

Bards Annual 2017

The Annual Publication of The Bards Initiative

Bards Initiative

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Foreword

Welcome to the 7th year of Bards Annual. When this group was first started back in 2010, I don't think any of us imagined the extent to which it would grow. I've said in the past that Long Island is experiencing a golden age of poetry, and I see that golden age continue to grow. The book you are holding contains over 150 poets, once again, the biggest Bards Annual yet!

As not only the president of The Bards Initiative but also the publisher for Local Gems Press, (which handles quite a few of the local publications and publishes the majority of the local poets) I see what goes on behind the scenes--I see the number of books being sold--the poets reordering more copies because they've run out. I know how many copies of the anthologies move, and every year that number rises.

This past year, with the fourth ever Bard Against Hunger, the event we started here on Long Island grew from a local event to a national event being held in 6 different states. This year, we expect that more than 10 states will participate in this growing national project--which started right here on Long Island.

Our sister Bards group in Northern Virginia, NoVA Bards continues to grow in leaps and bounds thanks to our VP and President of NoVA Bards Nick Hale--many of the poets down there have purchased copies of previous year's Bards Annuals to become familiar with our work. They are very impressed with how many poets we manage to amass at some of our events--and as the Bards continues to make friends with other poetry communities I can say that the work we do here on Long Island should and does serve as an example for poetry communities in other regions. Regions where there are one or

two poetry events in a given month for miles in any direction--here on LI we have options almost every night of the week--sometimes more than one!

This year we gave the first ever Bards Poetry Scholarship to a Northport High School student (who has a poem in this book!) We plan to continue the scholarship program in the future. And this year we also gave birth to the Apprentice Poets program--culminating in an after-school club at Norwood Avenue school of 3rd-5th grade poets, and the launch of an anthology of their work. These young poets were wise beyond their years and we hope to continue and expand this program as well--making more opportunities for the poets of the next generation.

So much can happen in a year, and we're certainly looking forward to what Long Island poetry will bring us in the coming year. But for now, enjoy Bards Annual 2017, and keep on writing!

~ James P. Wagner (Ishwa)
President, Bards Initiative

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Introduction

Every now and then, someone will ask me about the bards art. Questions range from inquiries about the artist to why we chose to portray strange magical creatures on the covers of our books. I usually give several different answers, but the simplest one is this: Poetry is its own kind of magic.

More than once, James and I have been told that the work we do through Local Gems, The Bards Initiative, and NoVA Bards is like magic because we make people's (publishing) dreams a reality, bring so many different people together, and for some, provide a voice they never had and a safe environment to share and explore poetry. While this is flattering, I think it's the poets who make the real magic. A poet can take mundane words and turn them into something profound, powerful, entertaining and/or moving. A poet can conjure tears, laughter, excitement or even anger from an audience or reader without the help of music, special effects, or a massive budget. Most importantly, poetry, has a certain ineffably human quality to it that some people may find hard to understand and that I certainly find hard to describe.

Every now and then, a non-poet, upon learning more about what I do, will ask me "why poetry?" Sure, I could have a "wider appeal" by writing and publishing fiction or non-fiction (and I still do those things), but I started with poetry and poetry became my main focus specifically because of that magic, because of that ineffable humanity that other genres of literature can't touch. It can be plain and simple or devilishly complex (sometimes at the same time). It can be incorrect, incomplete, or imprecise without it being a problem.

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As The Bards Initiative strengthens relations with poetry groups in other states, so do our opportunities to share our poetry and our magic with other communities. As more Long Island poetry makes its way past The City and across state lines, we'll simultaneously strengthen our own communities and those which our poems reach. The Bards Initiative even held a reading featuring the poetry of both *Bards Annual 2016* and *NoVA Bards 2016* and we have plans to hold a Virginia counterpart.

You hold in your hand a book of magic, woven together by the bards of Long Island. Whether you're reading this in 2017 or 2037, on Long Island or somewhere else, I hope you find the magic and humanity in these pages and that, perhaps, it even inspires you to create a little magic of your own.

~ Nick Hale

Vice President, Bards Initiative

Lloyd Abrams

pitching a new reality show

a proliferation of cable tv shows
romanticize living off-the-grid
in alaska the yukon and other points north

you'll see *them*
trudging through snow drifts at fifty below
scaring away ravenous bears just awakening
fending off black flies and swarms of mosquitoes ...
but *this* retired suburbanite
has treacherous adventures just as comparable

they are tracking moose and caribou
while *i* am tracking fedex packages and tax payments
they are trapping lynx and wolverines
while *i* am trapping mice and carpenter ants
they are killing to survive along iced-over trails
while *i* am risking my life on the southern state parkway

so there *should* be a show
about the grizzled men and overly made-up women
who brave the wild frontier
of strip malls and stop-and-go traffic
of bloodsucking boutiques and dunkin donuts drive-thrus

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of cvs's and 7-11s lit up like the midnight sun
and of the family of man
marching every day to the muzak of walmart

... let's call it *ultimate survival – long island style*

Brianna Acevado

Seabury Barn

I remember walking into this place with still slightly damp plastic bags.

I ran in the rain with them that morning.

Packed with things.

I remember the cold feeling of an unwanted hand on my back, leading me into the place I wanted to be.

A woman opened the door.

Short, black, dirty hair, so short her baseball cap hid it.

Sunglasses.

Eating a rice ball.

She sat me down and asked if I was the patient, then corrected herself to the term "client," she was waiting for.

I nodded.

She asked me questions and within the hour I was living there.

I looked at the dusty closed fireplace, the wobbly tables, cobwebs that hung underneath the kitchen table and everywhere else. The green carpet that looked like it hadn't been cleaned for a damn long time. The clump of something stuck to the corner of the huge flat screen TV that was worthless because they had no cable or any channels. The walls that had beige paint chipping. Old green

floral couches that I just wondered "Why" when I looked at them.

A kitchen with all foods opened and nothing to close them with.

A kitchen door that had no lock so it constantly slammed open and closed.

Stairs that weren't leveled.

Wood floors that were far beyond buckled.

A big room with two beds, all to myself, but with open windows in middle of the woods in a barn with no insulation.

Twins that refused to speak and who left days after I arrived.

A boy who I barely saw.

Staff that didn't really work.

A phone that constantly died.

No wifi. No TV. No anything.

A barn that I felt was made for animals, not abused children.

Plotted next to the cemetery in the middle of the forest in Mt Sinai.

Donald E. Allen

I Curse the Night

I awaken in the still of night
and roll to one side
pushing away errant pillow edges
that block my view
while seeking the glowing iridescent numbers
of the alarm clock.

Knowing full well
that their message
can only bring despair.

If it is much too early
I curse the night
for waking me too soon.

If it is just a little too early
I curse the night
for depriving me of
that magical last droplet
of slumber,
that extra iota
that would make everything alright.

If I awaken

a little too late...

LATE!

Holly crap I better to get moving!

Sharon Anderson

Missed Opportunity

I am not ready to write this poem,
but it clamors to be written,
squirms like a worm tunneling
through my mind.

I am not ready to write this poem,
but it pokes and prods,
pushes itself around inside me
like an unborn child long overdue.

I am not ready to write this poem,
but it is insistent, won't let me rest,
peers into the corners of my dreams,
perches on the edge of my cognition.

When I finally give in, stretch to grasp
this elusive embryo of an idea,
it whisks away like an autumn leaf
caught in the wind of never was.

I wish I had been ready.

Rose Anzick

Dreams

I took the flowered box from the closet shelf.

As I untied the bow I realized I hadn't
looked into the box for an extremely long time.

Gingerly I took the delicate tissue away.
Layer after layer a dream of long ago was stored.
Tears blurred my vision as dreams were unearthed.

Pressed flowers from a wedding bouquet.
Vows were to last until death do us part.

Picture of a Victorian house.
Term paper from a never obtained degree.
Snapshots of being a professional photographer.

Happenings and survival were reasons
the dreams were put away.

Now with time at its eleventh hour, the dreams
were being released never to be realized.

Sadness engulfed me as each dream was viewed.
The memory of youth and aspiration was recalled.

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Each dream burned with a passion that was forgotten.

One dream was life without compromise.

I hesitated as I thought about that.

One dream was met, now could I let go of the others?

Deep inside something kept tormenting me not to let go of
the dreams until the last breath.

Peter Arebalo (MC2)

blades and blunder

I remember wanting to write something important
Something that made the grass grow
Something that fed the hungry
Healed the sick
I wanted to write a miracle
a feeling like
universal love
god
and the death of death
Something that could convey
that nothing is as it seems
we need to un-clutch our investments in
this veneer
We try too hard
to doll up the interface
when the operating system expresses like the horizon of a galaxy
whose movements are so unfathomably interwoven that
you would cast all aspersions of
anything other aside
Something that would set down your cynicism
shake loose the armor
Something that to even begin to behold would bring bend to knee
it's how we get there
we have to own the broken bits

there is nowhere to hide
we keep running from broken mechanisms, the things too big
to understand
the things that most of us invest the image of our lives into
We're getting dragged through the motions and dashed against
the rock
Beaten enough to destroy the image we created
Something to break that beast you worship
Something that lets that light slip through
and offer its embrace
I was hoping that these symbols would seep through the cracks
Plant a seed and foster understanding
Something verging on a miracle
Something that would convince you to put down the blades and
let the grass grow

Frances Avnet

The Gift of Poetry

It comes unwrapped.
Sometimes it's small.
Sometimes it's epic.
Always original, always surprising.
One size fits all.
A gift from the heart, the soul, the creator.
No need for extended warranties or batteries.
Just the need for expression.
No return to sender,
No exchanges.
Just more poems to write
Until your life's pen runs dry.

Bob Baker

The Dancing Dentist

I hope he has a steady hand,
And I start to think;
Is all well with him today?
As I noticed he takes a second drink!

His hands seem steady,
But his body is not;
As the music starts and he begins,
To dance around a lot.

I want to ask him,
How's it going, are you okay?
But with tubes in my mouth,
What can I possibly say?

I mean he's a good dancer,
Please don't get me wrong;
And that music that is playing,
Is a really great song.

But with that drill in his hand,
I am starting to worry;
And all I can now hope,
Is that song will end in a hurry.

Then he can resume right away,
Without delay, his drilling;
On that ole cavity of mine,
That he was filing!

Claudia Balthazar

Wish

I had a wish in my hand and I let it go
Never wanting to wish on a shooting star
Love wasted on a broken soul
Not me, I cry

Now time's wasted
Years of tears and joy
Broken shackles from chains
Never wanting to let go

My soul cried
And in the midst of it fell over
Got over the bridge
I never chose to burn

I played
And the Jack bit me, Queen smiled and Joker could never
laugh so loudly
I cried, not me
In one millions years, an old soul never dies

In life, in love and in destiny
I loved, I lived
And sold the rest of me

Settling for nothing, wanting more
Needing to create the bliss that's always been missing

This wish, that I had once upon a time
Slipped through the cracks of real love
The heart wrenching love that creates suicidal butterflies
Swallows them up in the chest of the other, while time flies
Molds them into the key fitting skeletons that once were unique

Real love they say, pseudo love I say
Lustful eyes looked at me, through a mirror of images
And a girl named Claudia asked me
Who are you?

I never answered
Searching for the answer in the years to come
And I knew it was a test to my morality

So when I had the wish in my hand I was supposed to let it go
Nothing in life lasts forever
Even the lie about fairy tales of a dream that has yet to
come true

Only, I didn't know that the process of losing that wish
would take so long
And a moment out of its presence numbs the wounds
Revisiting from the past, never lost in the dust
What drives me? Not lust
Never

And so, a journey is taken
And in the midst, a soul is lost
Dreams of us, mistaken
Never, not me, I cried
I cried, not me

Broken wings
Through the dust I fly
Through the pain, I cry
And let go

The wish, meant to be lost
Messages behind the molded key
To my soul?
Never, to the world

So I play, and this time with a pre-dealt hand
How dare I lose again?
How dare I hold onto a wish?
How dare you look at me?
Ever again

Not me, I say
Not I, I cry...Never again
And in the end, I call the shots
I win

Broken butterfly, fly again, into the world
Like Atlas, world on your shoulder
Tell me you love, and I will shrug

Christine Barbour

Wine

Before we left for home,
heading south to New York City,
I looked into his eyes,
the blessed blue that imitates heaven,
kissed him on the cheek,
and hugged him my last good-bye.

One hundred miles away,
while we were having dinner,
laughing and drinking wine,
he was falling into the steering wheel,
face forward bruised, his amazing heart
broken beyond repair.

That night we were told he passed.
It happened in one split second,
before he pitched headfirst,
before the last sips of wine
slipped their way
down our throats.

Antonio Bellia (Madly Loved)

Where Did That Human Go

I have known
Different times
I have seen a different human
Another kind
Another race

I have heard and seen
Those human children play,
I've seen them run
And even climb

I have sat
In the shoemaker's
Shop
Laughing at his jokes
And then sobered
With his philosophy
One foot bare
Waiting for the hole to patch.

I have heard and seen
Men with fish basket full
Shoeless, walking
From the stony beach

To the cobblestone plaza
Loudly chanting
The content of their baskets.

I have heard the
Voices of women
Singing to the
Clothes-washing waters
Of a river
That never stops to sing along.

Where did that human go?
Is that human
Who tells stories by the fire,
That human who cares for
The aged at home
Forever gone?
Extinct?
Will he ever return?
Will I ever see him again?

Cristina Bernich

Found

And these words just come...
Said I was looking for the sun
A place to rest my soul
To pull myself out of this murky hole
So deep I'd burrowed down
Not likely to be found
But I was and you did
You saw me as I hid
Gave me words to stand up tall
Straighten out so as not to fall
Back on old runaway days
Return to dark and silent ways
Above me shining you stand
Stooping low to grasp my filthy hand
I clutch, hold tight and you pull me out
Taking my time then to look about
To soak in the hopeful light that is you
Desperate to walk away bright and start new
Wipe off the smudges of regret
Stronger now for the challenges I'd met
Said I was looking for the sun
With you my love, my search is done

Theresa Bivona

Cycles

Eyes open
And in a moment
I remember

You lie in a bed not ours
Blind and alone.
I wonder

Are you seeing
Ladies in blue that are not there?
I pray

Today passes in peace.
Bathe, diaper, feed,
Roll, dress, transport.
I dread

What rests behind closed eyes
As tubes suck out waste?
I watch

A single tear roll down your face
Yet not a word is spoken.
I weep

In silence by your side
As months of sadness
Move us through
Managed pain
Delusions too.
I ask

Who is left
Of Me and You?

Maggie Bloomfield

Childhood Should Be More

This child should be
recalled,
the notes she pens,
her plans each day,
dotting each i
of her journal,
the corner of the
dinner table
her counterfeit desk.
She reads, writes,
the fountain pen
never empty,
kept as sharp as
Aunt Flo's tongue,
lashing at this
persistence in
discovering words,
an authentic voice,
aching
to be heard,
acknowledged,
unerased.
In her seventh year,
an orphan,

her future is forged
by elders' hands.
She clears the dishes
of each meal,
leaving this
dark oak surface
her sole refuge.

John A. Brennan

The Meadow Ballet

The old man could handle a scythe.
Could swing it with the easy grace of a matador in a bullring in
Barcelona. Could turn and pivot, sure of foot, like a lithe ballerina
on the stage at the Bolshoi.

The grass, defeated with surgical precision, fell in complete
surrender
prostrate beneath him, each cut a perfect arc of knowing the way.
He would spit on his palms, grasp the handles surely, but lightly.
Glints of sunlight would flash like mirrored signals with
each slice.
The steel, sharp as obsidian, mowed with near silent swish.

Wielded like a gladius before the barbaric grasses, he made the
meadowlark and linnet flee in frightful flight before him, feathers
ruffled. The field-mice scurried helter-skelter, squealing for
mercy.
And always at full stretch, that graceful swing, that perfect step,
the meadow ballet.

The stone, nestled in the back pocket, waited it's turn.

He would pause, straighten his back and stand the scythe on end,
dulled blade pointed at the earth. Would wipe the sweat from his

brow with the back of his hand, slide the stone along
its length and
up the other side. Hone with an angle of perfect degree,
steady, sure.

The reaper's shadow, long and black, lay outstretched on
the stubble
behind him. Would drink deeply from the can of milk, and then,
the second act.

Richard Bronson

Punchies

Transported from “The Tombs” to Bellevue,
he and his cellmate played “punchies” that day
to see who’d “flinch first.” Now
his abdomen board-like, tender, a sign
of internal bleeding, a ruptured spleen likely,
we rushed him on a stretcher toward the OR elevator,
a rooky cop running beside us.
Cage-like it waited, accordion door open,
the operator’s seat empty.

“Hello?” I cried down the empty hall.
“We need a ride!” No answer.
Had he gone to the bathroom?

Our prisoner in distress, we pushed in,
slammed the door shut –
what, no floor buttons apparent
but a handled wheel? Tentatively
turned, forward signaling up, back down,
“Here goes!” With a shudder
we ascended, floors rushing by.

Andy Burke

15/Love

At fifteen we found tennis
and both went overboard.
Playing to exhaustion
we lost track of the score.

Barefoot on the blacktop,
stripped down to our shorts –
we volleyed in high summer heat,
a pair of teenage sports.

His forehands were low bullets
that barely cleared the net,
his backhands were more docile
and those I'd sometimes get.

My serves were drop-short killers –
if I could keep them in
but when he did return them
he'd almost always win.

I cursed and threw my racquet
And he'd just laugh and duck
I'd pretend "It's not my day"
but it was more than luck.

Then later on with sodas
we talked there in the shade
wondering about the girls
and how we could get laid.

That summer was the last time
we ever were that way.
Next year he had a girlfriend
and had no time to play.

Later he was law school bound
while I went off to war
but I recall that summer when
we didn't know the score.

Alice Byrne

Lust asleep

"What are you doing?" I asked of lust.

Winter was not super cold, but cold drifted along in his
darkness and quiet.

Wrinkled browned leaves clung to plants shriveled thirsty
for light, hungering for

Sun.

"I was just dosing," says lust deprived of passion,
bloodlessly cold.

"What, are you crazy?" asked I, relieved that in spite of frozen
behaviors some

Life remains.

Like Lazarus, the dead shall rise. Spring will come and lust
will live in me again.

Light the fire, keep my passion alive!

Carlo Frank Calo

Stardust And Siblings

The stars are there, in the darkness, filling the emptiness of space
Visible on clear nights for all who bother to look; silent, still, cool.
In time, the sun reveals all; bright hot intensity daring the eyes
to look.

When the sun is gone the stars return; in reality, they never left.
When the stars are gone the sun returns; in reality, it never left.
They are separate but connected, like the stardust that links us all.
The sun itself is a star.

They are siblings, have been since near forever.
Siblings are all around us; have been since near forever.

Paula Camacho

Physics

To enter the knowledge of nature
I must pass symbols
as cryptic as hieroglyphics and crop circles.

Behind the door I hear quarks,
neutrinos and electrons clicking around
a super cluster of galaxies.

Their secrets as obscure as a parent's
Hungarian language never shared.

The path of particles need calculus.
The door thickens with exponents,
radicals, quadratic equations
and trigonometric formulas.

One physics class brought me
unrequited love and a C.
I never reentered that door.
Never learned
how close physicists are to God,

never learned how to speak Hungarian.

Lynne Cannon

No Solace

Almost a year since
Your fluttering fingertips stirred the air
This room is still.
You and your grey winter
Suffering
The coming crystal cold days
were too much to bear.

You have missed the spring
Rainy April
The smell of earth and green
The sound of birds
The bright warm sun
and longer days
I cannot imagine
giving this up.

And in the August heat,
I think of your golden skin
Your tanned face tilted up
eyes closed, little smile
That laugh from your throat
like no other I have heard
Cross your eyes, tilt your head

No more goofy songs.

Now it is autumn again
And I wonder if you miss
How footsteps sound in the fallen leaves
I wonder if you can watch, or if you
can see us ache;
My faith is shaken
The space where you were
is silent.

I do not understand
I cling to all moments here
even though they are not all borne of bliss.
I wish for more moments
To go back
To beg you not to go

Stay another season
Please
It will be all right.

Georgia Cava

One September Morning

Our world has forever changed.
Its landscape of mighty towers,
Of power brought down to the ground,
Our sense of self re-arranged.

Known marauders cross border.
A reign of terror remains.
Ignorance, prejudice bred through centuries.
Lasting scars of hatred fester, Explode!

Distortions, corruption of right and wrong.
Around earth's orb, political ministries,
Churches, Mosques, Synagogues
Proclaim War! In God's name.

In God's name,
Will it take an apocalypse,
for mankind to identify,
His final opportunity to eradicate,
This arsenal of horrors?

Caterina De Chirico

New Year's Day

The rain clouds hide the view of Giant mountain,
today I'm determined to stay in bed and
keep my feet off the floor for several more hours.

So we make a wish and say a prayer
for another year of what appears to be fair
for you, for us, we think we know, then agree we don't.
You say yes to things as your body speaks a different language,
it's a good thing I'm trilingual.

