



Gyroscope Review

fine poetry to turn your world around

Issue 15-1 Spring 2015





GYROSCOPE REVIEW

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Spring 2015

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Submissions:

Gyroscope Review accepts previously unpublished contemporary poetry submissions through our online submissions system, gyroscopereview.submittable.com/submit. Please read our guidelines before submitting.

For further information, visit our website: gyroscopereview.com.

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From the Editors

Welcome to the inaugural edition of *Gyroscope Review*. We're excited to bring you a wide variety of poets from various countries and backgrounds. One of the things I love about being an editor is seeing the diversity of poems that end up in the slush pile. We started *Gyroscope Review* to continue to give voice to the amazing poets we were reading every day. It's a wonderful feeling to dig into the slush pile and find poems that engage you so well your coffee quietly goes cold. The authors in this inaugural edition all did a fine job of grabbing our attention with their craftsmanship and vision. The work represents a cross-section of contemporary poetry that wants to start a conversation with you. Let it. Breathe it in, read it quietly to yourself, out loud to the dog. Shout it from the front seat of your car as you barrel down the highway. Let it engage your senses and tap-dance across your mind. Isn't that what poetry is all about? Let your coffee grow cold as we welcome you to this, the first edition of *Gyroscope Review*.

Constance Brewer

Welcome, indeed. I found that not only did my coffee cool, but the world fell away as I read submissions for this first issue of *Gyroscope Review*. The jumble of images that populated my thoughts after a morning or afternoon of reading was astonishing for its breadth and depth. These poets brought us lyrical focused snapshots of a dizzying array of situations and emotions, in all kinds of formats, such that we are sure it would be hard not to find something in here that speaks to you. That grabs you as much as it grabbed us. And, since we're offering this first issue of *Gyroscope Review* during National Poetry Month, we hope you see fit to share. Poetry is our gift and our vision. It is our way of making sense of this world. Keep the conversation going.

Kathleen Cassen Mickelson

Fine poetry to turn your world around

Poplar Applause
by Bret Norwood

Polite the aspen's green applause and soft,
which celebrates this day and walk.

Heart of Brightness
by Oonah V Joslin

Never imagined it would be like this;
like a diamond.

A jewel from the air
casting light in all directions,
scattering the sun
like so much tinsel.

A jewel on the ground:
sharp and facetious:
cut to impress.
Its movement Cartier precise;
intricate, perpetual.

Soon your own heart keeps
that relentless beat.
Your feet pick up the pace.
Your mind accepts the clamorous roar
as waves crashing on a rocky shore,
a restless storm in a vast forest;
animal bellows, shrills and shrieks,
siren calls.

Down in the street in the dizzy deep,
of lacerating power, you meet
hard edged faces, inward looking,
sharp and quick as knives.

Many have been cut down here:
crushed, pulverised, buried alive
and dead.
It demands reflection,
worship.
No excuses.

But when you expect it least
it reins in to a trot,
lies still as schist,
invites you to
Imagine

an open glade; allow
the ghosts of time to invade
your circle of its sky.
Buildings hedge you round
like sentinels.
Nurtured and anonymous;
you're almost safe.

And after dark, there is no darkness here.
The diamond lights itself internally.
Dreams and shadows put on a show.
You walk a broad way
among mortal stars so close
you might almost think them real.
Diamonds are facetious.
They are carbon like all of us.

See the place
where black dust fell:
a reverberating avalanche
at the stone heart of her
flaws.
A canker at the Apple's core.

Consumed.
Consummated.
Never imagined you would love her so.

I Dream of Wellingtonias
[also known as Giant Redwoods]
by Sally Evans

The tweezer shape of double pine needles
that softened the floor, when ground was nearer
or fixed to twigs which carried tight green cones,
the green of paint, of lead paint.

The crossed bill of a bird. The bend of a hairpin, a fishhook.
Surely it was a dream I carried with me.
We had strolled round a park full of Wellingtonias,
the dream suddenly noticed from days ago.

I took dropped cones, saying the seeds
would grow. Seeds do grow, but these
would take so much space becoming Wellingtonias.
Where would the space come from as the seeds grew?

When I was a kid, the Encyclopedia
said that if you folded a piece of paper
a certain number of times, it would reach the moon
by a magic of number doubling.

I tried so hard, folding and folding
last week's pink cover of Sunny Stories
and drew to a wise but young conclusion:
Some of what they tell you is pish.

And yet. Double pine needles cover the floor.
I bend to them and pick up cones
that are open. I shake them onto white paper.
I nurture those tiny black specks.

The Museum Fish
by Steve Klepetar

strains across a long wall
brilliant in its many colors

on a sea of nails it swims
subtle curve from silver tail

to shadows of its sullen
mouth, has nothing to say to air

dead black eye reflects
a flash, rolls out to nowhere

sharp gills glint green, scales
tinged purple-blue flash

highlights of red gold in waves
of artificial light and somewhere

a boat hovers above the reed
bed swaying in swells, where

eyes twist into nets and lips
pucker with every breath

and gurgling sea trembles
as fingers bend hard into iron hooks

To Keep It Safe
by CD Sinex

To keep it safe we'd meet mid-day
those times when I came back to town.
What harm could come from lunch we'd say
in bright cafes with crowds around?

Those times when I came back to town,
those times when you could get away,
in bright cafes with crowds around,
we'd talk until you couldn't stay.

Those times when you could get away,
the days when we would not be found,
we'd talk until you couldn't stay,
or just hold hands without a sound.

Those days when we would not be found,
no harm could come from lunch we'd say,
and just hold hands without a sound—
To keep it safe we'd meet mid-day.

Finding Her Feet in a Rough Spring
by Mercedes Lawry

Pastoral and less than full, moon,
her grief, coddled as it is in grass fields.
She could hide and watch bees, wait for stings
to stop her heart. Amen, amen, mark
of a plethora of days in chalky dust.
Ruins of only minor interest
with weeds between stones,
statuary lies, historical falsehoods.

