

Bards Annual 2018

The Annual Publication of The Bards Initiative

Bards Initiative

Bards Annual 2018

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Foreword

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Introduction

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Lloyd Abrams

doomed

we squeezed onto the uptown express
past a double stroller
holding a teary three-year-old boy
and a crying two-year-old girl

one of their minders who was pregnant
while the other stood tugging at her micro dress
the kids' mother? ... their aunt? –
was slapping at the boy's hands
as he kept crossing them over his torso
into what we overheard her complain
– to somehow justify her actions –
was a defiant and insolent pose
but using not exactly those words

it was seven in the evening
as we were headed to the theater ...
they must've been tired or hungry
– maybe all four of them –
but instead of showing a modicum of compassion
a defenseless child
was being bullied and chastised –
a child

who ... without a doubt
was already doomed

Donald E. Allen

You Can't Blame a Guy for Trying

You look Okay, but you need a shave.
You can have that done in no time.
A few swipes with a blade
and you've got it made.
Look out world it's show time.

You have known for a while
that it is important to smile
attitude is quite infectious.
So do not pout
or allow negativity about
because bad vibrations are defectious.

Life is a game where we try to survive.
With each day a new opportunity to thrive.
Tomorrow morning will come
adding stress to the sum
and no one gets out alive.

Some may call it an act
and a matter of fact
sometimes
this clown
is crying.

But need I explain
I'm just keeping the wheels on the train
and you can't blame a guy for trying.

Sharon Anderson

Among the Fallen

When I was small
I danced among the leaves
weaving in spirals
of unchecked joy
chasing a dream

When I was young
I gathered fallen leaves
tossed them aloft
in a spin of delight
feeding a dream

As I grew old
I sprawled among the leaves
feeling them wither
along my spine
leaching my dreams

And now as I repine
I hold a single leaf
follow the veined design
and ache to know
if ever it held a dream
Sharon Anderson

Linda Ann

The Garden

Gated garden filled with red, pink, opalescent petals,
Sweet scent, passionflower nectar lingers in the air.

Hummingbirds, sparkle green and gold, bathed in late afternoon
sunlight,
Rest on twisted tangled vines.

Poplin flutters through garden's path, catching on twigs and burr, she
walks by day,
Dressing gown drapes over iron lattice ledge, she daydreams by night.

Stargazing, brilliant points of light,
Connecting, creating, precious masterpiece.

Gust of wind thunders, birds quiver, take flight,
Garden gate clatters, broken, unhinged, long ago rusted shut.

Rose Anzick

Back burner

You put your life on the back burner.
Never found out if you could be a Tina Turner.
Married at sixteen, mother at eighteen.
Six more children to follow.
Vacations at the ocean with lots of commotion.
You thought you were having fun, cooking, washing dishes and doing
laundry for everyone.
Motherhood *was* your career,
but everyone did a campaign smear.
Must be out in the world to use your brain.
Now that was insane.
Never given a helping hand,
even at the ocean while trying to sit in the sand.
A heart filled with love,
motherhood fit you like a glove.
You may not have been a Tina Turner,
but your life was not on the back burner.
Your ambitions were met, that is something
we tend to forget.

Claudia Balthazar

Dreams

Stories of a broken dream

A forgotten dream

A dream unwritten

Mad that it slipped away despite the fact that it was never between my fingers

I dreamt that I could soar into the sky and fly high

But the deep pigment of me skin weighed me down

Making it harder to reach the moon

Now I'm flying beneath the clouds while the fog is clouding my vision

And everybody that looks like me, moves in this slower motion

While their eyes tell me of their broken dreams

Their forgotten dreams, their dreams unwritten

But no one ever told me this

Mommy just pushed it away

And Daddy put on blind folds

And even though it's gone, I could still feel

The deep cuts in my back when I'm given a broken dream,
a forgotten dream,

a dream unwritten

So I want to know what it feels like to be loved

Not by you but by me because I want to move against the forces of society

Let it be known who I could be, who I could become

Finish all the actions I have already begun
I'm strong,
I'm stronger than you could ever imagine because
I still managed to fly high into the sky even after you have clipped my
wings
And when the deep pigment of my skin weighed me down
I fought it,
I fought it until I could hear my heart sing
So don't tell me of a lost dream
Of a forgotten dream, of a dream unwritten
Tell me of a real dream because I believe in you
We all do
So as long as I have a voice you will hear me speak
I'll search for the greater part of me
I promise that I'm not weak
Let me tell you of a dream I found
Of a dream that I will always remember
Because it is inscribed on my heart
And I dreamt that I would be the most powerful manifestation of who
I am
Therefore, I am capable of being anything I want to be
Because I dream
-Claudia Balthazar

Christine Barbour

Charm and Strange

for Stephen Hawking

We are so small to god
less than the nothingness

between sub-atomic quarks
including charm and strange.

Yet to ourselves, we find ourselves
everywhere and in everything:

we are cresting waves,
mists filmy nebulous,

setting suns,
the moon's penumbras

like carbon filings
blazing into blood-red fire.

We are more souls alive now
than all the tired minds worn down
since Time.

From the first stellar explosions,
we are one holy mass shattered.

The earth heals itself.
We are just specks.

Diane Barker

Eternity Reincarnate

Butcher, baker, candlestick maker
Skills from days of yore

Mother, lover, whore
Every girl next door

Child, Soldier, Hero
A cause worth fighting for

Hippie, liberal, radical
Peace the price of war

I've been this way before

Farmer, miner, trucker,
Body broken and gnarled

Ruler, Monarch, Emperor
Sovereign flags unfurled

Student, Teacher, Free thinker
Passage to another world

Believer, disciple, zealot

Passion twisted and twirled

I've been this way before

Life's endless cycle

Born to die

To live once more

Death is not the end

I'll return again and again

Just like before

Marilyn Barker

The Illusion of Perfection.....

She was an empty picture of perfection
Painstakingly painted
to fool the most observing eye.

Like an illusion pulling your vision away
from her dark, angry
and withered spirit.

Disguised in pretty things
A made-up face
and white curtains with lace.

Underneath the lies festered
and they ate her alive
while she was smiling
and couldn't/wouldn't feel the pain.

When she died
they buried her in a pretty coffin
and a very expensive dress.

It was the perfect funeral
for a life

that was
a perfect mess.

Erin Beiner

Professor

The words come hard to describe you
Ironic given your profession
Converting emotions to text
Like the cruelest form of confession

It's like I found a best friend in you
For the second time in my life
Of course, the first time being,
The day I became his wife

Every time I think I've done it
With every crazy thought I share
This time is the time you'll see me
As a personality you can't bare

But you never do, do you?
The opposite in fact
You always get my thoughts
Always reaffirm my track

Genuine human connection
A rare find in this odd place
This cold collective electricity
We humans call cyberspace

Antonio Bellia (Madly Loved)

Moonlight

It is not snow,
Nor rain, nor hail.
Strangely the moon is
Able to traverse the
Thick veil of clouds.

A glare exposes
Silver strings
Thrown from above.

I hear the call.
Yes, why am I standing
Under this roof?
I have to get out.

I want to dive
Into the silver-striped darkness.
Now through my breath
Like a small cloud
My spirit evaporates
Into the universe
Becoming one
With the infinite,
And in the infinite,

Tied to sparkly strings.

I am moved into
A short dance
On the limitless
Stage of life.

Cristina Bernich

Adalyn

Never my intention young one, to let you in.
Selfish, accidental weakness, my greatest sin.
Ended you early, death stole you away
and maybe I could have helped you stay.
But I let you go and I let you down.
Because of me, elusive peace will not be found.
For all these here, haunted we are, tiny wet breaths
each night black and by morning, freshly bereft.
I did not let you in, did not soothe and mend you.
Tired I was and you too new
too needy, too fragile, too sick, too much.
So was my exhaustion a convenient crutch.
But in my negligence, I failed to see
keeping you safe was a privilege, not my duty.
Masses of mourners hang heads low,
Mumble comforts and talk of tranquility she'll now know
They murmur, "Protected by God, to us will come no harm,"
But restless and shameful I know they're all wrong.
There'll be no harmony, no respite, no relief,
just strangers sewn together in lives patched with grief.
Mother so young, loving carelessly deep with all her soul
threaded to a war-hard, soft-heart father only left to behold
these tenuous strings weaving us now, quilting us all in sorrow.

Thérèse M. Craine Bertsch

Things I mean to say

Rain is wonderful
Riding the train is great too

Snow air delights me
And a cup of tea with you

Manners enrich us
Doubling the pleasure of life

Good clothes and perfume
Help us to join the dance

It is who I am
The reason why I was born

Don Billings

A Time to Tell

When you're young, down at the mall, just hanging around,
There may come a man ... saying nice things.
He might ask if you're hungry ... want to go for a shake?
To go with this man would be a child's mistake.

Beware, beware, my little one,
The pussy grabbers ... they will come.
It may start with tickling ... all just fun.
He'll be into your clothes ... you might want to run.

If you fight him off ... and want to leave,
He'll say ... tell no one ... for they won't believe.
You're just a kid ... who'll believe you?
I'm a grown man ... and powerful too.

If you go along ... just a little ... just a little longer,
It may be too late ... for he is stronger.
And when it's over, you won't feel the same.
You might feel defiled ... feel ashamed.

He may be your boss ... a TV star ... a priest.
He may even be a Senator ... perhaps a President.
He'll say: *Tell no one* ... for he's committed a crime.
But you can tell now, yes you can tell ... now's the time

Natalie Bjornsen

You are a heart
That beats
A melody
A soft thumping sound
I can sing
And follow
You are a heart
No offbeat
Your beautiful symphony
Now broken
Your rhythm is slow
Sad
You are a heart
Now broken

Peter Bove

Piece by Piece

An even roll of dice
An empty dream you can't wait to step into
You're in another world
'Cause, this one's too hard to live up to
Down with a dream on your face
You believe in a place called easy street
A dream of Hollywood
One more for the road so you feel good
You'll feel good
Piece by piece you're taken in
You and I were taken for a ride
Looking for a place to hide
I can't forget the time you fought that pain
Nearly went insane
Big parades made for baseball came to take you home
Here we are so dance with me
A golden kid in misery is too much to bear
Even though, time will pass, and anyway It's fun to breathe
I was in your arms but you and I could not afford to stay
I could never take a bite out of your arm and, pack my suitcase
Won't you be mad and say you will be all the time
They'll steal your sense of humor. You'll never be free
The way things are I'm glad no one ever taught me, to trust
Innocence is the hardest virtue to behold

Hold it tight

Hold it right

In a world that doesn't know the difference

Richard Bronson

Chrysalis

Undistinguished from an ordinary rock,
its Lunar provenance hidden,
how long had it lain on my desk

‘til late one night, it opened with a cracking sound,
a smell of must, as of an ancient dust.
Then silence like a sacred hum,

a whisper of the hallowed Name,
an ocean sighing, thudding
as of beating wings, a fearful place

where turnings of a ponderous wheel
cast many shadows on my walls.
And I within that fluxing light

lay breathless in the smallness of myself,
‘til bursting from this unsuspected husk
came something darkly wondrous.

Alice Byrne

Attention

The broken baby lies dead on the street.
The dying emaciated mother left the body
Before turning away too tired to weep.
A broken flower in life's garden calling
Out beyond the cell phones
A help plea.
"Love" said the rabbi , "Love one another" Jesus

Jesus was the rabbi but the women still weep.

Listen,listen to the song of my heart,her heart ,his heart
Allow the weeping and awaken
Awaken to see the other,
Drop the phone and see with open eyes.

Carlo Frank Calo

ICU

The Priest stops by to say hello as the
Family outside hugs, sharing relieved laughter and the
Nurse across the way holds a hand, whispering her smile to eyes that
also hear and the
Cubicle next to us begins clanging, clanging, clanging while a
Young man in the hallway sobs into his hands wiping
His nose with his sleeve, his glance locking on the gurney rushing
past carrying
A woman, tiny under the blankets, wrinkled and confused, pushed by
two EMT's who motion for
The Priest to hurry over, now.

Paula Camacho

Vacation At The Beach

Be careful of rip tides,
those disorienting wind and waves
moving away from shore.
Don't step on jelly fish,
those gelatinous bells
with trailing tentacles
of painful stings.
Back on the sand
use piles of sunscreen
to avoid a massive
twenty-seven million degree sun bake.
Avert your husband's eyes
from Bikini clad shapes
by an accidental beach ball to his head.
It is a dangerous place.
Sea shells poke your feet.
Seagulls and terns steal
your peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.
Windblown umbrellas lunge at you
like jousting spears
and is that a shark fin I see in the water?
To be safe
cover your head with a towel

until the sunset moves your husband
to pack the beach bag for home.
Return and repeat tomorrow
for the same fun in the sun.

Lynne Cannon

Ready, Set...

I will not clip your wings
Though you stand on the edge of the nest
Though I might want to grasp you back
Where it's safe
Where it's warm
Where no adventure can hurt you

The fog outside my train window
Obscures the New England shore and the ocean beyond
That doesn't make me stop considering
Soaring over it, riding its waves
I know it's there
I know it leads to other worlds,
New friends and new secrets revealed.

If you go I will worry
If you go I will cheer
I have raised someone curious
Fearless and resourceful
And kind.

But at the door where you've turned to go
You smile and say, "Back soon with stories to tell."
My held back tears
are of relief...

"Go," I say. "Go."

Georgia Cava

Primal Cry

A hear sick cry
Hoarse and spent
A vital link to
The past has passed

Away. Away, Away,
You'll stay. Stay
Forever in my heart
My friend.

A flash of past events
Flood o'er me.
Bonds borne in youth
Unite us.

Fly. Fly. Fly
I cry. I cry
May your spirit find peace
My friend.

Caterina De Chirico

Between The Seasons

Oh you, caster of spells, a shooting star that fell into my mind and through my heart, your hands empty and spilling electricity pulling green from trees turning them brown then green then brown then green, you move like the moon in your own time, softly in the silence before the silence with the voice of the wind between the seasons and the ceaseless message that forms itself out of the quiet night, beginning again and again, my heart listens for that longed-after presence as only saints can do.

Anne Coen

Creativity on a Deadline

Warning:

Events appear closer
than they appear on the calendar.

A poetry reading
in honor of National Poetry Month
is scheduled for this evening.

I haven't written a thing in four months.

Suddenly, the oven needs cleaning.
A pile of credit card offers requires immediate shredding.
Flower beds are pining to be weeded.

If I hurry,
I can have the shiniest tub in town
and still have time to write a poem.

Breathe deeply.
Don't rush the creative process.
Choose beauty over utility.
Laundry can wait.
I am on the verge of verse!

Joseph Coen

I Am Tired

This is not a protest song
nor is it a disputation long

This is about the relentless wave
of messages asking me to save

some animal that's distressed
or to help our nation do its best

Our leaders are just hopeless, see?
the stream of emails says to me

my correspondents they go on and on
so sure, you see, that something's wrong

I wish that they would go away
so I can enjoy the end of my day

Jamie Ann Colangelo

When the Soul Whispers...Listen!

When your soul whispers
It's time to open your ears
For if you choose to ignore it
You will be left in tears
All of us, young and old
Have stories never told
They leave a mark upon our souls
And in our hearts a hole
The traumas to our souls
The pains upon our hearts
Deteriorate our lives
The sickness in our bodies
The unhealthy relationships we share
The hurts we cause ourselves and others
The actions that we take
Are patterns we must break
So when your soul whispers
It's time to listen close
Heal the pains it speaks of
Forgive those who have hurt you
And prepare yourself for flight
Releasing all your woes
For without the heavy burden
Your soul is sure to soar

Milton Colon

Solitaire

On your silent repertoire I hang
A homeless portrait
Within the recess of our lady's facade
Dwells a mendicant soul
his core impugned -
raison d' etre purloined
facetious hopes smoked away
one of the refugees
of expired memories
who traipse the earth
night breed descending

Anne Coltman

A Sad World

His little feet are bare
There is coal dust in his hair
His face is pale and drawn
And distorts the true color of his complexion
Hunger is all he knows
And the pain in his stomach grows
As he reaches for another half eaten fruit
From a freshly emptied garbage chute

Childhood hunger – a scourge on mankind
That roams a world so full of waste
Where the fortunate enjoy exquisite taste
And wanton souls starve before they die
Under the same bright blue sky they share

Cry out heavy world let your cares be known
And let this scourge be overthrown
For your people are not listening
And while we turn our backs
On the other side of the tracks another belly aches
In a place that love forsakes
Somewhere in this sad world of ours

David Conklin

Strange Fruit

They said you could go in the garden but don't eat the fruit
Have anything you want but don't eat the fruit
Do what you want but don't eat the fruit
Listen to whoever you want but hear this. Don't eat the fruit
What did you do....You ate the fruit
Now you're cold and alone
Cast out of your garden
Hungry, lonely, poor
But you ate the fruit
You knew better but had to see for yourself
Now you're paying for it
Hubris is a bitch huh
So is heroin

Lorraine Conlin

Double Feature

The show already on when we'd arrive
Dad would hold my hand while we waited
for our eyes to adjust to the dark of the theater.

We'd follow the beam of the usher's flashlight
down the red and gold aisle
to center seats in the second row,
Dad requested.

He wanted me to see everything, learn,
experience goings-on beyond my world,
look closely at life, never miss a trick,
like he had.

