

# Gyroscope Review

*fine poetry to turn your world around*



*Issue 16-1  
January 2016*





## GYROSCOPE REVIEW

Issue 16-1  
Winter 2016

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Constance Brewer & Kathleen Cassen Mickelson  
[gyroscopereview.com](http://gyroscopereview.com)

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## From the Editors

In my part of the world it is gray and cold outside, snow swirls in fits and starts, and arctic blasts sweep patches of the prairie bare. It's a time to be inside looking out, or inside looking deeper inside, contemplating life in all its myriad forms. Something about winter and the prospect of long, dark nights leads one to introspection more readily than do warm spring days. It's good to spend time alone with your thoughts. It's better to spend some time with poetry, considering a wide variety of topics. In this quarter's issue, poets spent a great deal of time reflecting on everything from death to walking the dog. There are a lot of personal experiences that may resonate with the reader. One overarching theme we found was that of loss. Loss of little things all the way to loss of a loved one. Pain is tempered by hope, and a longing for a different future. Several poems look outside our world, to the stars. Winter is an ideal time to do that, to stand outside on a frigid night with your head tipped back, tracing the constellations, glimpsing the Milky Way in all its glory, becoming a part of the chain of humankind that gazed upward to the stars and thought about the past, present and future. We invite you to spend some time with Issue 16-1 and her poets, and think quiet thoughts about winter and the world around you. Let the words take you on a journey, somewhere, perhaps, you never intended to go.

**Constance Brewer, Editor**

In Minnesota, there is also plenty of gray, cold landscape, but I don't mind. I love winter here, the way it pushes us to hunker down and be quiet in a noisy world. That Constance and I share a tendency toward the contemplative is a part of what allows us to work well together on *Gyroscope Review* and give you a coherent journal with a flow that sweeps you along with us. We have been so lucky over the past year to kick off this little poetry journal with such amazing submissions from poets who have long publication lists and many other outlets for their work. We ask that you not only enjoy the poetry here, but also visit our [website](#) where we honor poets with interviews and they honor us with explanations that show us why verse matters, why it will continue to matter as long as there are people. As 2016 takes form, we will offer you more of these interviews between issues of *Gyroscope Review*, nudge you to expand your reading and, just maybe, also expand the way you respond to this complicated world.

**Kathleen Cassen Mickelson, Editor**

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# POEMS





**The Side That's Turned Away**  
**by Seth Jani**

If you speak softly in the darkness,  
Just after dusk, when the first  
Heavenly flames burgeon in the sky,  
You may befriend the cricket  
Beginning his day in the moistened grass,  
Or even learn the shadowy alphabet  
Of your own nocturnal self.  
That half-moon meaning. That hidden name.

**After the Last Winter Storm**  
**by Jenifer DeBellis**

Snow falls into the cold that has become our world.  
Brittle leaves blanket the yard, peek

through milky film that collects on fallen ash  
limbs & scattered brush loosed by last night's storm.

Over coffee, we talk about the weather, debate  
the existence of climate change. You ask me to pass

the sugar, say the coffee is bitter this morning.

**Magnetosphere or Pole Cat**  
**by Sylvia Cavanaugh**

My feline traverses the cosmic whisk  
whose paleo secrets are captured  
in deep subterranean stone  
garnet bones of the earth  
by scientists with their instruments

magnetic song resonates like notes  
plucked from parallel musical strings  
to orient my cat  
a billowing skyward harmony  
pinched from discordant poles

she flies like a carnival streamer  
caught in a solar wind  
down alleyways and streets  
beyond unknown buildings

a charged particle  
she blows across meadows  
in the golden glow of dusk

voice of the magnetic field  
is lost to me  
my lovely lonely hours  
adrift in a colossal world

**If My Eyes Were Clocks I Could See Space from My Living Room**  
**by Laurin DeChae**

*I don't know why I should write this.*

*I don't want to.*

*I don't feel able.*

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*

The light changes as the time changes  
and my mouth falls open to the stars.

Everyone laughs at me  
and I cry almost all of the time,

but I always liked to think that I was ordinary.  
I can feel it, the drought

that sucks me thin.  
What makes me unmakes me.

If I could talk to furniture on a yellow whim  
I know I would peel apart like petals

opening to sun. My glue unsticks me.  
For every room, a paper filled with print, a slick hanging.

What between me and you is paper thin?  
One pulls apart what makes us pattern. I can feel it.

I am sick and no one believes me.  
I am sick in such a room for worlds.

**Mouse Song**  
**(for Megan)**  
**by Akua Lezli Hope**

Science uncovers what only hearts knew  
music in what we can not hear  
all life speaks

each to other  
beckons, calls, tells, cajoles  
perhaps better than we  
glistenings seen through ahhh

We discover that birds learn  
pass tunes on, even invent  
variations on inherited themes

Whales sing and conversate  
as do dolphins and elephants  
below our range, rumbling discourse  
all these riffs transpierce us

That wee guy mouse  
stretches in plastic box  
trilling over the edge to unseen  
scented female, *hey hey hey sweetie*  
way above human hearing  
his song.

**Daylight Savings Won't Save Us**  
**by Alexis Rhone Fancher**

If I pull the drapes it is always night.

I cannot see the seasons,  
or you, sneaking off in the half-light  
like there's someplace you'd rather be.

Come Monday, it will grow cold and dark  
before people leave work.

Maybe you should go with them?

When I photograph you,  
I stash my feelings in my pocket  
where you won't find them,  
where the fabric sticks to my  
thighs.

*Go downtown*, you'd whisper, back  
when it mattered, push my face  
into your sunlit forever.

Can I help it if we are now on different clocks?

A hot pink August has stumbled  
into our November like a second chance.  
Why can't you see it?

Come Sunday, the saving of daylight  
will no longer matter.  
If I photograph the light, maybe you  
will no longer matter.

I grab my camera and shoot the dawn  
from the roof of our building.  
Catch you slipping out the lobby.

My world goes dark without you.



**Downhill Drift**  
**by Mark Danowsky**

A church sign reminds me  
*If you are coasting*  
*then you are going downhill*  
as if the penny in the hand-  
grip of the driver's side door  
slow sliding was not self-  
evident we heathens can coast  
while mindful

***You do not have to be good.***

– Mary Oliver, “Wild Geese”

**by Carolyn Martin**

Ain't that a kick in the head!  
After all the bunk about straights and narrows,  
wrongs and rights, confessionals  
where venial sins are laughable,  
it's come down to this: we've been duped.  
Friday fish, forty fasting days, crownings  
in the Mary month of May; rosaries,  
callused knees, indulgences that smudge  
our sins: they don't add up to *good*.  
Neither do tidy rooms, top grades in school,  
nor mandatory modesty.