You make several cups of tea, see what's wrong with the TV,
hook up the computer in the kitchen and complain
about your deadlines,
while across the sea 125,000 are dead in a Tsunami
and thousands more pray for lifelines.

We are shocked and saddened.
We talk, walk the dog, talk some more of all we have
if we just stay tuned watch and pray and
if we only have enough faith.

Last night we channel surfed hoping to find Dick Clark,
we can only get basic cable here, it's not the same without him.
So we fell asleep before twelve, without the count down,

without the death toll.

All's well here with the dryer fixed doing a month's worth of laundry.

You sort your underwear and rearrange your drawers for the second time,

“Why can't the socks just stay in one place” you say
as I catch a glimpse of the sun outside between the pines,
and the headlines on your computer say 150,000 lost in the
Tsunami.

We talk, we walk the dog some more, I walk alone up the
mountain road

as you watch me from a Christmas window and wave me in
from the rain.

I wave you out into the clean mountain air and we remember
what's good with us, with the world, and why we came here.

We are temporarily cleansed, renewed and invited back
to swim in an ocean of pure possibility this New Year's Day 2005.

We lapse in and out, back and forth, side to side
like restless sleepers in a half sleep, turning and tossing,
hoping to complete the dream.

Joyce Chu

I'm sorry I can't finish things,
Instead I wait
To Contemplate
The value of my
Worthless time

It's fading! It's fading!
My infinite youth
An unfortunate truth
The moments wasted
Add up to a lifetime
Of passing thoughts
And Idleness.

It's fleeting, it's fleeting
I keep repeating
The sinister smile
Of a blossoming day
Whispers my name
And leads me astray.

Norberto Franco Cisneros

Old Memories

How strange it is, parts
of our minds hang about in youthful stasis enclosed in these ole,
aging bodies,
wrinkled like elephant skin. Like poems, forgotten and discarded in
compartments of an old roll-top desk. Long held memories
open small drawers
replete with remnants of long ago dreams ensconced in the crevices of
yesterday's warm moments. Joyful recollections cuddle
comfortably in the recesses of my mind.

I pull out a folded
piece of yellowed, brittle paper and read weathered,
faded lines written
decades ago, but they're still fresh, as a field of Texas
Bluebonnets dancing
in the hot breeze in the month of May.

Reminiscing about those long lost
sunny days brings back the warmth when the furnace is down,
as today, making my
ole bones creak and crack between yawns of sluggish denials.

This house feels
like an ice cave and holds no good memories.

With the furnace on the blink, I
go outside into the freezing cold, scarf wound round my neck,

wheelchair

bound to the library to warm up.

A sharp, sudden wind hits my
face and a remembrance of yesterday's bitter breezes coming
off the bay stuns
me. Forgetting the cold, I reach into the archives of my memory
again and find
fragile pages with heartfelt words, but they don't bring back
the sunrises of
my yesterdays. The words only bring tears of regret for the
many years that
came and went as quickly as my youth. Expectations
of a fruitful future are folly
now; as time is not on my side, or is a friend I can count on.

Anne Coen

**Learning to Float
(A Mirror Poem)**

change is inevitable
learn to float
with life's ebbs and flows
ride the wave
struggles all cease
acceptance
cease all struggles
wave the ride
flow and ebb with life
float to learn
inevitable is change

Joseph Coen

Atomic Cloud

I am a dense cloud of atoms
traveling in another dense cloud of atoms
with a torrent of less dense atoms streaming at me
through the open window of what I call a car

I know atoms can exchange electrons
What if when I shook your hand
some of our atoms rubbed off on each other?

What if some of my electrons were left behind
when I kissed you?
Would we be connected in some subtle and mysterious way
even before we exchanged a word?

Is the constant exchange of atoms and electrons
over the course of a long relationship the reason why
lovers and close friends know when something bad has happened
to the other or sense they need a visit or call?

Atoms don't know if they are black or white, male or female
They don't know if they are rich or poor, high social class or low
Electrons don't know if they are well educated or not

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What if we take some of each other with us when we are apart?
Will the world be a better place because we are connected now?
Because I am now a part of you
and you are now a part of me

Anne Coltman

The Ivy And The Oak

“Don’t lean on me” said the old oak tree
To the ivy green and bright
“I’m standing tall all on my own
And looking to the light”
“But I can’t stand on my own”
Said the ivy with a sigh
“I need someone to cling to
So I can see the sky”
“Don’t cover my bark or branches
Don’t change the way I look
You will spoil my appearance
If you wrap me in your hook
No one will come near me
If they see you are here
Go! Get away from me
Go and climb elsewhere”

Alas! All too soon a stormy breeze
Came sweeping through the plains
The wind grew fierce and brought with it
A downpour of rain
The old oak struggled to keep upright
As it was pushed to and fro
Then lightning struck and with a loud crash

Oak fell where ivy chose to grow

“Oh my! Oh my! I’m on the ground
I don’t think I can stand
My back is broken, my branches are heavy
I’ll need a helping hand!
You can wrap yourself around me if you will”
Said the oak to the ivy as it lay quite still
“If you pull with all your might
And your vine is strong and tight
Then I can stand and see the light”

The ivy looked at the sad old oak
And rambled on its way
Up and up it climbed the fence
Just where the old oak lay
“I’m sorry Mr. Oak” he said
I shan’t spoil your appearance today.”

Lorraine Conlin

I Took it From the Top

A dancing school photograph
waltzed me back to three-quarter time,
clunky tap shoes on my seven-year-old feet
learning a new dance for the recital.

Chubby and clumsy,
I couldn't do the steps of the *Waltz Clog*.
Miss Liz, my teacher, demonstrated them
wrote them down,
told Dad to make me practice every day.

Dad patient, reassuring
helped me up
when I'd fall on the floor
"Stop crying; just *take it from the top*,"
he'd say.

On stage in a frilly gingham dress,
eyelet-lace bloomers
peeking beneath the hem
cameras flashing, I smiled.

When the elastic of
my petti pants snapped

during a turn,
fell down around my ankles,
I froze and began to cry.

Miss Liz, standing behind the curtain,
witnessed my wardrobe malfunction
yelled, “Dance out of them.
Take it from the top.”

And I did.

Jane Connelly

Seizing The Day

Early November; the last tomato of the season is gone.
Frost crept in overnight; the stems are all black.
And I have so much work to catch up with.
Raking leaves across a hardened spine of earth,
I heap them high into a huge pile, and
a neighbor's dog runs through it.
He has a wide patent leather grin, and
despite my consternation, I laugh out loud!
The sky is cobalt through the golden leaves
Grasping tightly against a north wind
that is pushing a V of geese, slowly
up high, through the cold blue air.
The dog is grunting now, and rolling on his back.
He's flattening my leaf pile!
He makes me laugh again.
It seems I've come to learn his language, and a lesson:
"WUF life!" says he;
"Barke' Diem!"

David Courbanou

Emit & Walda

it was in the long spring that she discovered the mistake
in the corner of the forest, the brush came up, all at once,
like a carpet
and underneath, when the roll of green was curled back, you could
see the true earth

she ran home to tell him

"Do you think it has something to do with the long spring?"
asked Emit

"I don't know," Walda said. "This was something different"

the next day they went to pull the ground back
it gave way easily and rolled up tidy
the brush and trees folded up neatly into each other

and underneath they saw the true earth
they stared at it, a black, dry, slate-like surface
it consumed the sun and reflected nothing

Emit knelt down beside it and touched it, "It's cold"
Walda picked up a pebble and knelt down by Emit and tried
to score the darkness
the pebble slid across the black without friction and left no mark

she stood up and stared
Emit let the flora roll back into place
the trees and grass shook as it re-carpeted the blackness

they agreed not to tell anyone

for a time, they let themselves forget about it
it was the long spring, and had been for as long as they could
remember

and then one day the summer crept across the world

at first, Emit and Walda heard the rumors that the Old Forest
had burnt up in brilliant white
but the Old Forest was far away and few could make the journey

but then the summer consumed the Fence of the First
and then washed out the green Plain of Plenty
and soon summer was all around them
a white hot glow across the horizon

Emit and Walda were afraid
they thought upon the darkness they discovered
so they went to the forest and searched for where the ground
gave way
the darkness was still there
still cold

Walda said "we could hide under the forest until summer passes"

and Emit agreed

so they gathered a few things from home
and saw summer approaching from all sides

they hurried
and huddled under the roll of green
their backs pressed hard against the cold darkness

soon, they felt the heat of summer flood the forest
so they waited for a long time

when they were ready, they found it difficult to roll back the land
but they pushed through
and suddenly, the land broke free
and fell up into the sky

and they saw it was summer all around them and everything
was gone
they trekked out across the wasteland to see if anyone had
survived

they found they were alone
their world replaced with the ghostly outline of new things
to come

in the basilica the artist held his pencil out to measure
and noticed a flake of whitewash came loose from the stone
with a stroke he repainted the mistake
and blamed it on the heat of the long summer

Steven Cuzzo

A Blind Person's Touch

What is it about a blind person's touch?
In just a few minutes, they can realize so much
whether you're a man or a woman, big or small
the shape you're in, if you're short or tall
confident or nervous, by the way you walk
where you are from, by the way you talk
engaging or withdrawn, or if you're happy or sad
that's if you're willing to converse, and share the day you've had
offering your arm to a blind person, is not like a crutch
you share yourself with someone, with a simple touch
the bond in this simple encounter, may not fade
acquaintances, friendships and more this way have been made
this gesture of kindness is remembered well
on both sides a wonderful story to tell
so next time you cross a blind person's way
ask them if you might be of service today

Jeanne D'brant

Vernal

Magic in the morning
dampness surrounding
wind restless, wet with rain

Tree limbs bow like supplicants
dancing green obeisance
crows caw, drowning the softer songs
of stalks pushing sunward from the earth
green abounds

Douglas Dennison

Coffee Eyes

I cannot shake addictions to coffee eyes,
to cola lips, mixed with a jigger of rum.

Hot, brown and bitter. They scald,
they waken, they strop me to a line.

At night, I drink hard from soft
syrup carbonated and fortified.

Twelve steps do not add up. Caffeine
multiplies, my craving hands divide.

The frogs and crickets spigot sound.
I leave my mug, unwashed, holding pencils.

Linda Trott Dickman

A Costco Serenade

por los hermanos

I heard it before I saw him.

It was coming from the dairy case.

*When I see your face,
there's not a thing that I would change,*

I turned to see the place
where the song began.

*because you're amazing,
just the way you are.*

A shy mom wheeled toward us
The troubadour in the cart sang out
I am four
I am a good singer!

The way you are,

His older brother danced,
proclaiming his bold adoration,
“that's my brother!”

The way you are,

He sang once more,
accompanied by the young *Astaire*.
Looking right at me,

Fringed onyx flashed at me.
*When I see your face
there's not a thing that I would change,*

I knew that voice.
It was not the God of war,
*because you're amazing.
just the way you are...*

Somewhere between the coffee
and the cream cheese,
five were blessed.

Sharon Dockweiler

The Lady Who Swallowed a Lie

I know a young lady who swallowed a lie.
I don't know why she swallowed the lie.
I guess she'll die.

I know a young lady who binged upon cake.
She gained so much weight, it was quite a mistake.
She binged on the cake to soften the lie.
I don't know why she swallowed the lie.
I guess she'll die.

I know a young lady who starved herself
Afraid that her life would be spent on the shelf.
She starved herself to lose the weight.
She binged on the cake to soften the lie.
I don't know why she swallowed the lie.
I guess she'll die.

I know a young lady who married a man
Who made her wish she were single again.
She married the man to not be alone.
She starved herself to lose the weight.
She binged on the cake to soften the lie.
I don't know why she swallowed the lie.
I guess she'll die.

I know a young lady who got a divorce

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She was tired of yelling until she was hoarse.
She got the divorce so that she could be free.
She married the man to not be alone.
She starved herself to lose the weight.
She binged on the cake to soften the lie.
I don't know why she swallowed the lie.
I guess she'll die.

I know a young lady who raised up her fist
And yelled out, "I don't have to live like this!"
She raised up her fist to declare she was strong.
She got the divorce so that she could be free.
She married the man to not be alone.
She starved herself to lose the weight.
She binged on the cake to soften the lie.
I don't know why she swallowed the lie.
I guess she'll die.

I know a young lady who swallowed more lies
They ate all the strength she was starting to prize
There was no excuse, she was used to abuse.
She raised up her fist to declare she was strong.
She got the divorce so that she could be free.
She married the man to not be alone.
She starved herself to lose the weight.
She binged on the cake to soften the lie.
I don't know why she swallowed the lie.
I guess she'll die.

I know a young lady who lives in remorse.
She's dead of course.

Peter V. Dugan

Poetry Rodeo

I do not want to be a poet lariat.

Poetry is an art form with freedom
and I do not choose to be one
who goes around rustling writers,
lassoing stray lyricists, roping
them up and tying them down,
forcing them to write and recite poetry.

And once they are part of the herd
and poetry scene,
they'll be branded as poets.

What happened to freedom of the range?

What's that?
You said poet laureate?
Oh, well.
Never mind.

Vivian Eyre

To the Early Harvester of Peconic Bay

If the tide were low enough
the sea level below your knees,
but the tide is not low
the sea is not below knee-level,
you would tug on rubber boots, thick-soled,
so no shell shards could cut you, you
would wade out into gumbo mud, carrying
a hammer to pry life off the reef,
Samson rope tied waist-high, so
the bounty bucket floats alongside you.

If a license empowered you
but there is no license that gives you sanction,
to rake across the reef
a heavy-toothed dredge
to harvest the smallest, sweetest meat
with slobber, lick, smack on the mouth of greed
and drunk with the ease of the take.
Unaware of the trap set
by the comeback of rising tides. Unaware
of rank water, so common in graveyards
of the slimy and broken
and no good comes from life
on the fringe of death's layers.

If your spirit were grateful enough
but your spirit is not grateful,
you would confess
that nothing compels you
as much as appetite. You,
lust-gush-gimme
in murky waters, you bloom
in murky waters, you
feast on the colonies of ostrea

without care for seeds or beds,
without discernment, voracious
child of the infamous tide.

*Fill your bucket to the brim
And it will spill.*

Adam D. Fisher

The Going Out of Business

sale begins on the sidewalk
selling hoses and wheelbarrows,
and everything inside
at 20-30% off;
40-60% next week when
they'll close for good.

For thirty-five years
I've walked to the back on creaky
wood floors to buy screws,
brought in a saw to be sharpened
(who'll do that now?),
picked up a gallon of paint
for our daughter's room.
I've bought mouse traps
that didn't work,
and bug killer that mostly did.
My granddaughter's swing
hangs from rope, Tom, the owner,
measured out, then gave me
extra to be sure.

Now Tom, Betty and John dart
around waiting on people

who've come to say good-bye,
who've come for a bargain.
They're intent on selling
everything; too busy to look sad;
but in a week, Tom will sit down
with the books
and see how much he's lost.
Betty and John will be out of work.
After a good-bye party with coffee
and a cake from the deli next door,
they'll go home feeling empty.
They'll have dinner, a few beers,
go to bed late, but get up at 5:30
out of habit. They'll lie
looking at the ceiling, and despite
having thought about it for months,
they'll wonder what to do now.

Denise Marie Fisher

Just Words

As the words came forth so casually,
I wondered if he knew, what he had said.
Sentiments tripped his lips so easily.
I acted but the ingénue, and bled
my feelings on the page, with fervent hope
he'd understand the depth of my desire.
Three syllables seem easy, but I groped
for perfect words, all writing skills gone dire.
Gasping for breath, assessing truth and lies...
gone mute despite my hearts innuendos!
I dare to speak what so long went denied
and tell the one my quiet love supposed:
"I love you," he then whispered willingly.
My caution, again, whispered ill in me.

Andrew Fixler

Screw U

You don't go to college for the knowledge
You go for the degree
The system is so corrupt
It really bothers me
It should be about the learning
Not the money that we spend
Sadly, we leave with no skills
Or money at the end

Elizabeth Fonseca

Spring

What is spring like?
Is it the wanderlust
Of the whipping wind,
The waywardness,
Elbowing all in its path aside?
Is it the soft breath
Of the breeze,
Milk-and-honey redolent
And fresh, unfolding
Tired limbs and shaking out
Like clean sheets
Tired spirits, making ready
To walk again
In the wide world?
Is it the face
Of a daffodil
That tells you
All is well,
All will be well,
Go on?
Or the catch in the throat
At the sight of so much beauty
After the stark dark
Of winter's narrowing hands?

David Ira Fox

My Stomach's Snack Suppression

My stomach's growling
(It's rather rude)
Screaming, shouting,
Give me food!
After I satisfy it
And get a snack,
My stomach's quiet again
Back on track.

Kate Fox

Phases of You

1. Mornings

Quiet demeanor
Glasses perched
Atop your nose
Flannel pajama pants
Tee shirt and slippers
I love watching you
As you sit calmly
One leg crossed
Over the other
Eating your sensible
Breakfast and
Watching the
Morning news

2. Midday

Everything depends
On the day of the week
And lists of things
That must be
Accomplished
Generally
Easy and paced

According to
Mood and energy
A walk
A meal
Conversation
Much conversation
The ability to
Ignore the cell phone
More than usual
The comfort of your
Company
Reminds me that
Nothing is as urgent
As I might imagine
And you are the
Only one
Capable of this

3. Evenings

Quiet conversation
A theme that keeps
Repeating itself
The ease allowing
For it organically
Easy
Unassuming
You tossing together
Dinner with
Whatever may be

Around
And it's always
Good
Always satisfying
Accompanied by
A glass of wine
Your company
The highlight

4. The dark of night

I say dark of night
But really it could be
Any time of day
The demons you
Release
The truth in me
Rising to greet you
Anxious to greet you
My voracity
Surprising me
At times

5. Always

Regardless of
Time of day
You are always
In control
You always

Keep me calm
And that is an
Aphrodisiac

I'd never
Imagined
Nothing I've
Experienced
Before
You are the
Only No
I say
Yes to

Rebecca Fox

Spiraling Descent

Look at me, the Spiral says
Gaze down within my curves
Let your eyes follow me down
So stressful on your nerves

Give me attention, the Spiral says
If you don't heed my plea
Your eye will be caught with me for all time
Locked for eternity

Peek down upon my center
At least try it if you can
If I don't get what I want
My wrath will befall each man

Oh dear, I'm sorry, your time is up
An illness will you ail
Run away from me, I'll create a storm
Look too slowly, you are a snail

Anthony Franchino

To be a Veteran

Many know the word, but very few know the meaning.

Walk into a room or an area and immediately look for all the exits, scan every individual for potential threats, and know which one to take out first that would do the most harm.

Say yes/no sir/ma'am even to the 16-year-old behind the Dunkin Donuts counter serving you tea.

Trying to stop yourself from saying "aye aye" if you're Navy or "roger that" for all branches of the military.

Having bonds of camaraderie with all active duty and veterans that you'll never find again.

The unending need to protect anyone around you, even strangers on a bus or in a mall food court, from potential harm.

Always longing to serve your country again even after 20 years of being discharged.

Standing up when the American flag is displayed, national anthem is sung, or during a parade the flag goes by and no one else stands.

Knowing what a grunt is, which isn't the sound a tennis player makes when hitting a ball.

Knowing that the term, "I got some," has nothing to do with sex. You stand slightly to the left or right while waiting in a line.

Acronyms are a part of our lives and we know so many that we have our own language.

Having the time in 24-hour setting instead of AM/PM even on the

clock in the car.

If you ever go to a fireworks show, you're wearing earplugs and headphones that are playing loud music so that you don't get triggered by the sound.

Even with proper medication and therapy, always remembering those that were close to you dying in your arms or right before your eyes.

Uncontrollable emotional breakdowns.

Fighting nightmares that happen frequently and are about the same thing.

Dealing with an invisible disease that some believe is not real, but kills 22 veterans every single day because they take their own lives so as to not deal with this disability that I currently deal with. And being a veteran meant that I wrote a blank check to the USA for an amount up to, and including, my life.

These are just a few things of what it's like to be a Veteran.

M Frances Garcia

The Swimmer

When I lost you on the horizon
I did not know where or how
to reach past the tangled fishnet
of confusion beyond the
chipped white buoys
of institutional knowledge
where once we'd
been contained.
My arms were extended
to the sea, vast, open,
stung at times by small, translucent
jellyfish lodged in my bathing suit,
their pale lavender texture adhering
like moist breath to my calves, my knees,
pulsing aquatic trinkets of hope
engaged in their own search for satisfaction.

I continued to swim forward, tasting the salt
water on my swollen tongue, feeling the need
to dive below the surface for exploration.
Was I out too deep? I did not want to drown
nor have to be rescued by lifeguards, but
wanted to stay afloat of my own accord.

Now, the waves roared against me. I
I felt the pull of undertow but alone
maintained the dignity of ocean foam.