When I'd raise my voice with excitement,
or question what I didn't understand, he'd explain.
Sometimes he added narration or shared his point of view.
He'd soften scenes of sad stories
that made me cry, wiped away my tears.

I grew up knowing the ending before the beginning
learned how to pick up plots from the middle,
finish things others began.

I can still feel that nudge before leaving,
his strong shoulder gently touching mine --
his words, "this is where we came in."

Jane Connelly

Becoming Mrs. Potato Head

It started with my rose-tinted spectacles
With octagon lenses, so cool!
That morphed through the years to
Aviators, Cat's Eyes, and the "Professor Look".
Next came my plastic ears that
Whistled when I bent over; a sound
Formerly only heard while passing
New York City construction sites.
They had warned me not to
Bake in the sun, but I never listened,
Having left my ears at home in their velvet box;
So your secrets were always safe with me
As I never heard you to begin with.
The brightly colored purse -
Oh! I always had one of those
Slung daintily over my left arm.
Though lately, it's my partial, which
Makes me lisssssssssp through pink lips Not quite as plump as
before.
Which leads me to a feeling of dread
On exactly what the next decade will bring.
And how I will feel such a fool! So steamed! Realizing too late, once
again
I forgot to put something on, or in

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As I'm out and about, skipping into the sunset
red vinyl shoes.

In my oversized,

Jeanne D'brant

Roma in the rain

Teeming, pounding, rain abounding
Il Vaticano, Il Coliseo,
wet on wet and anisette

Christians lie in niches in catacombs
Far below the drenched above
dark and eerie awaits us all

In the Basilica, a pagan soul
touches St. Peter's right foot
and is warmed

David Dickman

The Plinth

Before Ozymandias

Here once a statue proud did stand
Around it where there is but sand
Lie all the pieces of that, once grand.

Here rests still firmly embedded on stone
The plinth from which that work was grown
Wreathed in dust the wind since blown.

The sculptor dead and buried long
The carver with his plinth so strong
Which man was right? Which one wrong?

Linda Trott Dickman

Scoured by the Wind

For Amelia

We made it. You and I.
Oh, and Fred.
Our wings worse for the wear,
Felled far from our goal.
Rescued from the sauce.
Rescued.
Hope floats.
That little girl looked
Curious. Was it the pants?
The short hair? She looked
From me to her mother, questioning.
But we're rescued, Electra,
Drawn out of the salt
Into the spray.
Rescued!
Who could have guessed
On this rock solid pier
That we'd end up walking the planks
Into the rising sun.

Sharon Dua

Goodbye...

The breath has been taken once again from my lungs,
There are no words for my heart has been hung,
Those near and far try to shed a lighted path,
But for right now my feelings are quite frozen & quite dead,
Tell me how this could be true to the eyes,
The one, ‘‘THE’’ one I once knew so well,
To my love, for my love, never again my love,
Beautiful mirror has been shattered to pieces,
The aftermath is hard to take all at once,
Tiny steps are the remedy instead,
Tears fall for quite some time my love,
Baby you don’t know what you lost in me,
True happiness was supposed to be you and me,
The heart will repair itself some day,
Taking me on another journey – far away,
Baby – I thought it was you.

Peter V. Dugan

A pocket full of bullets

chains
of man

stains
of violence

grains
of sand

pains
of silence

chalk silhouettes
in the schoolyard

Alex Edwards-Bourdrez

As They Fall

Imagine each leaf a life,
Or part of one, each one rife
With colorful fragility
And desperate agility.

Or, imagine each a thought,
Luminous, lazy, and fraught;
A twisting, aimless, silent cry
Against an endless azure sky.

Destiny postponed, in soft
Invisible swirls they waft,
Somersault, and catch the light,
Then settle, gently, out of sight.

Sophia Emma

Billy Joel

His baby's all grown up
doesn't need her daddy anymore
now he walks with less purpose in each step
he steps slow, unsure.

He's immortalized in song, performed a thousand shows
sold out arenas, but now it's dark bars with stranger that he knows
by now he blends right in,
He's done it all, hit his prime,
lived the life of rock and roll

His house is much too big, a castle of red brick
and he, the lonely king, sits at his baby grand
the only thing filling the room, the curtains pulled shut,
he's had so many queens, he thinks of them and sings
between sips of soothing jack
a full bottle always on deck
it dulls the pain a bit,
memories of a stronger man

One more glass will make me happy
he lies and pours one more
he's quickly losing faith
in Jack Daniels and King James
his friends in earnest pray

and beg him to seek help
they try to lift him from his rut
but his feet are firmly planted
he has no energy to move

He's too old now
it would be a waste
to even lift a foot
he shuffles to the black and white keys
pajamas inked with stains
so different from his glory days!
he reminiscences, sits down and plays
his fingers move like clockwork
automatic from the start
with eyes welling up, he sings *Downtown Alexa*,
the bottle nearly gone.

Vivian Eyre

Letter Written on A Train Between Stations

--after Hirokazu Kore-eda

My love,

What was the name of the film that we saw at the Angelika?
The one that opens at the way station – just outside heaven.
And walking out of the train into clear white light,
old and young, with one week
to choose one treasured memory to relive forever.

Why I think about this now, I have no idea.
Except I sit looking out the window
the landscape flashing green and dew
And you are much on my mind.

Which memory do I choose?
Stars sewn onto a canopied bed in Venice
The Parisian flower sellers' gift of parrot tulips
for lovers, when we stayed awake all night
until we finished the crossword.

Everything that travels, comes back now.
That love that didn't come when I dug for it.
Don't you find that certainty entices surprise?
The surprise that was you.

Bards Annual 2018

What place do you travel to find your brightest time?
This next stop is mine. I'll write again
when I cross the river.

Adam D. Fisher

Instructions For Digging Post Holes

Ram a round-blade shovel
into soft-brown soil
then step on the top of the blade
to uncover a layer of small stones,
tan and yellow sand.

Work into the rhythm
of clink-crush of blade
on sand and gravel,
finally reaching gray hard-pan.

Swing the pick in an arc over head
and down into the hole

remove soil

measure depth

place post

plumb with level

fill in.

Only seven more to go.

Denise Marie Fisher

Galatea Revisited

Bleached blonde over blue, over Botox lips
and lacquered fingertips, French manicured.
Her tight waist over undulating hips,
skirts swish, revealing too much; she's assured,
each eye is following her every move.
Exuding perfection, her lovely shape
commands lust's attention. She finds her groove,
lewd whispers thicken the air, no escape
from the burgeoning heat of her motions,
creating notions of passionate ends.
She depends upon others emotions,
commotion creates the heat she pretends.
Pygmalion revived in a face of stone-
tricked passion denied, as the devils' own.

Andrew Fixler

Good God

Thank God for the good
Don't blame him for the bad
This hypocritical way of thinking
Is making me mad
Thank God for curing the sick
Not the medicine or the doctors
Who spent years on their craft
Pouring over every textbook in their lockers
God is all powerful
Yet deserves no blame for the bad
How does that make sense?
To blame the devil for that
God is either all powerful
Or he is all controlling
He can't be both
You are better off knowing

Charlotte Forrester

Nobody's Business

I am nothing personified,
A passing vagrant thought.
As everyone walks past me,
I stand here petrified.
With nothing to offer thee,
I perish within the winds of winter.
All of my struggles would be for naught.
But please forget me not
Or I will disappear in this pissing well.
For there is no worse hell than oblivion.
Alas, my existence would be for not
And I again become another useless thought
When I'm gone.

David Ira Fox

Imagination Station

Imagination station
Is where every poetic creation
Eventually finds a home
With the right lines
The rhymes and non-rhymes
Each thought becomes a poem.

Kate Fox

Learning Again to Fly

Allowing myself
To be
Weighed down
Over the course
Of a year
Every hour of
Every day
Another feather
Plucked from my
Wings and
Grains of salt
Tossed onto
My tail
I did not
Realize
The one I loved
Carried the
Salt shaker
Now that he has
Chosen another
I find
My wings are
Beginning to
Work again

And that which
Weighs me down
Is dissolved
By my tears

M Frances Garcia

Breakfast Special

Sunday morning
at the coffee shop,
the woman behind me
recently lost her father
and will have surgery soon;
it's close to noon and
most are headed out the door
as I read the newspaper
over orange juice and
wait for an omelette
studded with mozzarella, tomato and onion,
home fries and buttered rye
toast on the side:
everyone carries a menu
of hardships usually
hidden from view but
here is where their true stories,
served with scrambled eggs
and a cuppa joe,
are plated and presented
with kindness,
leftovers in
aluminum
to go

Kenneth Giordano

Tea Cups

Up on the shelves
so neatly lined up
we always got along so well
with the dishes
and the saucers
what is the reason
occasion for changing
the order
who opened the closet door
Tea cups
in the dark
eyes closed
asleep, so safe
Why is she shaking
up the wooden boards
we sat on for so long
wood grain shows through
white on top
where dark paint is worn off
with milk and sugar
bring us to the lips
sip the warm comfort
nourish the mind
warm the hearth

doilies on the table
tell me I'm fine
Ladies talk and let out
covered laughs
delicate as the
embroidered handkerchiefs
lace from the long sleeved ends
feeling the trust
let out secrets
squeals of naughty tails
times of lust
uncovered dust
shaky hands
rattling and roll us
china cups
in tan tea puddles
against the wet saucers
In comfortable company
where time had stumbled
and lost it's footing
aloof in the clouds
our tea party floats
on past memories
forgetting the stormy
weather outside
the gently sloping
graceful curtains
allowing only a crescent
of the cold rain
to show through

the curved wood
of Queen Ann legs
chairs that flow
with the colorful
print dresses on them
is out mingling
at the party
while we speak
with a soft touch
the bell shaped
tea pot's
hot steam whistles
chatter through the
misty air
come sit with us
girls out for now
in the moment
let go
let go the night
secrets in the dark
as we fall through
the cracks in time

Justin Goodman

Airport Notebook

Inspired by Daniel Poppick's notebook

"This small disaster"
An airplane through fog
Vacuum's frrrrom a window

I like it, it
has the intimacy of scrutiny. It's
between things.

This small disaster makes houses
of people. People! There are
castaways there! They perambulate
amidst the ant legs of the fog.

When I turn a page it
turns the paper of my skin right back.
Muscles, bricks of the body,

I get so sad I break down like lactic crystals.
It has a place for all of us
Because it only knows egresses.

Jessica Goody

Northern Lights

The pack ice resembles a mosaic of broken tiles where pups croak and croon, rolling playfully, enjoying the sensation of snow. Mothers plump and banded nurse pups who expand balloon-like as their fur gradually

darkens: ice-white, butter-blond, and dappled silver. They swirl in greenish water, trailing auras of bubbles behind them in a serpentine interpretive dance, joyful, reveling in their element. The silent fireworks of the

aurora borealis flash overhead like searchlights, mauve, barium green and methane blue, glowing while above them, polar bears stalk the icy plateau like wardens, waiting, tints glinting in their colorless fur.

Tammy Green

The Beat

Never good enough,
Who's the tough guy now?
Silent. Simmering.
Unreasonable.
Unwanted.
Failed.
Disgusted.
Why won't you take my love?
Take that!
A gun, a strap, a slap, a fist,
To demand respect,
To settle this.
The unearned punch.
The territory of rage,
Reframes the incident.
Now you see me,
When my unseemly hands,
Leave their mark,
Sear the skin,
Of the invisible and different.
Now you don't.
I reappear in headlines,
To blame you,
You rise,

A phoenix fixed-stare,
You dare,
To point me out.

Aaron Griffin

War Report

At 10:00 AM, as I unloaded a delivery of milk and eggs at BJ's Warehouse Club, Culverian naval police inspected the beached wreck of the RMS *Harland*. The ship yielded evidence of struggle, but no signs of passengers or crew. Authorities suspect an act of aggression by the belligerent Montescan Empire.

Around 11:28, I escorted a fork lift into Isle 23 to lower a crate of canned sardines to the sales floor. The truck's warning siren drowned out the emergency meeting of parliament at which special royal permission was given for a fleet to avenge the *Harland*.

Shortly following 12:00 noon, I wheeled seventeen pallets of a bulk order of Listerine onto a customer's waiting truck, leaving my manager to sign the invoice just as the Montescan prison ship *Gravesend* was sighted by the Culverian flotilla, and quickly surrounded.

Not long before 12:45, I set up an endcap of Kool-Aid, and the sailors of the *Gravesend* forced their prisoners to drink a potion as an Imperial priestess observed, and chanted spells from an ancient book.

At 12:49, a dozen Culverian hostages were tossed overboard as they transformed into titanic sea serpents and set forth to wreak havoc on the naval fleet that was sent to rescue them. A lady needed help lifting a family-sized case of water into her shopping cart.

Soon after 1:00, the hydraulic box baler on the receiving dock had to be emptied. The car-sized cube of compressed cardboard was ejected and ready for recycling as the last Culvarian corvette, helpless to resist the bestial onslaught, vanished beneath the waves. The sole survivor, escaping on the back of a giant dragonfly, returned to shore to report the loss of the fleet, while I cleaned and bandaged a painless, yet profusely bleeding paper-cut. Cardboard is dangerous.

By 3:17, the remaining prisoners on board the *Gravesend* had been transformed into sea monsters, leaving Culveria's eastern coast blockaded by a gauntlet of colossal serpents, gigantic squid, and other ship-crushing creatures never before seen or described, resembling the sea horse pool noodles that were strewn about the toy section.

Then, at 4:42, while refilling the dairy department with enough milk and eggs to last until closing hour later that night, I committed to memory the events of the day. The inciting incident of the Montescan-Culverian Sea Monster War would be chronicled by any means necessary, and at no delay. The lives of the innocent passengers who were stripped of their humanity and turned against their countrymen **would not** go unmemorialized.

5:54 sharp (because the time clock had a generous grace period) I punched myself out, grabbed the Razor scooter hidden behind the Coke machine, and rolled myself home as fast as its urethane wheels would take me.

6:32. Frozen pizza rolls were baking in the oven. I open up a blank writing document on my computer.

In the background, YouTube recommends a video of a puppy chasing its tail.

Closing the blank document without having written a word, I click the play button.

The war report could wait for the weekend.

George Guida

Where are the Pods of Gain? (She asked)

Surely and wherever they are
they grow, membranes split
like young planets' crusts
at the cyclone's edge.

The Pods of Gain
contain the seeds of clean
as deep as chores of morn
to conquer filth of night.

Hail to the Sheets of Cheer
for they stanch the charge
of heated atmosphere.
How they sacrifice their scent
and how they are thinned
as the drained Pods of Gain
and how all our sins descend
into the swirl of spin.

Concetta Guido

Unprocessed Sanctuary

Whatever makes you feel like you,
I say do.
So long as what is done
is not hurting yourself
Or others in the process.

Alter your look,
Treat yourself into a whole other person.
Be the person you needed to be
When you were growing up
And waited for Peter Pan to take you off
To Neverland.

Be who and what makes you happy.
Unprocessed is far more satisfying than
Forcing yourself into skin
That just doesn't feel right.
The posture is all off,
The light will not shine as bright.

Do not try to stress into a mold;
Forcing a circle into a square hole.
It just doesn't work.

Of course, everywhere we go,
There will be comments, chirps and whispers.

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Often a time, no one is brave enough
To accomplish it themselves.
Jealous we were strong enough to flaunt our
Documented *freak* swagger.

Do not be discouraged.
Different equates to fear in most cases,
Remember, you're not here to fit
Their Mold,
You're here to create your own.
You're not here for approval from those
Who probably won't be around in three, maybe five years to come.

But, you know,
Your sagacious subconscious is fully aware
Of what you need to accomplish to come
Into your own.

Be who you want to be,
Who you need to be,
In order to flourish as a human being.
You're not to be treated any less.

So don't be ashamed as you transmute,
Shedding the skin of who you thought or were taught you should be.

You're not hurting anyone,
More importantly,
You're helping yourself.

Kathy Gunzelman

Jesus in the Wheat

There were moments
No hours, no days
Only you my Lord knows

Time past slowly, I died spiritually
people saw; no hope
But still

Gazing at the picture
Of the wheat in the moon sun
Not always, quite rarely: a gift
You came

In those moments
so blessed was I
As you walked thru the wheat
In the noon sun

And hope grew: My spirit lived

They knew nothing, you knew all
Slowly moments became hours,
till days became weeks my God

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I praise you for never giving up on me,
for your constant gifts,
Lord when I could not even call to you
You came to me walking in the wheat in the noon sun.

Maureen Hadzick-Spisak

Extinction

A large bird – the dodo
Huge, hooked beak
Short legs, small wings
Funny birds, they couldn't fly
No need, they had no enemy
 Then man came
 Beat them with his club
 Dodo bird last seen - 1681

An awkward sound – the auk
Looks like a penguin
Black above, white below
Able to withstand the rigors of
Wind, waves and weather
 Then man came
 Plucked them for pillows, boiled them for fuel
 Auk last seen - 1844.

Numbered in the billions – the passenger pigeon
Scarlet eyed, slate blue, wine red breast
Flocks darkened the skies
Blocking out the sun for days
A wondrous sight
 Then man came

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Armed with guns, shot them for sport
Passenger pigeon last seen - 1914

A strange creation - man
Capable of great love
And even greater destruction
Polluted the waters
Deforested the woods
Befouled the air

Man came
Bringing lust and greed
Man last seen - ?