She read a dozen stories in the course
of several hours and became calm.
Wide open spaces offer comfort,
not much of a worthy word, closer
to oatmeal, pillow, broth.
Nothing you might apply to a crow
or his cawing that always sounds
perturbed and she likes him for it.

The Hurt Beech: September 2014
by James Graham

Last Sunday, as I stood
where my father's name is cut into a stone
I remembered the tree.
The beech behind our house.
One day I cut my name into its bark.
The same day my father hauled me out,
stood me in front of it, clenched my shoulders,
made me look him in the eye, and said:
'The Devil makes work for idle hands'. Then, fiercely:
'It's a sin to deface a tree. A sin. Don't ever
do that again, for I'll leather you'.
I followed that thought to the old house
and stood before the tree. The name
was fuzzy with long healing, but still legible.
What a fuss he made. Look, father, it's still here!
I was naughty, but I didn't kill it! Perhaps it was
a way of saying I want to make my mark,
achieve, be a man of worth. Of saying,
this is the place that nourished me. At least
it's a memento of my childhood. Don't you see?
I looked at the tree again, and turned away.
And turned again. I'm sorry, father.

Change of State
by Laurie Kolp

After the blackout, I stand
and scrape stones from my knees
uncovering pinpricks of blood
beneath wine-splotched tattoos
 then slide through tear-smudged glass
to vacuous kitchen. Have I been here before?

Wet paper towels daub the filth away
 stop, my throbbing body.
A washcloth placed upon my fevered forehead—
my mother, perhaps?

 You see, I left my lover this morning.

Everything I thought I ever knew about truth
suddenly cracked like frozen tree limbs.
As fast as one cold snap, frost that bites
the fragile dead.

 Like me.

Bonfire
by Angel Zapata

Ashes are
ascending prayers;
dead skin impressionists.
Choose one black flake
at random, snatch it
from the air—
it becomes a fly wing,
an aerial assault,
a prediction of worms.

Aunt Esther's Cookie Jar
by Trina Gaynon

Just another bright yellow Dutch Girl,
she doesn't hold any cookies tucked
under her apron, inside her skirt.
Her tricorner hat, one tip chipped off,
took the brunt of the damage of time.
Her eyes downcast, she'd welcome a smile.
Her short arms open wide for anyone
who might need a tight ceramic hug.
'Til then she remains hollow, hollow.

Anxious
by Beth Konkoski

Some days my details
shine out from beneath
a microscope, turning
invisible slights and germs
into tackle dummies
I must force to the ground.
When I hurl myself
and miss or feel their breathy
waiting in the wings
of my days, I prowl,
wear a path through the carpet
like any common zoo lion
in the split shadows of his cage.
It is the heat and flutter
of an insect cloud
building to eruption
in my chest. Only screaming
or tears, not even my daughter's
arms, will release me.

Into the Fold
by Brittany Renee Williams

The serene silence of space. We drift, trusting gravity to pull us down,
down, down into mysterious folds of unimaginable colors, so new I don't
know their names. Behind, home winks its fading eye, nothing but a pale
light among millions. Regret. I'll never plunge into familiar ice depths
again or drink in the light from my sun. My beloved whisper farewell,
voices sliding along star light. The price of exploration. We pick up speed
caught by an invisible net. Exhilaration, shame, and the desire to arrive.
Acceleration. We exist in a twilight state. To our backs, cold, black space,
spotted by star fire. Ahead, unknown, except streaks of . . . the words
come unbidden. Green. Blue. Good. We never know how a new world
will change us. Our engines awake to slow our descent, possibly alerting
the natives, if they don't already know. A tug-of-war, the planet's forces
against our vessel. We stabilize. The prize, life though it's no guarantee
we'll last the day. As we glide closer, images I don't understand. Alien
structures, but even my eyes comprehend, intentional. We land and the door
opens. Harsh light. My courage falters. I close, fly, and retreat into galactic
mother arms. My copilot brushes my forehead, pulling my thoughts back
from the sky. I grip my weapon and kiss my token. My stranger friend
and I clasp hands, united in desperate need. We step out into our new
world, old in the celestial sea, praying this world draws us into the fold.

Analog
by Rachel J. Bennett

having a theoretically infinite resolution

Woke up to beaks and contrails alike open to all
the music we can stand. Woke up to people-turned-

pixels thirty feet high above the avenue, the vines
scribbling extraordinary messages above

my thesaurus. Woke up wondering about angles as
curves and your name as the favorite poem of god

and my separation, as man-turned-god put it,
as something these machines will never

reproduce. The blood, the comedy. Woke up thinking
about yesterday's blizzard of flowers and all

the ways I'm painting signs for the world
to ignore at its peril. Woke up and admired

the personalities of babies and dogs: tall babies, future
babies, robo-dogs—and the baby with no dog except

the one she lost in her symphony of floods,
the only one she'll ever love (though none of us

can know how many dogs we have left
to love). And directions, I gave these all day, the kind

people ask for when they think you also know
what it is to be a little lost. I know about this. I can

tell you about sweetness. Woke up to every part
of the season around me, including me, falling quietly.

I Reach Across the River of Time
by Steve Klepetar

and there you are, running, always running
as if your brother would chase you forever

through mists, his red face twisted in rage,
gaining, and your sister crying, her tears huge

and hot as you twist around the narrow passages
of our world, those tunnels under buildings

where you lose him in the dark. And then
you're alone, building a model plane, gluing

gray, plastic pieces so carefully that even
the thinnest snap into place under your skillful hands.

And now you're surrounded by girls, teasing
and flirting as you choose among them

like a sharp housewife picking through grapes.
Hard to imagine you in love, though easy to see

how someone could love you, be pained
by your quiet moods, your inward dwelling

sense of self transcending boyhood as you kneel
in the dirt to shoot a marble toward a waiting hole.

Follow Him
by Rikki Santer

*for Stephen Bishop (1821-1857),
lead explorer and guide to Kentucky's Mammoth Cave*

Antebellum paradox. The mixing
of bloods didn't free you but
your subterranean prowess

gave you momentary relief.
If you could, would you burst
through the milky membrane

of history like the showman
you were to claim the libretto of
your life: puppeteer and puppet.

