

Gyroscope Review

Fine poetry to turn your world around



Issue 16-4

Fall 2016 The 'Honor' Issue



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Fall 2016

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FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to our first issue with a theme. When Constance and I decided to issue a call for poems with some underlying idea about honor, we hoped that we would get pieces that went beyond people in uniform. We wanted poets to explore the ideas that hold the very foundation of honor. How do we learn it? Who teaches us? How do we show honor, act with honor, feel honored? But in this contentious election season, and with the recent 15th anniversary of 9-11, thinking about honor beyond the obvious images of military and politics proved to be difficult. But perhaps that is the conversation we desperately need to have: how to be honorable in the face of ferocious disagreements about how to live in this world.

And that is the task of a poet or any other artist: figuring out how to define what is happening around us, how to hold it up for others to consider. We offer you 11 poems that came in at the behest of our themed call, and they are the most varied group we could assemble from the submissions we received. These pieces cover war, of course, both current and past, as well as human rights, hard work, acceptance, courage. They consider the aftermath of honorable service, the history that honorable acts create.

We've nestled the honor poems in their own special section in the middle of this issue. Our regular submissions, as we've come to expect, are widely varied. We love reading what poets are thinking about. We love seeing all the different styles and structures poets employ to get their ideas across. Relationships, home, nature, and details of everyday life are constant sources of poetic inspiration.

If you are so inclined, after you have read this issue, let us know what inspires you.

Kathleen Cassen Mickelson, Editor

In this quarter's publication we ask, "How do you define honor?". It wouldn't be fair to pose that question without attempting to answer it ourselves. At first glance there would appear to be somewhat of a dichotomy between honor and poetry. What does one have to do with the other?

It's interesting that discussions of honor usually focus on the military, as Kathleen states in her editorial. We look to the military as a sort of John Wayne keeper of our honor, content in the idea the military will do the honorable things for us, so we don't have to think about it. It may surprise you to learn I served in the U.S. Army. I come from a family of military veterans and grew up hearing stories of service in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam. Service was a duty my relatives felt obligated to do. They went without resentment. They served, and when the time came, they got out and came home. It was no big deal. They did it because it had to be done. They did it because it was expected of them - by themselves and others. They did it because it was the right thing to do.

That was what was imparted to me growing up. Do the right thing. Even when you don't feel like it, even when it's hard. Sometimes you will have to buck the crowd and do something unpopular. You will be the voice of dissent. You will do it because it's the right thing to do. Nobody said honor was easy. We can look to others to be our example, but sooner or later you have to stand up and be counted. Don't take the easy way out. Do what's right. That is honor to me. This is what I look for in poetry. Does the poem stand up, stand out? Does it avoid the easy ending, the cliches, and dig deep for what matters? Is it true to itself? Honor matters - in everything.

Constance Brewer, Editor

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POEMS

A MOMENT OF SILENCE
BY VERN FEIN

Today they called for a moment of silence.
After violence, a moment of silence.
No one ever killed in a moment of silence.
No bombings or shots in a moment of silence.
Hold a moment of silence
For the rest of time.

AUTUMN DAWN
BY KIM BAKER

lingering Moon
jilted lover
flaunts its satellite skirts
pulled up into sexy crescents
flirts with Earth
who can't commit
prefers to spin

Moon blames its aging craters
lunar moods
as Earth
no longer moonstruck
turns gamma gaga
towards Sun
no matter that Moon can
perigee and apogee when
all Sun can do is
pose

but oh
that fiery magnetism
solar glare
come hither stare
eclipses Earth's yearning for
the tenderness of gloaming

and so
wilting Moon hovers
hoping her lover
fickle but wistful
might pause this once
quash this starlet infatuation
fall back under the covers
for an ice age
for an hour

DOING THE MATH
BY JANE COLLINS

Unless time can be rounded
up or down, unless angles
let us figure how
love gets bounded by
an idea of division,
then I can't find
the difference, can't equate
this moment with loss
or gain. You can calculate
infinity if you hold
not more than,
not less than,
this moment.

IMAGINE YOU'VE NEVER SEEN A BRIDGE
IMAGINE YOU'VE NEVER SEEN A GAME OF HOPSCOTCH
IMAGINE YOU'VE NEVER SEEN A FAT CAT
BY KIT KENNEDY

1.

You're seven in a friend's car thinking
her Dad will drive up the bridge cables.
Petrified and silent, wondering why
your parents didn't prepare you.

2.

Someone stumbles upon an abandoned game
of hopscotch. Analyzes the markings
evidence of an early civilization
steeped in runes.

3.

Then you awake to morning light
through blinds which the cat rearranges
into the ideogram
emptybowl.

