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POETiCA REViEW

For the many, not just the few.

Issue 7



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POETiCA REViEW 7

POETiCA REViEW is a quarterly literary journal of poetry and artwork. We aim to give voice to the many disparate and marginalised voices within the artistic community, locally, and internationally, regardless of notoriety or who is currently favoured by this or that magazine. Our mission is to inject new blood into the poetry scene.

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Chief Editor: Mark A. Murphy
Asst. Editor: Kieran M. Conway

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Introducing our **Asst. Editor** and **Site Admin.**, Kieran M. Conway

Contributors

Submissions and Guidelines

POETiCA REViEW

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Introducing **Kieran M. Conway**, our new Asst. Editor and Site Administrator

We are privileged to introduce you to Kieran, the newest member of our team (formerly a Buddhist monk and outreach worker). An astute reader and skilled editor, Kieran brings a unique vision, voice, and vital compassion to our day to work.

As we go to press, he is busy developing our **‘Links’** page and putting together a new **‘Review’** page, where we will be publishing appraisals of new work by ‘marginalised’ voices.

We have a mountain of submissions to work through, and the new **Autumn Edition** of **POETiCA REViEW** to offer you, in the hope that you will continue to support us.

Don’t forget to spread the word. See ‘Milner Place Voice Poems’ in **‘Editor’s Eye’** and our new **‘Critiquing Option’** in **‘Submissions.’**



Howie Good 2 poems

Do-It-Yourself Destruction

People kept coming into my dead parents' apartment to collect stuff. One took away some sort of boat. No one seemed to particularly care if cities were burning. A woman from down the hall started stroking my face. I asked her to stop. She wouldn't. Her boyfriend was standing right next to her, but didn't say anything, just watched. A week passed, maybe more. The news was unbearable. Gas grenades and rubber bullets. Chants of I can't breathe, I can't breathe. First responders climbed the stairs two at a time despite the terrible weight of the unshed tears they were carrying.

Hope Against Hope

I have seen this movie before,
I know how it ends, with troops in the streets,
and the charred bones of buildings,
so, I turn from the ruthless images,
and, just as quietly as I can, lean
on the railing of the back deck
and wait for the grey fox to appear
from the dark tangled underbrush
into an evanescent strip of bright sunlight.

Praniti Gulyani 2 poems

Negotiating Boundaries

Just like every other night, she tosses and turns, her hair spilling onto my side of the bed, every lock brushing against my cheeks, like the waves of an ocean -- still wild and untamed.

Suddenly, she sits up straight and pulls her sari firmly over her partly-exposed breasts. 'Can I tell you something?' she asks me, and I nod, as the shape of unspoken words hover on her lips.

I watch the way her lips form the forbidden word, tasting the molasses present in every little syllable. Then, her tongue seems to roll around this word, holding it as tightly as it can, while it can . . .

'I had a dream,' she whispers.

shifting moon . . .
the new shape
of an old bruise

The Sum of Everything

a raw, summer star upon your eyelid,
a crushed grass-blade beneath your heel
the remnants of a dewdrop that cling to your shoe
a bruise of sky on your chin

the initial sum of everything

you hold an eclipse between your fingers,
like a thin volume of love songs
a shooting star twisted into your lashes
the shape of a song that trickles down your lips
and circles your Adam's Apple

the growing sum of everything

there is a crater between your brow,
and, the evening's sketched onto your arm

mingling with the saffron of dawn on your forehead
this rendezvous of light on your being

the combined sum of everything

a shooting star chisels a verse,
picks up your wrinkles, and your clinging scars
arranging them onto the expanse of your cheek
till they read like a poem
something like a poem

the ultimate sum of everything

Henry Bladon 2 poems

Normal

As I washed my hands
for the fiftieth time,
I thought about
the conversations
we always had.

I always asked you,
‘What’s normal?’
which was a question
you were never
able to answer.

Then I considered the fact
that now everyone is
doing the same,
and wondered what you
would have said to that.

Loss

Whatever will we do...
with the priest who lost his faith
and the man who lost his wife
and the woman who lost her daughter,
the dog who lost his ball
the patient who lost his mind
the traveller who lost his ticket
the soldier who lost his leg
the tree that lost its leaves
the customer who lost his wallet
and the teacher who lost his temper?

We can’t tell them all that time will heal their mourning.

Theresa Gaynord 1 poem

A Gypsy's Kiss

He loved her beneath the shadows
of Pichoca trees where white
palm leaves blew high into the
winds and vanilla vines swirled
and twisted into superfluous webs
of calico threads.

This is where she played on her
swing, suspended barefoot among
the grandeur of rock formations that
labyrinth to a sheer cliff, which
descended into the still waters of
a ghostly lake.

The porous lava of her skin was
carefully woven with the sweet
milk of life given to ghosts in a
dream, where modesty rose like
silence and atoms vibrated into
solid waves of pure color.

Grays and plums drifted across the
sky when they danced among the
eucalyptus that adorned moss covered
stones where the smell of burning sap
from copal trees served as incense
abound in the humid air.

Serenades of gypsy music and gothic
melodies terraced the red caravan with
one voice under the taps of falling rain as
the lovers kissed and sang in the silver
moonlight inspired by Mallorca wine and
fried fish served with burned mango.

Dion Loubser 1 poem

Lighthouse

You know
when a big storm hits
The lighthouse actually shifts
I have measured it
The engineers tell me it is impossible
But not everything in this world
Is explained by science
I offered myself up once
When it was too much and
Even the beauty of the light
Could not hold me
As I tell you this I know
You will think me mad
Out here on this rock
With only the gulls to judge
I leapt into the jaws of the sea
But they put me back
Gently
I am the keeper of the light
They told me
There is a balance to this world
And I needed to keep the light
Shining
I told them about science
And they said yes they knew
But there were other things
Like spirit and faith and balance
And they were the keepers
Of those things
So here I stay
I keep this light shining
And turning
While I wait
For the next big storm

Joan McNerney 6 poems

And the band played on...

Get used to it, just put one foot
in front of the other. Continue or
just die...that is the only option.

Nobody gives a flying fig. Everybody
has their own problems. Don't be a
drag, don't be down. Just dance.

While the band plays another number...

Dance dance dance on the barbed
wire of time time time. Feet raw raw
raw bleeding blood blood blood.

This world is a labyrinthine in my
ear and I am deaf and dumb from it...
no sure melody in these crazy strains.

Always the band struts forward...

Fuzzzz creeps into corner
covering burned-out brain cells
strangling yesterday's memories.

Film cartridges slip over forehead
that reel of hard plastic continues
yet something is incomplete.

The band marches on...

How did we dream up bright endings
as we spun our days? How could
we ever believe such delusions?

Our hearts caged in fear...now
listening to sirens pierce the night,
seeing flowers fade at first frost.

Still the band plays on...

Gone gone gone everyone and everything
is senselessly gone. Running thru rooms
marked no exit crying out in no voice.

To know we do not know plans of
distant galaxies. An incessant
discotheque of stars spin around us.

Yet the band music will stop...

This long road, mud and muck.
Our feet pull themselves into next steps.
So many sharp curves and cliffs.

How did we ever believe in light,
air, freedom? Now we can touch
the darkness, feel it blinding us.

Chella Courington 2 poems

While the World

Lying on the bed without you, my nude body in the mirror, I want to arrange my legs and arms, torso and face so you feel your head in the crook of my arm, your legs in mine, my belly heating yours.

Oh, what we took for granted two weeks ago, talking so close our lips blew warm, exhaling and inhaling into each other.

Coming together, our skin covered with cracks for sweat and oil, smearing your beauty with mine, then tussling and tangling again.

Kahlo knew how to paint herself, wounded woman with a broken column.

Diego had no idea, turning his brush away from her, from Frida who cropped her hair and rose again in bright hues of yellow and red.

Once you whispered *breathe me in*, your mouth on mine, and we did for hours—one body, one heart.

When the sun fell, dreams turned into sirens and make-shift morgues in Central Park.

Now, I offer you, my love, this reflection of me.

Where Swallows Nest

Quiet is overrated.

Unsettled by the silence, I miss the horns and yells, the crosscurrent of people at each corner.

Already blue hydrangeas and yellow roses welcome a different kind of spring as the cayote and alligator, monkey and rat take to the deserted streets.

Rarely do we retreat in full force from the outdoors, abandoning sidewalks and pools and golf courses and parks.

