

## Rocket Science

He said it wouldn't take a brain surgeon  
to figure that out and she said maybe it would  
because lately I've been getting these nagging  
headaches. I get dizzy when it's time for bed  
and I can't seem to pay attention whenever  
you start talking to me about whatever it is  
you are talking to me about.

I'm not happy anymore.

He said it wouldn't take a brain surgeon  
to figure that out.

He said it wouldn't take a rocket scientist  
to figure that out and she said maybe it would  
because I feel that you're light-years away from me.  
Blue as Neptune and cold as Pluto.

There seems to be a huge crater in my heart  
and we'd need the Hubble Telescope to find  
what's left of us.

I'm not happy anymore.

He said it wouldn't take a rocket scientist  
to figure that out.

He said it wouldn't take an Einstein  
to figure that out and she said maybe it would  
but I don't have the time or energy for that matter.  
I'm not happy anymore.

*Eve Forti*

## Government in a Box

*We've got a government in a box, ready to roll in.*

—General Stanley McChrystal, American commander  
in Afghanistan, February 2010

When the killing is nearly done  
our government says  
it's going to deliver  
a brand new government  
in a box  
for those pathetic people  
who never had one  
as good as ours.

But what kind of box, I wonder,  
to hold a whole government?  
A cardboard box?  
As big as a breadbox  
or small as a match box?  
Toolbox? Safe-deposit box?  
Shoe box? A wooden box,  
made of boxwood, shaped  
to look like a casket?

A ballot box? Lunch box?  
Pandora's box?  
Jack-in-the-box?  
Perhaps a box within a box  
within a box, like  
Russian nesting dolls.

Will there be a bow on the box?  
Will the box be wrapped  
with bright tissue? Or just  
brown butcher paper?

Will there be a key  
to open the box?  
Or a password or secret code  
or written instructions in their  
native tongue? Or will they  
need to use box cutters?

And most important, who will  
be chosen to open the box?  
Who will choose the chosen?  
Will there be killing?

*Tom Boswell*

## Thoughts on a Suicide Bomber's Cowardice

*Here, in the deepening blue of our corruption, let  
love be at least one corruption we chose together.*

—Carl Phillips

The fleshy thrill of 72 virgins not being enough  
to overcome the spiritual chill of sudden death,  
you balked, begged, bared your vest to us, and  
somehow we didn't shoot you. Your young eyes  
caught mine, your fright and tears touched  
my own, your youthful tenor cry awakening  
the thought, *there but for the grace of God go I.*

Young man, you're a strange thing sitting here,  
handcuffed, chained, stripped bare. How easy  
it'd be to send you back from whence you came:  
they would surely kill you. There, other fanatics  
would wield the whetted knife: snicker-snack!  
and then your head would roll out bleeding life,  
your healthy body coated hopelessly with red.

Our gods have put us here, done this to us,  
yours as unforgiving of life's soft blasphemies  
as mine, mine as hateful of impiety as yours,  
neither willing to leave us alone to flower.  
Both would have us kill and kill and kill until  
the human race breeds automatons, myrmidons,  
the planet quiet, the ungodly a past disgrace.

Thank you for not killing me. Thank you  
for not dying. Ah, Love, I would bathe you,  
salve your interrogation's welts and wounds,  
take off your binding cords, have you trust  
in what your body believes. Our soft bodies  
don't want to die. They fight our hard minds  
that would sacrifice us all for someone's lie.

*Rob Jacques*

Milltown Cemetery, Belfast, March 16, 1988

The last of the three coffins had just been lowered when the first grenade exploded. I was blown twelve feet away yet landed on my back unhurt. Over the PA a voice called out to get down. The crowd of mourners and journalists broke up in panic, scattering like debris. Some were gathering themselves from grave plots underwater knells booming in the deep of their heads. A woman was carried past, her head covered in blood. Another grenade exploded. Pistol shots rang out and an overweight man with black fuzzy hair and a thin beard appeared out in front of the crowd holding a nine-millimetre Browning pistol in his right hand. He then raised both hands triumphantly up into the air, one fisted, one bepistoled, inciting the crowd to *come on*—his mouth, muted by the din, fish-gasped inaudible insults as he produced another grenade and lobbed it into the air. The sea of people parted as it sank and the dull sound of the explosion lifted a cloud of dust into the overcast sky. Film crews lay spread-eagled behind gravestones, women were screaming, men were shouting, the gunman was smiling.

He began firing in a steady line across the crowd, from his left, causing a sweeping domino effect, like a Mexican wave, as the mourners ducked behind the headstones. I waited, and then ducked as he levelled his pistol to me. I held my face to the inscription on someone's headstone, their life surmised into two monumental dates, as the wave fell away to my left with the gunshots tracing its fatal arc after the falling crest.

Before I stood up, I stole a glance over the headstone. The gunman had turned and was running towards the motorway where a white RUC van was parked on the grass verge. A large group of people chased after him—unarmed hares bolting blindly after the greyhound.

The gunman stopped to turn and fire—the people chasing him dodged their heads like boxers weaving fists. The RUC van drove off. With no bullets left, no grenades, exhausted, the gunman ran onto the deserted motorway chased by three angry men.

At the graveside film crews scrambled out from behind their protective tombstones, cameras rolling, frantic for interviews. A tall, blond presenter for the BBC with her microphone held out like a pistol turned to me and demanded: *What did you see?* As I turned away, I told her what anyone from there, in those days, would say:

*"I saw nothing."*

*Paul McMahon*

## Oblivion

I stand at the window in our kitchen,  
watch as you cut peonies out back—  
two days past the date of our son's death.

We survived another year, numbed  
our way through the day we never mark  
on calendars. Somehow, we slipped

through its dark gate and into this late  
afternoon in May, this quiet evening  
so plain yet aglow with our garden toil.

Bouquet in hand, you walk to the house.  
I listen to *Oblivión*, let bass and *bandoneón*  
lace the air of our circling, the dance

we trace on the floor of fading years—  
even as you sigh, even as you arrange  
your flowers and weep before this small

thing of beauty, this one life that is ours.

*Justin Hunt*

## Wisteria and ashes

Cascades of purple blossoms  
tell me it's past time  
to clean the fireplaces, remove  
what's left of festive winter evenings,  
lazy Sunday afternoons.  
I get the shovel, dustpan and brush,  
dig in. No way to do this  
neatly. The ashes scatter, fill the air.  
Breathing it in, I can't help thinking  
this is what I'll be one day,  
what all of it adds up to.

In the past year two friends lost  
sons to suicide. I struggle  
to ease their grief, know nothing  
I say or do can give them  
the only thing they need. *I want  
to be his mother again*, says one  
when I ask how I can help. So many  
griefs that can't be mended, so many  
dreams go up in smoke. And where  
will the wisteria be in a week? A wisp  
of memory, like ashes of evenings past.

And yet the blossoms fill me  
as I await profusion of peonies  
and, later, summer phlox. What if  
their brilliant petals become  
brown litter in a day?  
We live like butterflies, here  
for an instant, gone  
in a blink, sip deeply  
of nectar where we find it,  
answer to ash.

*Joyce Meyers*

## Still, the rose

in our November yard  
persists, pale as evening's blush,  
tucked away  
on a small bush alone  
in the spent flower beds—

morning glories, mums,  
pansies all pinched back,  
begonias long gone, peonies  
dried to brown, except

this blooming flower,  
one blossom leftover—  
each thin petal whorls  
out of the one before.

The corolla caught  
like a ghost  
that doesn't know it died—  
how it failed to fade  
after many frosts,

after rabbits ate  
the tender leaves, after  
light snow dusted the garden,  
shriveled clematis  
and marigolds—

still, it sticks to stem  
the way my mother  
hung on near death,  
clung to life the way  
love never wants to end.