ONCE UPON A TIME
BY ADEN THOMAS

Somewhere the world begins.
A book opens. A toddler stands.
The air smells like cinnamon.
A man lies in the branches of a cottonwood tree.
He notices the leaves flow like waves
just before they glide into the shore.
A seagull, thinking he's an albatross,
flies into the fist of circumpolar winds.
Spanish syllables let loose their hounds.
Soon you're running with the pack
gathering dandelions under the moonlight.
A poet swallows lava. The legend opens true.
His tongue forks lighting.
A old woman takes her last breath.
Her hand opens. A white carnation
blooms inside her palm.

A HANKERING AFTER THE HERBACEOUS
BY OONAH V JOSLIN

Maybe I like
the way weeds grow
during heavy rain
steam rising
visible heat
from stone to stem
the droop, drip, drop
rose petals to ground
the sky in a lily flower
how leaves turn.

Maybe I like
the snail's progress
up damp brickwork
how coarse grass lies limp
water courses down glass
a vertical drench
turns toy windmills
quarter by quarter spilling
from the tips
of foxgloves.

Maybe I love
the way mint reflects freshness
chives reflect heat
rhubarb creaks as it grows
sea holly spikes
my strange cocktail of a garden.
I drink it all in
and who are you to criticise?
I may not have a gardener's eye
but they're my weeds.

ON THE ROAD EAST OF THE RED BARN
BY PAT ANTHONY

Deep in the woods, we sit the grey plank
bridge above the creek, no more really
than three 4 x 12's with a bit of framing.
Too narrow for the county mowers so
everything's grown up into bowers and
caves, poison ivy, smilax, horse weeds.
Sometimes, if the water's low, a turtle
will share a rock with a speck of sun,
but it's mostly dappled shade, damp
and rank, green mud, leaf drift. Go
farther east past the farm with all
the dogs and you can count frogs
beside the arrowhead, but here
it's just the silence above and
beneath those splintered timbers,
the smell of air so ripe it drips.

MY DEAR
BY KEITH MOUL

Given almost no time at all,
you'll begin a song.
Without reminders of classics,
you'll sing
du wa diddie, zip scat zip.

I am confident that you will do this
whether you bake in the sun
or you drench in the rain
or you clutch any anchor in the wind.

It doesn't pay to be too hip,
du wa diddie, zip scat zip.

STEREO
BY GEOFFREY ANDERSON

Uncle got grandma's stereo
to play music louder than she did,

bass dropping onto the hardwood
until B.B. unplugged his guitar.

It's strange using another person's tools
the first time she is gone.

Turning the volume right after months
of silence, the voice that escapes

could shake this house
even if it whispered.

STUCK BETWEEN STATIONS
BY DAVID COLODNEY

After I'm dead, I'm sure my kids will curse me
for leaving the burden of sorting through my possessions,
scattered random papers, boxes and notebooks
shoved, pages bent, on shelves, ripped, yellowing.
Stacks of books in the closet, stealing space folded jeans
and sweaters should hold.

A man can accumulate a lot of worthlessness in his life.
I may as well sift through this now, revisit
my own history, place this stuff in its context, its time.

I find a spiral notebook and touch it like velvet,
twirling the ripped shreds embedded in those metal rings,
seeing my college girlfriend's swirling penmanship
on paper thinner than my hair.

I can't let the kids think they're obligated to keep any of this.
I think of George Carlin's routine about how all his shit was stuff
and all my stuff was shit.

It's all shit to someone who didn't live the back story,
days chronicled upon days until they become lives
driving in circles, pushing buttons on car radios,
drifting in the atmosphere
stuck between stations.

MINIMALISM
BY GARRETT HOFFMAN

Ever since the
clocks fell back, as if
in surrender, a lot
more than just the sunset
has been manipulated.

The infrequent spells
of sleep are now being
accompanied by headaches,
a wicked cocktail I wasn't
prepared for.

And the actual alcohol
that usually fuels my step has
now dried up, in sync
with my wallet,
leaving me reminiscent of
a bobble-head during
an earthquake.

Everything is shrinking:
the importance of love,
the value of time,
the strength in my voice,
my life into boxes,
all reduced to measly
white shadows.

I've paid for almost
everything I own and
yet I feel as if all
that I own is someday soon
going to make me pay,
like a dependable premonition.

I like to tell people that I
Tripped into my minimalist
Life, prodded by circumstance
And the illusion of choice, but I
Hold on to the precious truth,
Rightly afraid that it might,
In the hour of my reckoning,
Be all I have left.

AT HOME
BY IRIS N. SCHWARTZ

I. “Have all your friends over.
Everyone’s welcome,” they said.
Tall Dora with deep coffee skin,
plump Sharon, café au lait,
Elyse, nearly translucent, freckled,
Lina, olive by June:
We combed a Barbie doll’s straight hair.
With her tiny nose, pale-Band-Aid skin,
and exaggerated hourglass shape,
she resembled none of us.

II. My parents hired painters
to double-coat all rooms of our house.
One year, the painter,
a slim black man,
took my mother up
on her offer of cold orange juice
on a blistering August day.
I prayed he didn’t catch her
placing his drained glass
in a corner of the sink, and,
later, washing it twice.

