

# SIXFOLD

POETRY SUMMER 2014



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Sixfold is a collaborative, democratic, completely writer-voted journal. The writers who upload their manuscripts vote to select the prize-winning manuscripts and the short stories and poetry published in each issue. All participating writers' equally weighted votes act as the editor, instead of the usual editorial decision-making organization of one or a few judges, editors, or select editorial board.

Published quarterly in January, April, July, and October, each issue is free to read online, downloadable as PDF, and as e-book for iPhone, Android, Kindle, Nook, and others. Paperback book available at production cost including shipping.

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# Anne Rankin-Kotchek

## Letter to the World from a Dying Woman

*for Ron Garson*

Approaching 44, I just feel it's over.  
I lie in a kind of permanent autumn:  
my bones talking back,  
shoulders curled in a parenthesis 'round my heart,  
& any remaining veins of hope tangled in despair.  
Don't ask me how I got here—  
I can't make you understand  
something you don't want to know.

But like the sky I have a story to tell:  
wisdom I might have passed on to a daughter  
if only she had arrived,  
things I would have said to myself  
if only I had listened.

Now, I see it clearly: there are many ways to die—  
some of them don't even involve death.  
You might come to know this later.  
Or you can listen to me now,  
before your song is up & while my urgency to speak  
succeeds my tendency to descend.

The thing is, somewhere to the left of your spine,  
your soul is waiting to tell you  
everything you need to know.  
Stuff like this:  
the best way to deal with regret is to  
do what you want in the first place.  
And, where it is necessary,  
do not give up or give in.  
But also, where it is necessary,  
give up & give in.

The road less traveled isn't always on the map,  
but seek it without waver,  
like a dog pursues his home.  
If you wait too long for the green light,  
you'll spend your life stuck in traffic. Go ahead.  
Mix apples & oranges:  
the world needs more fruit salad.  
At least once a year, check out the way  
pinks collide with orange in the sunrise.

Remember not to give your heart  
to someone you don't trust with your head.  
If you grow the little voice inside of you  
(add plenty of music & moonlight), it will  
take you where you need to go.  
Your skin also has a voice, so listen.  
In fact, let your body do the talking.  
Swim in the air & dance in the water.  
Don't forget to try an ocean on for size:  
no matter who you are it will be a good fit.  
Be sure to bring enough air. Your lungs  
were meant to be filled & emptied, just like your days.

Tend to a living thing as though you're being graded on it.  
And get to know the earth on a first-name basis.  
But don't take the rain personally.  
Life is very, very, very unfair.  
Sex & doughnuts can help,  
but they're not a permanent cure.  
Most of all, find love  
in the answer, the question, & the pause in between.

And when you step outside  
the lines drawn by all of your others (even you),  
treat yourself like the bliss-bound, spring-leaning  
creature you were always meant to be.  
Then come back to tell me all about it,  
before my song is up & while my urgency to speak  
succeeds my tendency to descend.

# In the Wake of My Father's Orbit

*for Marty Rankin*

He was a brilliant star, but  
he was damaged too.  
He gave off an entirely different  
sort of light, and we were transfixed,  
forsaken as the contrails of his angels.  
I see him standing in the corner of our kitchen,  
the distracted mathematician mumbling numbers  
(never realizing that we were growing  
and multiplying in space and time).  
And then the sudden flash of anger, stunning  
in its own way:  
such potential for pain and shadow.

Everything about it was distorted:  
the way we looked up to him—though  
we had no choice, held under nature's sway—  
and how it mattered to us so the way he shone,  
how his brilliance glittered off of us  
and splintered us in a thousand ways.

On Sundays the six of us knelt beside him on the pew,  
our palms pressed together, fingers pointed upwards  
like candles reaching for a flame.  
With every "Amen" came the shame:  
we would always disappoint him.

But his light was a prism  
we could not turn away from,  
even when we knew  
it would grow us crooked,  
break us into dark shards.

# More Than Candy

Night. Feels later than darkness.  
Way past a child's bedtime.  
We have no bedtime.  
My younger brother and I climb  
out his bedroom window  
opening into the summer air,  
buoyant as dreams.  
Big plans.  
We fly off the garage roof,  
jumping to the ground and roll.  
Old pros.  
Sometimes others tag along.  
Tonight we're on our own.  
Two tadpoles.  
Our parents, unaware as always,  
sit inside with Johnny Carson.  
They never laugh.  
It's the other side of the house.  
More like the other side of the moon.  
We smile, bikes ready  
to carry us anywhere.  
As far as we dare,  
Brian says with his eyes.  
We sail under the stars, shooting  
for 7-11 like it has all the answers.  
Pedaling in our high-tops,  
we wade through fireflies  
with the flurry of superheroes.  
We are the great escapers.  
Inside the store, the choices  
never fail to dazzle.  
We own the aisles, but we know  
it isn't about the sweets.  
We choose our favorites  
and head back into the dark.  
I turn to my brother  
as he unwraps a Reese's.  
I love him more than candy.

# The Journey

*for Margaret Elizabeth Regina*

But after a while the road seems to drive you.  
And that's okay, if you like  
mile markers and weigh stations  
that measure nothing of importance  
the whine of your tires on pavement  
endless potholes and truck stops  
speed bumps and rumble strips  
the white lines and orange cones  
highways that leave you low  
exit ramps that steer you nowhere  
faded billboards and tires blown  
signs to places you'll never go  
and if you want your steering wheel  
to serve as the compass of your life.

But you know me.  
If there's a sky above  
then that's my path to the sea.  
And I'd rather be  
musing with a mountain,  
wondering what the crows know,  
making plans with the firs and pine,  
knowing I can take my time,  
and not let my travels  
be decreed by the speed limit  
but by how fast—or slow—  
my heart wants to go.

# The Only Prayer

I can't do the big prayers:  
don't know the Rosary,  
won't crumple my torso over my knees on the floor—  
arms outstretched with audacity.  
You won't find me facing Mecca, or  
orchestrating the *Amidah*,  
or waiting for the wafer silently hunched over the pew.  
I have no idea how to bow  
(or to whom)  
and may submit that flailing on the floor in foreign tongues  
or slipping notes in the Wailing Wall  
will almost certainly ensure one's heavenly requests  
remain unanswered.

Sometimes, getting up in the morning is  
the only prayer I know,  
the best I can offer  
to whatever deity  
may or may not be  
waiting for me to tumble humbly out of bed.

# Sara Graybeal

## Ghetto City

My students have created a board game  
Out of cardboard, tape, and staples.  
Ghetto City, they call it.

A numbered path leads to a 3D hut  
With a restless stick figure in the window.  
The goal: reach jail and bail your brother out  
Before getting shot.

We play the day John's brother gets booked  
And the day Kareem's uncle comes home.  
We play the day of the middle school shooting,  
Two kids with guns, none of my students,  
Nobody hurt. We play as if these things  
Make the game all right, safe still,  
Hypothetical.

When funders visit, we hide Ghetto City  
Under a red sheet in the back of the class.  
My students cross their arms, discuss the impact  
Of arts enrichment on their lives.

When we play, I am usually the first to get shot.  
My students love the way that this makes sense,  
And all the ways it doesn't. When I suggest  
A new game, they are disappointed in me.  
It doesn't work that way, they say.

# General Store Café

All day, jazz. At a blue table, Masquerade dancer painted on top  
One hand cradling a jug of wine & a white clown face  
Glittery scarf, arched eyebrows, dotted eyes  
On the walls stained glass, green & gold  
Bounce light every which way, winding  
Wind chimes, shelves painted lilac, housing  
Cloth dolls, home-made post cards, wreaths  
Disheveled over rims of chairs, a bookcase of local books  
That we don't want to read  
But will pretend to

When forced

To, when there is no one else to share our table  
So much jazz: oil paintings of farm animals  
Pig snouts blowing kisses  
Herons psychedelic lime green & pink  
A sack labeled *Product of Colombia, 70 Kilos*—  
To which twenty-first century soul  
Did this old thing appear artistic?  
Rabbit wind vanes, painted wood critters  
A forest goddess cloaked in hand-stamped robes  
Carly's Grab 'Em By the Cowtail mocha  
A plaque stating *Love me, love my dog*  
& butterflies swinging from the ceiling.

A woman walks in, eyes wide, lost stare  
Her sweatshirt spelling *United We Stand*  
Can I get a coffee, she says, trips  
Over the frayed rug, bumps  
Into the boom box, plastered with  
Bumper stickers & rainbow flags

The radio stutters, shifts from jazz  
To Christmas tunes

Jingle bells jingle bells, faces fall flat around the café  
What is this CVS music? This gas station music?  
What is this music that turns my mocha bitter?  
That spins the butterflies idly, that nauseates  
The herons in pink-green waves, that reminds me  
I am spending twelve dollars & eighty-six cents



On my organic fair trade in-season spinach quesadilla  
Music that sounds like my grandmother's house where she  
Stuffed my stocking, read from the Bible  
I do not visit Grandma now  
She cringes at my unshaved legs  
This music, these fucking lullabies  
That make me want to snap shut my laptop  
Step outside, reach my fingers to the sky &  
    Hold the world close; no  
Not the café—  
Hold the world close; recall that  
These are two different things  
I am a citizen of both &  
    One is begging  
Eat your spinach quesadilla for the right reasons &  
Switch the station now & then, if only for a second because  
    Just jazz can get to be too much.

# Did You Hear That, Just Now?

Zimmerman not guilty.  
Trayvon Martin dead.

In South Philadelphia,  
Silent streets: a sleepy fig tree,  
Bony cats stalking their prey.

Is rising up too much to ask  
On a July night like this one,  
Wearing rage on our bodies  
As we do on our Facebook pages?  
Are we all so weary, so unsurprised  
That a march is unattainable,  
That the fury of our solitary brains,  
Our fingers whipping across the keys  
Are the most we can offer up  
In the name of solidarity?

If it were the sixties, millions would have marched.  
If it were the nineties, streets would have burned.

But it is 2013. The numbers ring apocalyptic.

Sidewalks are bare. Windows so dark  
It seems all souls have departed.

*I am Trayvon Martin*  
*We are Trayvon Martin*

The cries, once smothered by sirens,  
Forced entries and the clink of handcuffs  
Around the smooth wrists of brothers and sons  
Stand no chance against this silence.  
Boarded windows splinter open.  
Potholes yawn. They will swallow  
These cries by morning.

These homes, vacated of hope,  
Will soon be yoga studios and  
Montessori schools. And finally,  
The fight—the few voices still  
Murmuring over candlelight  
In buildings slated for demolition  
By winter—will drift to places still  
Worth fighting for. I cannot tell  
Whether or not they will be missed.

# Tee Iseminger

## Construction

They sold the empty lot next door last month, the one with the tree, the tree my daughter climbed all of those mercilessly long, stagnant summers, made her teenage cradle in, read her borrowed books. The tree whose limbs overgrew the property line and rubbed against our lives until we no longer remembered that it wasn't our tree, and we, or maybe it was only I who came to depend on the sympathy of its freckled shade on our breakfast table, the table where my husband and I sat suspended each morning in forbearance, in our own early fall, these seasons of not saying, of not knowing what else we might possibly say, and so grateful for the scratching of branches.

It came down more quietly than any of us expected; one day we simply noticed that we had poured our orange juice in a spot of warm sun.

“We won't be a bother,” the foreman had shouted from over the fence as I as pulled tomatoes that Wednesday, the last time I saw that tree.

I'm afraid you will, is a thing I could have said.

## Tuesday Morning on the Way to Rehab

This is the you I will press to a clean new sheet of memory, you asleep with your shaggy head against the dirty car window—do you remember when I still cared to stop and to wash things?—and with this newly exploding sunrise in the glassy space beyond you, as pale as you, as ignorant as you of a future I fear may not include either one of us. Or maybe the memory to keep is three years ago, when you were just beginning to fall apart, when I was still sure that there were so many chances, so many chances out there for you. It's getting late and we should hurry, now. You are small and changing fast, reducing. By sunset you will have shrunken back from the framed edges of this picture, farther than you were yesterday, farther even than you were early this palid morning, less you than just an instant ago—please, is there no way to save it now?—there is all of this history and I have nothing but you to keep it in.

# Ways We May Have Been Wrong

I am watching your sister through the window, waiting for the bus. The rising sun behind her has caught her in such a way that the space around her has been set afire. I step away, intending to pick up the camera to get a picture, but then stop, and decide only to just be present.

You are not here and today is your birthday. I remember the day, I think it was in the second grade, that I sat waiting on the front stoop for your own school bus to arrive, and when it did you ran fast down its stairs and up the walkway to where I sat, and with wide, frightened eyes you cried: *my friend died yesterday*. He was seven, and had only been walking home, only walking home—I can still hear so clearly that *only*—and he just collapsed, and that was that. I remember feeling as we clung together, and I think you did, too, that this is what made life the scariest thing.

Your birthday. When I was pregnant with you, had just begun to round out in the belly, my back pulled in to follow as you stretched us both out into unknown territory, and it was then that I felt the deep foreshadow of this place where we live now, and so I sat down to write a poem. It was rough, I was young, only twenty. But it was all you and me, all superhero duo and scrappy fairy tale. I still believe in that version of us. Maybe just not in quite the same costumes, now.

When you have made your bed, when you have finished with today's group and the nurse has watched you take your dose and sent you out into that unnaturally bright and crowded room, please call. I'll sing.

## Occlusion

I take a swipe at your tight face  
pull it back, brush the dustings off—  
you were 22 then, your bright smile  
gone fallow, your eyes anemic and  
retreating.

I pinch the features hard, try by  
brute force to bring you back to  
your surface, to pull you forward  
and out into this very particular,  
particular light—  
this place I have shaded  
by not shading, drawn by  
drawing around you,  
more screened,  
more diffuse, I see now,  
than chiaroscuro.

# Lisa Beth Fulgham

## After They Sold the Cows, But Before They Cut Away the Pines

Wine-fed and lying in truck beds thrown open,  
we had gathered in a field to watch meteor showers  
but first noticed the moon, halved  
and upward-facing like a bowl to hold  
every flinch, every shiver, every *amen* come Sunday.

Firelight would have drowned out the celestial,  
so we grasped at each other for warmth.  
We played geography, we played guess-the-headlights,  
we played sing-the-tree-line-to-sleep.

We awoke with the warblers at dawn, dew seeped  
into the openings of our sleeping bags.  
Together, we excavated the remnants of the night.  
Blushing and lacking pavement to guide us,  
we drove along the barbed-wire fence,  
hoping to cross it as we had the night before,  
without piercing our skin.



# The Choctaws under the Bed

The picture was boxed in forest green and dust,  
waiting to be discovered in the space beneath  
my grandmother's brick-hard mattress.

Man and woman, field-worn and dark-skinned,  
they glared at me. These two stood upright,

holding their half-filled baskets in front of them.

Behind them grew rows of cotton.

And I wondered, if they could see me,  
would they string beads in my straw-like hair?

If they could see me, would they touch

this skin that the sun bites into, chews,  
and spits out? Would they scold

me for slouching and step forward  
to straighten my spine?

Would they teach me dying

words that would hang in my throat  
like phlegm in Southern spring?

Would they say *Oh my, how you've grown,*  
*we remember . . .* or just return to their work,  
pulling at the bolls more forcefully?

# Justification

It's ok because I only count  
when I'm bored, she says, noticing  
every percussive pen click against  
legal pad from across the gap  
between her and Dr. Drivel.  
Behind her back she lifts  
and curls her fingers in multiples  
of three with each beat.  
The inspirational posters and books  
with well-worn spines don't distract  
enough from the floor tiles, arm freckles  
and kaleidoscopes that need to be inventoried.

Just like the asphalt and white  
lines of highways are not enough  
to keep her from turning her attention  
to the passing cars as she paces home.  
There is not enough time to number them all,  
to make sure that she's seen the correct  
amount before she can go inside.  
So she takes the longer way, dodging  
through alleyways and neighborhoods.

She turns the knob back and forth  
three times before heading indoors,  
announcing her arrival.

It's ok because at night I can rest,  
she says, turning the light off with  
the normal click, click, click.  
She turns over three times  
like an alligator in a death roll  
with a dog,  
and gives thanks for the dark,  
and gives thanks for the dark,  
and gives thanks.