*Carol Was*

## I watch him, my husband

I watch him, my husband (that word, so strange)  
as he rides his bike in front of me on our way to the beach,  
notice how his knees splay out just a bit,  
his ankles turn in just a hair,  
how his shoulders are relaxed as he steadily pedals  
along in a way that seems so effortless, so easy,  
and I realize that I am getting to see him as a boy—  
that he has always ridden a bike exactly like this  
so I ask him about being a boy and riding bikes  
and he tells me that he rode his bike to school every day with his friends,  
a small fact I had never known  
even after twenty-seven years of being together,  
twenty-seven years after that first night  
when the scent of his cologne  
slid down the back of my throat  
as we kissed on the street in the East Village  
and I would say to my roommate that  
I had just met the man I was going to marry  
which was the word I used to mean forever  
in that time when silence equaled death,  
but who could have predicted, what crystal ball  
could have foretold that we would be here,  
in this new century, as husbands  
with a house and a pile of junk mail, with a drawer  
full of cufflinks and collar stays and a vase stuffed full with poppies,  
or that we would have bike locks and helmets and bottles of water  
and be riding past sand dunes and tidal flats  
and deep into a beech forest stopping to watch  
as the sky turns impossibly pink.

*Jay Kidd*

## Shifting

After he died of Spanish flu  
my grandmother remarried  
a widower who brought along  
two boys, three girls to add  
to her five in the crowded  
Brooklyn apartment where everyone  
shifted to make room for the others  
sharing beds and one toilet and two  
lamp lights to do homework by  
or mending. And I wonder, did  
she tell them beforehand  
that the tailor named Jacob  
was coming to live with them  
because his wife had died  
and he needed a mother  
for his five children  
and she needed a husband  
to help support her five children  
and it was a *mitzvah* that they found  
each other and it wasn't a matter  
of love but necessity and they should never  
forget their own father but show respect  
for the man and his children and maybe  
love, a luxury, would follow  
or maybe it wouldn't and so it was  
one afternoon he climbed the six  
flights to the apartment with his five  
children and knocked on the door.

*Joan I. Siegel*

## Married Love

Words first.

Small words, completing the day.  
Something specific & kind, "Thanks  
for cleaning my hair out of the bathtub"  
would do. Words to draw our bodies  
close, while feet or fingers casually intermingle  
thumb-pad to thumb-nail, toe to instep.  
No heat, yet, but courteous companionship  
that gradually generates heat  
until you perhaps, or I, slip off  
the day.

A stirring might call to me  
or you might feel compelled  
to explore me like a field of wildflowers,  
the exploration slow and languorous  
as a summer afternoon  
with nowhere particular to go.

Then, as afternoon dissolves to twilight,  
the trusted dynamos engage.  
Engines deep in the body  
demanding touch  
and more touch,  
oil and heat,  
shifting through gears  
disrupting the flower-strewn fields  
blasting the summer afternoon  
throwing up roadbeds and bridges  
spanning chasms, forging  
and smelting, recreating  
the entire industrial revolution,  
clanging westward  
smoking,  
and ruthless,  
and out of control.

*Meryl Natchez*

## The Bedouin Dress

It hung in my mother's closet,  
black and heavy as a cloak,  
embroidered at the breast  
with deep red stitches,  
reminder of our brief life  
in Beirut. My father had  
unfolded the rolled bills in his palm,  
haggled for it in the desert heat.

Empty on the hanger,  
it seemed filled with the presence  
of the woman for whom it had been woven.  
Sometimes, I slipped into it,  
my arms vanishing  
into the length of the sleeves,  
the extra yardage pooled at my feet.

I liked to brush my cheek  
against the roughness of the cloth,  
run my thumb over the maze  
of raised threads,  
inhale the world hidden within.

And though it's been twenty years  
since our house burned to a pile of ash,  
I go there in my mind,  
walk through the rooms, remembering,  
touch the dress, again,  
feel it in my palm,  
the way we all visit our losses

in the ruined house of the past.  
The way I visit my brother, still alive  
in the rooms of our childhood,  
rooms of oak and grass, sky and sand.

The way the woman who once wore the dress  
must sit over an evening fire,  
heating the water for tea, remembering a child's hair,  
black as a birdwing, or her husband  
singing under the moon, his voice thinned  
by cigarettes.

Who knows if she ever thinks of the dress?  
A dress she danced in. A dress she wore over the curve  
of her growing womb, a dress she smoothed  
with the palm of her hand before  
setting out the evening meal.

She slid it on in the morning,  
then pulled it off over her long,  
unbraided hair at night.

A dress she wore when she lived in a village  
to which she can never return,  
a dress she carried under her arm as she fled.

Garment of dust, of smoke,  
of memory, garment of exile,  
still hanging in the burned room.

*Danusha Laméris*

## Poetry 2015 Contributors

**Susan Berlin's** poems have appeared in *Alaska Quarterly*, *Asheville Poetry Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Georgetown Review*, *Harvard Review*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *Oberon*, and *Ploughshares*, among many others. A multiple Pushcart Prize nominee and twice a Finalist for the National Poetry Series, she was awarded 1st Prize by the Rhode Island Arts Council in the Galway Kinnell Poetry Contest. She lives in Yarmouth Port, MA.

**Tom Boswell** is a writer, photographer, and community organizer in Wisconsin. Winner of *The Glass Mountain* poetry competition and the PoetryPort Prize, his *Midwestern Heart* won the 2011 Codhill Poetry Chapbook Award. He appears in *Rattle*, *Poet Lore*, *The Potomac Review*, *The Dos Passos Review*, and *Two Thirds North*.

**Lynn Tudor Deming's** chapbook *Heady Rubbish* was selected by Robert Pinsky for the Philbrook Poetry Prize. She was a 2014 finalist for the 49th Parallel Award for Poetry, and runner-up in the Cape Cod National Poetry Poetry Competition (judged by Gerald Stern). Her work has appeared in the *Bellingham Review*, *New South*, *The New Guard*, and elsewhere. Her collection *In the Honeycomb of Bone* was a semi-finalist in the 2014 *Crab Orchard* First Book Contest. Lynn holds a doctorate in clinical psychology and lives in CT.

**Deborah H. Doolittle** teaches at Coastal Carolina Community College. Her two chapbooks are *No Crazy Notions*, winner of the Mary Belle Campbell Award, and *That Echo*, winner of the Longleaf Press Award. She appears in *Blue Line*, *Nerve Cowboy*, *Poem*, and *Trajectory*.

**Eve Forti** lives on the coast of Maine with her husband, Tom. She has taught elementary and high school and served as a campus chaplain. She appears in *Asheville Poetry Review*, *Off the Coast*, and *Common Ground Review*. Her book is *Holding My Breath* (Finishing Line Press).

A native of rural Kansas, **Justin Hunt** lives in Charlotte, NC. In 2012, he retired from a long business career to write poetry and memoir. His work has received several awards and appears in *What Matters* (Jacar Press, 2013), *Pinesong* (North Carolina Poetry Society, 2013), *Kakalak 2013* and *Kakalak 2014* (Main Street Rag Publishing Company), *Pooled Ink* (Northern Colorado Writers, 2014), and *The Freshwater Review*.

**Rob Jacques** resides on a rural island in Washington State's Puget Sound. His work has appeared previously in *Atlanta Review* as well as in *Prairie Schooner*, *Off the Coast*, *Assaracus*, and *War, Literature and the Arts*.

**Tina Johnson** lives in Sitka, Alaska, a small town located on Baranof Island in the Tongass National Rainforest. Her work is influenced by the wet and wild environment in which she lives. Her work has been published in *Connotations*, *Tidal Echoes*, *Chanterelle's Notebook*, *Windfall*, *The Bacon Review*, and *The Old Red Kimono*.

**Jay Kidd's** poetry has appeared in *The Bellevue Literary Review*, *Florida Review*, *Burningword Literary Journal*, *Ruminate Magazine*, and *Mason's Road*. He was the winner of *Ruminate Magazine's* 2013 McCabe Prize for Poetry. Jay has been nominated for inclusion in the *Best New Poets* anthology and is three-time Pushcart Prize nominee. He lives with his husband in New York City.