III. My father’s brother,
during coffee and pie,
whispered to my parents
tales of “Sambos” and “jigaboos.”
(I’d never heard these words, but
understood them in context.)
After he left for Long Island,
I asked my mother
why neither she nor Daddy
stood up to him.
“Oh, that’s just George,” she
batted the air.
“That’s how he is. What can you do?”

III. In my Brooklyn neighborhood,
some Italians and Jews used code:
Black people were *moulinians* (eggplants)
and *shvartzers* (blacks).
When those epithets became
familiar to their subjects,
my Jewish mother spoke of *kuzines*.
“They won’t know it’s them,” she explained,
“if we use the word for cousins.”

COMING HOME
BY PAT ANTHONY

I'm crossing the Zócalo, alligator heels clicking across the cobblestones, blisters burning the backs of my feet, marbling my toes. I keep half an eye on where I'm going, the other on the deep, darkness hovering in doorways, the whispered *Buenas noches, Señora*. I don't bother to correct them, but it's as if they can see my swelling belly, the baby lurching with my uneven steps, the swing of my bag. I head for the cross street leading into the Colonia, the lights burning from the concrete framed windows in their faded pastels like women in worn out dresses, bare feet tucked into the extra folds. Tonight there will be nothing but empty air, faces with flaming cheeks from the hot liquor but no food, the rind of lemons still in the sink. I search for a piece of bread left over from the children's breakfast. Ease off the shoes. Why, he asks me, after a day of playing fútbol, don't you take the bus? I look at the socks thrown on the floor, gone grey with road dust and again, have no reply.

BITTERSWEET
BY KIM BAKER

There is never a good time to break up.
Something always makes you doubt yourself.
It's Christmas.
She claims to be changing.
Your mother loves her, the way she brightens up Thanksgiving.
But her cherry eyes, green sleeves,
the way she wraps herself around everything you love
feels smothering.
So. When to say enough.
Summer is no good.
She hides inside the evergreen.
And once, at a May Day picnic,
she got so wild,
she embraced the leg of a guest.
Face it.
She's a flirt.
Maybe you can't just break up.
Last fall, after watching QVC,
you threatened her with a pearl-handled axe.
Kill her pretty.
Then, preserve her like so many dried vines.
You know winter is best.
She hangs around until autumn abscission.
Then, every leaf exposes her location.
The delicate yellow flowers she wears in her hair.
The coquettish red accessories.
You love her in autumn.
You release her from the tree begging you
to obliterate her with your potions,
so you bring her inside to finish dying.
See. You can't split with this exquisite siren.
You find her more beautiful as window dressing.
Display her in all her November spectacle.
You've done better than break up.
You've tamed her.

SOUVENIR
BY MICKEY KULP

His pride was a useless
souvenir from younger
days, a cracked
thing with peeling paint
that sat in his blind
spot, like a junk
plastic pendant on a
carnival necklace
that had blown around
to dangle between
his shoulder blades
on the bike ride home.

THE THING ABOUT YOUR DAD
BY KARI GUNTER-SEYMOUR

I could lay on the guilt.
Say if you hate your dad
you'll end up like him.
Bitch your own Karma.
Not like if you got caught
with a joint or skanked
on someone's girlfriend.
I'm talking about *divine decree*.

I would be the first to admit
heartless disregard is the worst.
Not even a postcard
the whole time you were in Iraq.
Though there was that one summer
he taught you all the words
to *Rubber Soul* and to shave
even before you needed to.

Face it: he's a phenomenal liar.
Off the tracks more than a little,
he said it made him mental,
thinking of ways other people
could fuck up perfectly good lives.

You're wasting years, Son.
Simple math.
A person can't go around
telling people what to do with their lives
as long as he has
without eventually believing
he knows what he's talking about.

THE HONOR POEMS

A GYROSCOPE REVIEW
SPECIAL SECTION

PETITION #21485637
BY JENNIFER CLARK

We heard Ellen
roasted George's
wife an apple.

She is small,
very good looking,
sound and healthy.

Not the apple. Ellen.

The apple—once cut
open by the wife—
was rather unusual.

Slavery wasn't
suing Ellen. So,
after she swept

and cleaned, made
beds, and folded fine
linens, she poked

a hole in the apple,
filled it with mercury,
scraped from the back

side of a gilded mirror.
Passed down,
like a number

of things from our late
father's estate, she may
be sold, we pray.

Ellen. Not the mirror.

Just like that boy
of forty-five the Wilsons
sought the court's

permission to sell—
Sam, his name was—
a prolific source

of trouble, wild,
ungovernable, well, we
as do all our neighbors,

fear Ellen has the same
immoral attributes
and vicious habits.

Oh, praise be Honorable
Samuel D. Frierson Chancellor
for petition granted.