Nick Hale

[Double Click To Add Text]

Russ Hampel

Current Event

Am I drowning in the sea of life's hardships and heartaches?

Am I drowning in the sea of life's hardships?

Am I drowning in the sea of life?

Am I drowning in the sea?

Am I drowning?

Am I?

I am.

I am swimming.

I am swimming with the current.

I am swimming with the current because I can't.

I am swimming with the current because I can't swim.

I am swimming with the current because I can't swim against it.

Sylvia Harnick

Facing West

Four chairs
sit at the edge
of the sea waiting
the warmth of the sun
on their legs
seats cooled by the spray
of high tide
bright stars bouncing
off shiny arms
early morning wetness
envelops the four
their backs waiting
to be warmed
by the rising sun

Bob Hayes

Just Like Yesterday

It was a time of tasty egg creams
and days of simple dreams.
Baseball cards snapping in bike spokes
and sharing sweet, cherry cokes.
When munching on Mound's
didn't put on the pounds.
Going to a movie two for one
for an afternoon's fun.
Games of tag and hide and seek
played throughout the week.
I can still feel the fun
under that hot summer sun.

George Held

A daring young poet in Farmingville
flattered the gals there in villanelles
until they grew wise
to his wandering eyes
and showed him the road out of Farmingville.

Gladys Henderson

That River

No matter how deep
the thrust of your paddle
into the rolling, reckless
river, it will take you
where it will, and deposit
you on a foreign shore.

The smell of freedom
will fist its way into your soul
like elver making passage
to the sea; and your thoughts
it was a bad thing, that idea
of traveling the other fork,

the one for which you
were warned.

Judith Lee Herbert

Stuyvesant Town, October 29

Dana's friend texts her:
Firemen on a raft are rowing
on 14th Street toward the Con Ed
explosion.

We are looking down from our living room window
at the East River, which is
boundless and swelling, having burst through
the streets.

Cars are floating.
A person's head pops up
out of the water, arms splashing.
Is he swimming?

Dark waters rushing, rising.
Sparkling patches of glistening light
from street lamps and the full golden moon.

Stephen Hernandez

I Still See It in Your Eyes

They were all so excited
When I walked through the door
This year's greatest surprise
I saw it in their eyes

Eyes filled with tears
Faces full of joy
When the front door opened up
And they saw their little boy

But I saw it in their eyes again
That old familiar stare
Fear wrapped in happiness
Will this be his last year there?

All of their hugs and kisses
Let me know they miss me
But their eyes tell me the story
Of what their only wish is

They've prayed for me to get sober
For the last 15 years
But in those eyes I see

A wish that's trumped by fear

I have given them great presents
To hide my guilt, shame and fear
But all they've ever wanted for Christmas
Is my safe return next year.

Joan Higuchi

Parallels

Just what was it about that painting
that caught my eye?
He's only a bearded old man
gently stroking a cat
so obviously a contented person—
probably someone's grandfather

certainly not like my own Pop-Pop.
with children on each arm
another draped around his neck
hanging there like fruit
ripening on the family tree.

Perhaps, despite appearances so un-alike
that calm old man reminded me of him
but instead of a cat
it should be me plunked in his lap
expecting his often stated promise
“someday I'll buy you a pony.”

What ever would I do
if it were to show up now?

Arnold Hollander

Spring is Hiding Somewhere

Spring is hiding somewhere
And it needs to be found,
The crocus that pushed up
Is wilted on the ground.

Spring is hiding somewhere
And my songbird is confused,
For every time he wants to eat
Snow covers up his food.

Spring is hiding somewhere,
A latecomer to the game.
Snow shovel's at the ready;
My lower back is now in pain.

Spring is hiding somewhere,
It's feeling winter's wrath.
Cold permeates the air;
It's time for a warm bath.

Kristine Hoschler

Delicate Assassin

Love... a delicate assassin

Hearts...vulnerable like prey, craving Love to overtake

With the strength of a beast, Love roams the earth stalking vulnerable souls, deliciously feasting on their innocence

Souls yearning to be devoured

Alone, startled and overcome

Hearts willingly come undone

Loves weapon of choice, the color crimson dripping through the many cavernous layers of skin

Cauterizing wounds that have bled from within

Lust... Loves deviant henchman

Unleashes his mist, an elixir that clings dangerously through the night

Lust came, as I lay open as the day

Love, Devour me

Terry Hume

At The Beach House

for Mom

We sit in wooden beach chairs,
towel cloaking her shoulders,
straw hat protecting her from slaps.

With her dark sunglasses
she is a movie star.
Her eyes travel out to ocean,
up to sky

a seagull cries.

Cheryl Huneke

Your words awakened my inner soul

...a part of me, lost for what seemed like a lifetime, as other aspects of my life took over suppressing my creative soul long ago, hidden deep inside waiting.

...waiting to be alive. To remember my love of reading, writing, poetry and WORDS.

Words that touch my life, my soul and fill me with emotion.

You stand before your poetic peers and create the “scene” so the listeners can “visualize” your poem as they read along with you.

I hope and pray they, your fellow poets can comprehend on some level all that you have endured over this last year and a half.

A crash... a damaged, broken body and mind, and your struggle to become whole again.

We listen...

... you read

...they listen

...you create a visual of your words as you speak them.

...you finish and they all SIGH.. ahhh recognition as they applaud, nodding their heads in understanding.

Your job is now done, they get it!!!

So much emotion overflows from the inside.

I smile...

I feel love that can't be measured.

My Son. You make me so proud of you and the man you have become.

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You inspire me to write again.

... my awakened soul is alive again, even if only for this brief moment in time.

And I have created once again something I LOVE to do.

Thanks Rob!!

Love, Mom

R. J. Huneke

Scrawling

I

Can one pen conquer exhaustion
The sweetness of solitude should not be
Construed as depression
For the depression construct batters
Down
The most energetic socialite
As much as the hermit
Sleeping incessantly
Exhaustion
It loops in my eyes like a noose
And the cappuccino cannot wake me
At high noon in the cold
It's the depression construct choking
Rest
The most consistent sleep for twenty hours
Cannot stop the stressful
Pangs of backlogged black thought
Burials

II

'Flick Flick'
But I will make my stand on the besieged tower
Carving my pencil's wick like a wooden stake

Words

Art

'Flick Flick'

May be enough to ward off

That labyrinth of fatigue

That I and so many others are trapped in

Lost

'Flick Flick'

My weapon is sharp

Now if only my mind can hold on

Long

Enough

To do the impossible.

Maria Iliou

Unexpected Friend

Depth of
My energy
Naturally...unscripted

Impromptu scenes
Dramatize role play
Through lens of
My camera
Within character
You portray

Listening...pitches of
Depth in your voice
Captures my attention

Remaining in
Quietude
Sensing ebullience
Energy...Connecting
Our stories

Embracing in
Hugs...becoming
Unexpected friends

Evie Ivy

On A Good Day

It was below a sidewalk tree.
At first I wondered what it was.
It was pink. On close inspection
I noticed little protrusions.

Large, for its size cartoon eyes.
It was a tiny fledgling bird.
Did it leave its nest trying to fly
into the world it had been promised?

It did not get its chance to be.
As if, a bud that could not bloom,
no different from a love undone.

Larry Jaffe

Watching Love Dance

For my beautiful wife Shelley

I love to watch the way
love dances in moonlight

It spreads from stars
to earth And back again

Innate symmetry that
bridles the senses with purpose

My heart ever beating
with thoughts of you

I wear your love like a tablecloth
a feast of plenty

It cures Every ache
and makes each day worthwhile

I love to watch you dance
with love

Holding it securely like the reins
of a steady steed

You dance with love

I dance with you

I love to watch love dance

Andrew Johnson

Last Year

When I sit back and reflect
To where I was last year
My eyes begin to flow
With tears of blistering fear

To wake up every morning
With the yearning always burning
To feed the beast inside my soul
Oh shit my stomachs turning

The numbers seem to dial themselves
And soon I'm on the highway
I close my eyes and think of my mom
But damn I can't go the right way

The pain inside
So hard to bear
It's like a fucking movie
But this is real
This is me
Nobody to disprove me

To make a choice to end a life
Is definitely on the table

My life in pieces and me not here
I just can't cut the cable

I do my best
To stay focused on this path
To live in the moment
And entertain an honest smile at last

So now I wake up every morning
With a simple cup of joe
And never forget how quick
This beautiful life can go

To know yourself is a journey
And I feel I've made some headway
But humility is the answer
If I start seeing things my way

So I start a new year
With a little cheer
And some diminished fear
But I always remember where I was
On this day last year

Gabriel Jones

I am...

Traveling through space,

Traveling to a place,

I have never been to.

I have never been to,

My thoughts once so simple,

So casual - do you understand?

Traveling through light years,

Watching each planet flash by,

That's why,

I ...

I will never be like them,

I will never be like you,

I will never be understood.

I am not alone,

Neither are you...

But who am I, if I am not you?

I am traveling light years,

With heavy burdens,

The universe on my shoulders

And life is not certain.

Showtime behind closed curtains.

Breathless underwater,

Our souls remained submerged in...

One in the same, with alternative versions.

These were just the light years

I was traveling in,
Imagining,
Dreaming,
Feeling...
!
Like it's been light years.

Ryan Jones

Upon A Blackened Field

In the spring it was wet and green
Pushing up flora of all sorts
But all is changed by midsummer
The flowers have wilted away
The water has dissipated
And the rains have been infrequent
The grasses are beige and stunted
The late summer sun is too strong

The field hisses when tread upon
The husks of grass scrape underfoot
The dry soil grumbles with each step
Stones grind harshly when tread upon
Neighboring forests shed branches
Littering the field with gray twigs
The dehydrated limbs of trees
Now leafless and deceased, snap off

The quenching rains have yet to come
But the sun's rays beat on and on
Dust rises with the blowing winds
The stalks fall over in the breeze
They cannot stand any longer
In a time unsuited for life

When conditions are too extreme
Everything is baked and withered

Still the onslaught of heat goes on
But the shriveled can bear no more
A single spark is all it takes
The fallen field bursts into flames
Spreading over the dead terrain
Leaving the field blackened and charred
As it passes into the woods
Where the dying trees feed the blaze

The inferno consumed it all
Without moisture to intervene
There is no color, only black
The desolation is complete
Barren stumps ring a field of waste
The rains now fall upon ashes
Too late to save the bleak landscape
But what is this tendril of green

Amie Kachinoski

12 Steps

You said to follow the twelve steps
Well twelve steps don't get you very far
People never stop moving
And I learned to walk early in life
Baby steps that turned to strides
In shoes that gave me blisters
Trying to reach the goal of acceptance
When I for one
Am sober

Evelyn Kandel

There It Is, The Elephant in the Room

The appointment not remembered,
The friend I didn't call,
The inconvenient truth - I'm old.
All the facts and folderol
I crumple them, throw it
Under a table along with other
Dust balls of denial.
They molder there while I dither,
Overwhelmed by my disordered life,
Culled from jigsaw pieces
No longer fitting into now.

The elephant is so very large.

Kate Kelly

Earthquake

the center breaks slowly the core trembles
each thwarted touch a rift
the hardened shield shifts
unanswered prayers chafe
and the heart
cannot repair

a soft layer slips
for years
this heart was breaking
severed by unbearable desire
skinned by faults and fissures
the heart
will not repair

the slow breaking apart
of day from night dashes hope
as the earth
swallows whole cities
the very ground itself

driven by forces
deep within we bruise

Bards Annual 2018

fault
chafe
slip
tremble
and shift into a slow tango
of natural disaster

Daniel Kerr

Pride Cometh Before The Fall

Husbands and wives of many years,
often struggle to find things they enjoy doing together.
Our little church does an annual 5K run,
we decided to run the route every Saturday morning.
And so began,
an interesting journey of discovery.
Each time we ran,
I was always ahead.
I knew to pick up the pace,
whenever I heard the pounding sound,
of her little feet.
As the weeks passed,
she added treadmill time,
to her daily exercise routine.
I told her I did not think my well-honed exercise routine,
needed any tinkering.
One fateful day in July,
I could not escape the pounding sound of her little feet.
As I looked over my shoulder,
to see how close she was,
I heard the first warning,
*“Don’t look back while you run,
you will fall.”*
Each time I looked back,

I asked myself what I was running from,
and why I was so fearful she would pass me?
Is she the old man from the *Twilight Zone* episode,
that the young woman driving cross country kept seeing on the road?
*“Don’t look back while you run,
you will fall.”*

Am I Bobby Riggs,
about to be embarrassed on national TV by Billy Jean King?
*“Don’t look back while you run,
you will fall.”*

Am I Cosmo Castorini from the movie *Moonstruck*,
about to be told by his wife, *“Cosmo, you are going to die anyway?”*
*“Don’t look back while you run,
you will fall.”*

As I looked over my shoulder for the 4th time,
I did not see the sticks in the road,
and landed hard on the asphalt road.

As I lay in the street,
and assessed the damage to my ankle, ribs, both shoulders, elbow and
knee,

I found the answer to my questions.

As Julius Caesar learned the hard way,
sometimes husbands need to simply heed,
the repeated warnings of their wives.

Pride does indeed,
cometh before the fall.

Bill Kirsten

Killing My Wife

I have to kill my wife
but how should I do it.
She just nags, nags, nags and nags.
It's giving me a fit.
Sometimes I just want to strangle her
but she's too strong and if I tried
she would strangle me instead.
How about a nice long cruise
Which one? She can choose.
The Caribbean is nice this time of year
it's not hurricane season
so nothing to fear.
It is such fun
just sitting in the sun
and on a beautiful night
she can join me at the rail!
Leaning over to see the sea
I go to help her
but she leaned over too far.
Ooops!
I guess I won't have to worry
about her nagging any more.

Denise Kolanovic

Evanescent Moments

Could I go back to then?

Could I possibly return and fly

through the clouds once again

to see you smiling as if

there were no pain -

only you and I then and the same?

Could I hold close life's evanescent lightness?

Could you remind me of my own music and melodies

of kisses and breath, of all those strange feelings,

sensual and new, with an exotic taboo?

Can I almost hear "Trilogy", you in your t-shirt, sitting

on the edge of the bed combing my hair?

Carissa Kopf

Deep Red

I rush right by you
Not realizing it takes just a moment
To stop and see your beauty
And inhale your tantalizing aroma

It's not until I see your reflection
In the mirrored glass in front of me
That I see your magnificence
And it takes my breath away

You stand at attention
For your audience to see
Your rich color
Of deep red

I feel your velvety petals
And linger there
Before sliding my fingers
Carefully down

I cannot take it anymore
I pluck
And make you mine
My sweet beautiful rose

Michael Krazowitz

The right thing

Take off your shoe
Really, take off your shoe
I remain committed
To understanding

She walks like an angel walks
She talks like an angel talks.

Memories flood in
Secure in their fidelity
Color, quality
Like diamonds flowing from her mind

She walks on glass
Barefoot, lite as a feather

We caress infinity
Like a soldier waiting to go home
Overdue for a makeover
Reality sandwiched between convulsions of fear

It's the thrill of the night
Exchanging glances

Harvesting the situation
Like corn thrashed
Piled high like an elephants thigh
Oh what a beautiful morning

Do not hesitate
She runs down the alley

Heavy hands
Sandwich on the table
She picks up the empty dishes
And yells at the cook

Strangers in the night
Exchanging glances

At a roadside inn
The light buzzes its slow drone
As they sleep inside
Sun comes up to start a new day

Sitting on the dock
Of the bay
Watching the tide
Roll in.

Mindy Kronenberg

Darkened Prism

At first, their arguments stained her
with a kind of dread, skin becoming blue
with anger, a cool that burned
the tips of her hair.

He had a talent with paint, a flair
for splashing all the wrong hues.

If red bothered her, then he would
rage orange, sparing no fire
in his wild compositions.

If green was good, he tamed it
with no inhibition, slapped it down
so it ran like water in a rusty drain.

It never mattered what she might think:
his pallet was beyond her appreciation.

Pain could be purple, pink, pale
as flesh, subtly dipped on
tip of his brush.

If light was scarce in their humble
abode, he would raise a glass
to the dark, the greys and midnight shades
bleeding from his voice until
it filled her body
like ink.

Billy Lamont

Hero Or Villain Of My Villanelle?

You decide - Sheep or goat? Heaven or Hell?
Break down the fourth wall of art and culture!
Hero or villain of my villanelle?

Truth comes like ringing the Liberty Bell
Propaganda kills like a mad vulture
You decide - Sheep or goat? Heaven or Hell?

A turtle leaves the cover of his shell
A diamond forms under extreme pressure
Hero or villain of my villanelle?

Thirsty lips taste cool water from a well
Dignity offers hope, something more pure?
You decide - Sheep or goat? Heaven or Hell?

Poems bleed from my veins like ink from ink wells
Open wounds held to the light like torture
Hero or villain of my villanelle?

My words vibrate and create, can you tell?
Naked heart transparent without closure
You decide: Sheep or goat? Heaven or Hell?
Hero or villain of my villanelle?