# A Strange Offspring

Junior high experimenter,  
wisp-banged boy who swabbed  
the corners of my locker  
while I stood, kicking at a patch  
of dried gum on the short, grey carpet,

if then I could have seen the bacteria  
swelling in shades of white, green,  
and yellow, I wouldn't have volunteered,  
raising my hand and wiggling my fingers  
under the fluorescent lighting.

Later, we gazed at the Petri dish,  
a fertile culture blooming  
below us, condensation  
lapping the lid.  
A girl chortled

two rows over, called me  
moldy Mona. You slid  
your nails underneath  
the tape, opened the container,  
and released our spores.

## **Found after the Sudden Storm with Straight Line Winds**

This light switch, useless.  
That half-green, half-rust  
lawn chair lost.  
Torn bits of yesterday's news:  
the school's successful play,  
the congressman's unsuccessful affair.  
Power lines snaked  
across the asphalt.  
This pup thrown  
against the shed's aluminum side.  
This house halved by a pecan tree.  
Parking lot puddles reflecting  
our cheeks, the sun.  
This corn crop's thirst quenched.  
These ponds teeming,  
this conversation overflowing.

# Mary Mills

## The Practical Knowledge of Women

A pragmatist  
to all appearances, my father  
has spent his life  
with steel and fire

but again brings out the little bird  
and trusts her to her mate,  
her life the size of a wine cork  
and fragile as apple blossom.

“He misses her,” he explains,  
and it is I  
with my supposedly impractical education  
who can see the mistake.

She spends a week or so  
in the larger cage,  
sleeping beside him  
on a spindly branch

and it convinces my father,  
but not me.  
It is the practical knowledge of women:  
the man who will pluck a feather  
will pick your wings bare,

and he who will nearly kill you  
will kill you, eventually.  
My father believes in love.  
So do I, but I also believe

in the bone-cold January days  
I spent in an old farmhouse  
away from a sharp beak.  
I believe in many things

that only look like love  
from odd angles, that cannot be  
proven beyond any shadows,  
but speak the lack.

I believe  
in the bare places  
where feathers  
have never  
grown back

## Peas

My mother could make me eat peas,  
but not chew them.

I must have swallowed a gallon  
whole like medication,  
her motives  
vitamins dipped in gall.

Later, she could make me tell her  
events, but not how I felt.  
I'd hold crushes or despair in my mouth  
for hours until I could excuse myself  
to the cold altar of the bathroom,  
offer up the green  
flesh of my teenage heart  
to an empty room.

Even now, she tiptoes  
around perceived scorn,  
recoils from the black pits  
of old fires  
as if the specter of their heat  
still frightens her, as if  
they might reignite  
spontaneously  
and swallow her  
whole

# Earth from Space

I love best alone,

our apartment  
at the bottom of the hill a sunken glow.  
There's our life,  
I want to say (but don't). We watch the glass door,  
waiting to see  
ourselves walk by, inside,  
astronauts watching Earth from space.  
It reminds me of you  
last winter, on skates—  
how I expected your clumsiness,  
but you glided away. How you looked  
from the long end of the rink:  
oblivious, distant, whole in a way  
that crushed my ribs like paper.

I'm never  
this close up close, I didn't want to say.



## 30,000

Pushed off  
like a swimmer from a pool wall  
deep into a cold ripple  
of burned pearls.  
Our flying dollhouse.

I pretend to read  
but how?  
the lush whirl of earth, below;  
my eyes drag back  
like dogs pulling leashes,  
resentful of my insistence  
on the banal.

my god, I think, listening  
for the silence  
that coats the world,  
but the engines  
bored as cattle  
lumber on. My open book  
tells its story  
to the wall.

# Monika Cassel

## Waldschatten, Muttersprache

*(in memory of Erik Cassel)*

The tree is broken in the light.  
Every rose folds shut—  
Quiet, they say,

like the face of the woman  
who looks up from her reflection in the forest pool  
to gaze at you, at me, to hear the veery's call.

You asked for dark and light, for here and gone.  
The veery's notes resound unseen;  
they haven't asked you here

to tender me again with yellow petals.  
Marsh marigold, Dutchman's breeches, lady's slipper,  
chilled medicines I tucked under your tongue, your tired whisper—

These are the hard coins of our dreams:  
fish-breath, rain-slept, heart-kept.

## Thrift, ca. 1946

*“Die Fahne Hoch,” (“Raise the Flag”) co-anthem during the Third Reich, was composed by Horst Wessel, Nazi hero/martyr, and outlawed in Germany after 1945.*

She made me a new red dress  
when the schools opened again:  
pulled the old flag out from a drawer,  
clipped the stitches  
from the circle in the center, held it up,  
shook her head  
at the black spider,

“good fabric  
and a pity to waste it  
but there’s just nothing  
I can make out of this,”  
spread the red rectangle  
and cut the pattern;  
just enough.

A lot of girls wear red  
these days. At recess  
boys patrol the playground,  
yank up  
our skirts. They sing  
Horst Wessel’s song  
as they run by,  
“Die Fahne hoch!”

**Hertha Tielsch to Maria Radler,  
Garßen bei Celle, Germany,  
January 1, 1947.**

I've enclosed  
your handkerchief  
which I am returning  
to you, unfortunately  
still with the stain.

I just laid it in the snow  
one more time  
to bleach—

Maybe that  
will help.

# Michael Fleming

## To a Fighter

*for Marti*

### Invocations

#### I. CAT Scan

And just what does the cat see  
with his shining green eyes  
as he skulks through the dark  
warm jungle of your veins?  
Let him pad silently back  
to report that the wet, pulsing  
miracle somehow continues.

#### II. Biopsy

May the surgeon  
in her spotless apron  
emerge smiling  
from the kitchen  
saying:  
I had a little look  
you're not ready  
the oven's not  
even hot.

#### III. PET Scan

It sounds so gentle—just a light caress,  
nothing intrusive, nothing rude or rough,  
just a feathery touch, a lover's kiss,  
a whisper barely there, barely enough  
but enough all the same—you can't say no.

Or a light knock on your door: open it.  
A nice young man, clean as a Mormon, stands  
there smiling brightly and asks: How many kittens?  
Puppies? Tropical fish? And he hands  
you a pamphlet, a rose—you can't say no.

Think of these things when you're in the machine:  
the brush of a heron's wing, the soft knock  
of knuckles that have never known work, clean  
sheets, clean slates, clean blood. And one day we'll talk  
of this and laugh, or cry—you can't say no.

## From Dartmouth-Hitchcock

I want to tell you:  
they look like they know  
what they're doing here.  
I want to tell you:  
the man we met today,  
he'll be a sculptor in reverse—  
a poet of perfect excision.  
Just the one little pea, no more.  
And then we'll go back  
to West West, to wood thrushes  
and red-eyed vireos and the great  
blue herons rising like pterodactyls  
from ponds shaded by maples.  
Maples—  
they know how summer heals  
those neatly bored tapholes  
from early spring.  
I want to tell you:  
we wouldn't have a damn  
thing different.

## Chemo

By now we know a thing or two about fire, how it quickens everything alive or dead or flickering between, and how to conjure it from nothing, how to give it what it needs, and no more—just enough oxygen, just enough life. We love fire, love to exult in our mastery, love to amaze ourselves with borrowed power. By rights we would be gods. But gods, they have their troubles, too—all that incense, all that dark insufferable mumbling, all that rain. Why do we put up with it? We just do. Star-crossed, marked for the burning at birth. Pain? By now we know a thing or two about pain.



## Picture This

Do you like a beach? Okay, then, a beach—  
in fact, your favorite beach, favorite because  
you've never been to this beach before—each  
sensation beckons you, opens you, draws  
you in, welcomes you to *your* beach—the sand  
envelops the bare contours of your feet,  
sunshine pours over you, *here*, where the land  
yields itself to the sea. A waiter greets  
you, hands you a glass of exquisite wine,  
the taste is an aria, it unfolds  
itself in your throat, your belly, the line  
between you and universe is gone, golden  
light floods through you, heals you, holds  
you, whispers everything's going to be fine.

# The Champ

The Champ is down, cold-cocked. Seven. Eight. Nine.  
( *two heads faces backlit floating in smoke  
floating in warm wet gauze unending wind  
choirs of voices choirs of bells one face broken  
one barking numbers the other gone  
the other* ) The Champ stirs, shakes, slowly rises,  
staggers, steadies, blinks hard twice, unfreezes,  
nods all-clear. By God, the Champ fights on,

tapping the gloves as if to strike a spark,  
as if to pray ( *the other* ) and the crowd  
is delirious, a heaving sea of darkness  
and fists, cigars and fedoras, now  
rapt, now roaring, now howling like a raw  
nerve, electric, as the two of them dance  
the dance of circling beasts, now grappling, now glancing  
blows, now thunder—by God, the Champ fights on,

unrelenting (*the other*) a quick left,  
a right, darting jabs, starting to connect,  
at last the Kid is on the ropes, a deft  
feint from the Champ, dauntless on the blood-flecked  
mat (*the other*), that bed of mortal conflict,  
the crowd's madness is love, uppercut,  
the Kid's head flies back, rock-a-shock, eyes shut,  
nimbus of sweat and blood—the Champ fights on,

by God ( *the other* ) and the Kid is through.  
Carted off. And now the ref does his shtick,  
the big-mike announcer does his bit, too,  
the crowd trades backslaps and greenbacks. *The fix  
is on*, someone mutters gravely. ( *gone  
never gone* ) Echoes and laughter, house lights.  
Janitors appear, disappear. The night  
is over—and by God, the Champ fights on.

# Daniel Stewart

## January

I defy you this year with a smile  
less one tooth  
extracted because the bone  
that anchored it  
dissolved. Neglect born  
of neglect. A mother loves one  
son but not the other. A goose will kill  
its smallest, lamest mouth  
for the sake of other hungers.  
We endure  
inversion-gummed air, The Gap  
and I, ignore  
side streets rutted with snow  
marbled like foam on a latte.  
More than halfway through  
my forties I know  
better, January. If the boss I'd fire  
your ice; shove your single digits up your  
aurora borealis. I heart you  
like a clogged artery, stroke you  
like a pulse-burst. You've struck the sky  
of birds, strung the smog  
with tinsel. The frost-fringed dead  
limbs of the trees fool the kids  
but I'm lost  
as the starlings. Such garish  
garnish crowns you the grandest, damndest  
widow. You suck  
me dry. My hands crack  
and flake. My lips need  
a balm. A stranger reached  
into me and wrenched  
out a tooth. He numbed me  
first—I felt nothing—but the cracking  
was like ice fallen through.  
I've fallen through you,  
January. Your frozen fist will wreck a face.  
I turn my cheek for you to kiss.

# April

The white top reanimates, little stranglers  
haloed with petals. I thought I killed

them all last year with poison, with my bare  
hands dragging them out of the graves

they were digging in the lawn. Weeds  
always return. You never

will. The neighbors started gardens but I've been  
wary, haven't even tilled the weedy soil. Dandelions

roar neon wounds. Wind riots  
in the budding plum, the frantic

blossoms your absence. Sky an ache  
of angles through awkward branches. The poppies

under fatten and stir.  
Bent, I spray white top and crabgrass; crush

cheat; I resist. You insist  
the sky's schizophrenic with clouds. The sky

pales the way a face  
drains. The wind's scouring tears

eyes (a reflex) that reflect only the ordinary  
light. Mid-April, and frost expected after midnight.

## Corvette

As if Cancer was a giant  
vampire that broke off the blackened  
fang it sucked the blood  
from my family with & left  
it in the flesh to fester.

The white  
skeleton stretched grey  
skin into a yellowed  
grin, waved its claw  
like a magician  
performing a trick.

Stripes  
our Brindle/Pit mix  
whined and sniffed a chrome  
wheel, lifted leg to piss  
but found Dad's foot & curse  
up his ass instead.

My brother  
hooted & drooled, lusted  
over the two-seater trap.  
Never good at math, Dad:  
We were four, not counting  
the dog.

*Splinter*, I thought. *Stab*. Then:  
*Dick*.

Told my brother he could pull it out  
of the garage. Turned to me  
*O meat of him, grey-tinged pink with rotting*, said:  
*You get to wash it*.

# Midnighting

I like to do it while I'm drunk.  
I like to do it when I'm starved.

Slick out under a fat  
moon dressed in black,  
even the shoes.

Some nights call  
for hooves to clatter  
through quelled neighborhoods  
(The sleeping flinch  
while dreaming),

others stripped  
naked as a wish  
to be helpless, to be  
holy.

Others, lonely.

Or, fashion paws  
from cat hair and nail parings  
to match the mask  
filched from the raccoon  
hunkered under  
the shed—paws

ideal  
for scrambling  
up streetlights—now  
varmint stupid  
for starlight—pale

as a secret  
no one burns to know,  
breath molecular  
chaos I marry  
to wind and go.

## 17<sup>th</sup>

August you give me a canker  
my periodontalist wants to biopsy  
you send me flailing into rush hour  
you ding my fender  
you unfriend me  
you terrorize my mother out of language  
you berate her with dialysis  
you castigate her with leukemia  
you accuse us with fires  
you plaque the valley in smoke  
you cast deformed shadows  
you bully us into prayer  
*Are you prone to canker sores*  
*You have a history*  
*of smoking (sinning)*  
*Do you suck hard candy*  
*Do you suck anything*  
*What about cinnamon*  
what about turmeric coriander why  
is curry so expensive  
what about lemons  
what about *getting darker instead of dusk*  
What about Egypt Iraq Iran Syria  
Our lust  
for quinoa  
disempowers Bolivians  
On the Internet  
I saw a man eat another man's heart  
I saw a man immolate himself  
You unveil the olinguito  
then beach hundreds of dolphins  
Thunder after midnight explodes  
me from dream  
shudders the windows  
catapults the cats  
casts serpents seething  
through the barren plum tree  
the shriveled raspberry  
a respite  
August  
your hard hot rain  
on my wet hapless face

# John Glowney

## Cigarettes

What was cool  
was when an older boy snuck  
a girlie magazine  
out of Ross' Five & Dime  
inside his shirt.

No one knew girls like this  
in slips and filigreed bras  
with their compromised thighs  
and their bared knees,  
incongruous and lovely.

What was cool  
was Bill the mechanic  
at Schmitt's Garage  
with the cottony white  
of a Lucky Strike  
between two greasy black fingers

and the time someone jacked a pack  
and we watched him smoke  
back of the little league field

where the local bikers  
popped wheelies and burned rubber

and he hacked and hacked  
because he said  
he liked it.

What was cool  
was the chopped Harley  
we swore we'd take across the country  
the summer



after graduating from laying back on our beds  
with our secret urges  
and our evolving plans  
and our mystical trances

and our detailed seduction  
of the prettiest senior cheerleader  
who willingly unbuttoned her blouse  
gracefully as rain outside the upstairs window

and our copies of *True Detective* under the mattress,  
the models' eyes blocked  
with a black rectangle

so they wouldn't have to see  
what we were about to do

as we lit up and lay there  
revving our engines  
in the glow and the ash and the smoke rings of ourselves.

# Boys

A full nelson or Indian burn, jiu-jitsu  
or the flying drop kick,

we smacked each other around in the parking lot  
after Sunday School.

We caught the tomcats by their stringy tails  
and swung them,

we peppered the granary eaves with bb shots  
killing replaceable sparrows.

Slick green frogs, and mottled brown toads  
that peed in our sticky hands,

we marooned in old washtubs  
until they curled up like old shoes.

We pinched any girl we liked.  
The slow boys, the boys who couldn't throw,

we shoved into their lockers.  
The substitute teachers, especially the one

with the lazy eye, weathered our snickers  
and spitballs. We taunted

our retarded classmate until scolded,  
unashamed, the wild green pulse

of our short attention spans  
fizzing in the sugary glitter

of what comes next.  
And when, in the delivery room,

our first-born arrives,  
howling, a boy,

we sit there and blubber  
like *big old crybabies*.

# Paradise of Wounds

I'd have done anything in those days.  
Cut off my ear. Smashed

my red convertible  
through the mayor's front window.