And now behind walls, where our droplets fall in isolation, we see the sun rise in clear skies, wondering when the earth has ever been so pristine.

Never have I wanted someone to stay by my side, share coffee in the morning and Cabernet at night.

This desire for solitude decays as I sit here.

I need more than my books and music, intellect and memory, more than my own touch.

Need is a word I once refused.

Every cell of my body cries for someone to hold me.

Kathleen Hogan 2 poems

Cubist Dreams

Steaming water hits my neck,
runs down the center of my back.
I quiver as it flows over
the spot where all
lonely moments hide.

Mosaic rays shine
through flamingo curtains.
In the time it takes
for an eyelash to fall to a cheek,
a few pink glints skip
over the blue tiles
and I want to tango.

I have walked with Picasso
down the Gothic Quarter's
cobble lanes, secretly attempting
to stay just a fraction ahead of him.
Not enough so he'd notice
but enough to know I won.

And I said, "*No!*", when he asked
me to bare one breast,
afraid it would end up in a casket,
painted purple with a yellow nipple,
and that I would never be the same.

Lost

How do you find
your shadow in the dark
when you are afraid
of the spotlight's shine?

I have been a barren earth,
whose clouds unleash

teems of water, moisture
that hits like the death
of a child with rosy cheeks.

Fear touches
with skeletal fingers
that paint undecipherable
symbols on my face.
I try to imagine they tell
of how I stood tall under
the hanging tree
with eyes wide open
but know they are
the air that passes
through a window.

Sayan Aich 4 poems

The Moths

Calcutta returns home,
Inside me.
I count the cars,
With their seat-belts around my tongue.
My eye-lashes sweep the streets
A storm from another time
And whatever remains of the day
Stays back like crematorium ash
The dead having already escaped.
All the available pin-codes
Sit with missing story-tellers
And listens to ships returning
To empty harbours.
My Janus city has two names,
Both quieter like people
Who have already removed themselves
From telephone directories.
At night,
Moths travel between Calcutta and Kolkata
Planning a trip to the moon.

Overcoat

Last Friday,
Everyone I knew
Living inside me
Walked out of my room
Like disciplined and industrious
Summer ants.
The bridges that needed to be burnt
Surrendered meekly to my
Letter writing skills.
And my visit to the laundry
Only revealed that
I had forgotten to collect the overcoats
In whose folds

I'd hide as a child.
The afternoon wore
My worn out pyjamas
And walked the neighborhood
Ghosts, too old to scare children.
When evening came
I sat with a bottle of longing
That I've been brewing
Since I was 17.
I sat there,
Waiting for morning
The way the abandoners pets
Wait for their masters to return.

Of Simple Things

I woke up earlier than usual
To write on the remains of the night.
I told myself
That it must be a simple poem.
No complex images and metaphors
Being transported in slave ships.
It should be a simple act
Like opening the fridge
And a simple disappointment
Of finding it empty.
Furthermore, no violence
Related to choosing and squeezing
Words and ideas inside freight trains
Vanishing in the German darkness.
No negotiations with former lovers
Who spoke like Public Address Systems
When all I wanted to do
Was stand like a streetlight
In the rains.
It should be a simple straightforward act
Of tying the noose around the neck
And kicking the chair.

In a Couple of Years

The tea pot meditates
On the affairs of the world,
The stock exchange
The power cuts
And inflation.
The washing machine turns
Like planets
Cleaning the dust of broken hearts
As I crouch inside it
And close the roof of the world.
Inside the months of longing
Swirl like hula hoop
Till someone switches the power off.
The telephones don't work
The operators apologize
For not being able to connect
All the terraces in the city.
The dogs come home,
It will be night in a couple of years.

Natalie Schriefer 1 poem

On the Advent of Artificial Light

(on Van Gogh's *Starry Night over the Rhône*)

The night is brighter now.
Gaslight from town glitters
russet over the Rhône, shimmering,
encroaching upon the far bank
and revealing the prows
of vessels moored along the shore.

Overhead the stars bloom
like celestial alliums—or maybe
they're dandelions instead:
pale seed heads not yet
blown away by copper gaslight,
by the approaching breath of dawn.

Vern Fein 1 poem

NOBODY DIED

When the shit hits the fan:
I total the car.
Our TV and washing machine go kaput the same week.
Our daughter gets fired from her dream job.
Our grandsons move to Montana.

How long do you have to listen to our woes?

We often say to each other,
as a way to staunch the angst:
"Nobody died. But nobody died."

That causes us to stop our complaining,
realize that the worst tragedy did not happen to us
as our minds comb through the tangled hair of others' lives,
indeed some bodies did die.

We have friends who have lost children,
three genetic cancers and a drug overdose.
Did you ever look into the eyes of a mother who lost her child?

We are aware of the world, the terrible storms across the globe.
Biblical earthquakes and famines, the moon turns to blood.

incessant wars, nation against nation

suicide bombings, escalating mass shootings, unfathomable be-headings,

the widening poverty the rich take glee in,

the local teen selling popcorn at the football concession stand
paid with a stray bullet,

media responsibly bringing the bad news
as if it were some perpetual Marathon runner
falling exhausted before our brains every day.

We absorb. Process perpetually
but always end

with our litany of solace:
“Nobody died,”
which is true for us for now.

Paul Ilichko 3 poems

PREPARING FOR WAR

Imagine a beach in Florida the sun blazing from above with a slight hint of breeze from the ocean a typical lazy day but suddenly everyone in sight is a soldier in uniform

every flag is black every soldier is dreaming of war of Vietnam or the deserts of the Middle East as the sand creeps into their boots and infiltrates their socks

every surface is parched and golden every face is burned and stoic there is death in every mouth

their tongues are hanging as they pant like dogs

* * * * * * * * * * *

there is no weather in Florida there is merely heat and the endless drumming of preparing for war

you can't help but think that the beach is symbolic of something

if you don't look too closely you might imagine that the only things left alive are the seabirds that dash between the frothing spillage of the waves

* * * * * * * * * * *

a beach filled with soldiers is more like a church than a parade ground

and you recite a prayer as a mother falls to her knees in grief.

THE END OF FRUITFULNESS

There was fruit in the bowl there was
fruit on the trees fruit in so many colors
in red

and orange

and yellow

and purple

all of it waiting to be plucked

and peeled and sucked dry
until the seeds could be spat out
spat into the dirt where they might grow
and prosper
and create a new tree
with new fruit for future tables
and future feasts of color...
but at that same instant he discovered
that there was chocolate on his fingers
and so he sucked them clean
and as he did so the sugar
rushed into every crevice of his brain
and the taste
exploded
across the surface of his tongue...
and then the fruit was left uneaten
and it rotted into blackness and stink
and there were no more trees
and there was no more color
and the world had become a place
of suffocation and darkness.

SUMMER BLIND

Sweat gathers in crevices
as humidity wraps in blanketed warmth
a liquid sheen that collects
until gravity twists
and pulls a single drop
and then another and another
and soon the stench is thickening

into the encompassing weight

we communicate by smell

we trade the depth of perfume a lilac endeavor
a taste of peach

a flimsy discharge of swimming pool sounds
of silvery notes that ring the alarm

then fade
beneath the oppression of heat
into silence.

Dotty LeMieux 1 poem

Devolution

The road is narrow

It is night and Lisa drives
the Volkswagen slowly
away from the writers' conference

I sit behind and light her cigarettes

Every few hundred feet our headlights
come back at us, bouncing off a bend
or a patch of fog on the road

We come to a town called Marshall
and head straight for the bar –
 The Marshall Tavern

Lisa says there will be music there
and men who won't judge us
on our poetic sensibilities

The road straightens beyond
the signpost where fog overtakes
the bay to our left.

Watching it swirl and thicken, I think –

*So this
is what it's like at the bottom
of the ocean – dense
and we grow gills*

Carson Pytell 1 poem

Appreciation

Without the knowledge
we are damned to
glad ingratitude.

Captives of content, we turn out
too taken, held, Stockholmed
to read what writes us.

Life does that to people.
We shape heroes and hope from stars
which spell always, everywhere:
Morte me fecit.

Jeni Booker Senter 2 poems

SELF PRESERVATION

I layer pink rouge
on my pale cheeks,
the bones like a bas relief
jutting from my cold face.

My hands,
once supple
and able,
stiffen to impotence.