**Raphael Helena Kosek** teaches American literature and creative writing at Marist College and Dutchess Community College. She appears in *Commonweal*, *Silk Road*, *Big Muddy*, and *The Chattahoochee Review*. Her chapbook *Letting Go* was published by Finishing Line Press.

**Danusha Laméris** lives in Santa Cruz, California, where, after completing a B.A. in Fine Arts at U.C. Santa Cruz, she studied at the Squaw Valley Writers Workshops and with the poet Ellen Bass. Her poems have been published in *American Poetry Review*, *New Letters*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *The SUN*, and *Rattle*, among other journals. She appears in several anthologies, including *The Autumn House Anthology of Contemporary American Poetry*. Her poem "Riding Bareback" was selected by Gary Young as the winner of the 2013 Morton Marcus Memorial Poetry Contest. *The Moons of August*, her first book, was chosen by Naomi Shihab Nye as the winner of the 2013 Autumn House Press Poetry Prize. She teaches independent writing workshops as well as working with individual writers.

**Robert Thomas Lundy's** father was a career naval officer, so he lived in a variety of places as a child, attending schools in 5 states and two countries. A promising career as a perpetual student was cut short by the untimely receipt of a Ph.D. in Demography, which led eventually to a career in software engineering. Along the way he directed a children's theater program, wrote several plays, and is editor of the *Summations*.



series of ekphrastic poetry books for the Escondido Arts Partnership. His poetry has been published in *Analog Science Fiction* and anthologized in several regional collections. He does performance poetry as part of the team of Hither & Yahn.

**Mary Makofske's** latest book, *Traction* (Ashland Poetry, 2011), won the Richard Snyder Prize. Her other books are *The Disappearance of Gargoyles* and *Eating Nasturtiums*, winner of a Flume Press chapbook competition. Her poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Mississippi Review*, *Poetry East*, *Louisville Review*, *Asheville Poetry Review*, *Poetry Daily*, *Calyx*, and other journals and eleven anthologies. She lives in Warwick, NY.

**Joyce Meyers** taught English for a number of years, then practiced law in Philadelphia for almost three decades, specializing in First Amendment law. Her poems have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including *The Comstock Review*, *The Ledge*, *Iodine Poetry Journal*, *Slant*, *The Great American Poetry Show*, and *Common Ground Review*. Winner of *Atlanta Review's* Poetry 2014 competition, she has published two poetry collections, *Wild Mushrooms* (Plan B Press, 2007) and *Shapes of Love* (Finishing Line Press, 2010).

**Paul McMahon** of Sligo, Ireland, has been widely published in journals such as *The Threepenny Review*, *The Salt Anthology of New Writing*, and *The Montreal International Poetry Prize Global Anthology*. His poetry awards include first prize in the Keats-Shelley Poetry Prize, the Ballymaloe International Poetry Prize, the Nottingham Poetry Prize, the Westport Poetry Prize, and the Golden Pen Poetry Prize. He was awarded a Literature Bursary for poetry from The Arts Council of Ireland.

**Marjorie Mir** is the poetry editor for *Monhegan Commons*. Appearing in *Yankee*, *Light*, *Press*, and *Caprice*, she was the winner of *Atlanta Review's* Poetry 2000 competition. She lives in Bronxville, New York, where she is a retired librarian and a member of Poetry Caravan, a group of Westchester writers who share poetry with the residents of nursing homes and assisted-living facilities.

**Meryl Natchez's** most recent book is a bilingual volume, *Poems From the Stray Dog Café: Akhmatova, Mandelstam and Gumilev*. She is co-translator of *Tadeusz Borowski: Selected Poems* and contributor to *Against Forgetting: Twentieth-Century Poetry of Witness*. Her book of poems, *Jade Suit*, appeared in 2001. Her poems and translations have

appeared in various literary magazines. She blogs at [www.dactyls-and-drakes.com](http://www.dactyls-and-drakes.com).

**Rosalind Pace** has lived in Truro, MA, near the sea, for the past 25 years, after a long career as a Poet-in-the-Schools. She teaches memoir, an annual poetry seminar, and Image-Making, a week-long workshop in creative bookmaking at the Provincetown Art Association Museum. Her poems have appeared in *The American Poetry Review*, *Iowa Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Three Rivers Poetry Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Ontario Review*, among others, and most recently in *Nimrod*, *upstreet*, and forthcoming in *Passager*. She feels hugely lucky to have lived and taught in Afghanistan from 1962-1964, during what is now called its Golden Age.

**Sherman Pearl** is immediate past president of Beyond Baroque, Los Angeles' legendary poetry center. He was also a co-founder of the L.A. Poetry Festival and a co-editor of *California Quarterly (CQ)*. His work has won many awards and his latest book of poems is *Elegy for Myself* (Conflux Press, 2015). He and his wife, artist Meredith Gordon, live in Santa Monica, CA.

**Andrea Potos** is the author of five poetry collections, including *We Lit the Lamps Ourselves* (Salmon Poetry, Ireland), *New Girl* (Anchor & Plume Press), and *Yaya's Cloth* (Iris Press). Her latest is *An Ink Like Early Twilight*, from Salmon Press. She is an independent bookseller living in Madison, Wisconsin.

**Mary Rozmus-West** grew up in the United States but has lived in Bath, England, for 27 years. She holds a doctorate in English literature from Fordham University in New York, has recently won the *St. Petersburg Review* annual poetry prize, and is working on her first collection.

**Joan Roberta Ryan** is a professional writer living in Taos, New Mexico. Her recent poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Nimrod*, *The Atlanta Review*, *Calyx*, *Ekphrasis*, *Euphony*, *Cold Mountain Review*, *Off The Coast*, *Roanoke Review*, *Cape Rock*, *Concho River Review*, *Spillway*, *Naugatuck River Review*, and other journals, as well as in the anthology *Poems for Malala Yousafzai*.

**Tanya Shirley** was awarded an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Maryland. She currently teaches in the Department of Literatures in English, UWI, Mona, where she is also a Ph.D. candidate. She is the author of two poetry collections, *She Who Sleeps With Bones* (Peepal Tree Press, 2009) and *The Merchant of Feathers* (Peepal Tree

Press, 2014). Tanya Shirley is a Cave Canem Fellow and has performed her work in England, Scotland, Newfoundland, the United States, and the Caribbean.

**Joan I. Siegel** is the author of *Hyacinth for the Soul* (Deerbrook Editions, 2009), *Light at Point Reyes* (Shabda Press, 2012), *The Fourth Garden* (Shabda Press 2015), and co-author of *Peach Girl: Poems for a Chinese Daughter* (Grayson Books, 2002). She is the recipient of *Poetry Quarterly's* Rebecca Lard Award, the *New Letters* Poetry Award, and the Anna Davidson Rosenberg Prize. A former English professor at SUNY/Orange, she volunteers at a no-kill animal shelter, takes care of ten rescued cats, and watches her garden grow.

**Judith Terzi's** most recent chapbook, *If You Spot Your Brother Floating By*, is a collection of memoir poems from Kattywompus Press. Her poetry has appeared in journals and anthologies including *Myrrh*, *Mothwing*, *Smoke: Erotic Poems* (Tupelo), *Raintown Review*, *Trivia: Voices of Feminism*, *Unsplendid*, and *Wide Awake: The Poets of Los Angeles and Beyond* (Beyond Baroque). She holds an M.A. in French Literature and taught high school French for many years, as well as English at California State University, Los Angeles, and in Algiers, Algeria.

**Carol Was** has appeared in *Connecticut Review*, *Isotope*, *Gettysburg Review*, and *The Southern Review*. Her poetry has been nominated for *Best New Poets*, and her book *Why Not Oysters* was a finalist in the Slaporing Hol Press chapbook competition.