Mitchell Langsam

Young Grey Elephant

- Have you seen my young grey elephant
 - Lost beyond the gates charming snakes
 - The heavy heat weighs down on the pool by the mansion
 - Like a mirror reflecting a tiger that waits
-
- Have you seen my young grey elephant
 - It wandered through this garden alone
 - The lazy haze slows down the quickest rabbit in the thicket
 - Being chased by a little boy to his home
-
- Have you seen my young grey elephant
 - In the courtyard it was spotted by the guards
 - The irony of it all was rather humorous to the owners
 - Who wondered
 - Why it was left to roam from the start
-
- Have you seen my young grey elephant
 - Theres many rivers to cross til we meet
 - The swans neck whispered hints of showers at the oasis
 - That spit us out at the mouth of the sea ---

Ellen Lawrence

the throwaways

poly, paper and plastic nation
we are the throwaway generation
nothing is valued anymore
there's always another in the store
everything's made to be replaced
can planned obsolescence be erased
resources dwindling; wood, oil, coal
purging possessions takes a toll
unless we're careful we will be
thrown on the dust heap of history

Hope Lefstein

More (Original) Differences

You want to meet your favorite celebrities to fulfill your dreams;
I'm told I am a "psychotic stalker".

You have goals;
I'm told I have "unrealistic fantasies".

You seek help from other people;
I'm told I "use other people as crutches".

You have unique interests & tastes;
I'm told I have "dorky" interests & tastes.

You leave to move on to better things;
I'm told I resort to the "avoidance response".

You eat to live;
I'm told I "live to eat".

You relax and take time out for yourself;
I'm told I'm "lazy & waste my time away".

You have a sense of humor;
I'm told I'm "inappropriately silly".

You're boisterous and vivacious;
I'm told I am "loud & annoying".

Your voice is heard;
Mine is shut down.

Your personal business is your own;
Mine are exploited, judged, & ridiculed by you.

You are my bully;
I am your scapegoat.

Tonia Leon

Second Coffee

Let's be each other's second cup of coffee
not the first that we gulp down in desperation
to accelerate our heart beat, to start our blood rushing
but the second, the one we sip with delight
savoring the flavor, the warmth the soupcon
of sweetness hidden within the dark liquid.
Better still, let's be the whole pot of coffee
for each other: the joy the urgency and the sweet bitterness.

Steve Levy

Summer Thoughts

It's that simple, seemingly mundane, yet extraordinary feeling
That the most basic boring acts
Are overloaded with intense meaning
Significance

Changing a tire
A drive to the airport

A walk on the beach
A day at the fair
That bench in the park
The tree at school
Catching lightning bugs in a jar
Sparklers on the 4th of July

An old pair of sneakers
A weathered baseball mitt

A crisp apple
Ice water
Returning bottles

A good conversation
Trickling into debate

Then passionate argument
Brought up over and over again
Amongst friends

A life well lived

Melissa Longo

I Swear This Is Not Another Love Poem (But It Is)

As I crawl within you, I give myself time to know you.

I want to know you but this is all you're giving me.

Loving you hasn't been hard.

Untimely so, unconditionally so.

Ed Luhrs

Ocean Sketches

Blue cetaceans sing
deep ancestral hymns
beyond the continental shelf.

The albatross fathoms
an unholy garden
of plastic debris.

Great white teeth
follow a trail of mackerel
under the red horizon.

Eyeless bone eaters
scrap the seabed
for fallen pieces.

Abalone proves
a tough nut to crack
for the young otter.

Leaving his skiff,
Santiago dreams of lions
on the beach in Africa.

John Lysaght

The Doppelganger

Hypervigilance refuses sleep,
Cowering nerves quivering
My emotional stability flickers
As uncertainty floods the senses.
I must trust someone—
You—perhaps you?
I am grappling to stay composed,
Rational, lucid—hinged—
But my mental grip degenerates.
I have seen myself in periphery
Incessantly stalking me for days,
Predicting every move and mannerism
As if omniscient.
No mere look-a-like,
But my exact double,
A replica which casts no shadow
Utters no sound.
Witchcraft afoot, or hallucination, guilt—
Who is the counterfeit—
What can it— he want?
Atonement— my contrition?
I grope blindly
Imprisoned in a nightmare.

No misfortune
Has befallen me.
Balance is returning.
More companion
Than nemesis,
He seems protective.
Communicative mime,
An animated spirit guide,
Pleads for my attention
With declarative gesticulations,
Like frenetic semaphore,
At each new intersection I approach
Urging me to pause, to heed.
I contemplate these crossroads,
Their meanings and opportunities,
And retrace my lifepath
In order to amend the future.

Maria Manobianco

Best Said Plans

We planned for tomorrow, not knowing what the day would bring
Hope was our armor, guiding the way
Time holds the upper hand on what must come to be

The sun filled the hospital room, I sat at the foot of his bed
We spoke of healing time, being ready to go home
We planned for tomorrow, not knowing what the day would bring

Soon he became restless, discomfort dimmed his smile
I notified the Head Nurse who reassured me, he was fine
Hope was our armor, guiding the way

He said, *I'm too tired for visits of any kind*
I listened and didn't visit not knowing it was the end.

Joan Marg-Kirsten

Eating Mushrooms

He loves gardening,
mentioned he wanted to try some wild mushrooms,
the ones he had just finished picking.
Since he has trouble recognizing one plant from another
and since he already has a bad case of poison ivy
I didn't think this was a wise decision.
But I kept my opinion to myself
and went shopping.

Later, when I got home
my mother-in-law was there, hysterical
and there were two policemen.
I asked what was going on
then I saw him, my husband
lying on the dining room floor
dead.
I passed out.
Later, I wondered about how easy it all was.

Cristian Martinez

The Horizon Sea

Watching the horizon sea
The sky being so beautiful
Being able to walk across water
The beautiful birds gliding
Watching the sunset
Changing colors from blue, orange, purple, and pink
Seeing the moon rise
Hearing unknown creature's growl
Stars moving in the sky
Being lifted off the ground
And landing on a magical carpet
Flying into the horizon sea
Never being seen again

Michael McCarthy

Unwrap

Humming merrily to a new version of *Jingle Bell Rock*
awakened by the aroma of our freshly-cut balsam fir
dazzled by blinking lights dancing in the early night
and excitedly awaiting for that kiss under the mistletoe.

But

it is now time to step aside
and allow the quiet celebration to begin
walk outside
take a long moment
in the crisp, chilling air
set your eyes
on the clear dark sky above
find the lone star
which is calling out your name
with its tiny, yet steady glow
open up
claim the gift
that has always been.

Emerge!

Robert McKenna

Stolen: Miceys

While my cousins were drunk at the bar-be-que
she was all mine, unpeeling foil wrapped stones.
Above the clamor, we split potatoes, one by one
with sprinkles of ground salt from seas, we crossed
thankful for my mother's company and food shared.
Miceys silently glistening with pats of Kerry Gold.
We hummed approval, eye to eye smiles with each bite
interrupted by shouts, family pushes us to our senses.

Amid their shenanigans, we sat closer, side by side.
In a setting sun, we caught up on unimportant things.
Among darkness, we reminisced about adventures we had.
Her head bent toward my head, for words we could hear.
Her hand on mine, we unwrapped another pomme-de-terre
as close as we have always been our entire lives.

Gene McParland

It Looks so Beautiful, too

Mist in the early dawn,
dew upon the grass,
morning light ascending
silhouetting the funnel
of a spider's trap.

How it glistens!
a brightly jeweled pathway
descending to death.

It all looks so beautiful
and inviting;
almost like the world
of Man.

Shortell McSweeney

Swimming

A creature caught between land and sea
I dive to Earth's Pond where green grass meets grey oblivion.
I enter a liquid world
to find clarity.

Hands play with killies.
Feet test the sand.
My circled form somersaults
over and over till the brain tilts light.
Lips taste salt....and laugh.
Golden tendrils lead me free as
water embraces the pores.
I float wide
-open to the sky.
-refuse to think!!!
Stretching arms to the horizon, I kick for it.
Waves slap me happy.
And the body surfs on sweet aquatic rhythms.
Happiness is here!

Wayne Mennecke

Make America Beautiful Again

Some believe human beauty is based on symmetry, the proportion between facial feature measurements & a ratio known as phi.

High school anatomy class jumpstarts the school year:
pupils absorb and apply lessons on body symmetry,
search their faces for perfect spiral traces,
a survey of sacred geometry to calculate
the irrational eye-pleasing 1.618...

Students overlay beauty masks on cell phone selfies.
They gauge divine proportions
measure facial features and calculate the golden mean.
Like scientists, they compare fingerprint whorls
to galaxies and spiral windows of stained-glass stars.
Like artists, they sketch the cyclone coils of chameleon tails
searching for answers in beautiful page proportions.

Prettyscale.com grades the students' uploaded selfies
on a one hundred point scale with most ranking lovely
between sixty and eighty points; in amused fits
they upload an image of Brad Pitt
who scores a beyond-handsome ninety-six.

Some indulge distraction with Google images

of Canada's hunky prime minister Justin Trudeau
(eighty-nine), Barack Obama and Joe Biden
in their primes (low seventies) and then
predictably

Donald Trump's image uploads to the Prettyscale app.
He scores a thirty-three.
I hold my tongue.

I should hold my tongue.

I should have held my tongue

satisfied with quantifiable beauty
or lack thereof, but here
in high school, anatomy students
finally unmask
the chiral sham of governance-

an ugly American
inside and out.

Steven Messina

[Double Click To Add Text]

Susan Meyer

Buddha Breath of Cloud

Buddha breath of cloud issues silent
imaginings of air born sense- a score of
masterful glowing Angels that give flight
to wingless hordes of terrorists from 'round the globe-
Kosovo, Afghanistan, London, Somalia...

Engaging dramas play across the sky, writ from
unseen hands, amidst companion melodies unheard-
clash of symbols, droning cellos, piping seraphim who
follow earthborn folly with tears for unforgiving
wars- will struggling factions eradicate life below
held in precarious balance?

Or will Jove's outstretched Hand reach within
hovering clouds throughout this fine-tuning night?
As Guidance from above emerges, even we may see
a path to pearlescent harmony, to quit the fray~ with unceasing
reckoning of Violins, Oboe, Piano~ perhaps
we last another day, one- more- measured hour.

A hopeful coda provides an opening-
amidst echoes of earthbound strains, silvery
flute & golden piccolo now interject refrains,

with ancient melodies of Archangels-Uriel,
Raphael, Gabriel, Metatron and Michael-
Undoing the passion of human mistaking...

(with rolling kettle drums in deep assent)
We envision the promised Celestial rebirth
on a vast symphonic, terrestrial stage with
Arts, Science, Music and Dreams bearing
Light for healing weary hearts and minds
amidst our earth's Harmonic reawakening.

Meg Micheels

Walls of Time

A plague of no ambition
Everyone has settled
No motivation
Morale has vanished
Appreciation is gone
Leaving is no option
Just attitudes of defeat and dispare
No guidance
Just correction
As management collects their salary
Gains their ego
While we slave away for minimum wage
Obtains corrective action
Its a place of no ambition
Where everyone has settled
And time has stopped

Rita Monte

Reincarnation of Nature

Once I was green and lush
Hugging my handsome tree
Now, together we spend frolicking days
While basking in the sun
At night we contemplate the moon
In awe of her brilliance
We laugh
Even as the torrential rains fall upon us
At times we cry.
As autumn approaches
My green turns to red, golden amber hues
Just like the carpet below
I wither and fall.
I want to surrender and join my peers
Who have returned to mother
I want to surrender
But tyrannical winds sweep me away, away
Away from my companions
My loved ones
The force of nature's breath
Propels me along
I am a fragile leaf
At the mercy of the fickle wind
Abruptly my flight comes to an end

I am captured in the iron grip of a chain link fence
Alone, prisoner to the faith of time
I try to escape, free myself
Free to travel to my destination
I tremble and pray for the turbulence to end
But it is in vain
The chain link fence... my enemy
I know now
I must endure a long, snowy, frigid winter
A long desolate winter
Patiently I wait for spring to return
To return and free me from this agony
Free to caress the soft green grass once more
Free to give new life
To nourish... Mother Earth

Once again

Sheila Morrisey

Hug

That goodbye hug that grounds me
and holds my heart in place
much like that first real kiss
that I can still feel and taste
anchors
buoys
beacons
you are my harbor master

Joseph Munisteri

What I've been taught

I want to believe,
what i've been taught.
But what i've been taught,
Is to question what i've learned.

This gets me thinking,
Sitting in deep thought,
Questioning reality, the universe,
What i've been taught.

This stirs my perception,
like a chef cooking a stew,
made from the leftovers,
of a failed recipe.

Attempting to salvage some flavor,
or at least,
some form of sustenance,
creating a conflicting taste.

Marsha M. Nelson

Casualties of the Sand

He hung his combat boots;
his tour of Kuwait and Iraq
long gone,
but the years hung
limp about his neck.
Like dog tags,
lost in the desert
his life,
forgotten in the sands-
of a toxic battlefield.

Now asphyxiated;
unable to breathe in-
the cold indifference of his world.
Memories of poisoned foxholes;
chemical weapons,
mixed medicines.

Bodies fall with empty shells
others react later
from the burning oil wells-
War is Hell.

David Nevins

Poem Against the Student Loan Marketing Association

Cop sirens careen by the crime scene screen
of my red checking account, which bleeds bills
in waves by hundreds. Mammal blood is green,
viscous, weighed by dollar as the bank wills.
Outside, children play cop and borrower,
mimic debt trading by bonds and deeds,
placing bets on education proper,
to applause from vultures in the nosebleeds,
circling the field of ripened debt crops.
Greedy birds thirst more when the learning stops.
Pumpkin loving families grew children,
in the 70s, with loan pesticide,
harvested in the garden of Clinton.
Their murder was framed as a suicide.
You changed name since then, maligning fate,
rebranding in the dark conspiracy.
You lobby for blood at adjustable rates,
labeling deficit a heresy,
our bankruptcy- just millennial slack.
Futures crash in a flash of phone muzak.
Seasons roll over, kids become parents,
Co-signed cold cases stay open, unsolved.
Students survive by gaming forbearance.
You hunt a generation; they evolve.

Killer, you come to call on vinyl homes
vined in control by plans beyond you.
We protest the state; you mimic their tone
via CEO throat, Jack Remondi.
Press 1 to hear the new terms of your curse.
When state debt rots, student loans wither first.

George H. Northrup

Decision

Only 17, he'd endured enough,
stranded in hollow pain—
staring sleepless at the pitch of night,
each succeeding day a diary of disaster.
He stopped home after school
to empty his wallet,
except for the card
that would identify him.
Then, on to the platform—
the stage, almost—
where, any minute, an express train
would thunder across his future.

It would leave him in its wake,
mangled corpse of sorry flesh,
simultaneously killing off
any second thoughts, any kisses
or guitars, any teenagers of his own.

He had never heard
that dreadful claim,
“We had to destroy the village
in order to save it,”
but had lived long enough

to understand his savage need
to seek relief through violence,
to hope for salvage in ruin.
He would launch himself like a rocket
into the vacuum of death.

As the train approached,
he leaned toward the tracks
and stared at the iron face
of his executioner.
Last legs tense, amazed
by the shakes that overtook him,
an inner, opposing locomotive
roaring its own insistent message
of negation.
Fear, then terror, tightened in his chest.

For weeks, everything had drooped
in value except this one ambition.
Now it, too, fizzled into failure,
joining the general quandary
of regret and disappointment.

“Mom, I need help,” he texted.
An ambulance hurried him
to the Department of Emergencies
for a surreal weekend, locked
in a ward of unbelonging.
He accepted the Lithium that was offered,
and for a while no one could say

what, exactly, had changed everything—
a drug known for occasional miracles
or the unblinking headlights
of a ruthless commuter train.

Joan Vullo Obergh

This Year in...

My daughter is now serving in the military,
my friend wrote from Jerusalem.

You're so brave. How do you stand the worry?

I finally respond by letter.

You do what you have to do, she replies,
and I can see the determined shrug

of her shoulders in her disciplined cursive
and remember the granite resolve of her chin.

Hannah has now lived in Israel more than 40 years;
still visits whenever she can.

Hunter College serried all boundaries as our kinship
spanning so many years was forged.

It opened up brave new worlds for both as I learned
the meaning of the Mezuzah outside her apartment.

At mine, we discovered she could drink tea
from a glass reserved only for her.

Haunting library stacks, we whispered lofty girlhood ideals,
hers always stretching higher, her visions, so much grander than mine.

Last conversation right after 9/11 we speak of fear, of family, the
fabric of our lives.

When will you visit, Joan? We don't have forever anymore, she chides
me.

Of course she is right. But each time I hear about another mid-east
crisis my

not—so—brave as hers stomach knots.

Next year Hannah, maybe, I concede.

She laughs and answers, It's a date. But not next year, my friend.

This year. This year in Jerusalem...

Mike O'Keefe

Careless

I've only known careless love,
She said with sadness
I said I never knew love that wasn't
If it isn't passionate
Hell-bent and reckless
Then it isn't love
It's something else

It is the abandon,
The stripping of bounds,
Protecting us from ourselves
That makes love dangerous
Impetuous and thrilling
It's called falling for a reason
And yet, everyone is surprised when it crashes

Tom Oleszczuk

Wandering

a hint of spring
still too cold to go
 without a jacket
overcast, too warm for snow
mid-way to nowhere
 from yesterday

dead ones at the edges
family shrunken
 those remaining
 must expand
to fill the spaces

when the wind picks up
I need to anchor myself

on the beach at low tide
looks like moss from afar
flattened seaweed
 to rise when the water returns
as the gulls gather
 before launching again

George Pafitis

[Double Click To Add Text]

Bruce Pandolfo

Alternatives...