SERVITUDE
BY LUCIAN CARTER

It's the smoke that gets to you.

Not fetching gallon after gallon of water.

Not having to spew praise like a sycophant.

Not the constant hauling and shuffling of priceless loot you'll never get to spend.

Not polishing the scales.

No.

When a dragon offers to spare your life in exchange for servitude, think long and hard.

It's the smoke that gets to you.

HANDS

BY JENNIFER HOLLEY LUX

I will wash my hands. With water, with soap. I will wash with vigor. And often. Today, I touched machines both inside and out. Their greased gears. Their levers handled by one thousand men. Before I touch myself again, I will rid myself of dirt that stains my clothes and of germs that sink unnoticed into my pores. I will make myself worthy of touch. I will wash my hands of the fights of yesterday and ready them for the fights of today. The work is hard. My hands are raw. In the morning, after I step out of the shower, I view my long, white body behind the fog in the mirror. My red hands dangle from my long, white arms like someone else's hands sewn onto my wrists. Too much lifeblood fills my hands. I cannot control what they will do. Late last night, for instance, I walked into a doughnut shop to wash my hands. A woman stood in my way. She would not let me past the line. My hands, they hit her. I said "I'm sorry," but no one heard because everyone was yelling and the lights were bright. The strangers in the shop surprised me by pointing at my chest instead of my hands. They cannot see inside me. They cannot see what I have done right. The nights I listened for morning birds, letting a woman beside me sleep. Not touching her at all. Sometimes my hands don't listen. They go their own way. I am blamed for this. If people saw how I hold back. If they saw how many bruises I have not let happen because I hold back, they would love me. At every step, my hands are part of me yet are not. Like wings on a bird. You see? My hands, they fly.

BATTLEFIELD
BY EILEEN MALONE

An engraved brass sign proclaims
this field as an historical
battle site

to the rest of us born here
poor and remaining poor

it makes very little difference
what was fought for

or who won

this war happened
because the ones who started it
thought they could win

but it's the rats and cholera
that won

you already knew
all of this?

of course you did

we are all tourists visiting
one battlefield after another

we all know better

AN ADMIRABLE VIRGIN OF ADVANCED AGE
BY JENNIFER CLARK

Apollonia stands rooted in faith, even as
stones and fists strike her face, again and again.
The Romans threaten to burn her alive unless
she bows to their heathen idols. She refuses.

Fists again, bashing her once beautiful, Egyptian face.
Teeth crackle in her mouth, remaining ones wrenched
out with pincers. This deaconess who inspired many
to convert to Christianity is offered one final chance
to cast aside her God.

She draws breath as if to speak, quieting the crowd.
With last scrap of freedom, Apollonia offers up a silent
sermon, heaving her broken body into the fire.

There is no record indicating who plucked her bones
from the ashes. Her splintered jaw is now on display
at St. Basil's, teeth lodged like sacred bullets in churches
throughout Europe. The tooth as relic, under the microscope.
This is what is gleaned of faith:

upper premolar, all angle and arch, resembles a small church.
The tooth, ripped from its once pleasing u-shaped congregation,
is covered in a cracked, white coat; edge pearled, quite rare.
Kidney-shaped surface, a gnawing prayer.

Note: Appollonia is considered the Patron Saint of Dentists. She died in 249 A.D.

SEEN THE MOVIE
BY LEE CHILCOTE

When I was eight or nine
I asked my father if he'd killed anyone.
He shook his head.

“We didn't see much action,” he said
as if Vietnam were just a long walk
in the jungle.

I pictured men in camouflage playing poker
and flipping through girlie mags,
waiting for the enemy.

Did you ever get shot?

Dad thought a minute.
“There was one time.
I was pinned against a tree.
There was a guy shooting at me
and I couldn't go anywhere.”

My father, who had volunteered
and become a platoon captain at 24,
had five or six stories like that.

So what happened? I asked.
“He ran out of bullets.”

On Saturday nights, he watched war movies on TV,
the bottles from a six-pack
stacking up in the sink.

He dozed in the recliner,
glassy-eyed and listless.
We crawled over him as the credits rolled.

Is that what it was like, Dad?
“Not really,” he said.

DIGNITY OF SLEEP
BY JOHN C. MANNONE

The teakettle steamed.
A blue bowl teetered on the edge
of the table, half-full of lentils and rice.
He stared at it for most the night,

watched it congeal, his eyes still glued
on the cold black-and-white paste
when they came for him. He took
his last sip of hot water with honey.

Straggly hair curtained his hard brown
eyes; morning sun piercing the glint in them.
In and out of shadows, his face washed
with shades of blankness. And his mouth,

once again too dry to spit at the man
chanting prayers. His long shuffle
to the scaffold, no longer prolonged
by emptiness of night—the sun always

climbs faster in the dawn—as fast as
a black hood would settle over his head,
a new kind of darkness falling.
What did he yell into its silence?

