

Gyroscope Review

Fine poetry to turn your world around



The Third Anniversary Issue

*Issue 18-2
Spring 2018*



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Constance Brewer & Kathleen Cassen Mickelson

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

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FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to our Third Anniversary Special Issue. We have a lot to be happy about on this anniversary, including the addition earlier this year of our new Assistant Editor/Social Media Manager Joshua A. Colwell. Josh is a writer and editor who is also a submissions editor over at Apex Magazine, and we had the pleasure of working with him at the former online journal Every Day Poets. We appreciate his skills and point of view here, and hope this is destined to be a long-term relationship. You can find out more about Josh on our website.

In February, we appeared in an interview on Trish Hopkinson's poetry blog (find the interview at <https://trishhopkinson.com/2018/02/16/no-fee-submission-call-editor-interview-gyroscope-review-deadline-mar-15-2018/>). If you aren't familiar with her site, Trish's blog offers all sorts of useful information for poets who need homes for their work. After our appearance on Trish's blog, we received a flood of submissions. At about the same time, we changed our submissions form so we could find out where poets heard about *Gyroscope Review* and why they chose to submit work to us. Those who read our interview with Trish sent us work because we try to be open to multiple genres, are eclectic in our tastes, and include writers who have not earned an MFA. Those who have submitted before and returned to us during this reading period told us they admired our aesthetics, our thoughtfulness, and our admiration for work that deals with daily living with an awareness of language. People came to us after hearing of us from other poets and friends. We were stunned by the amount of kindness in these responses. As we celebrate our anniversary, hearing such positive feedback from poets has made it all that much sweeter.

Our flood of submissions made competition for space in this issue fierce. Once again, poems came in from all over the world. This time, we were able to accept some work that offers cultural points of view we don't often see here at *Gyroscope Review*. Specifically, we are excited to offer work from India, Nigeria, Israel. We also have work that is directly related to #MeToo, racism, violence, education. We have made it known that we like edgy, timely work and poets stepped up. At the same time, we had a themed submissions category open for this issue. The theme of "three" proved to be challenging; we received far more general submissions than themed. That's okay with us, though. Poets are driven to write by so many issues, events, and emotions that we are not surprised when a theme resonates with only a few. Nevertheless, we had enough to create a special section of poems connected to the theme of three. These poems vary wildly in their approach to the idea, which makes for a cross-section of work that showcases the incredible range of work we receive. Included in this themed section is one of two collaborative pieces we accepted which offer readers excellent and timely examples of how to mingle poetic voices into one cohesive, powerful work. Right this minute, we love that number three.

After three years, we are as committed as ever to sharing readable, relevant contemporary poetry. We are also committed to promoting the poets published here whenever possible. That is why this year, in honor of National Poetry Month, we are publishing an interview with a poet who has

published work in our pages every single day during the month of April. For the last two years, we offered what we called our Book Links Party posts during the month of April to showcase books by poets we've published. This year, we wanted to step up our game. So, back in January, we sent a mass email to poets who have published with us within the past year asking for participants in our National Poetry Month interviews. We said we would take the first 30 to respond. Within one day, we had our 30 poets. That told us poets are eager to tell the public about their recent publications and to talk about what drives their work. We are pleased with the response and consider this a wonderful supplement to the quarterly publication of our journal.

Happy third anniversary to us. We offer you the largest single issue we've produced so far. And happy reading to you.

*Constance Brewer
Kathleen Cassen Mickelson
Editors
April 2018*

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POEMS

SECTION 1

DREAM OF SEVEN EX-LOVERS IN A FUNICULAR
BY OONAGH C. DOHERTY

In airy suspense below a chirring wire,
we tipped the rocking lemon-colored car,
flicked puzzled eyes towards the cragged spires,

then down to moss and white ledge-sprouted briar
where ground, like summit, swayed disarmingly far,
in airy suspense below a chirring wire.

Most had been true, just one an unrepentant liar,
of the bewildered lovers gathered there so far
below the mountain's ring of craggy spires.

We recognized one another, glanced memory of desire,
while the vehicle swung past poles with grinding jar,
in airy suspense below a chirring wire.

One I kissed in a laundromat, clothes grappling in the drier,
one I loved on a summer roof, fingers gouging softened tar,
night skyscrapers above - constellations of oblong spire.

Each was the first, and each the last, the pulse, entire,
tempered wavering metal, twisted tuning peg, ringing the car
where we flicked puzzled eyes up to the cragged spires
spun in suspense below a chirring wire.

ODE TO CURSIVE—
BY ANN HOWELLS

like hand-blown glass

Grandmother's primer:
ink gone sepia, pages of *l*
uniform as telephone poles,
e in elongated coils. I admire
precise twelve degree tilt,
like spectators
straining toward action,
deep breath indrawn,
held, exhaled.
Each perfect *O*, an oval mouth
open in surprise,
each *G* a sailing ship,
M and *N*, snow capped peaks,
E a recalcitrant three
swirling feather boas.
Calligraphy, ancient art,
unintelligible as Cyrillic,
hieroglyphs, cuneiform.
Even my crabbed jotting,
unlovely, untranslatable,
is obsolete. Ballpoints
have gone the way of quills.
Mundane Times New Roman
spit by laser is ubiquitous:
interminable rows of sameness
like books left on a shelf,
bricks in a wall.

MY MOTHER SAID

BY GINA FORBERG

Marry for love, but money doesn't hurt,
but I chose the red, white and blue sailor

bathing suit over the lacy ballet tutu one.
She left the black patent leather Mary Janes

at the foot of my bed, but I grabbed the red
canvas Keds from the closet, tied them

in double knots. She didn't know girls
could love girls. She didn't know a lot

about a lot of things like those days
after school when my best friend and I

transformed into Ken and Barbie, rubbing
up against each other fully clothed or when

I leaned into the captain of the cheerleader's
locker, its insides taped with Jim Morrissey

posters and I wanted to be him, for her
to put her lips on mine the way she might

his if given the chance. My mother craved
"all girl," not a tomboy. I wanted to wear

baseball caps backwards and ripped jeans.
In the end it wasn't the money she worried about.

It was my obsession with boys, boys' clothes, boys'
toys, boy's sports, the boy I might soon become.

WILD THINGS

BY YONI HAMMER-KOSSOY

A sigh of thunder
sets the neighbor's dog howling.

Then quiet, until a gust
spatters rain with sudden fury.

Lightning shakes open the sky.
And the bedroom door

groans in the darkness.
My head is a worn deck of cards.

Soon you'll rush out
wearing your wolf suit,

backpack refilled with clean laundry
and not a hint on your face

of the day you fell into this world.
I'll fold an omelet into a pita

and hope it stays warm
until you eat it later on the bus.

HEMLOCK

BY CHRISTOPHER T. KEAVENEY

I

I found country comfort
in the old Volvo,
windows rolled down
in another small act of defiance,
static for company,
the albatross plush won at the church bazaar
to pimp the rearview,
and the fraying *memento mori*
of the rope coiled beside me
on the passenger seat,
brazen reminders
of the complicity of alone time
like the dashboard buttons
that lent themselves to your pushiness
on trips along winding roads
to and from town.

II

Such incidents are much less common
these days than you'd think,
first you forgave me for the flamenco
on the very night we watched the meteor shower
in its entirety
from the relative safety
of the little league diamond,
then you turned on me
as if kinks to iron out
meant as little as chain link
or that my father's indifference to you
could be resolved by looking
beyond the swaying furs on Opossum Hill.
You threw my well-worn copy of *Finnegan's Wake*
out into the muck
and condemned my entire record collection
for skipping
in all the wrong places
as if on cue,
as if I had willed it,

and I virtually had to beg you
not to hate the Carpenters,
who were after all
my first real teachers
and the sole witnesses
to the events of that night.

III

In our final hours together
sitting beside the lake
you saw me for what I was,
the only one who didn't cop a key to the city,
a man made complete
only by his pettiness,
which amounted to an obsession
with the smallest detail,
to wit
your graduation photo crumpled in my fist
when they found me
sitting cross-legged on the hood
with the engine idling,
the prospect of time served
for having reinvented the wheel,
and the salmon
of the sky at dawn
the one thing from that day
that they couldn't wrest from me.

IV

the numbness begins as a bludgeon
on the sides of the tongue,
a tingling in the fingers
as the poison kicks in,
an itch behind the fingernails
that dig into the chair's
tattered arms.
There are records of confusion
when the condemned reach this point,
rambling confessions
and the inevitable glassy eyed stare
almost a silver screen affectation,
and always the itch
and the consolation of befuddlement.

How badly I want this nosebleed
to mean something
more than the poke of crocus
through the early spring snow,
the snowman
having finally mastered
the art of running in place.

METAMORPHOSIS

BY LAILA AMADO

I saw the wings of seraphim
abandoned at the water's edge.

I knelt ashore and leaned my face
into the wave's blue lens.

Beneath thin film, in murky depths
lithe bodies writhed and played.

Swift swirling tails, glowing fins
and sharp
 as razor
 teeth.

THE SEA OF FORGETTING
BY STEVE KLEPETAR

*oh web of answer
sea of forgetting is it true
that you remember*

W. S. Merwin

Here beneath a white
paste of sun, the sea

of forgetting stretches
beyond sand and rocks,

terrible and vast.
Under the glow of this sky

we have come to love,
boats sail to the edge

of sight. Eventually,
everything disappears,

including sharks and shells
and raucous gulls.

We wander
through webs of light,

our hands touched
by shadow and breath.

It is enough
that we are here.

