

# Bards Annual 2017

The Annual Publication of The Bards Initiative

Bards Initiative

Bards Annual 2017

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# Foreword

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# Introduction

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# 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 everyday 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 Anzik

### **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.

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 know 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 lied 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,  
unerasd.  
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.

As winter 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 ?" Say 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!

## Lynn 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.

## 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.



Carl 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.

# 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

### **The Salmon Song**

The Sandalwood air tears at my heart when I think of your hands and the sands of time that have kept us apart. Remember that night when I was jealous of the Salmon? I watched you pat it, smooth it and and turn it upside down and pat it again “ to tenderize it “ you said. I wanted to be that salmon that night so I could feel your fingers gliding over me, smoothing, patting, gently rubbing and feeling if it was just right under your fingertips like the keys on your piano, I wanted to be them too. I wanted to disappear into infinity with you as you touched the white keys then the black then the white until I became a song that you loved to play over and over and over again. When I first realized that I could be hypnotized by you I was just a kid and its you I wanted to be with on the beach where you first showed me what you were capable of doing with those hands. I let you bury me all the way up to my neck , patting and smoothing, and smoothing until all was just right, then I waited for your fingers to reach down to find me and cover me and pat me and smooth me again, and again but that was long ago and now you won't touch me anymore because I'm not the one who will say I adore you Ok Ok Ill say it, if only you will play me until I become a song and smooth me, pat me, turn me upside down and tenderize me until I melt in your mouth .

# Norberta 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



Bards Annual 2017

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 down pour 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 Connoly

**The Color of April**

Just the day before yesterday  
Tight new buds of the trees  
Clenched tiny fists toward the  
Hunched retreating back of winter.  
While yesterday, the world wore a  
Heavy mantle of mist creeping slowly,  
Murmuring “Hush.....”.  
But today, the red sun rose early  
Shaking tardy bits of cotton against the horizon  
With a sky so blue; and somehow, overnight  
With the year’s first thunderstorm, each  
Bud opened its light green parasol,  
Tinting the landscape the color of April, and  
Singing “Which one of *your* gifts will you open this day?”

## 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  
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 wheel barrows,  
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

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



## Elisabeth 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 server 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 glag goes by and no one else stands.

Knowing what a grunt is, which isn't the sound and 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

[Double Click To Add Text]

## 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

[Double Click To Add Text]

Mankh (Walter E. Harriss 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](http://axisoflogic.com)

Sylvia Harnak

**Alternative Stories**

mornings are best for doing  
what I do not want to do  
I tell him he tells me  
about an interview in Readers 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*

Fran 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.  
They 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 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 Jablonsky

### **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 aint 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

## Anne 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*

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## 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

Bards Annual 2017

I couldn't stop  
Finding fulfillment in every bite

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 home made  
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 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 it's 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

**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 that 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, q 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

### Nights'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**

*Also called Broken Heart Syndrome, Takotsubo*

*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  
of heavy earthenware.  
Left side chamber swells its apex

fights the spasm of stunned blood  
coursing the channels  
grooved like a triple-heart of stacked stone.  
Unsure what to do when caught,  
moments live in short breath  
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 Nousa, 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)

# 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*.

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 rest 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 an universal arena.

In a tavern beneath, a young

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

## 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 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 Okeefe

### **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 Pafitus

### **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 Prilick

### 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 tassled 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.

Debora 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.

## Nancy 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.

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.

## 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 one time 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 !

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 siver 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

[Double Click To Add Text]

# 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.

Jose Talavera

[Double Click To Add Text]

## 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 nights 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 smokey 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 wizards 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.

## 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, Ziplock 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?

## Gregory St. Thomsino

### 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

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 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 who bled for seven days.

Humanity who 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 Vermillion

### **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)

[Double Click To Add Text]

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

## 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.

## 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



Rosie Weisner

**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

Marq Wells

**Metamorphosis**

For Bill A.

At the funeral home each visitor who has  
arrived to remember Julia, shuffles down the isle -  
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 arch angels whom beckon you with  
mutant trumpets that rip a shimmering hole  
through heaven's gates to a degree  
that gets GOD really miiffed but God knows  
it's is 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 who's 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.

## 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 lovingkindness  
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**

**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 titled, *April 1861*, *April 1862* and *April 1865*. His Blog can be seen at: [DonaldEAllen.blogspot.com](http://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; Chutes and Ladders* is forthcoming this fall. 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 20's 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.