I force my limbs
into a pleasant
posture
so as not to offend
those who mourn me.

My heart
I remove and discard,
filling the hole
with handfuls
of sawdust.

My grimace
of despair
I mold into a false
smile,
tucking the straight pins
into my cheeks,
pinning them
into place.

TRAPPED BETWEEN HERE AND THERE

Standing at the ledge—
at the edge of it all—
I am a small speck before sea and sky.

The water is blue and refreshing.
I cannot swim.
The sky is clear and open.
I cannot fly.

Remaining even with the horizon,
where the up and down meet and blur,
I stand inert.

Stephen Anderson 1 poem

The Swerve

Things just work out that way sometimes.

Jarring and jagged cut-you-up things
that spring up from the least expected places:

The sharp-toothed jackal that comes in the shadows
of the day to take away someone you love,

the disappointment by a friend who you had
so cherished before,

the dream shattered by a slight-minded person
in power unmoved by your light-source,

and then, and then the action taken by your
own hand that is self-or-other-betraying

in its blanket myopia, its perception far afield
from the bullseye of truth in the matter at hand.

All of this is ski-jawed freewill in the house of
destiny,

where we must do the high wire balancing act
above the big top circus and, lest we forget,

there is a world watching our every bob and weave,
a world that expects us to put on a good show

in spite of the shaky, thin wire we all must tread.

Fatima Ijaz 2 poems

SILENT SCREAM

When dissent like lightning enters the frail limbs of the night,
in the uproar of ferocious leonine howls
in the midnight turns of the heart –
that has finally prepared itself to laugh ceaselessly,
I sit by your side, loneliness, and conjure up the façade
Of moods and am of terrible minds. When I know
Certainly you won't exit, the dream won't come to pass,
Then I also know that you are the trespasser
the desert crows warned me about.

But still, I aspire into the solemn black hole of your empire
And seek out the significance of scattered lilacs.
There, alongside a paper-boat in a sun-drenched, stubborn
puddle, I list out the reasons of my absence.

I cater to the monsoon in a particular dark rhythm
I started playing truant along with the nursery rhyme
When the marches begin, I am plain visible as the scare-crow
Joker in a dealt hand of cards.

I crave the muscle fire of the working field
But nine swarthy cats cross my path:
In each life I am a broken idol,
Worshipped then forgotten.

Sometimes I sit by the fire and reminisce
But these times are golden like still paintings
Of sun-flowers. At times, I discern songs
In unfamiliar languages. I whisper to them:
It is to you I run to when silence overpowers me.
I am unable to step out of the lucid dream.
I am unable to count the stars on starry nights.

For Old Friends

We are walking on the asphalt ambiance of the road; there is nothing that holds us together, except the sun.

We several-turn and look at what is left behind. It is nothing but the rust of dreams and desire.

We run forward and our shadows dance in the wind.

When the rain comes, it drenches us to the bare, but our bones, they don't interfere.

What you were then, is running past, what you are now.

We liken the maze to a free dive into oblivion, we make do with our regrets.

You can feel the night descend on cities broken with curfew, we are parallel in our sleep-ware.

But we no longer care.

So it was that perplexed the blue-throated pigeon danced to wake us in the mornings. You didn't waken. The engines of the day-time couldn't rouse either.

We laughed at the way a citizen of nowhere now brought us flowers. In the times of love, you were distant like the waves on a terribly blue sea.

I gathered the 'flowers of evil' and sent them to prisoners, they hadn't had enough to get by. But they were yours. So I apologize.

When we drink of the sun, let us be merry. For it is the same duality we have known for years.

Your window is open, the lone canary sings.

I leave the whistle by the door. In its whistling parallel.

The poem refuses ink and I am thirsty for wintry double nights. Let us part ways again.

Sandra Kolankiewicz 2 poems

Communique #10

Once a year there are epic tides so low
along the jagged shore line that cliffs and
stony bottoms are exposed, touched by air
only during the first full moon of spring
in a sea of mixed semidiurnal
tides. Each March we wait for the ocean to
retract, pull from shore, and provide us
with a kind of shell fish none recognize,
which we pry from the rocks until we fill
our buckets. We peel and eat them raw, steamed,
and smoked, harvesting until the tide comes
back, part of our small diet until the
summer is full. By now many of us
have broken, become so detached from the
past we've forgotten who we were, what we
once did, and why we ended where we are.

Shirley J. Brewer 3 poems

Beneath the Pomp of Circumstance

—after *Dorothea Berck, Wife of Joseph Coymans*,
oil on canvas, Frans Hals, 1644

Dorothea, I know you crave fuchsia,
a gown with spaghetti straps,
glitter butterflies above each breast,

mauve on your lips and lids. I see
in your eyes the desire to lighten,
take off that stiff white cape

pinching your neck, those cuffs
like arm restraints. You toss
your missing glove at the artist.

Wipe your brush with this, you call
as you plot the next garment
you'll remove, something heavy and black.

Three and a half centuries you wait
for me to coax you free.
Let me drape you in a whisper of feathers,

cheer as you leave your frame—buoyant,
no one left to judge your dress.
We will primp in a gilded mirror.

When the guard scolds us, let's giggle,
girlfriend, and take him out to lunch.

My Glass Slipper

Cinderella's legend beckoned
in that green land where I came to study poetry.

I found her shoe—kissed by a pink flower,
a golden heel—atop a pedestal

at a shop in Kinsale, a town on Ireland's
south coast. Pale blue storefronts

vied with lemon, lilac, lime. The air
tasted like candy and the sea.

A glass slipper so easily broken.
I held back. With a wave of his wand,

the shopkeeper wrapped my treasure
in safe cotton. Eighteen years later,

I gaze at this fragile souvenir,
marvel at my perfect choice:

I am still a girl in love with words.
I dip my toes in the language of bards.

How long will a glass slipper carry me?
How far will I dare to walk?

What the Terrorists Do Not See

*Esther Nora Gibson, 1962-1998,
Sunday school teacher and oldest of 11 children
—from an obituary in a Dublin newspaper*

Later, the mother drew comfort,
steeping those moments in her mind:
morning light on Esther's face,
her perfect complexion aglow—
on the way to Omagh
to buy her wedding pearls.

They had lingered over lukewarm
cups of Irish breakfast tea
in the sun-soaked garden where roses leaned
against the wrought iron bench.
*Mama, you know I'll find peach beads
the color of my favorite dawn.*

In town, the car bomb explodes
a short distance from the shops.
Night reveals a fragment of moon—
a shard of glass pinned to the sky.

Joan E. Bauer 2 poems

The Poet Laureate of Awful Truths

for Maria Mazziotti Gillan

The drive from Palermo to San Mauro, three hours.
Palermo's on the coast. San Mauro, southeast & inland.
In San Mauro, a castle, a 15th century bell tower,
the skull of a saint.

When the Mazziottis left San Mauro perhaps
they spoke a mix of Italian & Sicilian as
my great grandparents did, coming from Vicari.

Gillan writes about lies & denial. She recalls
how she once denied 'that booted country'
even from herself.

She doesn't 'hide behind' language. She atones
for every unintended cruelty & false word.

*You have to knock that crow off your shoulder
& write what you need to write—*

as she does: on feeding baby apple sauce
to her dying husband.

Gillan paints. Her paintings, bright & joyous:
mixed media, pastel-toned portraits of women
with heart-shaped or oblong faces.

Frequent backdrop: floating fish or flowers or stars.

The lips are slightly off-center, the eyes, playful
or contemplative. Sometimes melancholy.

In Women around the Kitchen Table,
the face at the center
appears to be her own.

***It Happened One Night* (1 h 45 min USA)**

My sister's *The Walking Encyclopedia of Motion Pictures*.
She lives in LA & you can ask her anything.

Her first husband was partners for awhile
with Frank Capra Jr on a project for Burt Lancaster

but then Lancaster died. When I ask my sister
what's her favorite Capra movie, she doesn't say

A Wonderful Life, but *Platinum Blonde*.

*

My favorite began as 'Night Bus,' a movie no one
but Capra & his brilliant screenwriter Robert Riskin

wanted to make. Runaway heiress & roguish reporter
travel warily together. Miami to New York.

No one wanted to play the heiress, not Myrna Loy,
Miriam Hopkins, Constance Bennett, the list goes on.