I touch your face
and recognize your name.

We have left our questions
on the beach. How easy

it is to watch them float
away in the grip of waves.

FIRST APPOINTMENT (CIRCA 1958)

BY SUSAN L. LEARY

You would be my age. Mid-thirties. Married almost ten years. Bodies tremulous in your separate chairs.

The room is made of mahogany. The man you've sought a kind of god, ashing a cigarette into the desk.

Books are everywhere, opened like prayers. Which, you wonder, contains the parable of your husband?

The day you wed, you didn't know what it would be like: being with a man. But for a brief moment, the psychiatrist

is a priest, begging of you promises. He is proud to teach you how to tell yourself what happened. How to look

at your husband with a gentle fondness. By the third cigarette, you have learned words like neurotic. Though

how wretched must I be to assume a great distance between you? To question if there were love before, even while,

the man you agree to a life with disappears within himself from the Reserpine? Prefers to you his mother. How I

ache for you to have returned home, pressed your sodden body to his. Balled your fists into his chest and screamed

you loved him. Perhaps you did. The spring rain unrelenting: my mother born January of the next year.

ESPERANZA SPALDING AT THE JAZZ FESTIVAL
BY CAROL TYX

She plays the bass with her whole body
as if she were an instrument herself
attune to the slightest vibration,
long liquid strands shimmering from within
like silk thread spun to sound.

Now her whole body listens
as the bass player beside her—
a band with two double basses—
surfs the sound waves, her head bobbing
as the waves rise and fall
and then she's back in the water
and we slide over the barrel
the breaking motion of a perfect wave.

There is no encore:
she has given all she has to give.
We fold up our chairs, swim to our cars
still feeling the rush of water pouring over us.

PLOTS 'N QUOTES

BY SHERRY RIND

The king died
and then the queen died of grief.
The prince and princess died in a train accident—
no, the prince and princess fell from the tower,
or were they pushed
by the king's brother?

The king's brother's wife,
the new queen, secured the succession
through a tryst with a lowly courtier.
A lowly courtier did not wake one morning.
His wife crossed the border that night,
with one bag and her husband's diary
which fell into the hands of a publisher.

The king and queen and their new lords and ladies
declared the diary a calumny
written by the mad bastard son of the late king.
They showed the public a babbler from Bedlam.

A few quiet burials in the forest, a few payments.
With a good rainfall bringing abundant wheat and hay,
the king claimed a direct line to the gods
on gold lettered proclamations, all over
the country, a circus of shouting.

A BLACK STAR

BY NICHOLAS MCGAUGHEY

A black star
in the cosmos is
undoing.

The greens and blues
it bred and breathed,
its cycles quartzed in rock,
is now a round cinder,
a keyhole in the sky,
dead as any Moon.

War didn't make it sleep,
or the carnage of religions,
or strangers from the fictions
of our eyes.

No.
It was you and
me. Just letting things
be - as the seasons
fell, and the oceans
swamped over street and forest.

Forgive us;
we couldn't pray
to gods we had decreed as
dead.

POEM WITH A LINE FROM *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY*
BY PAT M. KURAS

You can hear
peepers by the pond.
The Big Dipper poured
into the sky, the sky.
My, God, it's full of stars.
Stars and peepers
and far removed
an occasional car
gunning down the road,
a solitary engine
fading into
the thick night with
a canopy of stars
and peepers calling
to the purple sky.

ODE TO THE GARDEN MOTH
BY TAYLOR RIVERS

it died in the bottle
 previously filled with sand
 and dreams;

its feeble little mind
 only knew nourishment
 and warmness

so it craved disheveled
 electrons in the long
 lost night

and the sap off freshly
 coated primroses at dusk
 or at day –

was it not aware human
 hands had touched these all
 before?

it must've confused that
 silica and sleep catcher
 for the world.

OLD FAITHFUL

BY APARNA UPADHYAYA SANYAL

I turn away, heifer- shy, from your keening moistness.
Your black purpled prune skin has been indentured to mine
for my lifetime, and half of yours.

You try to get my eyes, my smile, while I burrow deeper
into my bundle of contradictions, my mixed bag of shame and apathy,
to avoid your engagement.

If we don't talk, I can pretend you aren't there.
And the food appears at my laden table, as if by magic,
through thin air.

Never a slave, oh no! You are in turns, an old faithful, a confidante,
a toughened bottom on which, gran-daddy's kicks
made the lightest smacking sound.

You hold the keys
to the home of my ancestors,
but never to our hearts.

We are lard- fortified by our names, and that most random of pickings,
that gave me the bowl of cream,
and you, the bowl to clean.

I may fervently apologise in my inner heart,
for a thousand infractions daily, but still, each morning,
I will leave this house, head held tower- high.

Still gaze- averting, beautifully enacting the lie,
the desperate denial, that is,
our mutual life.

TELL PAPA

BY OGWIJI EHI-KOWOCHIO BLESSING

Ujunwa, have they told papa that,
I am a story wrapped in a parcel,
Held in place by a colourful ribbon of tears?

Did papa believe them when they told him
That I am the ashes of burnt dreams,
Waiting to be whisked away by wandering winds,
From the fireplace of broken ambitions?

I know. Uju, I know that I am the shadow
Of a lost wonder, tiptoeing through
The thick forests of fears,
Without a map to guide me home.
But I hope this secret has not leaked from
The lips of the gossiping evening wind-
That sits by the window of papa's thoughts,
Idling until the break of an unbroken day.

Uju, regardless of what they've told papa,
Tell him that I am the wandering smile
He seeks in the wilderness of frowns;
Tell papa that I am that 'female son' who
Will put an end to the repulsive mockery
Which trails men who have but daughters!

Author's Note: Ujunwa, Uju for short is my fictitious sister. In reality, I am a daughter to a man who has five other daughters.

REFRIGERATOR BOJANGLES

BY RICARDO ZEGRI

She looked like Sammy Davis Jr.
at first blush, our daughter.
A thin slice of human,

on a microscope slide.
Printed black and white
with low-res grain.

Her umbilical cane,
shuffling off to embryo
in a still life soft shoe.

Stuck up, eye level, on the fridge
by an Elvis magnet,
hips ajar in jumpsuit white.

Her puppy eyes,
clamped down tight
without vitreous,

just two salty tears.
Kept safe under paper lanterns
from the scar tissue

sight will bring.

TEACHERS

BY DEONTE OSAYANDE

I.

days spent
with captive
lizards, when
they went away

you know you shouldn't
have given black kids
something to love

all for you to take it
away. this was our
first lesson, but
I had already known,

been taught by
my father

(which many
of my classmates
didn't have the privilege
of having). I knew

how that which we love
leaves us, to be

tested on
or killed
in someone's laboratory

as if they didn't own
their own flesh
and bones, and many

years later, sitting
on that college
campus I wondered
what rooms our pet
iguana spent his

final moments in
and which ones
were innocent

II.

Sorry. With
one comment

undoing
entire
lesson.

All because.
Sleeping.

the others in class
didn't know or care
about hearing
while still hibernating.

Words.
Weight.
Heavy.
Cost.

But I can not tell you
thanks today because of it.

III.

first time
falling
asleep,
buckling
to nightmares

in your classroom,
the lesson,
compassion

for your fellow
human, when
seeing you
many years
later, shocked
to learn that I
am a teacher

I am surprised,
since you planted
the seeds all along

IV.

mathematics.
two feuding
students, shove
them in a car

with a gun
pointed
their way
blanketed
by your cries

for help.
recipe

for squashed beef.

when returning
to the track, not
best of friends
but the equation
checked out when
showing our work

V.

small.
delicate

in my hands,
the gentle touch
of this frail
scared rodent.

while the others
focused on fear,
you took it. told
me to attempt

to draw it
or paint it,
knowing

art was not
one of my talents.
yet here I am,
an artist, and you
could see that
all along

from the way
catching it
came to me
and I didn't
even squeeze

VI.

secretary,
although

never secured
funds for
finding
ways to do
what we

wanted. still
this job,
you advised me

to take, my duty to serve
the entire student body.

learned about
accountability,
and negotiations,
and democracy,
and how most
won't appreciate

powers they wield
until it's too late
to fight back for
them. and I think

your most
important
lesson was
on revolution,
how it rarely
comes peacefully.

VII.

targets

on my back,
shots fired.

Intelligent ones,
always first
to go. Especially
if they're black. you

taught me that.
wondering,

why you were gone
the next year,
thinking, you might
have worn the same
targets accidentally

branded on me
the day you said
I had a future

VIII.

turning on the lights,
paying on your car
or rent where you live,

choices you have
to make. when

going into the classroom,
smiles. laughs. when
leaving sorrow drowns you,
poverty strangles your neck,

suffocates you, as you go
through all of it over
again, you wonder

if this is what it was like
for all of your old teachers

IX.

teaching

college classes,
one of the topics

good and bad
role models.
student names
someone. turning

to write it on the board
and another student asks
what they did. replies,

drugs.

to which it's stated
they do drugs now,
you gonna judge me?

this is my life now,
talking about drug use
with my students,

hilarity ensues,
because who said
you can't have laughter
in the classroom. They

turn to me to ask
questions
and with a smile
on my face, I answer

PAINTED BLUE FLOWER

BY JACK GRANATH

It was strange,
the rain storm
and the rain coming straight down
despite the variously rushing wind,
an awning for percussion and a weird, low whistle
and the urgent pinging of a pelted trash can lid.
Maybe the winds were crashing head on—
over and over again into each other,
straw-headed forces locked in a pompous act of negation,
like two humans on a raft or in a room,
wherever, but together
too long,
maybe.
I sat there
on the porch
drinking green tea from a small porcelain cup
with a delicate blue flower painted on it,
while just a few feet from me
the world went dark and roaring.