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 an 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 breath.

**Claudia Balthazar** is a lifestyle blogger and resident of Valley Stream. She graduated from Hofstra University with a journalism and Political Science bachelor's degree. Currently, she helps to implement social media strategies for the non-profit organization, Council on American-Islamic Relations. In the past, she completed a Carnegie-Knight fellowship where she wrote about gun violence in urban America.

### **Christina Barbour**

**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 Grein 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, New York, since 1977 and is currently writing a collection of memoir poems.

**Maggie Bloomfield** psychotherapist/writer/performer, is an Emmy winning lyricist for Sesame Street. Graduate/ MFA Program at Stony Brook, Southampton, Poems/essays are published in many journals and anthologies, Maggie's chapbook, *Trains of Thought*, is published by Local Gems Press. She presents writing workshops and at conferences with "The Poets of Well-Being." [www.maggieloomfield.com](http://www.maggieloomfield.com)

**John A. Brennan**

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

**Andy Burke**

**Alice Byrne** Lcsw CGP FAGPAIs a poet and clinical social work with daughters,son-in-law and three grandsons

**LynneRose Cannon** lives in Crab Meadow, New York, 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.

**Paula Camacho** moderates the Farmingdale Poetry Group. She is President of the NCPLS [www.nassaucountypoetlaureatesociety.com](http://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*.

**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.

### **Norberta Cisneros**

**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* and *2015*, *PPA Literary Review #18* and *#19*, 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* and *PPA Literary Review #19*.

**Anne Coltman** is a resident of Lindenhurst, Suffolk County for over thirty years. She enjoyed a long career with International

Organizations and is widely traveled. Her love of the arts and family has inspired her writing of two books of Poetry - *For the Love of Grandma* and *Charming Expressions: Capturing Life, Recalling Times & Enjoying Nature*, and a Novel - *Scarred with Fortune*. Anne is currently the Vice-President of the Long Island Authors Group.

**Lorraine Conlin**

**Jane Connolly**

**Steven Cuozzo**

**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.

**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 Dockweilder** is a poet and writer living in Bethpage, NY. She has a degree in English Literature and a background in Marketing. She is a spokesperson for people with eating disorders and mental illness, as she suffers from and triumphs over both each day.

**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.

**Adam D. Fisher** Adam Fisher's poetry and short stories have been published in numerous journals. He has published ten books including four books of poetry and well as many articles. Fisher was the poetry editor of the Reform Jewish Quarterly from 2006-2014.

**Andrew Fixler**

**Denise Marie Fisher**

**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 Fox**

**Kate Fox** is a mother, a breast cancer survivor, and author of *My Pink Ribbons* and *Hope*. She has been a contributor to *Great South Bay Magazine* since 2004. Her work has been published in several anthologies. She received the 2014 Bards Humanitarian Award for her work for Breast Cancer Awareness and the American Cancer Society.

**Rebecca Fox**



## **Anthony Franchino**

**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**

## **Justin Goodman**

**Jessica Goody** 's work has appeared in numerous publications, including *Reader's Digest*, *The Seventh Wave*, *Event Horizon*, *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, and *The Maine Review*. Her poem "Stockings" was awarded 2<sup>nd</sup> place in Reader's Digest 2015 Poetry Competition.

## **Viviana Grell**

## **Concetta Guido**

**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 Poetry and Creative Writing groups.

## **Nick Hale**

**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](http://axisoflogic.com), hosts a podcast Between The Lines, and his blog is ScribeVibe. His mystical path helps feed his writings. His website: [www.allbook-books.com](http://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.

**Robert Michael Hayes** has been writing for a little over three years. His works have appeared in publications such as *Avocet*, *Odyssey*, and *Long Island Quarterly*. He is a proud member of the PPA, LIWG, 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* (Seattle: Goldfish Press, 2017).

**Frane Helner IS AN INTERNATIONALLY PUBLISHED POET**

**WITH HER WORK APPEARING IN MANY ANTHOLOGIES AND JOURNALS. SHE HONES HER POETRY IN CLASSES WITH OLLI, THE OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE AT STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY. FRANE'S OWN 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*. She was the 2010 Walt Whitman Birthplace Poet of the Year. Finishing Line Press published her chapbook, *Eclipse of Heaven*.