Played strip-poker with the nuns  
under the table. I had no quarrel

with the universal laws of nature  
or other local customs

but I ostentatiously rejected  
the Pythagorean Theorem

and flouted gravity  
by floating over the bright raft

of the tennis courts at night.  
I've crawled under the bed sheets

of their hourly-rate motels  
like an amorous cockroach,

I've waited at their bus stops  
to taste the sublimities of cocaine,

the narcotic joys  
they kept in coat pockets,

I've been jonesing  
for their hammer and nail

sex, I've hung out with them  
in our jail cell, our belts

around our necks.  
I've shared the clear cold vision

of the damned,  
who have seen the fruits

of their pleasures  
and delights sour,

whose heads are the stinging jellyfish mothers  
of a thousand motives.

# At The Museum of Don't Come Back

Memory's a stranger in a diner  
eating the blue plate special,

rubbing one hairy ear with a spoon.  
Don't look back the way a train

leaves the station and the countryside  
shrinks, the tiny red barns

glowing in warm yellow light. I've  
been riding with the crop-duster,

out-dated county map in hand,  
wheel and dive, wind bucking the struts,

following my instincts into the cross-hatch  
of fence-rows,

the drift of forgetfulness under telephone lines  
poisonous beyond the fields' lush edges.

Each time it's like visiting a museum,  
the early years taming this mid-west

glacial till. Scythes. Old threshing machines.  
Frost on all the exhibits. Some kind

of raw rust on the plough-blades.  
What I have laid aside extends for miles.

# Sunday Morning

And the gray in the sky today is nothing  
that a fresh coat of paint  
and some flowers wouldn't fix. Violets, fuchsia  
arranged in the cloud-beds,

some wanton tulips,

and the wind blowsy in the trees  
cluttering the air with the smell of fresh mown grass

and gasoline  
and sparrows  
like the change in your trousers  
scattered on a bare patch of sidewalk.

And the sun, roused like a king  
who demands all attention, then sleeps

like a baby as the party carries on.

No politics, just a silence  
so clear you thought  
you could sing it, or somebody could,

some gorgeous voice in the scuffed static,  
the needle stuck in the groove.

# Hannah Callahan

## The Ptarmigan Suite

1.

When I first flew south  
I was brown with white wings  
And I lived above the timberline.

In winter, white with black tails,  
I frequented the tundra,  
Quiet farms, yards, and barren hills  
And loved willow scrub the best.

If you'd sat down in a sheltered valley  
I might have called to you  
As I did in those days,  
A deep and raucous holler  
Had I pebbles in my voice box:

*Go-out! Go-out!*  
*Go-back!*

*Go-back!*

2.

The first time I pore over *A Field Guide to the Birds*  
I obsess over the ptarmigan, willow and rock. Why,  
Here's a sort of grouse shaped like a horn of plenty,  
Unremarkable; once I was described as a plain Jane;  
Stout, brown, pigeon-like, but lacking what it takes to live in density  
And it makes the sound of a soul leading a body toward fire.



3.

Chimney Swift  
Whippoorwill

Some birds look like sails when they fly  
Or sound like harps when they sing

And the myth I've heard is that the Devil  
Is where the birds sing through the night,  
In winter white, off a quiet hill  
Eclipsed by the willow scrub.

I've heard a big, big ghost  
Is who shelters the sheltered valleys.

Truthfully, I'm not for superstition  
But if you could change colors,  
Could leave when it snowed, could  
Fly off the moment you were scared,  
There would be a name in the ether  
For you.

4.

Despite the ways each bird in Heaven is superior to me  
Only I step this far back when needing to look.

As for now, we've all gone: shot, caged, or eaten.  
We sit around trying to arrive collectively at something real,  
Something about what it meant to live as birds.

One bird says *This is what the wind felt like,*  
One says *This is what it felt like for the wind to blow,*  
One even says *Here's a sensation similar to the wind.*

But the ptarmigan, the under-bird, the ground-feeder,  
The last one being carried off in the teeth of a fox,  
Says *Me, I can still feel the wind.*  
*I can go-back and feel it.*

5.

Some nights this winter a great-horned owl was wont to perch outside my bedroom window.

I'd never once see him. But his call, working like boiling water over the ice-thick air,

Caused me several times to think he was right beside me in bed.

The Great-Horned Owl: As large as our largest hawks, and fierce-looking.

So much fiercer than my ptarmigan bird, nights he hooted to me through the glass,

I imagined him sky-stalking, with preternatural foresight, so that the motion of the stars

To him, was as jewels scattering across a floor.

Untrue, but the image struck me nevertheless, because I was smaller than he was.

Because he could see me through the dark, and often told me so.

# Lee Kisling

## How the Music Came to My Father

Sort of a miracle, you might say because  
I never saw or heard him practice. Just one day  
there he was playing an accordion in his baggy pants  
and white shirt looking like he was holding two bags  
of potatoes, squeezing the air in and out of them.  
The miracle of it—so sudden and unexpected—I now  
picture God reaching down his wavering finger to touch  
some other man with musical sensibilities, some father  
two doors down, but accidentally touching Glenn.  
And there he was, blessed, in our crackerbox house,  
playing some nickering old-world polka and a passed-over  
father down the street pulled his belt from his pants  
and went looking for his boys.

The cosmic error was corrected eventually by  
whoever it is that fixes God's mistakes. We went back  
to our yelling and the whippings and the accidental  
Myron Floren moment passed. The world I knew  
made sense again, and the holy finger must have  
only barely brushed against him—he never said this  
is going to hurt me more than it hurts you. And now  
he's in a sort of band of accidental squeeze box angels  
on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street in heaven and there is a champagne bubble  
machine, and sometimes they go marching in their old  
army uniforms down that gold paved road,  
shaking with palsy, tickling the ivories,  
singing *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*.

## Kindly Give Up

Kindly give up these seats for the elderly and the daft,  
arthritic abuelos singing pharmacy songs.

Kindly give them up.

Where they have been you are going.  
Where they are going you are also going.

Give them directions, not to there—  
they will find there easy enough, soon enough,  
to where else they are headed before there  
with always bags of stuff on the bus.  
Kindly give them your seats  
your help, your hand, your memory.

Eyes magnified by thickening lenses, leopard spotted.  
Less admired certainties, less effective remedies.  
Less likely recoveries, less remembered memories.  
Like strollered babies eying their peers,  
they watch each other disappear.  
Landmarks of long lives, having passed by here before,  
creased old maps, now everything's changed,  
what with the by-pass and one-way streets to the shiny  
spotless hospital on the hill where

Once upon a time

    cows stood.

What is most depressing about cemeteries is the heavy yellow  
machinery—once just a couple of bums with shovels  
lowering themselves, making it last.

Please give up thinking of their movement as mass transit.  
Picked-up pilgrims along the road, slowly boarded,  
carried to clinics, casinos and churchyards,  
deposited on corners. Speak to them  
in Polish, Spanish, or Serbo-Croat.

Nod in understanding,  
yes, yes.

Babies once, transported in arms, never alone,  
tiny fingers, pink toes wee wee allthewayhome,  
soothed, sheltered, spanked, adored. Kindly make  
a place for them, give up your seats, soon  
the return, to the corner of  
Here & Gone, en memoriam, the gray  
guests of honor.

## Borrowings

Here is the imaginary library  
where you can borrow a father—a book  
you didn't finish. Old books about fathers  
and grandfathers with brittle pages,  
pictures and maps of Kansas and Iowa  
may show signs of wear. They are anecdotal—  
the price of a horse, the hot weather in September.

Here, the reading room.  
Empty chairs and morning sun  
slanting through the windows,  
the slow quiet turning of pages. Shhhh.  
No howl here—no keening, no Shall We Gather,  
but someone has written these books because  
someone needs to read them.

I will be your father if you'll be my daughter.  
a loaner to get you around the town;  
oh what a family we could be—  
understudies, bound to say  
sorry, I loved you,  
and goodbye.

# Write 50 Times

*(for Dave Moses)*

1. I will not chew gum in class. I will
2. not chew gum in class. I will
3. not gum in class chew. I will
4. in class chew not gum. I will
5. not sing The Marseillaise in class.
  
6. I will not, just incidentally, ever work for the telephone company.
  
7. And I will NEVER put my hand in my shirt like Napoleon Bonaparte.
7. Well yes, I suppose it all started with the gum chewing.
8. And some things just happen, of course.
9. I will remain gum-free, attentive, and responsible,
- 9a. but possibly not in class.
  
10. I will not chew gum at my Uncle Inor's funeral.
11. Tomorrow afternoon at 2 pm. Thanks for asking.
  
12. I will not chew more than one stick of gum in class.
13. I will not, as a rule, respond well to petty discipline in class.
14. I mean, who the hell really cares about gum chewing?
15. With all due respect.
16. Or bloody prime numbers. Or King Whatsit. Or wretched poems.
19. Like going to school ever did you any good.
22. Bongo the Clown probably makes more money than you
29. and he drives a red Camaro.
  
34. Christopher Columbus chewed gum and he discovered Virginia or someplace.
  
37. Actually, chewing gum is a sedative.
38. It helps me concentrate.
39. It's a health issue really—I could get a prescription.
41. You don't want to see me when I haven't had a chew for a few hours.
  
43. Thousands of people work in the chewing gum industry.
44. Good decent Americans with mortgages and car payments.



45. Next I suppose we won't be permitted to sleep in class.
46. What's this class about, anyway?
48. We the People demand to have the right to chew gum!
49. Give me liberty or give me some gum!
50. E chewibus pluribus gumbus!

# Jose A. Alcantara

## Finding the God Particle

When we are finally standing face to face  
and flesh to flesh, remind me that I want  
more than your body, more than your mind.

Remind me that I want the infinite sweep of you  
the full onrushing charge of you  
the m-c-squared of you, the big bang of you.

Remind me to give you the indivisible parts of me  
the strange quarks of me, the charm of me  
the up and down of me.

And though 95% of everything else is darkness  
let us be nothing but a tangle of vibrating strings  
caught in the claws of a curious cat.

# Alone

I fell asleep by the river again.  
Thirty-eight degrees. *The Stranger*  
in my lap. How is it that the same sun  
that gives this sweet lethargy  
brings another man to murder?  
A single shot, a pause, then four more.  
As I watch the ducks drop into the eddies  
I know the sun is not to blame, nor the moon,  
the fires, the droughts, or the surging tides.  
We act. We do what we want.  
Sometimes we get away with it.  
Sometimes we pay a price.

# A Day in the Life

It's her birthday.

She opens a tiny black box  
bound in a blue bow.

A billion billion stars tumble out  
some yellow, some red

some big, some small.  
They fall, in all directions

into a bottomless black bowl  
where they burn burn burn

until she makes a wish  
and with her cold breath

blows them out.

# David A. Bart

## Veteran's Park

I walked there at daybreak  
to view the colossal bronze  
of a young ensign, bereft, his rifle  
capped with another's helmet.  
May thirty-first. This was once  
observed as Decoration Day  
but today there are no starry pennants  
or tri-colored sashes pinned across  
men and women who rise from folding  
chairs to gingerly salute. This place is empty,  
almost. A teenager is learning to drive.  
Sparrows make their ablutions in the sand.  
And there. My dead father, standing away,  
teeth and glasses restored since I saw him last.  
But it's someone else, of course,  
some other elder serviceman  
yet to be taken Over There.

Bicycle parts and a broken cement  
culvert lay in the creek—mortar and caisson.  
Struck by its lanyard, a flag pole is ringing.  
Somewhere a lawnmower idles—  
my father's song—the droning made dulcet  
by distance and wind and how I like to imagine  
it is the sound made by the morning star.

## This Week

Our daughter lost her incisor.  
It rattled in the plastic bite-size  
treasure chest her school supplies.

Baptists examine their thirty  
foot steeple taken down  
for repair. It rests on its side  
across the parking lot.

Instead of sleeping on it  
she buried her tooth in the yard.  
Soiled fingernails, a red gap  
between thorn canines,  
like a novice vampire  
interring a fang.

Without its mitre, the house  
of God resembles any other  
middle class dwelling.  
On the church roof, spotlights  
hit a white spire of moths.

My wife found only sleeping hands  
tucked under the pillow.  
Regardless, the tooth fairy left a dollar.

After work I drive  
past the church.  
Sideways, the steeple  
points the way home.

# The Game

The drill team built a half-time prop,  
some sort of rickety fuselage parked  
in front of *Wildcats* spelled with Solo  
cups pushed into chain link fence.  
Wind carries the clatter of drum practice  
across the street to this coffee house  
buzzing with after-school girls.

A petite scholar pouts for a boy on her laptop,  
hands cupping her au lait, taking the brew  
like a philter. Bedheads peruse an art book  
trying hard to be unimpressed by 1000 nudes.  
When an unfamiliar classmate enters  
they turn but pretend they don't see her,  
even though they are dying to be noticed.

There is a father sitting with his very little girl  
who's eager to greet them all but it's time  
to leave for the game. As he helps put on her coat  
he recites, with each button, an oracle  
assuring his daughter that every closure  
will bring something unexpected and new:

*a gift*  
*a ghost*  
*a friend*  
*a foe*  
*a letter to come*  
*a journey to go*

## Green Ghost

Her hand made spontaneous scribble  
of things to come. On the grocery list  
our grandmother wrote *no not him*  
*not the one*. Moments later Oswald  
shot the president.

She miscarried seven times.  
She claimed their spirits awoke  
and could be heard after dark.

At dusk she smelled cigarettes,  
said the revenant of a smoking paramour  
had come to her kitchen window.

She once pursued a sad infatuation  
to Mexico, returned with a photo  
of the catholic priest and a devil mask  
she hung above her bed.

She put grandchildren in the guest bed  
to sleep but we stayed awake to play  
the board game stored underneath.  
The glowing phantom spinner pointed  
its finger at whoever had a turn but  
we never learned to play. We just watched  
Green Ghost spin phosphorescent  
then jumped into bed before our grandmother  
looked in, dabbing her red-rimmed eyes,  
muttering about missing pieces,  
the lack of rules and small voices  
in the night.



## December 13th

She wears a pair of pink strap-on  
marabou wings and whatever she's staring at  
is something most of us hope we never see.

I recognize her from Cora street's wildflower  
median. She knelt there for days last summer  
and announced *Do Not Mow*—

repeating the posted phrase as if to teach  
a bird to talk. She looks like she grew up  
from a fifth grade classmate I remember,

one who skipped cracks to save her mothers  
back, a girl with boy's glasses and breasts  
too soon. Shoppers skirt the sidewalk

where she stands this evening in a stained  
white formal, a store window at her back  
as if she's part of the display. Her perpetual grin

reminds me why mannequin smiles show no teeth.  
This displaced bridesmaid shuffles into the street  
where her damp hair gleams red with Christmas light

and she becomes someone else. A serene ingenue,  
ecstatic in her ordeal—Saint Lucy, unaware  
she has been crowned and the crown is fire.

# Greg Grummer

## War Reportage

The war began about six feet from victory  
and crawled there over the eyes of a child.

In the beginning soldiers walked up the road,  
never minding that as they did so the road got them  
pregnant with map in their own private Gethsemane.

Then a mother, crucified on coming unwantedness,  
bled son from the poem nailed into her trees.

Therefore, one by one, the Europes came to explain themselves.  
After that we hoisted up crows and made love in stones.

Satan picked up the throat of the town  
and drank from it until there was no more sleep.  
The town died then woke up again because of its smell.

“That’s when Satan returned, sir,  
and ate what happened in the field.”

But here in the camera one can see  
where bleeding and bleeding, and where “so on.”

One can see where two men revenged themselves on a dog,  
where a moiety revenged itself on a people, and where a ditch  
revenged itself on a shovel by spitting up church.

But then you knew all that, from the gap  
between fingers and from the distance between wolves.

You knew it, but you forgot it somehow.

# The Night Before the Battle in Which I'm Killed

Someday it won't be moonlight  
coming down to this field  
but it will be the actual moon.

The moon will fill the land with its priests,  
igniting ditches and water  
buffalo with desperate passions.

Trees will strain with the hatefulness of the moon,  
snapping under its high tiredness.

The moon's pilgrimage down to this field  
will split the brains of crows and carp  
will die with that kind of light in their eyes.

Someday the moon will present itself,  
along with its card, as the last actor of grief  
in this waiting room of bones and milk.

The world's infantry will be as surprised  
to be visited by the moon as pigs entered by demons

and driven off a cliff.

The moon, pushing us into the earth  
like a baby's thumb  
pushing a strawberry into the mud.

# Wounded in the Black Forest

Over there, by the X, is the place I was hit.

I was cut down in the dusk by an absence of face  
in the midst of this forest of Hansel and Hitler,  
this forest of make and believe.