I guess it wasn't the end or anything,
but for a nice moment
I thought so.

POEM THAT MENTIONS ONLY ONE AMPUTATION

BY LYNDI BELL O'LAUGHLIN

-My Work is Loving the World, from Mary Oliver's "Messenger"

My Missoura great-grandfather loved the world,
even though his left arm was shot clean-off
in a midnight bar fight, right after eating
two plates of catfish and hushpuppies,

but before loading his best friend's wife, Shirley,
onto a rickety Louisiana pontoon boat,
where he planned to work off
half a pint of Crab Orchard Whiskey

between Shirley's outspoken Cajun thighs.
The whole thing was an
unfortunate miscalculation
of timing and location,

and my mother didn't speak of it often
except to say she could still hear
that old bastard's laugh at night,
when the wind scratched dogwood limbs

on her bedroom screen,
and she'd be back there again,
a little girl standing in a line five kids deep,
a one-armed man ordering his grandchildren

to smell the end of his stump.
Sniff it you little son-of-a-bitch, he'd say,
while holding each of their clamp-eyed faces
up by the back collar of their shirt,

until the kid just had to exhale.
The next inhale Gramps called a sniff,
and he'd let go a wicked laugh after
poppin' 'em in the face with that stump.

They would always remember
how sometimes it was dotted
with pewter gray gumbo from the mule shed,
and once in a while pieces of straw

would be sticking out of the folds at the tip,
where the skin had been pulled
over raw bone years before,
reconfigured with 12-gauge birdshot.

Mom's work was to love the world too,
even in that haunted house in California
where Lucifer came through on her Ouija Board
and told her to barricade us all in the house,

kids, dogs, and next door neighbor
Katie Hernandez, locked down
until further notice.
No one in, no one out.

It was poor Katie's chronic misfortune
that had stuck her at our kitchen table
in the first place, transcribing messages, and she said
Jesus Mary and Joseph— get me another beer,

and it was Katie who after three days
called her son Christopher. She said
Bring tortillas and peanut butter, leave 'em on the porch,
and it was Katie's work to love the world.

Alabama Grandma Ellefair loved the world for sure,
especially when the Gulf of Mexico blew the rains in,
and Midland City creeks swelled to bloated arteries—
singing threats and soaking cemeteries.

And that's why Uncle Herb's six foot cross
still points straight across the road to the tin roof
on Burley's Fried Chicken and Bait Shack,
and why the hogs always wanted to crawl under

the little house on termite laden stilts, and Grandma loved
getting under there with them in the middle of the night,
on her way to the outhouse in wet ankle-deep red clay,
swinging her broom and callin' *Sooie sooie sooie, get on out!*

My people.
Not poets of birds or snowflakes, or the tender sigh,
but of Lucky Strikes and five-card stud—
of kids seen but not heard,

macaroni and cheese, grits and black-eyed peas,
ass kickin's, hang-overs, and Hank Williams—
Chevy Bel Airs, and stiff-sprayed hair on women
who called themselves “tough broads,”

black and white polaroids of farmers, and sailors
posing with buddies in skinny Korean doorways,
their round white caps cocked slightly to one side—
loving the holy shit out of the world.

PENNY TOADS

BY SUSAN JOHNSON

A three year old waves at the leaves out his window.
Who doesn't live in their own world, disappearing
into bark, into a clearing once orchard, once barn,
hay hoisted and hoofs printing snow. Back when

days were penny toads and you were a raft dodging
deadfalls, driving down a river toward nothing,
a nothing you can't help but explore. Hawks perch
on a branch peeled back to xylem. It's what your

bones look like though you haven't seen them,
a curtain pulled, nictitating membrane. How you
have to walk away from a mountain to see the mountain.
The air full of ravens blossoming above downed

limbs, deer limbs, another's life hollowed out.
When I was a kid I was a hummingbird hovering,
a vulture scavenging whiskey soaked cherries from
the bottom of a glass. Climbing up into the world

of redwoods which grows another world of lichen
which grows another of moss and worms, you only
climb deeper into yourself. Am I there yet? Or am I
still a spider just weaving another version of myself?

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
BY DAVID SOUTHWARD

A lipogram after Mark Zimmerman

As Will, I am small: a simple lease maker,
ill speller, arse slapper, serial liar;

while as Hal, Lear, Emilia, I am ample, wise—
imperial as a sapphire.

A peeress' warm whispers? Praise? A male heir?
Please! We mammals shall wail similar wishes

while eras pass, harmless. Same hammer, same mark.
Malaise wears a sham smile, like a rapier

whereas I seek real war. I skewer similes
as a shark samples his kill. I milk phrases, relish

whimsies, release Hell's seraphim like Raphael
as he smears his easel. A mask-realm's Ariel,

I raise paper messiahs, shape karma's laws.
Where else shall we see, hear, smell

a merrier empire? Ma'am, Sir, I swear: we are all
sleepwalkers, mere hemispheres, semi-aware.

SPRING

BY LISA WENCE CONNORS

After "Spring" by Edna St. Vincent Millay

A spring wave flows down the valley, welcoming
hummingbirds and mated pairs of mallard ducks.
Lambs frisk in softly greening fields.
Fragrant blossoms flutter tentatively fearing frost.
Wild asparagus.
Rising river waters, slushy remains
of winter's mountain party, pushing
down freshly burned clear canals, spreading
succulent subterfuge deep into the high desert.
A century of terraforming hides the arid truth.
Barren rock, a brown hell.
The Grand Valley scam artist perpetrates
its annual fraud -
life in itself
is a lie,
disseminated through the mumbling ditches.
And we fall for it, grinning like idiots.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE PRAIRIE BOAT

BY RICH IVES

1.

It's not because he watches
that his young girl
of silken deceit
could be an offering

the dragonfly mating
has wings and a wardrobe
his approach
green and unfinished

when she's gone he won't ask
it's not death that kills you but
he wants to turn that off
absent the absence

will something be missing
the fear of it
the turned-off sounds of it
still retrieving the odor of paradise

it's only necessary to squat in the field to encourage a departure

a white silhouette beyond
boxcars of broken consonants
whispering glassblowers
taking flight

the sinking saltlight
shipped to the camps for
a marble herd of peacocks
from the seaside garden

consider the bear-bellied maw
enclosed and anchored wooden
to stitch it back together
you cannot correct the grass

of the captain's
ideas about how
a crew holds tight-fisted approval
it's right whatever shape

nighthawks flare and stitch together

the insect holes piercing the fading
light until darkness closes over

2.

What she's saying now
hangs from antelope antlers
and the salty heel of some giant
the odor of ox fur and

it belongs to a lantern
for farm gods
it belongs to
a sluggard's flute song

hanging low over the foggy river

the cabin floats on
an ocean salty with time
descends softly and it begins raining
bright with its stain in the morning light

the prairie's memory
the voice of his shoulders
the arrows of lips bewildered and
like a bird

quietly battering itself against the window

washing her face
it's colder now outside a smoky cabin
with the yellow grass humming
the blue fence-gate simply wrong

in the horse trough by moonlight
full of salted buffalo
cricketsong and the tickle of stars
in the weed-choked russet yard

as for him he'll take a little green-eyed liquor

a great impossible attraction
he'll take snowlight swallowing his eyes
he'll take endless nights of clear cold
some little engine of the air

the most heroic grief of all
and the farm dogs swarming
emptiness until summer
harnessed to a hummingbird

3.

Goodbye Captain	goodbye to the starlings	sweetly adopted tabernacle
to asthma and	jaundice and English boys	with foul temper
goodbye to duckboots	and goggle-eyed princelings	slumming down
on the fishboats	to loosen the motherstring	that never breaks
goodbye to faces	stretched across	the sun's wide lap and
dropped back slack	and dry over	all that supple water's
goodbye to	fishscales under	underthings and
underthings under the	window to dry like	flags in the cold sea air
goodbye to time	passing sunshine far	away and spread out
everywhere else	along the cowardly horizon	while booty rainbows
edge the soggy men	with melancholy	and empty promises
a few more times	the sensual onslaught	it carries you into wonder
it hires you on	buys your excess	with excess and then
day after day of	the same wondrous awe	tying you to the mast
bills in your pockets	and wives and children	waiting with smiles
that tear your heart	out with a piercing	a gaff hook's grab

4.

Still the need
 wants to go out
 waits for them
 like a hungry dog

don't they know about squirrels
 don't they understand the loneliness
 of trees and fire hydrants and
 the mean rubber legs of automobiles

and yes they think love is like this
 and remember returning happier
 with what they left out there
 content at the shoed foot of

what brought them back

5.

but it's not true
or should it be said that
they're no longer there

time never leaves us
when it does
that's only one part of it

and the other part is
time has one direction only
directly at you

you can't change
and it's aimed
and it keeps on

arriving until there's no you to arrive at

and it's not true
something difficult happens

time slows down when
it's only anticipation

that makes you notice more
like it ought to take longer

and more seems
to think about memory

still departing the little time that's left

6.

Consider moonlight
too small to interrupt
and falling across the unknown
you need to arrive at yourself

on the snowy field the tracks
the silence rising
which is all
but don't stay here

it's someone else watching

someone you've become
further inside
it hurts your eyes seeing
your eyes that have been

able to understand
what made the tracks
how much you know
closed and closed again

which is who you were instead of who you are

7.