So let's delete the snake behind the apple tree  
and every bite of stale theology.  
Let's resurrect original wildness  
and ramble through valleys scratched and scarred,  
down unquiet streams, across raging fields  
of blooms disguised as weeds.  
Let's celebrate every fleshy flaw,  
each mistaken thought that turns out true.  
Let's race wild geese to the nearest star,  
cheering on imperfect  
nakedness with disheveled glee.

**Preemptive Strike**  
**by Tracy Mishkin**

“The skin is like a million mouths . . . going straight into your bloodstream.”  
*director, Organic Consumers Association*

If one day I sat in the doctor's office getting very bad news,  
my carcinogenic history would flash before my eyes:  
chasing DDT trucks down the street, summer camp  
with bug spray high in N, N-diethyl-3-methylbenzamide,  
eating lamb in England the year after Chernobyl  
sent a feathery plume to the west. All the harmless things  
I ever did would line up like lottery balls, concatenating,  
clicking into inevitability. I would go home and smash  
the dishes, then try to spin my rotten luck into  
something entertaining, like the man who told people  
hosting boring parties, “Sorry, I have cancer,” then sailed  
for Antarctica; or the woman who said her tumor  
should have a name, and asked her friends to help her  
think one up—Lord knows they would have preferred  
to make a casserole. Decorum is so easily cast aside:  
lymphoma is a license to read Harry Potter  
while drinking whiskey in your underwear. And who  
will call you to the dinner table? We may not whisper  
the word “cancer” anymore, but it's a game-changer,  
life-stopper, conversation-killer like nobody's business.  
Just in case it's waiting for me like a pink slip or a mugger  
who knows my route, screw you, cancer, screw you, right now.

**What I Would Ask of the Gun**  
**by Laryssa Wirstiuk**

Rather than kill me, awaken  
useful skills I hadn't known

until this incident: dismounts  
from galloping horses meant

for skilled cowgirls; Morse code  
transmitting; trauma nursing

in emergency room settings;  
careful hands for brain surgery;

erasure of a phobia of bees;  
*correction: abolish my fear*

*of everything*; accomplished  
politician; keeper of promises;

established opera personality;  
dismantler of gears; sightseeing

tour guide; Grizzly-bear trainer;  
truly alive. Awaken the latent

intelligence of fully populating  
each moment with sentience.

Allow me to stop the forgetting  
that comes with being one thing.

**[disappeared]**

**by henry 7. reneau, jr.**

we create only what we know will have dominion over us: the megaphone  
that is the internet serving as an imaginary prosthetic

the kind of narcotic kaleidoscope of gasoline in the water cellphones  
nuclear bombs democracy & the Kardashians via reality t.v. bestride us

like a colossus a monstrous animation of the institutions we create  
building a giant city out of high-powered telescopes

one polygraph at a time  
converting the intensities of your pulse your heart your arteries your breath

the contraction of your muscles i.e. the truth to oscillating lines on paper  
always under scrutiny: the stop-less conversion of internal life

(pulse breath heat neural activity) to external data legible to processors  
like the woolen overcoat of a shadow the size of a threat

as our silence mimes bravado—the hostage in the video  
mouthing the Lord's Prayer most often things ending up in the wrong hands

that cause history to happen: the grasp of ego the weight of displacement  
speaking in the place of someone

who is perfectly capable of speaking for themselves: why is it  
that we don't exist in history until some white guy discovers us?

a repeated lie of obscure origin & supporting evidence stumbling block  
even the sudden comes in increments spread spontaneously as coins

spilled onto asphalt: we everyday look up through  
a shattered-dream glass rhetorically a century of failures promises & protests

alone inside the moanin' & the cryin' in all those blues  
accumulated down the generations: a premeditated stealth

like a furtive cat with a sparrow in its mouth the myth we make of ourselves  
serving as the splinter of self that lodges in the heart

would have us preoccupied with celebrity & wealth  
with danger

along the shadowed edges & fear like locusts  
destroying everything



**An Introduction to Alternate Universes:  
Theory and Practice  
by Sandra J. Lindow**

Our Universe is just one among very many "bubble universes," all popping out of the general medium of the Big Bang like bubbles forming in a glass of beer. Somewhere perhaps there are many universes more or less like ours, some very similar to and others radically different from the universe we call "home."

John G. Cramer "Other Universes II," *Analog* 11/84

I. Universal Soup

Inside the dark cauldron  
universes bubble,  
each bubble emerging,  
breaking, becoming twinned--  
"Double, double toil and trouble"  
when life begins within.

II. Universal Tree

A time tree of universes  
rooted in Ygdrasil,  
formed by branching possibilities,  
the crotch of each branch,  
a crisis where time splits,  
heralded by the crow, "What If?"

III. Dream Door

A microcosm of macro universes,  
wood of would,  
the lintel is a shibboleth,  
a handle the size of a sonnet,  
opens to a dreamer's kiss.

III. What If?

Somewhere onions dream,  
whales sing oratorio; Elvis lives.  
Universes not yet conceived  
quicken behind the medulla oblongata,

providing magic starship rides  
into alternate possibilities,  
but getting home is tricky.

#### IV. The Glass

Is cold,  
I take a sip.

**Eliot's Musty Pages**  
**by Mike Jurkovic with Will Nixon**

In between the unrequited crushes  
the beginning tastes like ocean salt  
and so too, the ending.  
The clear-skinned girls  
cast exquisite shadows  
after midnight. Those outcast hours  
when you return home w/barely a whimper  
to find rummaging clowns reassembling  
Eliot's musty pages.

At the bakery, where you last said goodbye,  
everyone keeps busy.  
Engineers fall asleep at the wheel.  
Blonde mothers name kittens after Hanukkah candles.  
Saints and sinners rescue pillows.

Say goodbye to alligators  
in sewers, those childhood monsters  
who outlast the collapse of time.

Say goodbye to fashion relics  
who parade their pewter hair.  
The teeth you once traded for nickels  
are now third world commodities.

Say goodbye to babies agape  
at the midnight fire.  
The story of temptation  
leaves no stone unturned.