Are we in an overly priced and
“sorry you're not covered” -drugged out
fever-nightmare?

With four horsemen gamboling around
this game-bull that's such a gamble.
I feel lost in Las Vegas,
as the social climate changes
jumping between fiery eyes and cold stares
between FEAR and LOATHING.

How does a cess-gene-pool Lizard-human
(whom no-one has ever seen genuinely laugh..
much less bother to shed crocodile tears)
intend to “drain the swamp”
when he is upset by leaks
and enlisting in constant pissing contests.

It's silver spoon vs. rust belt
as red faced/red-scared hot headed
Cold War-traumatized Bible-Belt-Sanders
get gritty and abrasive about Bernie Sanders'
“socialism” on social networks...
so their red scared, yellow bellies vote

for an agent-code-orange-man
who is in bet with the Russians...
Princess and the P-U-T-I-N...
How do you sleep?
Tucked into an Irony Curtain,
hoping leaks will put out the
bed-of -flames-you-made
now-let-sleeping-dogs-lie-in-it.

Curled close like steel wool pulled
over the eyes-wide-shut of our
electronic sheep, plugged INTIMATELY
into “smart devices”
(wounds are known to “smart” too you know)
Remote controlled drones strike,
while worker drones remain remote
and don't strike against their controllers.

You've been “drinking the punch”
or the Kool-Aid if you think its uncool
to punch Nazi hate dispensers like Dick Spencer....

Hey..maybe we should consider Kool-Aid, man...
Looks like we're gonna have some walls to break through!

On the topic of Richard Spencer and walls like Berlin...
Rich is just one “E” away from “Reich” and it's interesting
that the alternative right doesn't feel anyone “Alternative”
is right or deserves rights...
wait.. “Alternative right?” the alternative to “right” is “wrong”

will we soon be calling Hate “alternative love”?

They're pros at conning us.

Day time talk shows expound on whose ex pounds who
and paradoxically obsess on how to shed pounds,
the pros and cons of probiotics and yogurt cultures,
the balancing act between self-love and body shaming
is thrilling enough to just GRAB YOU BY THE PUSSY!
but won't cover this disgusting fucking rape culture of disgusting
fucking.

“Oh, don't you rape-whistle blowers
make mountains out of molestation”
mounting concern for where concern isn't on the mounting,
where getting fucked by a stranger is so easy its a walk in the park.
The “TREMENDOUS” POLLS show that our support
of our young mothers (young children with young children)
is UnChartered Terror-tory.
The graphs read like jagged hanger scars in the shape
of a problematic lopsided parabola that resembles
the pregnant belly of a Plan-Bewildered
teen who is UN-expecting.

Apparently, what happens to her body is NEVER to be her choice.
And THAT is to be expected?!

As though to say “Je T'aime” and “victim” are close enough”?!
Will we soon be calling rape “alternative love-making”?

EVEN MOTHER EARTH GETS IT!

We oil-shot at her gaping O-Zone hole,
while she deep-throats our fracking phallic symbols
and pipelines... she's so wet and sweaty...
she experiences hot flashes during Indian-summer-flings
in the middle of winter and I find that a chill runs down my spine
when the coldest month of the year is SO FUCKING HOT!
And that is JUST THE TIP of the iceberg (that's left)

We need less borders and more bookstores!
Geez. Jesus Christ. Refugees get vetted,
then stereotyped and cast aside while
veteran hillbilly elegy Jesus freaks freak out
herds of bible thumping Trump voters vent...
hot under their Blue Collars...
that their unions are unheard and scream
“blue lives matter” caring nothing about unity
as black lives get snuffed out,
turning blue in the face in the face wheezing,
hoping to be heard as they gasp...
hoping the unifying safe-word is “humanity”
will we soon be calling “hate” alternative love?

Marlene Patti

Go on

How do we overcome?
Do we replace, forget, ignore?
How do we keep going
if the pain is constant?
The reality of my struggle
is that it lingers
it never heals
it keep appearing
repeating, tormenting me
even in my dreams
I try to get away
I try to hide it
but every idle moment
my heart is pounding
my tears start flowing
I start again
the cycle continues
yet we go on

Kelly J. Powell

How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love the Pun

*I have seen Lamb (Charles Lamb) lately—
Brown and I were taken by Hunt to Novello's—
there we were devastated
and excruciated with bad and repeated puns
Hunt doesn't want to go again.*

--From the Letters of John Keats

I have friends who live and die
literally, by the pun

sends shivers down the spine
with recollection
of double entendre
word farts
with too many meanings
used in what should be illegal pairings
(just shy of illicit)
at extremely inopportune moments

until one day
I read that John Keats
remarkable one of the greatest poets
of the English language

invested time
on his last days on this green earth
creating puns

and if they were important to him
I suppose I can give them a try

Kathleen Powers-Vermaelen

Stupid Cancer

I read an online meme today
that began, inexplicably,
with the words
Stupid cancer!
and I sat there, baffled
to see a stunner like
cancer
married to an underachiever
like *stupid*.
The noun, insidious,
loaded, life-changing. The adjective,
what a toddler shouts at
a sandbox playmate who stole
her pail. A surfeit of
dazzling descriptors
exist, yet the writer chose
to pair *stupid* with
cancer. The word
devastating
must have been hiding under
a couch that day, while
catastrophic
vacationed incognito
in a small Colorado town.

Let's call things what
they *are*. Let's stop
pretending, stop
giving out pink
teddy bears in aftermath
of shocking diagnoses. Let's
give people swords
and cheer them on while,
like gladiators, they enter
the arena to cut *stupid cancer's*
motherfucking head off.

Pearl Ketover Prilik

I am haunted

by the tumbled toss
of cosmic die that
flung my speck of
soul “here and now”
full bellied and free
rather than there and
who knows when –
burkaed, beaten,
starving, perhaps an
ash blowing in wind –
cosmic toss of good
fortune – haunted by
echoes of the others
beseeching bloated
arrogant far too for-
tunate-to-do-nothing
me – I stumble on in
too much good inten-
tion and far too little
action -this languid
legacy of legions of
“there but for some
grace go I” haunted
by unearned privilege

Stuart Radowitz

Norway

Lonely
in a small town.
Fog so thick the fjord disappears.

Change comes early and often.
In the distance freighters and their foghorns.
Rain lashes our cabin.

Adrift in a volcanic lake
Geiranger Fjord reaches up.

Lana thinks life must be better
somewhere else.
Lana says she is moving to a big city
to hear the noise, see the people,
smell the streets and the buses.

Lana says “the Seven Sisters hold me here”,
but her brother says “no, you must go.”

Lana says “people need people.
It is no good to always be alone.
I want to be lost in a crowd. Spin
out of control in the middle of hundreds.”

Her brother says “Norway is not for you,
there is too much ice, too many cold days.”

Lana says “I will call you from New York,
call you from London, call you at night.
You must tell me everything that has happened,
every flake of snow that has fallen,
every sound that you have heard.
How cold it is. How cold it will be.
This way my heart will be free
and my eyes able to stare into the sun.”

Phil Reinstein

It Ain't Sweet

It ain't sweet
all day I'm on my feet
mark four years in this recession
Where's the meat?

I just got canned
my job landed in another land
dark are tears in this depression
my butt got rammed

*Ain't got no work
no phone dial tone no money
I'll go berserk
no cash no stash no honey*

Ain't no doubt
unemployment checks run out
looking here looking there
no office work no desk no chair
no new jobs no how no where
prospects are bare

*I lost my home
can't find my food stamps*

*tonight I'll roam
with those Occupy Wall Street camps*

Just one hitch
my big bank dumped me in a ditch
tax the rich for their fair share
spread the wealth shovel ready some here
I wanna my *Obama/Medi care*
Ain't that fair?

Scout this out
no huff no puff no pout
we know who this is all about
I'm dropping out

Lauren Reiss

Parts of Me

There are parts of me that yearn to be touched:
Parts so tender and familiar that I haven't seen since youth,
Parts of me uncovered only after painful scraping,
Parts of me that even my sweet, exquisite lover can never find.

How is it that I lost these pieces of myself?
How effectively blind the shroud of my former life has been!
To hide even from myself the most tender young shoots of innocent
curiosity,
the early ignited yearnings for the flow of language like velvet upon
soft skin.
The joy of creation born of the soul;
My soul has lain barren and scarred for so long!

But even in a field burnt to ash and soot,
God grants tender shoots of new, young life.
And so I am reacquainted with parts of me driven underground long
ago, away from
the withering death that was my life.
There are parts of me only I can touch;
Parts I faintly recognize, so long in hiding.
I celebrate their survival and vow my nurturance!
I put out the call – Come back to me all you little children who fled
the storms of life!

Come back and lift your tiny heads to the light!
It is safe. You will not be harmed.
I have become the mother who can birth herself.
Let me welcome your tiny spirits, and celebrate your strength in
survival.
Let me caress your creative fire of life that has re-ignited once again.

Call my attention! Wake me from my sleep!
Make me listen with new senses!
Come out from your slumber and join me again in Life.
Help me find ways to celebrate you: I am in awe!

There are parts of me and only I can ease the yearning to be touched.
There are cries for release and only I can heed their call.
Dear Lord, I thank you for this awakening.
Please help me to find all the little ones hiding in the little places.
You gave me the seeds; help me bring them new life while there is
still time.

Diana R. Richman

The Pen Name

The pen desires my push
The keyboard a tap by my fingers,
The page offers space for my words
As my soul still silently lingers.

The story wants to be written
The truth seeks to be read
The experience longs to be shared
As my soul increasingly feels dread-

Does the writer want to be known?
Do the readers want to know?
Does one's life view really matter,
As my soul ponders where to go?

As the message meets the paper
The meaning begins to unfold
The writer and reader connect
Through the story being told.

So who has written this piece?
The true name may be unknown,
But the chosen words convey
Readers, you're not alone.

Al Ripandelli

A Hint of Summer's End

No longer the polished cotyledons of spring
they are now time worn and lackluster.
Fronds are soft and muted
Needles dusty and dry,
Amber blades, now blanket fields once green.
Under cerulean sky,
amidst the fading leaflets,
are scattered orange glints
and hints of yellow and red,
awash in an umber powder coat.
Of the brisk air,
most will breathe their last breath and fall...
abscised by their hosts, to be reborn sometime long after
summer's end.

Jeff Rogers

Everything You Are

Ripples from a rain drop, drip from the sky
Listen to the echoes of an angel's lullaby
The sweet sound of life comes alive with the light
The dawn of day arrives to relieve a starry night
The morning sun arises as the day begins anew
Fill your hearts with love as the grass does morning dew
Let nature nurture you as you become enriched
With a deep sense of knowing so that you may be convinced
That everything's connected through the presence of our being
Through the eyes of faith we believe without us seeing
We couldn't even question, it's in every and all direction
We without excuse cannot deny divine perfection
It's written in our hearts and encoded with mathematics
We symbolize the truth in plain sight and walk right passed it
Everything you are, is everything a star
A little piece of heaven brought to earth from up afar

Rita B. Rose

Harvest Moon

Moonlight drizzles across the Great South Bay
Kissing our waterfront table at Captree—
Your Blue Moon beer bottle glistens
In Creamsicle beams as does
Your aqua eyes... blonde hair... your vanilla skin....
Observe the Harvest moon,
I say to you— indifferent— droning on about you.
The unruffled bay embraces the moon
As if it a drop on a spoon;
Its caroty splendor splashing across sails, pilings, dunes—
The boat basin is awash in celestial delight.
Oblivious to the summer splendor, you chat of trials
While sipping Belgian white beer
And I— captivated only by sugary wisps
Dancing across my hands... my goose flesh— watch
As bright streams caress my shoulders; dewy as warm milk.
I surf the glistening horizon then rise— I leave her for you!

Marc Rosen

Death of a World

Eldritch Blasts fly across the battlefield
Striking the fictional demon lord
A warrior's blade slices through the horde of orcs
As the cleric brings divine wrath with her mace
And the twenty-sided dice continue to roll
The stories flow like rivers in a desert
Week after week, session after session
A neverending collaborative tale of heroic fantasy
Until it ended.

The paladin attempted to cast Raise Dead
To no effect.
The cleric begged her gods for a Resurrection
Yet none was forthcoming.
The great and powerful Dungeon Master
He who decided our fates in these fantastical worlds
Has departed the Prime Material Plane.

The great epic we were weaving together is now frozen
The adventurers will never complete their quest
The villains will never act on their plot
The realm will never be saved or damned
The world has died with him.

Narges Rothermel

On the shared Road

Slow down fellow walker, soften your steps
Dirt beneath your feet could be pulverized-bones of a new bride,
heart of a new borne child, or morphed-flesh of your ancestors.

Beyond your race your faith your birthplace, beyond color of your
skin,
beyond your shape and size, in each chest cavity the magic-pump
shares what it receives with rivers large and tiny.
All carry the same-rich-red-water to nourish the existence.

You and me, each speck of dust from galaxies,
we all are immigrants on this planet
Hold my hand, touch my skin, you are *me* I am *you*
Your smile lifts my spirit your fortune brings me comforts.

Your pain crushes my soul I share your despair
You pay for my sins I endure weight of your wrong doings.
Your hate your anger hollows my core
I wilt I crumble I fall beneath the harsh steps
When you kill, you die with the one you kill
I feel your agony I inherit your shame
I die with you I die with the one you kill.

When I reach to your hand, when you grab mine

When you offer me sip of your pure-wine made of *Love*
I grow I blossom I smile
I share my fruit, my smile, and my love with others.

Slow down glance at the one walking next to you,
in front of you, behind you, and notice me
I am on the same road, path to hell path to heaven,
path to beyond *Here* and *Now*.

Distance is hazy, time is scarce
Slow down call my name hold my hand
You are *me* I am *you*, both part of *The Whole* all part of *The One*.
Put down your dagger shed your anger
Step into *Wine-House* of the road
take a sip or two from Divine Jog of Wisdom, the gift of Ages
Share the road with drunk-walkers, don't walk alone.

Robert Savino

Dead Still

It's been 50 years since Sgt Pepper
colored our world and the Doors burned
in flames an age of examination,
a tumultuous time for politics and culture.
I can remember sitting beside Janis Joplin
with my hand on her thigh, hearing
in the background an echo from the dead lips
Jim Morrison, *I touched her thigh & death smiled.*
I ran in front of a photographer,
he never blinked.
I bumped into James Dean,
he never moved.
I ran down 42nd Street,
no longer crowded with 25¢ peep shows
and freak walkers, now a boulevard of bright
lights, roofs of buildings sucked up into the sky,
quickly returning to times I've idolized and lost
legends boarding in the house of Madam Tussaud.

Andrea Schiralli

Crush

I was roaming in the city, nothing predetermined to do,
Encouraged by ennui and a drink, I decided to meet you.
I stepped into the bar, scanned the room with wide-swept glance,
My eyes found yours and I stepped toward you, as if in a trance.
I was instantly hypnotized by your inviting smile,
Your perfect teeth, perfect scent, utter lack of guile.
You captivated me with your radiating charm,
Drunk upon your aura, I tapped you on the arm.
Tripping on my words, at a loss of what to say,
I asked you how it felt to be told “You’re so handsome” every day.
You responded that I was silly, and as you spoke, your eyes
Pull me in like sirens’ do, a sailor’s sure demise.
I tried to focus on your words, create meaning from the sounds
But my senses betrayed me; no cognition could be found.
For never have I been in the presence of a Beauty so pure,
I simply couldn’t help my melting when you pulled me near
You leaned in closer, whispered something in my ear,
But inebriated by you, nothing did I hear.
My heart skipped a beat or three, my breathing was amiss,
You tilted up my chin then leaned in for a kiss.
The world and all time stopped, others faded away
And I confess I’ve thought about that moment every single day.
I hope this doesn’t freak you out, but you gave me quite a rush
But if I must be honest, it’s only just a crush.

Karen Schulte

East Wind

The fat bellied squirrel stares at me from outside
on this almost Spring day, expecting bird seed,
and scraps from my meal to share with the sparrows,

and I wonder...

if I let him in with his deft claws
and scorching black eyes, his white vest
ballooning over gray hairs, where would
that would lead?...he would not stand still
to have conversation, tell me his dreams
and fears...wait patiently to hear mine.

In his squirrel-like way, he would forge
ahead, take whatever was not his to own,
murmur softly in the wake of spilled olives,
white wine, poached salmon with fresh squeezed
lemon, complain loudly... more is not
enough to quench his hunger.

Today, he stands tall, stretched flat
against the outside of the glassed-in door,
waiting for a handout of crumbs, which
he will scatter to the four winds, one of

which blows mean and strong, dry as bone,

while he loosens his belt, if he had one,
and lets his appetite run wild.

Ron Scott

Who Said That?

It's been said: *Multitasking is a woman's work;*

Man lacks the tools.

His cranium is absent the proper compartments.

Who said that?

It's been said: *A woman's threshold for pain exceeds man's;*

Birthing the undisputed example.

Man's role limited to procreation and transportation.

Who said that?

Let us not forget: *Who stands behind every successful man;*

Which says it all, I suspect.

As any self respecting wise man will attest.

A closed mouth serves him best.