Indignant epithets, the muffled
Shahada mumbling through draped
sackcloth? No ashes at his feet.
But he must have heard the deafening

cries in that darkness sift through
dirt, through graves of thousands,
to threads hanging next to his ears:
all the ghosts of gallows, plaintive wails

of spirits of the dead, Kurds massacred
—Barzani, Sardasht, Anfal—
for a moment, resurrected
to jeer at the indignity of their long wait.

The executioner yanked the lever,
gravity heaving the body through
where the floor was, until the snap
of his neck stopped the fall. His torso

twirled with the hemp rope, twisting,
untwisting, swayed as an effigy
tethered between heaven and hell,
but hell dragging it down.

His body, slumped over, swung
in elegant pirouettes, quivering
as it vacated bodily fluids,
his spirit ushering out

while tea in the backroom still steamed,
its vapors fading with his.

Sadam Hussein was executed on Dec 30, 2006 at 06:00 local time for crimes against humanity

OFF SIDE
BY CHERYL J. FISH

Prepared for rain, we arrive early wearing ponchos
Search for soccer field number two, Red Hook, Brooklyn
In striking distance of Ikea's flagship
Stockholm-on-the-Gowanus
Blackened factories, ships' containers
Trucks fire up tacos, serve plantains and guava drinks

Our team gets called off-side
Again and again, a whistle, a hand, nothing counts
A foot might wedge or pivot in air
And end up east or west, anywhere
They don't stand a chance against the bulky Latino strikers
elbows gnash their bony-boy physiques
in fancy uniforms, shiny red-and-yellow cleats
Our coach's panicky indignation fails to ignite passion
The ball arrives first
The others barrel it into our net when we miss
Their siblings mock-kick on the sidelines, a dog runs on the field.

Losing takes grace.
I head to the truck for a shake
Amid whistles, bewilderment
One boy boots a crushed Pepsi can
Into the blinding sun.

WORKING HARD
BY ANN BRACKEN

I move through the sea of men in gray
as they gather in the library for the show.
Posters on the wall encourage reading, working hard.

One man approaches me and offers his hand.
I'm getting out in a few weeks, he tells me. I really need a job.
"What have they taught you in the prison?" I ask.

He shrugs his shoulders. *All we have here is GED classes
and I finished them a long time ago.*
Our eyes search each other's faces.

"I'll pray for you," is all I can give.
When I ask another man what would have made school meaningful,
he nearly charges at me, raises his hands over his head,

moving them in time with his words.
*Nonviolent conflict resolution. They're teaching us now,
but we needed it a long time ago.*

MICAJAH “CAJOE” PHILLIPS, 1736?-1861

BY JENNIFER CLARK

Good at getting passengers
one place to another, Micajah
gets his old self to Waterford,
becomes a grand conductor.

*This here is mighty fine work.
Laying down tracks of hope
that will not burn. To and fro.
Riding folks to paradise.*

As a mansion smolders
in the night, Micajah
helps the people
go.

MIDDLE EAST VETERAN'S WIFE
BY KARI GUNTER-SEYMOUR

Sunshine finds you on the sofa,
heat inching forehead to chest,
stillness with a tremble of movement.
Sacred in that landscape,
where sleep knits real and unreal.

They say your mama was a whisperer,
reaching out to stray or wounded.
Not just dogs and cats, but crows,
mice, once a raccoon.
Her eyes, that touch,
silent words from a language
she somehow knew she had—
for wellness or the good death.

Soon he will wake,
stumble from the bedroom.
You will love him even as he screams,
a rapid fire of bitter words, despair
like fever dampening his upper lip,
eyes feral, memories in flashes and arcs,
chaotic, like mongrels
spilling through a torn fence.
He imagines himself as being held
in some kind of pen, waiting
to be released back into his life.

Edging up, you'll breathe his name
like a secret, reach out, give off a glimmer
of something like light, or hope.



How do you define honor?

*Story Stones from the Minnesota Military Family Tribute, St. Paul, Minnesota.
Photo by Kathleen Cassen Mickelson 2016.*

PSALM TO FIRE LONG EXTINGUISHED
BY KIT KENNEDY

Knew this barrel of embers wasn't hell
Knew this place couldn't be reached by car
Knew this heat needed matches not anger
Knew the lilac bushes paid the fire no mind
Knew the unsmiling neighbor standing guard
Knew this was the hue of my favorite shoes
Knew this was magic

THE PHILISTINE SKULL
BY DARYL MURANAKA

I scream or laugh.
After 3000 years
who can really tell
anymore? My open
jaw, my stony teeth
taunt you,
your lack of progress,
of imagination. Here
I am disembodied,
broken, with no nose
for my effort,
being handled
and brushed
and washed
across my dimpled face,
and still here I am
with more life
than you.