**Breakfast by Myself**  
**by Jota Boombaba**

—*Pattaya, Thailand 2013*

To start, I spark a cigarette  
remove my frames so I can't see  
the stares of strangers passing by  
their kind, misguided sympathy

They must presume I must be sad  
sitting solo at a table set for two  
no hand to squeeze, no one to thank  
for sparing me their sorry stares

But I'm not blind: I stare, too  
couples leaning back in wicker chairs  
some laconic, poking at porridge  
each alone devising their escape

Others gab, chatting up the rain  
jabber rolls like rice across the floor  
bored companions act amused  
grateful to be spared my sorry state

Yet I am not alone, not with paper  
not with more than fifty years of ink  
not with you a world or life away  
you now nodding—yes, yes, yes

**Silver Baton**  
**by Sylvia Cavanaugh**

A thin layer of teenage fat  
gives his muscles a more luscious curve  
and with his blonde hair  
he seems palomino

head tilted skyward  
feet together  
he straight-arms his baton  
all the way from the football field  
to autumn's highest blue  
a climbing twirl  
cartwheeling its way up the stairway to heaven  
end over end  
an ascent of flash  
scintillating the sun

my eyes wrap around those tensing thighs

pants the color of heavy cream  
cling to all three of his dimensions

he desires men  
this is the silence where my virginity paces  
uneasy

winter's close and we're slouched low  
in his dilapidated Mustang  
fat dice swing over the dusty dashboard  
ragtop pulled up tight

facing forward  
he drives us into December's descending night

at the reunion his body is emaciated  
he can't see much anymore  
but still teaches baton lessons  
a couple times a week

the bartender ignores us

we can't seem to get his attention  
John says it feels like being in high school again



**Pomegranate**  
**by Yuan Changming**

So long as you have ample blood  
Filling in your cells, your heart  
Will never fade  
Within your fine structure

A rosy inner being:  
Each sarcotesta is inflated  
With juicy passion

**Echoes in Leipzig**  
**by Barry Charman**

Up winding stairs  
in buildings winding down  
shadows of youth  
peer down, peer down

Curious people  
warm fires in the dark  
with lights in their eyes  
and look down, look down

A sense of waiting  
of having waited  
of waiting endured  
drifts down, drifts down

Ghosts of walls  
and walls for ghosts  
shapes that pause  
to dream down, dream down

Memories in the dust  
that sightless have seen  
a weight like history  
bears down, bears down

The world moves on  
yet places stand still  
and lives lived in echoes  
shine down, shine down

**Memorial for Miriam's Dad (and Miriam)**  
**by Sandy Feinstein**

It wasn't just the table she never told you about,  
the origins of its deep scars,  
slashes like medieval minims—  
if only I could have explained it that way then  
you might have forgiven us for playing  
with knives on New Year's Eve.  
While others drank and smoked at Albanezi's,  
we made candles—light.  
Our only prayer: please please don't ever remove  
the table cloth and pads while we're alive.  
“Do they know?” I'd ask regularly.  
And maybe you did.

There's more, too.  
Your daughter was my first editor.  
I bet you didn't know that.  
Not something she'd ever share.  
So I get all the credit  
she thinks you'd give me anyway.  
It's the old story you both know all too well.  
Once again I've painted myself  
into your cellar corner.

I hope you didn't put her up to this—  
“Can you think of something my father might have liked?  
Something spare and smart, you know.”  
Those poems I teach are centuries old—Christian,  
not quite the thing.  
Does she really mean,  
“write a poem for my father, he'd like that”?

I wish I'd had the chance to say, “Wait!  
Tell me what to say,” in May,  
when maybe words would form with spring  
and spring and spring and spring.

**Waking Daddy**  
**by Akua Lezli Hope**

He was always tired, worn out  
grabbing a few hours sleep by day,  
for long, wearying work at night

We sent the littlest one to wake him.  
He could recognize her tiny fists  
her fierce, high-pitched commands and  
would answer her impatient summons  
*Wake Up, Daddy!*, sweetly

When she called he would leave  
the nightmares he revisited, *okay baby*,  
and not report what he told us:  
a red multi-armed mutant hovering  
at the end of the block, ready to snatch  
any in proximity, the invisible war  
waged with hostile aliens that shred concrete

and flesh or the remembrance of when he was  
taken and returned by the East River  
or the dirty Hudson, maybe both, long ago  
before he made us, his gang of wild  
and wary children, nervous, but inoculated.

**Enlightened**  
**by Sandra J. Lindow**

Winter is the season of repose,  
a lingering meditation  
of gray days when cloud eyes  
lower but do not close.

Two years from chemo  
and a year from reconstruction  
I drive eastward toward  
a break in the clouds:

Winter's Eucharist,  
life's bright meal enclosed  
between loosely woven linen sky  
and wide white expanses of snow.

As a child, I shaped  
manna loaves of crusted snow,  
drank the wine of sky,  
unaware of ten below.

In the shadow of grandfather's  
shade maple, I made altars  
of cloud-earth-bread, a joyful  
transubstantiation of cold.

Sixty years later in a sacrament  
of sudden January light, I shed  
my heavy gloves, adjust  
the heat for hands and feet,

and sunlight consumes me  
this winter's day,  
the broken bread of my body  
eaten and made whole.

**The Family Tradition**  
**by Daryl Muranaka**

I am afraid that I am  
not as strong as you,  
as when fathers were  
strangers, and husbands  
were foreigners  
even in their own homes.

I am abandoned  
by someone who says  
distance is stronger  
than love. That love  
is not enough to build  
a family upon.

I wish that I was  
as strong as you,  
could sail the oceans,  
endure the years alone  
better than I have.

But maybe you did  
not, and I only imagine  
a life minus gaping holes.  
I have sailed the skies  
and lived in houses  
that you did not build  
and built a house  
that would not be mine.

I don't know you,  
your face, your voice.  
I only know that you  
rode ships and crossed oceans  
with no telephones,  
received out-of-date letters  
that inched their way  
in large, heavy sacks.  
I lean against the walls  
of the Red Line T



crushed in with the women  
in black skirt suits  
and bright athletic shoes,  
men with pale, shiny ties  
and headphones.

Day after day,  
I wasted my energies  
waiting, thinking of her  
thirty five hundred miles away,  
wondering if I  
could be as strong as you  
lying in plantation bunks,  
grease under your fingernails  
and red dirt staining  
the soles of your feet.  
I am cold  
in August Boston.

**Never Forget Why Your Wrist Throbs**  
**by Alexis Rhone Fancher**

Look, when the insurance runs out,  
the ulna sets itself

that clutch-at-the-railing/tumble down  
two flights of Victorian stairs,  
babe in arms, your wrist

eagerly sacrificed to save him.

Twenty-some years later,  
after the boy gets cancer  
and dies,

your body remembers,  
hoards its wounds like a black hole,

your right wrist, thicker than your left,  
that knobby protrusion  
a talisman you rub,

while the blame feeds on itself.

Even now you know his death  
was your fault.