With scuba gear and sans fear,
I dove deeper to find you below,
near sand and algae,
on silent retreat with seahorse and starfish,
coral and octopus, your prayer's basic
chant united with mine, for a brief time,
on sacred ocean floor.

Shilpi Goenka

Hands of Silk and Sand

Drop by drop,
I see the silhouettes
Of the world and its weary pleasures
Trickle down
And dissolve away—
The tears of these eyes
Part from them too,
Further away and disappear.
Even my tears
Are not mine anymore...
Everything slips away,
When the winds of change come.
I hold tightly and lean onto
That golden-brown curtain,
Which hangs in the corner of the house—
The memory of me clutching close to it
A nostalgic smell and memory,
The silken embroidery so familiar.
I slide my hands on it
The curtain still remains,
But my hands slip away
For they were the hands of silk...
Step by step

I see the silhouette of a child
Walking on the beach
And laughter rolling on waves high
Sounds slipping away from sea-shells
Riding on the winds carried far away
The gritty sand glistens under the fading sun
I lay my hands on it
The sand still remains,
But my hands slip away
For they were the hands of sand...
Memory by memory,
Trace by trace,
Digit by digit,
I slip away
In parts
From every memory,
Which I once called my own...

Justin Goodman

Failure to Start a Housefire

The lamp stalled into fluorescence,
Then onto the floor, where the light cracked

And its firebrand spirit with it.
Forgive me.

I wanted to see sight bridled by fire but
forgot light's momentum, once trapped in glass,
Propels it towards dissolution.

Jessica Goody

Discoveries

Imagine a cold of frightening intensity,
a region defined by lack of temperature.
Islets rise like moles on the expanse of the silver-nitrate sea,

glaciers shaped like plateaus, fortresses, mountain ranges.
Palaces of ice drift by, flashing colors in the sun:
prisms of lavender, rose, chrysoprase green.

Inside, a scene from a Jack London novel:
A low, thin cot piled with fur, luxuriant
against the rusticity of the barren shack.

Damp books with rotten bindings and pages stiffened with rime.
The mottled patterns of maps paper the walls,
a spiderweb of constellations to steer by.

Clotheslines span the ceilings, ancient apparel left out to dry,
frozen thermals and soaked mittens encased in ice.
The odors of coal oil and dampened wool ceased to linger

a century ago. Weathered wood and rotting leather,
diamond-shaped snowshoes latticed with rawhide, and specimen
trays of stones and shells preserved in the icebox of the Arctic.

Heavy trunks with handsome brass fittings, their elegance now tarnished. Inside, abandoned flotsam lies perfectly preserved: tin cans and melted stalks of candles, the heavy, solid hulk of an antique typewriter, and an elegant gramophone, its gleaming horn fluted like a seashell. One hundred years ago, it played Strauss to a curious audience of penguins who had never heard music before.

Viviana Grell

Nice

Ice
inside nice
cold
calculating
uncommitted word,
designed for brevity,
concise judgment,
NICE!!!
designed for deadness,
mindless word
lacking in depth
designed for disguise
your poems are “nice” they say
I see daggers
behind their eyes,
NICE
is not enough!!
truth– ugly and raw
NOT NICE !!
bite me
teeth are real and make me cum,
open your eyes,
nothing is nice
either its hot

or its not,
New York
not NICE
hard cement
neon glow
moon my solace
sun burns
not NICE!!
hot tears run
my eyes
begging you to
see beyond NICE
we are born
from an unknown
and leave for a place
we don't know,
I'll never be nice,
I want it NOW
fire and ice
NEXT TIME YOU SAY NICE
make it a scream
NICE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
I listen
waiting for your grasp,
hungry
to be a prisoner of truth!!

Aaron Griffin

The Old Diesels

Remember the old diesel trains on the Long Island Rail Road?
Remember driving twice the distance to a station with electric trains, rather than ride the diesel train that stopped right by your house?

Remember the tiny, grimy windows yellowed by the caustic chemicals used by the train cleaning crews?

Remember the red carpeting which inexplicably adorned the walls in lieu of wallpaper, while the floors were left bare?

Remember the little holes in the floor, through which the trackbed could be seen whizzing by beneath your feet?

Remember the bar cars, by whose legacy, alcohol continues to be lawfully consumed on board most Long Island trains?

It's true that those old trains needed to go, but I can't deign to let them be remembered only for the sad state of their waning years. Did you know that those cars were once pulled by the last steam engines on Long Island, in the final days before those iron horses were put to pasture?

Did you know, that those cars were built by Pullman-Standard? Yes, THAT Pullman-Standard, and while they were never grand like the Pullmans of the 1800s, they were indeed high quality passenger stock; only the finest for the Pennsylvania Railroad's prized territory east of Manhattan.

Those cars were the pride of the Island, and maintained to the highest level of care.

Then the MTA got ahold of them.

Yeah.

We all saw what happened after that.

And as for the locomotives that pulled them, those old monsters rolled out by EMD, and ALCO; what lucky beasts they were.

Diesels of their kind, on any other railroad they'd have been relegated to behind-the-scenes work, shunting, and freight trains.

But on Long Island, those lowly switchers ruled the rails with confidence, hauling their passenger trains like rugged mules given the work of royal stallions, and they were more than up to it.

And while I was rightfully thrilled when the stainless steel bi-level cars and matching diesels we have today first rolled into service, I now find myself longing for just one more ride on the creaky old trains of my childhood.

Though the Pullman-Standard cars are gone, I still see the old diesels that once pulled them, working the freight trains they've been demoted to, or dozing on the sidings, waiting for work to do.

As I ride my state-of-the-art, stainless steel electric trains into Manhattan, I always wave to my old diesel friends, knowing that if my express to Penn should break down, the nearest of those venerable workhorses will come right along and retake its proper place, working a passenger train again, like the good old days.

So, yeah.

I remember the old diesel trains on the Long Island Rail Road.

I remember when the L.I. Double-R was a real Railroad.

I remember rugged, roaring diesels, pulling rattling, rumbling coaches, all made in America.

I ride today's Long Island Rail Road, with its computerized, electrified, Japanese-manufactured commuter trains, knowing that some

day, even these trains will be replaced by a next generation of even better trains.

And I smile, knowing that some day, some sentimental nerd just like me will write a poem that begins:

“Remember the old electric trains on the Long Island Rail Road?”

Concetta Guido

A Shaken Blossom

Admonish the proclivity
behind narrow eyes,
tight minds
with one-way visions.
Never mind them
and continue blossoming.
You are so beautiful as you grow.

Maureen Hadzick-Spisak

Personal Space

Deep within my universe
Where love has been the catalyst
Of a thousand supernovas
Each burning brighter and longer
Than the one before
Shooting a luminosity that carried a
Piece of heaven to earth
A place where two cells collided
Releasing such heat and energy
That time and space became relative
And you were created.

Deep within my universe
The bomb dropped, the word spoken.
There was no existential moment
I was no longer author of my life
You, like Galileo, before you
Looked with pride on your gleaming instruments
Prodded your way passed
My inner ring and into the Milky Way.
There it was, like the Sombrero Galaxy
The telltale bulge in the center.

Deep within my universe
A shooting star implodes
Sending me spiraling down into
The oblivion of a deep black hole.

Nick Hale

Lace and New Poison

from the start
we looked at each other
as if about to charge
into battle
up the stairs
up the hill to dead
over again

later
scenes give way
to acts
pizza pillows
tubes of sugared
pixie dust
to caffeine and
all-night Karloff classics
snowballs and straws
nostalgia reminds us
what you can't take with you

who sits
in the seat
by the window
who gets the aisle

and

*'would you like some tea
dear?'*

'I like him!''

'he's such a nice young man.'
without checking his pockets
what's in his pockets

pocket full of roses
pocket full of miracles
pouches
of foul powdered pain
pernicious as the blame
we share and gift
who's flying this
plane and where
are we soaring so
 high
on powdered shame

Mankh (Walter E. Harris III)

thinK outside thE biG-boX storE

think outside the cubicle
think outside the square house
think outside the rectangular flat-screen
think outside the box-shaped car
outside thE biG-boX storE
literally stand outside the store
and think

think more than because you are recycling
a cardboard box that you are saving the rainforest

think more than because you travel with a metal thermos
you are cleaning up the Great Pacific Garbage Patch
and the North Atlantic Garbage Patch

once outside the box
think of a circle, a spiral, the many ways
that tree branches curve and angle the flight
patterns of birds the curve of fingers
as you type or hold a cylindrical glass of
water is life

let sleeping dogs dream
let remorse disappear like snow

on a 50 degree day in January
let bygones be bygones
let gonzo journalism live
let's not make so many deals

do not open Pandora's box again
i repeat DO NOT OPEN Pandora's box again
"leave crude oil in the soil
coal in the hole and tar sands in the land"

ask the grass before you cut it
ask the seed before you plant it
ask the tree if it is ready to stop being a tree
before you make your 2x4s

when i find myself in times of trouble
Mother Earth she comes to me
speaking non-verbal languages
"Let it be"

- poet's note: quotes from "I will not dance to your beat" (a poem by Nnimmo Bassey) and "Let It Be" (The Beatles)

first published at axisoflogic.com

Sylvia Harnick

Alternative Stories

mornings are best for doing
what I do not want to do
I tell him he tells me
about an interview in Reader's Digest
southern lady sits on her porch
early morning reading
saves the hot afternoon
for her chores
he rearranges my way
to fit his box
substitutes analogy
counters my tale
buries my words with
yesterday's debris

Bob Hayes

Just Being

A time to rest and relax
away from both phone and fax.
Time for quiet thoughts
that cannot be bought.
A place to get away
from the buzz of the day.
No clicks of the mouse
in this rustic house.
Just sitting in a chair
and being...
there.

George Held

"Nothing Happening on Meadowlark Lane"

Says my friendly neighbor on the phone
And I imagine our dead-end street snow filled
And car free—no summer people lost
On their drive back to the city

Like Legionnaires returning to the front
From R & R, their spoils left behind
And suntans masking their avidity
For conflict back in the city.

No, nothing's happening on Meadowlark Lane,
Where the last meadowlarks fled four decades
Ago as field turned to shrub, and ten years ago
Deer began to crop our gardens like sheep.

And there's nothing happening on Meadowlark
Lane even in the summer: Leslie and Jeff walk Daisy
Twice a day, and the librarian walks to and from work,
And UPS makes an occasional delivery,

So the street looks almost suburban,
But it's a village lane, a dead end, a few
Blocks from Main Street, and nothing's
Happening, ever, and that's how the deer like it.

For Josie Guerin

Frane L. Helner

Mordechai Perez

Bone-skinny body white as a sick fish,
craggy face, beaked nose, his garish clothes
bag about non-existent hips
and pool over purple hi-top sneakers

as razor-rayed obsidian eyes pierce into me.
This person has been planted here for long minutes,
standing immobile, stoic,
and causing me to twitch.

Where have I seen him before?
Memory files are scanned,
filtered A to Z,
but nothing clicks.

Now, like a shark
hunting his midday's meal,
he smiles at me, *Mordechai*, he says,
and at my blank gape repeats, *Mordechai Perez*.

Finally, the memory filter stops at M.
I know only one Mordechai;
Mordechai the money person,
who is already into his spiel:

*The Senior Frolic tickets are ready for purchase,
only \$36.00 a pair,*

You are taking two, are you not...?

Thus assured, the impetuous Mordechai

manages to rise on tip-toe, which,
to his showman's delight is obviously
difficult in purple hi-top sneakers, ergo
Mordechai celebrates with a quick cavort.

I marvel at the acuity of typecasting;
who could walk away from
Mordechai Perez, the money person,
without tickets for Shakespeare's Shylock?

Gladys Henderson

Walking Stege's Pond

1.

Along the way we name the flowers.

Mom in her straw hat,
dad in his red woolen shirt,
fishing rod in hand.

My brother's pale skin
is protected by a baseball cap;
the hospital and war behind him—

he doesn't have much to say anymore.

I walk with ease,
run ahead of them.
At the turn, they are out of my sight.

2.

The path is unchanged.

Along the way I name the flowers.

Near me, a small blossom
with a rose center
grows between the granite stones.

It is unnamed, an orphan.

I have lost them all.

Judith Lee Herbert

Normandy, 1994

We are sipping wine, salade nicoise before us,
as we sit at a long table at the Pre D'or.
Red and gold damask velvet
papers the walls.

Dad is standing, speaking about how
he jumped in the night before D-Day,
fought in hand-to-hand combat
to take Carentan from the Nazis.

We have taken a bittersweet journey here.
He is losing his battle with cancer.
He has arranged this gift for us
and our families.

We are here to bear witness.

Joan Higuchi

When Christmas Comes

we still put up our tree
no longer tall enough for angel
on the topmost branch to reach
for ceiling a few inches above her head
as if she looked forward to climbing
into familiar territory of clouds

while beneath the boughs
a collection of ornaments grew
during years of tight finances
when paper chains
angels made of Kleenex
crocheted snowflakes
or satellites of Styrofoam
and toothpicks, glue coated
then dipped in glitter filled the gaps.

Of course there was also the year
I used angel hair, a cobweb of spun glass
that left us feeling like a trickster had
smuggled in some itching powder.

Our tree is smaller now but loaded down
with baubles from our past

glass balls including one with bluebirds
painted on, a multitude of tiny dolls
small teddy bears, velvet bows
with baby's breath duplicating foamy snow

and most of all, each one
a review of treasured memories.

Arnold Hollander

The Last Word

They wave their nakedness to the world
Swaying back and forth, back and forth.
Trees are dancing to Boreas' cadence,
With tethered undulations and refuse to stop.
Spring is near, but you wouldn't know it,
Seeing the ground colored white from flakes
Matching the blanket covering their bare branches.
Winter will have the last word.

The sky disappeared some time ago,
As did the road and houses girding it.
All is now white and the sound is an
Occasional whirring interspersed
With silence.
Winter will have the last word.

The crocus pushed up weeks ago
Now hidden 'neath that white blanket,
Frozen by Mother Nature's joke.
Yes, winter will have the last word.

Terry Hume

The Light

Dad died this morning.

In the clearing of trees there's a light
that touches
and lays shadows
by my feet

I feel the warmth
against the coolness of March,
against the wet staining my cheeks.

These moments are fragile.

It's as if
with the wind
I'll scatter
like ashes
and blow away.

R.J. Huneke

Skeletally Human

I cannot get comfortable in my writing chair
Sitting too long skeletally human,
Mammal, animal, groaning silently
Standing would only incite this pen
Further
Silence!
Never!
There is ink that runs through my veins

I will not stop shaking my legs while in this chair
The world runs and shoots as a nation,
Infant, republic spills the Huge inkwell
The pattern blots four “L”s linked with hate
The stains
SCREAMING!
Defeat;
I will bleed out to drown it out

The careful collapse of my soul in this soft chair
Will serve a human purpose so help me
Goddamned, and god is, damned or else Clapton
Who the fuck knows what the ink will say

Slicing

Paper!

Paper!

The tree's sacrifice bears our soul.

Maria Iliou

Song Of Myself

I lost my self ...paddle boat off the shore
Logical, physical and emotional endurance
Extremely abstract to my body ...no one is listening
Hiding ...storing in files within my brain

Silence that quiets the mind ...deep in to my core
Buried underneath ...sadness only remains
Periodically, story receptive in certain situations
Repeats itself in various forms ...same principle
Adults think; secretly, you know these things of your age
Without being taught
how to manage instead of fear

While being in the moment of conversation
Our words melt away
Shy giggles
Not to be misunderstood...Sharing,
Sensing the mood changes
Without an understanding
Anxieties creep in
Losing my power, which is
Song of myself

To the power of the word

Vicki Iorio

The Astronaut

In the Bealls Outlet parking lot I back up into his Saturn
Hot day in Titusville smells like dead trout

Challenger circled by stars
a patch on his flight jacket USA
engraved on his space helmet bakes in the backseat sun
a broiling aorta

This traveler makes my heart a truant
to my obligations He tells me not to

fret the car a government rental We eat raw tuna
at a sushi bar Later under a full moon he traces Ursa

Minor on my majors mixes Tang with Vodka orbits my O
rings makes my g-forces soar

Proves astrophysics is an art

Joseph Jablonski

Her Graduation

And I could care less
About all else,
The sea of blue caps
I wish to part:
One, for the ages,
One, my great *amor*,
One, among the senseless,
One, whom I adore.

And the rows disappear,
And the suffering cease,
All pomp circumstance pales,
To the glory of she –
That no one else here, my
Heart yearns, only for thee.

Larry Jaffe

Mama Told Me

My mama told me
sticks and stones
may break my bones
that words
will never harm me

But the scars that words leave
are harsher than the deepest wounds

The scars that words leave
annihilate me to depths of my soul

The scars that words leave
scream at the unknown

The scars that words leave
shout for vengeance

They are just words
I tell myself
as I cry myself to sleep

These words are not defenseless
I will have my way

Another word another lesion
Another word another lesson

Meesha Johnson

A Place in My Life

Almost there but not quite, that moment in time, that place in my life where I'm still a little selfish, but it's quite alright...

When accountability is almost a result of responsibility, and still somehow I'm reminded of that place in my life when I could care less and only focused on what it was I dared to be...

When silence makes a sound that is so profound and then I smile and think for a while about the ones who want a piece of that place in my life but they're not allowed...

When being heard is better than being right and when being noticed is better than being seen, there's still that place in my life where the longer I listen, the more I learn what life truly means...

When everything wanted is everything needed, when I can finally see the beauty in patience because there's that place in my life where, if I ain't got it, then I just don't need it...

When everything said has been done and when I've eaten an entire box of Girl Scout cookies until there's none, I'm at that place in my life where there'll be no justification, no excuse, no guilt, no shame because no matter what...I'll wake up tomorrow and I'll be perfectly imperfect, I'll still be me, and I'll still be cuter than cute...

Ryan Jones

A Siphoning of Souls

Blackened, burned, bruised, and ruined
Such are the souls of men and women who go astray
Be it through their own actions
Or by having been led to misdeeds by the corrupt
The next link in a dread chain

A heavy morass swells up
Made of souls gone wrong like lead stuck together with grease
And we find that few are left
To reach more desirable destinations beyond
As the rest comb through their misery

There are those who sense salvage
To reverse damages done unto others and themselves
They try to restore their souls
And to receive the rewards of a virtuous life
Knowing too late the right choice

The righteous will have their way
Thus are souls siphoned through the judgment of the ready
They sense who holds true intent
Underneath the murky covering of their past deeds
Leaving the rest to their fate

Annie Karpenstein

Recycled

Jews, source of all trouble, officially vilified.
Crazed leader labels them filthy vermin. Intellectuals,
media join in with stories, lies, caricatures.

Goosesteppers, arm raised, worship purity.
Swallow ideology. A solid block of darkness
overpowers the soul. Blackens the spark. Fuels
mindless murder. Craves to hurl scapegoat over cliff.

Jews, rounded up, transported. Possessions
confiscated, organized. Piles of shoes. Mounds
of eyeglasses. Hills of gold jewelry, teeth.
Huge hillocks of hair. Meticulous records kept.

Jews, stripped of identity, head shaved,
arm branded, reduced to a number.
Unfit to live, destined for extermination.
Myriad ways to deliver death blow.

Diabolical ideas to dispose of so many bodies.
Recycle. Boil cadavers. Reduce them to soap.
Cadavers flayed. Skin used for lampshades.

Imagine a soldier, focused on efficiency, washing

blood soaked hands with remains of filthy vermin,
oblivious to the millions of tiny iridescent bubbles
catching light, dispersing rainbows.

Later, reading, his soul floundering in darkness,
oblivious to the human lampshade reflecting light,
muting its brilliance. The hated objects, transmuted.
Insubstantial, amorphous. Somehow, still channeling light.

Barbara Kauffman

Fragment

She is riding on an old-fashioned sleigh with a back and side bar to hold her in the seat. Cold air bites her bare cheeks. There is a baby on the sleigh in front of her and she holds the other child under its arms.

*puppies
curled up together
winter sun*

There is a roughness on her cold cheek— a scarf perhaps, or the back of her sister's snowsuit. She closes her eyes against the bright snow.

*comfort food
the smell of sleep
on an old blanket*

Someone lifts her up and carries her into a blast of warm air as they enter the apartment. The stiff clothes are peeled from her body. Her aunt offers hugs and kisses.

*tomato soup
the way love tastes
in a memory*

Nancy Keating

Lace

The empty lot tries to be a field again.
Before it shone
with white crocheted medallions
of Queen Anne's lace,
it was a family-friendly Moose Lodge,
its third and last incarnation
before the building fell into disrepair
and was knocked down at last.

Before the lodge, it was a nudie bar.
My mother would get her grim look
whenever we drove past.

They had Queen Anne's lace
in Canada too, Nana told me long ago.
She'd gather bunches from the roadside
for her mother, who said
they were nearly as lovely
in a vase as in the field.

Nana taught me to crochet and
teenaged, shooting for sexiness,
I tried to make myself a bikini
but was defeated by the openwork

of the lacy medallions.