## The Song of the Tang's Li Yu

Before the Song dynasty could begin, the Tang emperor,  
Li Yu—calligrapher, painter, poet—had to die because of a song

about the lost kingdoms seen in the clean bright moon,  
not a hook or crescent, but the full circle. The new emperor

sent him—banished, jailed—a poisoned cup of wine  
after the beautiful court musicians sang Li Yu's poem

about memory and sorrow with sorrow, from memory,  
the poem about the carved railing and jade steps of the palace

abandoned in Nanjing, every stone just then so permanent,  
only the bodies, lovely and not, aging, breaking apart.

Kevin Boyle

## The Executioner

*"After man survives hanging, Iran plans a second attempt."*  
—News item

The eyes are full of illusions, this we know,  
nearsighted to dragons in the distance,  
farsighted to angels at our elbow.  
No, the eyes cannot be trusted, yet  
I watched this man die for that is how  
I feed my children. As you drive your bus,  
hammer your nails, as you shuffle the clouds  
of each day's routine, so I peer through my hood,  
place another over each man's head, bring  
the knot of the noose to the side of his neck  
and whisper: *Go now to a better world.*  
And so it is and so it was, the lever pulled,  
the floor disappearing under feet, the body,  
a lifetime, dropping until the rope said *Stop!*  
and the weightless soul set free.  
Unmasking myself, I took him down,  
man to man. I took what the soul discards  
and carried it to the room to be cleansed  
and made holy for the earth.  
What happened next is still a dream.  
I laid him down, removed the hood,  
but as I turned away a sound slid through  
his throat like the hissing of a snake.  
The curtains of his eyes inched open,  
pupils pulsing on pools of blood.  
I screamed, stood back. His lungs clawed  
for air. He gasped and coughed and spit.  
*Brother, he choked, am I alive or dead?*  
Stunned, I did not answer presently,  
for in that moment I feared that if he were  
the man alive then I must be the dead.  
*Brother, he asked, are you an angel?*

I sat him up and brought him water  
though I knew he could not swallow.  
I placed wet cloths on the raw peel  
of his neck. He stared deep into my eyes  
like a child newly born into the world.  
And I wept as if he were my child,  
wept at the grace of God, wept  
knowing the state and knowing his fate.  
*We've met before*, he said as I held  
him in my arms. *Yes*, I answered.  
*Yes, brother, in another lifetime.*

Peter Serchuk

## Debt

Death borrowed from me  
Huge sums,  
But had no intention  
Of ever paying me back.  
His I.O.U.

Is not worth the paper  
It is written on.  
Emily Dickinson  
May think Death a gentleman  
With horse

& carriage. I know better.  
Walt Whitman,  
Walking arm & arm  
Into the confederate swamps  
With him,

May sing his praises,  
Requiems & anthems.  
I say go spit  
On Death's grave. Let him  
Come crawling,

Pleading poverty,  
Begging for forgiveness.  
I insist  
To be paid back in full.  
Interest included.

Ask any parent  
Who has lost a child.  
He or she  
Will tell you precisely what  
I mean.

*Louis Phillips*

## Instead of Prayer

I press your frozen face  
between my palms,

your steel-drum chest  
unbreathing. You still

smell like you: clean sweat,  
hair oil, ghost of the gasoline

you pumped for forty years.  
You'll be buried in work

clothes because you don't  
have others and because

your son wants God  
to know you at the gate.

Instead of prayer, I press  
my face to yours, sandpaper

over stone. I kiss this death  
that wears my grandfather's

body, his worn blue shirt,  
dry scent. I touch all this

because it's what  
you left me

and because even this  
inheritance will lie,

tomorrow, well beyond  
mouths and hands.

*Melissa Crowe*

## Stewards of the Dead

I watch them circle above me, wings  
like open pages curving slightly  
from the spine, a kettle of royalty  
attended by a page, a lone hawk  
hoping for scraps from their carrion,  
a bit of flesh or shredded muscle.

A wake of them undertakes to clean  
the world of waste, their wings caressing  
leaf mold as they feast on the fallen,  
leaving a heap of knackered bones,  
odd tufts of fur for the devil's cloak.

In Brazilian myth, vultures' wings  
blocked the light until the hero captured  
their king. Man and bird compromised:  
divide the world in two, day and night.

Gods of darkness, death, and terror, take pity.  
Spare me another hour, a jeweled sunrise—  
keep me from the tower of silence,  
for I am not yet finished with words.

*Susan E. Gunter*

## The World Wants Us Well

Said who? As a child I thought the opposite.  
Spider bites festered on my hands and feet;  
scabs from mosquito bites plagued my scalp.  
Ambushed by measles, mumps, and chicken pox,  
nearly undone by pneumonia and bronchitis,  
waylaid by cuts, sprains, bruises, and breaks,  
I thought the world wanted me dead.

It comes as a dawning revelation that health  
is what the body wants, that hives and boils  
are battlegrounds: the world wants us well.  
Each living thing, like the earth itself,  
strains to flourish. The world wants oceans of fish,  
earthworm-rich soil, fecundity, whales.  
The sky wants spreads of blue, rainbows and rain,

and our bodies want honey, dance, gardenias, silk,  
a cheeky mockingbird trilling on its perch.  
Our bodies want us bursting with a thousand blooms.  
When we falter, fall apart, we think  
that brokenness has won, but the world says no.  
It says a mighty chorus will keep singing  
through our day and all throughout our night.

*Lynn Hoggard*

## Orange Juice

Daddy, my daughter asks, did you bring  
orange juice for me?  
It is early morning.  
I am driving her to day care.  
She is four years old.

No, I say, did you want me to bring some?  
She nods.  
I watch her in the rear view mirror.  
The sun is just rising.

OK, I say, in the future I will bring  
orange juice for you.  
Daddy, she says, what is the future?

*Michael Fulop*

## In Play

Played some ball with God  
He throws hard with a deadly curve  
Time and again I swing and miss

Give me fame  
Give me immortality  
Damn, give me a love forever

Always he throws  
I swing and miss  
But the other day

I take to the field again  
And before I grab a bat  
Look in the stands

Find two who call me Dad  
Four who call me Grandpa  
And God, maybe a bit overconfident

Centers the ball  
Over the heart of the plate  
I meet it—drive it far and away

You had to see it  
God, his head down  
Would need relief

While I round the bases  
Touch home  
At last

*Greg Moglia*

## Kilmalkedar (*Cill Mhaoilceadair*)

*"Maolkethair's Church"*

*near Ballyferriter, County Kerry, Ireland*

Kilmalkedar. I keep saying the word aloud—  
the hard, crisp alliteration of the *k*'s,  
the fluid, calm intervention of *l*'s and an *m*,  
the growl of the closing *ar*—a strange  
hunger for the feel of this Irish name.  
Each time, something burrows deeper,  
looking for a meaning, a home.

The ruined church, its massive walls,  
the oldest part without windows,  
is a blind face presiding over its flock  
of lichen-covered headstones. Engravings  
and the ogham stone with its runic spellings  
seek to borrow for human speech  
some of the endurance of mountains.

The stone walls weigh upon the eye,  
graveling the light. They rest in peace  
while restless generations of flesh  
wash through them like the tide.  
I think of bones, masses of them,  
all that added humus  
raising the level of the churchyard.

I am drawn to a small tree  
budding out behind the back wall.  
It reaches so nakedly skyward,  
graceful and alive, expressing  
something it can scarcely contain.  
I imagine it with leaves,  
wagging with the wind.

It is worshipping as a tree worships—  
devoted to the star that gives it life.  
This sole remaining member  
of a disbanded congregation  
seems to proclaim *Christ is risen*—  
whatever a tree might mean  
by *Christ* or *risen*.