TORCH FISHERS
BY JOHN N. MILLER

Dusk is brief so near the tropics
where darkness snaps shut like a lid
on the horizon following sunset,

with no long wait
for the salt wash of the sea
to ebb under a new moon,

draining the fringe of reef
off Ka'a'awa. Look for the torches'
orange flames rising from the past

stretching their glow on shallow water
toward your vantage point on shore.
Through a whiff of kelp breathe deeply—

smell the kerosene-fed flames
fueled from rag-stuffed canisters.
You can't make out the dusky figures

holding their torches—fishermen
probing with twin-pronged spears for squid,
impaling light-stunned food fish,

kumu or *mo'ano*. You won't know
whether I'm still one of them,
the smallest and least successful,

if I have a vantage point on shore,
or if I'm a continent away.
No matter which darkness clamps down quickly;

when the moon is new and the tide low,
look for the reef that fringes Ka'a'awa
to spout orange flames once more.

PEONIES
BY BETH MCDONOUGH

Through Junes I urge your frail buds –
burst! Offer oriental pallor, pink
your scent delicacy here. After all,

those fast ruddy cousins spill
heavy heads, to ruby up
their shrubbery. Yet, annually you

teeter, nervous into next month, when
you can ravish blackbirds as I holiday
elsewhere. I return in rotting rains

find all your presents opened – already
spent. Nonetheless, I can't quite
grub you up and now, unexpectedly you

arrest me. Before I reach the stoop-
full sapling's plums, before the year falls
dark, you stop me with your leaves' red light.

NO WARNING (EARLY DAMAGE)
BY DANIEL THOMPSON

What's the use, only to see it coming
just before it puts out your eye.
Whip smart
at the speed of a knife

narrowed to a point,
while
at the same time
growing wider;
a slice of pie, as it punctures

high price for inner sight,
the lights already starting to blur
into the final turn of the attractor
stretched to a thin filament
around the edge
echoes between all points along its path

while,
on the other side (inside out)
it's the best, most natural thing
so lucky it could have happened to you
removing the splinter from your eye
designating that interior one,

still as a secret
underground stream
lucky enough to drink from, but
we'll never see its source
inexhaustible because nothing is ever extracted
only absorbed

Interject an injection here, to mimic
wrinkle-free fabric, erasing the faces' character.
Add some angel to our skin through bacterial
toxicity, gifting paralysis to our muscles so our smiles
don't damage our dimples. Tox wrapped
in a Bo, commercializing cosmetic alteration,
hemming an identity dress. I can't change
the channel away from the trending towards
Chanel sunglass masks.

I've seen enough and it's not even noon yet.

A fading vignette is the picture of today's synthetic superlative,
yet the flawed have far less flaws than the flawless.
Still, the sum would rather obscure into the mainstream marketing
glamour guzzle than suffer the illusion of living unnoticed lives.
It is the masses' manufactured marveling
that will cause them to fade out of focus,
and disappear in the glitz.
_____ ← This is them.

See the sparkles?

Let me spare suspense its 24-7 workload.
Your crazy is crazy, but society is mad bonkers insane.
Three hundred years ago it wasn't crazy
to burn innocent women on suspicion of witch-work,
(and sometimes we still do,
with a different kind of fire.)
So if you think you're not make-it-to-tomorrow material, stop.
If you think you're not not not together, stop.
And tell the sheep-shit-show-media-marketing-sewer-stew
to stop.
To just stop.

IF YOU HADN'T CALLED
BY JANE COLLINS

I wouldn't know
your voice feels like
sunlight, so warm.
The sound spilled
over my skin,
I felt my cells
settle in that light,
all the particles
of my self letting go
and floating down
toward the surface
of your words.
But you won't be
here for weeks,
so I can't meet
your eyes, can't touch
your skin. I know
desire is suffering,
but I want this
longing. I'll wait
for you, tasting
this silence.

SMOKE RISING
BY LIZ GLODEK

A crackle of burnt sticks in the center
of a wide, flat circle of dirt; a black
eye on the brown meadow. A drought,
a summer of no rain has everything
taking its last breath and we are
no different. You bend over the fire,
its heat matching the dirt's heat
coming up through sandals, which show
toenails thick with mud. Another day
marked by the turn of the earth,
like a wagon wheel turning in soft sand.
I have always hated the sun; but
I have always loved the fire.

HOW IT MUST HAVE BEEN

BY OONAH V JOSLIN

all along Bridge Street from the Old Gaol to the Town Hall
Whalebone to Queen's Head to King's Head to Turk's Head,
George and Dragon like pieces on a chess set
the yards alive with industry
the cattle market in full swing
steaming pats and urine, mooing kine,
straw and hay strewn on cobbles.

Coming through to Newgate Street
clinking bridles, hard wheel rims, never still,
to-ing, fro-ing, private trap and public carriage,
tuppence a mile from the Packhorse Yard,
its name eponymous with purpose,
day after day, hitched and shod, iron on stone
and men's voices pitched high against the clamour
and racket of it all, buying, selling,
making deals sealed with Irish spit and English ale.