Slave with a lantern, sweet talker
with harmony on your tongue--
the bitterness of the South,

and the honey dream of Liberia.
They followed you in your slouch
hat, the white elite in their long

skirts, starched shirts, through a
bonanza of labyrinths—no neat
set of steps but corkscrew paths

of sideshow thrills. They followed
you trying the dark and your blood
paths. Tapestries of sound—your call

and response in echo chambers,
your gospel sing-alongs floating
atop underground rivers, then

salvation in midnight grace notes
whispered moist in your Charlotte's
ear. Keen as those eyeless fish

your stealthy handholds traversed
unknown depths and keyhole orifices
like Kafka in his burrow. The miles

and miles of connected veins you
sketched from memory, topography
stitched through your bones. Your

bold byline when published, but
Master reaped the royalties and
altered your place names to suit

his own. Screech owl your turntable,
wrens scat copacetic and generations
still follow you. Union soldier's tomb

stone repurposed for you years
later as a moon-eyed afterthought
like the soot-etched autographs

you left on damp cave walls
marking the theater of your
inheritance, of your cage.

Aubade
by Ken Poyner

My beloved is waiting in the barn
With a potter's trowel. She made
Excuses at dinner, was allowed to leave
The recklessly untethered table
Before the maiden dessert course.
Out of the back air lock she ran,
Over the gravel to the guttering cries of the
Unicellular creatures in the cracks left
Between individual stones, her tungsten
Boots quivering along the rapture of
Her sandpaper thighs, her mouth cocked
Into the round O of a galactic serendipity.
Here I am, hands in my proud pockets,
Wanting to know what animal she will be,
What languages we will bury between us.
As I pass - disquieted from the dark
Of our open sea into the light
Of the closed barn, with a snap
And a spin and a joy of too many
Testicles - she, leather-backed and stamen crested,
Tosses me the slither and coil of that trowel,
And I am instantly bemoaned: I am to be judged.
My love, I disband into intentions,
And with loathsome joy I dig.

Crooked Pinkies
by Laurie Kolp

The man behind the mall's post office kiosk
asks to see my pinky. I always wave to him
while wrapping up my daily walks, passing by
my final lap before I exit through
the West Hall entrance.

Quizzically, I show him my pinky
as if I were in grade school, flashing my
inny belly button to a boy.

*See how it's crooked? Just wait until
the baby's born. I bet its pinky
will be crooked, or at least another
random quirk like curling tongues.*

Mine a curlicue I roll right through my puckered lips.

*It's kind of creepy how our babies clone
the weirdest things, pick up mannerisms
you think your own, then eventually outgrow
you. Sometimes you might even wonder
if they're really your kid. When that happens
remember your pinky finger.*

Her fist rippling across my belly
as if to say just wait and see.

Ferris Wheel
by Sarah Marchant

I grip my skinny hands
searching for a ring that hasn't
surfaced in months

A fish hook pulling me into
the tar-streaked sky
by the tendons

Bend and straighten
bit by tension-taut bit

Tonight the moon is gold
glinting to unearth my bones
unbury my clean conscience

I close my eyes and it's still you
moving on me in the dark
suspended, smooth and unblinking
in a thicket of disarray

Now We Will Speak in Flowers
by Micki Blenkush

I.

As a child I let the train of my own focus
roar across the tracks of my mother's words
when she returned from the garden
elbow deep in dirt sprouting:

clematis four o clocks hosta.

Squirrels digging tulips, dogs trampling
marigolds, even her confession
to pulling daisies like common weeds
a mumbled blur. Not until the day she showed me
bright candy flowers I could cut into my own bouquet
did I accept one name. *Zinnia*, my mind whispered
as I bent low snipping off extra leaves, stroking
the layered petals like feathers down
a pigeon's breast.

II.

Following her stroke, we brought flowers
to my mother's room. Sweeping gestures
said all her smiling mouth could not. The first texts
she ever sent to me come from the hospital.
Simple *love you's* floating back and forth
across January nights. Soon she texted flowers
across the distance. Gerber daisies
in a pixilated square.

Hopeful talk of morning glories germinated
as her speech gradually returned.
I walked the floor of my own house,
gripping the phone, straining to understand.
When I asked how deeply to plant
the four o' clock seeds she gave me last fall,
their name sprang like a reflex
from my mouth.

III.

In late July she makes her first drive alone to visit.
We join the other tourists walking the paths
of Munsinger Gardens:

Dianthus I say, gesturing near her feet.

Coleus, she says, nodding just ahead.

Calla lily? I ask.

Canna lily, she says.

Stopping at all benches so she can catch her breath
we look past the fountains, past others
also pointing, naming.

Alium, we murmur

as my daughter flits from flower to fountain
and back again to us.

Nearby the verbena nods. Salvia sways.

Delphinium, we croon
to anyone who might listen....

lobelia *hydrangea* *fern*.

**A Poem about Maria Teresa
by James Graham**

Maria Teresa
was taken ill one day
at her bench in the t-shirt factory
in El Salvador.

She went to the toilet
had a miscarriage
was found unconscious
rushed to hospital

arrested

charged with aggravated homicide
sentenced to 40 years.

In El Salvador
miscarriage
is abortion
which is murder.

Write a poem?
About Maria?

No, you have to try
to make things happen:
invade the noble square
before the President's palace
with red-lettered banners
ten foot broad
and angry shouts.
Fire demands and truths
at the high windows.

But Presidents drink fine wine
and banter behind heavy doors.

Well then, a poem. It's no better
and no worse. Drain off your anger
into words. Assemble
hard-edged images, disorienting

line-breaks, dissonances. Put

it out there for tough-minded
poetry cognoscenti. The folks
who like their poems
sweet and lovely -
flowers, songbirds,

babies –

will wonder what the world is coming to,
but modern readers who are used to
being disturbed, will be disturbed.

They will admire its craft
and passionate humanity.

They will return to it perhaps,
after a time, and feel again

concerned, moved,

helpless.