Claudette Colbert didn't want the part either.
She wanted to go skiing, rather than 'rough it'

on a bus. Colbert fought with the director every day.
In the 'classic Capra' bus scene, the riders sing,

'The Man on the Flying Trapeze.'
Colbert didn't think that scene worked at all.

In the fabled 'Walls of Jericho' scene,
hearts throbbed when Gable took off his shirt.

Rain is a motif in Capra films. He thought rain
is sexy. When the film ended, Colbert called it:

The worst picture I've ever made.

Mari-Carmen Marin 2 poems

Consumed by Pain

These past days I have been thinking of death. The image of the skull and crossbones has settled on my forehead between my furrowed eyebrows, a window I don't want to open. Yet I stand before the tree of life, its thick and thorny veins injecting energy through its dark green leaves.

I wonder how much longer I can endure this pain that ties me to my bed with iron-made chains like the iron handrail that impaled me through my pelvis on that bus ride years ago. I wonder how much longer I can endure a life without living, a life in this barren body of mine.

Perhaps death is the answer. Perhaps death will set me free.

My Mirror

A storm is blows up inside you. Gusty winds roar through your ears, while monsoon rains flood in between your bones and boiling blood, after lightning bolts have struck your heart. Staying still, you are paralyzed by the shock.

Sitting next to you on a bench in the park, I hold your hands. Now, your winds, your rains, your lightning strikes are also mine. From your chest through my chest, then out, a grey cloud departs our bodies, flies up towards sullen skies, escorted by two tall evergreens that ground us among the chaos.

Don't you still know? Through your eyes, I see my world; through your nose, you breathe my air. through my mouth, I speak your words. Murky waters can rise and scare us, but you'll never drown as long as I am with you riding out your storms.

Hongri Yuan four poems

Translated by Yuanbing Zhang

A Smile Is Like A Lotus

I am sitting in the divine temple of death and my smile is like a lotus
The night runs away and the universe is my garden of light
The gold pagoda from outer space is the palace of my soul in heaven
Where there are my illustrious ancient scriptures,
And golden poems which have been created by giants
Who told me of the rising of a huge city in future on the earth
Would come from a picture scroll by the gods predicted billions of years ago.

笑若莲花

我坐在死亡的圣殿而笑若莲花
黑夜遁逃而宇宙是我的光之花园
那天外金塔是我在天堂的灵魂之宫
那儿有我史前的煌煌经卷巨人创世的黄金诗章
告诉我大地上崛起的未来之巨城来自诸神的亿万年之画卷

The Smile of Eternal Flower

The age of silver and blue crystals is coming
The desert is gold and stands in the garden of heaven
Those gods will return above the clouds
and show that stately and magnificent city in prehistoric times
Oh, you will see the light of your soul
which makes the sea as sweet as wine - the smile of eternal flower

永恒之花的笑容

白银与蓝水晶的时代正在到来
沙漠是黄金而矗立天国的花园
诸神在云朵之上归来而展现那史前的庄严与华贵之城
哦你看到了自己那令海洋甜美如酒的灵魂之光那永恒之花的笑容

The Phantom of The Rainbow

When the light of heaven passes through your body,
the bird of the soul wakes up.
Maybe you'll see the huge city in outer space
and be surprised that the giant is just another you.
You are never in the world and there is no world,
everything is just a phantom rainbow.

彩虹的幻影

当天国之光穿过了你的身体灵魂之鸟醒来
也许你会看见那天外的巨城而惊讶那巨人的自己
你并不曾在人间也没有这世界一切只是一个彩虹的幻影
2017.3.29

Gold Pagoda of Phoenix Call

The beauty of heaven is beyond the imagination
that makes you disregard the golden palace of monarchs
make your thirty thousand years of bitter travel smile with the bright eyes of the dawn.
I sprinkle a timely rainfall from gold pagoda of phoenix call from outer space
And make the giant 's me in prehistoric to return in a spaceship for a moment.

凤鸣之金塔

天堂超乎想像之美令你漠视帝王的黄金之宫
让你三万年之苦涩之路微笑如一抹晨曦之明眸
我洒一曲甘霖来自天外的凤鸣之金塔矗立玲珑
让那史前巨人的自己乘坐星际巨舰而瞬间归来
2017.2.11

Janet Harper 1 poem

aught

(inspired by A Woman bathing in a stream, Rembrandt)

It was hot and the air hung too heavy.
He wanted to paint as he always did,
capture the light, hold shadows steady.
The day was moving slowly - dull, fetid,
languorous and thick with flies above mud.
I stood and walked into the sunlit river
to wash and let the cold refresh my blood,
feel a shock, that joyful icy quiver.
I watched small fish in shoals dart for cover
from me, the danger in their watery world.
I mused on escape and artful lovers,
how like paint water is when silt is stirred,
how anyone can make a picture lie
and would he catch the whiteness of my thigh.

Peycho Kanev 3 poems

Recognition

Right here the pages of the sea resemble an open book
of fairy tales forgotten by a child on the beach
and just before the sunset I look at the horizon's edge
getting cut up by the sharp wings of the seagulls and
the white moon slowly rises with its pale gray halo
and stars like fireflies are dotting the dark forest
under the sky which, once more, invoke old memories
of intangibility and eternity.

I stand as a rock, nothing else stirs, not even the air,
only the cold sea folds like a galvanized iron sheet,
the black fists of the clouds gather over this part of the hemisphere,
where my life runs like a brook into the ocean and I suddenly
discover that my childhood is already gone, the boats have
sailed off and my life – it's too early for last words – is a door
made of flesh, opening even more, it's a knife driven in
the bowels of the hours, it's the last page of the memorized *Iliad*.
All of a sudden, the wind explodes as a curse shaking the crowns
of the impressive trees, sprinkling grit as musical notes on
the staff of the beach, sweet music starts ringing in my ears,
unheard by anyone else - slow and eternal – at this place,
where nothing changes, only time is replaced with another
fresh time and silence absorbs all unnecessary sounds.

The sunrise arrives with the precision of early-rising surgeon,
cutting the flesh, first of the water, then of the land, the sun
ignites the surroundings with its bright impressionistic brush
and the whole world inhales again with ancient lungs.

Death is a panacea for everything that wants to live ceaselessly,
life again begins its development from the world's threshold,
where the humans reappear with their strange faces and
contrived monologues, preparing once again to screw up
all the works.

Hush

That sensation of a sliced honeymoon before
the moon comes up:
half-hearted -

darkness touches everything
that light left unsullied:

you lie inside your white shell
under the darkened spell—

this fragment of life that all men share:
your heart like a fish not dead yet

hopping
hoping

to slip out of the bony fingers –
love seems both unlovely and sterile:

until the bedside candle dies
and ships of clouds creep towards daybreak.

Spring Observatory

Two obscure objects
play with each other near the mouth
of a half-frozen puddle

a moonbeam touches your hair
and sets it on fire

In the dark
windless unrest
the sunflowers hold their breath

and then I sink in your other
Spring.

Alan Cohen 4 poems

Maturity

Grown
Accurate
Dispassionate
A scale
A ruler
A filter
Upright
Relentless
Sensible
Chary
Austere
A record
A jury
A blade

How We Change

We have driven from winery to winery
Along the Silverado trail
This one, Steltzner, is built next to a hill

Each has had its garden
And this time, carefully
We examine each plant

They are mature, fully grown
And we call each by a name
Rosemary, bramble rose, nanten, manzanita

They are not new but are
Different in this climate
As are we

Not the people we were

In Illinois, Connecticut, Massachusetts
The plants began as children

And are not the same, grown
To tell their story, ours
You must ignore, paint over

The fact that we are not
What, or who, we once were
When it, when we, began

And we are here
On vacation
Transparent, colorless

No emotion suffusing
Our inscapes
Painting us anxious or angry or triumphant

Changing what you see
Tell about
With your then and then and then

We are not coherent; float
From flower to fate to dream
Lifting weights, crossing streams

California Hills

In the viewing of the California hills
There's mist and haze and smog
The light itself
The angle at which it falls
It's intensity
The season
Dry or rainy
Trees on the slopes or not
The range of vegetation
How far they are from us
That help determine
Whether we see something sharp and clear and blue
Or white and ethereal
Miracle or mirage

Whether we see at all
Complex and subtle as men they are
The hills
As changeable as reliable
Foreign, hard

November 13

8:30, Santa Clara Marriott, 8th floor
Bright sun, dusty blue hills
Over them a few horizon clouds
Down below, someone swimming laps
Another someone emerging from the whirlpool
Palm trees dancing
Shifting rings on the blue floor of the pool
Yesterday, snow in Massachusetts
But here, the benediction
Cool breeze, sunlight, flowers, butterflies
For someone who remembers long winters
Like the magic of pain gone, flight, morning

Jenny Santellano 2 poems

heroine

he has
his claws
in you
again
ripping
through your skin
attempting
to access your core

faith in nothing
no logic
no sanity—
a blend of pale
promises
and powerless
points of view

stay
with me
on those visceral nights
no escape
no neverland—
just flames
and
ashes

forget about it

it's not your fault you rather swoon in darkness
than drown in the aftermath of a shooting star
it's not your fault your heart was shattered
and your brain can't glue the shards
it's not your fault you're an incurable, unstable genius
it's not your fault you rather pet a rock
than appease another human
it's not your fault that regardless you are kind and caring
it's not your fault you live in a world
full of hat-wearing haters

Tammy Stone Takahashi 2 poems

1.