**Judith Lee Herbert** returned to poetry after a successful career in another field. A graduate Cum Laude in English Literature from Columbia University, she has been published in the Bards Annual, the Long Island Quarterly and motheringinthemiddle.com. Judith has strong roots in Long Island and currently lives in New York City 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*, *The Long Island Quarterly Centennial Issue*, *The Lyric*, and *Odyssey and Prey Tell* (an anthology developed for the support of the Owl Moon Raptor Center).

**Arnie Hollander** publishes a quarterly magazine, **Grassroot Reflections**. His poems have appeared in many anthologies and he's been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. He has poems and short stories in the online magazine, **Bewildering Stories** and keeps a blog at [www.arnieh.webs.com](http://www.arnieh.webs.com). He belongs to Poets in Nassau, Performance

Poets Association, 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, **R.J. Huneke** 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 and is in bookstores.

**Maria Iliou** is an autistic artist, poet, actress, director, producer, advocate, and host. Maria's been published in *Perspectives*, *Bards Annual 2011* and 2013, 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 Jablonsky**

**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) He was awarded the Saint Hill Art Festival's Lifetime of Creativity Award, first time given to a poet.

## **Meesha Johnson**

**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 degree in English with a master's degree in childhood education, and works with children by profession.

## **Jenette Kallop**

**Anne Karpenstein** is a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Holocaust survivor; she is writing a memoir about her life which includes a history of her parents' experiences during the Holocaust. Publications include *Toward Forgiveness*, *NCPL Review I and II*, *PPA Literary Review #17 and #18*, *Sounds of Solace*, and *Bards Annual 2014*.

## **Barbara Kauffman**

**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**

**Mindy Kronenberg** is an award-winning writer whose poetry, essays, and reviews have appeared in numerous 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 arts initiative celebrating creativity through art and science. She was a featured reader in the Arts in Harmony festival in New Harmony, Indiana in June.

### **Ellen Lawrence**

**Tonia Leon** 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.

### **Melissa Longo**

**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.

### **Alan Lucks**

**Ed Luhrs** started his craft years ago and remains an active participant at events on L 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 Univ.

**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](http://goldfinchpublishing.com/authors/michael-mccarthy).

**Gene McParland** (North Babylon, NY): A graduate from Queens College and possessing graduate degrees from other institutions, Gene has published various research papers BUT have always had a passion for poetry and the messages it can convey. His works have appeared in numerous publications, and in previous editions of the Bards Annual. He is also the author of *Baby Boomer Ramblings*, a collection of essays and poetry. Gene also performs in Community Theater, mostly home grown original works; and has written several plays.

**Shortell McSweeny**

**Wayne Mennecke**

## **Susan Meyer**

**Edmund Miller** Senior Professor of English at LIU–Post and former long-term Department Chair, is most renowned for *The Go -Go Boy Sonnets* but has published two dozen other poetry books, most recently *The Screwdriver's Apprentice*. Three of his plays are in verse. He also writes literary criticism and is an authority on George Herbert and Lewis Carroll

## **Rita Monte**

**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.

## **Joseph Muntiseri**

## **Gloria g. Murray**

**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.

**Marsha 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,



Performance Literary Review, Long Island Quarterly, The Poets Almanac and Bards 2016.

**Tammy Nuzzo-Morgan** remains.

**Michael O'Keefe** is a retired 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Detective from the NYPD. He lives on LI with his family, where he writes a little, and practices the ancient martial arts of lawn and swimming pool maintenance, when he is not coaching football.

**Joan Vullo Obergh** writes both prose and fiction, and is a 12-time first place poetry award winner. She has been published in numerous magazines, anthologies and journals. Joan is a retired RN and Mental Health Counselor from Seaford, NY.

**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 Town of Brookhaven and serves as the Chair for the Disability Task Force. Her passion is accessibility, inclusion and empowerment of those with disabilities.

**Anthony Phelligrino**

**Kelly 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.

**Rohini Ramanathan**

**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 Richard** 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. His books BONDAGE NIGHT and CLOUDS OF HUNGRY DOGS are available from both booksellers and through the publishers themselves. He lives on Long Island.

**Al Ripandelli's** poems draw inspiration from the joy and pain of love. His most recent writings chronicle the interaction and consequences in a relationship that could not flourish.

**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.

**Gabriel Ricard**

**Diana Richman** *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 occasions since childhood has evoked her desire to express her voice through the musical language of poetry.*

**Rita B. Rose** is a multimedia artist who has always had a special love for the Literary Arts. She has gained recognition amongst poetry groups in NY and abroad. She 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 The 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 1<sup>st</sup> place award from: Newsday's 2016 Garden Poetry Contest, PPA Haiku Contest, and Princess Ronkonkoma Productions.