I think you've guessed by now  
that my human strategy was saddened by truth,  
my forehead used as a plow.

My company found me minutes later, clothes  
emptied, entered by rain.

They found me and took me straight to a grotto,  
where landed snow made it seem like the end of the century.

There they left me to turn into a priest.

And that's how I ended up here at this midnight  
surgery being stepped on by swans.

# Returning Home on Sick Leave

I, who emigrate, walk  
in on the rampage of the library.

The windows have been emptied.  
In any one corner there's very little room.  
Books torment.

Above desire, a globe burns with rhyme.

Is anybody home, there on the stairs  
where the dogs . . . ?

The estate is missing, taken  
on the road where it bleeds.

Home, where spouses, abundant, surge,  
and where kiss gathers in its sheets and tatters.  
Home, where the breast and its shepherd,  
a hand, fly like rice before the coming bride.

Is anybody home?

I doubt it, with a whip in the thorax,  
while the bones breathe.

“Hello?” hangs there in birds.

Eventually, I look into  
my own face again, and touch  
on the fat of “place.”

## The Meaning of War

I was at a party when someone asked “What is the meaning of war?” I was about to answer when someone else said “Hey, what the hell do you know about war? Were you ever a soldier?”

Well, let me say this: I’ve traveled with a skull and I’ve drunk its water. After a long and brutal firefight I’ve stumbled out of my barracks, well a-fter dark, and dropped to the ground, sick from the earth’s rotation, and there held onto the grass as if holding someone’s hair. And let me ask you this: Isn’t one a soldier who has slept with soldiers and woken up like that, eyes raw with smoke, but not the smoke from wood or leaves?

I’ve participated in the wars of the church and in the militarisms of fame and shallow hope. Just by taking a look at my fist you’d know that I know how a soldier feels after fighting with luxury.

(If you had the time I could explain what it feels like to go to war pregnant and then come back a spirit. The only thing rendering you visible? Survivor’s guilt smeared on the lips.)

My information would indicate to you what it feels like to darken after years and how to stumble beneath a pile of graves under water.

I can’t tell you the meaning of war because it’s an impression left on our flesh like fire impressed on a guitar in the form of dried wax. The meaning of war can’t be said but can be eaten like dust from the basement of a church; and it can’t be told but only heard, like past-sounds traveling through us at the speed of regret; and it can’t be confessed but must be held, like a tattoo of a heart blazoned onto a heart; and it smells like that most violent of all human emotions—fresh air.

But of course that doesn’t explain the meaning of war, which is why, after the party, I go home, then into my son’s room

and take him, crying, out of his crib, and put his bare flesh against mine because he's strong and we're both upset. Then I sing, not a song, because my singing is awful, but a death chant; I do this because although it's morning it's only 3:00 in the morning and he's hungry and would like nothing better than to sleep, and my death chant can help him enter the land of visions it will be hard to remember upon waking, and that, more than anything, is the meaning of war.

# Rande Mack

## rat

in the old days when the music mattered more  
than the mold on his cheese or the vintage of his  
swill this man danced circles around his appetite

he was conceived on a oak pew in a choir loft  
he was abandoned the day the plague arrived  
his mother's reasons were too raw to consider

he swept her final kiss under a rug in his heart  
his dreams turned into tunnels silent and twisted  
he circled the moon stamped on a miner's map

he staked his claim on flood ravaged hearts  
he glued mirrors to the toes of his boots and  
waded through laundromats looking for love

the people he calls friends are like old shirts  
stolen from lines in backyards without fences  
he finds the more they fade the better they fit

he enjoys irrigating his neighbors' contempt  
he leaves tracks across pieces of their minds  
this man's shadow might pick his own pocket



## rabbit

this man wishes the music wasn't so jagged  
in his dreams the music is always dripping  
drops of acoustic candy that nourish his delight

he dips his thumb in the wine and twirls his 'stash  
he pulls on his big ear as he surveys the salad bar  
he fingers the sudden hole in his empty pocket

his impeccable shadow ambushes his swagger  
he samples a crouton before turning away  
over his shoulder the silence grows louder

all the wrong strangers inspect his surprise  
he feels like god might be squeezing his aorta  
he feels like rubbing noses with the waitress

he is a son of a tenth generation heartbreaker  
he has an alphabet's worth of brothers and sisters  
his mother's carrot cake still makes men tremble

this man slips out the door into the arms of a new moon  
he wakes up in a bed of roses but ends up yet again  
in a mirror tending the scratches carved by thorns

# wolverine

this man is a master at making time  
every sundown he matches wits with regret  
too long in one place plays hell with his shadow

his foot prints are craters filling with snow  
his heart is a canyon with caves on the walls  
sooner or later he'll climb through them all

this man likes his elbow room frigid and vast  
he likes his music empty of all but the beat  
he unbuckles his belt when he sits down to eat

curiosity is an avalanche that overwhelms him  
he gargles gin and broken glass to sharpen his smile  
his big jaws chew on the words before he speaks

before he woos a woman with bones in her belly  
and silence in her eyes and white painted teeth  
another jazz angel on another moonlit street

in his dreams his lovers become mirrors where  
he finds his children with names he can't remember  
a turbulent murmur shudders his sleep

## snake

this man's heart is smaller than a chokecherry  
mercy never rattles the locks on his thoughts  
he grins as he dreams another man's dreams

he goes days without eating teasing desire  
imagining the flavors of his favorite soufflé  
he is a connoisseur with dirt under his nails

this man peddles fruit from the family tree  
his mother sits nearby in rusty moonlight mirror in  
hand plucking silver hairs sticking out her tongue

this man's past is wrapped around a rhythm  
he loves to bob his head and shake his tail  
and bend every ear up and down church street

he whispers as he stretches the truth  
listen closely to the parable of his want  
hear the silence he carves when he moves

this man heats his shanty with shadows  
he beats his rugs and sheds his skin before  
the dew on his lawn turns to blood and freezes

# J. K. Kitchen

## Anger Kills Himself

I wanted to nap one afternoon.  
Another row next door, I thought,  
though the sound was so regular  
when you woke me to listen.  
We heard one long scream  
followed by one long pause,  
then another scream, same pitch,  
and another pause, same length.

By the time I got up,  
you had already crossed the alley  
to find the cry and your neighbor,  
cord circling his neck,  
hanging on a branch of Dutch Elm,  
the most beautiful tree for blocks.  
His wife was still keeping the time  
of stare, scream and head in hands  
when the ambulance came.

That was ages ago.  
But last night I heard them again,  
only *he* was the one screaming,  
and it was constant until all air left him.  
Out of the sudden quiet her whisper told me  
she should have combed her hair;  
then he wouldn't have gotten so mad.

Late in the morning  
the lady from the dry-cleaners returned my call,  
said my shirt's pattern of crimson flowers  
was already faded when I dropped it off.  
I hung up and walked the seven blocks  
to call her a liar. Enveloped in my yelling,  
her thin cheeks had the clear sheen  
of a crimped garment bag

when she lost her breath.  
Then I myself could hardly breathe.

Our end will come in a picture-perfect, strutting blast of rage.

A postcard you sent from France years ago  
still hangs on the fridge.  
Most days I hardly notice it:  
a burly man carved on a capital  
in the choir of Notre-Dame-du-Port.  
Crouching demons drape his shoulders,  
their scaly arms choke his swelling biceps.  
His whole body is smooth.  
With thick long legs and a wide muscular torso,  
only his soul would be light enough  
to hurl into hell. His deep mouth gulps air.  
His eyes are stretched. Above them,  
two full waves of hair move in a stone flow  
past his blown cheeks. His long sword,  
its hilt gripped with both hands,  
rises straight from the waist,  
edges between hard breasts,  
then points to his throat—  
all power about to be spent.

To me he looks about as Romanesque  
as a dimpled lifeguard:  
athletic, handsome, mythical;  
a kind of Saint George who could  
slay Satan's minions, or die trying.  
Such chiseled vice might pass for virtue.  
Perhaps the medieval sculptor gave  
this Anger too flattering a personification.  
I imagine someone must have noticed  
the Sin's lovely allure in proud relief—  
a cleric once robbed of church plate  
or a respected widow raped in youth;  
someone who had suffered a knight's rage  
or a husband's fist, who would have known  
that such crafted beauty, so hard to resist,

demanded a deadly caption to warn us of stabbing fury,  
how ruin follows the one unleashing it.  
So at the top there is this: *Ira se occidit.*

# Daydreams of California and a Phone Call

1

When February's snow thickens and clumps,  
the Berkeley Marina  
is where tugging nostalgia  
takes me to see kites,

some the size of giant centipedes,  
others the shape of pre-historic birds;  
their faces are totems and their flyers  
take the name, sometimes even appearance,  
of each floating animal, "the flag of a clan."

In fact  
the little round clouds here  
remind me of Durkheim's baldness,  
the way it balloons over the blue border  
on the cover of *Elementary Forms*.

I imagine him, with his glasses  
pointed gently downward,  
as a French rabbi  
on an armchair that hangs in the sky.  
A cloud among clouds  
he observes and at last shares in  
the rest of a nebulous Sabbath.

To the lighthearted sociologist  
kites might resemble  
impaired *churingas*  
in slow and fluttered motion.

And in those parts of the air  
where faces of reptiles  
hover neck and neck  
the wind makes quiet sounds  
of slurred and whistled breaths.

The kited Marina,  
imagined from the distance of a far-away winter,  
is the measure of my dreams.

2

And my brother is always there  
at the hollowed-out bottom  
of a hill, his deck shoes  
planted before the tide's sandy arc.

His line stretches the highest.  
It is attached to the sun.  
The light he tethers  
gives each saurian form  
its airy iridescence.

Strands of his thick fire-and-ash hair  
rise and fall with the gusts.

He needs me to take hold of the orange reel,  
to free his fingers from the strain of the twine.  
And I want to. And I do.

He feels for changes  
in the breeze  
as he walks and smokes.

I tug at the gentle glare.

Glancing back I see  
his body blending into the bay,  
his shirt filling with a squall,  
his steps going  
closer to the docks,  
away from the knoll.

Gaunt and miniature  
in the distance he waves to me.  
His cupped and damaged hand,  
afloat in the cigarette's fog,



points to a striped spinnaker  
about to fly off the bow of a puffed yawl.

When we get home  
we'll ask Mom  
for cookies and cognac.

3

Beneath the kitchen lamp, eyes closed again,  
I see that beautiful black roundness of a seal's head.  
It glistens and bobs, as the weaving streams  
of the kites' blissful tails twist beside the water.  
My eyes open. Back in white Edmonton

I am still handling garlic, mayonnaise and oil  
mixed in a mustard jar, with the lie of a shaky simile  
riveting me to the wintery place I'm desperate to leave:  
no matter what, scattered walnuts *won't ever*  
settle on top of lettuce like boats anchored in seaweed.

Conflated memories make better dreams.  
My garlic, the milky package reads, comes from Gilroy,  
that spot I visited once as a boy craving to smell what was raw.  
Again to the shore of home I drift. The webbed feet  
of a white albatross grip the top of a bulb-shaped buoy.  
My eyes stay shut until the buzz of a phone.

4

Mother is calling to say I have jury duty  
in Martinez: yet another oil town,  
wet and windy and oceanless.  
On the edge of a strait that looks  
as hard as a shellacked box,  
this county seat of Contra Costa  
toils under the hot glint of refinery tanks.

The moiling waterway of Martinez  
is as much a coffin to me  
as the grim river that halves the city of Edmonton,  
where the air dries out once the flow freezes.

5

The Californian official who sent home the letter  
of my summons refuses to accept  
her argument that my living in Canada  
exempts me from judging those of my native land.  
*I tried to explain to the man . . . .*

This praying mother's protests rarely matter  
by the time the special intentions of her lost ones  
have inched their way along her rosary's shivering beads.  
Sorrowful mysteries, they can no longer plead for themselves.  
Sleepless unto death, they are sentenced to the hard time  
of eyes and testimony they can hardly close.

6

Changing the subject, she asked me  
if I remembered (hell-bent-on-discipline)  
Sister Monserat, my fifth-grade teacher.  
She left her order years ago, distraught,  
I was told, and then moved to a neighborhood

where hanging flowerpots line the streets,  
somewhere—Mom forgot exactly—on the Marin side of the bridge.  
Apparently, she had a pretty place.  
From her view she could see sailboats  
in their berths and windsurfers near the cove

where Donny, my brother, went to sleep  
on water. Like a kite let go of,  
he floated away on the same fogless morning  
her usual fast-paced walk across the Gate  
was cut short.

For all we know the former nun  
closed her eyes before the parting splash,  
rose numb to the surface of a green swell,  
blew out from her belly his pieces of swallowed ash  
then rolled her wailing body back into the sea.

# Jim Pascual Agustin

## The Man Who Wished He Was Lego

His hands would be yellow  
and forever curved  
into a semi-square “C.”  
Designed only for quick  
and easy snapping

of pieces meant  
to fit. His shoes  
would be the same color  
as his pants with no zips  
or buttons, no pockets

for slipping in notes  
that could be shredded  
in the wash. He would need  
not worry about the shape  
of his head, or haircuts

and thoughts for that matter.  
And best of all, his chest  
would be stiff and hollow,  
far too small  
for a heart.

## Do Millipedes Bleed?

The bathroom sink reflects  
a clinical glare  
from the white light bulb.

Close to my toothbrush,  
a dark shape  
thicker than a string,  
curved upward at one end.

My hand quickly tries  
to reach for something,  
a comb, a slipper,  
anything to flick it away,  
perhaps crush it.

Then up close I see  
it is hunched over  
a drop of water,  
drinking. Tiny feelers  
waving back and forth  
in a gentle rhythm,

minute legs, thin  
as the hair between  
my knuckles,  
quivering.

# The Photograph

Stripped of leaves from the planet's change of angle (scientific calculations can predict the end of such a cycle), the limbs of this tree appear no more than frail, black streaks against the grey sky. But for the birds. With folded wings they have chosen to adorn

the branches. It is not the first tree to be so starkly dressed. A friend on the other side of the world shared a photograph that looked nearly the same as what is now before my window. Echoes of the same rhythm, only composition and lighting differ.

The image remains longer in the retina, a memory reinforced, perhaps more intensely remembered? Would any photograph chanced upon, then lingered over, become just as embedded in the mind? That it, too, burns? Here, with the click of a mouse, I browse: a photograph of two soldiers.

One on the ground, the other holding a rifle. Afghanistan's range of mountains never looked so violated. The grass that clings to the jagged surface appears dry, dead. The colour of the soldiers' clothes, like soil before rain. Both of them wear green vests, for bullets and provisions. The one with a knee

close to the ground where the other lies is smiling. The lifeless one has thicker beard and no helmet, his shadow touches the sling of the other's rifle. I first saw them on my old laptop screen three years ago. I see them again on another machine, just as frozen.

# Science Fiction 1

“Yes, please,” her last words. Ears  
waiting for the flick of the switch.  
The thick glass plate between her  
and the man she trusts won’t allow more  
than a dim red glow. Chamber of recycled  
truck container. Crusts of rust on the stretcher  
stolen from an abandoned clinic. Energy  
saving lightbulbs with darkened tubes  
like fingers burnt in a power outlet.

In a split second she will no longer remember  
a loved one’s last embrace. That is her hope.  
Throb on her temple, beating  
of a moth. What comes next  
is always a surprise even for the man  
who has done this too many times.

# Recycled Chandelier Tales

*"Trust me, I'm telling you a story."  
—Jeanette Winterson, The Passion*

1

Held up by spiderwebs  
more than an iron ring clasped  
to the ceiling, I burn  
with the last lightbulb  
that may bring an end to this.

All past existences  
down to ash and rubble.

2

I was a trinket in a box  
for the emperor's twenty-seventh  
concubine. I had three eyes  
of rubies and a diamond.

I felt the grip  
once of love, then no more  
than lust. Until the people came  
to set me free, so many voices,  
so many feet soiling the chamber floor.

3

Dreams always end in darkness  
from where they came.

My skin was not always white  
or tinged with rust. I was red  
with the blood of infidels.  
Then of believers. Then of my master's.  
I used to cut the wind,  
sing as it gasped in pain.  
I remember petals coming down,  
and thorns. Always something sharp  
along with the touch of velvet.