This is you and i
looking up at the moon
contemplating our smallness

This is the moon
contemplating nothing
reserving her beauty for us

This is the space between
where holy words are fraught
with their unmaking.

2.

When we remove the word,
what remains? The word is love.
I walk on the forest floor

that will snake up a mountain
on steps made of stone,
the peak ascending as we go.

The sun, too,
flickers in and out
from among tall cedar treetops,

glinting now and then,
blinding as she does.
Becoming blinded, as I do.

My heart begins to race.
Go slow, I tell myself.
I know where love is not.

I stumble, my mind takes me
to all the places I've failed,

to all the things I have believed

I cannot do. Love is not
there either. I didn't know
how much I had been trying

to find it, in how many places.
How much I'd been trying to
formulate it, give it a name.

Then I bring it home. I breathe.
All I have to do is realize I've
exhausted all other options.

I stop running from myself.
And there she is. Love
to guide me.

J. Adams Lagana 3 poems

Regarding Matthew

He bore our family traits,
stubbornness, and eyes as blue
as the Atlantic in September. I thought
we were a loving bunch,
but we were angry instead.

Spare me your half-hearted compliments,
he once shouted towards his tight-lipped
God-fearing mother, who was always drenched in black sweaters
with Kleenex-stuffed sleeves, who never offered quite the right comforts.
I thought
we were a loving bunch,
but we were angry instead.

Don't you see me? he cried in utter frustration
towards a father, who never appeared
when promised. (My cousin lived
too many brooding, solitary days.) I liked
the wispy tattooed love who spouted
humor and tried to point him
toward life's sunnier side, (then broke
his heart for someone more spectacular). To them,
he shouted, *Spare me your half-hearted
compliments*, his voice bursting like luminescent fireworks
floating over darkening waters.

Not long after, he ditched the pills, ignored his therapist,
gave in to those brooding, solitary ways,
walked into a rush
of cracked mussel shells and tide
until the ocean
overtook him.

I thought
we were a loving bunch
but we were angry instead.

He was found along the beach and eventually.

He once told me all compliments
are meaningless. That they're half-hearted, empty. *Jesus,*
please, he said, *spare me.*

How Anxiety Interferes

First, it urges you
to rip up every photo of the dead
so that you are really done with them.
It argues that desire and memory
are a waste of time. It plays with your breathing, nags you
to bury the kitchen table, to start throwing pieces
of silverware into the Delaware once the Snow Moon
rises. It demands you make an offering
for every moment that didn't turn into
what you had hoped. Later, it becomes about fear.
Of death, or bad decisions, of losing your teeth, your breath.
Of forgoing your sense of direction.

In this moment. the rattle of street gravel kicking up,
the rumble of the garbage truck working its way
up the street, the heat kicking in, the radio, too loud, the day,
wide open. Go drive with the windows down
over the toll bridge. Listen for the chiming
of river water moving
through ice.

Worry won't let you see
that everything moves forward.

But it does.

Like geese flying somberly
through cold night in a sky
that is gradually brightening.

Ghosts

We think we see you
in passing, the man by the pond,
the driver in the fast lane, the gentleman
moving past us at the grocery store.
We search everywhere
for signs, are sure the blackbirds resting
on the water tower when we walk by,
and that four-wheel jeep driving
an unusually empty road are messages
from you. That song again, twice
on the radio, the one
I would never think
could make me cry. In this house
trapped breezes count for something. A rush,
cool and caught, after the screen door snaps shut
signals another storm. The pines are frantic
thrashing the roof, readying for another struggle
weighted in part by the dead
branches left behind
from last winter's fury.

Another trapped breeze,
passes through the kitchen,
ignores the dishes,
settles near the hallway. We maybe give
slight pause, our chatter and laughter
not to be confused
with even mild cheer.

Pamela Corbett 3 poems

Like A Line in the Sand

The seam between
this life and the next
is tenuous, threadbare.

I know, for I was
there—
hovering, dangling
between the two.

Hurting, pleading,
firm hands
pulled me back.

Another shore beckoned,
promising
sacred banquets.

I lay there torn, thinking—
if I don't move, it ends.
Still— I let fate decide.

Could Be

It is late May
daylight lingers

minutes unravel—
days grow long.

Skies stretch in
a thousand tones

of tawny
tangerine.

When Mary's
child draws

the sun descends
over the sea,

another day
is done.

Walls of Time

Is there anything outside
the walls of time?
A place where the past
unfolds over again?
Does it skip the present,
add ripples to infinity?

Is the future is born
out of vast uncertainty?
Or maybe there's a loop,
where memories replay,
like a hiccup in time.
Subtle memories linger,
with visions of long ago,
yet oddly they remain
forever the same,
like a lone mockingbird
knocking at your door.

Hunter Gagnon 3 poems

Quarantine poem #78 fisherman in the virus hours

Shot off on the shiny iron of it
all I wanted was to sit at the bar with
my brother
and talk about the end, but
Dragged off in the trench of it
The trough of grey water
The white light everywhere
from salt mist
How it broke him up
the sun which is God
which is my brother
how it broke him apart and spread him out
Little fish fly up like worms tossed
by earthquakes
Fort Bragg CA will be a dead town but I
scud its ocean now
Pulled through the side alleys
of locked doors, the froth of it the trash
man waving
with a neon hand
I am in the boat, I am unstable, they say
we are all in the boat, or in
different boats, but in all sayings
there is a storm
I know of storms how they cut the golden light
into pillars
that stride along the edge
This can't be sustained
These images of beauty against the cars that don't
stop
against the rent
My brother against the rent
Against the white bed
Which is God
Against the tube that searches the throat
Which is God and God's Hand
holding us to the earth, but I
am in a boat

There is no earth in the fish fog here
Only the cliffs like a dark animal
And the harbor
made by dynamite
made to catch us
Some years ago.

Quarantine poem #150 this truth of the dark blue road

As the virus + landlords
took Fort Bragg, I
found my dad
on a green hill
in New Hampshire
my friend in York
on a gravel trail
in a bottle of red
and my brother
in a bottle of red
saw the adversary god
in the face of a striped cat
on a stone wall
then a branch
wolf pine
did not find myself
could not breathe
through my nose
as it was
in the primordial car seat
sniffling
and the stick wars
a mouth breather freak
I had to listen
yellow toys and spiked weeds
and yellow and white flowers
and a windy marsh
love falls
on my head
with its sheets of fear
fear killed me in the porch lands
and the kids of paradise
fear and the barn light
circled by hay

my mom drinking and crying
my dad drinking and crying
an orange light like the pinched sun
I am in Berwick again
my brother shows me the leaves
of the beech tree
that fill the decay with soft light
the small ones
the ones that can be taken
the ones we eat

Quarantine poem #151 screaming in the parking lot stones, by some trumpeting chasm

put the gun away and your bird
with its wide yellow eye

put down the necklaces and ropes
of your latest meal, bread

from Hannaford, put down your
tiny biting dandelion dog

remove these loud voids, metal
tubes that stuff your heart

surgery is coming, will you be
the surgeon? or patient?

the skin to be fixed? with black
marker, gas strapped on

put back the gold and the food
release it to the deep nests

of the violated dead

Erica Bernheim 2 poems

Amplexus 1980: Sunshine Skyway Bridge

Kermit, how you have misled me
with your human clothing and gentle
manners. For you, every body of water
can become a quaint fishing village

at dusk or dawn. Into fog and towards
accidents, I followed your lead. I
plummeted, all the while believing
invitation made up three tenths of the law.

