at the chirping, but is not interested in getting
her paws all wet. Small mercies for the preening birds.

The sun's moved to another country.

The flock re-arrange feathers
check their flight plan and lift off to a new location as
an angry cloud moves in growling to let out
a roar of displeasure. Large drops

slap leaves before slithering to the ground.
The noise scares little birds on the branches.
They scurry back inside warm homes.

The pools sigh and overflow while
earth braces for more new arrivals off the clouds.

Shirani Rajapakse is the author of two collections of short stories *Breaking News* (2011, 2018) and *I Exist. Therefore I Am* (2018) and the award-winning poetry collection *Chant of a Million Women* (2017). She has also won awards for individual poems and has published widely in journals and anthologies.

Barbara Reiher-Meyers

Today, I dress for you in shadows— bits and pieces of time—
A blur of organ music mixed with Native American drums—
feathers, trinkets and sunshine, dog hair and apple juice—
A crazy quilt wrapped around my thoughts, waiting to
burst into a poem.

Later, in my dreams, all this will be stitched together
to blossom on a crisp new morning,
onto a crisp new page.

~ From the journal of Barb Reiher-Meyers

Barbara Reiher-Meyers was the Long Island poetry matriarch and community organizer. Her weekly poetry email brought hundreds of people together to celebrate the art. She was a board member of LIPC and TNSPS. Barbara has coordinated events for Northport Arts Coalition and Smithtown Arts Council, and conducted poetry workshops for local organizations. She was an active member of the Bards Initiative. Although we lost her in January 2019, her poetry continues to inspire.

Phil Reinstein

Passionately Poetical

You can be
a poet and you know it come with me
jump jivin' jamboree
sit right down and right yourself a letter
somber funny rhythm runny pretty witty

Scratch a line
just do it if you screw it up it's fine
any nameless shameless rhyme
move that cursor voice a verse of
passion pounding punch
allegories inside stories ballads by the bunch
fare thee well my villanelle haiku words too few adieu
poetry

Dial a style
timber timing meter mining take a little while
onomatopoeia will see ya smile
compilations connotations hyperbole imagery
sonnets stanzas word bonanzas metaphor and simile
Coltrane's quatrains quite musical to me
A whacky ode or tacky toad it's poetry BABY

Phil Reinstein found poetry when he finally met, loved, yet lost {lung cancer} the love of his life, Marie Emmons Wayne-Reinstein, ICU nurse and poetess. Sharing Marie's poetry in his grief, Phil aka the Insurance Mon, emerged as a performance poet and musician writing {politically incorrect} poetry songs performing with keyboards, accordion and {limited} vocals.

Georgia Ressmeyer

In Evergreen Park

slants of light through
stained-leaf windows

fall on jagged limbs
rusty needles under

bark-sheathed columns
in arboreal shrines

where walkers,
other creatures stop

listen to whistling
evergreen choirs

roars of prophesying
gusts in high pulpits

creaks of buttresses,
balconies, pews

while quiet chapels
sacred groves

arrest the feet of
restless hikers, hold

them in embrace of
silence, lift spirits

to spires of pines,
firs, cedars, spruces

Georgia Ressmeyer, twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize, has published three poetry books. Her poetry has received awards from the Council for Wisconsin Writers, *Wisconsin People & Ideas*, the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets, The Washington Island Literary Festival, *Peninsula Pulse* and others. Please see www.georgiaressmeyer.com.

Diana R. Richman

Coming Home

Generations leave their footprints
On paths paved by souls seeking truth,
Uncertain of unseen horizons
Their views remain clear deep within.

The life force determination
To sprout upward beyond toxic soil
Of daily surroundings and noise,
Reflects where this energy has been.

So much to say, but kept silent—
Space saved for words on the page,
The mind meditates to surrender
To life's seasons of birth and change.

Another soul awakens
To express its authentic voice,
No longer silenced, now invited
To contribute as mentor and sage.

Welcome all upon awakening
To discover your authentic path,
Feel gratitude throughout nature's cycles
Of cool night time, and warmth of sun.

The gifts of each human being
Enhance our collective lives
Through sciences, trades, and the arts,
And perhaps the poets to come...

Diana R. Richman, Ph.D., licensed psychologist, has been in private practice for many years. Listening to souls' stories, playing the cello in community orchestras, and writing rhymes for special occasions since childhood has evoked her desire to express her voice through the musical language of poetry.

Paul Richmond

Opportunities

Cars going by
Cars everywhere
He stood
On one side of a highway

Many lanes on each side
There was nowhere to cross
Many gazed at the other side

As he walked along the road
Looking at the other side
He saw a large rock sitting in the ditch

He was soon standing with the large rock
In his hand above his head
Approaching the first lane of traffic
As if to throw it at the approaching cars
As they stopped
He proceeded to the next lane
He did this until he made it across the highway
Then he turned, did a little dance and went back
Those who gathered cheered
He then offered

To take others across
For a small fee

He saw the opportunity of growing his own business
He would train others
Have company logo shirts with a rock on it
He was dreaming big
When the police showed up

He was famous for a short period of time
With the newspapers carrying the story
He was the rock guy
He tried to sell rocks
To tourist

Soon he found himself back at his intersection
Holding his old sign
He's a homeless vet
He'll work for food
He's the rock guy
You want to buy a rock

Paul Richmond has been appointed Beat Poet Laureate of Massachusetts by the National Beat Poetry Foundation for 2017 to 2019, and the National Beat Poet Laureate 2019-2020. His work is best described as political and deadpan, delivered wryly humorously in his own style. He has 4 poetry books published and has been published in many anthologies, journals, newspapers, and online magazines

Al Ripandelli

I Will Wait

Go ahead my love
and I will lay here
silent and still
on soft sheets
under the gentle hum
and wind pulses
amidst long curtains strewn
by mother nature's breath
inside the amber soft light
of dusk in summer
I will wait for you.

Al Ripandelli is the author of a poetry chapbook called *Heart's Window*. His favorite Whitman poem is O Me! O Life!

Jeannie E. Roberts

Honoring Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

Plunging feet, your talons snag a perch. Arched and elegant,
your majesty ascends. Clinging to your catch, brown and white
plumage illuminates as you glide.

We watch through division, chain link design, between lake
and river, where silhouette shapes line, where a landscape
of metal joins osprey and pine.

Soaring past gulls, beyond boats, above bergamot and alder,
over basswood and ash, you land atop tower, where nestlings
await in your sturdy stick-made home.

We bow to your presence and prevailing grace, where vines
and wire weave filigree and lace, of leaves laden with pores
a network of space, where sundown seeps color and poetry

of place. Hunger whistles, rapid cheeps resound from the nest.
Anxious chicks chatter until food arrives. For the moment,
silence serves your brood.

Ascending again, your steady wingbeats soar toward walleye.
We attend your bounty, beauty on high, watch through
division, chain link design, between lake and river, pin oak

and pine, where evening's a framework of silhouette and line.
We bow to your presence and prevailing grace, where sundown
seeps color and poetry of place.

Jeannie E. Roberts has authored four poetry collections, including *The Wingspan of Things*, Dancing Girl Press, 2017. Her second children's book, *Rhyme the Roost! A Collection of Poems and Paintings for Children*, was recently released by Daffydowndilly Press, an imprint of Kelsay Books, 2019. She is Poetry Editor of the online literary magazine *Halfway Down the Stairs*.

Rita B. Rose

Recollections of a Long Island School Master

(For *Walt Whitman*)

I

I have lingered upon its unspoiled rocky coast
From North Shore, Orient Point to the Brooklyn Bridge
Along South Shore beaches as white as virgin burlap
From Montauk to the Coney Island light
I gaze upon this peninsula, this natural haven, which attracts
This is the Long of Island, I so love

II

I have listened to the Atlantic Ocean thunder;
Have heard Long Island Sound as she slumbered
Watched seagulls gliding upon the Great South Bay,
Spied Piping Plovers dancing with Cotton-Tailed-Deer
And deep below Great Whites nap in their nurseries,
Flounders hide between cracks...
Indian Switch, Seaside Goldenrod and Bluestem
— Leaves of grass— tickle underfoot as
They cavalcade along my path
This is the Long of Island, I so love

III

I have traveled by carriage as winter boasts its trees of holly
And on horseback in the spring when lilacs bloom
In summer I have rested under oaks, admired silk trees
With their display of pink powdered puffs
And in the fall red maples do weep as they heed their call

This is the Long of Island, I so love

IV

Endless Blue Flag Irises poised along my garden path
Patient spiders with spinnerets weaving silky webs
And warblers clutching boughs of pine sing a wonderful refrain
Whenever I return to my beloved West Hills home—
Then in the evening sky Seven Sisters dip to my delight
I sit upon my rocking chair, holding quill to write
About my birthplace and memories of mother
In this Long of Island, I so love.

Rita B. Rose is a multimedia artist who has gained recognition amongst poetry groups in New York and abroad. She has performed her works for colleges, organizations and social programs. She is a published author and poet and playwright. She is the winner of two Bards awards for Literature (2018) and is the Long Island LGBTQ Poet Laureate, Huntington Arts (2018).

Marc Rosen

Broken Clock, Broken Mirror

It all returns to nothing

It all keeps tumbling down, tumbling down, tumbling down

It all returns to nothing

I just keep letting me down, letting me down, letting me down

~Hideaki Anno

An antique clock once ticked on the wall

Faithfully recording the passage of each second
minute

hour

Without falter or fail

Its glass shield shattered long ago

None came to repair or maintain the clockworks
Entropy claimed the clock, and time rusted

A vanity mirror once clung to the wall

Reflecting all in the room with accuracy

Not a single smudge or distortion to be found

Its shards now litter the barren floor

The frame remains in place, hanging uselessly

Never again will they be forced to show IT

Time and space have shattered and rusted
None came, none knew, none cared
None remembered, none could forget

Marc Rosen is the Treasurer of The Bards Initiative and lead editor of *Unbelief* and *Stonewall's Legacy*. When not solving people's problems, he enjoys tabletop role-playing games and reading on his phone.