Even now your body  
yearns for him,

the arthritic ache that pulses an  
image of his face,

a supernova, each time it rains.

**In a Moment**  
**by Sandy Feinstein**

Snow falls, ice coats.  
Deer raise their heads,  
stare, disappear.  
Cars spin their wheels,  
plans pile up, drift.  
Geese in a circle  
watch a red-tailed hawk  
hunched over a mole.  
Broken plows, bad backs,  
impassable roads,  
rigs on their side,  
lines elongate,  
wait until later.  
Two great blue herons  
fly over the floes.

**Lemons**  
**by Julianne DiNenna**

I can't make you believe.  
Lemon is a fruit, an acid,  
an acid fruit you hurled at me.  
Lemon juice you squeezed from ripe lemons down my skin,  
You scrubbed till I bled red acid, still not yellow,  
grated away my rinds, swirled them into cakes you gave away.

I can't tell you  
how you only tasted the sour lemon in me,  
how you made me want to cut myself,  
squeeze myself out, become a real lemon,  
how I just wanted you to love me  
for my greasy olive skin even if it never shone bright  
but deep like the earth, how you said lemons cut grease,  
how I belonged in the pit of it.

I can't make you believe  
how I want to shine a globe sun lemon,  
a yellow gemstone lemon, radiating from the sun,  
how lemon scent fills an empty, airless soul,  
how its blossoms attract the sun,  
how lemons sweeten the tongue.

**Find Your Muse**  
**by Bruce Alford**

*Heavenly Muse upon the secret top of...Eff that!*

Muse of Sacred Poetry (Sometimes geometry), (go figure) the obsequious poet's go-to girl; diadem-curved Polyhymnia, the one of many hymns arrives broken inside the poet's dream.

I mean you're dead: Potomac cold

A roman in rapturous dance, yet you are stone and so often seriously depicted pensive holding a finger to your lips.

*Christ of God!* I muse. I meditate on life. I write. I lie across the bed and talk to my sleeve.

I'm not soliciting any old time goddesses today  
We poets don't believe.

**Whistle for the Dog**  
**by Jeff Jeppesen**

Eggshell blue cloudless sky,  
a walk across an empty field of yellow  
summer grass  
(poets must walk across fields every chance they get  
it's in the contract),  
I come across a little blue flag  
on a wire stem whipping  
in the breezes.  
My sneakers are damp  
the spotted dog is a hundred yards off snuffing up good smells.  
He knows what he's doing.

With just a little bit of effort  
I can pretend not to hear the sounds of the road  
beyond the rise. If I keep looking down  
at the tiny pink flowers  
I will never see the jet contrails in the high air  
leading to and from the military base a few miles away.

I'm pretty sure I know what the flag is doing here  
but I want to forget about that  
and wonder what it really means, man,  
out here in this big old empty field  
of yellow summer grass.  
Because soon it will be time to whistle for the dog  
find the car and drive home.

**Reading Billy Collins's *Ballistics* on a Norwegian Cruise  
Up and Down The New England Coast  
by Carolyn Martin**

Damn! It's morning and I should have known  
you'd make me rue my lack of pad and pen.  
You're churning up images I can barely hold.

*White caps flee the cruise ship's cut ... eager pods  
carve fast lanes ... seabirds bob mindlessly ...  
stripped of clouds and land, the horizon's free ...*

or approximations thereof. When I pin down  
my first draft, I'll make sure to allude  
to Ovid, Frost, Valery, or anyone you approve

who connects to the sea or some other place  
like Paris, the Charles, or that ubiquitous room  
where you stare out the window at yourself

across the street or grab a post-sex cigarette.  
Right now, my coffee's hot and so is the sun rising  
on this coast long before it yawns at home in Oregon.

The guys at the next table aft are winding up  
a breakfast chat on the suspect nature of humanity  
and the reprieve of shaving for a week. I imagine

your stopping by to commentate on the virtues  
of a clean face, French pastries and how this listing ship  
is not what you had in mind for a morning stroll.

Tonight, I suspect, while high rollers roll  
their luck across the packed Casino floor  
and karaoke races through the Starburst Lounge,

I'll hole up in my room – the one with a balcony  
looking down on glacier blue smudging through  
persistent grey – and re-read your book.

I'll have turned down drinks at the Bali Hai  
and line dancing in the Bliss to ponder how you move  
from "August in Paris" to "Hippos on Holiday."

**Nick Chopper Lays Down His Axe**  
**by Ed Werstein**

*The Tin Woodman, originally an ordinary man, Nick Chopper (the name first appeared in The Marvelous Land of Oz, by L. Frank Baum), used to make his living chopping down trees in the forests of Oz.*

*for Sylvia*

I never saw the woods like this before  
every tree sacred  
the forest a cathedral.

Yesterday I spied her  
a sprite, a spirited sylph  
dancing in a clearing  
around the altar  
of a felled trunk.

I was blinded  
like Paul on the Damascus Road  
forever altered  
forever her disciple.

And when my vision cleared  
I gazed into the polished metal  
of my axe and saw myself  
real and true for the first time  
a hollow man  
heartless  
as a money changer  
in this wooded temple.

I am the Tin Man  
whose tears of remorse  
now rust my hinged joints.

I stand here motionless  
empty  
praying for holy oil  
from the sylvan goddess  
to liberate my dance of joy.



**Cleaning House**  
**by Seth Jani**

When you killed the spiders  
I imagined their bodies  
Pressed against the boards  
Spilling magnitudes of dark  
Unnamed innards  
Down through the creases  
Of the porch  
To enact an eerie sacrifice  
In the sunless mass  
Of hidden stones.  
I imagined our own blood  
Squeezed out by the fists  
Of cosmic resolutions,  
And I found myself wishing  
That their large, terrifying bodies  
Still hung from the shady woodwork  
Where they could weave down  
Towards our frightened faces,  
Inch by quiet inch.

**The Devil is in the Diving Board**  
**by Tracy Mishkin**

A secular Jew of the pool, I don't believe  
in goggles anymore. Once I swam a mile  
each week at summer camp, my eyes cocooned  
and dry, arms slicing the water as if I had a destination,  
like my aunt who stole her favorite library books  
and stored them in her bathroom for difficult days.  
Back then, ladies called constipation  
and psychotic breaks "difficult days."

My nemesis was the diving board. Once my feet hit  
the pebbled texture, I was committed to the plunge.  
Camp rules: no turning back. Chasm between water  
and me. Overwrought ninny me. Eeyore before Prozac me.

Now I wander in a heated pool like Israelites  
in the wilderness, side-stroke a hundred feet  
at best, bored by laps, winded too soon, doubtful of purpose  
and all institutions, no more inclined to open eyes  
in water than when I learned to swim in a dark lake.