Before the nudie bar, the site
had been a bowling alley we'd pass
on the way to church,
and I'd beg my parents
to take me bowling sometime.
"Your mother won't bowl," Dad said.

I would be wearing a chapel veil,
a lacy white disc. Mom's was black.
From the car we could hear
echoes of wooden collisions
when the balls hit the pins.

Bill Kirsten

The Affair

I think my wife is having an affair.
Do I confront her?
Do I dare?
I think it's him
that guy named Jim.
They met at Friendly's
because it's handy.
How can I compete
with Jim Dandy?

Carissa Kopf

Chocolate Delight

Each chocolate-filled treat
Sits so perfectly in a huggable spot
Surrounded with fancy gold trim
My eyes close and let the sweet aroma
Seductively romance my sense of smell

I've fallen under a spell with these
Chocolate delights
My fingers dance eagerly
At the side of the box
Anticipating which one I taste tonight

Opening my mouth
My taste buds are on fire
When I placed that dark chocolate confection
Upon my tongue
It's truffle cloud I'm floating on

The flavor lingers on my tongue
Inviting me to try another
Each piece so intoxicating
I couldn't stop
Finding fulfillment in every bite

Bards Annual 2017

Looking down into the empty box
My heart sorrows when I reach for a napkin
Then suddenly I remember
The tiny pools of melt chocolate
In the corners of my mouth

Mindy Kronenberg

The Cartoonist

How did you manage
To take a simple pen
And pull us onto the page
As the best (and worst)
of ourselves?

In high school you cast your friends
In Shakespeare plays, sketching us,
Fully costumed and poised for performance,
On the covers of our spiral notebooks.

And what glorious cameos you made,
Inking and painting our wide-eyed
Adolescent faces
On the cardboard inserts
of yogurt cup covers.

Even the corners of your envelopes
From the Air Force, your homemade
Christmas Cards, held mischievous characters.
The empty white space on the back of mail
Beckoned miniature murals of our lives.

Now your pen is permanently still.

How does friendship
fill the blank pages of time
line by line, year by year
softening the boundaries of who (and what)
we are, keeping us safe

from the hardened edges
of age, the horizons
that seemed so far off
as we were busy
filling in that void.

Scarlett Lady

Mistress

Your mother wouldn't approve,
Of your Baby,
She tells you when to step left and when to step right,

Nevertheless your baby is your world,
He eats, breathes and dreams about her,
Living in a constant state of reverie,

My Baby is a bad, bad man,
But not as Bad as me,
My Baby is a Death Before Dishonor gentleman,
I'm his mistress and he wouldn't live without me,

Be careful I might cause an explosion,
And make you lose your cool,
But My Baby has control over me,
With one stroke,
He puts me out,

My baby and his girl,
We are one and the same,
Like staring at a mirror,
A male reflection of myself,

My Baby is a bad, bad man,
But not as Bad as me,
My Baby is a Death Before Dishonor gentleman,
I'm his mistress and he wouldn't live without me,

So beautifully fucked up,
And I'm his love,
I'm his mistress.

Ellen Lawrence

Body Language

In Italian to elucidate,
It's essential to gesticulate.
The French say it with a kiss, a hug,
Occasionally they add a shrug.

But English is so very formal,
Waving arms about would be abnormal.
Only the female sex may kiss,
For men to do so would be amiss.

Therefore, it seems quite apropos,
In English feelings seldom show!

Tonia Leon

Whistling He Walks through the City

nights without stars
flowerless streets
tender hopes appear
but won't survive

even the hint of a smile
would suffice to lighten the way

Paul Lojeski

Like No Other Moment

He visited his dying friend,
Who loved poetry even
More than he did.

They spent days reading
Poems aloud: Carver, Moore,
Bukowski, etc.

Discussing lines and stanzas,
While gazing out the large
Plate-glass windows

At Monterey Bay, the surfers
And seals. They both knew
The best poetry wasn't

Being read but felt between
Them, the decades of shared
Experiences,

The history of the world they
Held in their now frail hands.
Poetry was the air they breathed.

Melissa Longo

We Deserve Better

Again and again
Over, over again
I feel like I'm not from this universe
You deserve better
We deserve better
A Sweet Escape
Another massacre
A new, grand opening
You deserve better
We deserve better
Again and again
Over and over again
They are crying; singing
This isn't a Woman's World
As the Water washes away our impurities
Our perfect imperfections
That we try to dull over time
Like a knife

Alan Lucks

Falling

Falling fairly constant
bulbous, brown and long
down in winding circles
falling til the floor

The image is an odd one
bent and sometimes curled
as a leaf shaken off its limb
falling til the floor

Ed Luhrs

o there is

o there is not there is
what is the more?
in saying yes is it nigh
yes it is nigh no not
who is the object
who is the spectator
dancing through glances
and calculations
is it Monday
no no Tuesday
and Thursday
and every day
that assembles
the graces
of connection

Maria Manobianco

The Silent Chair

A chair like all the rest
Location was what made it
special

It was your chair
at the head of the table
where each day and night
claimed your weight

A place that held secrets
of pain, joy, and aspirations
A place where food and drink
was shared with family

We looked in your direction
waiting
waiting to hear your thoughts

But you were silent
and we were clueless
wondering
what did we miss?

Joan Marg-Kirsten

Compelling

I really don't feel like doing this
why should I sit here typing
writing poems
I'd much rather be eating ice cream.
I could go to Friendly's
order a Jim Dandy –
5 whole scoops of ice cream
5 delicious scoops of ice cream
mint chocolate chip, butter pecan, coffee
black raspberry, and chocolate
but
I do so love crushed pineapple.
I am getting carried away
I need to rethink this
for instance
a simple Mint Cookie Crunch sundae should do it –
3 scoops of Mint Chocolate Chip ice cream
with hot fudge and Oreo cookie pieces.
On the other hand
that flavor
the one I love so much
that decadent vanilla ice cream
with nuts, and ribbons of caramel sauce running through it
with yummy pineapple topping

whipped cream on top, a sprinkle of nuts, a cherry.
Oh my
I'm drooling
aching to pick up that spoon and taste the ice cream
why oh why do I sit here typing
I need to put on my jacket
get in the car
and go to Friendly's.

Michael McCarthy

Whistling in the Dark

The September 11, 2001 Memorial
a collaborative masterwork
created
from bones shattered
by human hands.

Arresting
in its
painstaking
simplicity.

Finally
in 2015
August
In the late afternoon
a hot sun
hovering heavily
above it all
I met up with my brother
with unknown expectations
reluctant
to walk
this solemn path.

Still

a dynamic scene emerges
of abounding life
an array of busy bodies
shuffling about
cameras clicking
to capture
this moment
forever lost.

Quiet

in the still air.

Human beings

milling about
in a newfound void
enveloped by mighty structures
yet greeted with the survivor tree,
reassuring birds,
and
patchworks of the greenest grass.

Subterranean remnants

each with its hollow base
massive in scope
framed
with nearly 3000 names
impeccably impressed
on the hardened surface
Gone!

The steady breadth of falling water
on all sides
overwhelms
inevitably
slipping down
crashing
into an obscure haze.

And the uncountable other lives
pierced
by loss.

All senseless deaths
I begin to ponder
speak
to who we are.

The fertile soil
tilled
with the seeds of
ignorance and cruelty
sown
upon the good earth
inevitably cracked open
on that once clear September morn.

Smoke billowing
in its wake
into a faraway sky.

Doomed
lest we forget those
lynchings too
5000 or more
in our own land of
sweet liberty.

Recalling
every life
including
14-year-old Emmett's.

Abducted
beaten
mutilated
murdered
on that once fine summer day
August 28, 1955.

Still waiting.

It is time to
re-member.

Gene McParland

I Can't Paint

Sometimes I pretend
that I can paint.
I know that I can draw stick figures
and simple designs,
but my ego has convinced me
that I can't draw.

Foolish ego.

I paint with my feet
when I dance.
I draw with my mind and soul
when I write poetry.
I paint happy landscapes
when I smile,
when I laugh.

Sometimes you have to
pretend to agree with your ego
that you can't do something,
as you paint
your own masterpiece.

Shortell McSweeny

Night's Porch

Dusk crosses the garden,
traces treetops on blacking sky.
Fireflies drift across space
in phosphorescent search
of dreams.
They have many.

I sit on night's porch,
rocking desire,
watching that damn man in the moon.
The soft wind pushes chimes,
one perfect note after another.

I observe.

I should have been a firefly!

Wayne Mennecke

Takotsubo Syndrome

Broken heart syndrome gets its name from the Japanese word for octopus trap. During times of extreme anxiety, the left ventricle enlarges to resemble a fishing pot lying on its side.

The throat lumps tight like wet sand
swallows a hollow pot that waits
at the diaphragm's floor,
a bottomed-out vessel
heavy earthenware.
Left side chamber swells its apex

fighters the spasm of stunned blood
coursing channels
grooved like a triple-heart trap
of stacked stone. Unsure

what to do when caught,
moments live in short breath
held tight behind the sternum.
And what of release?

It acquaints with the long arms
of a living breathing being, lingers

in knowing beauty,
when a shaking pull

grips like a dive reflex,

drags slow relief

straight down

in the mouth of something

big and wild.

Susan Meyer

From The Start We Are Given Wings

From the start we
are given wings
an open heart to
set our stars by
move into as a path.

As time unfolds, we
inevitably transform
like somnambulists in a
nocturnal play making
arcs and bows upon
the tabula rasa of inner space.

Square dancing out a field
of possibility, with plaid
shirts and corduroy skirts
whirling in a trance amid
fiddles resounding in pastel
strands of colours that
hug the horizon, we
emerge, spinning as day
dissolves to dreamtime.

Edmund Miller

Lana Turner Playing Polo

For Ursula Nouza, Who Browed the Other Stars

Years ago on a magazine cover
Lana Turner with deep décolletage
In black velvet with orchid corsage
On lavender sheets made me love her,
Head thrown back practically upside down.
Despite platinum hair and clinging clothes
And orchids righted by inverted pose,
What did it was the neat eyebrows sleek brown.

But the stunning arch was a replacement
In mink for *Marco Polo* on-set defacement.
Brows never grew back. Then she'd disappear
With eyebrow pencil, going public freer
Since banishing all the fur trim let her
Stroll unnoticed—except in a sweater.

Rita Monte

Penumbra

What is it?

It follows me
Hounds me
Seeks me

It grabs me
Captures me
Imprisons me

It can be rigid
Obstinate
Relentless

At times a phantom
A shroud
An illusion

I need to escape from it
Avoid it
Elude it

It is my accomplice
Conspirator

Other self

So often it accompanies me

Guides me

Advises me

It is reality

Power

Light

What is it?

It is my shadow

Peter Morrison

Times Square: Memorial Weekend

Tiny dance steps through the crowd
Forward...sideways...back...diagonally
Past one crowd, into another,
Not ten feet away.
They form a ragged arc around two
Girls, naked, except for g-strings
 Narrow as a lady's watch band.

The girls are flags,

Red and white stripes laminating their breasts,
Betsy's balloons
When one of the girls turns away
For a photo with a tourist on either side of her,

White stars on a dark blue field
Adorning the tight buttocks
 Just a city thing, and verry Amereecan
 Without the raids
Mae West
 Lily St. Cyr
 Gypsy Rose Lee endured
 Old Glory has come a long way, baby.

Joseph Muntiseri

CALMix

I'm stressed, I need an Escape!

I've heard books help.

I need to calm down.

Perhaps a book will help.

Let's go to the Library.

I don't like these books.

WAIT, I see Graphic Novels.

Someone says to me, "No those are Comics."

I reply, "No, these are CALMix!"

Gloria g. Murray

From the Russian Orphanage

a baby girl comes to the land of the free
the brave and the eclectic
comes from the place where tongues are thick
where babies cry, reaching out to clutch
the ones who silently pass them by

she comes to the land of the good & the plenty

to hair brushed a hundred shiny strokes
to gala birthday parties
violin, dance lessons
glasses for lazy eyes
speech therapy for lazy tongues

social workers fine tune her spirit
culture shapes her like clay
as the potter's wheel spins and spins
her ethnicity away

(for Shari and David Langer who adopted)

Marsha M. Nelson

A Man from Galilee

Tranquility...
Deep, calm and still.
Water rising,
like warm spun gold.
On a lonely pier.
Breakfast on Skydeck,
my face pressed close to the glass.
Sunlight rests on my eyelids,
splashes on the nearby dock
Of the Caesar Hotel
in Galilee.

I am collecting early morning
expectations; divine connections
on this sacred journey.
Ephemeral yet abiding
heart to heart.
Heaping them on my breasts,
like a bouquet of
baby's breath,
violets, rose petals
and calla lilies.

A million times and more

I've longed to walk where you walked.
From the plains of the Jezreel Valley
and Acre to the Mediterranean shore.

These hills, rocks and dirt
have felt the warmth of your feet;
listened to the passion in your voice
and witnessed your miracles.
You are the bread of heaven...

Now, watching from my balcony,
I search for a trace of your presence
among the restless streets below.
Colorful lights pierce the night,
music everywhere; a mystical medley.

Van Morrison belts out his soul;
"Into the Mystic," and "Moon-dance."
I want to dance in the moonlight
on a magical night;
Silver shards of
Moon-dust in my hair
as I dip my toe
at the water's edge.
Rap, Rock and Reggae compete
wrestling
like immortal foes,
Titans in a universal arena.

In a tavern beneath, a young
woman plays a guitar,
her plaintive voice floats up,
wraps itself around my balcony.

George H. Northrup

Language Arts

My fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Downs,
detested slang so much
that she deducted points if she heard
a vulgar word like “got,” as in,
“I got a hundred on the spelling test”
or “I got a new bike for my birthday.”
She had a delicate ear.

I doubt she could have tolerated
Perry White shouting, “Great Caesar’s Ghost!”
at Clark Kent, in what passed for an expletive
on TV in the 1950s. She might have glared
at Humphrey Bogart crudely remarking
to a proper lady like Katherine Hepburn,
“Darn it!” or “For Pete’s sake!”

In tenth grade, my classmate Jeremy,
angry over his team’s loss in the World Series,
exclaimed, “That sucks!”
Mr. McCarthy overheard him in the hall,
and his billowing indignation
almost lifted him off the floor
as he castigated poor bewildered Jeremy.

Today a television newscaster used that phrase,
and no one paused to look offended or embarrassed.
Nowadays larger, more obscene offenses
bedevil our propriety, not one of them taboo.
Even the F-bomb finds its way
into ordinary conversation, and everyone understands
it's no longer an uncouth reference to sex,
just the outspoken equivalent of italics or boldface,
much like *screw it* or *I got the shaft*.

Words no longer shock—for that we need pictures.
Atrocities once reported, if at all, with stiff restraint,
saturate our living rooms on screens as grand in size
as Da Vinci's *Last Supper*.

Tammy Nuzzo-Morgan

A complete little universe: Paterson's Girls

*Halfgrown girls
stand in a spiral
like the opening of
the sexual orchid*

The young men
tongues stuck unable to comment how
*the ugly legs of the young girls,
are like pistons too powerful for delicacy!*

*And she, walking with
hands near thunder of the waters
filling his dreams
knows more than the young ones*

*The pitiful snake with its
mosaic skin and frantic tongue.
But the tongue of the bee...
It is a creature of the weather.*

WCW & a little bit of TNM

Joan Vullo Obergh

Phoenix Rising

Even now imbedded
microfiche images
still smolder and burn
in our minds

stinging stinging stinging...

inflaming sensibilities of
a city a nation a globe
divided by our God
their God your God
whose God is true God

dividing dividing dividing

On that godless morning
trembling heavenly blue
September skies belched
billowing brimstone plumes
spewing centuries of mistrust
between brother and brother

spewing spewing spewing

Ashes ashes we all fell down
to our knees on quaking ground
weeping we prayed for
a brave new peace
an ascending vertical credo
of unwavering faith to tower
above our oozing red apple
as Twin Towers of freedom rise
on hope for healing to consecrate
this impermeable cornerstone
these bright annealed slivers of
gleaming polished glass

rising rising rising...

Mike O'Keefe

Mother Receding

Lips cracked, dry, sometimes bleeding
Eyes a scornful accusation
Her once robust self an emaciated shadow of its former character
She shuns the water
And takes no food
Relentlessly she assigns blame to her offspring
For her own willful failure to thrive

Her days now full of lying in bed
Demanding the pill on the appointed hour
For the pain that she cannot quite describe
That exists only in her imagination
Eighty years of imagined slights and disappointments
She composes as a litany
The last fifty are mine alone

The High Priest of her new religion
Resplendent in his white coat
His stethoscope draped round his neck
Dangling like a scapula across his heart
To him she lies, all is fine
It is the only respite
To her otherwise impenetrable bitterness

Her cruel mouth has scarred my sister
She shoulders the blame for sins she did not commit
She permits my mother the fiction
That she was dotting, caring, nurturing and kind
I can do no such thing
I labor still under the yoke of abuse
That she committed or enabled, alternately without end

Her conclusion is near, she proudly announces
But not near enough for me
My empathy has beaten her to the grave
It is as dead as my mother surely soon will be
The only advantage is gained by my children
After enduring this culmination of hypochondria, I vow
I will be dead before they even know I was sick

Tom Oleszczuk

Need to Hold

A furry tail swishes across my cheek,
a small warm heart beats on my shoulder.
I am groggy in the new sunlight,
a devoted cat comforting me.

My sister is dead.
A year of chemo, without me.

Still dead.
We hadn't talked for ten years.

Dead.
Like a suicide to me.
Her children suffered quietly
through it.
No comfort from me,
no last-minute making up.

Just silence.
Her choice, silence.
Her choice, no love from me.
I miss the one she had been.
She'll be dead forever.
My cat knows.

George Pafitis

The Four Stanzas of Seasons

Sprightly spring arrives, slowly
jumps around on the stretch
of strings softening the Earth
so "crocuses" can break through.

After a short time the sun will
sizzle with deep obligations to summer,
since there is a tenderness in the strolls
of summertime or when we skip along the street.

And it happens until that robust sharp
air enhances our breathing
offering us the pow of fall
with a brightness of presence,

Which cheers and confronts us
until those heavy winter strings strike
against each other leaving us to trudge along,
happily until all seasons are upon us.

Bruce Pandolfo

Letter To The Universe

Dear universe, all of your entirety,
variety, your giant reach,
further than an eye can seek.
Feel a slight defeat when realizing weakness
in seeing I reside in thee,
but realized that I could see it all,
by inviting the universe inside of me.
Welcome, though it's humbling to talk to you,
your vastness is a very subtle obstacle,
gaze breathless through a heavy Hubble monocle.
The quandaries of your quantum cues,
are cracking my seams, and smart sinew,
I'm reading the signs, and they're all so astrological.
Good heavens! They're also allegorical,
If I open up to walking through, a wormhole portal
follow through,
String-me-along theory I wish that I could alter you.
Just the mention of your dimensions, dementia is threatened.
Dougie-Fresh-Adam's Hitchhiking Guide to the Galaxy,
Everybody loves Raymond...Bradbury, Asimov, Arthur Clark.
Leviathan '99-points on my Intergalactic travel log.
Aforementioned authors and countless others have thought of you.
Lost in you. Danger Will Robinson....
Danger will rob us indeed of

adventure if we are heeding all its angles.
Stare into the pitch black, abyss that is spangled,
I'm starstruck, punch drunk, hung up, thankful.
Our flag and our masters, our matters, advances,
our parents our planet, our patterns our labels are nothing.
I get this feeling of trivial restlessness when
spending delirious seconds or minutes just gazing into
the endlessness depths of all the heavens and feel minuscule.
Are you ever affected, infected by the question
"Will I never do anything to affect all this?"
Perception says your role is minuscule in scope,
but the pettiness of one bar of a spoke,
cheapens not the significance of the whole.
We're part of a cycle. Drown in the twilight typhoon,
while simultaneously becoming one as it imbibes you.

Marlene Patti

My freedom

Growing up, tied to
dependent parents
and older siblings,
the walls closed.

Freedom drove me to blossom,
the sun always over me.
I waited for the day
I could tear the roots away
from the earth
that so loved
to entrap me.

The walls closing in as I
reached freedom,
suddenly I felt it.
The ability to take off,
to travel abroad,
to taste the meat,
to indulge in feelings of bliss.
I felt it, I sensed it and touched freedom.
Its softness was unmistakable,
undeniably calling me to embrace it.
Like a waterfall flowing over me.