*Mark D. Hart*

## Where Swift Fire Moved

The narrow dry road winds like a shed snakeskin  
in the blinding heat of spent afternoon, flowing  
across splinters of bleached white trunks, turning  
to dust or phantoms over the Wind Cave grasslands.  
On a distant hillside, elk grazing, heavy antlers  
like the limbs of trees grown night after night  
beneath the brilliant stars, resolving into the shape  
of flames, into the arms of wild dancers waving  
like the branches of trees, bowing in the wind  
through golden dusty afternoons of August roads,  
curving through meadows of wild rosehips  
and blue sage painted over Paleozoic pages of stone,  
exposed in the lingering ages of slow ice.  
The great heads carry their sculpture of the spirit,  
disappearing below the far ridgeline  
like haze burning off, following invisible trails  
to places of shedding and release. Places I cannot find.  
I have come to love these dry hills where swift fire  
moved, leaving the earth bare, spare as ravens' wings,  
among scorched rocks in this place of wind  
and blackened stumps. Quiet seeps out of the land  
almost like relief, like the penstemons and turtleheads  
and wild roses colored like the dawn, opening  
in the ruins left behind by the lightning's bright fire.  
Perhaps, at the last, my own scars may come  
to seem beautiful to me.

*Michael S. Moos*

## Wong Lee Talks Idaho History to a Friend

This photo here? That's my grandfather, Wong Shu.

He came to America in 1881, a year before Congress  
passed the Chinese Exclusion Act. When he walked  
down the gangplank he looked like any other villager

from Guangdong: loose-fitting blue cotton blouse,  
baggy breeches, split bamboo hat, hair plaited in a queue.

His belongings hung from both ends of a pole  
borne across his shoulders. But over time that changed.

Long odds on the frontier sowed the devil in him.

Notice the revolver and gun belt, the Bowie knife  
on the opposite hip. It didn't matter who you were,  
Chinese or white. Cross him and you'd bleed.

He planned to join Chea Po's gold-mining crew,  
the one murdered by outlaws in Hells Canyon.

But he was stabbed in a knife fight before they left town.  
It took two months to recover. Meanwhile, decomposed

bodies began to fetch up on rocks and gravel bars  
along the Snake. It was a bad omen. When he regained  
his health he drifted down to the Boise Basin.  
That's where this picture was taken.

As you know, it was custom to marry and father a child  
before leaving home. The man had more reason to return.

Wong Shu indeed had done so while in China.  
But years of struggle dimmed his memory.

Like many Chinese, he loved to gamble.

He married a prostitute he won in a card game.

That's my grandmother in this other photograph.  
Although she was still young, circumstances had laid

their brand on her. They died when I was just a boy.

Sometimes they brought me small cakes.

But if I asked about their lives in the West  
only their eyes gave voice, flushed like startled geese.

*Peter Ludwin*



## The Horse Whisperer

In the horse country of Montana  
the magic cowboy delights  
in whispering his rhyming poetry  
into his horse's ear. Its brain  
teeming with the vivid colors  
of the sagebrush and roundups  
in the cowboy's imagery, this splendid  
animal, if frightened by a rattler  
in the field, relaxes and recaptures  
its composure, or, if hanging back  
at posse time, runs like lightning.

But when this animal recites into  
its cowboy's ear, while knocking  
off his Stetson and slobbering  
his cheek, the ancient sagas extolling  
the heroic stampedes of its Ice Age  
ancestors beneath a storm of spears  
let fly by creeping Cro-Magnons disguised  
as deer, the hatless cowboy, ear gobbed  
with slobber, thinks this just another  
show of dumb animal affection  
and awards his mount with a carrot,  
sugar cube or piece of fruit pulled  
from his pocket plus a toss of timothy.

*Mark Smith*

## From the Horse's Mouth

After Caravaggio's  
*The Conversion on the Road to Damascus*

Lord, I'm in trouble now! It's always  
the horse's fault when his rider  
hits the ground with such bone-cracking  
force, as if a giant hand had pushed him  
off my back onto the rocky ground.  
He lies there still, arms raised, eyes closed  
against the strange light pouring down.  
His lips move, but no words come forth—  
he's scaring me! I would bolt if I could,  
but I'm stuck here waiting, trapped  
in this moment, playing my part  
in a drama I don't understand.  
God knows what will happen  
when my master gets up, climbs  
on my back and urges me forward  
the rest of the way to Damascus.

*Barbara J. Mayer*

## Chestnut Mare

I have no reason to walk  
to the pasture anymore  
and stand at the gate,  
calling her name,

to see her head swing up,  
hear her nicker from wide nostrils  
as she gallops toward me,  
her thoroughbred muscles, precise  
and angular, with a machine's strength,  
churning beneath her glowing coat,

or to grab a handful of mane  
and swing onto her back, lie face up  
my legs dangling along her ribs,  
while she drifts, without my knowing where,  
with her own lazy purpose

out the gate,  
eating clover and yellow vetch,  
milk thistle and barley,  
down to the full-flowing river,  
my body becoming

the sound of her big teeth cutting grass,  
her fur, musk like dusty alfalfa,  
and my life, her steady gait moving  
on some unknowable path.

*Dion O'Reilly*

## Observer Effect

under our gaze  
a rose drops a petal  
wings take flight  
innocence stutters

the shivering moon  
grabs clouds for cover  
even the pot won't boil  
eyes change

what they focus on  
yet we think it strange  
when other eyes  
won't meet our own

they say our scrutiny  
can menace molecules  
modify the earth  
and life it cradles

our eyes alter  
the beauty they crave  
better to glance  
then look away

*Lew Forester*

## Barracuda

Shadows, cigar shaped, floating above clean coral currents  
Have chipped away for eons;

The sun, refracted through sea fans, lays its radial pattern  
Down, such a stillness as

The Buddha would envy if he could meditate underwater, if  
He had scuba gear. You

Glide ahead strapped to a little bubbling tank not daring  
To look up where

Shadows edge forward in a slow languid mass like a  
Cloud of logs. They

Are as big as wing tanks of napalm, zebra striped, camouflage-  
Adorned barracuda

Following you, staring their unblinking stare they are famous  
For (even fingerlings along

The beach back away rather than turn and run), that look  
Of curiosity and something

More, something like wonder and amaze at their own  
Fearlessness, how

Far they can go with one imprudent charge, how much flesh  
They can rake with those

Razor teeth, what can your floppy shape be holding in reserve:  
Poisonous jets, hidden

Jaws ready to strike back? O blessed ignorance that keeps  
Them in their place!

*Ron De Maris*

## Kicking the Bucket List

My dearest, here's a bucket list  
(not complete, but it's the gist)  
of things I think are better missed:

a North Atlantic New Year's dip;  
a twisting high dive or a flip;  
wire-whizzing on a zip;

finding lions, rhinos, apes;  
handling snakes so that they drape  
around my form in writhing cape;

tenting in a grizzly park;  
scuba diving deep and dark,  
and rubbing shoulders with a shark.

Don't beg me, dear, to parachute  
or bungee jump. I'm resolute  
on caves—I'll stick to surface routes.

I won't recline in mud bath slime  
or hike a peak in wintertime.  
I'd trek with you when in my prime

but that was years ago, my dear.  
I have this growing, gaping fear  
that I will simply disappear.

Keep this list, where I pretend  
I'll never meet a sudden end.

*Barbara Lydecker Crane*

## Ballerina

My mother, from middle age on,  
professed a desire in youth to be  
a ballerina. She'd rise up  
on her toes, lift her arms

with something less than grace,  
and take a step before  
settling down. She was short  
and slightly plump and

looked nothing like any ballerina  
I'd ever seen. Even into  
old, old age she'd mention it  
now and then, sometimes in a tone

that made it sound as if she thought  
it was still possible. I wonder now,  
more than a decade since she's gone,  
whether there is another life

where our dreams are realized, whether  
she is bounding now across a stage,  
light on her feet as she never was in this life,  
arms raised gracefully in flight.

*Matthew J. Spireng*

## Bedtime Story

Falling asleep,  
hearing Mom practicing  
Chopin's *Military Polonaise in A*.

Soldiers were marching,  
their cadence plagued by mud  
and heavy summer rain.

The tanks were having trouble shifting  
into C-sharp.  
The war wasn't going well.

The enemy had broken the code.  
There was a rumor of a truce  
by Thanksgiving.