4

I am electric. An abomination.  
Spiders weave more stories  
than I can remember. They taunt me  
with their clumsy legs, their non-geometric  
traps that catch nothing  
but dust. They obscure  
my view of a painting that was hung  
for me to illuminate. Someone  
spare me this existence. Crush  
the last lightbulb and stab  
a candle in its place.

I was meant for grandeur.  
Not for this. Not this.



# Jessica M. Lockhart

## Scylla of the Alabama

Scylla's taking more  
to men  
than she'd ever  
care to admit.

These days you'll find her going through a few.

I saw her in the river once,  
playing at ancient catfish—giant,  
grotesque, ages-long whiskers mingled  
with lights reflected from the bridge  
all distorted, all crude and reconfigured  
something elses.

All slicked and reforming bodies—  
the fish, the lights, the water,  
and us on a fish fry party boat,  
eating them all.

## Mapless in a Recurring Landscape

Everything is like this:

Air, brown cloud line, old  
water stains on linen.

Life in sepia  
dust-bowl, derelict.

I'll ask the tumble  
weed where to go.

I'll ask the sage  
what I smell.

Where is the yellow  
page. Where the faint-  
print words.

# Thirteen Ways of Looking

*after Wallace Stevens*

1.  
When in motion, attend  
to the still.
2.  
Out. For glinting yellows,  
deer by the road.
3.  
At a half-empty glass  
as a drink.
4.  
Behind you.
5.  
Down. Watch for pennies.  
Pennies are money, too.
6.  
With mirrors  
surrounding your head.
7.  
Relax your eyes  
and a picture pops out.
8.  
Scan the tuna salad. Leave  
no scales.
9.  
Up, maybe  
at a blackbird.

10.

Use binoculars. Use microscopes.  
Point great lenses to the sky.

11.

Never at the sun. Never at the face  
of the holy.

12.

At the news. Would you  
look at the news?

13.

Seeing the crowd, populate it  
with persons.

# Things to Remember

The crunch of gravel under sneakers at 6:30 in the morning when the pine trees, even the school buses, were gray. The way the mailbox was always empty, and a raised flag meant we would meet later in marshy woods where an old shack no one built fell apart a little whenever we weren't looking. The long route to the county school where whites and blacks were pretty much equal in numbers. How we liked to think we were enlightened, but lived on the edge of town for a reason. The ditch that ran up to the road, perpendicular. The one we called the Amazon, when the Alabama was only the river. How Selma is a place of water and rust and blood and ghosts. Dad's fried deer. Where the blackberries grew.

An empty trailer lot with no old shack behind it, ancient Amazonian tree stumps. A dull bus driving by in gray morning.

## Lost: Alvin the Aardvark

When Mom finally moved I'd forgotten  
that toy, and we tore up the trailer,  
because you can't sell or relocate  
wet pressed board and punched-in walls,  
but when I saw it—

I'd had a plastic anteater. It rolled,  
and it clicked, Velcro tongue  
shooting out at blue-fuzz ants. I remembered orange  
about it, and green. I remembered the mud  
beneath us, how the water leaked and ran  
below, through the floor.

I can't remember, though, how it got  
there, the anteater. I'd never go  
under there with a toy:

Spiders and snakes settled the damp, the cold  
aluminum skirting sometimes soundtracked  
in the paw-scrapes of infant cats and dogs.

I'd crawl, flashlight in hand, toward the weak  
yelps of a newborn litter. But not with an anteater—

When the wide trailer split, saturated particle  
board shred open in mash-up of creak and hiss,  
it was revelation:

the mud, the dirt, five-gallon buckets and beer cans,  
a crooked Stonehenge of half-buried  
cement blocks, rotting softballs, and among the brown  
and gray, the orange.

Fifteen years and still  
bright, undamaged polymer, but sticker-eyes  
peeled, strange blind plastic creature,  
the wet smack of suction popping,  
anteater removed.

# James P. Leveque

## Three Films of Jean Painlevé

### *Our Sins in French*

*(Les Oursins, 1958)*

Between morning yawns on the end of the jetty, divers, stripped to the waist, waiting for the sun to kick off the sheets, burnishing lenses and pointing out promising shallows, feel the water wet their toes. Fishermen settle in with the haze, cigarettes dozing between fingers stained and scratched. Their quiet French has a way of slipping around the corner, striking down an ally, leaving a song to be remembered by. Our sins grope the bottom of the ocean, scouring the silt and gnawing rocks with five teeth arranged as a star, until the tide is pulled away by the moon and the world is reduced to a dozen litres of brackish water while the colors are wiped clean by the light from a camera that can't but look for trouble. Our sins keep an eye over their shoulders, fashion shivs, and don't trust how your voice pitches up when you talk to them. And they pass away into their white brittle skeletons, become their own headstones, landing themselves on a desk, in a glass case, curios from the dead and the damned. Most will land in a net, the fishermen grabbing a few for breakfast, cracking their shells, and barely contemplating their bright-yellow glands before taking their forks and digging in.

### *Hippocamp: Vivisected*

*(L'Hippocampe, 1934)*

As if every seahorse is an oyster, growing a pearl in its gut, able to swallow every slight, every irritation and annoyance

and wrap its own self around it, bathing it in slight, pink stone. This bladder in its chest shines from finally being released from the lockup

of fishbones, split down the middle and spread wide like a Rorschach Test; "What do you see?" "I see a dead fish who gave its life

for my longing to see the inside of a dead fish.”  
The unborn eggs are hardly alive as scissors bring light

into the father’s divided womb, clip by clip. Under the flash  
and whirring of the camera, there is a mild suffocation of celebrity.

### *Interrogatives*

*(Voyage dans le ciel, 1937)*

What is the angle at which time lies down,  
with a heaving chest, rickety pulse, and shaky knees?

How precise must be the calculations to detonate  
the sun onto the page in chalk and acrylic?

When one eye is closed and the other opened, does vision, pitched  
from sun to tower to hand, eventually lead back

to the vortex in the head and the brainstem?  
The questions ride a hand-held Pegasus through plastic models,

the moon and Alpha Centauri suspended from visible wires  
and wearing their genesis in glue and cheap paint.

Was the vegetation on Mars edible? Did it rot faster than ours?  
Who placed the gemstones around Saturn in 1937?

The questions are embarrassing celluloid manuscripts of the mistakes  
you can finally admit to after the sparks, water, and ashes

have taken all relevant parties halfway across Europe and America,  
after time answered your letter before you finished writing it.

When the editing room light is switched off, and your sound engineer  
stretched his neck, blinked, and put on his coat, did he hear

your voice through the microphone describing other planets  
instead of the cars and conversations on his way home? Was he compelled



to look up to the speckled ribbon of stars between the buildings?  
When you talked of loneliness on a tired planet,

were you describing the scratch and static when the needle hits  
the record before the music begins?

## From Pandemonium

The wind is a brief benediction in the street, undoing scorch and sweat yoked for weeks around the shoulders of the underemployed, sopping up the grime of work and not enough work, from the pissed-off pavement

to shade's providence, on a café patio, where it's the absolution of gin and lime, where water cites its Freedom of Assembly on the side of a glass, where sensualists drink to the bikers and their 80 decibels of *Layla*,

and where the rarer features of a passing '41 Olds are enumerated—"Hydra-Matic transmission," they say, "advanced for its time"—alongside the drawbacks of psychoanalysis or Keynesianism.

A static vanguard we are, glossing the foliage of signals and feedbacks as it speckles the sunlight with a constellation of meanings, deciphering, like adepts, from our windows above the flagstones and the courtyards

to anticipate the hot breath rising from Pandemonium, exhaled from the gutters down the street toward the yellow glow in a street lamp and then, further down, another lamp, and then, another...

The music is a riff for aluminum cans echoing in a dumpster, the rattle of one loose shopping-cart wheel and the muted creak of bedsprings through thin walls, a sigh unexpected by its own mouth

when the printer spins out another article called, let's say, something like *Jazz and The Real: Coltrane, Mingus, Monk*. But we still hope to hear that movement's horizon and its *Tempo Rubato*,

let the pale sheet of pre-dawn fend off the day for a few minutes more at your computer, initiating countdown on the following message:

*Dear Sirs,*

*After much discussion, we recommend these few steps so that you might adapt*

*to your new lives: claim less luxury and wake at half-past 5;  
learn to pry open sleep and reheat the remains of yesterday's coffee;  
get a little Spanish under your belt. Take some comfort in the fables of the  
princes*

*of Greece and Russia, recalling their Westward escapes to New York, Baltimore, and Montréal. In downtown, there was an archduke, a descendent of the Tsars, managing an ice-cream parlor named The Winter Palace. His memories of court were fond, but distant, and muted by a natural sepia, and each one was framed and mounted on a black mat border, behind which the Red Army smoked, drank, and waited. He perused the paper, lamented with fellow exiles, shook his head at the unfortunate state of things, but didn't believe in his own name anymore, in the way his title, a spondee of bloodlines, could be anything but the polite nod from a customer, asking him where he's from and if he's out of chocolate.*

*We tell you this as fair warning, as the barely-restrained id of those who let their lawns grow untamed for weeks and whose kids talk back, those who wait in line to be sent back to the line, again and again, who sympathize, against their better judgment, with the graffiti writer who renames the city, by fiat of neon orange and blue:*

*Deltron, Pink Lady, Futura, Krash One-Four. They claim for themselves the belly of the expressway or the flank of the train, dirtying the decay of broken brick walls and the legs of a viaduct going deaf, walking down the street singing, "Style don't need a permit!" When the chain-link fence is too high, and the cops are too fast, we've got a thousand mix-tapes of his voice to replay, a slight crackle, then a little white noise before he sings it again.*

It's a sentiment that ends in the irrhythmic tapping on a keyboard.

Garrulous, okay, but only to fill the outline of four walls left bare with the occasional picture hook, wiring exposed, cupboards raided of everything that might suggest a simple way

to express a discontent that only exists as the frustrated exhale while standing on the corner of Least and Last, blowing dust in the eyes, stealing round corners, taking a crack on the jaw.

# Power Lines with Piano Accompaniment

The road below the power lines offers this heat  
to you—offered with pale streetlights, with distance  
as the closed suture between the meanings

of drained glasses, dry bitten crusts,  
the concave of spoons reflecting the inversion  
of...

*Of what now?* a barman asks again,  
leaning an ear toward a woman who can't articulate  
the word "whisky" over the noise. Of ten dollars

that a waiter stained with wine and the smell  
of garlic swears he had; of the wine;  
of the hostess thinking about going back to college;

of the chef who sees himself in the clean  
of the knives he washes, and of his humming  
a melody, whose name he can't recall, by Erik Satie.

*Something about gymnasts?* He worries about his memory,  
following the power lines down the road,  
watching them fillet the sky, humming

like violas imagined in the ears of Satie.  
Slowly and lightly, through the 1890s, his cane taps  
out antiquity's waltzes on the long walk home

from Montmartre cabarets to Arcueil-Cachan  
and his room above a tobacco shop, hiding a hammer  
in his pocket for the thieves in the allies, back to his piano.

Through the warm night, he asks how it feels,  
for miles around he asks how his piano feels.  
Because he wants to know that the gods still love him,

and he believes they sleep in the grain of the wood,  
so he asks how it feels. Is it tired? Will it wake?  
Satie is not a metaphor, Satie is not the humming

of the power lines escaping on steel shouldered towers  
into the hills, but is only the companion to the quiet,  
as the chef sits on the curb to light a cigarette,

the breeze stealing a chill from the sweat  
behind his ears and neck. He accepts the heat  
from the pavement, puts his hand against it,

scrutinizes his index finger where the knife's reminder  
of the small hazards and wages of his work  
lets blood from the knuckle. It pools a bit

and the blood, too, hums the warmth and the quiet,  
reflecting the thin strips of power lines  
upon which gymnasts, painfully, keep their balance.

# Kelsey Charles

## Autobiography

He told the story like eating soup,  
hot soup that steamed boiling  
fresh from the stove, and we watched,  
listened as he blew languid on each word  
to cool it for our consumption.

“You’ve lived such an interesting life,”  
I said, I hovered in my admiration, waiting  
for him to continue. But he stopped,  
told me my life was just as interesting  
and smiled knowingly.

He went back to his soup. I hung  
on his words waiting for resolution.  
Paris, stolen kiss, the graveyard,  
the subway, the walk, the loss and escape  
from commitment. By the end,  
I was full. I knew the meat was in the telling.

## Fishing with Teddy

The man could not keep quiet as he cast his line,  
pulled it back in, and cast it again without regard for finesse.  
Teddy said, “I don’t understand why the damned fish  
don’t like my bait.” I didn’t tell him they never had a chance to see it.  
I offered to bring beer, but Teddy brought whisky—  
“there’s no point in half-assing it.” It being getting drunk.  
I imagine for Teddy fishing was a mythical romp of triumph  
over the small brained swimmer, ending with a feast of his foe.  
There was no waiting. Teddy didn’t wait. For ten minutes he yo-yoed  
his line in the water, never letting it rest. He asked “Are there  
fish in this river? I don’t think they’re there.” And he fidgeted:  
crossed his legs, stood up, sat down, stretched an arm, formed a fist.  
When he put down his rod, I knew there was trouble.  
He went between the trees and broke off a branch the size of a bat.  
I ducked as he took a few swings and argued when he stripped his pants.  
He waded in like a hungry bear, and finally was still. Five minutes.  
I jumped when the splash came, I hadn’t seen him move,  
but Teddy swung away and the fish flopped on the bank  
beside me, a wounded enemy brought low.  
“Gut it, let’s eat.” Teddy commanded. I complied.

## Ten Miles Away

We ate more than our stomachs could handle  
that night as we sat with my Dad's friends  
I'd only just met, but the pots still over flowed with meats.  
The sausage and bratwursts, the steaks and lamb  
tenderloin, the pork chops all remained. The fried  
potatoes, the creamed corn, long skinny beans, and  
bits of carrot, we couldn't finish. But they smiled  
as I fell out of my chair, too heavy for legs.  
And we rested outside, on the porch, the nylon chairs  
sagging. I gazed at the fields without end until  
the clear Kansas night fell. And they told me  
the land was so flat you never knew the horizon,  
that my eyes would break before I saw the end.  
And there was a storm that night, but we were dry,  
watching lightning spring from the sky ten miles away,  
soundlessly illuminating the clouds in the dark.



# I dreamt I died in Montparnasse

I dreamt I died in Montparnasse,  
a careening moped to the skull.  
People rushed around my body  
and I watched them in third person.

I was abstract, a spirit, a specter  
wandering in my death, the streets  
around were filled with life, and I felt  
apart. Then my vision blurred  
and I saw other beings, great hordes  
of ghosts and ghouls about the town  
strolling through the living.

The artists and musicians of Paris past  
romped about, gathered together again.  
In the spaces they were most alive  
they returned to in their death.

Outside of Henry Tanner's house they  
beat against the gate, the lines of pilgrims  
returned for comments on their work.  
They huddled in the sunny shadows,  
burdened with translucent canvases  
clutched to keep from drifting.

The Bobino raged with crowds while  
Josephine waved from a car outside.  
She'd returned in her prime, showered  
in illusionary ticker tape parade.  
It poured from the sky and floated  
down through shades of past and present.

At the St. Louis Bar that night, phantom  
jazz twined with modern pop, though  
neither heard the other. The bar was packed  
with dead on living, both dancing non-stop.  
The air kinetic, emotions of both groups  
went rushing like a flood. They moved  
as though their souls depended on the joy  
they'd felt in their warm blood.

# John

You lay in the field, liquor in hand,  
dead with brandy for blood.  
You were hard to see in the two foot weeds,  
Why couldn't you have died courteous?  
The kids who stepped on you didn't flinch,  
except for the new kid  
from Connecticut. He looked on  
as the neighbor kids rummaged  
in your pockets. Thank him  
that you were picked up at all.  
When the morgue man came,  
he saw fourteen dollars:  
you were his dinner with a coke.  
He called you John, and apologized  
for the bumpy ride.  
On the icy tray they laid you flat,  
struggled with your arms,  
then left you in the freezer bank  
for someone else to claim.  
Go on, wait in the closet for no one.