Like a Kansas City disaster, but over
water and causing a different mourning.
A bike assembled from parts is called
a basket case. There are still men so

afraid they will not board trains or cross
bridges unless they can hide in trunks
or window-less toilets. Kermit, your
trench coats gave you away. You slammed

a vacuum cleaner through the walls of
your doublewide in the name of hard
work. You left early for this commute.
Your phone sounded different when it rang,

like people were piled on top of it, but no
one was home. It was a big, ferocious bluff.
Cement. The Zoloft bouncer at Club
Depression. A memo you never wanted to get.

[At the consulate, the workers are only hired short-]

At the consulate, the workers are only hired short-term, so as to prevent them taking bribes to do favours:

In Florida, we are re-defining film noir: the traveling electric chair, the barbeque pit, the streams of all these

different dead people we once were: babies, teenagers, something always propelling repellent motion. For us

to live, the hosts must die. It's better to burn blueberries afterwards than to re-harvest their pasts. It's like making

a feast and dying before you have to clean up.
I'll see you at the liquor store and raise you ten points.

Ron Smith 4 poems

The Ancrene Wisse

The introduction of a person's hand
 into your cell is a penetration.
You may not cross your legs, affect
 a lisp, arch your eyebrows
with moistened fingers. You may own
 no glove. You must seek permission
 to wear a belt made of hair or iron
or hedgehog skins. You may not flog yourself
 with these things, nor may you
bloody yourself, nor sting yourself with nettles.
 Do not strike the front of your body,
 nor lacerate your flesh in any way.
All tortures are treats to be rationed,
 permissible only with authorization.

[Author's note: *The Ancrene Wisse* is a "Guide for Anchoresses." This poem is inspired by (and partly extracted from) Mary Wellesley's "This place is a pryson," a review of the book *Hermits & Anchorites in England, 1200-1550*, ed. by E.A. Jones. I found Wellesley's review in *The London Review of Books*, 23 May 2019, pp. 3-6.]

On Translation

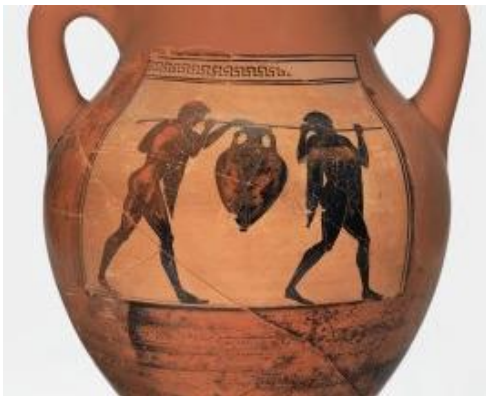
The gap
between word and world is
unbridgeable.

The gap
between word and word is
unbridgeable.

Go ahead, poet: Take the leap.

**What Walks on Four Legs
in the Morning, Reclines
on Two Elbows at Evening,
and Snores Away the Next Day?**

Two men with bouncing
pole bending with double-handed wine,
two hands each for the rod,
two shoulders (total) chafing,
dry tongues yearning to lift the cups
their masters will drain,
and they, if only in
imagination, will siphon off
a fair share of (quiet) frenzy, nothing
Dionysus would begrudge them, as
two friends become one
(in oblivion) empty vessel of smiling sleep.



**Discuss: How Is Tonight's Symposium
Like Homer's *Iliad*?**

Rage? We feel no Achillean rage
as we recline here amid swarming
witticisms, sipping (gulping?)
our host's excellent wine. So far
Calistos remains somewhat sober,
and none of us have smashed any crockery,
not even Herodion,
our customary breaker of painted horses.

[NOTE: The poems on this page were commissioned by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts for a reading accompanying the exhibition "The Horse in Ancient Greek Art," February 2018]

Kate LaDrew 3 poems

dear kate (December 31, 2018),

this year
go everywhere
do everything
especially if it's free
don't cover your face when you laugh
make eye contact with strangers
tell everyone you love you love them
tell everyone you can't forgive you forgive them
store every piece of happiness you've ever had
in a box with no lid, 365 days' worth, 730, 1095,
and don't forget that pesky $1/4$ it takes to get around the sun
trust me, I know you don't think it matters now
it matters

when a man walks through a door and keeps walking

the spring tension modulated by hydraulic fluid
passes from one reservoir to another
and, because there is no hand to hold it open,
the spring pushes the door shut
hitting me as I'm trying to walk in
we both, the man and I, know,
without knowing the exact mechanics that go into it,
how a door works
so, I measure my reaction to a door shutting in my face
by whether the man has seen me or not
by whether the man knows
he has just allowed a door to shut on another person
or whether he has simply allowed a door to shut
these are the options I give myself when a door shuts in my face
but neither is true
allowing a door to close without looking behind you
is no different than pulling it shut
when you know how a door works

how to ruin a day by thinking it can't go both ways

I don't know whether to be mad or glad you think I'm capable of ruining an entire day
this little body of mine,
its volume 62,000 cubic centimetres give or take
able to destroy 86,400 seconds, 1440 minutes,
24 hours, one complete rotation of the earth on its axis, give or take,
that I could affect the moon's gravity, its generation of a tidal force
controlling the world's tides --
you think I can do this?
and that you would say this now, in the middle of a global pandemic --
and that's another thing,
I do not refer to it as a global pandemic because I am unaware of what pandemic means
(from the Greek pan -- all -- and demos -- people -- literally 'all the people')
I know 'global' or 'worldwide' is redundant
I am simply trying to capture the immensity of the thing
because pandemic, no matter how colossal a word
cannot not do justice to what is happening now to *every-single-person-on-the-planet*
and, if I could offer another word, pedantic -- definition -- you,
from the Italian *pedante*, i.e. somebody nobody likes,
if you really think I have ruined your entire day,
and you pointing out this capability
has not changed or hampered my own day in any way
give me a moment
because I am a woman and you have no capability of understanding
the enormity of the bullshit I have had to put up with *every-single-day-of-my-life*
simply for being born
and maybe this is it, the day all old scores are settled, and you are the proxy
the man-shaped stand-in for every cruel, unfair, unwarranted slight this world has
produced
so stick out that bottom lip a little further and wait
if this is all it takes to ruin a day
I can ruin an entire life without moving a muscle

Michael Goldman

Reality

It's not going anywhere
and it's too big
to see all at once

so we examine one small area
or use a compass
or take a picture

anything
to make us feel better
about being small

but that doesn't change
reality, it just changes
our little experience

which is also a kind
of reality, but not
the one I mean.

I want you

Let me do to you
what moths do
to cherry trees –

Love you
into oblivion.

Carol Lipszyc 2 poems

Boy on Stoop

(from a photograph by Helen Levitt, 1940)

boy on cement stoop leans against bricks
of charcoal grey and mud brown

elbow perched on knee
face in profile exposed
in a flash of white
shadow of dirt on the nape of his neck

sullen resignation in the narrow reach
of his eye
in the dipped line of his jaw
in his monochrome mouth

son of the working poor
he will soon outgrow his britches
brace against the chasm
that looms across a remote sky

for the moment, huddled in the nook
of a street unnamed
(shot in a quizzical slant)
he may empty the pockets
of his oversize jacket, dust off the debris
and cull what remains
in the cupped palm of his hands

Trombone Man

(from a photograph, Mr. and Mrs. Eddie Morris, by Lee Friedlander, 1958)

Mr. Morris, how firmly you pressed your lips
to sound the polished bell

cramped quarters, furniture stacked on high,
sheer curtain in floral print -
your wife appearing through the divide
her hands folded, sealing an oath between you
while you face the camera, unconcealed
skin lined and swelled with wear

sorrow spent in unflinching eyes
you hold your trombone easily, assuredly

sheen of silk satin on your jacket lapel
I watch you slide the trombone with your fingers, your thumb
here wider there narrowing in:
the have and have-nots of a lifetime

more than the sturdy, sure-footed papa, trombone man
you rollicked and rolled in the tailgate style
of Kid Ory
filling pockets of rhythm as piano and horn sang
soaring over narrow corridors of black and white
as you posed for posterity

C.G. Nelson 3 poems

Insomnia

You lay in bed.
You were there,
Watching you clock creep
Closer to morning.