Lads in flat caps smoking pipes
turn towards a moment's history.
Men in bowlers discuss
the price of meat and politics.
The price of politics is high indeed
but the cattle don't notice and the horses don't fret.

It's market day in Morpeth 1898.
There are friends to be met
and the hands of the clock tower indicate the hour
when the men at the Hollon Fountain halt
and the woman at the centre of it all
checks change forever.



How It Must Have Been is an ekphrastic poem after ***The Clock Tower Morpeth (1898)*** -- Jan Radwanski greetings card shown above. For more information on Jan Radwanski's art, please visit www.jan-radwanski.co.uk. Image used with the artist's permission.

A WAY IN
BY ADEN THOMAS

Sometimes our chariots are pulled
by hummingbirds. Their wings
flash little ghosts of silver
in the searchlight of the moon.

They create a ripple in the wind
the color of infinity.
It's the same ripple
we imagine passes through a lion's mane.

We swim through caverns to find a light.
That light is a ripple that never left.
We keep a pocket full of vines
for ripples tethered to the ground.

We let go of the handlebars
or remove them completely
before the ride begins.
We feel that tiny wind.

We close our eyes and run with cheetahs
to swell our veins again.
We climb into the tower and feel time
from the concussion of the bells.

We swim into the sea.
We listen to the whales
and their echolocation through water.
We return with knowledge of the tides.

CONVENIENCE STORE
BY SARA TRATTNER

it's been a long time since anyone said he was a writer
a rust belt poet
browsing a campus convenience store
picking up shitty beer and circus peanuts
fingerprinting "everything is beautiful" in condensation on the chest freezer
he wants to drink nicotine
wraps himself in cigarette
smells like mothers arms and mother's clothes back in grade school
he took it literally
when you said
"take me for what i am"
so he took you
made you the patron saint of aching bones
i'm sure someone's got a god for that
and he paces the aisles
wishes he ate to be full of catharsis
like krispy kreme would heal his muscle spasms
he asks you if people can be symbols
people can be symbols
but there's probably a god for that too
who says
"one too many"
like it's a gift
at the udf
he pays for his haul with a matchbook and two keys
pulls the midwest from his wallet
and leaves a penny

TO THE WOMAN TAKING A HIGHWAY SOBRIETY TEST
BY ADEN THOMAS

I judge you. I condemn you under my breath. I laugh
while you stumble
to walk a straight line, recite
the alphabet backward,
touch your finger
to your nose.
How deaf from alcohol you must have been
to drive the length
of this two lane highway where sagebrush is all we can believe.
Intoxication never imagined you,
your insect frame, your hair like elderberries.
Cars slow to pass the siren lights.
Your face is the color of the wind.
I think of the sorrow that caused your flight and the creatures
you thought you were leaving to find humanity out here
with sparrows weighting power lines.
They watch you stand and let your head back, your eyes
closed, your arms
outstretched until
the world spins
and crashes down.

CATS
BY JOHN P. KRISTOFKO

twenty years they lived with us,
swaggered through the rooms they let us have,
letting us participate like statues
at the ritual of their disdain,
deigning to array our laps,
our beds when it was necessary,
kicking up the dust, their hair,
to davenports, chairs, everywhere,
in air we breathed,
the fine mist of their passing,
swept up, scrubbed down when we sold the house, moved,
choosing what to keep and leave;
we brought them in two boxes with the names on top,
set them on a bookshelf in my room,
quiet as their time curled in the sun,
still enigmatic, cryptic,
still letting us attend them
every time we come to dust the shelf

HOW MUCH I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE ORDINARY
BY KIT KENNEDY

For instance, dinner plates.
It amazes me how a plate takes
whatever is placed upon
without argument
without treatise on nutrients
say, spinach rich in flavonoids
and antioxidants.

looking at any object, the personal seeps in

I can't cook
spinach without olive oil and garlic --
union of bulb and leaf.
As I stir
I observe I am the hand
of my father.

how the non sequitur is quick-step and glue

Cooking takes us here to there.
How do any of us distinguish color
sun creates or understand
chlorophyll's trick with photosynthesis
wringing energy from light.
Or, for that matter, the confluence
of steam and spirit?