# Therese L. Broderick

## Polly

Better that my daughter forget  
her weakest rabbit, one I loved  
the most, white runt Polly

born lame, her red eyes  
the spitting image of rabid;  
and kept away from our cat,

penned inside our zoo—  
warmest upstairs room—  
which might've been filled with

a baby crib, rocker,  
and a table for all those changes  
of onesies, had I ever wanted

to have another baby, but no,  
never did want  
to risk  
playing favorites. And better that

my little girl was sleeping  
that evening Polly shriveled  
like a flawed corsage

on the carpet, between my knees,  
on my lap her rear leg ceasing  
to twitch: first of twenty limbs

to wither. First rabbit to die,  
just shy of those four equal  
survivors, my sturdy orphans.

## To the Motionless One in Egypt

Pup, will you lift your dry head, open dusty eyelids  
if I slap you hard on your ribs, tug at your right ear,  
force open your jaws with the rim of my bottle,

will you rise on front paws if I flee my tour, leap  
into this pit of crumbling columns, only shade for miles  
you might perish in—or the other strays pant in—

which parchment was once your milking mother?  
Pup, are you sinking through Valley of the Queens  
or sailing to Ra, or will you rouse soon as I've gone

back to the bus, through tinted windows glimpsing  
your resurrection but forbidden—ever—to touch  
the miracle, to rest my hand on your salting belly.

# Pistol Squat

Fuck any aim of Zen  
humility.

I do squats as means  
of combat, BMI  
held to 20.

Right knee bent, left leg deployed  
like the barrel of a  
handgun.

Ankle cocked & hard core  
burning down  
inch by  
inch.

Target: the toe:  
Fix it.

*three two one*  
Fire.

## The Old Stylist

She soothes by comb, making it all better,  
she wants to make hairs happy once  
again, as they were before neglect—  
my cheap shampoo, steely bristles—

and she wants to move to a city warm  
with tropical reds & mauves & yellows,  
new textures she can improve upon  
every eight weeks, or six

and she doesn't want the water spray too hot  
on my head or the dryer helmet too close  
or the cut too short, or highlights too bright  
for my grey eyes, she wants to retire

after a few more years of this, squeezing perfect  
tablespoons of perm gel, rescuing roots,  
coating every gal in her chair with bliss: the do  
will be so much easier going forward.

## With Lines from All My Diaries Since the Millennium

She rehearses the words of Zeus, aloud,  
waiting in bed  
for breakfast.

Mistletoe is a veiled parasite,  
and my party mask is the back  
of a round mirror.

Of the pumpkin  
she takes 50 photos, then says to me,  
*you're too overflowing.*

My husband's mother (God help her)  
put Superglue in the corner  
of a false eyelash.

2010 was the best year of my life:  
I almost had Asperger's. Until  
my doctors agreed: *you don't have Asperger's.*

Loud, soft, loud, soft: patterns  
I snore in. He groans in.

"Singers Wanted"  
pleads a bumper sticker;  
"Sonnet"  
declaims a license plate.

Did you know that some tornadoes  
can swirl invisible?

# Lane Falcon

## Touch

He stands in my bedroom doorway and goes on about how this is it then, I won't see him again, and I sit in my antique chair and cradle her while she sucks out the last ounce of her bottle, and he shivers a little in that threshold—*don't try and call me, nothing. When my daughter's older, I'll tell her the truth*—and the silence turns pink in my mouth, then orange, then blue.

•

At five, he romped  
barefoot in a pigpen  
in the Dominican Republic,

his aunt would sterilize  
a needle and pick whipworms  
from the bottoms of his feet.

He, with a matching pair  
of sneakers for every outfit,  
whose rubber soles jut

just over the edge of my bed,  
my incredulity matched  
by wonder. In my dream,

the worm's pointed head  
pricks through the skin  
of my index finger. Tweezers

finally grip the exposed  
eighteenth of an inch,  
and it stretches,



stretches, its length  
lodged in my flesh,  
til the tweezers slip

and the worm, still one,  
snaps back into  
position.

## The Descent

*Why do they ignore me?*  
My sister and mother, who don't

look themselves but svelte, decorous  
in frosted lipstick.

The voice says *you died*.

Me? The ghost of this house  
where I found what I stole? A broken

VHS and the diary  
of the gastroenterologist I dated.

On the mantelpiece,  
a picture of me at The Gala leans

without frame. How blithe I was

with my chipped nail polish  
and glitter wallet, how little I cared

my hair clung to the fringe  
of the circular rug . . .

## Dream Feed

The infant hatches from sleep,  
a hiccup, chirp and gasp  
reel me from bed  
to the edge of her crib. Her eyes  
jerk upward.

In minutes, they'll latch onto mine  
as I push the latex nipple  
between her lips, hurry  
to quell her rage.

She bats the anime toy clipped  
to the car seat where I've placed her  
while I mix Similac and nursery water,  
my panic, a current an inch below the coos

*One second Baby.*  
*Hold on Honey,*  
*I'm here—*

## My Father Fixes My Portable A/C

*If it would only grip, he says, just a little,*  
the plastic hose clamped between his bent  
knee and elbow, as he tries to screw the open  
end into the “duct.” I now know the name  
for it—the part I circled with painters tape  
from when I moved in six years ago (adhering  
to itself, it twisted thin as twine as I brought it  
round the hose, then patched it, again and again,  
when chutes of humid air pushed through,  
arrows of sun piercing clouds). Even the word  
“grip” fits, what neither part will do as he seals  
their tenuous kiss with aluminum tape, welding  
the last few grooves of the hose to the duct’s  
ridge.

# Ricky Ray

## The Bird

I

She looked over and saw a bird underneath a city tree,  
its head sunken,  
its body so still and low we thought it dead.

Then it struggled to lift its head and showed us:

one eye swollen, an inlaid marble,  
the other swollen and crusted over,  
the beak grotesque with infection.

It wobbled its head like five-hundred pounds,  
shook as though a fault line were widening,

and it was.

Her heart leapt out of her and I felt it and mine followed.

Then I acted out of pain and frustration,  
that sobering, sorrowful uselessness,  
told her to get up, I wanted action, said  
sitting there being sad was doing nothing to help it,

and that was true, or maybe it wasn't,  
but it was the wrong way to say it,  
the wrong way to harness this energy  
hovering over a life that was broken and breaking apart.

We carried our groceries upstairs,  
called the rehab center and left a message.

Got down the cat carrier,  
made a nest out of socks and an old T-shirt,  
a nest we'd made before, and told the cats to be good.

## II

Then we went down and she cupped it in her hands  
and lowered it in, covered it, told me  
how cold it felt, and bony: even less of a chance.

I found hand warmers in our emergency kit,  
shook them and placed them over its wings.

She filled a tea cup with water  
and dripped drops along its beak.

We couldn't tell if it swallowed,  
tried to decide what to do,  
turned to the internet for help.

It didn't offer much.

Then I heard commotion in the cage,  
saw it flapping and called her over.

Maybe the warmers were too hot,  
or maybe it wanted freedom,  
from here, from its body, from life, just—out.

She held it again, tried to shh its heart calm.

It settled for a moment.

Then it flapped harder,  
flipped itself over, scrambled its claws in the air.

We saw the gash along its body, how wasted its flesh,  
felt its inability to eat and she made the call.

I had no doubt in the right of her heart.

Something in me knew this was coming,  
forefelt the tears in her eyes,  
the dread in my limbs.

### III

I found the sharpest, largest knife I could  
and hid it along the arm of my sweater.

She asked if I was going to break its neck.

I shook my head, said I wasn't confident  
that would be as quick and painless as it seemed;  
what I had in mind would be quicker and sure.

She asked if she could carry it to the roof,  
and I said yes, picked up a plastic bag for after.

Then she asked if she could help,  
and I said no, wanted to spare her that,  
and she didn't protest or ask again,  
walked to the other side of the roof and cried.

### IV

I held it down on a flat rock,  
its head drooping on that mangled neck,  
felt the strength in its muscle  
as I pinned it down

—so faint—

pressed the blade gently but steadily into its throat,  
its beautiful, purple-green, grey feathered throat,

and sliced,  
quick and hard,  
in one swift stroke  
severing spine and head  
and leading its blood toward the light.

God, how that headless body writhed,  
bucked for minutes against  
the stillness that called it out of this world,

or down through its seams  
into the underbelly of existence,  
and no wonder it shook:  
all that energy leaving the body at once.

I walked over and hugged her then,  
saw her wet, red, swollen eyes  
and felt pangs I have no words for.

V

I asked her to get napkins  
and two more plastic bags  
to clean up what I'd done.

She did.

I cleaned, kept the head with the body and wrapped it in white.

She saw the knife on the way down and knew.

We placed it in the freezer,  
with the others we'd found on our walks through the city,  
so many avian deaths dotting the sidewalks.

We'd bury them soon,  
before winter and its hardening  
made the ground and the task even more . . . more what?

I don't know.

But she thanked me then, and that—that I understood.

VI

Later that day,  
she said a good man  
is better than a great one.

I know what she means.



And when she says it,  
I believe her.

She said her heart felt better, lighter,  
at ease in the release—its,  
the relief—ours.

## VII

I went up there the next morning  
to check the spot:  
all that was left was an already fading,  
poorly wiped-up pool of blood.

That, and something I couldn't name,  
something that passes between us in times like these,  
something that made my whole body tingle with affection  
when I went back down and watched her sleep.

Something that stirs deep in this being,  
deep where we are no longer merely human,  
spreads its wings and flies with me,  
flies through me now here to you.

## IIX

Is this sufficient?  
Have I made the life of the bird  
and our involvement in it an honored thing?

Is this good enough to put down the pen,  
bow my head to life and its ways  
and let nature carry on?

I don't know, but it feels good enough  
to sleep on, and at the moment,  
that's good enough for me.

IX

Goodnight,  
dear bird,

I'll say hello  
to your fellows  
in the morning.

X

And thanks, world,  
for whatever it is  
I received today—

I don't need  
to know its name.

# Chopping Wood

I liked going out in the rain,  
so much rain in that land  
of green hills, evergreens

and infections of the lung,  
liked stepping through  
puddles in my once

water-resistant boots  
as I made my way  
to the woodshed where

I'd pull the rusty light-cord,  
check for spider webs,  
then eye the piles,

one of oak, several of fir,  
and pick the next ashes  
for our old-fashioned,

wood-burning stove.  
Then I'd carry the logs  
to the chopping block

and drop them, not carelessly,  
but less concerned with  
the way they'd lie

than the way they fell,  
and wonder about  
the woodsman who felled them,

how he'd ponder  
bringing them down  
from the sky

and selling them  
by the cord, whether  
the land was his

or he bought them,  
walking through  
and showing which,

splashing paint  
on the bark  
to remember.

Then I'd pick up the logs,  
heft the weight  
of wood in my hand

and place them on the block,  
this time with care  
so they wouldn't fall

and would offer me  
their broadest face  
to swing my favorite

axe down into.  
And then I'd begin  
the work that took me

out in the rain in joy,  
I'd measure my paces  
back from the block,

a two-hundred fir  
by my quick reckoning,  
I'd lower my hands

along the shaft,  
send the heavy head  
along its arc

and throw some  
muscle into the slice.  
And if the wood

was placed right  
and the swing  
was hard enough,

if hand and eye, mind  
and muscle came together  
in perfect concert,

the wood would split,  
the blade would embed  
ever so slightly

in the face of the block,  
and I'd place my sole  
on the edge of that old fir,

I'd firm my grip on the handle  
and use the leverage  
of my body

to bring  
the axe-glint  
back into the light.

And if any of those  
things was off, the axe  
would get stuck

in the little log, and I'd  
lift it, axe and all, over my head  
and come crashing down

until it split, or the blade would  
stick in the block  
deeper than I'd intended

and I'd have to tease it  
side to side while  
I tried to coax it out.

An hour's rain later,  
out it would come,  
the wood would be split

and I'd pile it in my arms,  
careful of splinters,  
then carry it in

to warm the bodies,  
the lives of my  
wife and children.

Once, I missed the log  
and the block entirely  
and the blade

glanced off my shin,  
but made no damage,  
no cut, not even a bruise,

and I thought of how  
easily the bone  
would have splintered,

I felt pain at  
the thought of  
being a tree

subject to the woodsman's  
expertise, the loss of shade  
that was respite

to so many creatures,  
the nests  
that may have been woven

high up  
in the swaying branches,  
the resting spots

for migrants, playgrounds  
for squirrels, the haunts  
for owls whose screeches

scorched us in our beds,  
the cats alert with God  
only knows in their ears.

And I thought of the grave  
I dug on that property,  
larger than a man's grave,

the size of a woman  
and child I thought  
as I dug through dirt

into grey clay  
that didn't want to be dug,  
the mother llama looking on

and moaning low  
as her child's body  
decomposed under the tarp.

Then I stepped  
out of the rain  
onto the doorstep,

opened the door  
and saw those  
dear faces,

and was glad all that  
thinking and chopping  
was behind me.

# Phoebe Reeves

## Every Petal

The roses in the pitcher open  
their gradient of desire.

My flesh blooms, too, and I travel  
its gradations: fulfillment,

need, silence. The white  
at the height of the curve, what

comes after speech.  
After petals come  
loose in the hand.  
Without the fruiting

body, the red hip  
violent against winter's  
shushing monochrome, tart and disdainful.

Muscle, also pink,  
also loosening, clenches  
its last bud. Releases its last bloom of blood.



# What We Don't See When We Witness

Twice, I sang with nine other women,  
all older than me, beneath the shadow  
of the stage, behind the orchestra's last row.  
The bassoons, the fourth violins, the harp.

Just back and above I could hear the feet  
rustling and thumping down. Titania,  
Bottom, Puck, the pas de deux, the local  
ballet school girls all dressed  
as tiny fairies—I would see them after,  
leaving with their parents, cheeks flushed like  
the flowers they were supposed to be.

Three hundred dollars was enough  
to take the train up and stay in my old  
bedroom, regress in age and occupation,  
be the chorus girl again, without spot  
lights, in matte black like stage hands,  
singing only a small part while the story's  
feet in worn pointe shoes tattooed its  
old tune behind me, in the lights.

Three years ago this winter J took E  
to the emergency room, late and in the  
cold dark of old December, two days  
back from their honeymoon. Her breath  
came short in the car, shorter, and he  
left her at the bay doors to park the car.

No E when he ran back, no breath.  
Just the halogen lighting and the scrubs  
and the obscene gift shop.

Was it looking back or not  
that lost Orpheus his wife?  
I never knew any ballet better than  
the one I never saw.

# Atomic Oneiromancy

We see the bomb in the distance, knowing  
the radiation comes. We can't  
just crawl into a lead-lined refrigerator like Indiana  
Jones, and come out adjusting our fedoras.

First, nausea. Weariness, blurred  
eyesight. Then, the dreaded hair  
on the pillow, coming loose at the root.  
The cells of the stomach and intestines  
slough off like a glove peeled  
inside out. Can't eat, can't drink,  
veins thin under skin like dry  
river beds. Isn't that far enough  
to go?

Or is it worse to live past the present  
crisis, to imagine all our little half buried  
codes clicking on in the genome,  
like land mines waiting for the pressure  
trigger, precious inheritance  
passed down for generations, all  
the rigors of natural selection  
switched on at once as we  
flick the light on over our heads,  
and watch it rain down, alpha,  
beta, gamma, the alphabet  
of our unmaking. If not this,  
then something else.

# Enthymeme

*All enzymes are catalysts, therefore they battle entropy.*

You enter the house enumerating your domestic sins,  
trying not to envy the dancers jumping high in their entrechat—  
remember, their toes look like hamburger.  
During the entr'acte they shoot up their feet with Novocain and cry.

Such is beauty.

You get all entangled in the entourage of your insecurities,  
but the pruned redbud trees are never too mangled  
to put out the tiny cilia of their good looks come March.

You are not entitled to any more entropy than the rest of us.  
Pause. Make your entrance.

Entertain the guests. Envelop them in your hearty  
goodwill. Enunciate their names, making eye contact.

They will remember how you reached out your hand,  
your enthusiasm for their chatter.  
It's better to find comfort in their enthrallment, the canapés,  
the gossips picking through the absent players'

entrails, than to be on stage, ensnared in the one spot light,  
waiting for your partner in the pas de deux.  
He'll never show.  
There's only the entreaty of the crowd and the ensuing silence.