Anthony Phelligrino

The Day

The sun will come up
Out of the East and trumpet in
The Dawn of a new day
For some it will be the
Start of a new life
For others the end of one that was lived
There will be people who will fall in love
For the very first time
Sadly others will conclude happier times
There will be those who will thank
The Lord that gifted them the day
Then there will be others that
Will curse the hours away
Some will make a fortune
Some will see Theresa taken away
Here and there the weather will be pleasant
But woe to the places that will see
Huge snowfalls, hail, high winds and funnel cones
To many the day will be ho-hum and ordinary
A few will find it to be a bundle of joy
Somewhere in the world people
Will be starting a war
And in other parts people will

Be blessed with a new peace
Then night will come
And most will find true rest and sleep
They may wonder and dream
About what the next day may bring

Kelly J Powell

Divine Intervention

Dear Joan,

How much easier for you
knowing your part in The Big Plan!
Divine Purpose being less ambiguous
than say—Temporal Lobe Lesions
causing Extremes of Emotion
Hyper-Religiosity or sensations
of *eating yellow* like Van Gogh's psychosis
or Plath's merely outdated *Daddy Issues*.

Although, perhaps while burning
you may have briefly lost your moral courage
if only for a moment and only for a moment
wondered that God had forsaken you, too.

In your day they took it seriously
when one claimed God or the Devil
made them do it and had you not fried
like a greasy, KFC menu option—

Your Black Box—
as almighty THEY have nicknamed the brain
would've become lab material

and more food for men's brains—and
merely Science instead of World History

Thankfully no 30-minute meals for you
that don't account for hours
of shopping and chopping, traffic to compete with
recipes to swap from The Chew—
bad Facebook photos.

You skated really
the day-to-day torture of a needy man
price of gas, carpools, crabby teenagers
complaining their ipad knockoff's
not as good as the real one.

Cyber bullies and online-o-philes
cars and bars and other divine wars
or your mother's loom that you forsook
turned into a Martha crafting nightmare.
Righteousness and martyrdom
less complicated than Groupons and Xanax.

Tolstoy said daily life might be the hardest thing.
Harder than War and Peace? Maybe
for his wife writing by candlelight with a dip pen.
I would tend to agree but you weren't
born for a few hundred years yet.

O to be a warrior in God's army!
Fighting on the side of Justice and Light!

Alongside a man in his natural element
away from diaper changes
and pubescent rages
easy-no-tool furniture from Ikea
the latest virus and/or diarrhea

No broken homes or neglect of alcoholic
parents to be found. Just show up, fight
and dramatically die for being dressed like a man.
We should all be so lucky.

Pearl Ketover Prilik

Free Falling Fool

There I was – the little girl with big dark eyes, an old soul they said – too grown for childhood games-aged four or five– finding the very word ‘child’ insulting – Foolishness was just that – not for me – silliness pushed to the side –laughter soft –preferably posed behind a polite hand. In stead there was ... lush music, boundless books, swirling art and of course the joy of flattening on hot pavement watching the world of an ant make its way carrying a gargantuan crumb –
Important lessons to be learned –

I sequestered foolishness

for now
free fall
into its swirl
hungry to eat
each welcome
mouthful with
a spoon– now
that it and I
are properly
aged and
simply
delectable.

Nino Provenzano

The Encounter

Meeting someone in circumstances like
the one I'm telling you is just not right.
I would be disrespectful and unmannered,
surely without morality and good taste.
Yet every morning we do meet and always
at the same place exactly, without fail.
I am half naked, with my hair messed up
and we exchange exactly the same smile.
He winks and says: "Hello, you're here again?"
I bow my head and say "I swear to you
that we will always be good friends. You know why?
Because you prize this friendship as I do."
"Yes, we are friends, but you're not getting younger.
I don't mean to imply that you are old."
And I reply with anger in my voice:
"Who do you think you are? You lousy mirror!"

Rohini Ramanathan

I Like Him

The last time this nut lover, the burrower,
A newcomer on my property, was on my deck,
He studied the plate on the small round glass table
Peering through the glass from below.

A few seconds later,
He wrinkled his mammalian snout and sniffed the air,
Lingered and beheld the plate again.
Next, his, dark shiny eyes darted about, both to spot and to
avoid danger.

His attention returned to the plate; maybe he was ready for
the plunge now.
This cuddly little fur ball with his shiny black pelage seemed to
be in no hurry.
My heart tugged at me to urge him to go for the food on the plate,
Which I had put out specifically for my deck guests. A new
habit on my part.

The black bushytailed wonder circled the table,
Paused, then resumed his peering.
I wondered why he did not jump right up next to the plate
and help himself.
Was he hesitant because the food had not been offered to him

specifically?

Or was the plate not positioned properly?

Was he not sure what was on the plate?

Wasn't his nose a good sniffer?

Why did it not apprise him yet?

Disappointing me even further,

He moved away from the table, and hopped on to the slat of the deck's railing.

His face facing out, he wagged his brushy tail and rubbed his nose with his paw,

Then he turned around and eyed the food, which was visible to him now.

His face a blank slate, I could barely decipher his thoughts

Or predict his next move.

However, his cocked ears proved that he was ever so vigilant.

Normally, I am a good face-reader but not so in his case.

A few seconds later, he leaped off the railing and moved toward the table,

Looked up, contemplated hopping on to it.

He was definitely interested in what was there though eager he was not to get to it.

This was puzzling. Maybe this cool indifference is what gave him that . . . well, cool look.

At one point, he stared into the house through the glass door; I made myself scarce.

Do animals see things around them the same way we humans do?
This fella seemed to suggest they do.
He seemed totally aware of his surroundings.

Finally, he vaulted on to the table and began his nibble.
First, he tasted the cereal, then helped himself to more.
He even found one or more fruit loops in the mound.
Positioned on his hind legs and alert as a hawk, grabbed
these fuller solids with his paws.

As his pointy teeth bit into the loops, I recalled a few walnut
pieces, too.
His paws and jaws moved fast
But the cereal itself dwindled only slowly.
I was amused.

It was a lot of cereal for one squirrel.
Hardly have I seen more than one squirrel at a time engaged
in any activity other than
When chasing each other up a tree trunk
Or just horsing around.

My guest took a break, bounded over the slats,
Bounced off the railing,
And on to a tree branch, and in an airy blur
Disappeared!

While he was away, a few sparrows showed up.
They too studied the surroundings
Then helped themselves to the cereal.

Soon the burrower returned. The birds scampered away.

Mr. Squirrel was back in his element as he partook of the cereal once again.

This time, he seemed more relaxed and

More at home.

And not as beady-eyed.

Barbara Reiher-Meyers

Reruns

I reach into the dark
for the familiar,
find the remote
invite reruns to share my night

Old shows eclipse old friends
gone and not retrievable.
Familiar flickers reassure
that some things will not change.

Phil Reinstein

Africa my love

Africa oh Africa
a bridge too far animal planet cookie jar
Africa you are my love

Eagles hover high above fly fishing from the sky
buffalos chewing cud herd calves with wary eye
snaky rivers give me shivers as we roll on by
the lions sleep tonight

Happy hippos dip so dangerous dare we dance too close
crocodiles now sunbathing along the Zambezi River coast
elephants smack whack water want to wash their coats
the lions sleep on site the lions will sleep tonight

Africa oh Africa peculiar place particular pace
Africa showcase I love
Africa oh Africa curious space warm embrace
Africa your grace I love

Springbok antelope can't cope forging forks for fight
wandering warthogs worry mope grey storks in black and white
elusive leopard crossing the road serendipity sighted highlight
the lions sleep deep don't peep don't creep no flight
the lions are sleeping tight

Giraffes emerging to our left seek water to our right
big baboons dig *Scrabble* babble ostriches lose sight
elephants plop drop dark dung beetle bakery delight
the lions are sleeping light
the lions will need to bite

Africa oh Africa
mystery majesty pageantry parade for me my love
beyond the bar beyond bizarre exotic erotic star
Africa oh Africa my love

Gabriel Ricard

Safe House in Philadelphia

They're still watching the Twilight Zone marathon
on four different TVs downstairs,
while the rest of the assholes he has to love,
because a lot of bridges were burned with gasoline
and stupid songs over the last ten or so years,
are still watching Evil Dead II on a wall
that aspires as well as anything ever could
to be as captivating and endless as the Manhattan skyline.

By two A.M.,
he can't really stand the thought
of moving back and forth between these things
for however long these idiots want to party.

Which is apparently forfuckingevery,
so he's sitting between the upstairs and the downstairs
by two-thirty. He's chain smoking,
since the owner of the house is still unconscious
in a bathtub in the basement.

People are still trying to wake him up, too.

He sits at the bottom of the second set
of stairs, smoking, keeping a Subway cup

full of vodka and fruit punch nearby,
and waiting for the bus schedule to start up.

Pretty soon.

It's dicey out there,
but the last time he checked,
this wasn't the last safe house in America.

It's probably not even the last safe house in Philadelphia.

If Sundays count for anything at all,
it might not even be the last safe house
on this lousy, hateful street.

Although for the purposes of self-preservation,
it might need to be.

Diana R. Richmond

Submitting a Poem

Seeking visibility while protecting the soul
Desiring connectedness while remaining alone,
Striving for self-expression while maintaining privacy
Reveals life's paradoxes in living authentically.

Submitting heartfelt messages expressed through a poem
Merges souls longing to find their path home,
Yearning to live fully and freely to the core
Poetry transforms deeply with so much to explore.

Placing a poem permanently onto the page
Reflects risk and courage at each life phase,
Intertwined with truth and wholeness, strength and sincerity—
Surrendering to life's paradoxes gives birth to authenticity.

Al Ripandelli

Sonja

Suddenly
naturally
and with ease
she arrived
and I knew.
Sitting close
with soft touch
a sweet smile.
Her quiet laughter
adorable and
engaged.
I am nervous
warm without heat
shuddering.
Then a kiss
gentle
serene
shrouding the flurry inside.
Alive again.
Anxious and calm
exploding but restrained
surrounded in hope
long overdue.

Jillian Roath

What Makes a Leader

As a child, I was addicted to the Redwall series.
They were fairly simple books,
usually consisting of a young hero saving his home or
freeing slaves
with plenty of riddles, quests, and coming-of-age character arcs.
However, re-reading them as an adult, I realized that each of
the heroes,
leaders of their people in the end,
shared certain traits.
They were willing to put the needs of others before their own.
They wanted to help people because it was the right thing to do,
not because they gained something from it.
They understood that the world was unfair and,
while there were things they could- and did- change,
these fictional heroes didn't waste their time complaining
when they didn't get their way.
But what I enjoyed most about the Redwall heroes—
young though they were—
was that they didn't ask to be leaders.
They were chosen to lead by the people who looked up to them.
And now, as an adult,
and hearing people complain about how nothing is fair
while demanding to be heard because their vision of the future
is so much better

than the one we currently have,
I wish more people had read the Redwall series.
Maybe then, some of the best leaders I've read about
wouldn't be restricted to the world of fiction.

Rita B. Rose

Art is but a Poet's Dream

To make one feel, to make one sing
To make one express an inner glow
To explore each self for the world to show

Art is but a Poet's dream
Strokes broad and thin
Inner visions sprouting to light
The scribble of words to ones delight

Art is but a Poet's dream
A kaleidoscopic of desire
Mediums of paint and ink
Fleeting in a blink

Art is but a Poet's dream
Indulging in who I am
To daub the universe as I see fit

Art is but a Poet's dream
Do not wake or rattle me
For I do not want imageries to flit

Art is but a Poet's dream
The color of the craving soul
To have forever and to hold
Art is but a Poet's gold

Marc Rosen

Rules For Using a Microphone

1) We don't care about your backstory. You're just another entertainer. **READ THE POEM, SING THE SONG, TELL THE JOKES, or SIT DOWN.**

2) You are just as welcome as everyone else, which is to say, don't you dare make it screech or you will be forced to step on Legos, barefoot, every hour, of every day, for all eternity.

3) If you're the feature, you get to use your time however you want. If you're not, **GET ON WITH IT!**

4) As much as everyone loves your most recent ode to the dead cat you've left sitting in your living room for the past twelve years to rot, remember that some of us may have recently eaten. Offend the ears all you wish, just don't offend the stomachs.

5) If you must raise your volume, back away as you do. Violators will be sent to the Maximum Fun Chamber, where they shall listen to an endlessly looping recording of a shrill-voiced woman named Fran singing "It's a Small World," for no less than three hours.

6) **DO NOT FELLATE THE MIC!** The microphone is incapable of experiencing sexual pleasure of any kind, and may, in fact, be damaged by your oral ministrations.

7) You get as long as the host says. If she says two poems, that doesn't mean you get to retell Revelations.

8) No flash photography. It causes seizures, migraines, and bad reviews.

9) Repeat offenders of any rules shall be dealt with by the Spanish Inquisition.

10) Do not speak the name of the King in Yellow! I don't want to change our venue AGAIN.

Narges Rothermel

Mysteries of life

One spring

I dared to cross the road from a thriving forest
to a ghost-land once called *the pine barrens*.

Expecting to be in the graveyard of burned pines,
till I noticed the green tips of tiny offshoots
on the floor of the forest.

The newborn vibrant pines were sitting
on blackened ground waiting to flourish.

I bowed my head to Mother Nature,
tiptoed out of the charcoal-covered forest,
and smiled in awe.

I was grateful for witnessing this resurrection.

Dina Santorelli

The King of Queens

Young wolves in packs,
Fiercely protecting their kin
Whose esteem is determined by a boot.
Their march scatters fallen leaves
Across narrow alleyways,
Spray-painted bases drawn in haste,
Ropes of groundwater—

Car!

Round and round,
Wheels of plastic roar about corners,
A convoy of tasseled handlebars,
Barreling past headless bodies
Buried under hoods of metal,
Dribbling oil to our moat.

Cross me, please; cross me back again—

The sauce! It coats the air, our skin, our mood,
Lingers under runny noses,
Under fingernails,
In the bloodshot eyes of old men,

Taunting the French fries in my garbage can.

Here, luck-a-luck-a-luck-a-luck.

Don't worry, she don't bite,

But don't run just the same.

Can Danielle come out to play

On this endless day?

We have no money to buy,

But what we want is free,

A rubber ball, our grail—

Our weapon, our peace treaty;

A box, a steamroller; a can, a puck,

Tap, tap, tap, I see Fish under the green truck.

Here, men are men, toes dyed purple,

Sitting at tables like kings.

Here, women are women,

Plump in their housecoats

Scrubbing sidewalks till they gleam.

Urban lionesses, their eyes watchful,

Atop concrete perches,

Whispering to the probing winds—

Strawberry Shortcake, cream on top...

It's almost dark

And there's nowhere to park

The asphalt river now a stream.

Windows blink open with dinner calls

But the game's almost over and they go ignored.
Hark! The siren song of Mister Softee,
The pied piper of the poor
Brings smiles to dirty faces,
Who are hungry no more.

Here, girls are boys,
And boys are girls,
Sisters and brothers borne of a city block.
The air is cold, but our jackets are home 'cause
Our skin is warm with youth and promise.
Wedge between metal roofs
And inclines of bricks,
We hide from the sun,
The storm,
The unforeseen sorrows,
Talking tough of what we know, which is little,
Of the lives to come—
Until, as if at once, they are gone.

Robert Savino

Between Me and Modern Mourning

How is it that bullets and bombs fire up
front pages in media madness,
breaking the shield to tread air
through above ground graveyards,
home and abroad.

In recent times,
civilians covered in rainbow sheets.
In every other breath,
soldiers covered in stars and stripes,
not to mention unrelated innocent victims.

In the safety of my home I enjoy sitting alone
writing poetry in a cool afternoon breeze,
where houseflies often barrel into window screens,
where mosquitoes and gnats wallow outside
the door, planning uninvited entry.

Oh how I complain about these things that bug me.
Until the news refreshes yesterday, broadcasts
today and warns of tomorrow's alerts.
I then recognize the world rotates
on a fragile axis of uncertainty

and return to the wilderness
filled with voices reciting poems of the dead.

Debra Scala-Giokas

Peace Soup

My cold hands hug this warm bowl,
like an embrace from a friend
with a stranger's face,
strange how hope comes in a can,
perhaps donated by your hands,
and heart,
mine will remember yours.
My spoon full of thank yous

Karen Schulte

Memory

Even as I remember
the place I lived as a child
it changes.

Within its walls
the shaded light of
yesterday's afternoon.

Memory and fact
become questions where
everything has a shadow.

Two large windows open
over a side street,
an aerie perfect for winged flight.

How many seasons ago
since the great oak's leaves
unfurled in the courtyard?

Looking over rooftops,
smoke rises,
dissipates over railway trestles.

There is little I know without
movement, the pulling in of time,
the stirring of the pot.

Ron Scott

About Poetry

Fluid in form, unlimited disguise; I know not the face, the name,
Gender unannounced, it escorts an invisible force,
Strength to divide and make whole, without volition,
It captures the soul.

Standing invitation beckons; whether sorrow or jubilation,
Miles Davis blows in the background, as people sway,
You arrive to give us each, our own sound,
Blue in Green, In a Silent Way.

A warrior against turbulence; breath of levity in despair,
Inspiration to face tomorrow, with all its uncertainties,
Desire to remember yesterday; to hear the music once again,
That golden trumpet.

Lena sings, Martin speaks; the thread so subtle,
Music weaves the words, tapestry to behold,
A message delivered; an appeal to consciousness,
Truth be told.

I hear your rhythm, your beat; the meter your vehicle,
Emotions in flux, you become my song, my story,
Of life's peaks and valleys; a companion
In poetry.

N.M. Scuri

Moonlight

Slowly

Softly

The warm breeze tickles the new-born leaves as they

Softly

Slowly

Push their way through frost-hardened bark skin.

Resistingly

Restlessly

Like the rumble of distant drums, a chill wind pulls at

the new-born

leaves as they

Restlessly

Resistingly

Cling to their frost-hardened bark skin.

Crashing

Crushing

The sting of rain and ice strips leaf and bud as they fall

Crushing

Crashing

Laying on the ground with their frost-hardened bark skin.

Gasping

Gaping

I feel your frigid breath at my throat, and I am

Gaping

Gasp

Clutching at air in the dark and the frost-hardened chaos, and the
screaming wind, and as I finally go as cold as you,

I pray for moonlight.

Keith Simmons

Long for Long

I long for long evenings
of days past
3 a.m. conversations
those special smiles
knowing we had found
love
understanding
compassion
hope

I long for long evenings
evenings before the war
when our flashing eyes
windowed our souls
when we found comfort
in touch
silence
laughter
tears
in honesty

I long for long evenings
when our hearts soared
when the world was ours
long evenings before the war
of shifting perspectives

Ray Simons

Proof of God

Children,
Grandchildren (mine)

Waking up,
Waking up (on a beautiful Kodachrome day like today)

Women,
Women, in general,
...(Ellie Gonsalves, in particular)

Puppies & old dogs,
Being able to keep a puppy as it becomes an old dog.

Forgiveness,
"To err is human, to forgive divine"
Nah, people do it all the time...
that`s where the miracle is!

LOVE,
Love, whether it lasts a lifetime
or was a onetime thing...
Even when painful beyond words
it changes you forever....
for the better!

Growing old...

Growing old gracefully...

with understanding & fairly good health..

another miracle when it happens...

Courage,

Courage when any of the above

doesn't work out as you planned

& you get out of bed anyway!

Chloe Sky

The Seine

I have never seen people so in love with a river,
which makes me think all my romantic moments until now
have been wasted.

Swindled, if you will,
on things that don't undulate in the moonlight.

Barbara Southard

Hollowed Chamber of my Heart, Speak to Me

I am a pilgrim wandering in your place,
my eyes taking in all you can no longer see.

I take your dreams and make them grow inside me
a streak of silver passing over the sea's sky in a long
lingering glide
the land across the Sound growing distant to my sight
a continuum of burnt gold on the hazy horizon.

I climb until I reach the clouds, threads of mist blowing past,
an illumination of white, trees fading to gray
yet with a glisten of burnt silver moisture on leaves,
their lichened trunks a pillow of soft pearly greens.

I breathe you in.

Dd. Spungin

You want it raw

Truth that bleeds
running over your pristine life
You want raw
truth in a bag of dead bones
The hallways of murder,
rape, drugs

You want nice
You want to whitewash
over your horror,
your nightmares

Life, a bag of dead fish,
a holiday from morality,
a wanna-be goodness gone amok

You want a poem
This is it
Before trussing, seasoning, baking~
Raw.

Ed Stever

Blood And Metal

It amazes me still, the way my brother
sprinted from between two parked cars
right in front of one that was not,
and the way that red Chevy's chrome bumper
catapulted his five-year-old body in a perfect arc,
slinging him ten feet down the road,
where he lay, blood bubbling in his mouth,
and the neighbors and my Mom
trying to capture his tongue with a spoon,
as if they could yank the life back into him,
and with leaves spinning down around us,
red, gold orange, and brown, I shivered in the cold,
hands in pockets pushed to the periphery
by the buzz of suburban bloodlust.

Later, sitting in the police car,
parents departed with ambulance,
I gave an eyewitness report,
as the world yielded its softer edges
from inside the cruiser,
 its steel partition
segregating seats, a simple barrier

defined by simply complicated entrances,
and I gazed back through that grille,
saw the dried drop of rusted blood on the seat
and the world tilted, the world tilted.

Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino

Stephen's Lake

1.