Old Lady Aprison passes me with her retirement stroke,  
a front crawl alternating with a backstroke so precise  
she must have learned it from Mark Spitz himself,  
the hottest pin-up of 1972: Speedo, rebel moustache,  
seven golds. Mrs. Aprison never bangs her head  
on the pool wall or feels the sharp dismay  
of fingers touching frayed blue rope.

I've been stuck on that diving board forty years,  
goggles on, unable to press forward, cold minutes passing,  
the water only a foot below the board, counselors  
urging me on. Mark the Shark does not materialize.  
A freckled teen with a zinc cream clown nose  
leads me back down the plastic steps of shame.

**Declaration**  
**by Lynn Veach Sadler**

I never talk devotion,  
never let passion heat  
(except in dreams I cannot help).  
I don't chew on love  
as if it were bones  
to suck its marrow out  
while—*before*—it sucks out mine.  
Bones is it, all right.  
And connective tissue.  
Blood, brain . . . *corpus callosum*,  
all the pieces I can name  
but never touch.

(Yes, I tried the formalities of Church.)

Even in this mean century,  
*devotion* I say, for  
I never knew man,  
will still be maid (*old* maid, then)  
when Death takes me  
to . . . Wherever.

(Yes, I tried the formalities of Church.)

I dread the taking.  
Death will fly me beyond doubt  
to That One most call God.  
That One, doubtless,  
will set me afloat in the universe  
as a scattering, smattering of atoms.  
Some simple bird will eat my heart,  
take my maidenhead.  
That, at least, I'll like.

**A Rose Colored Pony**  
**by Laurin DeChae**

*Pink meat overdone  
is ripe underneath stretched skin:  
crude lines of worship*

fold over the blanket that coils me like a sausage.  
It smells like my great grandmother's house  
or maybe it is only because I am thinking of her  
and needing to remember to prove  
I hadn't forgotten about her yet.

There's something about things that are sunlit and flowering that reminds me of unfolding. I  
remember the first time I felt like foliage. I smudged pollen on my eyelids, swept scent on my  
collarbone. I prepared myself for death.

She falls, they laugh. She rocks  
against polyester carpet knitting memories  
with hands she doesn't recognize.  
I will sit where she sits.

Spread, I was leafy and blossoming and needing to see the sky for what it was—that dome of arched  
prayer. If this is my trajectory, let the fall be full of wolves. Where I swell, you swell. Where I tense,  
you sink.

How the mind loses its rocker,  
how the seat shifts shapes.  
Her eyes have marbled. Glassy,  
they only reflect windows as she sits staring  
with tissues in her sleeve and a butterscotch clenched in her teeth.

*If my hands could fold,  
petals would unfurl to lips,  
uncoiled, a mouth breathes.*

**Memories of My Friends**  
**by James Croal Jackson**

I.

memories tips  
of dry paintbrushes  
scraping canvas  
saturated with constellations,  
faint shapes remembered,  
bone smiles, glazed eyes,  
span of sunlight, eight  
long minutes away

II.

a chewed-out lighter  
flickers in my hand.  
tiny fragments of a broken  
windshield from a wayward  
stone compile into diamond  
dust, a fractional mountaintop  
glistening at dusk

III.

we dug all of the glimmer out of dirt,  
filled paper bags with crystals.  
there was no laughter,  
there was no silence.  
everything happens now  
and never again

**Wyoming 1949**  
**by Patricia Frolander**

Five hours ride into the storm,  
Old Joe thrashes through drifts, slows,  
head down and back humped.  
His thousand pounds of horseflesh stop,  
quiver, collapse,  
almost buried in the whiteout.

I pull myself from the saddle,  
flounder, fall against the dead body.  
Throat constricts as my knife cuts the cinch,  
razor-edge separates the sorrel hide.  
Crimson spreads, melts the snow beneath.

Tears freeze as I empty Joe's cavity,  
crawl into the steaming breach  
hope I'm found in time  
to give Old Joe a righteous burial.

**Olive Oil**  
**by Julianne DiNenna**

In hand-me-down pots olive oil boiled,  
splattering off the white-haired woman.

*Ecco*, she said,  
passing me the bottle:

*This is how you do:*  
*pour, stir.*

Her hands large as the spread of leaves  
knobby knuckles of olive trunk knots,

garlic-smeared fingers, baby zucchini,  
skin of slow-cooked pepper, she

splashed in offspring, fried them up,  
stirred with a splintered wooden spoon.

*It's your turn now,*  
*show me how you do.*

**When You Think You're Ready  
to Pack Up Your Grief  
by Alexis Rhone Fancher**

Begin with his letterman's jacket.  
Bundle it together with regret.

Stack sorrow on top of his class ring,  
interspersed with his hip hop cd's.

Loneliness should not be smoothed over the heart,  
nor his childhood drawings folded in on themselves.

Don't tuck his senior portrait in the side pocket.

Lay it beside delicate items,  
like feelings, face down;  
place tissue paper on top.

Use additional layers to fold the last of him  
in reverie, so it is engulfed.

Use this approach for your own heartbreak.

When friends ask to help, don't  
spread the grief around. Keep it for yourself.  
When the suitcase won't close, don't sit on it.  
Don't even try to shut it.



**into the valley**  
**by john sweet**

give me dead hands  
down empty country roads

give me november

pale sunlight in a sky  
scarred w/ contrails

grey fields, grey hills,  
small bones both bleached and  
stained, and nothing is hidden  
when everyone is blind

no one is blind when  
everything is lost

walk backwards long enough,  
and all gods return to dust

**Oblation**  
**by Sylvia Cavanaugh**

She tells the kids to go play  
as we drag wooden crates  
over uneven pasture  
enclosed in the stuttering current  
of a failing electric fence

bottle of cabernet  
from the kitchen cabinet

twilight shimmers atmospheric gold  
over this farm settled on a ridge  
above distant Lake Michigan  
past the blue-cast mass of trees

it's lambing time  
baby sheep leap  
from all four feet at once  
dancing putty hued pattern on the green

she pours the wine with one hand  
raucously into our glasses  
laughing and drawing me in  
while the evening chill  
creeps into our faces

recollections of life on the stage  
ages ago in New York  
a couple elemental drops of wine  
offered up to the soil

**Letting Go**  
**by Barry Charman**

As he's dying  
He says  
Tie a bundle of sticks together  
Call it family  
If you want  
Then place it in my shadow  
I want them to weigh me down  
I don't want to go