The bookish canvas
unfurled
the crude bravado of
just enough

mouth of her wings
reciting air and evading
boys who know
to reach past their voices

it wasn't right the way
he was sleeping
and before that he was
the truth in the

he said I still need you before
in the garden
just sleeping but it's
sometimes

they couldn't tell if it was their shadow but it fit so they stepped inside

they wore it like a sleeve
they were able to enter the
formerly lived in
sleeping and they were not there

but they were all arms reaching
darkness that had
only there around them
as they expected

first there were two and then
all the other heroes
nearly too late and all over
they liked the way it seemed

a portrait of two
ascending the cobalt evening
the released news flew
to be the same two

but then it wasn't and the boat sailed on

THIS IS THE LAST TIME
BY KILEY CREEKMORE

that I give that gypsy in the glass box my quarters.
She sputtered out this disheartening fortune today:

*Sometimes the object of the journey is not the end, but the journey itself.
Life will be happy, until the end when you'll pee yourself a lot.
The end is near...and it is all your fault.*

I breathe heavily, hands in pockets, fingers feeling for more quarters.
This addiction to fortune has caused dirty laundry to pile up
in the corners of my house – laundromats take a lot of quarters.
Just one more time.

Fortune not found: Abort, retry, ignore?
I kick the machine and hurt my big toe.

You will die alone and poorly dressed.

A PHYSICAL MANIFESTATION OF MY INTELLIGENCE (OR LACK THEREOF)
BY ALEX ANDREW HUGHES

“Don’t you know that toe length is related to intelligence?”—I didn’t, and back home discovered the evidence of my ignorance—

unchecked, the brutish big toe stuck its nose beyond the refined contours of the second— and chagrined, I resolved to change this.

I first learned to speak of all those ideal Greeks with their *piéd grec*, which I thought sounded smart, but after weeks of use I found no change in the relation

between my toes. I read *Harry Potter* to no magical effect, so I stepped manfully through all sixteen novels by Dickens (even *Martin Chuzzlewit*) and hiked

the full 1500 miles of *War & Peace*. Growing desperate, I went gung-ho *À la recherche du temps perdu*, tread *Ulysses* carefully, and converted to a lover

of verse—though at the conclusion of each felt myself stupid in comparison, and anyone looking at me could but see its truth without

using a ruler to judge the distance. Of course I have long-since learned there is no relation between one’s feet and intelligence, and that

no amount of work will grow one’s second toe, but still sometimes late at night I’ll trace the outline of fate and shudder at life’s impossibilities.

POTTED PLANTS
BY DAVE MALONE

The Abbey priest,
he keeps a set
of potted plants,
a golden pothos,
a wandering Jew,
against the screen
that bows at his
room's window ledge.

In winter days,
he's told to quit
this earthly joy
but sells his soap
to foot the bill
for nutrients.

The flora he
admires and tends,
they climb his wall—
and cleave to light
not felt by most.

ZOEY AT THE THRESHOLD
BY CAROL TYX

We are waiting for you
to cross the threshold
and become yourself.

It is hard to enter
the human world
so much loose light and air

no wonder you hang on the edge
while we try everything we know
to draw you toward us

chanting prayers
and promises
we can never completely keep.

WHY HE DIDN'T

BY ALEXIS RHONE FANCHER

At the beach in late August, deep in the leather bucket seats of his 289 Mustang, we didn't, although he kissed me with tongue and open mouth. We didn't, although his finger traced my nipples to pinpoints on the outside of my blouse, and his hot breath seared my neck. His hands stayed reluctantly above my waist. I wanted to pull him into me, a vortex, his tongue so deep in my throat it disappeared. On the beach in Malibu, he didn't, although he tongued the hollow of my throat, followed it down to my aching-to-be-fondled breasts, and stopped cold. On the hood of his car, he didn't, when he bent me back against the still-warm metal, and covered my body with his. We didn't, but I rubbed the hard swell of his penis through the prophylactic of his jeans, ground myself into him like I knew what I was doing, and I wanted him to do it, too. Before he left for college in San Diego, he didn't, he left me behind in L.A.. I was sixteen, eager as fuck. He'd just turned eighteen. And when his father warned him, "Eighteen into sixteen don't go", he listened.

FOG IN OUR FINGERS

BY ANN HOWELLS

*In the north witches knot wind
into bags, sell it to sailors.*

A dimpled calligraphy
etches the river,
and foghorns murmur
of advancing grey infinity.
Lonesome little buoys
ride swells of polished tin.
Waves shatter --
spectacular encounters with rock,
feather bursts of spindrift.
Tourists' tail lights slither
as they flee. Islanders
take on the storm's energy;
hours pass
like silvery minnows
in a blue-lighted world.

RUTH

BY S.A. LEGER

Our planet, a Gnathostome, gaping jaws of the Earth
ripped open on the hinge-side—this interrupted by gentle
gurgling hot sulfur water—to reveal the mantle’s tongue.
Balancing on that palate: several deciduous trees, see
how they, chopped at the hairline, leave a woodblood stain
leave sawdust and chips and battered midrib leaves *evermore*

evermore evermore and then a “Hey!” off the walls of the *evermore*
canyon. Our planet, like a jagged thumbnail ticking through earth
child’s flipbook, skip a page, skip an era, ignore the stain
all the trees. She appears, Ruth, the passive gentle
woman, her bottom corked and squeezed, so that you cannot see
her toes, under glass; she has her own thoughts, her tongue

brain remembers, lopped off at the hairline, phantom tongue.
Ruth is rooted like a tamarack. All spread out, evermore
acidic fen, acidic bog, back again, just the surface—can she see?
Ouray, a gaseous sunchild, burping and gurgling from Mother Earth
vomits wretches spits until she’s mad, fumes, exudes a cautious
wisp of smoke, a settler’s town, chewing-machine with stained

lips, fragments of other towns, boluses digested, protruding blemishes,
precursors to 2x4’s. Ruth has skin like rough-cut lumber, a tongue
like primal memory. Ruth comes from hardy stock, she’s too gentle
now. Lost: hagfish vertebral elements, please contact...one forevermore
imprisoned to leak from the foundations of ghost town cabins, earth
fleas, consumed by Ouray. If she had eyes like a fly, she could see

the women, pioneer bonnets and all—what they were to become—see
Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers & Yellow-bellied Marmots, tinged
downy feathers & oral pelage, respectively, undeserved of Earth?
Ruth can sense a lie. Never tell a soul, for God’s sake. Her vernacular
does not include the impropriety of *those* kind of women. *Evermore*
evermore evermore Poe’s Lenora rattling around inside her gentle

frame, velvet-soft neural tissues barred up tight by the delicate folds of lacy slips. Having never met Ruth, new sulfur sees how seeping mantle, blaspheming magma, hardening evermore into the grooves, tectonic titans—Ouray in the middle—blackened dust that Ruth wipes up, can silence and *redact redact redact* her tongue. Forget the part where she moves from California. She's of the Earth.

Ruth has the tentacles of a mother, gently suctioned to a sheet of earth—see how she strains, perspires—her anemia, a sunburn, pressed white tongue evermore as good as gone. Ruth is afraid of gods. *Evermore*, besmirched.

SECTION 2

PSALM 23

BY CLAIRE SCOTT

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want
anything except a good night's sleep &
a tall glass of single malt scotch.

He maketh me to lie down in green
pastures: gasping polluted air,
sucking my Albuterol inhaler.

He leadeth me beside the still
& stagnant waters of sludge
dumped by ExxonMobil.

He restoreth my soul, which is all
well & good, but doesn't pay the bills
or wash piles of dirty diapers.

Yea, though I walk through the valley
in the shadow of nuclear weapons, I will
fear no evil other than a sociopath
with stubby fingers.

For thou art with me; thy rod & thy staff
may comfort me but I would be more
comforted without open carry.

Thou preparest a table before me
in the presence of families surviving
on food stamps, immigrants stalked
by ICE, children sloshing soda.

My cup runneth over with the red
ink of gas bills, electric bills, staggering
hospital bills for my asthmatic son.

Surely goodness & mercy shall follow me
all the dwindled days of my life
& I will dwell in this house
with its peeling paint & plugged toilets

forever.

FREE FROM NEED

BY APARNA UPADHYAYA SANYAL

She does not mind the appropriation of rainbows,
as much as despise their joyful use for a subverted purpose.

Sex is a messy thing, even girl- boy, boy- girl. She says it is strewn
with tiny land mines- fault lines and inevitable disappointments.

She is not made vulnerable by her need of it.
She never will be.

She tells me to use it sparingly, this sticky candy between my legs-
it's best used for procreation, and to make a man beg, on his knees.

She un-sees my friend, the one with the haired chest and sad eyes,
because he will never kneel before a woman.

She's five parts misogynist, one part misanthrope,
and all of her hates her husband with a deep, deep apathy he cannot match.

The man has passions too deep to quell with exacting intercourse
and spare smiles, so, he has learnt to find solace in other arms.

Those arms are too open to heed gender.
They are only need.

He returns to her bedside like clockwork, nonetheless,
to converse with her brilliant mind and ignore her white shrunken body.

Their chats are rapier sharp-
he derives a Machiavellian stent from her heart.

She is happy with the equation, she tells me,
with eyes that empty my soul.

Look how she has advanced- she is reaching her own nirvana.
She is free from the *ignis fatuus* of need.

GIRLS SLASH WOMEN

BY ROBIN BECKER

In fifth grade, my best
friend was molested in the wild
flowers behind the mall
by the old man who hung
out at the arcade.