Lynn Veach Sadler

Jazz Mass for Kerouac's Navy

Jack Kerouac could have
gone down
on the *Dorchester* that day.

His friend, the Black cook,
Old Glory, did die
on the *Dorchester* that day.

Kerouac deemed his “dead brother”
a saint, heard him
speak from Heaven before that day.

Kerouac had a habit
of scat-singing
with Gregorian chants—jazz Mass.

Kerouac later left the Navy
for “angel tendencies,”
roamed the earth.

—*Between the Lines: A Book of Words, Poetry Festival Chapbook*, 2010. Wilmington: Art Soup, 2010. Unnumbered. Version, “Back Story for Kerouac,” *Voices Israel 2011*, 37 (2011): 149. Lynn Veach Sadler, *Brother, Can You Spare a War?* Grimbergen, Belgium: Aquillrelle Press, 2011: 120. Lynn Veach Sadler, *For Shakespeare’s Duke Orsino: Music, Food, Love*. Grimbergen, Belgium: Aquillrelle Press, 2012: 15. *Music in the Air*. Ed. Whitney Scott. Dyer, Indiana: Outrider Press, 2013: 119.

Former college president Dr. Lynn Veach Sadler has published, in academics, 5 books and 72 articles and has edited 23 books/proceedings and 3 national journals and published 3 newspaper columns. She has 11 poetry chapbooks and 5 full-length collections, 4 novels, a novella, 5 short story collections, 2 nonfiction collections, and 41 plays (1 commissioned for The First International Robert Frost Symposium).

Chuck Salmons

Gathering Leaves with My Son

He tells me the whoosh and crackle is
a pile of crumpled paper,
a million crinkled report cards
with rotten grades, ready to bag and burn
before parents read them
and impose punishment.

I tell him the crash is ocean surf
washing ashore its flotsam, lifeless
leaves with edges mimicking sea shells—
scalloped oak, serrated maple and birch,
and gingko fanning out lobes
like two halves of a clam.

I explain even detritus finds a purpose—
squirrels sculpt their dreys and dens
with dead leaves, fallen twigs,
hollowed husks of acorns and walnuts
rot and feed the soil, sea shells harden
into limestone for bridges and buildings.

But how to tell him what will become
of our own ash and bones...
How to prepare him to scatter what's left
of me—partly among lichen and moss,
partly at sea.

We keep raking, dreaming up metaphors—
fleeting testaments to moments
when we still need one another
to push back against the world,
defy its tendency to cast aside
what it deems no longer useful.

Chuck Salmons currently serves as president of the Ohio Poetry Association. His poems have appeared in several journals and anthologies, including *Pudding Magazine*, *Evening Street Review*, *Common Threads*, *The Fib Review*, *Red Thread Gold Thread*, *Everything Stops and Listens*, and *Appleseeds*. He is the author of two chapbooks: *Stargazer Suite* (2016), available from 11th Hour Press, and *Patch Job* (NightBallet Press, 2017). He is the recipient of a 2018 Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award for poetry. Read more about Chuck and his work at www.ChuckSalmons.com.

Edith Graciela Sanabria

I Come From The South

I Come from the South
where the unknown magic of centuries
had returned in rhythmic verse
where the history has embroidered
Tales of colossus, pyramid temples
dancing with Inca gods, Tiawankotas, Tobas.
I come from the South
Where the wind sings in zamponas,
where the hearts
beat the rhyme of wind and thunders.
I come from the South
My profound roots emerge with the tropical breeze
with whisper of time and space, singing tragedies,
Legends of conquerors, love and mysteries.
I am the sister of the migrant birds
that came escaping from the strong frozen polar torment
the ones that are chirping the nostalgia
hidden in the abstract darkness of uncertain daybreak.
I come from the South
I am the anonymous mother of the abandoned child
that cries his hidden tragedies in the caves of the world,
I come from the South
my blood flows with the power of Iguacu Falls
carrying the baggage of languages and melodies
kept in the depth of Mother Earth,
translated to a song in the soft of the language of the soul.

Edith Graciela Sanabria's poetry has been published in South America: Bolivia and Brazil, in Great Britain, India and in the United States. She is living for more than 28 years in the Washington DC area where she is a member of different groups of poets and art groups. Her bilingual poetry books were published by Grace Press. She writes short stories, and plays and is working on a collection of Pre-Colombian Poetry.

Cindi Sansone-Braff

For My Finnish Grandmother

Lone grey woman
Worn and tired
Staring at the ocean tides
Wondering if this will be the last time
Watching these waters flow.

The handful of sand
She holds tightly to
Still seeps through
And still
She smiles
Knowing within her lies
the soul of a newborn child.

Lone grey woman
Workhorse of the world
Lies still smiling
Still dying
Still very much alive.

Cindi Sansone-Braff, *The Romance Whisperer*, talks to the dead to show you how to live well and love better. She is an award-winning playwright and has a BFA in theatre from the University of Connecticut. She is the author of *Grant Me a Higher Love* and *Why Good People Can't Leave Bad Relationships*. Visit her website at: www.grantmeahigherlove.com.

Stacy Savage

Share Your Gift

Everyone has
a poem within.
It's up to you
to lift your pen
and bring out the art
that echoes inside.
Use your words
and write with pride!
Some people choose
to not reveal
their poetic tones—
It is not their will
to share their talent
with the world,
then after death,
a gift's unfurled
from the papers
tucked away,
uplifting readers
with what they say.
Please do not wait
'til after death
to carry words
on nature's breath,

like Dickinson
of long ago.
Be proud you're a poet,
and let it show!

First published in *Indiana Poet* newsletter, May/June 2016 issue

Stacy Savage has published several anthologies that have benefitted multiple charities. Her latest anthology, *Celestial Musings: Poems Inspired by the Night Sky*, benefits the Charles W. Brown Planetarium at Ball State University. Her work has been published in numerous publications, including *Birds and Blooms* magazine, *Ideals* magazine, and *Asian Geographic* magazine. She recently had a poem used by American Institutes for Research.

Robert Savino

Ghost of Ominous Bones

Lately in shadows of a dark room
branches erratically point to me
spirits come to life in dust particles

faces appear to flicker
familiar faces, eyes that speak
voices clearer than ever before
familiar voices, ominous warnings

messages delivered as brief as night
slowly separate toward morning
waking to a rusted gate left open

Robert Savino, Suffolk County Poet Laureate 2015-2017, is a native Long Island poet, Board Member at the Walt Whitman Birthplace and winner of the 2008 Oberon Poetry Prize. His books include *fireballs of an illuminated scarecrow*, *Inside a Turtle Shell* and recently completed bilingual collection of Italian American Poets of Long Island, *No Distance Between Us*. Robert is currently mentoring the young poet Cristian Martinez.

Jo Scheder

Forest Infusion

Winter's woodsmoke thru burnished air
Imbued with the sighs of wanderers
Evaporated and absorbed

Intercepted by open-pored bark
Stirring dormant veins
With tales told by driftwood fires
Sap tinged with ancient murmurs

Pine scent in oak buds
Birch breath in maple seeds
Remnants of sage
Blown from New Mexico

This tree's juice, complex with past autumns
Astonishes at first taste, delivers
The grove's life, uncoaxed, at dusk

Jo Scheder explores poetry as alternative ethnography. Her poems are included in *Verse Wisconsin*; *Bards Against Hunger* 5th anniversary anthology, and Wisconsin chapbook; and *Free Exercise Thereof*, an exhibit curated by Axle Contemporary Gallery in Santa Fe, NM.

Andrea Schiralli

Never Before

a touch never felt like a million electric shocks tingling through
my body
a kiss never felt like my soul was melting into somebody else's
a glance never felt like someone was piercing into the depths
of my being
a word never felt like my heart could soar—or break.

everything with you feels not only magnified, but just, different.
of course, better. but totally different.
my body has never bent to somebody's will involuntarily and
unthinkingly and
unknowingly becoming addicted
you think painkillers are addictive? then what is your skin?

every single activity on Earth is a different experience by
your side
pool isn't just getting balls into side pockets—it's laughing
and bonding and clicking and spending time with the guy I'm in
love with
eating across from each other in pain and anger (and still, in love)
isn't just a meal—
—it's accepting we hurt each other and wishing we didn't,
wishing we can work it out

holding your hand isn't just your skin against mine—it's you
telling me I am Yours and You are Mine, and me delighting in
that more than anything, proudly showing the world He is Mine
and I am His

washing your hair isn't just massaging shampoo around your
scalp—it's telling you I care about you and want to take care
of you

loving you isn't just feelings of devotion or adoration exchanged
from one human to another, like it has been in the past:
Loving you is life itself.

Andrea Schiralli is a teacher and editor from Long Island. She is
addicted to chocolate, the color pink, and anything that sparkles. Her
favorite writers are Fitzgerald, Maugham, and Remarque.

Robt O'Sullivan Schleith

Spirit Song of Walt Whitman (A Rhapsody)

These sunlit, tree-high
vault of sky faultless poems
 these spared-the-rod-&-spoil't
 lyric ink-spilt children of Walt's
salt of the earth & water-birch
wood place of birth;
 this knotted paper-bark voice
 this boisterous bravado
 Camerado begging choice
the voice of a reasonable god
uncloistered in love, perfect love
 undefiled love-child of wildwood
 rejoicing in blue-sky nakedness;
 this awakening duality of sexuality
this spontaneous, this subcutaneous,
this seditious, wish-fulfilling
fisherman-prophet-poet
 knowingly wrote of it
 the boy trollop's
dollop of delight – the same that loved
both muse & prostitute alike
with trembling fingers dared,
 palms pressed in supplicant

prayer; gray-haired

Mr Whitman with his bristle-brush

twig-&-blade bearded

Mr Whitman bathing w/ the wren & thrush

daisy-tripping, unchastened,

skinny-dipping waist-deep

in sweetwater dripping manly, fervid words

Mr Whitman in a cloud of bumblebees

Counselor to the birds

Mr Whitman in his grove of hickory trees

traced back generations, both

his father, and his father before him-

native, American-heart-&-halcyon

hidden-away Song of Myself

this body electric, subconscious,

collective song of Ourselves.