### **Dina Santorelli**

**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*.

**Debora Scala-Giokas** from Sayville, is an award-winning business communicator and her career in marketing spans 29 years. She is the Director of Marketing at Certilman Balin Adler & Hyman, LLP, Long Island's second largest law firm. Debra earned her Bachelor of Arts in English, *magna cum laude*, from the State University of New York at Stony Brook in 1987 where she was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa. In 1993, she earned her Master of Business Administration degree, from Dowling College, where she was also an Adjunct Assistant Professor in marketing. Her first love, poetry, gets swept under the rug from time to time, but she has dusted off some old poems and is writing some new ones, especially about places in America. Her poems have appeared in literary journals and magazines including the 2014 and 2016 *Nassau County Poet Laureate Review*, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of the *Long Island Quarterly*, the *Great South Bay Magazine*, *Dan's Papers* and the *Montauk Sun*. She is also one of the Etsy makers, and her shop is:

<https://www.etsy.com/debraanndolls>.

Follow her on Twitter @debrascalag.

**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.

**Nancy Scuri** is a writer, editor, teacher, sort-of rugby player, and feline support staff. Her work appears in the anthology *Sins of the Past, Thirteen Stories and Paintings, One Bite at a Time, Twenty Six Ways to Die, Gathering Dark*, and twice weekly as part of Two Sentence Horrors. She is trying to be the person her Schnauzer thinks she is.

### **Chloe Sky**

**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.

### **Ray Simons**

**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** is an award-winning poet who hosts for Poets In Nassau and PPA. Her work has been published online, in print journals and anthologies, most recently *Brave Hearts, Grabbing The Apple* and *Syzygy*. Spungin loves love, family, cats, peace and beauty. Truth is good, too.

## **Ed Stever**

**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 Stover**

## **Qumran Taj**

**Gayl Teller** Nassau County Poet Laureate (2009-11) and Walt Whitman Birthplace 2016 Poet of the Year, 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.

## **Gregory St. Thomsino**

**Ted Tiller** graduated in 2009 from Syosset high school. Ted got Mitochondrial disease when 19. Ted moved to Huntington in 2013. Ted wrote a book called dreamers versus Nightmares

## **J R Turek**

**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 Vermillion** has an M.F.A. in Creative Writing and Literature from Stony Brook Southampton. Her work has appeared in several literary publications, including [\*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!\*](#), a publicity guide for community nonprofit groups. She teaches literature and writing at Suffolk County Community College.

**Margarette Wahl** is a teacher's aide in Special Ed for 14 years. She is a PPA co-host at Bellmore Bean Café, an NCPLS Advisory Board member, and Bard's Initiative nicknames her *Bard's Groupie*. She is the author of *Educating By Heart*. She took 1<sup>st</sup> place in the 2016 NaPoWriMo Chapbook contest held by Local Gems Press.

**Herb Wahlsteen** earned a BA in English from CA St Univ Fullerton and an MA in English from Columbia U. Publications include *Long Island Quarterly*, *Great South Bay Magazine*, *The Lyric*, *Paumanok Interwoven*, *Suffolk County Poetry Review*, *Bards Annual*, *Form Quarterly*, *13 Days of Halloween*, and *String Poet*.

**James P. Wagner (Ishwa)**

**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 Dowling College and 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 from West Babylon who's been writing lyricism and poetry for over 25 years. He has Associates degrees in Liberal Arts & Sciences and Ornamental Horticulture. He was elected to the executive board of the Long Island Archival and Arts Center and is co-host and events coordinator for Poets Aloud at b.j. spoke gallery. He's written "Netherworld Befalls" and "The Blue Moon Complexion: One Giant Leap For Penmankind". He's currently the host/producer of the "Gawdless Pawdcast" on Podomatic.

### **Jeffrey Watkins**

**Rosie Weisner** 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...poet. Rosie reads at various Long Island venues. Her poem *West Meadow Beach* won a first prize from Long Island Performance Poets. Her poem *If You Want Dinner* won acceptance for Gallery North's juried exhibit: *Poetry and the Art of Eating*.

### **Marq Wells**

### **Jack Zaffos**

**Donna Zephryne**

**Lewis Zimmerman**