I told the cops
how he pushed on the log
inside his crotch
and pumped Ms. Pacman
full of quarters.

In college, my roommate
fucked by her father
in love with a prisoner
came home late and drunk
with stitches in her hand
and a black eye.

*I have a baby inside, she whispered
I hope it's a girl.*

In graduate school
my classmate screamed
all morning for pills
all day for her daddy
all night for the comfort of it
and always for a gun.

We called the cops
and she disappeared.

At my first teaching job
student upon student
girl after girl
woman after woman
nervous as sparrows
show me scars from delicate
cuts like flowers
throats sore from bile
arms bruised by boyfriends
asking me to bear witness.

This world, I tell them
handing out tissues like rose petals,
it needs us.

ECDYSIS

BY DOROTHY SWOOPE

I would have loved to have watched
the slow sloughing of skin,
fascinating and repulsive in equal measure.
After all, you have been my daily companion
flattened black in the garden at the bottom of the steps,
only slithering into rocks when I disturbed you
instilling fear for my daughter's curious little dog, Maddi
visiting for Christmas.

I checked each day before her energetic explorations.
There was no sign of you, as though you knew. Did you?
I wondered, on discovering your still black lengthy skin,
(enough for a belt, my husband said), an hour after they left.
Sticky, humid day after day now there is no sign of you.
No doubt you are under the house
fattening that supple new skin
frog by frog.

HOW IT ALL STARTED

BY MARY ELLEN SHAUGHAN

No one is sure how it started.
Someone, no one can remember who,
tossed a burning vowel into
the conversation knowing

that it would probably
spark a fire, but was either too
slow or maybe unwilling
to retrieve it before

the entire dialogue went up in flames.
It caught the rest of them off-guard
and for what seemed like hours
but was actually minutes

they tossed their own smoking
syllables into the fray and yet
they seemed surprised when
stored resentments snapped and popped,

shooting burning invectives
searing and sizzling deep
into vulnerable hearts, eradicating
the site where trust once lived.

LOBSTER AND DOG STAR

BY OONAGH C. DOHERTY

I am older; what I once thought love
was capacity for self delusion.
Love is pained tolerance and time.

Sirius radio teleprompts
into dark beside our bed;
my best efforts of flannel sheet,
bright cushion
fail in cold quilt askew,
yesterday's clothes and towels.
Stuffing bleeds from old pillows;
short wave crackles under coiled blanket.

Never do we lie down together,
never does he look at me;
he curls away, bone-sheathed notochord
ears jammed with headphones,
eyes screwed shut.
He is not specially angry -
it has always been this way.

I speak, he moves just enough
to tug out *one* headphone, roll right eye back -
you cannot imagine the caution.
How could an un-stalked eye curve back so?
If only he *were* a lobster, barnacled claw
mine to pat, blue chitin slotting dorsus,
faint sea smell. A lobster is lovely
in its mottled silly way.

Last night Sirius channeled Howard Stern
did you do her were her tits real
Tonight it's Bloomberg Radio monologuing
gold shares, interest rates.

If I flung wide the window, leaned
above ice-sheathed trees, would I see
Sirius II, the source,
glistening quick across navy sky?
Could I make it curious and pretty?

Before we moved in together
he joked of the choice between
irritation and loneliness.

Our contract will never run, and yes,
since you asked, I love him.
If we play our cards right
we'll end our days in a kitchenette
off a golf course, with a view of Tampa Bay.
That is worth more than sweetness
which like self delusion
never fed anybody.

SOCKS

BY D. DINA FRIEDMAN

An abandoned sock
is sadder than divorce

because socks do not knowingly
cheat on their partners. The choice

to co-mingle is forced upon them.
Perhaps they weep

from the loss of their mate.
Perhaps all they want

is togetherness. All I want
is togetherness

with my socks
and my children

both of whom used to cling in the heat.
My teenage daughter thinks socks should be communal

like free love in the 60s.
Years ago, I was a wild sock child

but this is a secret I will not tell.
I wear socks that match

and try to detach myself
from socks with holes,

though perhaps it's classist
to discriminate. Better to darn them

but that would require training I do not have
and leads to the question: do socks need therapy?

Or do they simply need
a mechanism to cope

against absorption of odors
and angry children?

I don't know
but socks call to me

in a way that gloves
and shirts do not

in a way my children no longer do,
despite my stealing their socks.

AT THE BAR AFTER HIS READING, THE FAMOUS POET STILL CAN'T RECALL MY NAME
BY ALEXIS RHONE FANCHER

But I think you're exceptionally fuck-able, he grins.

He doesn't remember:

How the booze flowed.
How the room spun.
How I fell into his bed.

Four martinis down, he nibbles a toothpick-speared olive,
gazes soulfully at my tits, as if they offer a clue.

I sidle up to his ear. *Here's a hint:*
It smelled like a Holiday Inn.

The famous poet adjusts his paunch,
eases another notch on his belt,
fingers the bar food,
orders another round.

I slosh in the sea of his forgetfulness.

I want to tell him:
How it felt to be touched by fame.
How he never returned my calls.
How some nights, the only way I get off is to imagine his words.

How even tonight,
I can't keep my hands off him.

SUNDAY

BY JOHN SWEET

it was a letter that
never arrived
and so the sky had no color

was iridescent in all directions
and what she wrote
was i need to hear your voice

what she believed in was hope

and i had been a failed husband,
had been a failed poet,
and i had excelled at both

was sober on
the day my father died

went to the mailbox
but it was empty and, when i
got to the top of the stairs,
my phone was ringing

my children had no names

storm came riding down the
valley like the future
wasn't even worth
considering

SPRING, SLOUCHING
BY KB BALLENTINE

—*after Yeats*

May-apple moon hazes a blue-gray dawn,
shivers in the watery sky. Rain all night.
House wrapped in mist, last autumn's leaves
surrender, wash away.

Mourning cloaks wing brown-velvet.
Irises spike the roadside, daffodils already dimming
as days lengthen, world rushing into spring —

not waiting for the clouds to clear,
not daring to wait as headlines of Vegas,
Sutherland Springs, Lakeland blast our dreams,
mire our nightmares.

Stars gasping as they sink and drown.

VARIABLES

BY MICKI BLENKUSH

The man who stands at the corner
holding the *Homeless, Please Help* sign
is different. Even if he is the same guy,
today he is lifting one foot to the other
though it really isn't that cold.
The traffic moves, so you forget
until later at your desk when you hear
a bang so thunderous it shakes your house.
You open blinds to look out all four sides
but no one is crashing into anything anywhere.
You don't see anyone at all, so you think
of that episode of *The Twilight Zone*
where the man is the only soul left on earth,
and it isn't until the next day when you see
the lumber dumped in your neighbor's yard
that you figure it was the unloading.
What they'll be building remains to be seen,
because you don't want to stand in the street
counting beams and trusses, and there is nothing
you can do anyway. The homeless guy and the lumber
and the journals you've been meaning to burn
are each still out there. The night you dream
of walking on a roof high above your current city,
you wake holding the word *communion*
in your mouth. Its flavor lingers as you slice the fruit.
You pack lunches as it dissolves, pressed
like a wafer against your tongue.

WRAP AROUND RAP

BY ANDY BETZ

1. Sympathy is found between shiitake and syphilis in the dictionary
2. In the dictionary, you will not find the word gullible
3. The word gullible only offends three types of people: the weak, the fool
4. The fool rushes in where Angels fear to tread – **Alexander Pope**
5. To tread the beaten path rarely forces on onward
6. One onward, two forward, three backward equals square dancing
7. Square dancing in the rain beats waiting for a storm to pass
8. To pass resolutions in favor of vegetarianism garners no cooperation from the wolf
9. The wolf, in literature, reflects the qualities we most despise and fear in ourselves
10. In ourselves, live the life others want to remember
11. Remember, sentences can begin with “I is” if they end with “the 9th letter of the alphabet”
12. The alphabet is best for algebra, bra sizes, and batteries
13. Batteries are like children. Both have stored potential
14. Potential of 1000 men tomorrow is equivalent to the action of one man today
15. One man today, can conquer the world with a single idea; albeit infrequently
16. Infrequently, in terms of sex, can be one word or two
17. One word or two, can vs can not, is how you acquire experience
18. Experience is what you get when you didn’t get what you wanted
19. What you wanted is rarely what you receive. This is the definition of marriage
20. Marriage is the only war where you sleep with the enemy
21. The enemy of my enemy is my friend
22. My friend is old enough to have had an interesting past and young enough to have an interesting future – **Oscar Wilde**

23. An interesting future, the love of a good woman, and long health. What more could a man ask for?
24. Ask in May, settle in June
25. In June, April may
26. May you be hung like Einstein and be as smart as a horse
27. A horse trotting is poetry in motion
28. In motion, the acceleration of an object as produced by a net force, is directly proportional to the net force, and inversely proportional to the mass of the object – **Sir Isaac Newton**
29. The object of war is not to die for your country, but to make the other bastard die for his – **George Patton**
30. For his birthday, he gets the future as his present
31. His present happiness comes wherever he goes; sometimes whenever he goes – **Oscar Wilde**
32. He goes to Heaven for the climate, Hell for the company – **Mark Twain**
33. For the company of your friends, don't think less of yourself, think of yourself less
34. Yourself, less any assistance, be the master of your fate, the Captain of your soul – **William Henley**
35. Your soul, in contrast to your integrity, can only be sold once; thus garner the highest bid at auction
36. The highest bid at auction reveals a value, not a price
37. Not a price paid for tribute, not a voucher reserved for defense – **Thomas Jefferson**
38. For the defense of a country requires an army. For the defense of liberty requires a patriot
39. A patriot always fights for his country and sometimes for his government, when it deserves such actions – **Will Rodgers**
40. Such actions and such thoughts excuse such behavior at such times by such people for such reasons
41. For such reasons, the following is obvious: happy spouse, happy house, a happy wife, a happy life