This is a song for Walt Whitman

who dreamed the poets after him

the scope & breadth

would steal his breath

had he still breath within him

Ah, but he moves among us

still - he always will.

This song is to the spirit of Walt Whitman,

the weight of an Uncivil world laid down upon him;

came home to die
a cardboard butterfly
now witness to his specimen brilliance;

came home to die
hand-painted butterfly
forever witness to his specimen brilliance.

Robt O'Sullivan Schleith hosts the Poets INC (Inland North County) open reading (escondidoarts.org/poets-inc/) and is a regional editor for the *San Diego Poetry Annual*.

Kathleen Schrum

When the Rains Come

(farming the Palouse in the 1930s)

I've heard tell that dreams are free,
but in those days hope cost us \$25 down
and a firm handshake.

We bought that sand-scoured house on the wind-swept land.
The house looked to have been built on lean funds and
wishful thinking,

but we wanted to be part of this land.

The townsfolk said that farming on the Palouse
put us at the crossroads of crazy and poverty.

But I know we'll be fine when the rains come.

I saw thunderstorms on the horizon

but they must have gone somewhere more deserving.

Sometimes it was hard to be grateful for what we had
when what we had was dry, wild, and weedy.

What we had were scrawny chickens and skinny eggs,
and gradually the scrawny chickens made their way to our
dinner table.

The mice had to go outside for a good meal.

Seeds planted with sweat and anticipation grew just enough
to stop the waves of tumbleweeds

blowing before the rainstorms that went elsewhere.

But I know we'll be fine
when the rains come.

Kathleen Schrum is a poet, quilter, and a work-in-progress. Living in Eastern Washington state is the inspiration for her poetry, which has appeared in *The Avocet: A Journal of Nature Poetry*, and *Celebrating Spokane Authors*. She was honored as the Spokane Lilac Poet in 2014 and is a member of the Poetry Scribes of Spokane. She welcomes email at joeygirl@comcast.net

Jack Sheedy

The Open Mic Sign-up Sheet

1. The man who rhymes dust with must,
pink with stink, belly with jelly,
and smiles as he ends each couplet,
as if to say, “See what I did there?”

2. The woman who interrupts
her own poem to say,
“That’s an example of assonance,
as opposed to alliteration.”

3. The bent old man in an overcoat
whose most memorable line distracts you
from counting the panes of glass
in the archway above his head
(eleven? Why eleven?).

4. The heavy young man who sways
from right to left, right to left,
As if waltzing with each
of his love-forsaken verses.

5. The seasoned reader with seven volumes,
each with fourteen fuchsia Post-it tabs
hanging from the pages
but still says, “Bear with me” after each poem.

6. The woman who reads four haiku and two limericks
and then holds up a ceramic ashtray
and says, “This, of course, is a metaphor
for uncertainty.”

7. The woman who speaks alternately in C sharp and
A natural,
never straying into B-flat or F sharp
elongating certain syllables seemingly at random,
never projecting at greater than 38 decibels.

8. The author of this poem trying to convince
tonight’s listeners
that he’s talking about *other* open mic events,
certainly not *tonight’s*, where no one is guilty
of these crimes against the humanities.

Jack Sheedy (www.jacksheedy.com) is a poet, essayist, journalist, and author of the 2012 memoir *Sting of the Heat Bug* (Signalman Publishing). His poetry has appeared in *Mad River Anthology 2018* and in *BEAT-itude: National Beat Poetry Festival 10 Year Anthology* (2018). He lives in northwest Connecticut.

Barbara Shepherd

Creative Spirit

I am from stretched canvas and oil paints
a fan brush in my hand
a script brush waiting in silence
clenched between my teeth
Grumtine's citrus smell permeates my studio

I am from yeast dough and cinnamon
cold marble and peach cobbler
I'm from hardbacks and soft covers
lead pencils and spiral notebooks

From bolts of fabric stored in armoires
drawers and boxes of sewing notions
I thread my way through the patterns of life
I am from now but sleep with dead people
framed on my wall they tell me their secrets
keep me on branches of our family tree

Scraps of paper I own are valuable
birthdates or maiden names of obscure ancestors
dresses I've designed
poems I've scribbled while driving
recipes I've manipulated into gourmet delights
thumbnail sketches for paintings

I am of friendship and labor
clutter and chaos
excitement and frustration
desire and passion to create

I am from joy

“Creative Spirit” – Published in *Poetry is for Everyone*, 2009;
Prosateurs: Tales & Truths, 2018; *Lone Stars Magazine*; and
Harp Strings Poetry Journal.

Barbara Shepherd, the 2019 Poetry Society of Oklahoma Poet Laureate, is a Woody Guthrie Poet, a nominee for Poet Laureate of Oklahoma, and author of *Patchwork Skin*, *River Bend*, *The Potbelly Pig Promise*, and *Vittles and Vignettes*. (www.barbarashepherd.com)

Susan Sheppard

Heaven

There are no clouds here,
Only horses whose hooves spark fire
Against a planet's rings. There is a black river
With the green underbelly of a bank
That leads into another and another.
There is no sun to vanish. But we see
Where one used to be. Fleets
Of fish swim under brackish waters
Like a widow's golden hands. Each star
We pass is a tiny furtive light that is
Really a lone house in the woods
Where some great bear circles.
Heaven prohibits angels of folly
So they are returned to earth.
There are specters of slain deer
Who graze on little but planetary light.
So we stand on the edges of
Ourselves until we fall. Where we land
Can't be known, not even here.
No longer in a fever, we stay until forgetting,
The same way we forget, once, a lover's cast off clothes.

Susan Sheppard is a native West Virginian of mixed ancestry with Lenape, Shawnee, and Swedish origins. (Her Lenape ancestors lived on the Brotherton Indian reservation before being forced into what was then Virginia, now West Virginia)... Sheppard's poetry has won numerous awards including a poetry fellowship from the WV Arts & Humanities. She has been published in *Nimrod*, *River Styx*, *Pennsylvania Review*, *Ohio Review*, *Yellowknife Review* among others.

Linda Simone

This Poem Is for You, Reader

whom I will never see, never meet,
except across this inscribed proscenium.
Will you glean my grains
threshed across a life?
Lean like stalks of wheat
toward love
no matter what, no matter who,
hijabed woman,
white-masked klansman,
children hunted and hiding,
parent who adored
and failed you?

Under the scrim of night
set things right.
Carry your props—
people, birthplace, circumstances, century—
and build a tableau of sunlight streams
where sparrows glide,
where all is one
where you, I, we
enter Sanctuary.

Linda Simone's work includes the poetry collection, *The River Will Save Us* (Kelsay Books, 2018), and two chapbooks, *Archeology* (2014) and *Cow Tippers* (2006). Since moving to San Antonio from New York, her poems have been selected for the city's 2018 Tricentennial and for the San Antonio Poet Laureate's signature project (2016). Lindsim1@aol.com

Bobbi Sinha-Morey

Peaches

I left my ladder propped
in the branches of the peach
tree where my niece continued
to pick fruit and I stood there
so still looking at the opening
in the painted picket fence,
blossoms spilling over the edge,
red as cedar sage; I could see
them lazily dangling in the warm
wind. And under the afternoon
sun, the air pungent from
a neighboring spruce, I longed
to lay in the grass, soak up
the sun while it was still young.
I could idly stay here all day in
this ripe spring weather filling
up buckets with my niece for
pie baking in annual contests
and treats to spread out over
the weeks. I savored how long
the day felt, gazing at the high
crowned road that turned and
led to my mother's friend's

house. I could just melt til
the sky above darkened to
the color of ice tea and we'd
finish up, leaving before
the peel of the moon, dreaming
of another day like this, wishing
it would never stop.

Bobbi Sinha-Morey's poetry has appeared in places such as *Helix Magazine*, *The Tau*, *The Wayfarer*, *Pirene's Fountain*, and *Miller's Pond*. Her books of poetry are available at www.Amazon.com, and her work has been nominated for Best of the Net and the Best of the Net 2018 Anthology Awards hosted by Sundress Publications.

Sheryl Slocum

When in Your Garden Poets Recite

you will not regret
stacked dinner dishes
corks rolled under shrubs

there will be midnight strolls
to savor the nonsound
of a town asleep

out of the dark
the pink of an upturned palm
will call you on

you will walk on water
gaze through ice
into black depths and shiver

steamships' throaty whistles
will clang your heart against
the wide horizon the open sea

leaves of your grape arbor
will caress each other
in the breath of words

and wine from that year
will be burgundy purple
with a tang no one can name

Sheryl Slocum lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where she teaches English as a second language. She publishes frequently in small press magazines and anthologies. Sheryl is a member of the Hartford Avenue Poets and the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets.

Sandra Soli

**Inventing My Ancestor
the Coffin Maker**

He strokes the wood, fitting
board to board, measuring precisely,
the cuts steady, without error.

He's late for supper again
as relatives gather in kitchens
to boil cabbage, roll out pies
talk of measles, and count
the ones left.

He works alone to shape
and plane and sand, using no nails,
everything straight and true,
shavings falling like stars around him

so that his wife will find splinters
in her fingers after the washing,
surprised that the fragrance of mahogany
becomes a husband.

Always the wood must be honored.

The reprise of tree carols

passes from his hands
into other bodies. Praise.

A forest's dream comes true,
the ground opening her sweet
green mouth.

Former teaching artist Sandra Soli has published widely for four decades, with two award-winning chapbooks. Honors include nominations for the Pushcart Prize, an Oklahoma Book Award, and New Delta Review's Eyster Prize in poetry. She has recorded for NPR and supports projects benefiting the homeless. Sandy enjoys collaborative work with artists in several disciplines, as well as wordplay and terrible puns.

Barbara Southard has had work published in *Poet Lore*, *Canary*, *Long Island Quarterly*, *Boones Press*, *Mobius*, *Eratio Poetry Journal*, *PPA Literary Review*, *Long Island Sounds*, *Bards Annual*, as well as several anthologies. She serves on the board of LIPC and teaches poetry to students at Walt Whitman Birthplace.