When I Die and Go to Heaven
by Kenneth Pobo

It's a blah eternity if the best
I can hope for is the company
of angels—notorious for bad cooking

and wrestling--in gym
Wayne Gochman pinned me
on a gray mat.
The others yelled *Kill him! Kill him!*

According to Mary Suldana
who blew him behind the bleachers,
he was an angel. I doubt that.
You can put your hand
right through an angel.
Flesh won't stop you. Maybe

in heaven Bette Davis
regrew her flesh. Smoking
had better be allowed. Garland
will sing "Ol' Man River."
Even upper-echelon big mansion
dudes like St. Peter will applaud,

Eternity a cat's tongue,
no end to its pink.

Cinder-Esther
by Daryl Muranaka

She stands there, in the sky blue
Disney dress and worn brown boots,
munching on a hamantash,
her “don’t mess with me” stare
turned up to 11. This Cinderella is
not going to bite the dust.
But at the end of the party,
the eyes of a little princess
filled with pure, unmitigated plea
the open hands, fingers out-stretched
like sunflowers reaching for the sky,
waiting for me to pick her up,
let her wrap her arms around my neck.
Just one more day when I will tell her
that the world is not as bad as I found it
that the monsters she sees are alive
only in her head, that the Hamans
who are real and unreal, the bad guys
she doesn’t understand, that hate
her for no reason, that hate
the shape of things to come,
must come through me first
and I am waiting for them at the door.

Purim 2014

Nursery Rhyme
by Ann E. Michael

Here is the crooked man,
his house collapsing slowly
upon its crooked lot.
The path he's walked,
though full of steeps
and turns, was straight
enough for him. And for
the lopsided hound
who now limps down
the skewed oak stairs
to greet him at the mangled
gate. She waits, wags
her broken tail as he
checks for mutilated mail
in his car-struck postbox.

What forces pulled his fences
to and fro, a wracked row
of splintered posts—
quake? hurricane? deep snow?
The crooked roof,
the crooked stile, he wills
himself to smile (a crooked
smile). That sixpence
won't begin to pay the note
his crooked banker wrote
so one more burden shifts
his backbone further
out of whack. What was it
that made him so slant,
shoved spine, hip, and knee—
Experience? or gravity?

Level with Birdsong
by Rachel J. Bennett

for Joseph Weizenbaum

You crest the hill, light
a carnelian fire to let
the valley know you

miss it, even though
its stars were farther
away and the night

very cold. Above,
an invisible bird
makes the sound

of a ringtone with
its lungs and throat,
suggesting you are not

where you thought
you would be, setting
out. It's been days

since you spoke
to anyone, but *days*
exist less when

you're not speaking.
Like air, you expand
to fill any space

and experience *lost*
as the impulse
to press something,

anything into wet
mud. With rocks,
you construct a cell

tower to carry
these strange birds
through faucets and

radiators and teeth
to anyone who might
receive the signal and

think of you out here.

The Robot's Self Diagnostic
by Ken Poyner

I'm finding the rattle
That seems to be somewhere
In my left leg housing
Has become something
I can adapt to. At first
I figured it was a worn bearing.
Later it seemed somewhat
Of a shear of larger metal,
A filing calved from an otherwise
Still sturdy support. I was expecting
Over time it would work itself
Into quiet suspension, or wear
Entirely away. It should have been
Easy to put it out of a mind
Made of pure circuitry and registers:
An electrical cascade of mechanical purpose.
Some subroutine of self maintenance,
Or due diligence, or enforced awareness for public safety,
Keeps bringing it to the fore
And its tap tap tap rounds my execution
Pathways once again, compares itself
To what from the last trip remains
In nonvolatile memory. I am starting to apply
A pattern to it. Lasting long enough,
Even a random disrepair can seem to have
Some reason, some purpose ladled into itself.
I listen to the tap tap tap, and I think
It is some carnal code, some interest
Expressing itself, something saying something
It wants understood beyond the small
Confinement it taps inconveniently against.
I am finding the rattle convenient.
Forgive me, but I think it is a prayer.

Road Trip
by Angel Zapata

Takes a nursing aide
with concrete fingers
to side roll daddy,
sponge him clean,
crack jokes
between
diaper
changes.

Thirty-three years
of road repairs;
was the eye-candy
of mini-van
soccer moms
awed by
biceps,
stretch,
sweat
over black-top tar.

Road signs
leave little to
the imagination:
caution,
slow down,
danger ahead,
road ends.

Grifters Among Us
by Mercedes Lawry

Evenings of trickery. This man is not
this man, but a puff of lies. He winnows
and feigns in a welter of oily words.
All promise just out of reach, a plane
of contentment, drizzle of luxury,
at least what is deserved. Thin man,
fat man, hands like disappearing birds.
He makes a point, makes it twice
and backwards. Here, there, the gullible
pull their heads up and breathe
the rarified air. We might be somebody else,
they think, and better. The con is on,
the grifter clicking his yellow teeth,
his wolf-smile every bit as glinty
as a Jupiter moon.

Chorus
by Terry Jude Miller

the voice that describes
my mother's murder to the insurance man
ticks with static and feedback,
words adhere to slick metal,
then snail down the sluice,
a thick stream of black milk
an insulated voice tells my sister
of mother's violent end, an act
of ventriloquy points my sister
to the west wall, away from blood
and blame - she is not fooled,
she knows the origin
a whisper tells me my mother
is dead, everywhere there's falling,
flooding, freezing, like treading water
and not feeling the sandy bottom
beneath the sea that suspends me
I do not know from where the final voice
comes, it has no shape nor alphabet
and has lived forever many times
before, it has no face nor blood,
no breath nor light nor darkness,
it carries comfort on its back
in a gunny sack that once held stellar embryos,
I recline upon the air and beckon
it to sing

Writing in Blood
by Steve Klepetar

She copies out a hundred poems,
then does laundry in the big, tin
tub. Next time she writes will be in blood.