42. A happy life my grandparents spent. A tidy sum my grandparents saved
43. My grandparents saved their wisdom for the listeners, not the talkers
44. The talkers cannot be participants, only spectators
45. Only spectators wondered what happens. Participants know it happens
46. It happens can be shouted with a Shhhhhhhh!
47. With a Shhhhhhhh, Death trades forever in pain with forever in silence
48. In silence, one man suffers his fate while one man plots the fate of others
49. The fate of others is of three blessings; wife, children, and of friends – **William Robert Spencer**
50. And of friends, worthy of our trust and our time, number but a few
51. But few truths are indeed self-evident as “No man can use what he never had” – **Izaak Walton**
52. He never had the ability to hear, only the desire to listen
53. To listen to her errors ignores what she added
54. She added years to my life and life to my years
55. My years of awareness makes me unique, just like everybody else
56. Everybody else jumps off a bridge, would you?
57. Would you marry me?
58. Marry me, dairy free, cherry tea, hairy knee, verily
59. Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me – **KJV 13:21**
60. Betray me politician when you sacrifice your judgment to the daily opinion of the majority
61. The majority of people who have eaten carrots have died or eventually will
62. Eventually, will someone explain why the word abbreviation is so long?
63. So long. Farewell. Auf Wiedersehen. Goodbye – **The Sound of Music**
64. Goodbye is just a prelude for until we meet again
65. Until we “meet again with spice” said the carnivore to the mustard

66. To the Mustard (Colonel), with the candlestick, in the library
67. In the library, is it the Huey, the Louie, or the Dewey decimal system?
68. The Dewey decimal system religion does not force all fractions to convert
69. To convert, to invert, to pervert. What is the correct order?
70. The correct order of the universe is “If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands”
71. Your hands can give me a frontal lobotomy or a bottle in front of me
72. In front of me is either Mr. Right or Mr. Right Now
73. Right now, I would like to help you out. Which way did you come in? – **Mark Twain**
74. Come in after you knock knock
75. Knock Knock. Who’s there? To. To who? No, to whom
76. To whom it may concern, do not go gentle into that good night – **Dylan Thomas**
77. Into that good night, some will shatter the hold of ignorance only by the accidental exposure to thought
78. Exposure to thought provokes the epic plans, the great actions, and the tragic consequences
79. The tragic consequences of literature derive from the scattered, covered, smothered remnants of the heart – **Waffle House**
80. The heart is where sympathy is found
81. Sympathy is found between shiitake and syphilis in the dictionary

WHEN HE COMES HOME

BY JANETTE SCHAFFER

Forget what your grandmother said about patience. Pull him to you without a word, hooking your thumbs in his belt loops. Draw a line of indelible affection on his collarbone with your finger. Scorch him with your longing. After, run your hands on his smooth skin as your roots take hold in the earth, entwine. When he leaves again,

call your sister and make conversation about how spring came late, how the chill is hanging on this year, rotting the lilacs. As she talks about a soccer game and little league baseball, remember the staccato rhythm of his heart when you last made love. Tell her the concrete slabs in your yard hurt the knees as you tend to the garden.

A RENGAY (AFTER GARY GAY): COLLABORATIVE HAIKU
BY WRITERS FROM AMERICA, CANADA, GERMANY AND NEW ZEALAND

METAMORPHOSE

BY LESLIE MCKAY, S.E. INGRAHAM, SUSANNE MARGONO, INGRID BRUCK, AND JULIE NASLUND

shape shifting
a game of clouds
and mountains

soot shadows the city
dusk despairs

mantle of snow
layers on pine branches
taller than the sky

limbs tangle
in tatted lace
white on white on white

under noon's scorched sky
the geckos stretch stone-still

lay of the land
in sunlight and in shadow
metamorphosis

VARIATION 25
BY DOUG BOLLING

I adore my own lost being, my imperfect substance
- Neruda, Sonata And Destructions

Winter heaves and my wood burns
through the slag of memory.

New equations how they knock against
all things upright and confirmed.

How now I revel in shadows, listen
for the wolf cry that
banishes all thoughts of village light.

Ancestry of ruin and bungling of directions
I cherish you for all things imprecise
and broken

in my innermost chambers even as I
caress these delicate blooms of hyacinth
so perfect in their unspoken stillness.

As now as I enter this lake
to bathe and
leave behind the dogmas
of stale rubric

You of this world hear my gorgeous disclaimers,
count the steps by which I descend into
the rich syrup of
imperfection.

DISTANCE SWIMMING
BY OONAGH C. DOHERTY

*Midlife is like distance swimming –
sometimes you need to look up, take your bearings, change course.*
- PC

I once beached on the Isles of the Blessed -
quartz and limpet scoured my hands,
arms pounded through storm and chill
I navigated by Mother Carey's echo.

But I'll not sink now, nor hope;
I'll not choke brine and wrack.
My course cannot reset now
though iron in each red cell

pull to follow compass-needle.
It is late. My seal teeth soften
I circle the safe harbor
graze against buoys, clanking shoal bells

bound in this horizon
sure as if my skin were folded
locked deep inside
the harbormaster's sea chest.

THE COMPETITION
BY DAVID SOUTHWARD

for Richard Wilbur

Word spread fast: the steering committee,
eager to launch Chicago's Exposition,
would need a symbol for the city's
worldlier ambition—

a structure to exceed men's dreams,
to rival Eiffel's miracle in Paris.
Contestants sketched out countless schemes.
In Pittsburgh, young George Ferris,

fresh from a railway bridge design,
passed up a night of euchre with his friends
to study Eiffel's graceful lines
through a magnifying lens.

The tower awed the engineer.
Seeing it as the bridge of earth and sky,
he wondered: what extreme frontier
remained for him to try?

He undid bolts; rotated beams;
changed angles; altered curvature and weight.
Teased by a stateliness that seemed
too perfect to translate,

he spun the figure—let a weird
chaos detach the observation decks
and loop them. In his mind appeared
a structure more complex:

a wheel of dangling terraces,
revolving from the crowd-packed fairground queues
to summits—prized, like Paris's,
for panoramic views.

The judges praised his sense of fun,
spoke of a showman's grit backed up with science—
and gravitation overcome
with something like defiance.

THE BUTTON BOX

BY MARY ELLEN SHAUGHAN

Oh, the tales that shoebox could tell.
It rattles as she picks it up,
hundreds of buttons knocking
against or sliding over each other,
each a remnant of a life:

glowing mother of pearl
from a wool vest her father
wore on the ship coming to New York
from the Old Country lauding it over the
small white ones her mother, years ago,
snipped off her husband's Sunday shirt
that she discarded when both the
collar and cuffs became frayed;

and hiding in a dusty corner,
beneath all the mundane and
ordinary buttons of everyday life
are 16 minute ivory satin-covered globes
from her mother's wedding dress,
strung on a thread and knotted,
the only remainder of that long ago
union of the practical young woman
and the boy in the wool vest,
both of whom traveled from
villages in Russia,
each with a one-way ticket.

THE GOLDBLOCKS ZONE
BY KILEY CREEKMORE

Gods themselves search
in parallel artificial moons
studying immortality.
Prometheus from the magician's
vacuum of the future is in the loophole
of the universe
merging humans with robot arms
and electric engines.
Persistence of memory
when emotional machines
collide with an extraterrestrial Shiva
in a handheld body.

NORTH OF VALLEY LEE

BY ANN HOWELLS

A narrow rural road
banks of reddish sand --
no window glow,
street lamp,
splash of neon --
and suddenly
headlights
burst from a hidden entrance.
No time to brake.
No place to swerve.

No metallic clash,
no red glow winking
in my rearview mirror,
no beams aimed willy-nilly
at the sky. I am alone,
staring into the shallow cave
my own headlights
carve from night --
heart a hammer,
fingers ice, hands
frozen at ten and two.

BARS AND PLANETS

BY JESSICA MEHTA

*The bar is a planet, and you
are the moon, my mother
said to me in a nightmare
three days after she'd died.
I'd heard her body'd gone
black, marinated in gallon-
sized vodka and over-seasoned
with opioids. Found naked
in bed with the television so loud,
the paramedics pawed
their ears and the whole
street heard South Korea
had a president who gripped
the enemy's hand. I took the five
dollar Porthole bills taped
beneath the sticky dresser
and poured photo albums
into garbage bags before the funeral
vultures landed rough. And when I saged
that property, gave her back
to the sky, I felt the nesting
in my center. A being let loose
of drink and dementia
and for the first time in decades
I didn't hate that house, the entirety
of my childhood and all
I'd long since buried quiet
in the deep where no one could see.*

JUSTIN

BY JANICE S. FULLER

Tools are strewn about
in the truck cab and back,
the yard, the garage, the “Work Room”
where you climb over 2 bicycles,
Sophie’s bike cart, all the camping gear,
the half-done coffee table
with half-glued mosaic pieces.
The couch hides under bits and pieces
of lumber, potting soil, a doll.
Seedlings started way too early,
in January, show signs
of tomato blossoms in early April.
Pots and pans from morning pancakes,
lunchtime pasta, last night’s chicken
languish on the kitchen stove,
counter, and too-small table.
Holes of many sizes dot the walls
of their bathroom and bedroom,
like a forest besieged by woodpeckers,
remnants of electrical work
done with YouTube videos.
Deck half done,
lumber turning grey in the rain,
bags of cement hardening.
The unfinished canoe
a long strange skeleton
tucked tightly against the garden.