David Southward

Walt Whitman, Are You Watching?

O Walt, if you could wake to see
our sex-besotted century—
and from your grave, with widening eyes
survey its soulless enterprise—
what would you make of DVDs
in which men copulate in threes?
of college girls who flash their gams
to sociopaths through dorm-room cams?
Would situations so perverse
inspire a sanctifying verse?

The adolescent iPod teems
with auto-tuned erotic dreams,
with rap songs that abuse the rhymes
for “bitch” and “booty” countless times;
while aging men (to whom the young
might turn to right a world gone wrong)
look backward in their search for truth
to the erections of their youth!
Walt, tell us, is that what you meant
by honoring our embodiment?

The cameramen who keep their wits

while dueling vamps adjust their tits
objectify the working class
to kick some rival network's ass.
It seems that our democracy's
no match for such hypocrisies.
Now that ratings rise with pulses,
hotness rules (or so a poll says);
only those can get elected
who've been sexually selected.
Help us, Walt, to understand:
what happened to your promised land?

Newsmen, sporting whitened smiles,
flush out squirming pedophiles
so craftily, there seems no way
to tell the predator from prey.
It's not injustice or oppression
that's exposed, but indiscretion—
as if the nation's only care
was who did what to whom and where.
Can poetry make any sense,
O Captain, of our prurience?
Shall masters of the cell-phone arts
(who publicize their private parts
to strangers querying "how hung?")
presume the body electric sung?

I'd like to think, if you came back,
your verse would take a different tack:
you'd yawp at your Americans

to tie their hair back into buns,
button up their loosened trousers,
save the goodies for their spouses.
But face it, Walt, we know that you
were something of a pervert, too.
You'd loiter round a swimming hole
until the bucks got out of school,
and when they scampered out of reach,
you'd cruise for comrades at the beach.
Odds are, today you'd join the herd
that rolls down Broadway Ave., chauffeured
and add to your long lists of joys
a troupe of naked singing boys.
Maybe we should just embrace
the truth we find so hard to face:

that underneath our Puritan
façade of moral cleanliness,
we've always had an eye for fun,
and spectacle's what we do best.

Who cares if learned astronomers
predict our expedition's failure:
let's send a rocket to the stars
with essence of our genitalia

smeared in stripes of DNA,
so startled aliens can tell
the universe that we said "Hey!"
It won't be calamus they smell

(if they have means olfactory)
but something gutsier, more crass
we picked up absent-mindedly
while tramping through your *Leaves of Grass*.

David Southward teaches in the Honors College at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. His sonnet sequence, *Apocrypha*, was published by Wipf & Stock in 2018. Other poems have appeared recently in *Light, Measure, Stoneboat, Gyroscope Review*, and the anthologies *Van Gogh Dreams* and *Love Affairs at the Villa Nelle*. In 2017 David was awarded the Lorine Niedecker Prize from the Council for Wisconsin Writers (selected by Tyehimba Jess) and the Muse Prize from the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets (selected by Mark Doty). Read more at davidsouthward.com.

Dd. Spungin

One minute poem

There's no time to pour this onto a page
Things to do, a place to be
but hearts will dictate
and anguish pens a script

The play's the meaning
Actors pounce upon a stage
set in the forest
where all is lost

All is always lost

The director cries
his last moment
on the stage

And the audience is in tears,
is torn apart
because the ushers have left the building

Oh Elvis

There is a play upon words
The tickets have softened in the sun

and rain dances on the windshield of your life

*Have I mentioned
the Carnegie Deli has closed?*

This poem is a word against the establishment,
a koan about death,
a falling leaf,
the wilderness, the Dali lama,
the Christmas cards I write

*There is only loneliness left in Mudville
This poem cries for everyone.*

Dd. Spungin hosts events for Poets In Nassau and Performance Poets Association. Her poetry can be found in anthologies and in print and online journals, most recently *Maintenant 13*, *isacoustic*, *First Literary Review East*, and *Fearless*. Several of her poems have been set to music by NY composer, Julie Mandel.

Ed Stever

Dialogue of One

I am sitting
in the steam
of the tub,
my cheeks
resting on the
knees of my
peaked legs,
arms folded
across them,
hands grasping
opposite elbows.

I am peering
down at a shriveled
and submerged
pink penis.

It looks up at me
with its one good eye
and asks,

_Why do you do
the things you do?_

I whisper down
to it. _I don't know.

I honestly don't__
Then it sinks and

recedes into the
truth of my body.
Because I have
nothing to say
I close my eyes
and listen to
the monotonous
thoughts of the faucet,
as it drips its chant
into a pool of past tenses.

Ed Stever, Bards Laureate 2015-2017 Poet, playwright, actor, and director, Ed Stever has published two collections of poetry with Writers Ink Press: *Transparency* and *Propulsion*. *The Man with Tall Skin* was published by Local Gems Press in December of 2014. In that same year he compiled and edited *Unleashing Satellites: The Undergrad Poetry Project*. He recently took first place in the Village of Great Neck Plaza's 5th Annual Poetry Contest. He is one of the editors of the *Suffolk County Poetry Review*.

Tom Stock

Hijacked

HOW DID HE KNOW
MY HANDICAP?
LACK OF COMPUTER SKILL?
HE KNEW
WITH STETHOSCOPE INSIGHT
HE HAD A SUCKER READY TO REEL IN
HAD ME BY THE BALLS FROM THE START
I ASKED MY LAPTOP FOR HELP
AND I GOT IT
IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES
UNAWARE THAT MY BROWSER
WAS BEING BROWSED
HIS NAME WAS SANTOR
SHORT FOR SATAN
SOUNDED COMPASSIONATE,
TECH HELPER AND TRICKSTER
HE HELPED HIMSELF TO ME
STILL IN THE 20TH CENTURY
OF CLICK, SCROLL, DELETE
NEAR THE END OF HIS GUIDANCE
I STARTED FEELING UNCOMFORTABLE
THE END GAME, THE MATCH POINT
HE HAD MY WALLET OPEN
FINALLY RELEASED “I AM BEING JACKED”

ALMOST CONVINCED, HE ASKED
“IS YOU STILL THERE?”
MY TEAM VIEWER SAVED ME
HE WAS ABOUT TO HELP ME
HIJACK MYSELF

tom stock just released his new chapbook: *BARRIER BEACH BACK COUNTRY*; 36 illustrated poems with a Fire Island setting. this high quality chapbook is available by mail: \$12.50 check to tom stock ; 20 willow street, Babylon, NY 11702

J.B. Stone

The Harmonizer

His words could turn
a desert of silence

into a valley of notes
Turning winter into spring
his soul into a quill

to rewrite the melodies in everything
From the California sagebrush
to the Fire Island beach plum

His rhythm was a release
for every caged song
ready to be freed

His legend would be a new gospel
where God was never dead,
just shined under a different light

J.B. Stone is a neurodivergent writer from Brooklyn, now residing in Buffalo. He is the author of two digital chapbooks, *A Place Between Expired Dreams And Renewed Nightmares* (Ghost City Press 2018) and forthcoming, *Fireflies & Hand Grenades* (Stasia Press 2019). His reviews, poetry and fiction have appeared in *BlazeVOX*, *Occulum*, *Maudlin House*, *Rye Whiskey Review*, *Anti-Heroin Chic*, *Peach Mag*, *Crack the Spine*, *Glass*, and elsewhere.

Tim Suermondt

The Dream of Everything

In the flow of this night
I run down a city street
hop onto the back of a public bus
like my father did

and I stand with my younger self
both of us marveling at the wide river
cruising by us straight towards dawn
wishing we had a boat

rimmed with petals of flowers
to help us make our getaway
before the rooster crows
and I will no longer

fall in and out of love faster than Don Juan
the names I have forgotten
the names I will never have the chance
now to remember

Tim Suermondt is the author of four full-length collections of poems, the latest one *The World Doesn't Know You*. His fifth collection *Josephine Baker Swimming Pool* will be coming out from MadHat Press in January 2019. He has published in *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *The Georgia Review*, *Prairie Schooner* and *Plume*, among many others. He lives in Cambridge with his wife, the poet Pui Ying Wong.

Sarah Sullivan

Words from the Candle Flame's Mouth

What a flame does for you is this:
it proves there is still enough oxygen to go around.
You think there's any difference, the glows in the houses of gods,
whatever the gods are named, in whatever house of worship?
Or in the light shed over a Shabbat table or an Advent wreath?

I march you down the street in some sort of comforting silence,
close by your side, as if I held you steady, one shoulder in each hand
while you move through another night cautiously.
I march all who are willing, down that same street.
I listen to your whispers and your somber silence,
and some subtle joy leaps between my flames.
Your tears don't douse my fire. I remain radiant.
I flicker and almost dance for you, even during horror,
because there is still enough oxygen to go around.

When the wax runs low at this vigil or that
and the wick becomes a speck of charcoal,
I leave you with my last breath.
The smoke which follows my flame precedes your next gesture,
that of return to home, of relighting, of sitting down
in an arm chair, on the edge of your bed,

on the floor in a corner—
just sitting somewhere. You will find me again.

The families of killers watch the same flame
and wish for more. For heat.
Not all of the families. Some are content.
The families of victims wish for more.
More than heat, but even heat would help.
I am here to show that there is enough oxygen to go around.
And when there is enough oxygen for me to burn,
heat must be nearby.

Dear god, share your heat, people!
There is no need to hold your palm over my flickering body.
There is no need to toss me off the table.
My flame illuminates your next gesture,
that of a return to home, where you light the candle anew,
and there are teacups on the table, a piece of wood in the stove.
And that shivering stranger sitting on the street,
he would have held a candle, too, had he been offered.

Now is the time to share our light, let others in, offer the tea.

Sarah Sullivan, a resident of Northampton, MA, is a physician, poet, teacher, editor, lover of ocean and sun, partner, parent, friend, meditator, searcher. She is published in *Switchgrass Review*, *Sixfold*, *Free Lit Magazine*, massmed.org, her collections *While it Happened* and *Together*, *In Pieces*, as well as several anthologies. Her website is sarahbsullivan.com.