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

You can see old men sitting in shadows on wheels and gears
looking back to the bang boom boom, the heat and roar.

Dd. Spungin

Snow Vision

I can see them
God and Mother Nature
A couple of drinks
Maybe Hot Toddies
on a day like this

They are head to head
laughter flowing from their eyes
Remember that blizzard, He asks
You mean that one, she replies
They all but tumble from their bar stools

cracking up, if such beings can
Reminiscing about their favorite
practical jokes, played on dumb humans
Going back, perhaps to the first snowfall
Toasting each other, can you top this

He's laughing so hard, tears flood the bar
She says, uh oh, not another flood
Where's Noah when you need him
and that sets Him off even more
Pretty soon, the whole bar's floating in tears

Alice in Wonderland, He says
She can't respond for near-hysterical laughter
The bartender wonders who's going to pay
for the drinks, for his place, now asea
God and Mother Nature toast each other

What a team, they laugh into the water
What a team!

Susan Starr

Mahogany Fire

Flames leap from the pit
curling in heat, long time starting.
Mahogany curves, warming
to the touch
of your fingers
on the strings
as we sit
at the edge of time.
Sensual notes, long and full,
ethereal.
Soft wood, yielding
to the rhythm,
not yet music,
struggling to stay in tune.
Long time waiting.
Not yet...not yet.
She moans under your
studied hands,
delicate touches, exploring
a universe.
I close my eyes as you strum,
melting into mahogany fire,
brilliant in the darkness.
And I moan, long time coming.

Ed Stever

Hurricane

The wind whips through
the early morning
shearing shingles,
has its own business
and is incognizant
of what occurs elsewhere.
Then a small child outside
inside a rolling metal garbage can
whips past cracked windows,
cheering the new event.
As he rounds the house
and returns, the cyclone
throws another punch.
But the boy is howling,
screeching with unbridled joy.
And me? I still can't step outside the house.
And then again the garbage can
filled with the same boy,
rips by the window,
spinning, grinning, hooting!
And then the wind
boils into a song about dying sailors
as the old oak collapses
onto the roof of the house.

It is then that the fun explodes!

Oh, how I miss childhood!

Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino

from The Spinning Bud

How might a wish
unuttered
its author receive —
methinks in certain ways

Inwardly express'd
all is kept unfore
I close my lips & utter —
a boldest vocable

Kate Dellis Stover

The Biochemistry of Spring

Seize the Day!

What day?

It is all darkness here

In the injuring light

Of a flagrant and vicious Spring.

I shield my eyes from the attacking sun

And ride coldly past the dogwood blossoms

And cherry trees.

Life, rude and uproarious,

Begins to grow and spread –

Green purple yellow red –

All lost to my pained vision,

These orbs darkening like witch's lanterns.

Pray for me this season.

It is only through a power beyond my own

That I will be delivered to any kind of peace.

I do not have the faith I once had
In the sheer goodness
Of one struggling flower
Near enough to the sun
To find a way to bloom.

It is a loss,
A gravity,
A bottomless wishing well
Where the pail brings up
Waste and vermin
And only a handful of darkened pennies.

Who gets their wish?
The innocent, the children,
The ones who still hang onto hope
Like a sad balloon, withering, its skin loose with age.

Not me. My wish spits in the face of nature screaming
“Make me whole” and “Take this pain away.”

Seize the day?

No.

It is all darkness here

Down the cruel, unwinding road of discovery

Where I find only more of the same old truths.

Do not tell me to rejoice.

I will come to celebrate in my own time

When one of the pennies will turn up heads or tails

Or cares which way and

I will have my body back,

My heart, mind, and soul together

In blissful harmony

That now belongs only to the crocus

The daisy

The tulip

And the whispering green

Of a thousand trees of Spring.

Douglas Swezey

#1413 (Act of Erasure)

A painting program
open on the computer
was trying to
crop and frame
find the best
light available
only one picture
included the needed
actors

so much extra existed
between the bounds
of the fstop
a group shot
with many gathered

there were many ways
to extricate the art
of white noise
but none so which
would keep that required

so it began:
the cutting away

the removal of memory
the rout of attrition
an act of creation

taking the big white
square and moving it
as an eraser across
the screen: there go
the walls

there goes the floor
the ceiling
the man standing next to me
the woman below
the lighting above

in a fury, the cursor
scraping and scratching away
obliterating, omitting the moment
it felt evil
it felt good

I was enlivened
I was G-d
and there was none to stop it
nor would there be
and who would know

when it all was finished
and my work was done

sitting back to admire the opus
no, it was not perfect
not at all the fine product

seen in my mind
but it was mine
an abhorrent bending
of the truth
a laceration of time

Jose Talavera

Yolanda

Your time with us will never be forgotten
Often I think about you when I look outside
Loving unconditionally was always your greatest quality
Always putting the need of your family ahead of your own
Death wasn't going to stop you
A loving mother to the very end

Dedicated to Yolanda B. Talavera
November 2, 1965- August 30, 2017

Gayl Teller

Along Highway One

(for Mike)

Celebrating fifty years of marriage
is like standing in a poem
in the stillness of the snowy egret,
poised on its own reflection,
in the pool of mirrors we saw
as we journeyed on the switchback trail
from LA to Monterey,
then on to the San Francisco Bay.
Others have tripped closer to the edge—
We took the inside track, the surer grip.
Our legs wrapped around each other,
a knowing familiarity, naked security.
Each day in walking away
to our various businesses,
we've carried each other's fingerprints,
all over our bodies, a visceral blanket by now
given in the spirit of triage
like mental health workers.
You need it rounding these white-knuckle
bends on life's scary mountainsides, climbing years
higher into the northern sky,
the horizon growing wider, vaster,
farther away, until this view—

our life on a postcard,
or looking out from a window in a plane.
Landscape at such height knits,
like fifty years together out on an overlook—
with even the waves crashing against
our ancient massive idiosyncrasies
jutting out like glacial boulders when we were young—
Now one panorama. Such loveliness in serenity.
So much safer because we share the driving
along the hairpin turns, the curve-hugging,
jaw-dropping miles, with each of our years
seeking to be made welcome in some all-inclusive,
ecumenical congregation called marriage,
some say an endangered species,
while all too often our years have been
more like these many massive elephant seals
tossing sand on their torsos,
splayed out and heaving on time's vast beach,
barking and sparring for place:
How to make welcome and include
the time I came home from the hospital
with our baby with the time you came home
from the hospital with a catheter with the time
we left together for the marriage counsellor with
the times we left our parents in the hospitals.
And then everywhichway we turn our heads,
something so beautiful, so unphotogenic
as these playful otters as entangled in kelp
as our lifetime friends entangled in our years,
as this giant artichoke flower rising

purple as our passion in a secret garden
where we giggle and renew our vows,
and already I am longing for you—
fifty years are not enough.

Tiffany Thomas

Turning Over

A cold white blanket covers hot pink petals

A warm suns breath uncovers crisp marbled leaves

J R Turek

Law of the Lawn

When the landscaper raised his prices
to compete with the National Debt,
I decided to maintain my own lawn.

First, I went to buy a mower –
even though gas scares me,
I looked at every model, narrowed
my choices down to colors, and finally decided
the John Deere ride-on mower was a bit much
for my 40 x 100 property.

Then the warranty, the additives, all the extra
gimcracks I really didn't need and I went home
with a pretty red mower and matching plastic gas can.

I almost couldn't wait until Saturday morning
to test it out. It rained. It rained all day Saturday
into Sunday and Monday and by Tuesday, the grass
was half a foot high. I worked late on Tuesday and
Wednesday and by Thursday after work,
I had no choice but to get the mower going.

By the time I got the gas and oil in, found the on
and off, the choke, the push button start –

you'd think these would be things the salesman should have told me – it was dark. Now I knew why the John Deere had a headlight.

Then there was the seed, the fertilizer, the grub control, the weed control, the spreader measurer and I became the treasurer of a legal-tender-green lawn. After mowing it twice a week all through July, I started to wonder why I wanted it to grow so fast.

After the brown spots, the plugs, the grubs, weeds rooted in another county and spreading and choking my grass, I pushed the whole pile to the curb, paid the extortion rate of the landscaper and bought myself a new hammock. That's my law of the lawn.

Don Uhrie

Rebirth

Like a mustard seed
Buried deep in the ground
My faith lie in wait
As I continued to self-destruct.

My father died and my soul
Was buried, locked in the coffin
With him.
Anger engulfed my being
Lucipher attacked, taunted,
Relentlessly persisted.

Suddenly through some miracle,
Through some unknown act,
The mustard seed broke
through the soil of my torment
a seedling of faith, which grew, fed
by the sunlight of love around me.

A glimmer of light emerged from
The darkness in my heart
And soon flowed through
My veins. I was reborn.
My new life had begun.

Luis Valdes

Divine Beast

My voice acknowledge my mind,
intertwine I lost my vision in the sands of time.

Fear has void what was the best of me,
What was left of me was the courage I had not to finish the
recipe.

The harrowing past always plays catch up in the present.

My body is here but mentally I am harping my soul away.

God forgive me for not fulfilling my purpose.

How could I accept defeat knowing my dreams were born in the
graveyard?

Walking to the abyss into the shadow,
by becoming the light that my inner child wish to see

Self-reflect, man in the mirror,

I holy the beast, my ghost of the divine return to me.

as I walk through hell to introduced my demons to heaven.

Pramila Venkateswaran

Underwater Chorus

Beneath the ocean is a chorus of green
for creatures to anchor.

Starfish paint themselves onto aquamarine,
their protein-rich sheen reflected from
a treasure house of algae deepening light.

A woman asks, *what does water mean?*
I say *renewal*. She asks, *How can I believe that*
if pipes burst or a flood sweeps away life?

She sees *scourge*, not the ritual sprinkling
of precious drops, or bathers in a Monet painting,
their abandonment in water.

Margarette Wahl

Eggnog
for Brian

We reconnected after losing touch.
Messaged on Facebook
about our tattoos, mistakes
scars we created on ourselves.

You were tall, dark with pale blue eyes
like a tropical ocean,
enjoyed drinking, music, and ink.
Together we recognized
how our lives changed
over the passing of years.

The last time we spoke
Christmas Eve.
You were still tall, but gray.
Cancer aged you with weakness.
Unable to keep food down,
you drank a glass of eggnog
from the bottle I brought to share.
We celebrated with family.
Right before you left,
you told me to keep writing poetry.

When I learned of your passing
on New Year's Eve,
I realized drinking eggnog
would never be the same.

Herb Wahlsteen

Stephanie

I walk out late again. I can feel tears
well in my eyes and cold wind touch my fears.

I mutter with each slowly taken breath
the emptiness that chokes my heart to death.

The cold-white moon looks round majestically.
She smiles. She's never known complexity.

The moon and trees in this small park ignore
these morbid feelings that they must abhor.

My anguished gushing, their serene repose,
ironic juxtaposition's born, grows.

Through the fine mist above my eyes, I see
her. Living love could not exceed her beauty.

Her thin-cloud spectral self shines in the sky.
She strides night's onyx floor with head held high.

When by the gates of Paradise, she turns
her brilliant, starry stare to me. It burns.

I call, "Dear, lovely one, love me; caress
and cure my heart; please end my emptiness!"

In spite to all my pleas, she laughs, then mocks
and leaves. I hear my way to heaven lock.

Now, I appeal to hell to loose its whole
array of captors, "Take my unblessed soul.

If not allowed to live with love just once,
what purpose then is life with all its wants?"

Fast fading through the air, I hear echo
my shrill voice only. So, I turn to go.

Reflecting while I walk away, I think:
Unlike a god, ignobly planned, I'm linked

with beasts and live with every desire
devouring me. I'm burned by my own fire.

James P. Wagner (Ishwa)

[Double Click To Add Text]

Jillian Wagner

Perchance to Dream

I dreamed about you again.

Have we met before?

No, not officially.

Have I seen you?

I have.

Have you seen me?

I'm sure you have.

Are you real?

I know you are.

I've seen your face. I've heard your voice.

But, I don't know you.

Not yet.

Will we know each other?

I hope so.

Even if we just meet in dreams,
even if that's the only place we can come face-to-face,
I look forward to the day when I can finally say,
"It's nice to meet you."

Virginia Walker

Curious, running

Blessed visit from a fox—
nothing to feed this wild
sleek, long-tailed red spirit.
Suddenly, he is there. I rise
from my chair too late.
Below freezing, the air
is silent, birds have left feeders,
the squirrels vanished.

Alert with hunger, the fox passes
near the porch, running light on
icy snow; his dark-tipped
fur lengthens his outline.
I wait at the glass door
to sight him again. All is still.
Then far in the field, I see him:
swift, dark, alone, curious for life.

George Wallace

How The Mist Moves

To make love to you the way the mist moves, without motive or logic,
like a bird of prey, like sufi dancing, like the first man to look beyond
the golden valley and feel the urge to go, just go, to stray across the
river and go into the glow

I am accustomed to the wind and weather and the city, how heavily
raindrops fall on concrete, all the isotopes and jazz, all mad water, and
i am accustomed to the eastern sea, its pavilions and concourses, its
secret contours and confessions, its corridors of being,

But i have never known the earth like this, in the hands of sun, in my
hands, how urgently they rifle through morning -- how the mist
moves, in search of itself, through your hair, through your clothing,
through my impoverishment

And these gestures you offer to the sun and to me, their rhythm, their
movement, i have never known gestures quite like these, radioactive,
liquid as volcanic rock, quick as obsidian, this sad timepiece ticking
in its secret coil and mortal shell

And om to your eyes, and om to your lips, blue nests on mountain-
tops, and om to this eternal confusion, this thing called infatuation

And i am a man only a man, and you are a category of womanhood i
have never known, you reside beyond scandal or desire, unknown
even to yourself, and between us daylight grows pregnant and alive,
bold as canna lilies and ready to open!

Charles Peter Watson

[Double Click To Add Text]

Jeffrey Watkins

Bleat

Just as a shepherd safeguards his sheep
Mountain high, river deep
I stand committed, your heart in my soul to forever keep
When come the ravages of cold wintry storms
I will be the sun that gently soothes gently warms
Your every weary muscle every tired bone
As if they were the aching of my very own
I wrote this note on the outside of an old envelope
That when come urgent times you instantly
Sense my presence of peace of mind and hope
I wrote this letter with my heartfelt love inside
When you cannot see I protect your blindside
These words written on the outside
Merely scratch the surface of my love
That longingly bleats for you as a guide
To the unfathomable realms of joy
My heart harbors for you deep down inside,

Samantha Weiner

Anxiety

What am I if I am not a nut in a nutshell, a minute seed
in a jacket encompassing me in safety?

To break out of the shell would mean I have to leave
the comfort of my womb, the safety of inside, as opposed
to the chaos of outside

To leave my humble abode and embrace the sheer unknown
and uncertainty of all that is, is frightening, but I must do it every
now and again.

My heart palpitates as if it's going to escape the place inside my chest
I swallow repeatedly as if gulping the air I cannot breathe will help
I sweat and sometimes cry, flooding my skin with creeks and rivers
I shake, tiny tremors brought about by my soul's plates shifting
Sometimes I vomit, erupting like a volcano, spewing forth a hot
lava-like substance, and a few profanities

But I need to grow

I need to become a tree with many branches ,
with birds whispering and singing in my ears as I pick up pen
to paper and write

My roots are planted deep in the soil, connected with the past
and future, but alive here and now

In order to do this

Nuts in nutshells have to go
through many trials and tribulations, frosts,thaws
drougths, a Niagara of emotions, mudslides, chaos,
disquietude
The only certainty is uncertainty
and that is okay.

Marq Wells

In The Opposite Corner

(In memory of Peter Chindelas)

Earlier today I spied *Mistress Death*
peeping through my bedroom window,
trying to eradicate the condensation
with her arid carrion breath.

She ripped you away much too early my friend,
after your valiant match of 18 years which
some say was fixed. But I know better.

Coming off the ropes after the seventh round,
You dropped your guard for a half second
when the rancid bitch latched onto your pride,
exposing her weak side to the crowd like
A famished leech intoxicated over the
prospect of your demise.

I have seen her now and again from the corner of my eye
The first time, she pretended to be an Indigent man,
peddling his adopted shopping cart down my street.

Shortly after that she was the paper boy.
Another day; the airman's pit bull next door.

Later that week, she became a Jehovah's Witness,
dribbling dark spittle from the corner of her mouth
as she slinked from house to house ,
sniffing out the small and the weak .

Last week as I was channel surfing,
I laughed out loud as no one even noticed
that it was *Mistress Death* impersonating
the leader of some nameless ultra orthodox faction

and before the camera panned right,
she had the unmitigated gaul to smile
just like the Cheshire Cat, only weeks away
from having the entire globe impaled
Like a tragic Red Cardinal between her jaws.

Jack Zaffos

Behind The Roles

Behind the roles you play is a branch of gold
flowing on a river
to a land in the hills that touch the sky,
where the heights reach beyond the roof of limits.
Where there is a garden with birds and trees
of many colors,
the trees rooted deep in the Earth.

And the flowers swing playfully and give off
forbidden fragrances
and you know you are now free
to breathe in the enthralling sweet scent.

And you open up and your breath is long and deep
and the body and Soul unfold,
and you remember what you've long forgotten
stored away in stories.

But don't be afraid of this
it is an awakening.
It is the awakening of a Heart Force
that our desperate world calls for.