Let him do it, Leah says.

It keeps him going,

keeps his mind off the cancer.

GRIP

BY PAMELA MITCHELL

pine tree toppled by wind
roots ripped from soil yet
clinging to boulders

I suspect I will grip
when life topples me
tearing my roots

my toes clawing into soil
clutching clumps of earth
my hands grabbing

all that is part of me
all that is dear

DEAR KITCHEN FLOOR

BY TONI LA REE BENNETT

Dear Kitchen Floor:

Do you have a magnet hidden
beneath your warped tiles
pulling things from my hands as I walk by?
Why do you want what I have so much?
None of it belongs to you.

Dear Clumsy Person who keeps dropping things:

That piece of buttered toast, the flailing fork,
the handful of bouncy kale, the soggy teabag—
that they congregate in this space
is neither my business nor yours.
Stop blaming me for your losses.

IMPOSSIBLE LOVE
BY JACK GRANATH

Your silhouette,
 the apple slices of your hair,
your hip could be
 a crescent moon,
 your breasts
 a lap of water,
your brows dissolve
 into the tips of
 fingernails,
 and all of you
rendered in the colors of the night,
black on dark
 blue
 with hints of silver,
and there you hang,
 you,
 winking on the wall,
my cheap
 museum shop
 Matisse.

RAIN WASHES AWAY NOTHING

BY JAMES CROAL JACKSON

sharp turns for the hospital's worst,
left left left.

sometimes the beeping
(turn my bed)
or the yellow window birds.

looking for cardinals
through interstate belt loops
or rings of cigarette smoke.

some days are asthmatic
others are just right.

the warmth of a blanket
this hole no one will lift you out of.

INTERCHANGEABLE

BY APARNA UPADHYAYA SANYAL

The diamonds in front,
the cheap seats at the back.
I am-
layers on layers, substratum to core,
counting is irrelevant,
the universe that lives at the glowing end of a cigarette,
ashed away in a blink.
Also, I am the universe
that exists at the base of the *banyan* tree.
I am the voice created by a child.
But mostly,
I am you-
part of, made from, mirroring.
Interchangeable,
you and we,
me and me.

POLES A PART
BY JAMES PENHA

If I suggest when you are down
a movie perhaps or a shower
an invitation to sit at the piano
a trip to the lake
for a picnic lunch
if you answer at all
it is to connect to me your dots
imagined like Seurat gone mad
for the colorless hues out there
conspiring against you.
And when you are up
singing or baking
loaves or in the pool with the koi
carrying the dog on your shoulders
telling me we are off to the lake
and I mention in the car
seat belts or mirrors or stop
signs or lights your wit arises
like reflux possetting enough clown
white acid on my face to make you laugh me
tremble hoping again for the silences
against all hope I cannot stand.

IN TONGUES

BY TOTI O'BRIEN

I squeezed words into a flower press
clamped with steel vises
weighed with large stones.

When I freed them
they turned from velvet to parchment
quickly crumbling away.

Then I scattered them
—bird food, ants delight, mice heaven—
brittle thin

like bread shepherds carry in their bags
for their daily loneliness
when they could meditate

but sing easy tunes instead
on cheap flutes made of bones
hollowed out by the wind.

FROM THE COMPOSER'S NOTEBOOK
BY JAMES MILLER

She writes: "I come to feel
that the score will not reveal
all it promised. But how
could it be otherwise?"

What will listeners do
but listen? That blown bauble
will cool and coil on a shelf
in Atacama."

She writes: "The less we pray,
the more we pray.

When I try to sing, always
from a crowd in holiday heat,
the word that opens widest

resembles *tumor*, or *tumescence*,
perhaps only *trombone* or *tomb*.
The edges are reddish-brown
and flaky, like a warm pastry."

She writes: "Not so easy now
to work by hand. The birds
blur in my grey ink, smear
some Exxon blue-blood
across the most honest words:

Not so. Not so. How
could it be? Not so."

ENERGY STAR

BY OONAGH DOHERTY

Blocky liberator,
my quad of creamy narwhale ivory.
No fissured hands, red fingers,
rasping bleached sheets billowed fresh.

World over they scrub at stone sinks
by village well,
slap rags on river rock. Not I.

Instead, you swash and smell of lavender,
judder with excitement,
sweet sweet cube
of gleaming ice
straight off a glacial shelf.

AT FUENTE MARDOQUEO

BY TIMOTHY B. DODD

I was eating a hamburger
in that old-feeling restaurant;
a traditional kind of place,
its dark dining room lined
with long wooden tables
and little stools. Two young
women paced the aisles,
refilling each spot's condiments:
ketchups, mustards, and hot
sauces. I watched them more
intently than my food, boredom
on their faces. Something more
than hair and lipstick made them
beautiful --- quietness, simplicity,
or maybe that no one paid them
any mind. An old man approached,
hands in pockets, limping and greasy-
haired. I didn't hear what he said,
just saw the wart jiggle on his jaw
and the girls giggle as he passed on
to the bathroom and they kept wiping
rims of containers and jars. Then
happiness and humility visited me:
young, bored, and beautiful; old,
content, and ugly. I am all of it,
with tiny squirrel hands pushing
bread and beef into a hole in my head:
so when eighty years exits bathroom,
me and the girls will hand him gobs
of mayo to rub on our lips together.

SECTION 3: THREES

REACH

BY JANINE HARRISON, COLLEEN WELLS, AND LAURA MADELINE WISEMAN

I

LMW: The challenge is to take up a yoga pose for a month. What? Reach into parivrtta trikonasana, then bike to class to remember what's forgotten—meditation on a bearing. At the wall with a block, pose. If old habits dance in and perform, yoke body to breathe. Let the mind fill with twist.

CW: You wanted the fairy tale, never dreamed of adopting black children with an older man. At four you were blended into a family, sharing a house but no history. Your dad remarried. Both families grew. You became a middle child. Sibling stew.

The first time your sons toddled up to their home, Ayalkbet scooped snow into his mouth. Yakob tried but fumbled with his mitten. Rick took their hands.

You called them "brown berries." They wore matching pajamas, ate with Barney forks, danced. Big wheels, bright fleece vests and oversized sunglasses. Ethiopian kings. White neighbors smiled.

JH: Holding breath, avoiding Final Net and Afro Sheen stench, I hurry to the cafeteria, passing tables of black teens, the divider, and search for a friend's feathered hair; we met in biology, hers the only white face I saw. Lynne waves. We get into line. Two lines exist: Left, black students await lunches. Ours, the white line on the white side. Earlier, Gary Winbush slammed his hands on my desk, seized and shook it, me in the attached chair. Draping his arm around my shoulder, he leaned in: We goin' to homecoming in a purple Cadillac. Then we goin' to a penthouse and we gonna have five beau-ti-ful children! Puckered lips conquered my cheek; he then walked away. Lynne chortled. I whitened, trembling. What was that all about?

II

LMW: The challenge is to notice where the body seizes, acknowledge pain, then back off. Something alleviates by tending. This is the assignment (stretch, release) and study (breath-work, anatomy), even if it's hurried (pinches shoulders, locked neck, uneven hips). Do it, then work. The paying job is temporary. The unpaying job is necessary. Fence it off in silence, schedules, goals. This matters. It's work to challenge the stories. Tell the truth, but twist it triangles.

CW: They wanted nothing to do with a nine-year-old Haitian sister. Yakob called her crapper. In 2010 Gaelle defied an earthquake. Inside America, she bounced around, finally settled someplace good. But it was temporary.

Whisked away by strangers, she sobbed in your lap. Your heart broke.

JH: First job: Black co-worker and I fold sweaters.

You perm your hair to curl it?

You perm yours to straighten it?

III

LMW: The challenge is learning to separate the junk. Gossip, engage, or stay out of it. It's a triangle. How many face—slammed doors, cockroaches, empty bottles, layering smoke? How many see—hungry kids, syringes, restroom rapes in the news? How many twist? The challenge is knowing what to take from studies—unknown vocabulary, unstudied traditions, misunderstood cultures. Why complete yoga's eight arms? Why seek guidance on sutras? Why challenge? Just pose. Open arms.

CW: Your stepdad corrected you. I don't have to listen to this. You're a dumb Kentuckian. Forks stopped clinking.

You sulked in your room, hungry.

Gaelle elected to go to her room. Stomp, stomp, the ruckus of slamming drawers, a thump of clunky luggage to stuff with belongings.

The siblings argued. New language emerged, words like, Pisser-mouther.

Over time you smoothed together like play-dough. You stopped hearing, *this is a stupid family*.

JH: Later, I teach Chinekas, DeShawns. I read their narratives.

IV

LMW: The challenge is the bike gets stolen during yoga. Walk three miles with the cut lock in hand. Arrive home and stretch. Finally, it feels like a welcomed hug, an okay to notice and care. Talk to the cops. File a report. What good can come? Could this discomfort too be examined?

CW: Forever Gaelle wanted to ride horses.

Although it was "family time," the boys were older teenagers, too cool to participate.

The steeds should have been closer together, but she won't slow down, doesn't know his name, calls him "this animal."

You plead.