*Steve Kupferschmid*

## Musée National d'Art Moderne

*Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris*

It is true that we tend to mock  
what we do not properly understand,  
but when I look at modern art  
I feel it is mocking me.  
Not the art, per se,  
which a fevered child could have done,  
but the artist himself who had to laugh  
when someone first said to him,  
"I want that painting for my museum."  
"Ha, ha," said the *artiste*  
(to himself, of course)  
and now the museum director says,  
"Ho, ho," as I put down 12 Euros to see it.  
While this is all very droll,  
I realize that the last laugh has been on me.

*Brian C. Felder*

## At the Word Party

Lady Riposte and Lady Eschew sip mimosas  
as they parade around the drawing room  
hoping to catch the eye of the Duke of Obfuscation,  
but the duke is chasing after Miss Crepuscular,  
who looks a bit shady to me.

Mr. Inveigle stands out on the balcony,  
peering into the bright room,  
wondering whether Admiral Antediluvian  
will play bridge tonight, and, if so,  
how he can maneuver his way into the game.

The serving girls are pretty things—  
the host, Earl Pomposity, makes sure of that  
despite Lady Termagant's bitter protests—  
he'd like to unbutton Portly later,  
see if she has an extra syllable tucked away.

Back in the kitchen, Mrs. Chubby labors  
over a triple layer speech cake  
but the adverbs and prepositions are burnt,  
and she blames young Eyebrow  
who should have been raised better.

It's the usual affair, noisy and crowded.  
I was glad to see my Aunt Myopic,  
but I miss the rest of our family,  
the ones who never come:  
Gray and Old and Dark and Long.

I should have stayed home with Small,  
the two of us reading our books  
on either side of the fireplace,  
not needing to speak.

*Mary Soon Lee*

## On Cheese

*The poets have been mysteriously silent  
on the subject of cheese.*

—G. K. Chesterton

My question is why, G. K.,  
you didn't weigh in on a wheel  
yourself, the Cheddar Gorge  
magnificent behind you,  
a tang teaching your tongue  
how curds break from whey  
the way words amass  
and hold together  
as time drains off and the poem  
feeds us, savory, sharp.

Not to mention your lack of research.  
See James McIntyre, Scot  
turned Canadian, whose "Ode  
on the Mammoth Cheese Weighing  
Over 7,000 Pounds," personifies,  
in single-rhyme quatrains, the great  
cheese as a monarch with suitors:

*We have seen the Queen of Cheese,  
Laying quietly at your ease,  
Gently fanned by evening breeze—  
Thy fair form no flies dare seize.*

I admit this is scant poetry,  
doggerel composed on the fly  
as the cheese went off to town,  
not to mention the misuse of *lay*  
when what the cheese did was *lie*.

Still, won't you admit cheese  
as worthy food for a poem,  
as well as instructive allegory  
on the act of composing?  
McIntyre needed the lesson:  
for months the wheels brood, cloth-covered,  
and mature at Cheddar in caves  
as cool as stone icicles.  
So a poem should swirl unconscious,  
underground, to gain its particular  
heft and essence. Horace recommends  
waiting eight years to publish.  
Only then the reward: stern  
Stiltons and bleus, brie  
with a startling slap, soft crumbly  
Wensleydale swirled with cranberries.

*Susan Elizabeth Howe*

## I Will Never Read *Dr. Zhivago* Again

Here,  
before the end begins,  
I will do us both a favor  
and close this book forever.  
Stay wrapt in the momentary blue  
of her eyes, like frosted panes of dusk.  
Stay pressed against her breasts,  
divine domes of your own personal orthodoxy.  
Listen only to the whisper of sap  
from a log on the fire and the occasional  
pop of laughing wood. Don't listen  
for the wind, the wolves, the distant  
pop of a rifle, the squeal of footfalls  
in the morning snow, or the turning  
of a page. Hold her tightly.  
Let her hold you. Here.  
Forever.  
Page 421.

I wish that someone  
had done the same for me.

*Caleb Brooks*

## Odes to Effects Pedals

### (chorus)

underwater consensus  
a wash of many  
different voices each saying the same thing differently  
a house built from every timber  
the sound of every

### (reverb)

backs of walls and concert halls  
& ancient caves converted into a circuit  
soaked from stepping in the same river twice

### (looper)

sysiphus is my sideman

### (phaser)

offset perfection  
cosmic oscillator simulation  
sitars & the sounds of vowels  
catscratch. the depth of tremble  
in tune with the universe

### (wah-wah)

funky breath fresh out the devil's mouth  
the nastiest jawbone since Samson slew a thousand  
i am one who has eaten the sun howling at the moon

### (distortion)

slicing off the tops of mountains  
i swallow signals whole  
and spit out  
oceans of sweet frequencies  
i am beauty found in jagged places  
i am destruction / rebuilding / in my own image  
i have holes in me but i sound better than ever

*Simon Mermelstein*

## Moment of Omen

Our wedding was held in a mountain meadow  
in a long ago June with perfect weather, guests  
smiling when our friend Susan proposed a tipsy  
toast to the newly married, popped the cork  
with élan and it (this is true!) hit a passing bird  
in flight, causing shocked silence followed by  
nervous laughs as a few feathers drifted down  
and the bird, looking dazed, soared off  
over the trees and into the invisible future  
and so did we.

*Tom Chandler*

## Going Away

Leaving for vacation is like dying  
a little. We pay our bills, stop  
the paper, clean out the fridge.  
We straighten picture frames,  
give instructions to next of kin  
or next door neighbors—tell them  
where we've hidden the keys.  
We make arrangements  
for the dog, the fish, the plants.  
And as we slip from the house,  
shuffle off our routines, we glance back,  
once more, before pulling away.

*Cathy Carlisi*



## Stroller Tot Violently Upset

In the coffee line it doesn't bother me, the howling causing my skull to vibrate. Don't get me wrong, soon I will escape, there's only so much siren I can stand. But for these moments it's clear to me she is a surrogate wailer. She is the mother who lost her son in a carjack. She is my father when his father died, though it seemed he only ground down his jaw and took care of the details of death. This splitting lamentation is the traffic going slowly past the wreck, fists of metal, glass like confetti after a parade, the stains on the concrete wide and dark. This little creature, her red face bursting, is the audience watching the news, the 55-year-old who lost his job after two decades. She is the boy who fought for his country and now in sleepless nights grabs his rifle at every wind. She's the town crier for every town.

*Clifford Paul Fetters*

## Santa Monica Sunrise

I woke up—bolted up  
in a panic  
felt for my dog-tags  
felt for the thin green wafers that  
once slept over my heart  
like tickets to a steve  
mcqueen movie

tags toyed with by lovers  
little stamped poems read by  
proud parents

proofs sometimes given for public  
assistance—

tokens to be offered to st. peter

I hadn't worn them in twenty years

dawn was breaking  
over the tiny cupcake santa monica  
hills  
the sun speared through  
heartshaped curtains &

like the blades of a damaged  
falling blackhawk

I could hear my dog lapping water  
somewhere near

*Mike Faran*

## Live Scan

The campus cop looks bored, rolling  
my fingers, one by one, over the glass  
he sprays and wipes after each digit,

paying special attention to the thumb,  
and none to my corrosive stink-eye.  
There'll be no crime spree, now, for me,

scoffing at the bumbling Law. No gun-  
battles in stolen cars, my soul-mate volleying  
beside me. No leading a gang of shapely

desperadas, or living king-like in Rio  
while cigar-chomping G-men grind  
their gums. If I ever touched, ungloved,

a bank's bulletproof glass while holding up  
a holdup note, armor-piercing rocket  
in my pen—if I burglarized a home,

then, before roaring away with TV,  
jewels, computer, and a wad of cash,  
made a peanut butter sandwich, and failed

to wipe the jar—if I slit my ex's  
lawyer's throat, or strangled a serial-  
killing pedophile, my hands smudging

his locket stuffed with toddlers' hair...  
these lines, loops, ridges, whorls—  
more than my face, my voice,

my way of making turtles swim in air—  
make me unique and catchable.  
As for crimes that might lurk

in my DNA, Conscience—the scowling  
jailer who's shackled me for years—  
now has a two-ton partner primed

to pin Felonious Ambition in his cell,  
and however loud he screams and hard  
he thrashes, hold him down.