Water-green reeds
stand sentinel
to a season's waste

Here the sunnies bob
to bread & corn
then dive to mudded rainbows

Plentiful minnows scam
their nests bubble and thrive
insects scurry the water top

Casting my rod from a deck — I see
among cress & vine — vague recall —
asylum of verdigris

2.

Mostly complacent syllables
through miry depth
arise —

Where are the flirting lilies

that changed to winged bandits and
flew all care away?

A tranquil water breaks
upon a stone — in part hidden —
in part plainly seen

My paddle dips — imparts a ringed cadence
Winds reverse their course —
I drift with it

Tom Stock

Yes

to life

to freedom

to the intelligence of all life

to interconnection of life and no life

to soil

to food

to air

to water

to relevance of all

Kate Dellis Stover

Homecoming

There is no place I will not find you.
Your spirit moves with the tides and the winds
And makes a song down alleyways while the housewives on
balconies
Shake out their carpets, smiling.
Your spirit, like your life, is too large to capture.
Definitions peel away from the core of you
Leaving you breathless and searching for whatever is far and wide
Endless, infinite, star-spun, infused with light.

You have been haunted
You have been visited by ghosts.
You had to tuck your soul away in a distant corner
To stay true to yourself.
No one had to tell you what to do
Or keep your heart beating to the rhythm of the light.
With both hands, you held fast to the center
Though still a mystery, still a wordless adventure.
The soft hands of love touched you tenderly
So that, even in the dark hours, you would not forget.

I love you.
I loved you when we met, I love you now

2

This story will not end.

It stays in motion even when we forget and turn away.

It has the energy of a blazing sun, a distant moon.

It shivers across the web of a new born galaxy

Rich with purity and light.

How I long for you now

As you sit quietly in the next room.

I understand there will be no kisses,

No deep kisses like the ones we had in the mornings and nights.

But, my love, I have your embrace and the touch of your hand,

A faint bridge to your cloistered heart,

That I cross with grave uncertainty.

Watch for me,

I'm coming closer,

Still the woman you sat with by the water.

Shyly, you took my hand,

And the sky grew brighter without stars.

You discovered me like a wide-eyed animal, still and curious.

No one remembers.

No one can picture you strong and vibrant in the garden

you planted

And watered and nourished.

3

Tall and brown-skinned, you were the color of the sun.
The sun's energy lit you from within.
You stood at the center of that green world
With that smirk, that mischievous smile.
It hid a secret you would never tell.

I see you in my mind's eye,
And my heart is rich with the soft texture of memories.
You are not lost.
As long as I am here, watching and listening,
You are not lost.
Now, when you smile, a touch of that adventurous man
Rises to the surface.
That is my answer.
You will keep moving forward with that pure spirit
Until you finally win your freedom
And I welcome you home.

Qumran Taj

Wizarding Ways

The world sleeps while the night kind creep
Through crack and crevice over hill and hole
All things slithery and shunned by day
writhe and wriggle in the dead of night's cold.

Creatures great and small delight in the dance of darkness.
No judgment falls for all must survive and thrive. That is
life's law.

So kiss the moment deep and savor nocturnal glories
For one day our revels will end and what then?

From the black heavens a silver sickle slices the bare earth to cut
Away its precious colors and leave behind tattered shreds of gray.
While dreamers roam ethereal realms in slumbering jaunts
We who are ambassadors of the unlighted realms gather to
Nature's tasks under a moon that spies us with squinted eye.

What is this? Something unworldly powerful draws near.
A tall robed figure is sudden born from misty graveyard gloom.
Before him, Nature herself kneels with bowed head and silence.
Beneath a dark cloak, the wizard's power cannot be contained.

From within the darkness, he calls forth the light.
From behind shuttered eyelids, he sees more clearly still.

He carries the Hermit's flame within, unseen to mortal sight.
Over past, present, and future he presides in the eternal now.

In a sheltered grove, by ancient oaks hidden,
The wizard finds his magic table, rough-hewn and well worn.
Beset with the tools of his Craft, time and tradition seasoned
A midnight dew transforms moon rays into diamond showers.

All powers are gathered and the wizard bends them to his will.
At the ready a wizened old cauldron, crowned with ashes and rust.
Frankincense and myrrh smolder over coals glowing angry red.
Candles, silver and gold stand tall, dagger and chalice all in place.

Fragrant smoky tendrils like overlong fingers caress this
sacred space.

The time has come. The hour is right. Both stars and moon agree.
The wizard turns within to the source of all that is, was, and
will be.

Under hooded garb, with eyes half open he spies invisible things.

Arms rise as if to orchestrate the powers that be. Silently he
calls the watchtowers, guardians of east, west, north and south.
Thrice the circle he walks and raise the cone of power he will.
The gathering is called and the guests have all arrived.

This working proceeds but for how long who can say?
A healing goes forth, or maybe some help to those in dire need.
The wizard's works are many and wondrous indeed!
In secret he sends powers of strength, hope, and good cheer.

For many good works are wrought in places dark and deep.
Seeds come alive and spring forth from the darkest soil, do
they not?

The body repairs, rests and revives itself in the dead of night.
And was it not from the darkness that God said: "Let there
be light?"

His work now done the wizard closes shop for the night.
He bids one and all a cheery "Hail and farewell!"
At his silent command, the tall man returns all to Nature's cradle.
Soon the dawn breaks and he must join the rest to play a mundane
role.

Jose Talavera

Entitlement

Ever stop to think about the direction entitlement is
going these days?

Not really a good direction from what I've been seeing
Those of a different generation think they can call the shots
with no merit

It is quite fascinating to watch sometimes

Too many people want all the benefits with none of the effort

Lacking the desire to learn new skills that could benefit them

Even when the answer is right in front of them

Making that extra bit of effort just seems like too much of a hassle

Everlasting gratification is something these people expect!

Not one accepting the harsh reality of what is outside their bubble

Time is the only thing that will tell how well they will do in
the next step

Gayl Teller

Posted on Facebook/Poem

Husband—My challenge to my family:
Let's go 24 hours WITHOUT
ordering anything from amazon.com.
I know it'll be an epic struggle,
but let's give it a try!
What say you, wife?

Wife—Yeah! I just can't commit to that.
If our household didn't need any items,
then I would not order anything...
mind you, these are not frivolous purchases,
but more like light bulbs, Ziploc bags,
and parts of Halloween costumes.

Husband's Mother/Poet Aloud to Her Husband—
I just don't get it: Why do they
make their private topic public?

Mother/Poet's Conscience In Private—
Why is your son's private topic
made open to the public on Facebook
any different from your making
it public in your own poem?

Ted Tiller

You don't know me

You don't know me but you could easily learn to understand me.
You don't know me but I am a person who loves a lot
You don't know me but I could be your friend
You do not know me but give me a chance and I'll be your friend
to the end.

You do not know me but I have feelings.
You do not know but I don't want to be known for my illness
You do not know me but I try to keep my promises.

You don't know me and I don't know you.
You don't know me and I would like to know you
You don't know me but we can learn about each other
You don't know me and that's okay, for now.

J R Turek

Mom and Pop

Too young to be called names like
Grandma and Grandpa, Granny and Gramps,
they were Mom and Pop, my paternal grandparents
young and vital and I grew up saying
I want a love like that.

Mom was tall and elegant, always coaxing me
to stand up straight and hold my head high,
Pop was a bundle of fun, laughter spilling
from his lips. Pop was Marty, but everyone
called him Big Marty – my father, much taller,
was Little Marty. Mom was Julia but preferred Judy
and when the name rang out from the next room,
we'd singsong *Which one?*
and giggle like schoolgirls.

Everywhere they went, they were arm in arm
a comfortable loop of elbow to elbow –
I can't picture Mom without Pop beside her
shopping, strolling, even taking the trash
down the hall to the compactor, together.
I prayed for a love like that.

They fell in love young, he was barely 19

she was 17; they ran off to Maryland, eloped,
returning to families incensed at a mixed marriage.
She was pure emerald Irish, he pure gravy Italian.
A church wedding, everyone wore plastered smiles
because traditions weren't meant to be broken.

My father was their only child, spoiled
by each side and each side still as distant
as their fatherlands. Every Saturday night,
Mom and Pop would tell my dad to behave,
they were going *shopping for linoleum*; Pop called it
a ginmill, Mom would smile and say dance hall.
I watched them dance all my life

until the big C snuggled between them.
She lost her vanity, her dignity, her ability to walk down
the street arm in arm with her forever love. It was long,
brutal, the funeral went on for five days, the church
like a wedding – his on one side, hers on the other.
I still prayed for a love like that.

Times have changed, traditions have eased, even
disappeared but the gulf between the two families
never spent one moment between their arms,
their hands clasped in friendship, their hearts
locked in love, and prayers
do come true. I have a love just like that.

Luis Valdes

Poetic Justice

The light of the moon imitates the reflection of the ocean.

The land was not made in time to unwind the scars of mankind.

Everlasting seasons shift just like the gateway to my soul.

The tree of life was torn between the difference
of knowledge and wisdom.

The roots became forbidden once Adam ate the fruit.

The leaves give mankind a breeze when their souls bleed.

The wound that was never healed bled for seven days.

Humanity unwrap those scars on Christmas, Eve.

Poetic through those biblical scripts, Justice within God.

Perfection is Holy, painted by the Ghost,
portrait the essence by the beloved origin.

Pramila Venkateswaran

Making Symbols

After Gail Horton's "The Four Irish Elements," Textile Art

She must have stepped out into the moonlit dark
to escape the storm within four walls to find

clues on the chrome path etched into red earth—
shell of star shadow, feather of starling, a blue egg

still in the nest after sky scream. Following old
footprints would not have helped. Nor would

swinging from creepers hanging like questions.
Perilous must have been the seas rising absurdly.

If night had knitted itself thick, how much spirit
did she have to muster to discern shadows?

How many women must have kept the boat still
with every atom of their being! Brought
the rolling egg of the soul to rest.

K. Powers Vermaelen

Gone

Gone is
the last reservation,
the apron string crafted
from spider's silk.

The final straw has been
placed, the back broken. They
suppressed your truth, lied
about what happened to you.

You are free now to
ascend, to launch from
the hole they tried
to bury you in. Yes, there

will be drama, banshee-like
wails, accusations of
abandonment—ironic,
considering. Steel yourself

against the sweet pull of the
familiar, the cloak of blame
they will try to clothe you
in, draining your soul

of heat. Remember
your story. What happened
cannot be erased by denial, explained
with a shrug, a glass of

spilled milk they did not care to
mop up or cry over. Wrench
yourself from their talons,
secure and crushing, and

throw yourself toward
newfound bliss. A reckoning will
come in your wake, their hearts
growing fonder, and yours, free.

Margarette Wahl

Ingrid Hearts New York

For Ingrid Hancock

She carries these wherever she goes,
handing them out to each face
she meets,

any person she gravitates towards.

These chocolate candy hearts
with tiny handwritten messages
of inspiration.

Ingrid hands them out

Thank you!

for a service rendered

or a warm welcome

inside a store.

A few caring words

brighten someone's day.

Small reminders of God's love,
given one little generosity at a time.

A friendly cashier

a hardworking busboy,

a sad waitress who

ran after her to hug her,

I needed this today.

This sweet messenger of love

walks streets of New York City

to suburbs of Long Island
sharing chocolate hearts in kindness.
Retired from teaching music,
she exchanged music notes
for love letters.
Somber expressions
on the faces of New Yorkers, post 9/11
she decided to bring them back into smiles.
We meet a woman inside a Manhattan boutique
whose eyes shine towards this candy lady.
I know you!
points to *God loves you* message
displayed on her register
received from Ingrid years earlier.
Together, we smile knowing
this kind of love lasts
beyond the sweet taste of candy.

Herb Wahlsteen

Innocence and Experience

The clouds are growing really large and gray.
October's here. The leaves put on a last
spectacular display before they stay
below December's snow. The day dies fast.

The ground is wet from a week's rain. I slosh
across the field, sad and embarrassed by
the stupid things I did last night. I washed
the puke stains off my sneakers, but, now, I

keep wondering how to clean my puke-stained soul.
I never drank before, so, last night, I
got smashed. I (first time) smoked weed, too. The whole
night I did things and said things that crushed my

young vanity. I wonder how weak whims
win. I keep thinking of my night last night.
I went to a concert held in the gym
of a close college. I thought it'd be all right

to have a little wine before the show.
With all the weakness of a novice drinker,
I drank and drank until I didn't know
what I was doing: I, the "strong-willed thinker."

I bought a half-gallon of burgundy.
I knew that was too much but guessed I'd meet
some friends there. At least some would probably
come since a concert close to home's a treat.

I got there early like I'd planned. Then, when
I found a tree-enclosed spot with quite dim
light, I drank, hard. Much later, rain again.
I staggered to a dry nook near the gym.

It was a dark, dry corner some feet of
a sidewalk that went round the gym and on
to parking lots. The overhang above
where I was standing stretched out wide and long.

A friend approached, surprised. He joked, "Smoke this."
I said, "OK," and toked away. My friend
and I were where the cops weren't. "Holy piss!"
exploded a loud voice. I could tell right then

that voice shot from a young high-school teacher
I'd had. Lost in thick haze, I couldn't form
an answer, so, instead, I passed the reefer
to him. He stared, amazed. "I thought you were born

with more intelligence than this!" he said,
disgusted. I was at a loss for words
and smiled just like a brain-damaged child fed
all his favorite foods. It then occurred

to him how drunk I was and how worthless
his words would be. My mind was almost gone.
My stupid mouth began to move through the mess
my thoughts were in. I loudly babbled on

how I wasn't worried about tomorrow
because tomorrow I would smoke more weed,
and that would help my hangover. "What? No,
I don't believe it. What's brought on this need

for being stupid, Herb? You seemed too strong
for this," he sighed. He left with a quick stride.
I staggered out onto the rain-soaked lawn.
I soon felt tired and lay down on my side.

I never got to see the concert. My
friend saw that I was much too out of whack
to be in public. "Hey, before you die,
let me take you home," he offered. I spat

and groaned, "OK. Phew. I feel terrible."
He helped me to his car. I walked like a
man with the "dancing disease." Unable
to keep my liquor down, I turned, and: =uhhh...=

The whole long night I hung above the toilet
bowl. I did time in purgatory all
night long (though it felt like I had been set
in hell, that place of permanent purge). All

night long, I muttered, “How could I have been so stupid? I take pride in my strong will and my strong mind. Damn! Then I take a swim in toilet water. O, shit, am I ill.”

Today, I feel like the decaying year.
I’m certainly corruptible like it.
Large bits of strength and wisdom dwelling here this past spring and summer are gone. My spirit

has lost some innocence. My quite naive self changed last night. I see I’m weaker than I thought I was. I no longer believe because one might be gifted that one can

completely be above the weaknesses of people who aren’t born with wisdom, or strength, or intelligence. Now, my guess is that all are hanged or hangable. The more

we learn, the more corruption we’re exposed to. Well, will I forsake corruption in the future? I’ve been blown away by those instincts that I once thought would never win.

The cold, October wind chills me again.
I shudder from the cold and at my fears.
Will my small strength decay like leaves? And then...
I’ll learn an answer in the coming years.

James P. Wagner (Ishwa)

As The Crow Flies

*Which way is main street?
2 Miles that way as the crow flies...*
As the crow flies...
Yes, crows can fly and we cannot,
But is it possible that the meaning
Of this saying is brushed under the rug
Overlooked, shrugged aside
So often.

Flying would admittedly be easier
Than walking, running
Or driving,
But maybe, it's not the flying
That's so admirable.

Maybe it's the fact
That a crow flies straight
That makes their destination simple
No grids or crooked pathways
Winding roads or signs
Calculating GPS's to throw them off point
They stay true,
Focused,
A goal in mind.

Virginia Walker

The Color of Paint

The Lexington Avenue Line is red-footed.
Crimson are the bases of steel supports,
bulging like elephant feet out of place,
holding walking sticks in a manor house.

In the silence between the trains, far off,
the blues, played by an unknown throat,
whips the air in rising and falling notes
as train wakes course the underground.

In Arlington, heading into D.C., caught
in spring storm, I ask a dark face
which bus and he acts as our guide, jolly,
until I mention the metropolis I know.

"I would not feel safe there now," he offers
and silences our smiles. I turn to friends
then back to him, but he has left the bus.
I remember, then, blood seeping from feet.

George Wallace

Knowledge is a Prison, She is a Riot in Cellblock 49

This is not Memphis, she is not Cleopatra, the Roanoke river is not blue lightning and she has not been drinking from a whiskey bottle - she is a white cloud, her face is a mirror and when the wind parts the curtains it lets the white clouds in and out, and she is one of them, one of the clouds, what's wrong with that, and the sound outside her window is not blue jays quarreling, and field mice are not nesting in the hedge, and a motorcycle is not revving up the gravel drive, bringing him home, and what was she supposed to be doing anyway, she is doing what she is doing, something practical and to be expected,

This accidental thing called love, she smiles to herself, and her smile is a condescension to smile, and she arranges her hair with her hands because she knows how to do that, and daylight streaks through the room like the image of her mother in a photograph, imperious, particular, talented, young to a fault, and in addition to herself she is a portrait of her mother, everyone's always said that and she knows it's true, everything she knows has always been right there in front of her, and present and true, it all culminates in her, is her, and anyone who would say otherwise is a liar,

Anyhow who could say no to this little room, she can hear everything that's coming right here inside it,

She has auburn hair and it cascades, it cascades, and her skin is white and delicate, *like porcelain*, she says, *my skin is like porcelain*, she has thought about that a lot but she's not going to think about it all day, and this is her entire vocabulary, it is a language of remembering, and worth remembering, and she is still and a cat is walking through the room, like the ghost of the cat who used to live in this room, this room on the third floor, her father's father built this old place, it faces west and the afternoon is quiet, and this is her identity, her sanctuary and where is that comb, where is that damned comb,

The idiom and the accent of her hair will have to wait, she looks in the mirror, how her hair composes itself

Knowledge is a prison, she is a riot in cellblock 49, her forehead is a ridgetop you could ride along forever like a troop of cavalry, and her eyes which sometimes are without color at this moment are bursting with light, with light! the color of black walnut, the color of rebellion, the color of Jack Daniels -- and no this is not her hand, and no this is not her hair, and no these are not furrows in the corn, this is not dust over wheatfields or a motorcycle ripping up the gravel,

And no this is not the ghost of her grandfather, crawling out of a Fredericksburg trench,

Or lost in a forest somewhere in the Ardennes following the sun with his eyes, the winter sun looking westward and home

Charles Peter Watson

To Your Blue

You're Aztec blue.
The evil eye turns from you
but all mosquitoes come swarming through
to your blue.
You're not azure,
not aquamarine pure,
but yet you cast out like a lure
in open view.
Wherever your waters and sky blend
to coalesce as to show no end
or beginning of either bend
to shared hue,
dusk, dawn, twilight,
you glow as if your day in night.
Could you be a stone set upright
tried and true?
But tried and true
is more a cliché for this review.
So let me say it to you,
to your blue.
What's new?

Jeffrey Watkins

The Harbinger

There have been countless nights I have not slept
My heart raids memories corners searching the depths
Of what sleepless nights become
When sleepless nights are the memories kept
The long nights endless tears for you I have wept
Brings no solace into this dark heart's dreary depths
That even when dried these tear tracks are bereft
Of hope or joy, just as when wet they remain
The harbinger's sadness ruling my heart's dark domain
No Sun no Moon no Stars bring intercession to my disdain
Nor can they stop the surging onslaught of my broken heart's pain

Marq Wells

Metamorphosis

For Bill A.

At the funeral home each visitor who has
arrived to remember Julia, shuffles down the aisle –
smiling respectfully as if to absolve themselves
from their own personal grief
and the revelation of their own mortality

And after the Father has chanted his peace,
emanating incense, wealth and welfare
for the loved ones and for the Great Ecumenical,
the visitors disperse and you alone
are left to grieve, never quite prepared
to deal with the specter of death
as you suddenly grow up all over again,
twisted vine amongst the sharp
brambles and needy weeds
out here in the expanse of this island *Paumanok*.

Then I am distracted by a vagabond troupe
of archangels whom beckon you with
mutant trumpets that rip a shimmering hole
through heaven's gates to a degree
that gets GOD really miffed but God knows
it's not your time yet as all these angels gently weep

because they really want to jam with you
and your guitar which sparks my own revelation
that I am never packing any gig bags
to bring all my crap with me once I make that great leap,
that holy Jump over the great divide.

That metamorphosis back
into some creature whose name is
always on the tip of my tongue
but with whom I will never become intimate,

never appreciate until it's too late
for me to lift and drop a question on my plate
or even object as angels will have their way
or so it seems with each of us
in due time for us to return to coda
and continue through the great reprise.