Samuel Swauger

You who hear in disbanded prose
Unbroken by rules of art
A sweet chocolate symphony
Walk a wet city street.
A storefront washed in neon
Reflects in leather eyes.
Windows flash shiny trinkets,
And old folding knives.
Pale hands, red-tipped,
Dive in plastic bins and
Pluck out a rusty watch.
Now it ticks quietly on your wrist
And the wild torrents of its heart
Say “I love you.”

Samuel Swauger, a writer from Baltimore, MD, has previously been published in *Founder's Favorites* magazine. Samuel's website is samuelswauger.com.

Douglas G. Swezey

#1426 (I Honour You, Walt Whitman)

I honour you with long words
Which give birth to the rise
Of democratic thought we exercise
Daily through a matrix of characters
Developed into a synchronous civics
Ratified in a constitution

I honour you with footsteps
Long strides through lawns and
Fields of green which curl
Beneath my feet and leave
Loose impressions before they
Rise up again and face the sun

I honour you with voice
Speaking to no one and absolutely
Everyone I can about the state
Of being we inhabit here on
An island and anywhere else
We communicate for fellowship

I honour you with memory
By taking souls though the woodwork
Polished by your father to show off
The penny atop the stair he built
And the crib you slept inside
The hearth you warmed and ate beside

I honour you with writing
Publishing article upon article
Showing off the good deeds of
The people in your community
The trials and tribulations
They face on a weekly basis

I honour you with sound
Playing aloud the pitted
Scratchy record of a Dutch
Accent reciting a few lines
Of your own work into a phonograph
Remarkable for its time

I honour you with freedom
Lines of image without end
Describing the land and its features
Its animals insects people all
Inhabitants and their innocence
So wondrous and beautiful to you

I honour you with a latticework
Of all these things combed together
Funneled through a network of minds
Whom organize all of this into
A living, breathing artwork
People gather to hear and read
Called poetry

Douglas G. Swezey received his B.A. in English and Art History from Stony Brook University in 2004, has written as a journalist for many weekly newspapers, was the Managing Editor of *Government Food Services Magazine* and is the author of *Stony Brook University: Off The Record* (College Prowler, 2005). He currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Long Island Poetry Collective and has been an Associate Editor of PoetryBay. He was the host of the LIPC's Reading Series and the co-creator of Super Poem Sunday.

Harvey Taylor

Another Look At The Blueprint

Once upon a time, before Eternity was broken
into disposable bits, every day was Holy.
After a misunderstanding with the landlord
that led to our eviction from Eden, we invented
a new god, WORK, and began worshipping it
six days a week, with the seventh set aside
to catch our breath, and called ‘the Sabbath’—
being unemployed was worse
than being an atheist in the Bible Belt.

Of course, that all seems long ago, and now
we’re quite enlightened, working only five days a week,
that is, if we’re lucky enough to have a job.
Why, sometimes, we even have a long weekend!
Plus, we can daydream for fifty weeks about
our vacation—if we’re lucky enough to get one...
and daydream for fifty years about our retirement...
if we haven’t worked ourselves to death before then.

Apparently some prankster, or demon, or
dyslexic bureaucrat, or sleepy third-shift supervisor
turned the blueprint upside down,
because we’re *supposed* to have two *on* and five *off*,
or *one* on and *six* off—the fine print is a little blurry—
or possibly, *none* on—and *all* off.

A hard-boiled pragmatist may hear this and think:
nice fantasy...but who's going to pick up the trash?
Good question, for that's exactly the point:
no one will pick up the trash—
because nobody will waste time
making junk that turns into trash...
now, that's what I call practical—
the planet doesn't get buried in garbage,
and we discover the treasure of our daily lives.

In my imagination, a morning dawns when we each awaken...
rub our eyes...stretch...yawn...slowly get oriented...and realize,
“...hmmmm...another day...to do exactly as I please...
another 24 whole hours, for meditation and creative activity,
rest and play, joyfully intertwined:
aaaaaaaah...
the life of a trillionaire!”

Harvey Taylor is a founding member of the 30+ year *Earth Poets & Musicians* performance ensemble, peace-&-justice activist, avid gardener, poet, songwriter, composer, CD/video producer, and photographer, who particularly enjoys gigging with his partner, Susie Krause in *Susie & Harvey's Adventures In Song*: www.harveytaylor.net, and facebook.

Gayl Teller

Once Upon a Virtual Afternoon

Around the kitchen's granite-topped island,
family central, each sits, unspeaking,
each looking down in reverence
at an electronic device, 4 of them laid out,
their bold letters dark and compelling
like granite headstone etchings.

She's young and in love with a lush, liquid stain
lipstick she untests on a finger, orders with a click,
hangs out with her best friend on her smartphone,
Snapchats a shot of her goofy brother
fingering his shaky tooth back and forth,
and her friend snaps back one of her dad, mouth open.
As best friends, they snap each other every day
to get their Snapchat rewards with dopamine surges.
Then she texts her how she danced for an hour
with "the cutest partner ever" on Xbox.

Her brother is zapping dragons and monsters,
scoring higher and higher, as more and more
reincarnate in some compulsion loop app.

His mom deletes the split-screen faces
on a conference call completed, unusual for a Sunday,

on “Strategies Enhancing Sensitivity in Public Schools.”
She untouches the lace on the blouse,
unfeels the fluff of the cashmere,
unscented the orange blossom fragrance,
unanswers the landline’s ringing,
lets voicemail tell whomsoever—

“We seldom answer this phone.
Please hang up and text us.” And so
her father, states away, sends his message
one more state removed, “like Plato’s shadows
to the real, like *Reader’s Digest* version
of *Gone With the Wind*,” he teaches,
“like freeze-dried astronaut food
to mom’s delicious stroganoff! And we can’t
get Skype to hold Little Guy’s whole face!”—

As she unhears his voice as he types, she continues
to roam the airless, high-end e-boutiques
of luxury e-tailers along the virtual boulevard,
then checks again for a burst of warmth
and affirmation from a Facebook like.

Her husband reads a news feed
like an exitless maze, structured
so one page path leads down to another
and another and another, till he yawns
silently, opens his online course, reads
the unheard remarks of an unmet professor,
how he should “learn how a sentence works.”

Each one on the island unheard as a computer
tells voicemail, “Our records indicate
you have not updated your free Google account.”
From inside, the little one rouses, cries to be held.

Nassau County Poet Laureate for 2009-11 and the Walt Whitman Birthplace 2016 Poet of the Year, Gayl Teller is author of 6 poetry collections, forthcoming, *Flashlight: New and Selected Poems* (WordTech/Cherry Grove Collections, 2019) and the editor of the poetry anthology *Toward Forgiveness* (Writers Ink, 2011), for which she was awarded a NY State Decentralization Grant for the Arts. Director of the Poetry Series at the Mid-Island Y in Plainview for 24 years, a Hofstra University professor, and the originator of “Stray Feet,” a roving poetry show, she has been the recipient of the Westmoreland Arts & Heritage Poetry Award, the Edgar Allan Poe Prize, a National League of American PEN Women Prize, the Peninsula Library Poetry Prize, a National Federation of State Poetry Societies Prize, and others. Her website: www.gaylteller.com

Jon Tobias

A Reminder to Those who Read Love Poems

I tried to mail the coaster
designed to look like a postcard
as if it were a real postcard,
but you never received it,
and it was never returned.

I imagine a mailman saw what it was
and stole it.

At the end of his day,
he rests his whiskey glass
on top of my description of your nose.

Your face is trapped in amber
on someone else's coffee table.

I am sure he has a kitchen drawer
full of stolen envelopes
and postcards.

Some smell like perfume.
Some have ink smeared
from tears.

He reads them often,
imagining they are for him.

I sent another card this morning,

*These love poems,
Dear Reader,
These are not for you.*

Jon Tobias is a poet and short story author. His most recent credits are with Local Gems Press and A Word With You Press. He is a San Diego native who has recently relocated to Texas where he spends many of his nights writing and or reading poetry at open mics.

J R Turek

Impermanence

*as titled after Stuart McCallum's photograph
in tribute to Walt Whitman*

Leaves of trees birth from bud, vivacious green
hands from slender limbs of bark-skinned wood
flutter, ripple, wave in three-season ode to life
to turn red, yellow, brown in dirge of death
fall, tumble, fly, hands clasped in prayer to land
in patient Mother's lap – O Walt,

how fleeting this life of leaves, and grass, O Walt
how innocent tender lilac shoots of green
how abundant sycamores upon our shifting land
toppled in a rush of wind, charred branches of wood
left behind from wildfire flames of forest death
yet soon new roots, new birth, new life.

This constant state of flux we call life
this ever-changing impermanence, O Walt
each moment a miracle, yet a step closer to death
in birth, our aspirations sprout shoots of green
grow tall and limber, sturdy stately spine of wood
we live knowing we will die and fall upon the land,

yet we fight the absence of permanence to this land
curse our vulnerability, this fickle concision of life
conspire to defeat mortality, beat our breasts, would
that we could live forever – teach us, O Walt
that leaves cannot constantly remain green
that once upon a lifetime, we must face death.

Tell us we'll walk hand in hand with delicate death
led by chants of a thrush's song to an unknown land
of perennial lilacs with leaves of heart-shaped green
every leaf a miracle, as is now our life –
help us live our years without fear of death, O Walt
may we embrace this day without thought of coffin wood.

Let us wake tomorrow and dig a trench to birth new wood
rake away fallen dreams, bury the ash of promised death
observe a spear of summer grass, celebrate ourselves, O Walt
show us every sniff of leaf, every breath of sea and land
to never look through the eyes of the dead but sing of life
sun, moon, stars ever changing, hopes ever green.

O, that we would accept our temporary time on this land
not waste days dreading death, let laughter fill this life
O Walt, we embrace these leaves so capricious with green.