The creak of the worn wood boards.  
Did you think your waiting would entrance all these  
entrenched carnivores? You're an entrepreneur in a desert,  
a seamstress in a nudist colony, a chauffeur

in an automobile museum, a museum on the moon.  
You are entombed in your own environs  
and your patrons applaud when you fold down,  
fetal, under the sodium lights, and press your entire body to the stage.

# David Livingstone Fore

## Eternity is a very long time or a very short time

Perched between  
a stone bear  
& bull on  
    this common winter lunchtime

Below  
me men  
& women swim up  
    Sutter Street

These ones will die  
so their spawn had better take

Lather rinse repeat

I am joined here by six  
or seven others . . . cormorants drying our wings before  
setting out over  
the sea stretching before  
us each

A short-cropped gray-haired citizen bends over  
the Sporting Green like a pathologist deducing what led to  
the swoon this June that killed the Giant's chances

Below me is a man  
or the facsimile of  
one lying athwart  
a step whose feet long ago forgot the inside of  
a pair of  
but whose mad mats of  
hair offer a pillow for  
his head

& so on

In  
this moment I would like to believe in  
many things including how well the cold sun shines off  
my white shirt  
& my tightly tied shoes  
& my clean-shaven face

Q: Who am I kidding?

A: \_\_\_\_\_.

Two years back now  
& I still wonder which country is overseas

Nothing is as it should be

I can hardly breathe  
because of too much oxygen in  
the air  
or nitrogen  
or something else

Nothing feels right nothing looks right nothing sounds right

It's all been switched around

Mirrors hang backwards forcing me read my face right to  
left

Clean sheets are sandpaper against  
my skin  
so I sleep  
w/out

Those 2:00 am vigils stretch 'til  
dawn  
as I listen for  
movements of

any soul enemy  
or friend

But then the man looks up from  
his newspaper  
& swivels his head  
as do all the other guys  
& so on even the drifter  
which could only mean *one* thing  
so I monkey the men  
& my eyes fill  
w/a billowy blue skirt  
& olive-skin legs  
& a fury of  
red hair

A woman walking westward t r a v e l l i n g s l o w m o t i o n  
though not like on  
TV  
but deliberate motion instead

Fluid graceful  
& strong all shoulders  
& hips propelling her body forward  
even as she sustains herself in  
place in  
time in  
mind each movement telegraphing her intent to  
the earth  
so the planet may shift  
& so benefit from  
the blessings of  
each  
fall  
of  
each  
foot

There is also this blond @  
her side a woman  
w/the kind of  
looks that were she to walk into  
a bar alone she'd just cold-stop all talk on  
the spot  
but today hers is a mere rivulet of  
prettiness swept away by  
the flood of  
beauty flowing from  
the woman in  
blue

I start moving from  
my position  
& when I reach street level  
her eyes lock onto  
mine  
& mine to  
hers

It's this instantaneous thing electric + mutual + raw

Then the blond says something that makes her laugh

She laughs  
& laughs  
& laughs  
& as she laughs she folds @  
the waist then upright like a fountain of  
water then she folds again  
as the mirthful hem of  
her skirt bounces @  
her knees  
& her breasts sway under  
the fall of  
the fabric of  
her blouse

She laughs like today is the only day

She passes on by  
as I watch her backside retreat like a beacon inviting  
& denying me an ember growing small  
& cold.



## Ing

What a popsicle-sucking fan-waving shade-hogging hog-hauling arse-ogling tongue-parching donkey-stopping feet-perspirating cheese-racing Sata/n-sitting fig-gnawing grape-seed-sucking cigar-chomping chad-hanging milk-carton-reading iceberg-melting answer-machining little-girl-fondling nail-biting carpet-bombing Hitler-longing cuck-olding Lord's-name-in-vane-taking totally-tripping brown-nosing pencil-nibbling knee-jerking water-wasting loose-tooth-wiggling whore-whispering autoerotic-asphyxiating chain-smoking blister-peeling chin-chinning social-networking mother-stabbing father-fearing tumor-palpating granma-fleecing gas-lighting Berlin-lifting baby-dangling water-boarding Treasury-raiding pressure-cooking turkey-plucking love-handle-grabbing cleavage-leering hem-pulling leaf-blowing pig-sticking scrotum-scalding nipple-twisting beluga-bludgeoning harp seal-strumming level-heading nasal-excavating global-weirding needle-pointing nit-picking likker-slurping tea-partying craptastic-poetry-generating slow-dancing three-times-heel-tapping dog-snatching cat-scratching snatch-dogging hardly loafing time.

# The sea is always the color of your last lost love's eyes

I spot San Diego wedged into  
the lower left-hand corner like a secret  
as the remaining nation fans north  
& east

I am told my main problem is never remembering clichés  
& the sea is always the color of  
your last lost love's eyes

That's why I occupy these dunes above  
the beach  
as the sun above bakes my back each morning  
& the crown of  
my head by  
noon before  
finally blinding me @  
the blue end of  
day

I spend the final afternoon peeling layers away to nothing  
but desire for  
the astringent sea

I sprint across  
the beach  
& dive into  
the face of  
a towering wave  
& rise to  
the surface beyond  
the breakers where an otter bobs in  
a hidden kelp forest                    the  
to                    crest

I join in                    up                    then  
as each new swell draws us                    down  
the

After an hour  
it gets cold  
so I ride the surf into  
shore bathing in  
forces beyond  
ken  
& control

other  
side

Sand up  
my nose

Water in  
my mouth

Astonished  
& alive

The final colors dribble down  
the sky  
covering for  
the night  
that steals light from  
the undone day

A promise never made

I shake off the sea  
& cross the beach to  
    a pier where I pass a burly black man who wears snow  
    gear in  
    summer  
& plays space music on  
    his synthesizer  
    w/a sign that says Jesus Is A Fisher of  
    Men  
& there's also this Vietnamese guy casting  
& casting his bait upon  
    the waters  
& a pair of  
    lovers loving one another against

the wooden railing  
w/half-empty soda cans dangling from  
their still-free hands

The further out I go the fewer people I meet  
until it's just me  
& the slivered silver moon hanging  
like an open palm just beyond my reach

Jesus had it easy he wasn't fishing for  
the moon.

# Tim Hawkins

## Northern Idyll

Flushed and fevered, appalled by the city,  
you crept through nightfall over shards of glass  
back to the Northern forest, whence you'd come;

An upland preserve of bear wallow and fattening deer  
where tannic alder and maple-soaked rivers cool  
like a tonic the color of tea or bourbon,  
depending on your need.

You had planned to wade their timeless eddies,  
to meander in their cloudy back currents,  
to imagine lost loves and idylls  
and absent friends,

until the night I arrived at your door  
with furrowed brow and frown as tight  
as my clenched and trembling fist  
to solve the latter once and for all,

and to bring word from the late city  
with its campaign slogans and broken bottles,  
scorched pavement and red-rimmed,  
downcast eyes,

word of the woman and child denied  
this leafy province of despair.

# The Leap

I hold your small hand in mine  
while salmon lunge  
and hurt themselves  
on the rocks beneath us,  
chasing death,  
immortality  
and a dim and watery notion  
of home.

In the not-too-distant past,  
folks from the east side of town  
arrived in horse carts and carriages  
on this bluff above the river,  
hailing one another  
in the cool of evening  
as they gaped at the bounding rapids  
and the bears  
who fished below.

With a promise of ice cream in hand,  
we make our way to the car  
parked on the bluff—  
now a park  
surrounded by hospitals,  
apartments  
and schools.

One day you will return without me  
and you will understand  
like the generations of salmon and men,  
that though the bears and horse carts  
may be gone,  
the poorly understood migrations  
and countless wet dreams  
remain.

# The Gallery

My wife was born in a tropical climate  
where trees flourish through sun and rain  
and the four seasons are a myth passed down  
and diluted like generations of conquistador blood.

Here, in Michigan, she is fascinated by the falling leaves,  
how some nights they swirl and dance across the road  
seeming to perform for our oncoming headlights,  
and she chides me for failing to notice such beauty.

Thanks to her insistence I now have another experience  
to reconsider, another image to call to mind  
in the cold and austere days that will come  
soon enough, in the long, white gallery of winter.

## A Rain

A sudden chilling autumn rain  
blows through darkening fields and towns,  
drums on moss and weakens stones,  
moistens eyes and dampens skin;

shrouds the bleak and withered hedge,  
snaps the slender wavering branch,  
floods a narrow wooden bridge,  
and gathers battened skiffs to launch;

takes no heed of wall or fence  
nor burnished plaque to mark the deed,  
seeks the least resistant path,  
deaf to human remonstrance  
and blind to monuments of their dead.



# The Archives

After the stabbing light of the sun  
has dimmed to a wintery ache in the eye,  
one grows accustomed to stark interiors,  
intimate with corridors  
and their convolutions  
of gun-metal gray.

After a certain period of adjustment  
amid the superficial scrape and glint  
of marble halls and their distorted  
echoes of coughing like laughter  
in the rarefied air,

after the clatter of metal slamming  
and footsteps marching away in lockstep,  
then fading along the corridor,

something rare that we are gifted  
and burdened to name  
is bred in the silence that follows  
and filed away.

There is a veneer of winter solitude  
that can linger then, briefly,  
like snowfall melting on clothing

or that can remain for a longer term  
like wintering in some forest hollow,  
marking a more remote frontier,  
a knife's claim on ragged bone  
bounded by a feverish wind.

Perhaps that is the end of it, after all,  
a sudden shiver, an abrupt decision  
followed by the tinkling of ice  
and a return to the sunny port  
of conviviality.

Or perhaps, after numerous seasons,  
after window-less years spent  
locked in dutiful chambers  
by turns airless or drafty,  
idly tracing the torn and faded map  
of one's veins,

from some half-remembered story  
rescued from the false bottom  
of memory  
one hears apocryphal footsteps  
creeping away  
along the chilly corridor  
among the snowy drifts—

a second self  
cloaked in the terrible  
gift or burden  
of a second skin.

One imagines archival landscapes,  
even the frozen scar of a frown  
so like a familiar horizon.

# Abigail F. Taylor

## On the Pillow Where You Lie

Pause. Pluck the moon into memory  
before the sun cracks open the yolk of dawn.  
Sorrow weak and gone in reverie  
of heaven's breast bone; the wild blue rambling on.

In this now, I am not watching you die.  
You are whole and fit to me as you were  
once, when we were new. And foolish.  
We, Tom and Huck, aged hard this year.

I won't be ready for your rye  
departure, your stone-wrought name slurred  
in clipped grass. I am too selfish  
to let you go. With death so near

I mourn the living you, but it's not dark  
yet. Soon the moon will cradle its mouth between  
the burden of sky. You and I, marked  
by fate, thrust into an idle god's routine.

# The Older One

I do not have a fairy-tale sister.  
Not the sort with twisted fingers  
and charred spirit. She is the winter  
between seasons. She is only a whisper;  
the gladness of fresh snow and honey lemon tea.

What we are is not a Hollywood marquee.  
We do not gossip or share ice cream.  
We are ships in the night.  
Blood strangers.

Once in the morning light  
we built stick houses for The Green Folk.  
Begonias ruined and laid by the stream  
to garnish crowns as we sang “Da Luan, Da Mart.”  
All for a moment.

I am as unsure of her as I am of that day.  
Small clean memories are too few to be forgotten.  
Sisters, we are told, have a bond that is uncommon.  
Not so. Sometimes sisters struggle to obey  
the path. We fall apart. Unaware of the dangers.

## **Young Australian**

We lay in the summer bed  
having never slept together  
but for the steady breath  
and the quiet warmth  
of our arms pressed as one.

## A Threesome with Liquor

Ah yes! Music is the fool of love  
but not as forgiving as rusted brandy  
shattered like the melody.  
Reach for that tender woman in the bottle  
then tell me you adore me.

But goodness falls short of  
this. You, unable to hold promises, scanty  
in bockety hands, are still astoundingly  
beautiful.

We often cherish the difficult things.  
They glue together small pleasures.  
You sleeping while I read.  
Fresh bread kneaded together.  
Silk sheets against bare thighs.

But erratic days become too much and bring  
hair pulling ENOUGH! That pressures  
the twist of conflicted needs.  
I learned to never trust you  
and I am at fault for trying.

# Immaculate Exception

*another song for Ruben.*

To this day  
your heat is engraved  
into the grooves of my fingers

Remember  
we sang, Tomorrow!  
Our eager dreams stretched  
beyond the time you borrowed

This month. This hour  
sorrow worships  
*all* your names

And when this sour  
thing  
rubs raw young flesh

I don't want to go on  
and can't . . .

Go on.

Oh to speak with you  
One. Last. Time.

The only voice I hear is  
my own darkness  
Or worse. Nothing.

And I am sorry I never cooked you breakfast.

# Joey DeSantis

## Baby Names

Let's call him Baby Doom  
or maybe Tricycle Madness would better suit him  
or Lester's Little Secret, Braunze, Fire Catcher  
Blood Drinker or The Dream Machine  
Samuel is nice too, I know  
but you ruled that one out months ago

You also ruled out Jacob, Peter, Daniel, Addison  
and Joseph  
which was my baby name brainchild but  
oh well  
You are right to want something flashier  
like Superjerk, Gnashings St. Claire, Lydio  
Brother's Bane, Davidson  
or even just Slice

He will go on to do great things potentially  
Of this your blond-winged friend was certain  
so long, he said, as we pick just the right name  
And so we must ask ourselves  
would Cookies N' Cream rid the world of evil  
or merely turn the other cheek?  
Could an angry Clementine overturn a money table?  
I think not, but Jesus might  
Why not Jesus?

Or how about Jeezus  
Now there's a boy destined for something greater  
a boy who could easily hold his own inside the ring  
maybe an Italian with a great sob story  
I can already see the headlines and the VIP tickets proclaiming  
Red Foam Drinker versus Little Baby Jeezus  
I see our root beer cups overflowing as our heavenly son  
deals RFD a left hook for the ages  
fated, unable to hold back, winning  
all the fruits of our careful planning



## Out of Time

My father is flowing clockwise  
in a holiday sweater vest and a gold chain watch  
He is down in the groove, swimming through  
the electric grey rooms  
kept warm by the stove light, and on the table  
a bowl of ham and pea soup  
Immigration was his grandfather's story  
yet he too finds comfort in the small  
At night, laying himself in the arms of his armchair  
he can at last afford to go nowhere

My mother is flowing counter-clockwise  
still as beautiful as she was  
fifteen years ago, twenty years  
back when the sun and sky made a point  
to match everything that she wore  
I believe now that they even changed colors  
for her secret moods  
Had I known it then I might have seen her apart from me

Her jade necklace is timeless  
Her laughter is timeless, his records and her red coat  
that he gave her that she always wore  
I grow  
I am the clock—the testament to the full length of things  
I tell it like it is  
The dinner plates with the hearts on the rims, they are timeless  
until another one breaks (not out of anger)

Not out of anger, I dropped it  
Out of time  
She asks, How many are left?  
A wedding present, he says, it was our very first set  
How many are left?  
I point:  
Two

## **We Can Sell the Antiques**

On most East Coast beaches  
the shorelines and their crowds tend to look the same  
So long as you don't look at either too long or too hard  
or lift your eyes to see a lighthouse  
twirling about in some other town's coat of paint  
you can fool yourself

There is a mansion in Asbury Park filled with junk you can  
never quite unsee  
Six door knocker faces, a pair of red kissing manikin torsos,  
twenty-three beautician's scissors  
dulling in the back of your brain's dark closet  
sorry-eyed, turning undead  
all of it grooming a monstrous shadow  
until there might be anything in that house  
and everything in there might remind you of it

Today it is crowded  
on the beach where kids seem to have only one kind of scream  
Small talk, heavy feet, dark eyes  
She must know that she is not the one walking beside you today  
but so long as she doesn't risk everything with a look, two  
distressed searchlights, blue  
she can fool herself too

## Death Considers the Buttercups

One track, one mind  
Death must glide along these buttercups  
without pausing to consider them  
even as they hug the train of his cloak  
in their harmless fervor to be chosen  
by truly anyone

And yet, in a small and secret way  
hidden as his hands and feet  
that are weary for their journey's end  
by the shed where his old man waits  
still humming in his wife's wide-brimmed hat,  
Death does consider them

The buttercups, who let him go just as quietly, no thorns  
leaving only a yellow signature (a suggestion) to be  
remembered by  
He would have sucked them dry  
or at least taken a few lazy, arching swipes at their heads  
but it isn't their time yet and besides  
he still has a long way to go

## On Lent

Low ceilings are still en vogue  
as is setting aside money in small increments  
to prepare for the wise and lonely years  
We all at times need God's wrath or a Great Depression  
to keep our thoughts from becoming too silly or from towering  
precariously  
I vow to not be so outlandish  
with my spending  
and to apply this kind of discipline to future relationships  
so that one day I may find and keep true adult love

For Lent I used to give up red squash  
which I hated just as much as the other colors of squash  
the purple, the green, the blue  
I still do  
I regret the bacon bits that ended up on my salad yesterday  
that were not supposed to end up there  
I pray for the strength to avoid the near occasion of bacon bits  
And to understand that true love is made up of sacrifices both  
small and silly  
True love is unsexy and is nothing to be ashamed of

Last night I dreamed  
that something surprised me so much that I  
swallowed the whole world  
Knowledge, Wealth, and Power drifted silently across a lake in my belly  
And while I considered hurling them back into the void  
I was scared that I might start a new world war and possibly get  
shot in it  
I had firmly resolved to never give up anything  
when a searching voice called out my name from deep inside of me  
and I felt a great relief at being judged

# Cameron Price

## Every Morning

New moons fade to longing,  
filling the air with transfusions of autumn light.