Her brother climbs a ladder to the roof,
watches stars burn a path across
the early winter sky. If he fell, she would

bury him so deep the wolves would have
to dig for days to find his mangled flesh.
She owes him that and more, his firm

hand stuffed into his shirt as though
to hold the heart that must be tumbling
from his chest. She hears blood throbbing

as he stares at mysteries. What blue pulp,
his eyes, what a handful of white teeth.
His colors are pink and white, with orange

calluses on the bottom of his feet. She
marvels again at the size of him, his
shoulders and his weight, all that solid bone

pressing on shingles and struts. And still,
somehow, he flies, light as a mindless thing,
a wretched bird, warbling hard against the wind

Radioactive Zombie Marie Curie
by Rachel Bennett

You slept, shining out your bones

from *Radioactive Zombie Marie Curie*, a text-based game by M. Alexander

The first thing you see is a woman, head
in hand, surrounded by the idea
of all the men she's left like countries,

their constitutions irrelevant and
desk drawers overflowing with saltpeter
and musk. *Dear receding empire,*

she thinks, *it was a mistake to be
from anywhere.* The danger here
is great—her unspoken

eyes and childless machines—you
will need all the bars you've acquired
to defeat her. *This is where*

the organism stops, you think,
but she's already thought it. Ditto
shadows growing like teeth

in sunlit mouths. This is before
her city abdicates its promise
of homecoming like a dying

body, but don't think chronology
tempers her resolve. You are a room
in the house she walks through

to be somewhere else. She's programmed
to be undefeatable. If it seems unfair,
forget the program and go

about domesticity. Your windowsill
heaped with lamb's quarter
and lovage, your bloodlust

in its tooled sheath a souvenir
from the quest. Meanwhile she solves
the problem everyone said was unsolvable,

the way sand moves through the sea.

A Body New
by Richard King Perkins II

I leave Rome's forgotten bedroom. Tent of vermillion skin.
My identity a fruit the insects reject. Slate curvature made of slate.
I absorb completely, shunning the deepest chemicals. Uncountable
leaves try to fly within. Histories of frozen hunger. Stones as
supple as subconscious. The quietness of shepherds that live inside
me. The first words that find independence. The complex sounds
that lack meaning slung between layers of sediment. A few take
root, air-invisible, in the earth; forms resolve, disperse, resolve.
They are featureless, trunks of future flourish. Eye stalks removed.
Blinded to certainty. Orbits filled-in. I run backward to hear what
was said. A lifetime of lucky guesses and I may fit together
temporarily. The map of discovery belongs to the furthest away
because the nearest cannot read it. There are so many X's to find.
Light thins then gorges then thins, its purge a formula of the stars.
I'm so sorry I didn't remember to bury the fallen apples. Seeds
suspended in rot will find no purchase to make a body new.

XXXX00

by Melissa Gordon

I wrote unclear and spell check changed it to nuclear. Maybe you exist in my nuclei. Maybe what your image arouses is a part of my self.

When we are together, I don't explain. Something protruding from one of us, fits snug into a slot in the other. Interlocks.

I've not often had someone visibly show me they want to mesh with the space I occupy. And into your space I don't have to trip and fall. I walk straight into it and press my knees, my thighs, my shoulders against yours. You press my lips when we say goodbye.

We let our toes dangle over the edge of our distant couches. We snap expressions in photos and send. I read your books, your essays, the words you've written while you disconnected from humans, sought alone. I see your face beneath the words. And, like a knife, I carve pieces of me, and hand them to you.

I am not afraid of what I willingly give you. I wait for time to give us another moment. I wait on the shore where I know you will wash up.

Cold Oatmeal
by Joshua Colwell

I shouldn't eat alone,
at least not so soon
after what happened.

You once read me Pablo
Neruda while stirring us
oatmeal, saying this is
how professionals do it.

I didn't know what
you meant at the time,
I thought everybody
just added water.

Gathering
by Beth Konkoski

I see the wild places
ungroomed, untrammeled,
unwatched
until I intrude, add
my steps, my quiet eyes,
my pen. They give me,
these places, no attention,
continue long after I have left.
The bones of a beech tree
brittle and spined,
husk of a puffball
small twist of smoking
spores, a frothing spring,
some deep belly gurgle
spat from a cave
beneath roots, the red
of a leaf, new fallen
and placed by planetary
forces in the center
of a puddle black
with old rain.
These I gather, hold onto
and breathe in as I journey back.

2. Domesticated Throats Unguarded

The diminutive peacock-fan paw
withdrew from its reflection
and joined the rest of the fur falling
from the bathroom sink to the floor.

There by the open door a scent-story
stretched toward her from the couch
in the neighbor room. It said

*if the woman were to lean back
the man might kiss her on the neck.
Her hand, fingers spread slightly
on the soft spot between his lips
and ear, would reminisce briefly
before withdrawing
in human epiphany.*

This narration, echoing in feline nostrils,
might then mix with those forgotten before
the body in which they found themselves
came into being. Perhaps
one of these would recall that

*before she could withdraw her paw
from her reflection in the lake fuming
with poisonous volcanic gases, she fell
and sank to the sediment
deep at the bottom,
a casualty
of the ancient thumb seeking army
of primates in embryo
millions of years prior
to their loss
of her tail.*

The woman leans back.
Her cat, Ida, settles in agreement
with gravity to reflect the scene
in her green eyes.

She might be thinking,

*Thus do humans plant neighborhood.
Such are their claws.*

3. Vespers Pulse of a Cat's Throat

The teeth of tigers is not
the bone-scraping cry
of ancient prey
any more than Ida's tongue
is the drop about to fall
from the bathtub faucet.

The drop,

more convincing than her reflection
in the sink mirror,

falls to find its place
as one of many such descending petitions,
culminating as the dregs
of ancient ocean-seeking armies.

Thus do cats lick faucets.
Such are their tongues.

4. Voiced Flesh Safeguarded

Swear when you heard the word *cell*
first confess it had become plural
you saw amino signals unfurl
and waft across the vast steam
of primordial soup seas.

Swear you saw wide-armed Christ-s
on the water gesture,
we, your ancestors,
were here where you have arrived
at our memory.

Swear you saw mud awaken
and harvest community,
so help you God.

(That's one thumb scrutinized forefinger

the mirror thought earlier watching her
release a strand of hair from an eyebrow
as if an artifact of the fossil appendage legions
she had seen in National Geographic.