And even though  
We'd all had our troubles  
Rows over the little things  
That we allowed to provoke us  
Push us apart  
Like weeds in cracks  
We each of us left the hospital  
Picked up a twig  
And added it to a bundle

Then showed him  
We didn't want him to go

And only then  
Did he let go

**Cleaning with a knife**  
**by Mark Danowsky**

Cleaning a fan with a knife  
you come to understand the point  
of no return

when no matter what  
you will make the dysfunctional  
functional once more

convinced Reason is half  
dedication, dedication, dedication

**Milk House**  
**by Nels Hanson**

The yard-wide iron-rimmed four wooden wheels  
no longer leaning against a white-planked corral  
40 years torn down rolled a phantom wagon piled

with yellow hay from the alfalfa field long gone  
to feed plow horses and Jersey cows disappearing  
three-quarters of a century now with silver cans

of milk kept cool in a thick-walled house six feet  
square soon claimed by angry wild stinging bees  
no poison would kill so when we looped it tight

with a chain the tractor pulled at first the hollow  
brimming upper walls cracked and in a waterfall  
honey golden as whiskey from a tapped hogshead

rushed and poured until the nectar lay in one wide  
lake and with a fingertip I risked a taste so sweet  
before the white-ash soil drank a last tainted pool

in sight of High Sierras still standing to the east  
rare days a rain scrubs dark sky and granite snow-  
creased scarps loom close enough to touch again.

**Hubble 25**  
**(lipogr\*m)**  
**by Akua Lezli Hope**

Slivers of pigment undid its polished perfection  
misconstrued tools resulted in severe errors  
offset edge by 2.2 micrometers, tiny, profound

restored by skyfolk, reworked by outliers  
who reengineered vision with corrective devices  
more mirrors, new lenses, fixed slight imprecisions

peers further into cosmos through five servicing missions  
competition for telescope time is intense  
no schedule for unexpected events

It studies the deep field, this fiery, filled universe  
geosynchronous systems used to tell us  
help discern colors from monochrome sources

Figured the birth of the universe in 2003  
found our first moment of being to be  
13.7 billion before we were conceived

Redeployed to higher low third-rock orbit  
345 miles up there Hubble flies  
16,000 miles per hour sees bygone whys  
flickering lights in ever unfolding skies

**An Accounting**  
**by Tom Montag**

The wide land, and sky enough.  
Hawk, and hawk's friend, wind.

A grand stillness, sun on  
the tawny grass, sun on us.

Some things surely endure.  
Some pass through.

**Astronomical Dawn**  
**by Olivia J. Kiers**

Early. The sky,  
as gentle as a pearled shell  
still unopened and perhaps alive,  
begins to fade from black to blue  
to aquamarine, blotting out the constellations  
like the weird glints of deep-sea angler fish  
swimming away.  
They watch each other fade  
within the anxiety of uncertain, twilit distances,  
that no one is awake to calculate.



**I need to groom this garden**  
**by Jamie Haddox**

before the renegade thorns are too  
savvy to thwart. And yes, it is true,  
they are getting more clever every day,  
finding shadows where they know  
I'll never see them, waiting to exact  
their revenge for my pruning... or my  
neglect, whichever they happen to be  
pissed off about today. I consider  
alternatives: gasoline or herbicides  
but I can't kill my garden. I'd rather  
have an irregular heart beat than  
an empty chest. I suck the blood  
off my finger, curse the overgrown mess,  
and head back to the shed to find  
some fucking gloves.

## Contributors

**Jota Boombaba**, when not on the road, writes in and around San Francisco, where he lives and kicks back with his son. Visit him most days at [www.jotaboombaba.com](http://www.jotaboombaba.com).

**Bruce Alford**'s first collection, *TERMINAL SWITCHING*, was published in 2007 (Elk River Review Press). He received a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Alabama and was an assistant professor of creative writing at the University of South Alabama from 2007-2011. Before working in academia, he was an inner-city missionary and journalist. He has published fiction, creative nonfiction and poetry in journals such as the *African American Review*, *Comstock Review*, *Imagination & Place Press*, *Louisiana Literature*, and many others. He currently lives in Hammond, Louisiana.

Originally from Pennsylvania, **Sylvia Cavanaugh** has an M.S. in Urban Planning from the University of Wisconsin. She currently teaches high school African and Asian cultural studies. She has been the faculty advisor for break dancers and poets. Her poems have appeared in *An Ariel Anthology*, *Hummingbird*, *The Journal of Creative Geography*, *Midwest Prairie Review*, *Peninsula Pulse*, *Red Cedar Review*, *Seems Literary Journal*, *Stoneboat Literary Journal*, *Verse Wisconsin*, and elsewhere. She has a chapbook coming out from Finishing Line Press titled, *Staring Through My Eyes*.

**Yuan Changming**, eight-time Pushcart nominee and author of five chapbooks, grew up in rural China, began to learn English at 19, and published monographs on translation before moving to Canada. With a PhD in English, Yuan currently edits *Poetry Pacific* with Allen Qing Yuan in Vancouver, and has poetry appearing in *Best Canadian Poetry*, *BestNewPoemsOnline*, *Threepenny Review* and 1129 others across 37 countries.

**Barry Charman** is a writer living in North London. He has been published in various magazines, including *Ambit*, *Firewords Quarterly*, *The Literary Hatchet* and *Popshot*. He has had poems published online and in print, most recently in *Leading Edge* and *The Linnet's Wings*. He has a blog at <http://barrycharman.blogspot.co.uk>

**Mark Danowsky**'s poetry has appeared in *Alba*, *Cordite*, *Grey Sparrow*, *Mobius*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *Third Wednesday* and other journals. Mark is originally from the Philadelphia area, but currently resides in North-Central West Virginia. He works for a private detective agency and is Managing Editor for the *Schuylkill Valley Journal*.

Metro Detroit writer **Jenifer DeBellis** is *Pink Panther Magazine*'s Executive Editor and an international freelance writer. She's a former fellow for the Meadow Brook Writing Project and

earned an MFA in Creative Writing from Solstice of Pine Manor College. JDB teaches creative writing and comp for local colleges and facilitates workshops for Oakland University's MBWP Writing Camps. Her poetry and prose appear in publications such as AWP's *Festival Writer*, the *Good Men Project*, *Literary Orphans*, *Sliver of Stone*, *Solstice Lit Mag*, and other fine journals.

**Laurin DeChae** is a MFA candidate for poetry at the University of New Orleans, where she acts as the associate editor for *Bayou Magazine*. Her work appears or is forthcoming in *Harpur Palate*, *burntdistrict*, *Rust + Moth*, *Crack the Spine*, and elsewhere.