In the crevices of sleep, the world dreams  
of tossing a coin :

heads, we wake up // tails, we keep sleeping.

It is always tails, the doldrums of the covers.

*(listen)* every morning a clear white note  
breaks out over the land : it's the snap of a  
dream sundering.

In that moment, everything wakes up :

moss undulates in a breeze that  
is not there;

the mice collect twigs and hair  
to build palaces;

the deer gather to search out the  
most delicate rosebushes to plunder.

And then it ends.

Things revert to rising slowly, as from  
a daze or stupor.

Some things feel more hopeless than others :  
maybe your back aches mysteriously or you  
worry habitually about the bills.

But yet there is still that moment, every morning,

when everything pulses at once, tributary to  
one rhythmic source.

Don't blink // don't sleep.

We must try to rise and feel it every morning,  
to remember who we are.

# The Silence of The Dead

The final cessation is  
a tomb, a stone cup, a chorus,  
flung far into a dream  
of black water and the rushing  
of exhausted exits.

This is the hymn of listening,  
a secret hid from the world.

In this cavern, cut smooth  
by centuries of bitter water,  
I find a pool of gaping shadow.

The bones of every being that came before me  
sleep submerged and wait for a sign :  
they, too, listen  
for a revelation on the other side of the silence.

I tread the stones around the edge,  
and watch the brittle hands of the dead wave  
like kelp in a secret current.

I kneel and lean my face down to the water  
to kiss the menagerie of bones  
arranged in grooves of sleep.

A slender finger bent in cold yearning  
reaches for my lips  
and their memory of warmth :  
a frigid caress.

The wait rolls on in constant flow,  
in this tomb, this holy cup,  
the chorus of the dead :

This is the hymn of listening,  
A secret hid from the world.

Now I, too, wait and reach  
for lips that come to kiss the dead,  
the waiting,  
waiting for the end of silence,  
for the tomb to break open,  
for hope to break open,  
and breathe.



# L'Ancien Chanson d'Hiver

A thousand yards of linen are not long enough to record this story,  
written on the skins of onions in yellow thread,  
sewn by fingers of light.

I am in a place, existing in liminal spaces,  
like a shred of yesterday lingering in a patch of morning shadow,  
fleeing the noon eye.

I am the concrete road, splayed like a compass,  
pointing towards your future : walk on.  
I am open, split like the gaping mouths of lions,  
my strength laying in the multiplicity of my pieces,  
the hydra of my being : I live.

Come to this place, warm and humming :  
the perfume of a hornet's nest in June,  
the smell of honey in a tree, raw and woody.

Find me there, between the gaps of leafless trees,  
waiting like the smell of smoke,  
in dappled puddles on a wet path.

I wait there writing my story,  
on the backs of beetles and the fingers of bats.  
I am there singing this poem through the pores of a leaf,  
the mouth of a dandelion.  
I am there like a thought, the memory of a still pond in winter,  
the sadness of the night passed away.

So wait : be my friend.  
Sing this song with me in the hollow of my open hand.  
Add to my fullness, find me in the ancient song of winter:  
*Attende-moi, aime-moi, et chante, mon cher, cher ami.*

# David Walker

## Sestina for Housesitting

Don't you feel like the forgotten piece  
of luggage? The product of heel-  
scraping left on the rug before  
they all go off to forget  
the humdrum. Bottle  
of cleaner in hand

like a sidearm weapon, you finger  
the trigger. It brings you peace.  
Much more than that bottle  
of Jack. Far from healed,  
you just want to forget  
the mess you found just before

you went to bed. You think of before  
all this, when "scrubbing on hands  
and knees" was only a forgetful  
turn of phrase acquired piece-  
meal from easily-healed  
fairy tale characters bottle-

necked into life-lessons. You think of the bottled  
up frustration that needs outlet before  
they return, the time you had to walk heel-  
to-toe along a night-lit road, arms  
outstretched like traipsing. *Piece  
of cake*, you boasted, forgetting

this cop had no sense of humor. Forget  
drinking yourself numb. You need to bottle,  
compartmentalize each and every piece  
of envy you have of them before  
you snap and decide to hand  
the dog off to the heels

of a stranger. You say he's a good dog. *Heel*,  
you demonstrate, hoping the dog didn't forget  
that command. Seal it with a shake of the hand.  
*Good riddance*. Instead, you grab the bottle  
of cleaner again and spray. You knew before-  
hand that you would be leaving pieces

of yourself scattered around like shattered bottles  
and they would come home and say, "Before  
you leave, just so you know, you forgot a piece."

# Helen R. Peterson

## Ablaut

In the company cafeteria the man  
murmurs a tune to his daughter,  
alone except for a woman  
reading a book by the window.

The toddler rings back the words  
out of tune. He rocks the child,  
diverts her attention to the tvs  
the fact that they're all on CNN  
makes her giggle.

He is relieved to quiet the song  
until a photo of a child, newly dead  
flashes on screen. "Look Daddy."  
his daughter cries, attracted  
as children are to people  
their own age. "Yes, very pretty"  
The father says, and rocks his child  
"Isn't she a pretty girl?"

# Mageirocophobia

When grunions make their run to mate  
the male sliding his body around the female, her tail  
dug deep in the sand, they are unconcerned  
about the parasites slipping between their scales  
the scummiest of waters flowing through their open mouths  
and seeping, filtered, from their gills. They don't know  
salad bars are more likely to make a body sick than sushi,  
or that Aunt Mae will someday scrape the mold from their bodies,  
bury them deep in a tomb of batter, fry them crisp  
in oil that will leap at her wattled arms.

## Contributor Notes

**Jim Pascual Agustin** writes and translates poetry in Filipino and English. He grew up in the Philippines and now lives in Cape Town with his Canadian-born wife and their twin daughters. His recent poetry books, *Kalmot ng Pusa sa Tagiliran* and *Sound Before Water*, were simultaneously published in 2013 by the University of Santo Tomas Publishing House in Manila. Due for release by USTPH is his new poetry collection, *A Thousand Eyes*.



**Jose A. Alcantara** lives in Carbondale, Colorado. He started writing poetry four years ago after a quasi-mystical experience in a graveyard involving Dante, a dead woman named Guadalupe, melting frost, a raven, and some church bells. He was the recipient of a 2013 Fishtrap Fellowship in Poetry and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize.



**David A. Bart** is a writer from Arlington, Texas. His poetry appears in the journals *Poet Lore*, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *Margie*, *Cider Press Review*, *Illya's Honey* and *The Weight of Addition* (Mutabilis Press).



**Therese L. Broderick** has spent many years serving her poetry community in Albany, New York, as an open-mic reader, teacher, contest judge, Board member, classroom guest, blogger, and Poet Laureate of a local tavern.



**Hannah Callahan** was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, the youngest of four. She studied literature and printmaking at Bennington College in Vermont, and currently resides in Asheville, North Carolina. Hannah is a writer, collage artist, and extremely amateur thereminist. She is also the co-founder of [falconswithcaps.tumblr.com](http://falconswithcaps.tumblr.com). Her loftiest dream is to walk across country to Roswell, New Mexico to find a UFO.



**Monika Cassel** is the English department chair at New Mexico School for the Arts, a statewide public arts high school in Santa Fe. With the support of the Lannan Foundation, she has developed a successful creative writing minor at the school. She is working on a manuscript of poems on her German family's WWII history; her translations of the poet Durs Grünbein are forthcoming in *Asymptote* and *Structo Magazine*.



**Kelsey Charles** writes poetry and fiction whenever he can. But, of course, time is finite and always seems to be escaping him. He currently teaches English Writing and Public Speaking at Beijing Language and Culture University in China where he lives with his wife and daughter. Despite living in China for four years, he is still learning Chinese.



**Joey DeSantis** is working towards an M. Ed. at Boston College and will soon be a high school English teacher, somewhere. Maybe one day he'll get that dream job writing for Nintendo. From substitute teaching to serving as a teaching assistant with KEYS Service Corps, AmeriCorps, working with youth makes his child at heart happy, as does writing poetry and listening to Bob Dylan.



**Lane Falcon**'s poems have been published in *The Cortland Review*, *Rhino*, *Brain*, *Child Magazine*, *Pank*, *Word Riot*, *2 River View* and more. In 2012, she was awarded the Rona Jaffe Fellowship from The Vermont Studio Center. She lives in New York City.



**Michael Fleming** was born in San Francisco, raised in Wyoming, and has lived and learned and worked all around the world, from Thailand and England and Swaziland to Berkeley, New York City, and now Brattleboro, Vermont. He's been a teacher, a grad student, a carpenter, and always a writer; for the past decade he has edited literary anthologies for W. W. Norton. (You can see some of Fleming's own writing at: [www.dutchgirl.com/foxpaws](http://www.dutchgirl.com/foxpaws).)



**David Livingstone Fore** is a designer and writer living in Oakland.



**Lisa Beth Fulgham** is a recent graduate of Mississippi State University's M.A. program in creative writing and is the Managing/Founding Editor of *Blinders Literary Journal*. Currently, she is a wanderer and is working on submitting her chapbook, *A Voice Raised From the Dirt*. She is the former Associate Editor of *The Jabberwock Review*.



**John Glowney** has practiced commercial litigation with a large Pacific Northwest law firm, Stoel Rives LLP, for over 30 years. He is a past winner of several Hopwood Awards at the University of Michigan, a Pushcart Prize, Poetry Northwest's Richard Hugo Prize, and the Poetry Society of America's Robert H. Winner Memorial Award. He lives in Seattle and drinks a lot of coffee.



Raised on a vegetable and cattle farm in North Carolina, **Sara Graybeal** is a writer, spoken word performer and teaching artist living in Philadelphia. She is a founding member of the Poeticians, a spoken-word collective based in South Philly, and a member of the Backyard Writers' Fiction Workshop of West Philadelphia. Her work is published or forthcoming in *Tempered Magazine*, *Apiary Magazine*, the Head & the Hand Press, and *Floating Bridge Review*.



**Greg Grummer** has been published in many small presses and periodicals, including *Hunger*, *Rhino*, *APR*, *Ploughshares*, *Indiana Review*, and more. He is a paper artist and teacher also.



**Tim Hawkins** has lived and traveled widely, working as a journalist and teacher in international schools, among other positions. He currently lives in his hometown of Grand Rapids, Michigan. His writing has appeared in more than two dozen print and online publications, including the Summer 2013 issue of *Sixfold*. In 2012, he was nominated for a Pushcart Prize and published his first collection, *Wanderings at Deadline* (Aldrich Press). Find out more at: [www.timhawkinspoetry.com](http://www.timhawkinspoetry.com)



**Tee Iseminger** is a recovering advertising copywriter returning to roots in fiction, with two novels and a short story collection in progress, and is experimenting with poetry—particularly narrative style. She's an alumni of Squaw Valley Writer's Workshops, Fishtrap Writer's Conference, Fine Arts Work Center's online workshops, and one day will finally finish her BA, 10 years in the making, at the University of Nevada's creative writing program. She lives with her husband and daughter in Reno.



**Lee Kisling** is a senior at Hamline University in St Paul, Minnesota. In December 2013, his poetry chapbook *The Lemon Bars of Parnassus* was published by Parallel Press in Madison, Wisconsin.





Originally from California, **J. K. Kitchen** is Associate Professor of Medieval History at the University of Alberta (Canada).



**James Leveque** lives in Edinburgh, Scotland, where he is both a teacher and student at the University of Edinburgh, and where the city's energetic support of poetry has provoked much of his writing in this issue of *Sixfold*. He is originally from Fresno, California.



**Jessica M. Lockhart** is from Selma, Alabama. She recently completed her MA studies at Mississippi State University, where she currently teaches English Composition.



**Rande Mack** lives in Manhattan, MT. Sacajawea walked through his backyard long ago. Writing poetry is a way he makes sense of things, a way he prays. Some of his poems have appeared in a few small publications. He won a fellowship for his poetry from the Montana Arts Council.



**Mary Mills** is a recent graduate of King University in Bristol, TN. She lives in Virginia, in a small town in the Appalachian Mountains, with her husband and their four birds. Her work has appeared in *Shot Glass Journal*, *Four and Twenty*, and *The Clinch Mountain Review*.



**Helen R. Peterson**, from Eaton Rapids, Michigan, writes poetry and fiction and is coeditor of *The Waterhouse Review*. *Melons and Memory*, her first full-length book of poetry, was published in November 2011 from Little Red Tree Press. Her work has appeared in over 100 publications, both nationally and abroad, and she has read at the Bowery Poetry Club, the Out of the Blue Gallery in Cambridge, the Walt Whitman Homestead, and Rio's in Glasgow, Scotland, amongst others.



**Cameron Price** is a poet living in Ann Arbor, MI. His poetry and experimental film work has appeared in *Humble Pie* and *Small Po[r]tions*, respectively. He is the design and visual art editor at *Duende*, a new online journal of art and literature.



**Anne Rankin-Kotchek** is a freelance editor and writer. Her nonfiction has appeared in *The Sun*, *The Mount Desert Islander*, *The Washington Post*, and elsewhere. She graduated *summa cum laude* from Ohio State with a BA in English. Current projects include a book of poems, short stories, and a memoir. She cannot say enough good things about dogs, and, although an extreme introvert, she continues to build the tender, delicate bridges (she's certain) connect us all.



**Ricky Ray** was born in Florida and educated at Columbia University. A non-dualist, he was once a garbage man, a functional bum, and a record label owner. In 2013, he received the Ron McFarland Poetry Prize, second-prize in the Whisper River Poetry Contest, and was a runner-up in the Georgetown Review Magazine Contest. He lives in NYC with his wife and three cats, where they dream of farm life in an undiscovered village.



**Phoebe Reeves** earned her MFA at Sarah Lawrence College, and now teaches English at the University of Cincinnati's Clermont College, in Southern Ohio. Her poems have recently appeared in *Versal*, *Third Coast*, *Quarterly West*, and *Memorious*. Her manuscript, *Helena of Bikini*, was recently named as a finalist in the Sarabande Books Kathryn A. Morton Prize, and a semi-finalist in the Waywiser Press Anthony Hecht Prize.



**Daniel Stewart** is the author of a collection of poems, *The Imaginary World*. Since 1999 he has been a teaching-writer for the Writers in the Schools. A variety of print and online publications have featured his poems, including *Educe*, *Puerto Del Sol*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Rattle*. Recent work may be found in the anthologies *REduce*, and *Thrush Poetry Journal: an anthology of the first two years*.



**Abigail F. Taylor** is a student of theology and history. She has had the honour of being previously published in *Illya's Honey* and *Red River Review*. She also served as Script Editor and Assistant to the Director to the gore black-comedy, *The Dinosaur Experience* (previously known as *Raptor Ranch*). She is currently working on her second novel and a chapbook.



**David Walker** teaches English at both the high school and college level. He is the founding editor of *Golden Walkman Magazine*, and has poetry and fiction appearing in several literary magazines including *Drunk Monkeys*, *Words Dance*, and others. He has a chapbook forthcoming from *Finishing Line Press*. Living in Westfield with a hyperactive cat that puts holes in all his window screens, he is married to the love of his life, Caitlin.