Later, she withdrew her hand from his cheek,
fan-fingers slowly closing
as she opened her eyes
reminiscing his absence,

reminiscing
the solitude of a single hand,
a tongue that reads tea
in empty cups,

and how words proceed from skin.)

Swear!

5. The Throat that Welcomes Time's Sharp Edge

As new year morning bodies claim full height
as do rising suns

the sky,
my own stature is compromised
by a spinal scoliosis that rides
my ass like a question mark.

Well, it's more like a street sign really,
warning of dangerous curves ahead--

warning

this crooked row of chalk crab apples
rising to fill the bushel of my brain
shall be juiced as all blood's
usefully wasted red
destined to feed
the bone-breathing pyre
of earth.

But how can I turn my back
on this persistent frame,
this fence
of time and softening substance,

with such good friends
and neighbors?

Marionettes
by Steve Klepetar

“I am trapped on a desert of raw gunshot wounds”
Audre Lorde

Somewhere there are dead children whose bodies
swim in their own blood, whose faces have been
eradicated, whose mouths are nothing
but wounds and there are hands with black gloves
holding guns, there are voices shouting about insults
there is a man holding forth, a man shooting a target
until it splinters like a broken land
there is rage and sorrow which fogs the air
night has become a cloud of sorrow and rage
and when the cameras go off, then suffering begins
in a new silence that drowns every word you could say
or dream, that threatens mothers with madness
fathers with a silence terrible as the deep, heavy pit
where torn bodies are laid again and again, mangled
a broken pile of marionettes, limbs tangled in awful sleep

Twelve Hours To Go
by Sy Roth

leisure moves in to sleep with me on my sofa
a companion like a homeless, long-lost cousin.
days stretch out in indolence and tossed timepieces
resting among a slew of colorful ties.

refrigerator beckons me.
in a lethargic, ass-scratching stretch
conduct an archeological dig through its
slimy ham, hardened bread, and moldy cheese.

today I will move some dirt
from a patch looking askew
my Leaning Tower spied out of the corner of my eye--
reroute the edging,
replace the stakes,
weed the small plot
and sweep the refuse repeatedly into a black garbage bag.
thirty minutes of diversion.
pungent, earthy smells follow me into the house.

took up where I left off in my novel
the assassin within transported me there.
no longer feeling manipulated by authors,
I journey with them.
Will I transport today?

my head becomes a wrecking ball,
weebing/ wobbling
stabbing at my chest with a receding chin
train-wrecking snores stir me.

the sun rips a crimson streak across my left cheek.
my Madeleine,
dried cookies and sounds of imagined, tapping keys
fellow travelers in my somnambulism.

the overused delete button
leaves a trail of incoherent words
and a discordant rhapsody sings a morose song
in a jumbled day-- twelve hours to go.

I move along with it in monosyllabic fits and starts--
perhaps time to kill some ants
back there in the garden.
polymorphic words haven't yet arrived.

Ambassador Trudging
by Rikki Santer

You open the door
of every morning
to suffer the law
of falling bodies
a tiny index
on each sleeve as you
trudge through the husks
of day into too many
conferences of sorrow
too many attempts to conjure
breath from cypress knees.
At night a lone firefly stutters
its way across the belly
of dark until a thread
of phosphorous takes flight
and your valley shimmers
with sleepless chaos, rotating
rotating towards morning.

Personal Taste
by Angel Zapata

someone
is always
something
I wish
“to taste”
tongue to
uninterrupted
appetite

to syphon
toast
oats
tea
out of the phrase

“to state”
“o attest”
this singular desire
for someone
like you or
a bit(e)
more like me

Grass Cutter
by Daryl Muranaka

The shears are made from one
piece of metal, the blades facing
each other, widening as you go,
then the perpendicular twist
of the handle before the loop
of the spring. Brown with usage,
with rust, it works with a quiet
scrape, scrape, scraping at each cut.
And there Grandpa sits, perched
on the little yellow bath stool
cutting each blade of grass
with the patience of a barber—
the busy snipping cutting little
but making everything equal,
everything quiet and calm.

How different from the man—
thick armed, barrel chested—
amongst the sturdy, rough men,
holding the deer up by the hooves,
the cords taut in cable of his arm,
pulled by the will of his grip.
How young and tough like Yamato Takeru,
in whose iron grip, the regal blade cut
down the field of grass and blew
the wind to consume his enemies.
How now the howl of adventure
echoes further and further back
like the hum of the sword of power
sitting in a distant shrine
away from prying eyes.

Letter Home
by John Grey

His letter from the war
was cleared by the censors.
That's the meaning of the purple stamp.
This letter can depart the battlefield
by the usual channels,
catch a plane to the US,
wend its way through
that incomparable maze -
the postal service.

There's nothing of troop movements
on its lightweight paper.
The writing's scrawled and smudged
but no hint that that's from low morale.
There's no slights to fellow soldiers.
No dwelling on the ones that died
nor the officers that ordered them
into treacherous territory.
Slurs of politicians are fine.
But the military protects its own.

He's managed to skirt
all that's forbidden.
It's almost like a child writing home
from summer camp
except for the baseball game
interrupted by sniper fire.

It's mostly all "miss you"
and "love you" with the occasional proviso,
"and the kids."
The people in charge are fine with that.
They understand that
a soldier would rather be home
with his family
than stuck in a foxhole
trading bullets with the enemy.
Pining and dislocation...
That's where the kills come from.

Anticipation of Spring
by Howie Good

They take my shoelaces and belt away. On the wall is a clock without numbers or hands. The pendulum moves slower and slower. Professional advice is slippery. Tears are slippery. I want to slip out of this place to go to another where it never rains. Not just anyone can go. You need a reason – the flat light, the still wind, the white sky like an empty canvas. There is some kind of holiday there, too, that starts with grains of dust and ends with ox-eyed daisies.

flower music
by KC Heath

I want flower music —
Sweet as caramel chocolate
Just as rich ~

Contributors

Bennett Rachel J

Rachel J. Bennett likes getting lost. Her chapbook, *On Rand McNally's World*, will appear in 2015 through dancing girl press. Individual poems can be found in *Big Lucks*, *inter/rupture*, *Queen Mob's Teahouse*, *Salt Hill*, *Similar:Peaks::*, *Sixth Finch*, *Smartish Pace*, *Spittoon*, *Rattle*, *Verse Daily*, and *Vinal*. She lives in Brooklyn and, virtually, here: [@rachtree11](#).