(Sestina)

J R (Judy) Turek, Walt Whitman Birthplace 2019 Long Island Poet of the Year, Bards Laureate 2013-2015, is an internationally published poet, editor, workshop leader, poetry event host, and 22 years as Moderator of the Farmingdale Creative Writing Group, and has 2 Pushcart Prize nominations. She was named a 2017 NYS Woman of Distinction. She is the author of the full-length poetry collections *B is for Betwixt and Between*, *A is for Almost Anything*, *Imagistics*, and *They Come And They Go*. J R, The Purple Poet, lives on Long Island with her soul-mate husband, Paul, her dogs, and her extraordinarily extensive shoe collection. msjevus@optonline.net

Pat Tyrer

A Sestina of Flight

I imagine a place filled with light.
A place to which I can travel.
Cold burning star surrounding a planet
or a celestial body as bright as a star
I want to go to where I imagine
the stars fill the deep, blackened sky.

The path of the Milky Way crosses the sky
resplendent in wide swaths of light.
Who named all the stars I can only imagine
Who wanted to journey, to visit, to travel
little did she know of the moon and the stars
and nothing of the dwarves and the planets.

If I could fly, I'd head toward a distant planet
one floating deep in the icy cold sky
far from the celestial bodies I know, the stars
unfamiliar objects spreading their light
along the path of whirling spheres that I travel
filling that starry, fantastical place I imagine.

Surely ancient astrologers looked out and imagined
the Earth moving along, passing other planets.

Those early scientists must have yearned to travel,
to ascend to the heavens, to ride across the sky
on waves of energy and wave lengths of light.
Never could they imagine the sun as a star.

When I close my eyes I imagine a billion stars
burning brightly even greater than I can imagine
Filling the sky with streams of white light.
from heavenly bodies and unknown planets
filling the expanse of darkened, deep sky
urging us Earthbound explorers to travel.

Wending back through imaginary galaxies I travel
Passing familiar planets and recognizable stars,
sensing which galaxies belong in my sky
the universe I watch and the one I imagine
Mars, Mercury, and Venus, my known planets
Glowing from the reflection of my sun and its light.

In all the intergalactic travel I imagine
of glorious stars and hidden planets
The sky from my porch is the light I adore.

Pat Tyrer is a poet who lives in the Texas Panhandle and writes of the nature of life on the high plains. She has published two books of poetry. Her work has been published by *Indiana Voice Journal*, *Penwood Review*, *Form Quarterly*, and *Plum Tree Tavern*, among others. She enjoys hiking in Palo Duro Canyon birdwatching during the day and star gazing at night. Pat teaches American literature and creative writing at West Texas A&M University in Canyon, Texas where she lives with her husband, Steve, and two dogs, Emma and Winnie.

Lesley Tyson

What we call ourselves in the dark

Names have started to admit their inabilities,
though without a mouth I can swear your name.
For there is some kiss we want our whole lives:
the infinite knocking at the door of every word.

You know you are more than the shape of letters,
that is a definition of an aspiration or a blessing.
Yet we use public names to neutralize our identities,
and we use general terms, like questions repeated.
No satisfactory answers, we avoid asking again and again.
We do not hear the language shape the possibilities.
So, you talk around who you are, what you want.
As if the space between the sharp edges of letters
was a blueprint of a structure without utilities.
Names have started to admit their inabilities.

But, the same sound interrupted by a tiny noise, so quiet,
vibrating below the accepted thresholds of hearing,
becomes the name chosen in the darkness, a garment
worn not to limit, but to protect, to be embellished
to become the alias your imagination calls you,
an endearment, seeking qualities you cannot claim.
We are afraid to go deeper than spontaneous words,
realize connections are more than continuous ink shaping

sounds between emptiness. From dark safety proclaim,
even without a mouth, I can swear your name.

The label summarizing what breathes in my chest
does not contain, or restrain, you to any shape
of emotion, declared on any page, in any book.
Just as I am not the desire I want to believe I need.
No need to identify the mystery in the same way,
but find language to name the temptation that thrives
in the whisper of words of longing we become,
and change the label of what the world names us.
How prepared are you to go beyond what survives?
For there is some kiss we want our whole lives.

Is it truth, or temptation, spoken in a whisper,
that we pretend not to hear with colors present?
We undress in the dark to worship without voices,
creating new myths for each other's imaginations.
We fill the spaces between the shapes of letters:
possibilities of differences erasing definitions, blurred
into solutions resolutions, derived in the parallel
of universes of instantaneously invented language.
We become created names in defiant silence heard:
the infinite knocking at the door of every word.

Lesley Tyson from Reston, Virginia, has had work in issues of *The Poet's Domain* and *NoVA Bards* anthology. Lesley is a regular contributor to several local Northern Virginia poetry groups and co-leads Poets Anonymous ©, Northern Virginia's longest running open reading.

Chris Vannoy

Sing Me A Song

Sing me a song Walt Whitman
from your grave
from the worms mouths
that have dined on you

Sing from your silent peaceful dreams
about how you lived
a staunch ally for the world of words
and the music of words

I have heard you,
not your real voice
for it is still
but the music of your words
rising up from the printed page
to my eyes
to my brain!
your deep voice, strong and husky
ringing in my ears

I have seen you
or caught glimpses of you
in the clatter of the streets
in honking horns and roaring buses billowing smoke

in whining siren cries that split the silent night
I have found you there
smiling, your words ringing in my ears
as you speak to me
of the feeling that you had felt
of the visions you had seen
of wisdom that you drank in like wine
with your eyes
and spilled it back again
onto the pages with your words
so that I would know
that you had lived
and loved
and cried
and laughed
so that I would know
that you are a part of my dream
as I was a part of yours
and that we are parts
of all the dreams
that mankind has dared to dream

Sing to me now Walt Whitman
Sing to me again and again

Phibby Venable

Walking The River

You believe I will speak of blue, but no,
a pale green, an emerald, a birthstone
that believes in fertility
all float in a canoe of good intentions
When I look behind me, there are past passions,
a gathering of decades, the fragile bones of a fish
tagging after another year –

And always, there is the river,
curving around the bend in a question,
washing the long hair of the weeping willow,
the stoic legs of a loon,
seeking the lazy owl, who closes
his eyes on purpose
If you look closely there is a map around my eyes,
a small drink of water in the palm of my hand,
and a coastline I built, from small cocoons –
the ones that never opened, never flew.

Phibby Venable is an Appalachian poet and writer whose works appear in numerous anthologies, magazines, ezines, and journals, both nationally and internationally. She lives in Abingdon, Virginia & works in animal rescue. Twice nominated for the Pushcart Prize, two volumes of poetry -- *Uncertain Ships*, and *Bones Of A Generous Woman*.

Lisa Vihos

Questions for the Open Road

for Walt Whitman

Fatiguers of hamstrings, did you feel me strain
while still afoot upon the road? Did you feel
my sinews work like pulleys on my course?

Carriers of water, what is the secret
of your depth, and why do you forget to swallow?
Do you remember when I leaped over you?

Fellers of trees, how is it that you ever fail?
The tree falls away, no matter what you do.
Stand back, make space for the trunk.

Throwers of pearls, can you see that swine
are everywhere and how easy it is to lose sight
of the one true prize? Wrinklers of bedsheets,

can you feel that death follows life
follows death, and that in between
is the journey, this open road?

First printed in *Fan Mail from Some Flounder*, (Main Street Rag
Publishing, 2018)

The poems of Lisa Vihos have appeared in numerous journals, both print and online. Twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize, her fourth chapbook, *Fan Mail from Some Flounder*, was recently published by Main Street Rag Publishing in 2018. She is the poetry and arts editor of *Stoneboat Literary Journal* and the Sheboygan organizer for 100 Thousand Poets for Change.

Janet Wade

Gone, Never Forgotten

I remember the day you gave me a Rose
And promised to be mine, never letting me go
The days were long, yet I patiently stayed
Treasured in my heart, that love would find a way

The memories we shared I kept at hand
And when feeling lonely I revisited the Land
My eyes sometimes clouded with tears and fears
Embarrassing my tomorrow, years after years

For now, your days are over, your nights all gone
But looking at my rose and I now understand
The promise was to forever, support my heart
My emotions you fenced, even in your depart

I've cried the last tears of sorrow, my tears now, all joy
For our offspring is solid, and now bouncing off the walls
My rose never wilted, you see; 'twas planted too deep within
And now fully bloomed, its fragrance rises upon pure will

Janet Wade lives in Nassau County; she joined the PPA in 2016 and has been attending various locations and participating in their open mic sessions throughout. McLaren-Wade poetry is wide-based and has been written to inspire and motivate individuals from a spiritual point of view. Each of her poems expresses her devotion to God and show how He has used the challenges in her life to shape and refine her way of thinking.

James P. Wagner (Ishwa)

Everyday Alchemy

Alchemy *noun*

- 1. the medieval forerunner of chemistry, based on the supposed transformation of matter. It was concerned particularly with attempts to convert base metals into gold or to find a universal elixir.*

To turn lead into gold,
a power that countless have sought
throughout the ages.
Many of the smartest minds in history had tried
their hand at this craft,
yet hundreds of years of research
and the conclusions of modern chemistry
have taught us
that this science,
is a pseudoscience.
Alchemy doesn't exist.

And yet, my mind, and eyes,
have never fully received that memo
because I see alchemy every day.
I see it in my cup of coffee
when I think of the magic of the change that these
beans go through, with a little hot water

I see it in the kitchen, with every amazing meal
cooked

I see it in the morning paper,
a mere combination of ink and parchment, that now
conveys untold information
through abstract lettering, that we can actually
understand.

I see alchemy performed masterfully through the
kids at the lemonade stand,
taking literally the life gives you lemons quote
and turning it into pocket money
to buy things, that will enhance their summer
creating experiences, and fun times they will
cherish forever.

I see alchemy in the classroom, where the teachers
turn books and lessons
into knowledge.

I see it in the roads we take, that have cut our long
journeys down from days or weeks
to minutes or hours.