**Julianne DiNenna**, usually from DC, writes from Geneva, Switzerland. Her work has been published in *Offshoots*, *Susan B and Me*, *Grasslands Review*, *Italy a Love Story*, *Every Day Fiction*, as well as others. She won poem of distinction in *Writecorner Press* in 2011 and she has frequently been spotted on the train heading south to escape the winter.

**Alexis Rhone Fancher** is the author of *How I Lost My Virginity To Michael Cohen* and other heart stab poems, and *State of Grace: The Joshua Elegies*. Find her poems in *Rattle*, *The MacGuffin*, *Slipstream*, *Fjords*, *H\_NGM\_N*, *great weather for MEDIA*, *Chiron Review*, and elsewhere. Since 2013 she's been nominated for four Pushcart Prizes and four Best of The Net awards. Alexis was photography editor of *Fine Linen Literary Magazine* and is poetry editor of *Cultural Weekly*, where she publishes "The Poet's Eye," a monthly photo essay about her ongoing love affair with Los Angeles. [www.alexisrhonefancher.com](http://www.alexisrhonefancher.com)

**Sandy Feinstein's** poetry has appeared most recently (2015) in *Freshwater* and *Tau*; it has also appeared in anthologies, including *A Fine Frenzy: Poets Respond to Shakespeare*, and, in 2015, *Teaching as a Human Experience*. Her scholarly publications include articles on Chaucer, Arthurian literature, and alchemy, among medieval topics. She coordinates the Penn State Berks Honors Program and teaches English.

**Patricia Frolander** and her husband, Robert, ranch in the Black Hills of Wyoming. Still active, you may find her on a tractor or horse, but at this stage of her life she prefers her writing desk.

**Jamie Haddox** is a poet from Minnesota. She holds a BA in Creative Writing from Metropolitan State University. Her work has appeared in Metro State's literary publication, *Haute Dish*, as well as *Pretty Owl Poetry*, and on the *Golden Walkman Podcast*. In her spare time, Jamie loves reading and watching her son play hockey.

**Nels Hanson** grew up on a small farm in the San Joaquin Valley of California and has worked as a farmer, teacher and contract writer/editor. His fiction received the San Francisco Foundation's James D. Phelan Award and Pushcart nominations in 2010, 2012, and 2014. Poems appeared in *Word Riot*, *Oklahoma Review*, *Pacific Review* and other magazines and received a 2014 Pushcart

nomination, *Sharkpack Review*'s 2014 Prospero Prize, and 2015 and 2016 Best of the Net nominations.

**Akua Lezli Hope** is a creator who uses sound, words, fiber, glass, and metal to create poems, patterns, stories, music, ornaments, wearables, adornments and peace whenever possible. Her awards include two Artists Fellowships from the New York Foundation for the Arts, a Ragdale U.S.-Africa Fellowship, and a Creative Writing Fellowship from The National Endowment for The Arts. Her manuscript, *Them Gone*, won Red Paint Hill's Editor's Prize to be published in 2016. She won the 2015 Science Fiction Poetry Association's short poem award. A paraplegic, she's started a paratransit nonprofit so that she can get around her country town.

**James Croal Jackson** graduated from Baldwin Wallace University with degrees in film and creative writing. Some of his poems have recently appeared in *The Bitter Oleander*, *Glassworks*, and *Ping-Pong*. He recently moved from Los Angeles, California, to Columbus, Ohio. Find more of his work at [jimjakk.com](http://jimjakk.com).

**Seth Jani** currently resides in Seattle, WA, and is the founder of Seven Circle Press ([www.sevencirclepress.com](http://www.sevencirclepress.com)). His own work has been published widely in such places as *The Foundling Review*, *The Devilfish Review*, *The Hamilton Stone Review*, *Hawai'i Pacific Review* and *Gravel*. More about him and his work can be found at [www.sethjani.com](http://www.sethjani.com)

**Jeff Jeppesen** is a Pushcart-nominated, Georgia-based writer. His work can be found in *Space and Time*, *Every Day Poets*, *Strange Horizons*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *The Linnet's Wings* and other print and online journals.

**Mike Jurkovic**'s poems and music criticism have appeared/are forthcoming in 400 literary magazines, but have yet to generate any reportable income. Chapbooks: *Eve's Venom* (Post Traumatic Press, 2014), *Purgatory Road* (Pudding House Press, 2010). Anthologies: *WaterWrites & Riverine* (Codhill Press, 2009, 2007), *Will Work For Peace* (Zeropanik, 1999). VP, Calling All Poets in Beacon, NY. Producer of CAPSCASTS, recordings from CAPS, available at [www.callingallpoets.net](http://www.callingallpoets.net) [www.theground.town](http://www.theground.town) SoundCloud, YouTube. Music features, interviews & CD reviews appear in *Elmore Magazine* & the *Van Wyck Gazette*. He loves Emily most of all. [www.mikejurkovic.com](http://www.mikejurkovic.com)

**Olivia J. Kiers** lives in Boston, MA, and works on the editorial staff at an arts magazine. She holds a Master's degree in the History of Art and Architecture from Boston University. Her previous poetry has appeared in *Literary Laundry* and *Glass, Garden*.

**Sandra Lindow** is presently vice president of the Science Fiction Poetry Association. She has seven collections of poetry. She is semi-retired and lives on a hilltop in Menomonie, Wisconsin. She teaches part-time at University of Wisconsin-Stout, writes and edits.

After forty years in the business and academic worlds, **Carolyn Martin** is blissfully retired in Clackamas, OR, where she gardens, writes, and plays with creative friends. Since the only poem she wrote in high school was red-penciled “extremely maudlin,” she is still amazed she continues to write. Her poems have appeared in a variety of publications including *Persimmon Tree*, *Stirring*, *Naugatuck River Review*, and *Antiphon*. Her second collection, *The Way a Woman Knows*, was released in February 2015 by The Poetry Box, Portland, Oregon ([www.thewayawomanknows.com](http://www.thewayawomanknows.com)).

**Tracy Mishkin** is a call center veteran with a PhD and an MFA student in Creative Writing at Butler University. Her chapbook, *I Almost Didn't Make It to McDonald's*, was published by Finishing Line Press in 2014. Her work has appeared recently in *Hartskill Review* and *The Quotable*.

**Tom Montag** is most recently the author of *In This Place: Selected Poems 1982-2013*. He is a contributing writer at *Verse-Virtual* and in 2015 was the featured poet at *Atticus Review* (April) and *Contemporary American Voices* (August). Other poems are found at *Hamilton Stone Review*, *The Homestead Review*, *Little Patuxent Review*, *Mud Season Review*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Provo Canyon Review*, *Third Wednesday*, and elsewhere.