Blenkush Micki L

Micki Blenkush works as a social worker and lives in St. Cloud, MN with her husband and daughter. Her writing has appeared in *Nota Bene; An Anthology of Central Minnesota Writers*, as well as in *Limehawk*, *Rose Red Review*, and *Heron Tree*. Her poems have also been included in poet-artist collaboration events hosted by Crossings in Zumbrota, MN.

Colwell Joshua

Joshua Colwell writes from western Pennsylvania. He currently works as a Submissions Editor for Apex Magazine. His work has been published in *Everyday Poets*, *The Story Shack*, *Quail Bell Magazine*, *Eunoia Review*, and *Boston Literary Magazine*, among others. You can follow him on Twitter [@colwell_joshua](#)

Evans Sally

Sally Evans has been published widely in Scottish and UK magazines and increasingly, recently, on the internet. She lives in Callander, Scotland, where she runs a bookshop with her husband, edits Poetry Scotland broadsheet, and hosts the Callander Poetry Weekend. She has written 2 book-length poems, *Millennial* and *The Bees* (2008), and is currently writing a series of sestinas and other poems about her family home in Cumbria. Two Wellingtonias, or Giant Redwoods, stand in the grounds of this house.

Gaynon Trina

Trina Gaynon's poems appear in the anthologies *Saint Peter's B-list: Contemporary Poems Inspired by the Saints*, *Obsession: Sestinas for the 21st Century*, *A Ritual to Read Together: Poems in Conversation with William Stafford*, *Phoenix Rising from the Ashes: Anthology of Sonnets of the Early Third Millennium*, *Bombshells and Knocking at the Door*, as well as numerous journals including *Natural Bridge*, *Reed* and the final issue of

Runes. Her chapbook *An Alphabet of Romance* is available from Finishing Line Press. <http://tdgaynon.webs.com/>

Good Howie

Howie Good is the author of several poetry collections, including most recently *Beautiful Decay* and *The Cruel Radiance of What Is from Another New Calligraphy* and *Fugitive Pieces* from Right Hand Pointing Press.

Gordon Melissa

Melissa Gordon is currently an MFA student at Western Connecticut State University where she is editor for *Poor Yorick*, the program's online literary journal. Her poetry has been published in *DMQ Review* and is forthcoming in *Mom Egg Review*. She works at Yale University conducting substance use research and is a contributing author on several articles in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*.

Graham James

James Graham was born in 1939 in Ayrshire, Scotland, in a rural cottage lit by oil lamps. He was a teacher for thirty years, but would rather have been a celebrated journalist and best-selling author. His work has appeared in print magazines including *The Dark Horse* and *The Linnet's Wings*; anthologies published by Edinburgh University Press and the Glasgow Centre for Contemporary Arts; and numerous websites, notably *Poets against the War*. His second collection, *Clairvoyance*, was published by Troubador Press in 2007. He is currently a site expert with the internet writers community writewords.org.uk.

Grey John

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident. Recently published in *New Plains Review*, *Rockhurst Review* and *Spindrift* with work upcoming in *South Carolina Review*, *Gargoyle*, *Sanskrit*, and *Louisiana Literature*.

Heath KC

KC works in an office with no windows, so her poetry reflects a love of Outdoors . . . and an attempt to "Live Life Like a Haiku." Oh, and she adores rabbits, too.

Blog: <http://joyinyourarms.blogspot.com/>

FaceBook: <https://www.facebook.com/kc.heath2>

Joslin Oonah V

Oonah is currently Poetry Editor at *The Linnet's Wings*. You can also find Oonah at <http://www.oovj.wordpress.com> and all the sites in the Header list there, <http://oonahs.blogspot.com/>, at her former employ at www.everydaypoets.com, and as three-times winner at <http://www.microhorror.com>. Or you could just Google Oonah V Joslin and see where it takes you

Klepetar Steve

Steve Klepetar's work has received several nominations for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net, including three in 2014. Three collections appeared in 2013: *Speaking to the Field Mice* (Sweatshoppe Publications), *Blue Season* (with Joseph Lisowski, mgv2>publishing), and *My Son Writes a Report on the Warsaw Ghetto* (Flutter Press). An e-chapbook, *Return of the Bride of Frankenstein*, came out in 2014 as part of the Barometric Pressures series of e-chapbooks by Kind of a Hurricane Press.

Kolp Laurie

Laurie Kolp, author of *Upon the Blue Couch* (Winter Goose Publishing, 2014) and *Hello, It's Your Mother* (Finishing Line Press, upcoming), serves as president of Texas Gulf Coast Writers and belongs to the Poetry Society of Texas. Laurie's poems have appeared in more than four dozen publications including the *2015 Poet's Market*, *The Crafty Poet*, *Scissors & Spackle*, *Blue Fifth Review*, *Pirene's Fountain*. An avid runner and lover of nature, Laurie lives in Southeast Texas with her husband, three children and two dogs.

Konkoski Beth

Beth Konkoski writes and teaches high school in Northern Virginia. Her poems have appeared in numerous literary journals including: *The Potomac Review*, *Gargoyle* and *blueline*. She was nominated for a Best of the Net Award in 2014 for a poem appearing in *vox poetica*. Her chapbook, *Noticing the Splash*, was published by Bone World Press in 2010.

Lawry Mercedes

Mercedes Lawry has published poetry in such journals as *Poetry*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Harpur Palate*, *Nimrod*, *Poetry East*, and others. She's also published fiction, humor and essays, as well as stories and poems for children. Among the honors she's received are awards from the Seattle Arts Commission, Hugo House, and Artist Trust. She's been a Jack Straw Writer, a Pushcart Prize nominee three times, and held a residency at

Hedgebrook. Her chapbook, *“There are Crows in My Blood”*, was published in 2007 and another chapbook, *“Happy Darkness,”* was released in 2011. She lives in Seattle.