LOVE POEMS
BY KRISTEN SHARP

- I. I woke to an immense thunderstorm, the rain pressing in through the screens and the smell of dirt and running water volatilized in the moonlight. You were sleeping. Everything was wet and expansive and resounding. The rushing water smelled like shale and Campari. I climbed out to the fire escape and watched the deluge from the fifth floor, leaned against wet bricks, the Bronx streets shining.
- II. You taught me how to smoke cigars on a lawn on Liberty Island, New Jersey, in view of a Midtown skyline that shimmered in heat haze as if viewed through the exhaust of a jet engine. Drinking champagne and lying on the clipped grass in pink sunglasses and seersucker, the skirt of my dress spread around me, and you in pastels, arms splayed out like an archaeopteryx wing, a fossil bird. We watched polo under a crowd of saffron umbrellas.
- III. Once, your roommate's mom let me in on a night when you fell asleep waiting for me to get off the subway. When I woke you up you asked me how I got there—it seemed like more than just a logistical question. And when you lay under sheets you looked like one of those mummies in the Egyptian wing at the Met, dried up, strangely small, your hands folded on your chest, a galaxy of freckles on your pale left shoulder.
- IV. You said the time you spent with me was the only time when you felt comfortable in your own skin. Afraid of who you were and where you came from. A family history of suicide. Snow on a stoop in Brooklyn, the steps slick, the tree outside your house covered in ice. Your hair pulled back, combed behind your ears, hunched over your knees in a wool sweater. You stared at the ground. You said I wasn't what you hoped I'd be.
- V. The last time I saw you we weren't speaking. The group sprinted down Miami Beach in the dark, spilling sugar and mint leaves from mojitos in plastic cups, glow sticks around our arms fluorescing pink and yellow. We splashed into the surf and ran out, wading into the warm gulf waters.

The rest of the group had dispersed across the beach until they were out of sight and you and I found ourselves alone, out in the ocean. I could barely see you treading water, swimming in our clothes.

When we returned to shore I lay down on the sand and I expected you to do the same—I believed that was the moment our trajectory could change, if we both wanted it enough. You didn't stay. You went back and rejoined the others.

SPILLING OVER AND WASHING US ALL
BY SANDRA KOLANKIEWICZ

We decided we'd walk after the ice
cream so stumbled into sandals, the summer
hanging on, sky still light at a time that
in a few weeks would be dark, the fat black lab
eager for the leash, our voices silly
from happy birthday and chardonnay served with
dinner that had never been better, the
wondrous right to go around the block and
look at asters, check out who yet had a
red dining room, see which cats belonged to what
houses, for there they'd be, licking their paws
and waiting for someone to let them in, an
occasional late cicada making
itself known but the rest of the evening air
blank, the mounds in the park at the center
of town calling for us to come watch Venus,
Jupiter, Mars clustered on horizon,
Little Dipper pouring itself into the
Big, spilling over and washing us all.

A PERSON FROM PORLOCK
BY MERCEDES WEBB-PULLMAN

There's no room for slackers
in this posting, Mr Coleridge,
or for dreamers.

Was that you wailing?
Have you been drinking?
It's not even five.

Dismantle that
stately pleasure dome
this moment

and clean up those caverns
of ice. You know what
the tea lady's like.

And for pity's sake, man,
do something about that hair.

CONTRIBUTORS

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When she isn't teaching the abundant virtues of the comma and writing poetry about big hair and Elvis, **Kim Baker** works to end violence against women and end hunger. A poet, playwright, photographer, and NPR essayist, Kim publishes and edits *Word Soup*, an online poetry journal that donates 100% of submission fees to food banks. Kim's chapbook of poetry, *Under the Influence: Musings about Poems and Paintings*, is now available from Finishing Line Press. Kim is currently working on a book of ekphrasis poems about the stories and portrayals of women in the paintings of female artists.

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Sandra Kolankiewicz's work has appeared widely over the past 35 years, most recently in *Appalachian Heritage*, *BlazeVox*, *Gargoyle*, *Fifth Wednesday*, *Prick of the Spindle*, *Per Contra*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Appalachian Heritage*, and *Pif*. *Turning Inside Out* won the Black River Prize at Black Lawrence Press. Finishing Line Press published *The Way You Will Go*. *Blue Eyes Don't Cry* won the Hackney Award for the Novel. Her novel with 76 color illustrations by Kathy Skerritt, *When I Fell*, is available from Web-e-Books.

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John C. Mannone has over 500 works published/forthcoming in venues such as *The Drowning Gull*, *New England Journal of Medicine*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *Inscape Literary Journal*, *Windhover*, *Artemis*, *2016 Texas Poetry Calendar*, *Southern Poetry Anthology (NC)*, *Still: The Journal*, *Town Creek Poetry*, *Tupelo Press*, *Baltimore Review* and *Pedestal*. Author of two literary poetry collections, including *Disabled Monsters* (The Linnet's Wings Press 2015), he is the poetry editor for *Silver Blade* and for the Hugo-nominated *Abyss & Apex*. He has been nominated three times for the Pushcart. He is a professor of physics in east TN. Visit The Art of Poetry: <http://jcmannone.wordpress.com>

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Keith Moul is 70, retired and loving it. His mind senses more than it ever has. What's not to like?

Daryl Muranaka was raised in California and Hawaii. He received his MFA from Eastern Washington University and spent three years in Fukui, Japan, in the JET Program. He currently lives in the Boston area with his wife and two children. In his spare time, he enjoys aikido and taijiquan and exploring his children's dual heritages.

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