**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 lives in Boston with his family. In his spare time, he enjoys aikido and taijiquan and exploring his children’s dual heritages. His first book, *Hanami*, was published in 2015 by Aldrich Press and his first chapbook, *The Minstrel of Belmont*, by Finishing Line Press.

**henry 7. reneau, jr.** writes words in fire to wake the world ablaze: free verse illuminated by courage that empathizes with all the awful moments, launching a freight train warning that blazes from the heart, like a chambered bullet exploding inadvertently. His poetry collection, *freedomland blues* (Transcendent Zero Press, 2014), was released in September of 2014. He also has an e-chapbook, entitled *physiography of the fittest* (Kind of a Hurricane Press, 2014), which was released in December of 2014. Additionally, he has self-published a chapbook entitled *13hirteen Levels of Resistance*, and is currently working on a book of connected short stories. He is a Pushcart Prize nominee.

Former college president Dr. **Lynn Veach Sadler** has published five books and 72 articles, edited 22 books/proceedings and three national journals, and publishes a newspaper column. In creative writing, she has 10 poetry chapbooks and four full-length collections, over 100 short stories, four novels, a novella, two short story collections (another in press), and 41 plays. As North Carolina’s Central Region Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished Poet 2013-2015, she mentored student and adult

poets. She works as a writer and an editor. She and her husband have voyaged around the world five times, with Lynn writing all the way.

**john sweet**, b. 1968, still numbered among the living. A believer in sunlight and surrealism, not so much in reality tv or politicians. Most recent collection is *THE CENTURY OF DREAMING MONSTERS* (2014 Lummo Poetry Prize winner)

**Ed Werstein**, Milwaukee, WI, spent 22 years in manufacturing and union activity before his muse awoke and dragged herself out of bed. His sympathies lie with poor and working people. He advocates for peace and against corporate power. A member of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets and The Hartford Avenue Poets, his poetry has appeared in *Verse Wisconsin*, *Blue Collar Review*, *Mobius: Journal of Social Change*, and *Stoneboat Literary Journal* among others, and has been anthologized in several publications. His first chapbook, *Who Are We Then?*, was published in 2013 by Partisan Press.

**Laryssa Wirstiuk** lives in New Jersey with her mini dachshund Charlotte Moo. Laryssa's collection of short stories, *The Prescribed Burn*, won Honorable Mention in the 21st Annual Writer's Digest Self-Published Book Awards. Her poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction have been published in *Gargoyle Magazine*, *Word Riot*, *Barely South Review*, and *Up the Staircase Quarterly*.  
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*Gyroscope Review* will read submissions for our spring 2016 issue  
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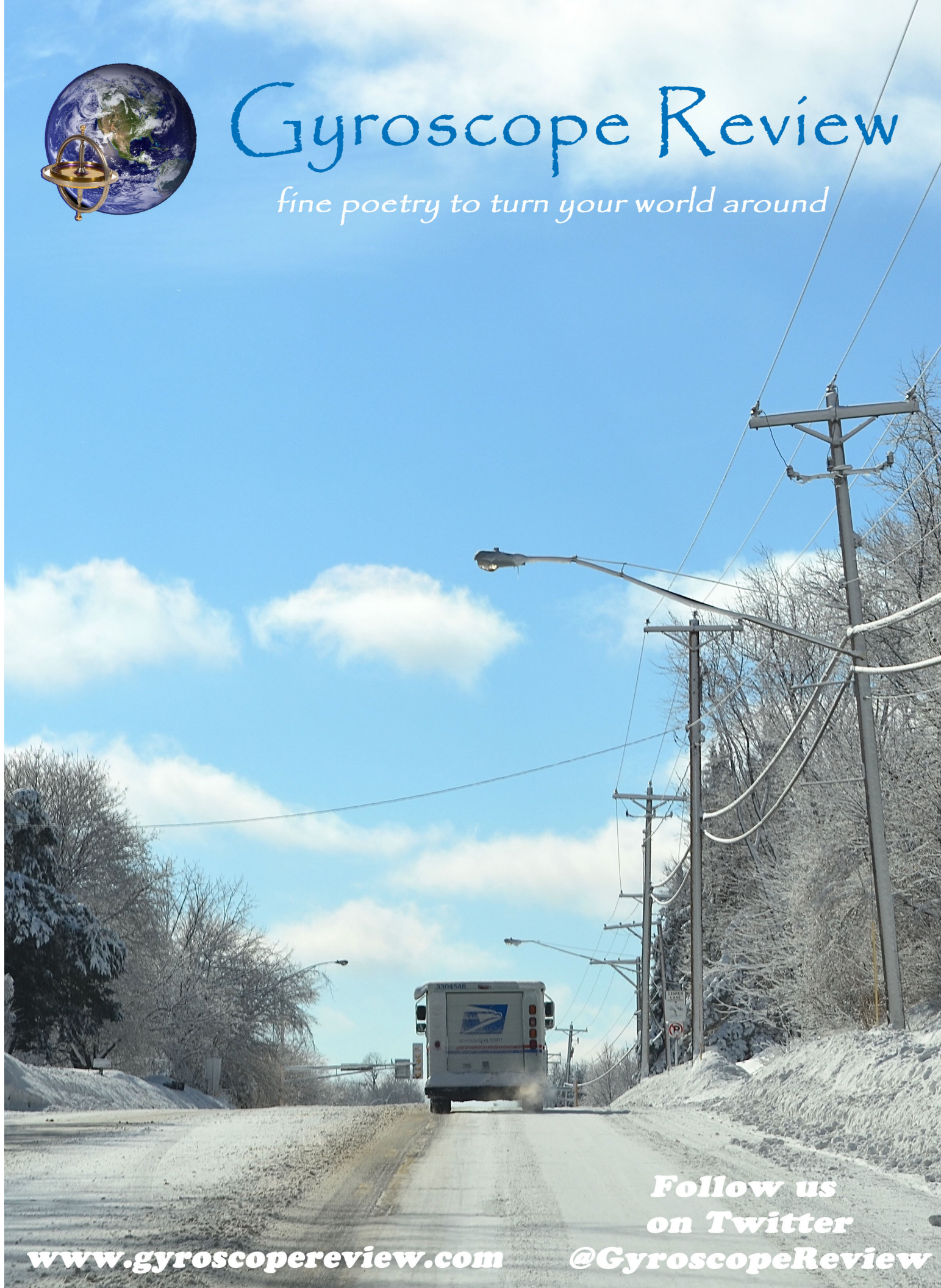
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