*Charles Harper Webb*

## Coracle of Prayer

As my computer dings  
its constant reminders  
of meetings and appointments,  
I think of those ancient  
Celtic monks and their coracles,  
their faith in fragile canoes and currents  
and a God who will steer  
them where they need to go.

Having given over my free will  
to Microsoft Office, I allow  
the calendar to steer  
me. I rely on my e-mails as a rudder,  
although I often feel adrift  
on this sea of constant communication.

Perhaps it is time to ransom my soul  
which has been sold to this empire  
of the modern workplace.  
I look to the monks  
and their rigorous schedule of prayer.  
Feeling like a true subversive,  
I insert appointments for my spirit  
into the calendar. I code  
them in a secret language  
so my boss won't know I'm speaking  
in a different tongue. I launch  
my coracle of prayer  
into this unknown ocean,  
the shore unseen, my hopes  
rising like incense across a chapel.

*Kristin Berkey-Abbott*

## Anti Carpe Diem

I'm sorting listings in the TV guide  
to eight hundred channels, searching for  
a show to fill the hours until bedtime.  
Three thousand two hundred and fifty-one free films  
available On Demand, but every one  
I've either seen or do not want to see.  
No melodramas. No home improvement shows,  
no lion-downs-gazelle Nature specials.  
A comedy—but not a Seinfeld rerun  
or classic episode of *I Love Lucy*.  
No porn—porn isn't free. No Disney.  
No Great Performance Balanchine Ballet  
or New York Philharmonic Symphony—  
I want to be amused, not educated.  
I want to waste, not make the most of time,  
post-martini, after after-dinner drink,  
even though I know I'll die regretting  
every precious minute I misspent,  
or maybe not, if I'm in agony  
and only wish they'd give me stronger dope  
to dull the pain until the world goes dark  
and I wake up in X-Finity  
and learn that, as on Earth, there's nothing on.

*Richard Cecil*

## Having Mastered Time Travel, Mark Twain Visits the Walmart Supercenter

No, he's not bewildered in the least.  
He takes it all in at once, every snag,  
every ripple, each fluttering of light,  
and sees in a single squint the genius  
of scale, the lucrative convenience  
of a single roof, how it would drown  
every mom and every pop, the way  
it would wash every little river town  
downstream: it's sad, but the profits  
appeal to him. He even likes the way  
his shock of gray looks almost blue  
in the buzzing lamps. And he likes  
the carts piled high with stuff—shelves,  
stacks, pallets, big damn lusty stern-  
wheeled packet-boats of products,  
the aisles of anonymous plastic waste,  
a mix of the necessary and profligate  
proffered with equal absence of shame.  
Mark is a moralist, but not one to let  
his scruples slow the big wheels down.  
He knows sometimes a big steamer  
will overrun a raft just to see the splinters.  
Plus, he always liked circuses, and this one  
comes with miles of bread, cheap if not free.  
He damns it all and spits in the corner.  
He'll write about it. If the book sells  
he'll buy shares: stock ticker WMT.

*William Jolliff*

## Outsourcing My Grief

It was the year after my father died  
that I discovered a Chinese factory  
where I could outsource my grief.  
Built on the edge of a giant city  
whose name I'd never heard,  
the factory has six thousand workers  
who each morning practice *tai chi chuan*  
to ease the sun's components  
through the supply chain of the dawn.  
Now, for just \$39.99 a month, the workers mourn  
on my behalf, performing graceful lotus kicks  
that raise my father's spirit  
like a kite, then send it soaring  
high into a forgetful cloud.

So pleased am I with the results,  
I've upgraded for an additional \$19.99,  
so a troupe of the factory's best workers will recall  
with traditional song and dance  
the fading instance of my father's death.  
And raise in the air a small white stone  
for exactly thirty seconds, the time it took  
for my father's heart to stop.

It seems to be working.  
I can laugh again  
and read the morning news  
without wiping my eyes.  
Still, I worry: If every American did this,  
wouldn't our half of the planet lighten with a forgetful ease  
while China's half became bloated  
with the weight of our outsourced grief?  
And wouldn't the Earth wobble, then  
topple from its solar course?

I asked the factory foreman.  
"Don't worry," he replied.  
"We're used to the grief,  
and so is the Earth."

Twice a year, the factory sends me  
my father's status update report.  
The latest says his spirit floats  
halfway between heaven and earth,  
weightless as a hungry ghost.  
Munching on tofu, chicken feet and rice,  
he sings, as he rarely did in life, *Thank you, everyone,*  
*thank you. Thank you very, very much.*

*Peter Krass*

## Rustbeltasana

Stand tall, feet rooted in the soil of  
the pioneers. Legs straight, body  
aligned, head floating like corn tassel  
above stalks. With shoulders back  
and eyes forward, pull your pockets  
inside out. Avoid gazing out  
windows with views of abandoned  
factories, vacant houses. Bend over,  
hands on floor. Lower self to knees.  
Hold. Rise if you can.

*Lynn Pattison*

## Profession of Flora

We believe in flax, the pearlwort, and coneflower,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
and all that is seen and unseen.

We believe in one phlox, oxalis,  
the wavy cloak fern, eternally begotten of the fleabane,  
gaura from garlic, lobelia from lungwort,  
hollyhock from holly fern,  
begotten, not made, one in Being with the fuchsia.  
Through him all things were made.  
For lupine and sea lavender  
he came down from heaven:  
by the power of the hens-and-chicks  
he was born of the lady's mantle,  
and became mint.  
For our sake he was corydalis under purple moorgrass;  
he is sunflower, dianthus, and blue bugloss.  
On the third day he is rosemary again  
in fulfillment of the sky vine;  
he ascended into helenium  
and is seated at the cattail of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the liverleaf and the deadnettle,  
and hibiscus will have no end.

We believe in the painted daisy,  
the yucca, the giver of chives,  
who proceeds from the fennel and the gentian.  
With the fennel and the gentian  
he is wood fern and globe thistle.  
He has spoken through the poppy.

We believe in one holy campion and agapanthus church.  
We acknowledge one baptisia for the forget-me-not of sins.  
We look for the ravennagrass of the dead,  
and the life of the world to bloom. Amen.

*Jane Varley*

## The Situation

*for Mara*

In the tempest between two bodies  
we know how to have what we  
can't have and time and memory  
weave different beauties. Slow  
in the deeps the assemblages  
of hate are sinking, everything's  
fragmentary except  
the air absorbed by you.  
Worked things are imperfect and the void  
between truths is like  
water brimming from a spring  
that produces everything except  
an eye more perfect than the sun  
that turns you golden. This is an  
unceasing freedom that you cause,  
a word not hidden away on  
the table of reason where  
salamanders and rattlesnakes  
eat reflections of language.

*Juan Gelman*  
translated from the Spanish  
by John Oliver Simon

## Sunday Morning in His Workshop

Left at the ready, a button-headed brace  
rests on the bench, awaiting a command  
to spin once more. With augur bit in place,  
it translates languages of mind and hand  
into a solid, runic poetry.  
Beside the drill, a wood plane seems to float  
on waves of scalloped shavings out to sea,  
its prow scrolled skyward like a dragon boat.  
The other tools attend at ease: the awls,  
screw drivers, chisels, mallets, saws, and pliers  
grouped family, genus, species on the walls  
and shelves as their utility requires.  
A broom and pan lean on an empty chair,  
and cedar incense fills the golden air.

*Duane K. Caylor*

## Contributors

**Kristin Berkey-Abbott** has two chapbooks: *Whistling Past the Graveyard* (Pudding House) and *I Stand Here Shredding Documents* (Finishing Line Press). She oversees the Department of General Education at the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale. [www.kristinberkey-abbott.com](http://www.kristinberkey-abbott.com)

**Kevin Boyle's** new collection is *Astir* (Jacar Press, 2015). *A Home for Wayward Girls* won the New Issues Poetry Prize, and *The Lullaby of History* won the Campbell Award. He teaches at Elon University, NC.