Marchant Sarah L

Sarah Marchant is a blogger, poet, and literary enthusiast living in St. Louis. Find her on Twitter at @apoetrybomb.

McCarthy Tim

Tim McCarthy is an adjunct Instructor of Philosophy and Humanities at Lakeland Community College in Mentor, Ohio, and of English at Cuyahoga Community College in Parma, Ohio. He is Editor in Chief for the *Kent Zendo Review* (www.fbttc.org) and head of the Kent Zendo, a Soto Zen Buddhist community. Tim is a graduate of the MFA program at Kent State University, and his poetry has appeared in several literary arts journals including *The Maryland Poetry Review*, *Chattahoochee Review*, *Pudding Magazine*, *New Mexico Humanities Review*, *The Gamut*, as well as *Whiskey Island*.

Michael Ann E

Ann E. Michael—poet, educator, essayist, librettist and avid gardener— resides in eastern PA, where she is writing coordinator at DeSales University. She’s the author of the collection *Water-Rites* and blogs at www.annemichael.wordpress.com.

Miller Terry Jude

Terry Jude Miller is a poet from Houston, Texas. The recipient of many Poetry Society of Texas poetry awards, a Juried Poet for the 2011 & 2012 Houston Poetry Festivals and winner of the Global Peace Poem competition of the 2012 Tyler Peace Festival, his work has been published in scores of publications. Miller's books of poetry, are titled: *"The Day I Killed Superman"*, *"What If I Find Only Moonlight?"*, and *"The Butterfly Canonical"* and can be purchased at barnesandnoble.com and amazon.com. Terry is a retired professor of eMarketing and held an Innovation Fellowship at Kaplan University.

Muranaka Daryl

Daniel 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 heritage. His first book, *Hanami*, was published by Aldrich Press.

Norwood Bret

Bret Norwood lives in Sheridan, Wyoming. His stories and poetry have been published in the *Open Window Review*, *Owen Wister Review*, *Soundzine*, and other journals, and his poetry was recognized in the 2013 WyoPoets National and Members-Only contests. He is a staff blogger for the Sheridan Programmers Guild. Follow his work at bretnorwood.com.

Perkins II Richard King

Richard King Perkins II is a state-sponsored advocate for residents in long-term care facilities. He lives in Crystal Lake, IL, with his wife Vickie and daughter Sage. He is a three-time Pushcart nominee and a Best of the Net nominee whose work has appeared in hundreds of publications including *The Louisiana Review*, *Bluestem*, *Emrys Journal*, *Sierra Nevada Review*, *Roanoke Review*, *The Red Cedar Review* and *The William and Mary Review*. He has poems forthcoming in *Sobotka Literary Magazine*, *The Alembic* and *Milkfist*. His poem “*Distillery of the Sun*” was runner-up in the 2014 Bacopa Literary Review poetry contest.

Pobo Kenneth

Kenneth Pobo has a new book forthcoming from Blue Light Press called *Bend Of Quiet*. His work has appeared in: *Indiana Review*, *Mudfish*, *Nimrod*, *Hawaii Review*, and elsewhere.

Poyner Ken G

Ken Poyner has lately been seen in “*Analog*”, “*Café Irreal*”, “*Cream City Review*”, “*The Journal of Microliterature*”, “*Blue Collar Review*”, and many wonderful places. His latest book of short fiction, “*Constant Animals*”, is available from his web, www.kpoyner.com, and from www.amazon.com. He is married to Karen Poyner, one of the world’s premier power lifters, and holder of more than a dozen current world powerlifting records. They are the parents of four rescue cats, and an energetic fish.

Roth Sy

Sy Roth often ponders the imponderable and, in odd moments, finds the time and the wherewithal to capture the errant cogitations and give them words (or perhaps vents that steam to the surface) and others smell them and exhale gleefully lost in thought. Many publications have seen fit to publish his work.

Santer Rikki

Rikki Santer is an award-winning poet whose work has appeared in numerous publications including *Ms. Magazine*, *Poetry East*, *Margie*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Grimm* and *The Main Street Rag*. Two of her published poetry collections have explored place: *Front Nine* (the Hopewell earthworks of Newark, Ohio) and *Kahiki Redux* (the late Kahiki Supper Club of Columbus, Ohio). *Clothesline Logic* was published by Pudding House as finalist in their national chapbook competition, and her latest collection, *Fishing for Rabbits*, was published by Kattywompus Press. She lives in Columbus, Ohio, where she teaches literature, writing and film studies at a public high school.

Sinex CD

CD Sinex lived in rural Hokkaido (Japan's northernmost island) for 20 years. His poems have appeared in *Every Day Poets*, *The Boston Literary Magazine*, *The Icebox* (Kyoto, Japan), *Contemporary Haibun On-Line*, and *Four and Twenty*, among others. He currently lives in the Pacific Northwest.

Williams Brittany R

Brittany Renee Williams breathes fiction and writing keeps her sane. So much so that she graduated from Texas A&M University with her Bachelor of Arts in English Literature. After college, she survived being a paralegal and wrote more legal documents than any sane person should. Now she stays at home with four beautiful children and of course, writes. She has been published in the *Campbell County Observer*, *Sprout Online Magazine*, and the Wyoming Writer's Newsletter. She placed third in Wyoming Writer's Contest for Flash Fiction.

Zapata Angel

Although Angel Zapata currently lives in Georgia, he was raised on the streets of New York City and uses the grit still clinging to his shoes to chalk up fiction and poetry. He is the recipient of the 2012 Mariner Award for Bewildering Stories' most outstanding flash fiction work of the year, "*Carrion Folk*," and a winner of MicroHorror's 2013 CJ Henderson Memorial Award for his horrific tale, "*Eye Appeal*." He's authored the poetry chapbooks, "*An Offering of Ink and Feathers*," and "*Prayers from Crooked Spines*."



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