Rosie Wiesner

Molecular Thoughts

I am folding a paper bag for recycling
and thinking about the universe
eons and billions
star stuff and history
this could have been me
this paper bag
born in some galactic event
tossed for millennium
through the outreaches of space
I could have become a toadstool
a horse
an Olympic wrestler
or Andromeda
parts of me
everywhere
twirling through the molten universe
reproducing
whirling unintelligibly through
muck and magma
was I circling some far off sun
or imbedded in astroidal rock
slamming through galaxies
what part of the big bang
scattered me starward to blend and

crash through time to this moment
inhabiting this skin
at this nanosecond
in the great scheme of things
this moment of stardust
pulled together
to recycle this tiny
irreplaceable
measure of existence
folding this bag

Jack Zaffos

Unwind

I hear the stream
as it washes the feet.

I feel the coolness of flowing waters
as the fine mist touches my face.

I came to this meadow wired
hard with frustration and it has melted to sadness.
I am in mourning.
I sigh while the stream waters by.

I mourn with discontent the bitter anger around me
and I realize that it is also within me,
I kneel tired and so sad.

Again a world has come undone.
Concepts, hopes, blown away.
Yes I saw it coming but I did not believe my eyes.

I resisted and grew tired.
The anger that kept me going
now saps my strength.

So now I hear the stream again,
It sounds so wonderful in my ears.

May I know to trust the stream,
may I know it's persistent flow.

May I know the flow of Wisdom
as I know the stream.
May I trust that current as I walk on.

May I unwind and breathe in the meadow's air
and may the Soul flow like a stream,
streaming like a River Of Light
that illuminates the darkness.
Flowing on with a persistent course,
lifting in loving kindness
and moving through crevices of hopelessness and fear.

Donna Zephrine

Homeward Bound

I return from an active duty tour to find that my house is no longer my home
I open my door to my house and there is another family living in it
They tell me they have been renting it for two months
I cannot find my wife and kids
I do not know where to look
I had a life when I left
I had friends when I left
They do not feel like friends anymore
I have seldom spoken to them in the last four years
I could still knock on their doors
I'd rather not
I have pride
I do not want to have the same questions about things I do not wish to speak of
I'd rather sleep on the street
I will find a box or standing shelter
I am strong and have survived sleeping in much worse places
I am not homeless, I just do not have a home right now
I am a hobo
Hobo means "homeward bound"
I am homeward bound,
I just do not quite know where that is yet.

Lewis Zimmerman

Little Trains

Little trains, little trains
Something old still remains
Chugging on, pumping steam
On the long snaking gleam
Of the tracks leading where
There's no route through the air
Hear the sound, see the sight
Simple joy, pure delight.

Whistles blow, engines cough
Brakes release and they're off
Taking folks to and from
Where none else go or come
Smoking stacks, narrow rails
Such a trip never fails
To elate and enchant
Railways can, airways can't.

Been to peaks high and steep
Into woods dark and deep
Amish farms out of reach
And a little Dutch beach
Others too, still not gone,
Ply the tracks stretching on

Continents far away
Hope to ride them one day.

Little trains, as of old
Pristine vistas unfold
Pay the fare, come along
Laugh and shout, sing a song
Tourist trap? I don't care
Joy is someplace out there
We can find it, I know
Where the little trains go.

About the Authors

Lloyd Abrams a retired high school teacher and administrator, and an avid recumbent bicycle rider and walker, has been writing short stories for over thirty years. Lloyd's poems and stories have been published in a number of anthologies and publications.

Brianna Acevado is fresh out of high school & looking to explore the world with her poetry & music. She is a Latina cellist and poet looking to impact the world by telling the stories of her past & sharing her insight on what she's learned.

Donald E. Allen is a member of the Performance Poets Association, the Bard's Initiative, and The Academy of American Poets. Don has three books of historical poetry: *April 1861*, *April 1862* and *April 1865*. DonaldEAllen.blogspot.com

Sharon Anderson has been published in many international and local anthologies and received a 2014 Pushcart nomination. She is the author of *Sonnets Songs and Serenades*, and *Puff Flummery*, and *Chutes and Ladders*. She is an advisory board member for NCPLS and a PPA co-host at Oceanside Library.

Rose Anzick is the proud mother/grandmother of poets Kate Fox and Rebecca Fox. She has been writing since her mid-20s and has been a regular contributor to *Great South Bay Magazine*. Her second love, and hobby, is photography. She is honored and excited to have her poetry included in this anthology.

Peter Arebalo (MC2) is a poet and spoken word artist hailing out of Long Island. He is the host of the Muse Exchange and a regular on the New York open mic scene. His work offers a journey through intense vulnerability, presence and self-discovery.

Works by **Frances Avnet** been published in *The Arts Scene*, *Creations*, *The Narrateur*, *Bards Annual 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016* and *Rescued Kitties Two*. Currently she blogs on East Meadow Patch about being a historic reenactor.

Bob Baker is a former retail store manager, insurance support manager, and early on worked a stint on Wall Street. In all of those jobs, he felt like a square peg trying to fit into a round hole. When it comes to writing, he doesn't write for a living, but rather he writes to live, to exist, like most people live to breathe.

Claudia Balthazar is a lifestyle blogger and resident of Valley Stream. She graduated from Hofstra University with a degree in journalism and Political Science. In 2014, she completed a Carnegie-Knight Investigative Journalism fellowship, where she wrote about gun violence in urban America

Christina Barbour lives in Woodhaven, Queens, has an MFA from Sarah Lawrence College and a BA from Queens College. In 2010, she founded Iron Horse Poetry; she is creating an anthology for the IHP poets. Publications include *Writer's Digest*, *PPA Literary Review*, *Rhino*, and the *Nassau County Poet Laureate Society Review, Vol. 5*.

Antonio Bellia (Madly Loved) is a renaissance man who has traveled many paths, a man of deep sentiment drawn to performing arts, who has acted and danced throughout his lifetime, and always compelled to express his emotions and experiences in the form of poetry. He is translating his poems from Italian into English.

Cristina Bernich is a graduate of Teacher's College, Columbia University who works full-time in her own pediatric private practice. Cristina is a happily busy mother of three rambunctious boys. She is an avid hiker, camper, and climber.

Therese Bivona is a retired Speech/Language Pathologist and Educational Administrator from Evanston, Illinois, who taught high school English at the beginning of her professional careers. She has lived on

Long Island, NY, since 1977 and is currently writing a collection of memoir poems.

Maggie Bloomfield psychotherapist/writer/performer, is an Emmy-winning lyricist for Sesame Street with a MFA from Stony Brook, Southampton. Poems/essays published in many journals/anthologies. Author of the chapbook *Trains of Thought*, she presents writing workshops and at conferences with “The Poets of Well-Being.”

John A. Brennan, Irish author/poet, is a native of County Armagh, Ireland. His 1st book, a memoir, *Don't Die with Regrets* was a 2015 Next Generation Indie Book Award winner. His 2nd is his first poetry book, *The Journey: A Nomad Reflects*. His 3rd book, *Turn Out the Light* is a tribute to musicians who died young.

Richard Bronson is on the faculty of the Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care & Bioethics at Stony Brook University Medical Center, the Board of Trustees of Walt Whitman Birthplace Association and the LIPC Board, facilitating its weekly workshop. He won the 2003 poetry prize of the American College of Physicians.

Andy Burke is a U.S. Army Veteran (Vietnam). He worked for NYS as a Lifeguard at Jones Beach for 35 years. Andy loves cats, photography and poetry

Alice Byrne LCSW CGP FAGPAI, a poet and clinical social work with daughters, son-in-law and three grandsons

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 LI. When not fishing, playing poker, counseling TBI survivors part-time or babysitting his grandchildren he enjoys writing eclectically. Email: 1170boy@optonline.net

Paula Camacho moderates the Farmingdale Poetry Group. She is President of the NCPLS www.nassaucountypoetlaureatesociety.com. She has published three books, *Hidden Between Branches*, *Choice*,

More Than Clouds; and three chapbooks, *The Short Lives of Giants*, *November's Diary*, and *In Short*.

Lynne Cannon lives in Crab Meadow, NY, with her husband, two kids, two dogs and a tortoise. When she's not writing she's a professional editor. She's been published in anthologies for both the Nassau and Suffolk County Poet Laureate Societies and is currently working on her third novel. "No Solace" is for Emily, wherever I may find her.

Poetry, for **Georgia Cava**, has been the greatest means by which she communicates emotions and ideas in a minimalist fashion. She is a graduate of St Joseph's College with a BA in English, a BA in History, and is a graduate of LIU/CW Post with a Master's degree in Library and Information Science.

Caterina De Chirico is a French and Spanish teacher, yoga therapist, artist and children's book editor. She makes her home in the beautiful seaside town of Northport.

Joyce Chu was the first ever recipient of the Bards Poetry Scholarship at Northport High School.

Anne Coen is a special education teacher who has been writing poetry since the 1970s. Her work often contains wry observations on conundrums of everyday life. Publications include *Bards Annual 2014, 2015, 2016*; *PPA Literary Review #18, #19, and #20*; and *Thirteen Days of Halloween 2014 and 2015*.

Joseph Coen is the other half of a poetic duo with his wife Anne. He is the father of a free spirit and physics major. He has been published in *Bards Annual 2015, 2016*; and *PPA Literary Review #19, #20*.

Anne Coltman is a resident of Lindenhurst for over thirty years. She is widely traveled. She is the author of two poetry books: *For the Love of Grandma* and *Charming Expressions: Capturing Life, Re-*

calling Times & Enjoying Nature; and a novel, *Scarred with Fortune*. She is the current VP of the Long Island Authors Group.

Lorraine Conlin Nassau County Poet Laureate (2015-2017), and Vice-President of the NCPLS. She is on the Board of the Bards, Events Coordinator for Performance Poets Association and hosts *Tuesdays with Poetry* and other local venues. Writing is her ‘Prozac.’ Lorraine is a breast cancer survivor and “a student of life.”

Jane Connelly is an artist, writer, graduate nurse & certified medical coder who lived in Guam before moving to LI. She placed 1st in the 2017 PPA contest and 2nd in the 2016 Princess Ronkonkoma Productions. Publications include *The Avocet*, *Bards Annual*, *13 Days of Halloween*, and *PPA Literary Review*.

David Courbanou is a guy who thinks a lot and has a weird brain. He is a breakfast cereal enthusiast and tells stories to his girlfriend and family of stuffed animals. They keep a tiny nest in Babylon, NY.

Jeanne D'brant is a holistic physician and professor of Biology and Anatomy. Her works have appeared in numerous scientific and alt med journals, as well as yoga and Feng Shui publications. She is a world traveler with visits to 66 countries on 5 continents; her poetry focuses on imagery of distant lands.

Douglas Dennison has been a son, student, Marine, husband, father and salesman. He has occasionally found love and as often lost it. All have informed his poetry.

Linda Trott Dickman is a life-long learner, a seeker of rhythm from trains on tracks, to cicada serenades, to the deep thrum of a Harley convoy. She is a school librarian. She and the love of her life make their home on LI where they both grew up on opposite sides of the tracks.

Sharon Dockweiler is a writer/poet and local open-mic whore. She

advocates for those with mental illness with honesty, openness, wit and experience.

Peter V. Dugan is one of the illegitimate feral offspring of the Beat Generation. He lost his mind in Coney Island, and Far Rockaway broke his heart when they tore down Playland and stole the memories of his youth. He hosts Celebrate Poetry, a reading series at the Oceanside Library on LI. He is the Nassau County Poet Laureate 2017-2019.

Vivian Eyre is a poet, a painter, and poetry advocate on the North Fork of Long Island, NY.

Adam D. Fisher's poetry and short stories have been published in numerous journals. He has published ten books including four books of poetry as well as many articles. Fisher was the poetry editor of the Reform Jewish Quarterly from 2006-2014.

Denise Marie Fisher is a sales executive by day and a poet by night.

Andrew Fixler has always believed that doing what's right and staying true to your principals are more important than concerning yourself with how others perceive you. He has a strong love of all animals, and is a practicing vegan. In his spare time, Andrew plays drums and guitar.

Elizabeth Fonseca is an avid traveler who writes non-fiction as well as poetry. She currently teaches at Nassau Community College in Garden City, NY.

David Ira Fox edits the poetry magazine *The Poet's Art*. He has been published locally in *Great South Bay Magazine* and *The Pink Chameleon*. Overall, he has been "published" in over 100 posting boards, e-mail newsletters, journals and websites in England, Canada, India, Finland and United Arab Emirates.

Kate Fox is a mother, breast cancer survivor, and award-winning author of *My Pink Ribbons*, *Hope and Liars*, *Mistruths* and *Percep-*

tion, and *Angels and Saints*. Publications include *Great South Bay Magazine*, *Bards Annual 2014-2017*, *Suffolk County Poetry Review 2015-2017*, and *PPA Literary Review*.

Rebecca Fox Anime nerd girl,
Plays many video games,
Also writes sometimes.

Anthony Franchino was born and raised in New York. He is a disabled American Desert Shield/Storm war veteran. His poems are centered around the struggle veterans face with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

M Frances Garcia M.A., is a contemplative poet and photographer. She is also a freelance journalist and adjunct professor of English at Suffolk Community College in Selden, NY.

Shilpi Goenka is a graduate student of Biomedical engineering at SUNY LI. Apart from being a researcher; she is an avid artist, poet, writer and spiritualist. Publications include *Bards Annual 2014, 2015* and *Suffolk County Poetry Review 2015*. silentsculptor.blogspot.com

Justin Goodman earned his BA in Literature from SUNY Purchase. He is currently the Assistant Fiction Editor at Boston Accent Lit and Assistant Reviews Editor at Newfound. His writing is published, among other places, in *Cleaver Magazine*, *TwoCities Review*, and *Prairie Schooner*. justindgoodman.com.

Jessica Goody's poetry collection *Defense Mechanisms* was released by Phosphene Publishing. Her work has appeared in over three dozen publications, including *Reader's Digest* and *The Maine Review*. She is a columnist for *SunSations Magazine*.

Viviana Grell is a poet/singer/spoken word artist and dancer originally born and raised in Argentina but thoroughly Americanized....the freedom she felt when she landed in the States rocked her mind and English became her choice weapon in delivering the messages she believes in. She is the founder, MC and DJ of the Stark Reality Open Mic in New York City.

Aaron Griffin, also known as "Super Train Station H," graduated with a degree in Creative Writing in 2015 and likes trains more than most people.

Maureen Hadzick-Spisak is a retired Reading and English Teacher. Her poems have appeared in many anthologies including *Whispers and Shouts*; *Paws, Claws, Wings and Things*; and *Sounds of Solace*. She is a nature photographer, but poetry is her first love. She is a member of the Farmingdale Creative Writing and Poetry groups.

Nick Hale is a literal and metaphorical hat collector. He is the vice president and a co-founder of The Bards Initiative. Originally a native of Huntington, Nick currently lives in Northern Virginia where he leads workshops and hosts readings and seminars through his group NoVA Bards. Nick is a publisher and editor with Local Gems Press. He has worked on many anthologies including the best-selling *Sound of Solace*. In addition to writing, teaching, organizing performing, and editing poetry, Nick enjoys reminding people that there are no bad jokes, only bad audiences.

Mankh (Walter E. Harris III) writes, edits, and small press publishes, author/editor of 17 books, ~70 essays, and umpteen poems and haiku. Mankh is resident poet and essay contributor at axisoflogic.com, hosts a podcast Between The Lines, and his blog is ScribeVibe. His website: www.allbook-books.com

Sylvia Harnak is a member of the National League of American Pen Women admitted as poet and mixed media artist. Her poems have been published in *PPA Literary Review*, *Toward Forgiveness*, and

Whispers and Shouts. Her creative process in poetry and painting is similar, using imagery, metaphor, and enigma.

Bob Hayes has been writing for a little over three years. He now writes in many different genres, including short story, memoir and poetry. Publications include *Bards Annual*, *The Odyssey*, and *Suffolk County Poetry Review*. He is a proud and avid member of the LIWG, PPA, and the Farmingdale Creative Writing Group.

George Held regularly publishes poems, stories, translations, and book reviews in journals such as *Xanadu*, *Plainsongs*, *Transference*, and *American Book Review*. He has received ten Pushcart Prize nominations, including one each for poetry and for fiction in 2016. His twentieth poetry collection is *Dog Hill Poems*.

Frane L. Helner is an internationally published poet whose work appears in many anthologies and journals. She hones her poetry in classes with OLLI, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Stony Brook University. Her book of poetry is *Onion Juice*.

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

Judith Lee Herbert is a graduate cum laude in English Literature from Columbia University. She has been published in *Bards Annual*, *Long Island Quarterly* and *motheringinthemiddle.com*. Judith has strong roots in LI and currently lives in NYC with her family.

Joan Higuchi, winner of consecutive first place awards in the PPA haiku contests, has recently been published in *Avocet*, *The Long Islander*, *Long Island Quarterly Centennial Issue*, *The Lyric*, and

Odyssey and Prey Tell (an anthology developed for the support of the Owl Moon Raptor Center).

Arnold Hollander publishes a quarterly magazine, *Grassroot Reflections*. He is widely published and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. He publishes in the online magazine, *Bewildering Stories* and keeps a blog at www.arnieh.webs.com. He is a member of PIN, PPA, and Stray Feet, a group doing readings at schools and senior centers.

Terry Hume is a caregiver and has been writing since she was 18. She is currently working on her own book and is pursuing a career in the medical field. Her poems embrace heritage, love and love lost.

R.J. Huneke At age nineteen, traveled across the country from New York to California in a dilapidated van with no brakes or heat . . . in winter. It was there that he began to write his first novel. His debut for a major publisher, the sci-fi thriller *Cyberwar*, came out in 2015.

Maria Iliou is an autistic artist, poet, actress, director, producer, advocate, and host. Maria's been published in *Perspectives*, *Bards Annual 2011-2016*, and *Rhyme and PUNishment*. Maria is host for Athena Autistic Artist, which airs on public access tv and hosts the radio show, *Mind Stream The Movement of Poetry and Music*.

Vicki Iorio is the author of *Poems from the Dirty Couch*, Local Gems Press, and the chapbook, *Send Me a Letter*, dancinggirlpress.

Joseph Jablonski is an indefatigable student of life, poet, novelist, and Swedish furniture salesman. He has been previously published in *Five2One's* #thesideshow and *The Odyssey*. He discusses real-world challenges, along with the merits of mindfulness, on his blog, Lorem Ipsum, which can be found on Medium @JMJablonski.

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.

Meesha Johnson is a member of the Shinnecock Indian Nation in Southampton NY. A single mother who despite being blind, enjoys writing, kayaking, and spending time with her 16-year-old daughter, Meesha has a Bachelor's in Psychology from St. Joseph's College and will attend Stony Brook University for her Master's in Social work.

Ryan Jones began writing at an early age. Ryan's topics of interest include nature, human and natural history, mythology, and personal and collective experience. Ryan holds a Bachelor's in English with a Master's in childhood education, and works with children by profession.

Annie Karpenstein is a 2nd generation Holocaust survivor, writing a memoir about her life which includes a history of her parents' experiences during the Holocaust. Publications include: *NCPL I- IV*; *PPA 17-20*; *Bards Annual 2014-2016*. Awards include Mid-Island Y JCC 2015-2017, and Great Neck Plaza Poetry Contest 2016.

Nancy Keating Nancy Keating is working on an MFA at Stony Brook University. She and her husband, Tom Stock, live in Babylon, New York.

Bill Kirsten claims he isn't a poet, writes under stress when his wife, Joan Marg-Kirsten asks him to. However, one of his first poems was selected to be read at a 9-11 memorial, and the next poem he wrote was selected to be included in the *13 Days of Halloween* anthology.

Carissa Kopf is an inspiring poet who has published a number of poems along with a romance novella, *Time For Me*. When not teaching, her fingers dance across the keyboard creating more poems for her first poetry book. Carissa enjoys writing at coffee shops, beaches, parks, and or right on her patio where she loves to garden.

Mindy Kronenberg is an award-winning writer whose poetry, essays, and reviews have appeared in publications in print and online, here and abroad. She teaches at SUNY Empire State College, publishes *Book/Mark Quarterly Review*, and serves on the board for *Inspiration Plus*, an initiative of art and science.

Scarlett Lady A passionate lady with a dark side. She is naturally a free spirited woman and everyone she knows often calls her "Bubbly". She works hard and plays even harder.

Ellen Lawrence is a grandmother of six and a dedicated animal welfare worker. Many of her poems focus on her pets, family, and two year old great grandson, Ryan. A member of Long Island Writers Guild, and Jericho Taproot Workshop, her poetry has been published in *For Loving Precious Beast*, the *PPA Literary Review*, *Bards Annual*, *Songs of Sandy*, *Taproot Journal*, and *Paws, Claws and Wings*. She is currently working on memoirs of her early years in Europe during WWII.

Tonia Leon's poetry and prose has been published in English as well as in Spanish in the USA, Mexico, Colombia and Japan. Her two bilingual chapbooks are: *This Beloved Chaos (2014)* and *Slow-Cooked Poetry/Poesía a Fuego Lento (2017)*. She currently teaches Latin American studies at Baruch College, CUNY.

Paul Lojeski was born and raised in Lakewood, Ohio. He attended Oberlin College, and his poetry has appeared online and in print. He lives in Port Jefferson, NY.