Donna Zephrine

Optimism

We all have road blocks that lie ahead of us.

We can choose to let them stop us or take the journey in overcoming them.

For me, my learning disabilities have been a major obstacle.

I learn different than everyone else, things take me longer, my combination of learning disabilities cause me to feel like I am constantly in an uphill battle.

I learn better by connecting things with not just my mind but also my body, which is known as bodily kinesthetic.

This means I have to put the extra effort in to do hands on learning.

Learning is not as simple as reading or memorizing for me and sometimes it is exhausting.

I could choose to let my disabilities defeat me, but I refuse.

Instead I take them in stride.

I may have to work harder than most people but it makes me appreciate success so much more.

I turn to those around me who have battled and conquered their disabilities.

This attitude has allowed me to accomplish things I never imagined.

I've graduated from Columbia University with my masters, served in the U.S Army, road over 30 miles on my bike, and now am facing my next obstacle; my board exam.

I will not let my obstacles defeat me, I WILL succeed despite them, and the success will be even sweeter because of it.

Optimism; a state of mind that has the power to help one overcome any battle.

About the Authors

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

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

Sharon Anderson has been published in many international and local anthologies. She received a 2014 Pushcart Prize nomination for her poem *Priorities*. Sharon has four publications of her own poetry, *Sonnets Songs and Serenades*, *Puff Flummery*, *Chutes and Ladders*, and *The 12 Days of Chris-Mess*. She serves on the advisory board of the Nassau County Poet Laureate Society, and the advisory board for Bards Initiative. When not writing, Sharon's other interests are perennial gardening and square dancing.

Linda Ann is a 56 year old mom who loves the beauty of nature and the spoken word. She is a bird photographer who loves to write poetry, often marrying these projects together. Linda tries to always remember, life is short, it's important we do what we love, at least some of the time!

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

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

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

Diane Barker began her writing journey in response to “empty nest” syndrome. She is a member of the Farmingdale Creative Writing and FBSN workshops. An award winning poet and published storyteller, Diane has found her passion in the written word.

Marilyn Barker

Erin Beiner has always called Long Island home. Along with her husband, Jeff, they now raise their two children in the same Long Island town in which they grew up. Erin has a passion for musical theatre, karaoke, and the written word.

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 a local pediatric specialist, is former graduate of Columbia University Teacher's College, New York. Her three busy boys, her work with infants and children and their families, and her love of nature happily fill her days.

Thérèse M. Craine Bertsch a resident of Sayville and a single mother, pioneered AIDS related policy and treatment. Therese wrote poetry to come to voice, and engage others in a search for meaning. Her scholarship began at Empire State College, with a Master's in Science of Social Work from Columbia University, and a Doctoral Degree in Social Work at Adelphi College.

Don Billings

Natalie Bjornsen

Peter Bove Long Island Native Peter Bové currently splits his time between Montauk, NY & Texas where he is making his documentary; Peyote Road about the Peyote religion of the Native American. He published his first novel Dead Lift in Oct. 2017 and his recent Solo Exhibit of Fine Art at the Alliance Francaise received rave reviews. He has published a collection of 67 poems, each paired with an original work of his art; Souls Weep. Although a writer/director/producer of film television and documentary, including

2003 Sundance Grand Jury Prize Winner: *Capturing The Friedmans*, he admits he is actually a raconteur poet adventurer.

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

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

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

Paula Camacho moderates the Farmingdale Poetry Group. She is President of the NCPLS www.nassaucountypoetlaureatesociety.com. She has published three books, *Hidden Between Branches*, *Choice*, *More Than Clouds*; and three chapbooks, *The Short Lives of Giants*, *November's Diary*, and *In Short*.

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

Georgia Cava Poetry, for Georgia Kanelous Cava, is the greatest means by which she communicates emotions and ideas. She is a graduate of St. Joseph's College earning a B.A. in English and History, and is a graduate of LIU/CW Post with a M.S. in Library and Information Science

Caterina De Chirico is a French and Spanish teacher who was influenced by those poets as an undergrad and later by Japanese Hindu, Buddhist, and Sufi poets, in grad school. Her earliest musings began with writing songs for Motown ! Cate has made her home in Northport where she dabbles in Photography and Painting .You can see more of her work on Fineartamerica.com

Anne Coen is a special education teacher who has been writing poetry since the 1970s. Her work often contains wry observations on conundrums of everyday life. Publications include *Bards Annual 2014, 2015, 2016*; *PPA Literary Review #18, #19, and #20*; and *Thirteen Days of Halloween 2014 and 2015*.

Joseph Coen is the other half of a poetic duo with his wife Anne. He is the father of a free spirit and physics major. He has been published in *Bards Annual 2015, 2016*; and *PPA Literary Review #19, #20*.

Jamie Ann Colangelo is a Christian, living on Long Island. She is the mother of twins, Liane and Christopher, now adults. She is the author of *From The Father's Heart - A Book of Poems and Suggested Gifts To Inspire, Encourage and Bless Those in Your Circle of Influence*. She found her passion for poetry at the age of 12 and now enjoys using her gifts and talents to share God's love and encourage others on life's journey.

Milton Colon

Anne Coltman is a resident of Lindenhurst, Suffolk County. A poet and novelist, Anne delights in entertaining readers of all ages. She has written two books of poetry - *For the Love of Grandma*, and *Charming Expressions: Capturing Life, Recalling Times and Enjoying Nature* and two novels - *Scarred with Fortune* and *The Mute's Masquerade*. Anne is currently the Vice-President of the Long Island Authors Group.

David Conklin

Lorraine Conlin Nassau County Poet Laureate (2015-2017), and Vice-President of the NCPLS. She is on the Board of the Bards, Events Coordinator for Performance Poets Association and hosts *Tuesdays with Poetry* and other local venues. Writing is her ‘Prozac.’ Lorraine is a breast cancer survivor and “a student of life.”

Jane Connelly is an artist, writer, graduate nurse, certified medical coder and former legal assistant who lived in Guam, M.I., before moving to Long Island, NY. She placed 1st in the 2017 Performance Poets Anthology, 1st Runner Up in the 2016 LI Light Poetry Competition; 2nd at the 2015 LI Fair Poetry Contest, Old Bethpage Village; and 5th in the 2017 Mid-Island Y JCC Poetry Series. She has been accepted for publication in *The Avocet*, *The Bard's Review*, *Nassau County Poet Laureate Society Review*, and *Performance Poets Anthology*. In 2017 she read her short story “*Filthy Lucre*” at a “*Now You're Talking*” live storytelling performance night, and has done readings for seniors with Gayl Teller's “*Stray Feet*”.

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.

David Dickman

Linda Trott Dickman is a poet, teacher, librarian on the North Shore of Long Island, NY. She hosts a monthly poetry reading at the Caffè Portofino in Northport, NY, Co-facilitates a writing workshop at Samantha's Lil Bit of Heaven in East Northport and leads poetry classes of students at Norwood Elementary School. Linda is the current Bard's Laureate for the Bards Initiative. She waits for quiet spaces, and unusual history and then ..she writes.

Sharon Dua is a volunteer for a non-profit organization, New Beginnings Community Center and is a part-time sub for Long Island Head Start. In her free time, she likes movies, singing, & writing children's stories and poems. (anywhere from serious to funny to all about life). She is currently working on a couple of different writing projects including a children's book.

Peter V. Dugan is one of the illegitimate feral offspring of the Beat Generation. He lost his mind in Coney Island, and Far Rockaway broke his heart when they tore down Playland and stole the memories of his youth. He hosts Celebrate Poetry, a reading series at the Oceanside Library on LI. He is the Nassau County Poet Laureate 2017-2019.

Alex Edwards-Bourdrez

Sophia Emma

Vivian Eyre is a poet, a painter, and poetry advocate on the North Fork of Long Island, NY.

Adam D. Fisher 's poems have appeared in a wide variety of publications including BITTERROOT, FOOTWORK, LI QUARTERLY, MANHATTAN POETRY REVIEW, NORTH ATLANTIC REVIEW and WEST HILLS REVIEW. His four books of poems are: ROOMS, AIRY ROOMS, published by Writers Ink Press and Cross Cultural Communications in cooperation with Behrman House, DANCING ALONE, published by Birnham Wood/Long Island Quarterly, ENOUGH TO STOP THE HEART, published by Writers Ink Press and HANGING OUT WITH GOD published by Writers Ink Press

Denise Marie Fisher has been a restaurateur, a mom, a graphic artist and a marketing consultant. She's loves gardens, cooking, sonnets, and elegant rhymes. Forty years ago she built a house by the bay, and still lives there.

Andrew Fixler has always believed that doing what's right and staying true to your principals are more important than concerning yourself with how others perceive you. He has a strong love of all animals, and is a practicing vegan. In his spare time, Andrew plays drums and guitar.

Charlotte Forrester Charlotte Forrester is a Long Island based writer, actress, pin-up model, political activist, and stand-up philosopher.

Despite being told that she would not go far in life due to her autism, she's proven skeptics wrong by her wacky wit and determination, and with that, she graduated from Queens College with Honors. Charlotte is also an avid cyclist and photographer, and when she's not babysitting her nephews, she enjoys mastering her cosmetic arts.

David Ira Fox David Fox has been published nationally and internationally in the U.K./, Canada, India, Finland, and the United Arab Emirates. He has been published locally in *Bards Annual 2017*, *Suffolk County Poetry Review*, *PPA Anthologies #10-#15*, *Great South Bay Magazine* and *The Pink Chameleon*. He edits the family-friendly journal, *The Poet's Art*. *Samples or contributor's copies* (copies after acceptance) cost \$8 or \$22 for 3 issues (Issues come out twice a year. Mail poems or for guidelines at: 171 Silverlea Lane, Islandia, NY 11749

Kate Fox is a mother, breast cancer survivor, and award-winning author of *My Pink Ribbons*, *Hope and Liars*, *Mistruths and Perception*, and *Angels and Saints*. Publications include *Great South Bay Magazine*, *Bards Annual 2014-2017*, *Suffolk County Poetry Review 2015-2017*, and *PPA Literary Review*.

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.

Kenneth Giordano

Justin Goodman earned his B.A. in Literature from SUNY Purchase. He is currently the Fiction Editor at Boston Accent Lit and Assistant Reviews Editor at Newfound. His writing--published, among other places, in Cleaver Magazine, TwoCities Review, and Prairie Schooner--is accessible from justindgoodman.com.

Jessica Goody debut poetry collection *Defense Mechanisms* (Phosphene Publishing) was chosen as a "Power Read" by *The Hilton Head Monthly* and was a Book of the Month for *The Creativity Webzine*. Her writing has appeared in numerous publications, including *Reader's Digest*, *The Seventh Wave*, *Event Horizon*, *Really System*, *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, and *The Maine Review*. Jessica is a columnist for *SunSations Magazine* and the winner of the 2016 Magnets and Ladders Poetry Prize.

Tammy Green is a poet and playwright. Her poetry has been published in the Long Islander News, 2018 Poets Almanac, 2018 Suffolk County Poetry Review, and Readings from Urban Coffee. She is the winner of the 2017 WNYC Scary Story Contest. Tammy tells stories based on family legends. She is the daughter of the Belle of Boca and the co-inventor of NASA's Highway in the Sky. Tammy is a proud supporter of the Elwood Public Library where she hosts a monthly writers' workshop. Tammy lives in Huntington, New York, with her husband Kurt Wilner.

Aaron Griffin is a 30 year old Long Island native who is currently working as a warehouse club clerk, and self-training as an advertising copy writer. After narrowly escaping Dowling College in 2015, he was priced out of Long Island and fled to Charlotte, North Carolina in

November 2017. He writes fiction in his spare time. He likes Pokémon and trains.

George Guida is the author of eight books, including four collections of poems--*Pugilistic*, *The Sleeping Gulf*, *New York and Other Lovers*, and *Low Italian*. His recent work appears in *Aethlon*, *J Journal*, *the Maine Review*, *Mudfish*, *Poetry Daily*, *the Tishman Review*, and *Verse Daily*. He teaches at New York City College of Technology, and serves as an advisory editor to *2 Bridges Review*.

Concetta Guido

Kathy Gunzelman

Maureen Hadzick-Spisak 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 has published two poetry books: *Bite of the Big Apple* and *Yesterday I Was Young*. She has won many awards for her poetry. She is a member of the Farmingdale Writing and Poetry group.

Nick Hale is a literal and metaphorical hat collector. He is the vice president and a co-founder of the Bards Initiative. Originally a native of Huntington, Nick currently lives in Northern Virginia where he leads a poetry workshop group. Nick is a manager, publisher, and editor at Local Gems Press. Nick's first collection of poetry, *Broken Reflections*, is available from Local Gems Press. He is currently working on two upcoming collections of poetry: *30 Pieces of Silver* and *Public Education*. Nick's enjoys reading his poetry live. He

doesn't get to as often as he would like, but can usually be seen wearing his trademark bowler hat while doing so.

Russ Hampel

Sylvia Harnick is a member of the National League of American Pen Women admitted as poet and mixed media artist. Her poems have been published in PPA Literary Review, *Toward Forgiveness*, and *Whispers and Shouts*. Her creative process in poetry and painting is similar, using imagery, metaphor, and enigma.

Bob Hayes has been writing for a little over three years. He now writes in many different genres, including short story, memoir and poetry. Publications include *Bards Annual*, *The Odyssey*, and *Suffolk County Poetry Review*. He is a proud and avid member of the LIWG, PPA, and the Farmingdale Creative Writing Group.

George Held a ten-time Pushcart nominee, contributes annually to the Bards anthology. Forthcoming in September 2018 is his fourth children's book, *Under the Escalator*.

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

Judith Lee Herbert poems have been published or are forthcoming in publications including *Bards Annual*, *Silver Tongue Devil Anthology*, *LIQ*, *These Fragile Lilacs*, *First Literary Review East*, and [The](#)

Ekphrastic Review. Her chapbook was a finalist in the Blue Light 2017 Chapbook Competition, and her poems were awarded 2nd Place in the Mid-Island Y 2018 Contest and Honorable Mention in the NCPLS 2018 Contest.

Stephen Hernandez

Joan Higuchi winner of consecutive first place awards in the PPA haiku contests, has recently been published in *Avocet*, *The Long Islander*, *Long Island Quarterly Centennial Issue*, *The Lyric*, and *Odyssey and Prey Tell* (an anthology developed for the support of the Owl Moon Raptor Center).

Arnold Hollander publishes a quarterly magazine, **Grassroot Reflections**. He has poems in various anthologies. His poem, **A Penny For Your Thoughts**, nominated for a Pushcart award. His poems and short stories are in the online magazine, **Bewildering Stories** and he keeps a blog at www.arnieh.webs.com.

Kristine Hoschler

Terry Hume has been writing since her teens. A caregiver for the last 10 years she is passionate about making sure the elderly are not abused nor neglected. She has been published in *The Bards Annual* 2016, 2017 & 2018, *Suffolk County Poetry Review* 2017, *The Poets Almanac* 2017 and *Nassau County Poet Laureate Society Review* Volume V. She gravitates towards the silence.

Cheryl Huneke

R. J. Huneke At age nineteen, traveled across the country from New York to California in a dilapidated van with no brakes or heat . . . in winter. It was there that he began to write his first novel. His debut for a major publisher, the sci-fi thriller *Cyberwar*, came out in 2015.

Maria Iliou is an autistic artist, poet, actress, director, producer, advocate, and host. Maria's been published in *Perspectives*, *Bards Annual 2011-2016*, and *Rhyme and PUNishment*. Maria is host for Athena Autistic Artist, which airs on public access tv and hosts the radio show, *Mind Stream The Movement of Poetry and Music*.

Evie Ivy poet/dancer has 3 books out, *The First Woman Who Danced*, poems based on her experiences as a dancer, *Living in 12-Tone . . . and other poetic forms*, *No, Nonets . . . the Book of Nonets*. She has work in webzines, *Levure littéraire*, *Versewrights*, etc. Evie hosts the long running Green Pavilion Poetry Event in Brooklyn.

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

Andrew Johnson

Gabriel Jones is a writer, a blogger and an influencer. He continues to discover who he is by reinventing himself daily. Gabriel believes that self-discovery leads to self-fulfillment which ultimately leads to a life full of experiences.

As he continues to build the Gabriel K Jones brand he always strives to bring value to the community through poetry and life hack resources on Gabrielkjones.com

Ryan Jones began writing at an early age. Ryan's topics of interest include nature, human and natural history, mythology, and personal and collective experience. Ryan holds a Bachelor's in English with a Master's in childhood education, and works with children by profession.

Amie Kachinoski is the proud author of her first chapbook "Walking Contradiction". When she is not writing poetry, songs for her guitar, or children's books, she is using her newfound freedom to navigate this unscripted world.

Evelyn Kandel

Kate Kelly

Daniel Kerr is a cross-cultural consultant focused on helping people and organizations work across borders. His cross-cultural work has been recognized by the United Nations (*Doing Business in a Multicultural World*), and The Steinhardt School of Education at New York University (2009 Business Education Alumni of the Year). He also teaches accounting at Stony Brook University. His poetry explores cultural differences, history, politics, religion, and his experiences growing on the north shore of Long Island in the 1960s and 1970s.