I see it in the inventor, the business owner,
the repairman, the plumber, the carpenter,

I hear it, in the music,

I see it, on the stage,
and the television screen,

I look at it, in the art gallery,
and the museum,

I see alchemy,
the concept of turning something of little worth
into something of great worth

in almost everything I see around me,
when I really look, with knowing eyes.
Perhaps the scientists and historians who have
declared alchemy a dead art,
have just gotten so used to the magic
so desensitized to the transmutations we perform
on a daily basis
that they forgot to look
just a little bit deeper
and appreciate
everyday alchemy.

James P. Wagner (Ishwa) is an editor, publisher, award-winning fiction writer, essayist, performance poet, and alum twice over (BA & MALS) of Dowling College. He is the publisher for Local Gems Poetry Press and the Senior Founder and President of the Bards Initiative, a Long Island, NY based non-profit dedicated to using poetry for social improvement. He has been on the advisory boards for the Nassau County Poet Laureate Society and the Walt Whitman Birthplace Association. James also helped with the Dowling College Writing Conference. His poetry is also used to autism advocacy, having appeared at the Naturally Autistic Conference in Vancouver and in *Naturally Autistic Magazine*, as well as his essays. James believes poetry is alive and well and thoroughly enjoys being a part of poetic culture. His most recent collection of poetry is *Ten Year Reunion*. He is the Long Island, NY National Beat Poet Laureate from 2017-2019. James has edited over 50 poetry anthologies.

Jillian Wagner

Perchance to Dream

I dreamed about you again.

Have we met before?

No, not officially.

Have I seen you?

I have.

Have you seen me?

I'm sure you have.

Are you real?

I know you are.

I've seen your face. I've heard your voice.

But, I don't know you.

Not yet.

Will we know each other?

I hope so.

Even if we just meet in dreams,

even if that's the only place we can come face-to-face,

I look forward to the day when I can finally say,

"It's nice to meet you."

Jillian Wagner earned her BA in Creative Writing from Dowling College. She is an active member of Fanfiction.net and is working on her collection of short stories entitled *13 Dark Tales*. She was one of the founding editors of *Conspiracy*, a genre fiction magazine at Dowling College. She is a certified paralegal and sits on the board for the Bards Initiative.

Margarette Wahl

Honor

in memory of my Mom, Doris Wahl

My mom, had a gun
like in westerns or cop movies
a real 22 caliber, sometimes a 32.
My mom, she wasn't scared
came from a tough Bed Stuy neighborhood.
Growing up my brothers would tease:
When mama shoots the gun everyone runs.
Truth is mom's gun was more privilege than protection.
Those people who ran from her,
they are the fastest runners of the world.
You see, my mom she had a gun
held it well above her head
arm straight in the air,
at heaven's reach.
My mom's shot fire for track and field
over 35 years.
She's met Diane Dixon, Jackie Joyner Kersee,
Carl Lewis all
at the starting lines and finish lines.
My mom, she had a gun
with plaques of citations and rewards.
First United States Woman starter
at the Olympic Games

Atlanta, Georgia 1996.
Today, I am just standing here proud
to say I'm her daughter.

Margarette Wahl is a Special Ed Teacher Aide and Poet. She is published in anthologies and two chapbooks with Local Gems Press. She is a member of the Bards Initiative Board, Host for PPA, and NCPLS advisor. Her poem "Honor" was read aloud at the USATF banquet March 24, 2019 where her late mother was inducted into the Track and Field Hall of Fame. Doris Wahl is the first woman starter for the Olympic Games, Atlanta, GA 1996, and the only woman starter ever at Milrose Games in New York City three years in a row.

Herb Wahlsteen

dead are those who have no soul

a gray monotone of smoggy sky
reflects the face of holbrook
like coffins
gas stations industrial parks strip malls houses and cars
lie in neat rows
like coffins
they contain dead and soulless humans

here and there are
ordered lawns and
tiny gardens

this town is one large graveyard with
private grave plots for
worshippers of mediocrity

this poet is sitting

behind a library in
small littered woods
thinking laughing crying
getting really drunk with
birds' songs.

Herb Wahlsteen was a finalist in the *Yale Series of Younger Poets* contest, placed 3rd in the *Writer's Digest 77th Annual Writing Competition: Rhyming Category*, and has had poems published in *Long Island Quarterly*, *the Great South Bay Magazine*, *The Lyric magazine*, *Paumanok Interwoven*, *Suffolk County Poetry Review*, *Bards Annual*, *Form Quarterly*, *13 Days of Halloween*, *String Poet* (2 poems translated from the French, 2 poems translated from the Spanish), and *Measure* magazine.

George Wallace

In A Cottage On The Peconic

--For R.B. Weber

Morning came, the tide was high and about to change, the bay calm, you could almost say 'expectant' and get away with it. I found 3 cartons of books on the floor of the summer cottage he lived in all year round on account of the professor salary. Hardcover mostly, they were for me.

The door to the porch was unlocked, & the note said 'Next Door.'

That's where I found him, eating hardboiled eggs at the kitchen table in the morning sun, laughing out loud with the language guy from the Southampton campus, a litter of eggshells surrounding them.

The joke was something about Derrida.

Richard had fallen down again, he was giving away all his possessions.

George Wallace is writer in residence at the Walt Whitman Birthplace, writing professor at Pace University, and recent winner of the Orpheus Prize (BG), Naim Frasher Prize (MK), CSAO Award (IT), and Alexander Gold Medal in Greece. Suffolk County's first poet laureate, he is editor of Poetrybay, co-editor of Great Weather for Media, and author of 34 chapbooks of poetry, including *A Simple Blues With A Few Intangibles*, chosen as a Top Ten summer poetry reading choice by the *Huffington Post* in 2017.

Laura Grace Weldon

Design Revealed

Answering each cry, heart leaping faster than my limbs,
I rocked tiny ones close,
soft breath and hands patting my face,
lashes closing into worlds past me.

I nodded at mantras
chanted by women my mother's age
enjoy them while they're young
this time goes too fast
though so weary
my skeleton ached for rest.

Motherhood's origami folded and creased me
in unfathomable patterns, as together
we sang to the Milky Way on late night walks,
blessed insects set free from window-bound prisons,
danced through days far from time's imagination.

Mantras come true.
Those little ones now lean over me,
pausing gently before hurrying toward worlds beyond.
Last night I dreamed of fallen fruit, ripe unto bursting.
I offered this bounty to children
but in house after house they had been fed.

Waking, I see design revealed.
I feel the beauty
of greater unfolding.

Laura Grace Weldon is the author of two poetry collections, *Blackbird* (Grayson Books, 2019) and *Tending* (Aldrich Press, 2013). She's written poetry with nursing home residents, used poetry to teach conflict resolution, and as prompts for writing classes although her work appears in more conventional places such as *Verse Daily*, *J Journal*, and *Neurology*. Connect with her at lauragraceweldon.com

Ed Werstein

Thirteen Ways of Looking at Poetry and Poets

Poetry may be an endangered species
but it is not extinct. Occasionally,
in life's dark forests, one can glimpse
sunlit words reflected from the ivory nib
of the poet's pen. An ivory-nibbed
word-pecker at work, finding nourishment
in otherwise wooden words.

If the dictionary is a slab of marble
the poet is Michelangelo chiseling
away all but the beauty.

Poetry is a silver fox fur draped
over the shoulders of Barbara Stanwyck
in life's film noir.

Poetry is the Busby Berkeley of language
choreographing words into dancing images.

If life is bread and water
poetry is spice and herbs.

Poetry is not only the loaf of bread

and the jug of wine, but it's also
the Emperor of Ice Cream serving up the dessert.

In life's desert poetry is an oasis
of date palms, olives and fresh water.

On a stagnant sea, poetry fills the sails
of the ancient mariner's vessel.

Poetry is a travel agent sending us
to Coney Island with Lawrence Ferlinghetti
on a caravan with William Stafford
and fishing with Elizabeth Bishop.

Poetry is a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize
protesting war and injustice
with Denise Levertov and Alan Ginsburg.

Democratic-minded people want poetry read at inaugurations.
Poets want poets inaugurated.

Poetry speaks out against greed and evil.

Poetry goes home at night and puts a bullet
in the head of the super-rich.

Ed Werstein, a regional VP of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets, was awarded the 2018 Lorine Niedecker Prize for Poetry by the Council For Wisconsin Writers. His 2018 book, *A Tar Pit To Dye In*, is available from Kelsay Books. He edited *Bards Against Hunger: Wisconsin Edition*.

Roger West

Podcasting

cusp of dawn
crown of dusk
those husks of time
the intoxicating musk
that invites and entices
leavings of bark and leaf
and fruit suspended
ripe and pendulous

in these 'perpetual transfers and promotions'
nothing is wasted

repollinated seed
refertilised flesh resurging

through yellowtail browntail wormwood pug
chafer leafcutter ladybirdbug
through cloud-bordered brindle pine hoverfly
snowberry clearwing bright-line brown-eye
through white-letter hairstretch through fletch and foil
and by lugworm toil through sand and soil

and even the shuck and shell
is podcast into still lives
for propagating artists.

Roger West is a performing poet, a singer and a songwriter, who lives in France. He writes in French and in English and translates poems from French, or via French into English for publications or for poetry festival readings. He recently performed in a French/English show based on ‘Song of Myself.’

Lynn White

One Last Time

Before the trees begin to fall
I'll take a walk
through the woods
one last time,
hear the leaves glistening
and shaking
in fear of what is to come
some are already fallen
lying
dying,
it's the season for it
after all.
I'll see the light shining
lighting on the leaves of grass
that push soft spikes of green life
in between the fallen
see the light shining
through the trees
one last time.
It lights up the white crosses
chalked on the trunks
as it passes by
too many white crosses

all ready
to mark the graves
of the fallen.
It's the season for it
after all,
always the season for it
one more time.

Lynn White lives in north Wales. Her work is influenced by issues of social justice and events, places and people she has known or imagined. She is especially interested in exploring the boundaries of dream, fantasy and reality. Her poem 'A Rose For Gaza' was shortlisted for the Theatre Cloud 'War Poetry for Today' competition 2014. She was nominated for the Pushcart Prize in 2018.