**Caleb Brooks** is a poet and fiction writer who practices marriage and family therapy in Las Vegas. He appears in *Lullwater Review*, *Gihon*, *Meridian Anthology*, *Borderlands*, *Willard & Maple*, and *Puckerbush*.

**Richard Cecil** has four collections of poetry, the most recent of which is *Twenty First Century Blues*.

**Tom Chandler's** latest book is *Guitars of the Stars*. A poet laureate of Rhode Island and Phi Beta Kappa Poet at Brown University, he has read at the Library of Congress and the Robert Frost homestead, and been featured by Garrison Keillor on National Public Radio several times.

**Ron De Maris's** latest book is *Spoor*. He has poems in *Stand*, *Poetry*, *Paris Review*, *APR*, *The Nation*, and *The New Republic*. Still going strong at 85, he lives in Miami, Florida.

**Cathy Carlisi's** poetry has appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *The Mid-American Review*, *Southern Review*, and many others. She is President of BrightHouse, a consultancy to organizations that serve society.

**Duane Caylor** is a physician in Dubuque, Iowa. His poems appear in *First Things*, *Off the Coast*, *Blue Unicorn*, and *Slant*. He has twice been a Nemerov Sonnet Finalist.

**Barbara Lydecker Crane** has two chapbooks, *Zero Gravititas* (White Violet Press, 2012) and *ALPHABETRICKS* (Daffydowndilly Press, 2013). She won the 2011 Helen Schaible International Sonnet Contest.

**Melissa Crowe** has two chapbooks, *Cirque du Crève-Coeur* (dancing girl, 2007) and *Girl, Giant* (Finishing Line, 2013). She's an editor of *Beloit Poetry Journal* and lives in Asheville, North Carolina.

**Mike Faran** is a retired lobster-trap builder living in Ventura, CA. He is author of *We Go to a Fire* (Penury Press) and appears in *Off the Coast*, *Rattle*, *The Comstock Review*, *Chaffin*, and *New Laurel*.

**Brian C. Felder** "is delighted to be making his first appearance in the elegant *Atlanta Review*." He appears widely, including *Connecticut River Review*, *Chiron Review*, *Owen Wister Review*, and *The Humanist*.

**Clifford Paul Feters** has poems in *Literature & Belief*, *The Tampa Review*, *America*, *Pamplermousse*, *The Oxford American*, and *The New York Review of Books*. He lives in Miami with his writes-like-a-dream wife, Debra Dean.

**Lew Forester** is a social worker who has been in remission from multiple myeloma for three years. He enjoys hiking in the mountains of Colorado and volunteering with other cancer patients. He appears in *Main Street Rag*, *Pudding Magazine*, *Colorado Life*, and *Pinyon*.

**Michael Fulop** is a psychiatrist living near Baltimore. He appears in *Rattle*, *Poet Lore*, *Plainsongs*, *Potomac Review*, and *Xavier Review*.

**Juan Gelman** (1930-2014) was the leading Argentine poet of the last half-century. He lived in exile after 1976, when his son and pregnant daughter-in-law were disappeared by the military junta. (He found his granddaughter in 2003.) His career included 37 books, the Argentine National Poetry Prize, and the Miguel Cervantes Prize, the highest honor for a Spanish-language writer.

**Mark D. Hart's** first collection, *Boy Singing to Cattle*, won the Pearl Poetry Prize. He appears in *Chataqua*, *The Evansville Review*, *Rattle*, *Poetry East*, *Margie*, and *Tar River Poetry*. A native of a wheat farm in Washington state, he now lives in an apple orchard in western Mass.

**Lynn Hoggard** is a translator and poet. The latest of her five books is *Motherland, Stories and Poems from Louisiana* (Lamar U. Press, 2014). Her translation of *Nelida* by Marie d'Agoult won the Soeurette Diehl Fraser Award for Best Translation from the Texas Institute of Letters.

**William Jolliff's** latest collection is *Twisted Shapes of Light* (Cascade Press). A professor of English at George Fox U., he appears in *West Branch*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and *Southern Humanities Review*.

**Peter Krass**, a freelance writer and editor, teaches fiction and poetry at the Writers Studio in New York and online. His poem "All Dressed in Green" received a 2012 Pushcart Prize special mention. He appears in *Rattle*, *CommonLine Journal*, and *New Verse News*.



**Steve Kupferschmid** makes his living as a musician and has published numerous choral compositions and arrangements. An editor for the J.W. Pepper music company, his poetry appears in *Poem* and *Creeping Bent*.

**Mary Soon Lee** was born in London and now lives in Pittsburgh. *Crowned*, the first book in her epic fantasy in verse, was published by Dark Renaissance Books in 2015: [www.thesignofthedragon.com](http://www.thesignofthedragon.com)

**Peter Ludwin**'s most recent collection is *Rumors of Fallible Gods*. He appears in *Bitter Oleander*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Nimrod*, *North American Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Santa Fe Literary Review*.

**Barbara J. Mayer** of Mooresville, NC, has appeared in *Plainsongs*, *Main Street Rag*, and *Pebble Lake Review*. Her poetry collection *Peacock* was published by Mount Olive College Press.

**Simon Mermelstein** is the author of *Zero One: Poems for Humans* (Zetataurus Press, 2013). A Pushcart nominee and Poetry Slam finalist, he appears in *RHINO*, *Spillway*, *Light*, *Poems-for-all*, and *Parody*. [simonmermelstein.wordpress.com](http://simonmermelstein.wordpress.com)

**Greg Moglia** is a widely-published poet who teaches philosophy of education at NYU as well as high school physics and psychology.

**Michael S. Moos** has published three poetry collections and won awards from the NEA and the Loft-McKnight Foundation. He has been writer-in-residence for the Academy of American Poets, the O'Neill Theater Center/National Theater for the Deaf, and various state arts councils.

**Dion O'Reilly** lives on a farm in the Santa Cruz mountains and teaches high school creative writing and Spanish. She appears in *The Sun*, *Redwood Coast Review*, *Existere Journal*, and *Numinous Magazine*. She is the creator and publisher of the *PMS Coloring Book*.

**Lynn Pattison**'s poetry books include *tesla's daughter* (March St. Press), *Walking Back the Cat* (Bright Hill Press) and *Light That Sounds Like Breaking* (Mayapple Press). She appears in *Rhino*, *The Notre Dame Review*, *The MacGuffin*, and *Harpur Palate*.

**John Oliver Simon** is a poet of the Berkeley Sixties and a translator of contemporary Latin American poetry. Working with the California Poets in the Schools since 1971, he was the River of Words 2013 Teacher of the Year. His new book is *Grandpa's Syllables*, from White Violet Press.

**Mark Smith** is a novelist and author of *The Death of a Detective*, an NBA finalist recently republished by Brash Books. A recipient of

fellowships from the Rockefeller, Guggenheim, Fulbright, and Ingram Merrill foundations, he appears in *Poetry East*, *Gettysburg Review*, *New Ohio Review*, *Pleiades*, *Mid-west Review*, and *Tampa Review*.

**Matthew J. Spireng**'s book *What Focus Is* was published by Word Press in 2011. *Out of Body* (Bluestem Press, 2006) won the Bluestem Poetry Award. His chapbooks are *Clear Cut*, *Young Farmer*, *Encounters*, *Just This*, and *Inspiration Point*, winner of the Bright Hill Press Competition.

**Jane Varley** is Chair of the English Department at Muskingum University in Ohio. She has three books in three different genres, including a poetry chapbook from Finishing Line Press.

**Charles Harper Webb**'s latest books are *What Things Are Made Of* and *Brain Camp*, both from the University of Pittsburgh Press. A recipient of grants from the Guggenheim and Whiting foundations, he teaches creative writing at California State University, Long Beach.

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