Bill Kirsten

Denise Kolanovic is a published poet and ELA teacher. Her work has appeared in *Bards Annual*, *Walt's Corner*, *Long Island Quarterly 2018*, *Celeiyd*, *PPA Anthology 2018* and others. She is president of All Cities Branch of National League of American Penwoman and author of *ASPHALT SOUNDS*.

Carissa Kopf is an inspiring poet who has published a number of poems along with a romance novella, *Time For Me*. When not teaching, her fingers dance across the keyboard creating more poems for her first poetry book. Carissa enjoys writing at coffee shops, beaches, parks, and or right on her patio where she loves to garden.

Miichael Krasowitz is very happy to participate in the Bards Annual 2018. He is an intuitive artist working in primarily two dimensional visual media. He sees poetry and the structure of poems as if he is creating an improvisational painting with words as his brush and color. He just turned 60 years old and anticipates holding onto his youth until his spirit cannot be constrained by this earth any longer.

Mindy Kronenberg is a widely published poet, writer, and professor at SUNY Empire State College. She conducts workshops for Poet & Writers, BOCES, and various arts organizations. She edits *Book/Mark Quarterly Review*, is the author of *Dismantling the Playground* and the illustrated chapbook *Open*, and has contributed work to the international Ekphrasis Project.

Billy Lamont is a multi-media poetry performer who has performed on national television a number of times, including MTV, performed at rock festivals such as Lollapalooza, and appeared on major radio stations across the U.S. He has three books of poetry and eight poetry

with music CD's/digital downloads. His newly released book of poetry *Words Ripped From A Soul Still Bleeding* is available at Barnes And Noble and Amazon as a paperback or as an eBook.

Mitchell Langsam

Ellen Lawrence is a grandmother of six and a dedicated animal welfare worker. Many of her poems focus on her pets, family, and two year old great grandson, Ryan. A member of Long Island Writers Guild, and Jericho Taproot Workshop, her poetry has been published in *For Loving Precious Beast*, the *PPA Literary Review*, *Bards Annual*, *Songs of Sandy*, *Taproot Journal*, and *Paws, Claws and Wings*. She is currently working on memoirs of her early years in Europe during WWII.

Hope Lefstein

Tonia Leon's poetry and prose has been published in English as well as in Spanish in the USA, Mexico, Colombia and Japan. Her two bilingual chapbooks are: *This Beloved Chaos (2014)* and *Slow-Cooked Poetry/Poesía a Fuego Lento (2017)*. She currently teaches Latin American studies at Baruch College, CUNY.

Steve Levy

Melissa Longo is a bookseller from a faraway land and an intern at Poetry Street of Riverhead, LI. She's from a beautiful family and is eternally grateful for her loved ones. Sometimes, you may see her appear at local open mics reading her original work.

Ed Luhrs started his craft years ago and remains an active participant at events on Long Island and in New York City. His interests, reflect-

ed in his writing and performance, include theatrical monologue, humor, dialect, folklore, ancient history, as well as orchestral, jazz, and traditional folk music.

John Lysaght is a writer of fiction and poetry from East Meadow. John began writing poetry while a student at the University of Scranton, graduating in 1968 with a B.A. in English and Latin. Here, his poetry was first published in *Esprit*, the university's literary journal.

Maria Manobianco's poetry books, *Between Ashes and Flame*, *The Pondering Self* and her first Young Adult Fable, *The Golden Orb*. She is also the Archivist for Nassau County Poet Laureates 2007-2015 and served on the first Nassau County Poet Laureate Committee. Maria has a BS in Art Ed from NYU and a MA in Studio Art from Adelphi University.

Joan Marg-Kirsten

Cristian Martinez is an 11-year-old poet and soccer player from the Connetquot School District who will be entering Middle School in the Fall. He has been writing for two years and is mentored by Robert Savino.

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.

Robert McKenna resides in Glen Oaks, New York. Robert attended a Catholic seminary, where he was inspired to write poetry by Rev. Harold Buckley and Rev. Thomas Catania. Robert is an avid hockey player, having played since he was 3 years old. His latest poetry book is “Stolen Poems carried by Canoe to Blind Man’s Bluff”.

Gene McParland (North Babylon, NY): is a graduate from Queens College and possesses graduate degrees from other institutions. He has always had a passion for poetry and the messages it can convey. His works have appeared in numerous poetry publications over the years. He is the author of Baby Boomer Ramblings, a collection of essays and poetry. He is also the author of, Adult Without, Child Within, his collection on poetry celebrating the child within.

Shortell McSweeney

Wayne Mennecke read “Make America Beautiful Again” at the 2018 Super Poem Sunday poetry contest held at Walt Whitman Birthplace on February 4, where it won first place.

Steven Messina

Susan Meyer

Meg Micheels

Rita Monte

Sheila Morrisey Born in Albany and grew up in Kings Park. After a 42-year absence/exile, I have returned home to Long Island and

reside in Northport. Until 2 years ago, I had not picked up a pen to write in 35 years. Since then, I have self-published four books of poetry and am writing a novel. Two of my poems on metamorphosis were featured recently on Hofstra University's "Calliope's Corner: Poems from People Like You" radio broadcast. My poem, "Lone" was included in the debut issue of "Long Island Poetry Journal."

Peter Morrison Peter Morrison has been writing poetry for several years. He teaches English at Suffolk County Community College.

Joseph Munisteri

Marsha M. Nelson is a playwright and an award-winning poet. She is the author of two poetry books, "Night Visions" and "All Rise- Stand Up Holy Gates." Her poem, "I Thought It Was Love" won the Nassau County Poet Laureate Society 2016 contest. She has also written and directed several Resurrection Cantatas and Christmas plays. Some of her poetry has appeared in literary magazines and anthologies such as NCPLS, PPA Literary Review, Long Island Quarterly, Poet's Almanac 2017, Bards Annual 2016; 2017. Marsha was born in Trinidad and Tobago. She is a world traveler and loves exploring new and interesting places. Since childhood, she has always loved animals. She owns and operates a dog grooming business called "Luv'n Pooches and Pals Dog Grooming."

David Nevins

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 Associ-

ation, and served on the Council of Representatives that governs the American Psychological Association.

Joan Vullo Obergh a multi-award winning poet, has been published in numerous anthologies and literary magazines, including *Lyric*, *Oberon* and as featured poet in *Avocet*. She has published a volume of poetry, *Rara Avis*, and an anthology of short fiction, *Chapter One*, in collaboration with her novelist writing group.

Mike O'Keefe is a retired 1st Grade Detective from the NYPD, as well as an award-winning poet and novelist. He is the author of the acclaimed thriller, *Shot to Pieces*. He resides in Farmingdale where he is crafting his follow-up novels, and poetry that makes the reader go Oomph!

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

Bruce Pandolfo

Marlene Patti is a native of Chile, a wife and mother of two boys and the current Chair of The Town of Brookhaven Disability Task Force. Her passions include accessibility, inclusion and empowerment of all people. She is honored to be among these talented poets.

Kelly J. Powell is a poet native to Long Island...she is a graduate of SUNY Binghamton's program in Literature and Rhetoric...and a lover of all poetry

Kathleen Powers-Vermaelen teaches literature and writing at Suffolk County Community College. Her poetry and fiction has been published in several literary magazines and in the flash fiction anthology *The Best of Every Day Fiction Two*. Her indie book *Publicize This!* recently won NLAPW's Marjorie Davies Roller Nonfiction Award. *She occasionally blogs at* <http://kathleenpowersvermaelen.blogspot.com>.

Pearl Ketover Prilik Pearl Ketover Prilik is a long-time LI resident, psychoanalyst and writer, fortunate to have work widely published in journal, anthology, and individual publications. PKP lives on the barrier island of Lido Beach close enough to the water she loves, with husband, D.J./Ira Prilik and "human-in-disguise-as-a-cat-Oliver. You can read more of and about her work and background at "Imagine" - <http://drpkp.com>.

Stuart Radowitz

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.

Lauren Reiss Lauren is a poet, author, and educator. Several of her articles have been published locally. Lauren is currently writing a book on healing for Balboa Press, and is studying several forms of

energy medicine. She also enjoys creating art and singing classical choral music. She was a teacher of blind and visually impaired students in school districts across Nassau County for 26 years.

Diana R. Richman Ph.D. licensed psychologist, has published numerous articles and chapters in professional journals and self-help books. Listening to souls' stories for over 30 years, 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.

Al Ripandelli has been published in several collections since his introduction in *Bards Annual 2016*. His experiences in relationships and matters of love are the foundations of much of his poetry. He has been inspired by the many talented poets in the community and appreciates listening to, and feeling, their expressions. His new book is *Heart's Window*.

Jeff Rogers

Rita B. Rose is a multimedia artist who has always had a special love for the Literary Arts. She has gained recognition among poetry groups in New York and abroad. She has performed her works for colleges, organizations and social programs. She is a published author and poet and is presently compiling her poetry into a collection for publication - 2018

Marc Rosen is the Treasurer of The Bards Initiative and lead editor of *Unbelief*. When not solving people's problems, he enjoys tabletop role-playing games and reading on his phone.

Narges Rothermel is a retired nurse, she is an admirer of Rumi and Hafiz. Her poems are published in PPA Literary Review, Bards Annual Avocet, Mankh's Haiku calendars, and Haiku calendar. She is author of wild flowers, Rays & Shadows, and Side roads. Winner of Newsday's Garden poetry

Robert Savino Suffolk County Poet Laureate 2015-2017, is a native Long Island poet, born on Whitman's Paumanok and still fishes there, for words. He is a Board Member at the Walt Whitman Birthplace and winner of the 2008 Oberon Poetry Prize. Robert recently completed a bilingual collection of 47 Italian Americans Poets of Long Island (*No Distance Between Us*). His books include *fireballs of an illuminated scarecrow* and his first collection *Inside a Turtle Shell*.

Andrea Schiralli Andrea is an editor and education consultant. She helps students with their college application essays; giving them makeovers provides her with "a sense of control in a world full of chaos." She is addicted to Taylor Swift, the color pink, and anything that sparkles.

Karen Schulte a retired social worker, began writing in grade school, managed to win a citywide contest that paid her way through college. Since she began writing again, about 10 years ago, her poetry has been published in a number of journals and anthologies. Most recently she won the 26th Annual Writer's Digest Self-Published Book Award for her poetry collection, *Where Desire Settles*.

Ron Scott is the Executive Vice President of the Nassau County Poet Laureate Society. Ron's work has appeared in various poetry antholo-

gies throughout the region, one in particular resulting in a 2016 Pushcart nomination. He is the author of two novels, *Face of the Enemy*, and *Twelve Fifteen*.

Keith Simmons is a LI poet, songwriter and musician, board member of Folk Music Society of Huntington and PPA staff member. His search includes self-realization and writing poems with surprise endings.

Barbara Southard has had work published in Poet Lore, Canary, Long Island Quarterly, Boones Press, Mobius, Eratio Poetry Journal, PPA, Long Island Sounds, Bards, as well as several anthologies. She currently teaches poetry to students at Walt Whitman Birthplace.

Dd. Spungin Doreen (Dd.) Spungin hosts events for Poets In Nassau and Performance Poets Association. Her poetry can be found in anthologies and in print and on-line journals, most recently *Maintenant 12* and *First Literary Review East*. Several of her poems have been set to music by NY composer, Julie Mandel. Spungin lives for love, prays for peace and writes for her sanity.

Susan Starr is a writer, editor and poet, and a lifelong resident of Long Island. She's the co-creator of *Gaia's Vision Oracle Cards*, contributing short evocative poems to accompany each of 40 photographic art cards. Her poetry is inspired by the deep places of the heart and moments that transcend time. She lives in Hauppauge with her miracle Maine Coon, Mollie.

Ed Stever Bards Laureate 2015-2017 Poet, playwright, actor, and director, Ed Stever has published two collections of poetry with Writers Ink Press: *Transparency* and *Propulsion. The Man with Tall*

Skin, was published by Local Gems Press in December of 2014. In that same year he compiled and edited *Unleashing Satellites: The Undergrad Poetry Project*. He recently took first place in the Village of Great Neck Plaza's 5th Annual Poetry Contest. He is one of the editors of the *Suffolk County Poetry Review*.

Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino 's poetry and prose have appeared in *Barrow Street*, *New York Tyrant*, *jubilat*, *Rapsodia*, *Verse Wisconsin*, *StylusLit*, *GAMMM* and *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars*. His most recent volumes are *The Valise* (Dead Academics Press, 2012), *Selected Poems* (Bibliotheca Universalis, 2017) and *Two Short Novels* (Bibliotheca Universalis, 2017). *The Wet Motorcycle: selected writings* is forthcoming. He is founding editor of the online poetry journal, *Eratio*.

Kate Dellis Stover has a BA from Columbia Univ in Literature/Writing. She is featured on the CD "Northport Celebrates Jack" reading her prose poem "All Hallows Eve." She wrote the text to *Woman on the Wall*, a collection of photos of graffiti portraying women as goddesses and temptresses.

Douglas Swezey

Jose Talavera was born in NY and is the first in his family to be born and raised in the US. While always interested in the fields of math, science and aviation, and currently studying to be a professional pilot, he was president of Dowling's poetry club for a year. Recently, he earned his MBA; he remains active in poetry.

Gayl Teller Nassau County Poet Laureate (2009-11) and Walt Whitman Birthplace 2016 Poet of the Year, is the author of 6 poetry collections, most recently, *Hidden in Plainview*, and editor of the poetry anthology *Toward Forgiveness*. An award-winning poet, she directs the Mid-Island Y Poetry Series and teaches at Hofstra U.

Tiffany Thomas

J R Turek J R Turek, Bards Laureate 2013-2015, Bards Associate Editor, is 20 years as Moderator of the Farmingdale Creative Writing Group, twice Pushcart nominee, author of *A is for Almost Anything* (2016), *Imagistics* (2015), and *They Come And They Go* (2005). Poet, editor, workshop leader, PPA host, and poem-a-dayer for over 13 years, the Purple Poet collects dogs, shoes, and poems. msje-vus@optonline.net

Don Uhrie is a High School English and Creative Writing teacher, as well as an avid writer. Don has published a poetry anthology, *Whispers from Within*. He loves poetry's ability to expose the soul of a person. Don grew up in Massapequa Park on Long Island. Living a life often laced with much solitude, he began to express himself through poetry. He possesses a powerful relationship with his beautiful, natural surroundings, which he so eloquently expresses in his written work.

Luis Valdes, Louie V The Poet, was born and raised in Harlem, NY. At 17, he performed at Madison Square Garden in a national spoken word tournament, and auditioned at The Apollo Theater. Former

President of the Writers' Club at Mohawk Community College, he is now Writers' President at Suffolk Community College.

Pramila Venkateswaran Suffolk County Poet Laureate (2013-15) is the author of *Thirtha*, *Behind Dark Waters*, *Draw Me Inmost*, *Trace*, *Thirteen Days to Let Go*, and *Slow Ripening*. She is an award-winning poet who teaches English and Women's Studies at Nassau Community College.

Margarette Wahl

Herb Wahlsteen was a finalist in the *Yale Series of Younger Poets* contest, placed 3rd in the *Writer's Digest* 77th Annual Writing Competition: Rhyming Category, and has had poems published in: *Long Island Quarterly*, the *Great South Bay Magazine*, *The Lyric* magazine, *Paumanok Interwoven*, *Suffolk County Poetry Review*, *Bards Annual*, *Bards Against Hunger*, *Form Quarterly*, *13 Days of Halloween*, *String Poet* (2 poems translated from the French, 2 poems translated from the Spanish), and *Measure* magazine.

James P. Wagner (Ishwa)

Jillian Wagner

Virginia Walker of Shelter Island received her Ph.D. in British and American literature from New York University. She has taught writing and literature courses in New England and Long Island colleges. She is the co-author of *Neuron Mirror* (with Michael Walsh) which raised over \$10,600 for the Lustgarten Foundation for pancreatic cancer research. Her poems have appeared in *Poets 4 Paris*,

Suffolk County Poetry Review, The Light of City and Sea, and the Humanist.

George Wallace is writer in residence at the Walt Whitman Birthplace, writing professor at Pace University, and recent winner of the Orpheus Prize (BG), the Naim Frasher Prize (MK) and the Alexander Gold Medal in Greece. Suffolk County Long Island's first poet laureate, he is author of 33 chapbooks of poetry, editor of Poetrybay, and co-editor of Great Weather for Media in New York City.

Charles Peter Watson

Jeffrey Watkins

Samantha Weiner

Marq Wells

Jack Zaffos

dawn zahra

Donna Zephryne served in the Army and served two active deployment tours in Iraq. After returning, she graduated with a Master's degree in Social Work from Columbia University. Donna currently serves as a peer mentor at the Northport VA and is eager to become a social worker, so she can help other veterans. Donna currently works at the New York Office of Mental Health while preparing to earn her NYS Social Work License. In her spare time, Donna enjoys writing and has been published in multiple anthologies. These publications include Radvocate Literary Magazine, the "Afterwords" anthology, the "9 lives" New York University's Veteran's Writers Workshop

anthology, Bards Annual 2017, The Local Gem Press, War Writer's Campaign, Poets and Writers, Blogground, Oberon Magazine 2017 and CA/T Magazine of Columbia University. Donna also belongs to various veterans' organization such as Wounded Warrior Project, Team Red White and Blue, and World Team Sports. Donna is a dedicated learner and is always ready to take on a new adventure