John Sibley Williams

Genesis

That in the beginning nothing was
known of the beginning only explains
so much. That our fathers had fathers
who traced their trembling back
to strange sources. Rain as weeping.
Storm: rage. All the suffering
wrapped up in us: deserved. & the awe,
the rinds of light that make their way
down here, burning like an anthem.

When the sky can't fill it all in, I too
color outside the edges. Isn't that what
edges are for? Like rules, how they say
you must master before breaking them.
Like how the field is only filled with
what we can see in the field. Doe tracks.
Wolf tracks. Waiting. So much waiting for
our turn. Everything burning endlessly
with the odor of its birth.

John Sibley Williams is the author of *As One Fire Consumes Another* (Orison Poetry Prize) and *Skin Memory* (Backwaters Prize). An eleven-time Pushcart nominee and winner of various awards, John serves as editor of *The Inflectionist Review*. Publications include: *Yale Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Massachusetts Review*, and *Third Coast*.

Gary Winters

Cantina Dog

I live in Baja California
so I don't need a leash for my adopted
Doberman/Shepherd cross. Let's get this straight,
she adopted me. I call her Negra.
At a cantina or bar she quick zips
under the table or stool and cools it.
Tourist dogs tend to drool all over you
make a lot of noise, a general nuisance.
Negra sits in a corner watching while
I disappear inside the men's baño.
When I come out she lies at my feet.
She likes tacos, fish, and tortilla chips.
Once at the Ponderosa Cantina
I strolled past a dog locked inside a car
in the hot sun. The motor was running
the air conditioner. I felt the cool air
escape a window open a good inch.
I sat on a bar stool next to the owner
and ordered a Tecate.
"Nice dog out there," I say to the owner.
He doesn't notice Negra tucked snug up
under my feet at the bar, cool, content.
"I feed him special balanced formula
costs \$28 a ten pound bag,"
the proud owner proclaims to the whole bar.
I don't tell him Negra's chow is kibble

costing seventy-five cents a kilo.
Twenty-seven percent protein. And I don't
let on that she likes chicken bones, veggies
tortilla chips dipped in most anything,
whatever happens to be on my plate.

A man dressed in a safari outfit
a couple stools over pipes up, "I just
took my dog up to El Centro for his
semi-annual checkup at the vet."
"Oh," I say. "How much a thing like that cost?"
"Three-hundred-and-eighty dollars."

I mull that over,
"That include travel expenses?"
"No, that's just the vet."
I mull that too,
"He find anything?"
"Clean bill of health."
I take a slug of Tecate.
Do not mention the time I wormed Negra.
She had some trouble doing her business
and looked up at me for a little help.
I took a brief look and pulled a three-foot
tapeworm out by hand and flung it way out
into the sparse desert scrub for the rats.
Then we went romping off
to a cantina
to see what kind of botanas
they were serving.

Gary Winters authored *The Deer Dancer*, a multicultural novel about a Yaqui boy in Mexico. It won four awards. He has won awards for short story, poetry, and photojournalism. His fiction and poetry have appeared in anthologies and such diverse publications as *Whisperings*, *The Caribbean Writer*, *Free the Marquee*, and *BEAT-itude*, dedicated to the preservation of Beat poetry.

Francine Witte

As soon as you're ready,

get started. Don't wait
for one dot to get up off
its butt and connect itself to another.
Go ahead and draw the line. Don't
forget that time flakes down
like snow, like soft, soft snow.
It ices over and seems permanent,
but ends up swallowed in the ground.
And don't forget that anywhere
you stand you are always close to someone's
daughter dripping period blood
for the first time, or someone else's
daughter getting raped. So much going
on, and you can keep on standing there
if you need to, but don't forget that
the earth is still going to bubble
and shudder underneath you all the while.

Francine Witte is the author of four poetry chapbooks, two flash fiction chapbooks, and the full-length poetry collections *Café Crazy* (Kelsay Books) and the forthcoming *The Theory of Flesh* (Kelsay Books) Her play, *Love is a Bad Neighborhood*, was produced in NYC this past December. She lives in NYC.

Jack Zaffos

Master Of Keys

Master of keys,
jingling.
Master of gates guarding
the secrets of the sky.
Master of explanations
not known.
Keeper of the seasons,
months and years.

Sometimes,
I hear your keys jangling
when the winds blow
and the shrubs by the street
do their dance of praise.

Master of keys,
my thoughts of your secrets
bring me fear,
for thoughts of the unknown
can be terrifying.

Master,
Will you open your gates
for a glimpse?

But, you answer no no no.
But most of all you tell me
Be not afraid.

Jack Zaffos has been creating poetry since he was 18. He is retired Creedmoor Psychiatric Center as a Therapeutic Recreation Specialist and an Intensive Case Manager. He is the author of *Songlines In The Wilderness*.

Ed Zahniser

Whitmanic Manifesto

My poetry is fiery crimson
My poetry is a wounded doe
Looking for shelter in the mountains
—*Josè Martí*

My poems will lift Antaeus off the ground to sap his bully's
strength.

My poems will rescue children from the hobgoblins.

My poems will draw strength from the offshore breeze.

My poems will await the precise moment to catch that perfect
wave.

My poems will drain the slough of despond and replant it with
passion fruit.

My poems will redeem the suicide from banishment to Hell.

My poems will evacuate Hell like the slough of despond.

My poems will celebrate the mountains and make the valleys
fruitful.

My poems will dance to popping pockets of air in poplar fire-
wood.

My poems will reach for Yeats' music in "A Deep Sworn Vow."

My poems will aspire to a relentless rhythm like Pound's "Envoi
1919."

My poems will dress wounds with Whitman in the Civil War.

My poems will try to get you to take them to Mardi Gras.

My poems will boost the ego of outcasts, misfits, and kids not
picked for teams.

My poems will play endless fetch with the rescue pound puppy.

My poems will pull the ripcord on the parachute you forgot to
wear.

My poems will shimmer in the winds of change like aluminum pie
plates.

My poems will castigate the negative.

My poems will laugh at themselves.

My poems will cry with you.

My poems will seldom carry an expiration date.

My poems will come with warnings about possible side effects.

My poems will not cause dangerous interactions with other
poems.

My poems will not seek FDA approval.

My poems won't be full of fillers like so many supplements.

My poems won't pay to play.

My poems won't rue the day.

No way.

Ed Zahniser was a founding editor of Some Of Us Press in Washington, D.C. He co-founded the *Shepherdstown Good News Paper* in 1979 and serves as a contributing editor and writer and poetry page editor. Red Dashboard Press published his sixth book of poems, *Confidence in Being*, in December 2018. Ed is listed as a poet and fiction writer in the Directory of Poets and Writers. As senior writer and editor of the National Park Service Publications Group, Ed wrote and or edited and editorially produced a dozen books on national park areas. He also planned and wrote major parts of a book on North American trees for the Reader's Digest Trade Books Division and has given talks about wilderness and wildlands across North America. Ed is the Poet Laureate of Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

Sally Zakariya

Reading Walt Whitman at McDonald's

McDonald's afternoon ... unexpected jazz
... low sun slicing in on French fries
blooded with ketchup ... two graying men
with coffee ... young man by the window ...
trio of teenage boys posing and preening ...

Whitman wrote of these men, or men like them
in *Memoranda During the War*, wrote
of bringing pencils and paper and consolation
to the wounded of both sides, walking among
regiments of iron cots, a shaggy buffalo
of a man, a man of generous heart

*All Nature so calm in itself ... he wrote ... yet
there the battle raging ... Is this indeed
humanity—these butchers' shambles?*

Reading, I imagine the war-torn grief
buried beneath Walt's bare ellipses

Closing my eyes, I am with him in a field
hospital here in Virginia... closing my eyes
I see a soldier so young he has hardly lived
at all lying limp on a stretcher, a farm boy

muddied with the red earth he once plowed
the earth where the bullet felled him
the earth he will lie in tomorrow and forever

I imagine we hold his hand ... we wash his brow
we help wind bandages around him ... the whitest
cloth ... the tightest weave ... folded thick against
the blood ... folded thick to hold life in

The weak sun breaks through the smoke of war
trails pale fingers of light across his ravaged face

A wing of shadow passes and his eyelids flutter
and when he cries *Mother* we say
She is here ... she is coming

Sally Zakariya's poetry has appeared in some 75 print and online journals and been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Her most recent publication is *The Unknowable Mystery of Other People* (Poetry Box, 2019). She is also the author of *Personal Astronomy*, *When You Escape*, *Insectomania*, and *Arithmetic and other verses*, as well as the editor of a poetry anthology, *Joys of the Table*. Zakariya blogs at www.butdoesitrhyme.com.

Donna Zephrine

Success and Failures

What are your dreams and goals?

Where do you see yourself through the next year?

It is important to have focus, a determination

Need to know where you are going, even though you may not get there

Life can become difficult and try and steer you away from your path

Some goals are achieved, others take longer, but it is crucial that you
always keep trying

It can be frustrating, depressing and disappointing

But that should not stop you

Negative will come, but it's those that turn negatives to positives that
have key to success

Life is short, take the risk, and do not hold back

When you try you will fail at times, but that should not stop you from
trying again

You meet failure head-on and keep trying

A door at the end of the tunnel will open and don't stop trying until it
does

Failure can lead to success and those failures will make it that much
sweeter

Once you succeed you can be a role model and encourage others to
follow your path

Show them not to be afraid to fail, that success will come with hard
work, dedication and perseverance

Donna Zephine was born in Harlem, New York and grew up in Bay Shore, Long Island. Donna graduated from Columbia University School of Social Work in May 2017 and currently works for the New York State Office of Mental Health at Pilgrim Psychiatric Center Outpatient SOCR (State Operated Community Residence). She is a combat veteran who completed two tours in Iraq and finds writing therapeutic in sharing her stories and thoughts and hopefully inspiring others.



Local Gems Poetry Press is a small Long Island, NY based poetry press dedicated to spreading poetry through performance and the written word. Local Gems believes that poetry is the voice of the people, and as the sister organization of the Bards Initiative, believes that poetry can be used to make a difference.

Local Gems Press has published over 200 titles.

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