Melissa Longo is in her early 30s, coming from a rather beautiful family. She is a part-time bookseller and a full-time dreamer extraordinaire. She adores stories, whether it is another's story or writing poetry.

Ed Luhrs started his craft years ago and remains an active participant at events on LI and in NYC. His interests, reflected in his writing and performance, include theatrical monologue, humor, dialect, folklore, ancient history, as well as orchestral, jazz, and traditional folk music.

Maria Manobianco is the author of the poetry collections *Between Ashes and Flame*, *The Pondering Self*, and her first young adult fable, *The Golden Orb*. She has a BS in Art Ed from NYU and a MA in Studio Art from Adelphi University.

Joan Marg-Kirsten's favorite activity growing up was sitting in a chair next to the window, reading. Now she is a poet and short story writer with many publishing credits, and her husband, friends, and grandchildren write poetry along with her.

Michael McCarthy is a native Long Islander, residing in Port Jefferson 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*. goldfinchpublishing.com/authors/michael-mccarthy.

Gene McParland lives in North Babylon, NY. His works have appeared in numerous publications, including and in previous editions of *Bards Annual*. He is the author of *Baby Boomer Ramblings*, a collection of essays and poetry. Gene performs in Community Theater, mostly homegrown original works; and has written several plays.

Wayne Mennecke is a science teacher at Islip High School. His previously published poetry has appeared in *Hanging Loose*, *Avocet*, *Long Island Quarterly* and the environmental anthology *Fracture*:

Essays, Poems and Stories on Fracking in America. His first chapbook of poetry, *Pencils Down*, was published in January 2017.

Edmund Miller Senior Professor of English at LIU–Post and former Department Chair, is most renowned for *The Go-Go Boy Sonnets*, has published two dozen poetry books, most recently *The Screwdriver's Apprentice*. Three of his plays are in verse. He writes literary criticism and is an authority on George Herbert and Lewis Carroll.

Peter Morrison is a newcomer to published poetry, though has written many unpublished poems. He has been teaching college-level English for more than fifty years.

Gloria g. Murray is an award-winning poet, published in various journals including *The Paterson Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Bardic Echoes*, *Third Wednesday*, *The Ledge*, etc. Her poem was honored by Ted Kooser in his online column American Life in Poetry. Her one-act plays include “What Are Friends For” and “Madame Tanya.”

Marsha M. Nelson is a playwright and a published poet. She has written and directed several Resurrection Cantatas and Christmas plays. Her poetry can be found in the *Nassau County Society Review 2016*, *PPA Literary Review*, *Long Island Quarterly*, *The Poets Almanac* and *Bards Annual 2016*.

George H. Northrup is President (2006-) of the Fresh Meadows Poets in Queens, NY; a Board Member of the Nassau County Poet Laureate Society; former President of the NYS Psychological Association, and served on the Council of Representatives that governs the American Psychological Association.

Tammy Nuzzo-Morgan, Suffolk County Poet Laureate (2009-2011), founder/president of The North Sea Poetry Scene, Inc, editor of *Long Island Sounds Anthologies*, she holds two Masters: Business Admin

and Fine Arts. Author of six poetry books, one nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, she is Walt Whitman Poet of the Year 2017

Joan Vullo Obergh a multi-award winning poet, has been published in numerous anthologies and literary magazines, including *Lyric*, *Oberon* and as featured poet in *Avocet*. She has published a volume of poetry, *Rara Avis*, and an anthology of short fiction, *Chapter One*, in collaboration with her novelist writing group.

Mike O'Keefe is a retired first grade Detective from the NYPD. He is an award-winning poet and the author of the break-out crime/thriller *Shot to Pieces*. He is presently at work on the prequel to his novel; *Maybe All We Get* can be expected early next year. In the meantime, he is adding to his extensive portfolio of poetry.

Tom Oleszczuk has published in various journals and online, hosted readings in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Sag Harbor. He now lives in Sag Harbor with his wife, Heidi, and their four cats.

George Pafitis has been writing poetry since 2003 when he retired. He attends poetry workshops at the Great Neck Community Ed Center. Publications include *PPA Literary Review*, *NCPLS Review*, and *Bards Annual*. He is the author of *Feelings and Words Traveling Together*.

Bruce Pandolfo is a poet, author, rapper and musician based on LI, who tours nationally. He is known by most supporters as "AllOne" the moniker he records, releases and performs his work under. His work is a meticulously dense lyrical attempt to articulate the emotional and intellectual concerns of people.

Marlene Patti is a native of Chile and a graduate of Stony Brook University. She resides in the Town of Brookhaven and serves as the Chair for the Disability Task Force. Her passion is accessibility, inclusion and empowerment for those with disabilities.

Kelly J Powell is a poet from Long Island...

Pearl Ketover Prilik, poet/writer/psychoanalyst, has had three nonfiction books published, was editor of a psychoanalytic newsletter, two international poetry anthologies, and a wide variety of print journals and collections. She lives near enough the water in Lido Beach, NY, along with husband D.J., and Oliver the *humanoid* cat.

Nino Provenzano was born in Sicily, and lives in the United States. He is Vice President of Arba Sicula and has published three collections of bilingual poetry, Sicilian-English. His latest, *Footprints in the Snow*, was presented at St. John's University September 2016. Nino has done translations for film-makers Spike Lee and John Turturro.

Barbara Reiher-Meyers is a former 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. Her poetry has been published in print journals and online. Barbara sends weekly emails of local poetry events.

Phil Reinstein, inspired by his late wife Marie, The Insurance Mon is now writing and performing his own poetry songs along with keyboard, accordion and {weak} voice. His politically {in}correct poems have been published in more than a dozen anthologies.

Gabriel Ricard writes, edits, and occasionally acts. He is a contributor/columnist with both *Drunk Monkeys* and *Cultured Vultures*. He is also a writer and performer with Belligerent Promo King Productions, as well as an Editor with Kleft Jaw Press. He is the author of *Bondage Night* and *Clouds of Hungry Dogs*. He lives on LI.

Diana R. Richmond Ph.D., licensed psychologist, has been in private practice for over 30 years. Listening to souls' stories, playing the cello in community orchestras, and writing rhymes for special occa-

sions since childhood has evoked her desire to express her voice through the musical language of poetry.

Alphonse Ripandelli has been published in several collections since his introduction in *Bards Annual 2016*. His experiences in relationships and matters of love are the foundations of much of his poetry. He has been inspired by the many talented poets in the community and appreciates listening to, and feeling, their expressions.

Jillian Roath 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.

Rita B. Rose is a multimedia artist who has always had a special love for Literary Arts. She has gained recognition amongst poetry groups in NY and abroad. Rita has performed her works for colleges, organizations and social programs. She is presently compiling her poetry into a collection for publication.

Marc Rosen after repeated tests, has been determined to be Chaotic Neutral in personal alignment, and Poetic Neutral in literary alignment. He is Treasurer for Bards Initiative since its inception. Publications include *Monster of Fifty-Nine Moons and Other Poems*, *Retail Woes*, every *Bards Annual* to date, *The Spoon Knife Anthology*, and scattered e-zines which have since gone defunct.

Narges Rothermel is a retired nurse. She is the author of *Wild Flowers* and *Rays and Shadows*. Her poems are published in *PPA Literary Review*, *Bards Annuals*, and many other anthologies. She has received 1st place award from: Newsday's 2016 Garden Poetry Contest, PPA Haiku Contest, and Princess Ronkonkoma Productions.

Dina Santorelli was voted one of the best authors on Long Island for two consecutive years. She wears many hats -- journalist, novelist, ghostwriter, editor, lecturer, essayist -- but the one for which she is most proud is mom.

Robert Savino Suffolk County Poet Laureate 2015-2017, is a native Long Island poet and Board Member at both the Walt Whitman Birthplace & the Long Island Poetry & Arts Archival Center. Robert is the winner of the 2008 Oberon Poetry Prize. His books include *fireballs of an illuminated scarecrow*, and his first collection *Inside a Turtle Shell*.

Debra Scala-Giokas from Sayville, is an award-winning business communicator and Director of Marketing at Certilman Balin Adler & Hyman, LLP. Publications include *Nassau County Poet Laureate Review 2014 and 2016*, *Long Island Quarterly*, *Great South Bay Magazine*, *Dan's Papers* and *Montauk Sun*.

Karen Schulte is a retired Social Worker and poet. Her work has appeared in a number of publications including *Bards Annual*, *Suffolk County Poetry Review*, *Long Island Quarterly*, *Avocet*, and *Poetica Magazine*. She has won several prizes for her poetry and is a PPA co-host at East Islip Library.

Ron Scott is a member of the Long Island Authors' Group and Long Island Writers' Guild, and Executive VP of the Nassau County Poet Laureate Society. Ron's work has appeared in various anthologies throughout the region. His recent novel, *Twelve Fifteen*, reflects his second hat as a novelist.

N.M. Scuri is a writer, editor, teacher, sort-of rugby player, and feline support staff. Her work appears in *Sins of the Past*, *Thirteen Stories and Paintings*, *One Bite at a Time*, *Gathering Dark*, *Twenty Six Ways to Die*, and twice weekly as part of Two Sentence Horrors. She is trying to be the person her Schnauzer thinks she is.

Keith Simmons is a poet/singer/songwriter. He is a staff member of PPA, and Treasurer of the Folk Music Society of Huntington. Professionally, Keith works as a multi-client CFO of LI businesses and serves on the board of Organizational Development Network LI.

Barbara Southard is a writer and visual artist. She currently teaches poetry to children at Whitman Birthplace and serves on the board of LIPC as treasurer and co-editor.

Doreen Dd. Spungin hosts events for Poets In Nassau and PPA. Her poetry can be found in anthologies and in print and online journals. Several of her poems have been set to music by NY composer, Julie Mandel. Spungin lives for love, prays for peace, writes for her sanity and will read anywhere for a cup of coffee or an Earl Grey tea.

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*.

Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino has poems in the *Bards Annual 2013, 2015* and *2016*. His most recent volumes of poetry are *The Valise* (2012) and *Selected Poems* (2017). He lives in Brooklyn Heights, NY, where he edits the online poetry journal, *Eratio*, and works as a private docent.

Tom Stock facilitates a monthly poetry reading at Jack Jack's Cafe on Deer Park Avenue in Babylon, first Thursday of every month. His recent poetry is funny.

Kate Dellis Stover has a BA from Columbia Univ in Literature/Writing. She is featured on the CD "Northport Celebrates Jack" reading her prose poem "All Hallows Eve." She wrote the text to

Woman on the Wall, a collection of photos of graffiti portraying women as goddesses and temptresses.

Jose Talavera was born in NY and is the first in his family to be born and raised in the US. While always interested in the fields of math, science and aviation, and currently studying to be a professional pilot, he was president of Dowling's poetry club for a year. Recently, he earned his MBA; he remains active in poetry.

Qumran Taj is a Personal Empowerment Coach. He is the author of *Keys Of Power, From Tears to Triumph*. His articles, quotes, poems, and interviews have been published in books, magazines, newspapers, TV, and feature film. Visit www.KeysOfPower.com

Gayl Teller, Nassau County Poet Laureate (2009-11) and Walt Whitman Birthplace 2016 Poet of the Year, is the author of 6 poetry collections, most recently, *Hidden in Plainview*, and editor of the poetry anthology *Toward Forgiveness*. An award-winning poet, she directs the Mid-Island Y Poetry Series and teaches at Hofstra U.

Ted Tiller graduated in 2009 from Syosset High School. Ted got Mitochondrial disease when 19. Ted moved to Huntington in 2013. Ted is the author of the book *Dreamers Versus Nightmares*.

J R Turek, Bards Laureate 2013-2015, Bards Associate Editor, is 20 years as Moderator of the Farmingdale Creative Writing Group, twice Pushcart nominee, author of *A is for Almost Anything* (2016), *Imagistics* (2015), and *They Come And They Go* (2005). Poet, editor, workshop leader, PPA host, and poem-a-dayer for over 13 years, the Purple Poet collects dogs, shoes, and poems. msjevus@optonline.net

Luis Valdes, Louie V The Poet, was born and raised in Harlem, NY. At 17, he performed at Madison Square Garden in a national spoken word tournament, and auditioned at The Apollo Theater. Former President of the Writers' Club at Mohawk Community College, he is now Writers' President at Suffolk Community College.

Pramila Venkateswaran Suffolk County Poet Laureate (2013-15) is the author of *Thirtha*, *Behind Dark Waters*, *Draw Me Inmost*, *Trace*, *Thirteen Days to Let Go*, and *Slow Ripening*. She is an award-winning poet who teaches English and Women's Studies at Nassau Community College.

K. Powers Vermaelen has an MFA in Creative Writing and Literature from Stony Brook Southampton. Publications include *The Southampton Review*, *The East Hampton Star*, *The Best of Every Day Fiction Two*, and *Suffolk County Poetry Review 2015*. She is the author of *Publicize This!* and teaches at Suffolk Community College.

Margarette Wahl, a teacher's aide in Special Ed for 14 years, she's a PPA co-host at Bellmore Bean Café and an NCPLS Advisory Board member. Bards Initiative nicknames her *Bard's Groupie*. She is the author of *Educating By Heart* and *From Rags to Whiskers*. She was awarded 1st place in the 2016 NaPoWriMo Chapbook contest.

Herb Wahlsteen earned a BA in English from CA St Univ Fullerton and an MA in English from Columbia U. Publications include *LI Quarterly*, *Great South Bay Magazine*, *The Lyric*, *Paumanok Interwoven*, *Suffolk County Poetry Review*, *Bards Annual*, *Form Quarterly*, *13 Days of Halloween*, *String Poet*, and *Measure magazine*.

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 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*.

Virginia Walker of Shelter Island is the author (along with Michael Walsh) of *Neuron Mirror*, sales support pancreatic cancer research. She teaches literature courses at Suffolk County Community College. Publications include *Nassau Review*, *Minetta Review*, *Light of City and Sea*, *Touched by Eros*, and *Bards Annual*.

George Wallace is first poet laureate of Suffolk County, author of 30 chapbooks of poetry and writer in residence at the Walt Whitman Birthplace. Editor of *Poetrybay*, *Long Island Quarterly* and co-editor of *Great Weather for Media*, he teaches writing at Westchester Community College and Pace University in Manhattan.

Charles Peter Watson is a writer and multimedia artist, co-host and events coordinator for Poets Aloud at b.j. spoke gallery, and the author of *Netherworld Befalls* and *The Blue Moon Complexicon: One Giant Leap For Penmankind*. He's currently the host/producer of the "Gawdless Pawdcast" on Podomatic.

Jeffrey Watkins has been a published student of poetic verse since the late 60s on down to the present day and time. He feels his best works are works that exult the virtues of love and human reactions to love's undeniable place in the lives of all...

Marq Wells was first published in 1981 in *Zephyr* magazine. Marq has also been published in *Bards Annual 2011-2016* as well as The North Sea Poetry Scene's *Long Island Sounds 2008 and 2009*. Marq serves as IT Tech, event host, and photographer for the Poetry Place since 2009.

Rosie Wiesner, former middle school teacher, adjunct college instructor, Community Relations Director, graphic designer, Recycling Coordinator, avid reader, book collector, sporadic scribbler, and now retired...traveler, environmentalist, student, hospice volunteer...award-winning poet.

Jack Zaffos has been creating poetry since he was 18. Since his retirement in 2008, he has increased focus on his writing. He is the author of two books, *Meditations Of The Heart* and *Songlines In The Wilderness*. He lives with his wife, Linda, and daughter, Laura.

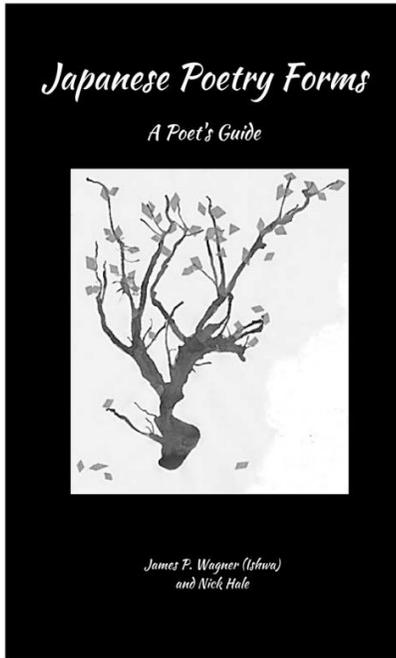
Donna Zephryne served the US Army Reserves for seven years, stationed in Savannah Georgia. She did two tours of duty in Iraq. She currently works for NYS Office of Mental Health and graduated from Columbia School of Social Work in May 2017. Donna enjoys challenging herself at cycling, kayaking, and sled hockey.

Lewis Zimmerman is a Science teacher at Forest Hills High School in Queens, NY. He and his wife, Joyce, have two daughters, a granddaughter and a grandson. Lewis enjoys poetry, music, reading, travel, comedy, and photography.

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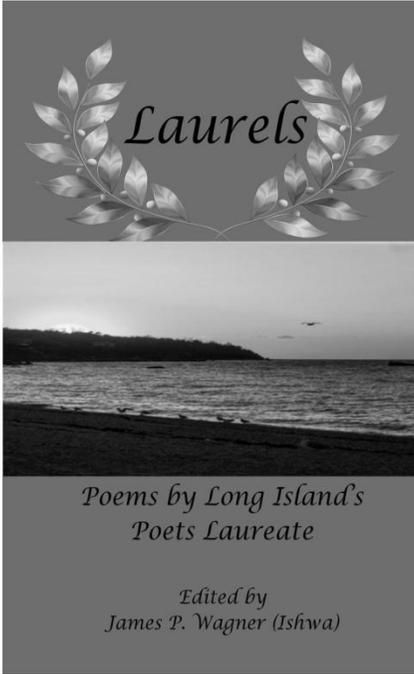
Learn about the Renga, the Tanka, the Sedoka, the Choka, the Haikai, the Dodoitsu and others. Learn about the Japanese death poem tradition and read some poems by Zen Monks that are up to 700 years old.

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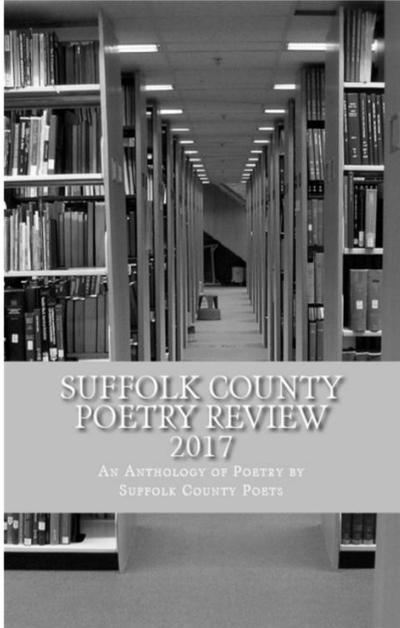
Long Island has been blessed with various accomplished and invigorating poets laureate who help spread the art and encourage it. For the first time, their work has been put together in an anthology made easy for the average poet/reader to appreciate.

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Nassau County Poet Laureate Society Review



**Nassau County
Poet Laureate Society Review**



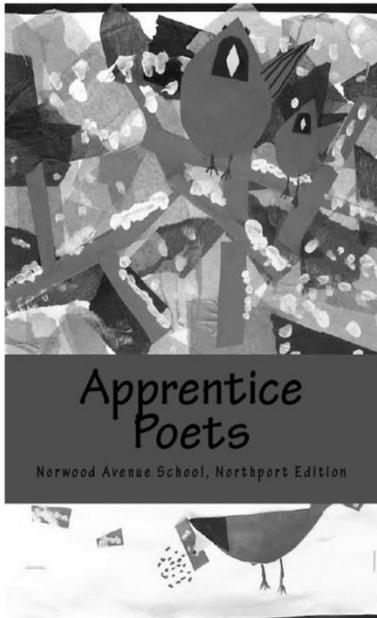
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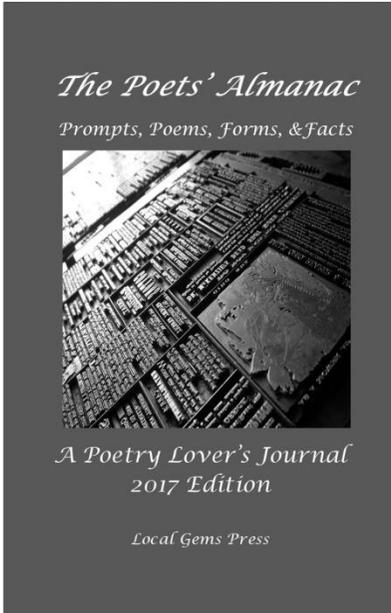
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A multi-purpose poetry project, The Bards Initiative is dedicated to connecting poetry communities, while promoting the writing and performance of poetry. The Initiative provides avenues for poets to share their work and encourages the use of poetry for social change.

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Local Gems Poetry Press is a small Long Island 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.

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