You reached out across
The bed, hoping
To grab onto something.

She is gone, of course.
She wasn't there
To begin with.

It's time to begin again.

As you watch the
Sun rise in your window,
You rise also.

And you are new again.

Together Again

He had a wooden fish--
more accurately a wooden puzzle.
He would sit on his bedroom floor and obsessively
put it back together again over and over and over over over
Again.

He would sit on the floor
and as he heard his parents fight,
he tore apart that wooden fish.

And when they couldn't reconcile,
he tried to put in all back together

Again.

But that's the funny thing with puzzles.

Sometimes you can have all the pieces
memorized, forwards and backwards.

Yet when it matters most you
can't put it together again
for the life of you.

Persephone

On a cold slab, bare and nude
I awake in a room that doesn't include
anything warm or soft--

no drop of sun, no splash of a candle.
Then I see her-- draped in dripping silk,
her hair the color of devil's milk.

"How long have I been in this room?"
I ask her, "Are lilacs still in bloom?"

"April has come and gone," she said,
"Time has no meaning in the land of the dead."

Milton P. Ehrich 2 poems

SILHOUETTES ON A WALL

During twilight hours
I walk around the park
and see silhouettes
on my handball wall
where I once played
with Father and friends
and see everyone I loved
who also loved me
voiceless without smiles
they send a silent message
as they come and go
in cameo appearances
standing stolid and still
before they disappear
and now all that remains
from where they stood
is an ebony black shadow
on the wall in the shape
of a lone arrow pointing.

THE END AT THE END OF THE ROAD

I stumble forward—trudging along until
I see my imagination-enriched view
of the end of the road.
But I see no Pearly Gates
or hand of God to greet me—
not even a Dead-End sign.
Just a pile of rocky rubble
With a graffiti-scribbled question:
*How have you managed to walk so far
with your head up your ass?*

Contributors

Howie Good is the author most recently of *Stick Figure Opera: 99 100-word Prose Poems* from Cajun Mutt Press. He co-edits the online journals Unbroken and UnLost.

Praniti Gulyani has been writing ever since she was a little child of ten. She has had her work published in many international journals – both online and print, such as *Modern Haiku*, *The Heron's Nest*, *Frogpond* amidst others. In addition to that, she has published a print collection of haiku entitled *Half a Memory* and an eBook of Haibun *a Raindrop is a Train Window* published by Title IX Press.

Henry Bladon is a writer of short fiction and poetry based in Somerset in the UK. His work can be seen in Spillwords Press, Pure Slush, Truth Serum Press, and POETiCA REViEW, among other places.

Theresa Gaynord has *been published in a number of magazines throughout the years*. Some of those magazines/eazines include Aphelion, Cajun Mutt Press, The Alien Buddha Press, Raven Cage, Bindweed Magazine, The Wild Word, Literary Yard, The Beatnik Cowboy, Setu Magazine, Ramingo's Porch, The Creativity Webzine, Dissident Voice, Printed Words, and the list goes on. Theresa has also been honored to be in a number of print anthologies.

Dion Loubser is a thalassophile suffering from eleutheromania. Also, a bibliophile, oenophile and some other big words. Drawn to impressionist imagery, magic realism and dystopian visions, his poetry and prose has been published by JungleJim magazine, ITCH literary journal and PenHead Press. His vivid dreams of flying have him hoping he was a vampire in a previous life, with a taste for fine pinot noir.

Joan McNerney's poetry is found in many literary magazines such as Seven Circle Press, Dinner with the Muse, Poet Warriors, Blueline, and Halcyon Days. Four Bright Hills Press Anthologies, several Poppy Road Review Journals, and numerous Spectrum

Publications have accepted her work. Her latest title, *The Muse in Miniature*, is available on Amazon.com and Cyberwit.net. She has four Best of the Net nominations.

Chella Courington is a writer and teacher whose poetry and fiction appear or are forthcoming in numerous anthologies and journals including *SmokeLong Quarterly*, *The Collagist*, and *The Los Angeles Review*. Her novella, *Adele and Tom: The Portrait of a Marriage*, is available at Breaking Rules Publishing. Courington lives in California.

Kathleen Hogan is a graduate of the University of Connecticut. Her poetry has been published in Panoplyzine, Indolent Books *What Rough Beast*, Above the Bridge: The First Decade, and the *Nancy Drew Anthology* published by Silver Birch Press. She is a member of the Bloom Reading Series committee in her Washington Heights neighbourhood in New York City.

Sayan Aich Bhowmik is currently Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Shirakole Mahavidyalaya, Kolkata. A published poet, he is also the editor of the blog Plato's Caves, a semi-academic space for discussion on life, culture and literature.

Natalie Schriefer received her MFA from Southern Connecticut State University. Her work has appeared on MTV and in *Room*, *Into the Void*, and *Connecticut River Review*, among others. She works as a freelance writer and editor. Home base: www.natalieschriefer.com.

Vern Fein has published over one hundred poems and short non-fiction pieces on over forty sites, a few being: *82 Review, The Literary Nest, Gyroscope Review, Courtship of Winds, 500 Miles, and The Write Launch, and has non-fiction pieces in Quail Bell and Adelaide among others and a short story in Duende magazine, Goddard College.

Paul Ilechko is the author of the chapbooks “Bartok in Winter” (Flutter Press, 2018) and “Graph of Life” (Finishing Line Press, 2018). His work has appeared in a variety of journals, including Manhattanville Review, West Trade Review, Yes Poetry, Night Music Journal and Rock & Sling. He lives with his partner in Lambertville, NJ.

Dotty LeMieux has had pieces published or forthcoming in Poets Reading the News, MacQueen's Magazine, Writers Resist, Mill Valley Literary Anthology among others. She lives and works in Northern California helping progressive candidates get elected and she is active in the Marin Poetry Center.

Carson Pytell is a poet living in a small town outside Albany, NY. His work has appeared in numerous venues online and is currently available or forthcoming in print from such publications as Vita Brevis Press, The Virginia Normal, NoD Magazine, Blue Moon Lit & Art Review, Spank the Carp, Crack the Spine, Futures Trading, Down in the Dirt Magazine, Gideon Poetry Review, and Children, Churches & Daddies, among others. His debut collection, *First-Year* (Alien Buddha Press, 2020), and his first chapbook, *Trail* (Guerrilla Genesis Press, 2020), are available on Amazon.

Jeni Booker Senter is an author, editor, English teacher, and an advocate for mental health awareness. She has bipolar disorder, but it doesn't have her. Her writing is cathartic in dealing with the intricacies of navigating adulthood after growing up in generational familial dysfunction and poverty. Her writing has earned awards in the C.M. Duque Wilson Essay Contest and the Christian LaRoche Memorial Poetry Contest. She is a member of Sigma Tau Delta, the International English Honors Society, and she has a master of arts in English and creative writing. She is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in curriculum and instruction. She has contributed to the Blackwater Review, the Journal of South Texas Studies, A&U, Troubadour, and other literary journals.

Stephen Anderson is a Milwaukee poet whose work has appeared in *Southwest Review*, *Verse Wisconsin*, *Foundling Review*, *Twist in Time*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *New Purlieu Review*, *Free Verse* as well as in numerous other print and online journals. Many of his poems have been featured on the Milwaukee NPR affiliate WUWM Lake Effect Program. Anderson is the author of *Montezuma Resurrected and Other Poems*, *The Silent Tango of Dreams*, *navigating in the Sun*, as well as two full length collections, *In the Garden of Angels and Demons* and *The Dream Angel Plays the Cello*. In the summer of 2013, six of his poems formed the text for a chamber music song cycle entitled *The Privileged Secrets of the Arch* performed by some musicians from the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and an opera singer. Anderson's work is being archived in the Stephen Anderson Collection in the Special Collections section of the Raynor Libraries at Marquette University.

Fatima Ijaz is a contributing editor at Pandemonium Journal. She graduated in English from York University and Eastern Michigan University and has taught English Composition and Speech Communication at IBA. She won first prize at the McLaughlin Poetry Contest in Toronto (2007). She participated in artistic collaborations, which were featured at Music Mela 2019, Art Baithak 2019, and Taseer Art Gallery 2020. Her poetry and prose have been published in New Asian Writing, Kitaab, Rigorous, Zau, Praxis, The Write Launch, Red Fez, Whirlwind and Naya Daur. She is currently collaborating with designer Sadaf Malaterre for an art project titled ‘Whimsical’.

Sandra Kolankiewicz’s poems have appeared widely, most recently in *Galway Review*, *One*, *Otis Nebulae*, *Trampset*, *Concho River Review*, *London Magazine*, *New World Writing* and *Appalachian Heritage*. *Turning Inside Out* was published by Black Lawrence. Finishing Line has released *The Way You Will Go* and *Lost in Transition*.

Shirley J. Brewer serves as poet-in-residence at Carver Center for the Arts & Technology in Baltimore, MD. She also teaches creative writing workshops for seniors. Recent poems appear in *Barrow Street*, *Chiron Review*, *Comstock Review*, *Gargoyle*, *Poetry East*, *Slant*, and many other journals and anthologies. Shirley’s poetry books include *A Little Breast Music* (2008), Passager Books, *After Words* (2013), Apprentice House, and *Bistro in Another Realm* (2017), Main Street Rag. In January, 2020, Shirley was interviewed at the Library of Congress by Maryland poet laureate, Grace Cavalieri, for her long-running series “The Poet and the Poem.”

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Joan E. Bauer is the author of *The Almost Sound of Drowning* (Main Street Rag, 2008). For some years, she was a teacher and counselor and now divides her time between Venice, CA and Pittsburgh, PA. Since 2001, more than 250 of her poems have appeared in journals and anthologies in the USA and abroad. Her second, full-length collection, *The Camera Artist*, is forthcoming from Turning Point in February 2021. She’s currently working on a new poetry manuscript, “In Fair Verona,” focusing on Italian Americana.

Mari-Carmen Marin was born in Málaga, Spain, but moved to Houston, TX, in 2003, where she has found her second home. She is a professor of English at Lone Star College—Tomball, and enjoys dancing, drawing, reading, and writing poetry in her spare time. Writing poetry is her comfy chair in front of a fireplace on a stormy winter day.

Her work has appeared in several places, including, *Wordriver Literary Review*, *Scarlet Leaf Review*, *Dash Literary Journal*, *Months to Years*, *The Awakening Review*, *Lucky Jefferson*, *San Fedele Press*, *Willowdown Books*, *The Comstock Review*, *The Green Light Literary Journal*, and *Mothers Always Write*.

Hongri Yuan (b. 1962) is a Chinese mystic poet and philosopher. His work has been published in journals and magazines internationally in UK, USA, India, Mexico, New Zealand, Canada and Nigeria. He has authored a number of long poems including *Platinum City*, *The City of Gold*, *Golden Paradise*, *Gold Sun* and *Golden Giant*. The theme of his works is the exploration about human prehistoric civilization and future civilization.

About the Translator

Yuanbing Zhang (b. 1974), who is a Chinese poet and translator, works in a Middle School, Yanzhou District, Jining City, Shandong Province, China. He can be contacted through his email- 3112362909@qq.com.

Janet Harper is a poet who writes every day and often in collaboration with other poets and visual artists. She has trained in theatre and education. Her work as a teacher in adult and higher education has been all about words and meanings, inspiring a love of language and communication.

Peycho Kanev is the author of 6 poetry collections and three chapbooks, published in the USA and Europe. His poems have appeared in many literary magazines, such as: *Rattle*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Evergreen Review*, *Front Porch Review*, *Hawaii Review*, *Barrow Street*, *Sheepshead Review*, *Off the Coast*, *The Adirondack Review*, *Sierra Nevada Review*, *The Cleveland Review* and many others. His new chapbook titled *Under Half-Empty Heaven* was published in 2019 by Grey Book Press.

Alan Cohen/Poet first/Then primary care physician, teacher, manager/Living a full varied life. To optimize time and influence/Deferred publication, wrote/Averaged 3 poems a month/For 60 years/Beginning now to share some of my discoveries. Married to Anita 40 years/in Eugene, OR these past 10.

Jenny Santellano is a poet who lives in Chicago with her husband and two children. Her poems have been published in various e-zines and journals, including The Scarlet Leaf Review, Tuck Magazine, Midnight Lane Boutique, Dead Snakes, The Beatnik Cowboy, Duane's PoeTree, Veil: Journal of Darker Musings, and The Literary Hatchet.

Tammy Stone Takahashi (Tammy T. Stone) is a Canadian writer and poet. Her short stories have been published in Orion Headless, Broken City Magazine, Dairy River, Grace Notes Magazine and SNReview. She has been a featured writer and columnist for Elephant Journal and The Tattooed Buddha, writing about wellness and the arts. Her poetry (as Tammy Takahashi) has been widely published (most recently in The Sunlight Press) and anthologized, and her first poetry collection, *Formation: Along the Ganges and Back Again*, was published in 2015. Her second collection, *Little Poems for Big Seasons*, was released in 2016, and a third, *Land*, was published in 2018. She has also served as co-editor on two anthologies of spiritual poetry by women writers, including *Poetry as a Spiritual Practice: Illuminating the Awakened Woman* (2017). Her newest collection is called *100 Days of Peace and Hope* (2020).

J. Adams Lagana's poetry has appeared in *Atlanta Review*, the *Ekphrastic Review*, *Naugatuck River Review*, the *Paterson Literary Review*, and others. She is the co-editor of *River Heron Review* and lives in Bucks County, Pennsylvania (USA) with her family. **Pamela A. Corbett** is a writer and teacher who lives with her family in Bedford, NY. She loves gardening and biking along the horse farms, reservoirs, and beaches on Fire Island. Her work has appeared in *Dissident Voice*, *Haiku Journal*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, *The Journal of Classical Poets*, and *Prelude Magazine*.

Hunter Gagnon lives in North Berwick, Maine. He has worked as a State Park Seasonal Aide, a bookseller, and as a poetry teacher for elementary schools (before the pandemic). He holds a degree in Philosophy and has served in AmeriCorps and FemaCorps. He is a winner of the Mendocino Coast Writers' Conference 2019 Poetry Contest. His work has appeared in *7x7*, *Joyland*, *A) Glimpse) Of*, *Cabildo Quarterly* and elsewhere.

Erica Bernheim currently teaches English at Florida Southern College, where she also directs the creative writing program and the visiting writer's series. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Denver Quarterly*, *The Kenyon Review*, *New Reader Magazine*, *DIAGRAM* and *The Missouri Review*.

Kate LaDew is a graduate from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro with a BA in Studio Arts. She resides in Graham, NC with her cats Charlie Chaplin and Janis Joplin.

Michael Favala Goldman (b.1966) is a poet, a jazz clarinetist and a widely-published translator of Danish literature. Over 140 of his translations and poems have appeared in literary journals. Among his fifteen translated books are *The Water Farm Trilogy* by Cecil Bødker, *Dependency* by Tove Ditlevsen (a Penguin Classic), and *Something to Live Up To – Selected Poems of Benny Andersen*. His first book of poetry, *Who has time for this?* was published in 2020. He lives in Northampton, MA, where he has been running bi-monthly poetry critique groups since 2018. www.hammerandhorn.net

Carol Lipszyc's book of short stories on children and adolescents in the Holocaust, *The Saviour Shoes and Other Stories*, (2014) and her book of poetry, *Singing Me Home*, (2010) were published by Inanna. Her edited anthology of eighty poems on the heart, *The Heart Is Improvisational*, was published by Guernica Editions (2017). Integrating chants and narrative for ESL Literacy students, she authored *People Express* for Oxford University Press. An arts-based educator with a doctorate in education, Carol has published scholarship in international journals and is a retired Associate Professor in the English Department at a SUNY upstate college. A chapbook of poems, *In the Absence of Sons*, is slated for 2020 publication by Kelsay Books. Her web site can be found at www.carollipszyc.com

C.G. Nelson has been an avid reader of poetry since she was thirteen years old. Her first loves were Emily Dickinson and Edgar Allan Poe. C.G. Nelson is a new poet. She went to the University of Washington, where she graduated with a degree in English and Philosophy. Find her on Twitter @CGNelsonwrites.

Milton P. Ehrlich Ph.D. is an 89-year-old psychologist and a veteran of the Korean War. He has published poems in *The Antigone Review*, *London Grip*, *Arc Poetry Magazine*, *Descant Literary Magazine*, *Wisconsin Review*, *Red Wheelbarrow*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and the *New York Times*.

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