I'm not gonna risk this animal getting mad and hurting me. I'm protecting my soccer legs.

Twisty turrets, ruts, ravines. A guide who looks twelve. Panic. Silent cursing.

JH: In "Race and Writing" -- black women's stories burble:

I stopped in a small town in Southern Indiana. I was walking down a street to a store. All of a sudden, from behind, I heard: 'We don't welcome niggers here!' I saw a white man standin' in the middle o' the street with a shotgun – and I ran – like I ain't never ran before! I could hear the bullets flyin' past me!

With new eyes, I read Gary's backstory.

V

LMW: The challenge is gratitude. Say it to heal. Say it to feel different. Say it while the phone rings. When the dad answers with, Kid, I've got no time for this. Call your grandpa, say it. It's break, breath, pose, mediate. Say it when the dad calls back. He has an old mountain bike he found on the curb and gives it over for free. There's just enough to get a lock that twists keeper. Say it. This is the challenge.

CW: When the terror ends, you take a selfie, fist-bump your sons.

You did it for her.

Yakob reminds you friends await him.

Gaelle interjects, Time for ice cream!

Ayalkbet scoots around. Where's my charger?! Can I use yours?

No, Gaelle says. You lose yours too much.

Things escalate. Rick sighs, turns up Lou Reed.

JH: A photo.

IM: You look handsome.

Reply: It is because of my beautiful mother.

I mentor students online. Seby: misses his mom on Christmas, lessons she couldn't teach; doesn't want to be taken like her – prematurely.

Hurricane Matthew leaves little. I scan news.

FB: Seby okay?!?

Hold breath.

Finally, him: I lost everything except my life and my brain, my precious things.

Replies are fluffed pillows.

He signs: Love you. Seby.

I've a son in Haiti; I'll meet him some day.

FORECAST
BY RONNIE SIRMANS

the climate changes
but we hope it turns around
when we wave goodbye

THREE SEALS

BY KALI LIGHTFOOT

after Richie Hofmann

1 – 12:25 a.m. December 28, 2012, City Hall, Portland, Maine

Two men stand on the top step, hold hands,
parkas unzipped to show matching t-shirts –
Love Is Love – standing below them we cheer,
wave candles, they hold up their marriage license,
with its gold seal of the State of Maine:
first state where citizen's votes made gay marriage
legal. The first couple steps down
into hugs, pelted by flowers, we watch
for the next, prepared to cheer every pair,
our voices husky with cold.

2 – A summer morning, Boothbay Harbor

Today in the quiet of purple dawn,
a harbor seal treads water
ten feet from my solo canoe,
onyx eyes fixed on me. I stare back,
watch nostril slits open, close,
open. We breath together awhile.

3 – November 12, 2016, Salem, Massachusetts

Our post office, built 1933, Colonial Revival
architecture so convincing I imagine
mailmen in three-corner hats and breeches
descend the graceful front stairs I climb
to mail another donation I can't afford –
this one for wilderness protection
follows others for civil liberties, racial justice,
reproductive rights. What to do on this day of feeling
unheard, unseen; what to do but lick the envelope,
seal my check inside, stop at the bronze slot
and tip the flap, feel a puff of air as my hopes
land on all the others there in the dark.

THREE APOLOGIES

BY MICHAEL JACKMAN

i.

I'm sorry I yelled
at your son
for saying, "fish sticks
fish sticks
fish sticks"
over and over
and over, but
I also confess it felt good
to yell, "Be Quiet!"
Good, too, the purgation of silence,
the short-lived glistening tears,
the apologies
and mutual reconciliation,
plump and ripe
as two olives.

ii.

I am ashamed.
There are no more Castelvetro
olives, the expensive ones I bought
you, Sarah, from Whole Foods
plump and bright green,
almost fluorescent as they bobbed
in the brine we use for dirty
martinis. The first taste

of a pitted Castelvetro
and I knew why deer love a salt block
by a rill tinkling with snowmelt
that tastes of spring. In a trance
of appetite, much like the one

I fell into when I first licked
your salty neck, I ate another
and another and now
I am sated
but there are no more olives.

iii.

That 40-pound block
of compressed fat, grain
and corn I lugged
up the hill, that you bought
so the deer wouldn't starve

sits hardly nibbled after
two hard seasons, autumn
and winter, of our first year
as self-elected caretakers
of this small woodlot,
down-slope of a forested knob,
with all its skinny, bent pines,
and assorted creatures.

The deer have not only ignored
your gift, but made long, muddy
skid marks down our front lawn,
eaten your okra bush,
stripped your new cherry sapling,
and barked at you one dusk as they filed

past the deck. I wish they had barked
in apology for their placid, ongoing
rudeness, but they are what they are,
and they know what we are, humans,
and once you have heard deer bark,
you know they apologize for nothing.

YOU ARE THE HUNGER, YOU ARE THE FOOD
BY LOIS ROMA-DEELEY

Like a rat snake devouring its tail
creates a circle, endless and complete,
or the three-hearted octopus
eating arms, head, and mouth,
Body, at the very end, you are nothing

but an inky zero,
floating along the bottom of the sea—

THREE QUAKES IN INDONESIA

BY JAMES PENHA

The first time I felt these islands quake
we were naked on great grey boulders
by a Sumatra waterfall we had found where
we told each other no one else had ever lain
or certainly had queer sex until my mouth
went down around your dick and damn!
the earth moved and the rocks rumbled
beneath us and I lifted my head to see
you wide-eyed and we held on to each other
and the granite as best we could. What?
We held on to these big balls of the planet
as they rocked and might have rolled
us down the mountainside. What
fools even to think we could hold on
But we did and we have though the shaking
never stops.

We barely missed the next big temblor,
the one in Padang that flattened
the big round hotel we departed two
days earlier like a seven-layer cake
into a mile-wide oatmeal cookie.
When next we visited the town, the taxi
driver told us how two victims from
that dead hotel vanished from his back
seat in mid-ride. They were, he said,
ghosts

And just now amidst our picnic at the lake,
thirty years after our first shocks together,
you said you felt dizzy, that it looked to you
like our car was shaking, and I said it was
the ground and the frenetically rippling
water and the dozens of birds taking refuge
in the air.

THE THREE WITCHES
BY SKAIDRITE STELZER

It wasn't easy being a witch in Kalamazoo.
And we didn't know any ceremonies,
but decided anyway to broadcast rumors among the sororities.
It was the mid-sixties, our hair and skirt length defined us.
Starting in the student union we frightened the frat-boys.
Kristen waved her wild red curls in their faces
while Parsla and I burned incense.
Frangipani wafting its unknown rituals.

And we scared away the girlfriends
of the men we had chosen.
Threatening spells and juju dolls,
we danced in mad circles,
our boots long and lean,
tight against our thighs.
"When shall we three meet again?
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?"
we asked each other,
using our education
beyond the professors' boundaries.

Being a witch in Kalamazoo had its hazards,
yet we had our magic--
finding the Chinese dinner party by smell;
no need for addresses.
Then Kristen started to believe.
Seeing ghosts in her basement,
dreaming of her grandmother's rosary,
she started counting the beads,
covering her knees.
And Parsla got serious; no longer
wanting to run away to New York.
And her lover turned out to be gay,
so she painted a purple parrot and looked for art shows.

It was strange being a witch in Kalamazoo.
At the Latvian mid-summer festival haunting the suitors.
Or so it seemed, when the cursed one fell from the hay-loft.
That smell of mowed clover, the weaving of garlands.
So many earth-goddesses clustered around me.
I listened for barn owls, wished there were wolves,
did not jump the bonfire with my future husband,

Felt inside me the dying of spells
as the milkweed pods prepared
their autumn explosions.

THE FERMATA
BY BIANCA SALERNO

Waiting in silence,
Orange dimming to blue-dusk:
the color of 'was.'

With warm air inside
and a chill through the window
every breath still you.

The past, the future
and I here, their night watchman:
My son. His father.

DEPARTURE

BY PATRICIA FROLANDER

I calendar the days of desolation.
Today, I threw away his toothbrush,
Three hundred three days
 after he left . . .
not to the doctor, not to the hospital,
not to the lake with his fishing pole.
I grab his robe and thrust my face
into the folds of captured scent
 but it is fading.

SELF-PORTRAIT WITH DAVID PERLMUTTER, A FATHER, AND A DEAD MOTHER
BY CARLA SCHWARTZ

I say I am all about health, so I don't work a regular job.
To send an email to my father, is to send one to my dead mother.
They shared the same email address. I don't say I don't work.
The work, the doing, the thinking, all part of my being.
I want to make a video about my newest dish —
curried egg in rice, loose yolk. I was born in the US
but my mother was born in Germany. Now,
the town where she was born is in Poland.
What is citizenship? In Germany, xenophobes exploit a tragedy.
Today is my mother's 85th birthday,
but she is dead. I ride my bike when it's cold,
but then, I am even more afraid of being killed.
When I ride, like melting snow, my nose runs.
Instead of going out to hear live music,
I visit a friend. We talk, we eat, we slice up
state bureaucrats and sprinkle them on our pizza.
Now, after reading Perlmutter, each bite is shameful.
My country wants to be great again.
I think about the women's march on Washington.
My mother would have gone in a flash. I'd have gone too,
but I was Florida, shouting with the gulls.
Now, the cars line up like links in a chain
from the elementary school out to the road. Even taxis.
This whole pick-up-at-school thing eludes me. I used to walk.

As I ride by on my bicycle, bundled against the cold,
I spit on the ground. Road salt bands my tires
and might destroy them. Dr. Perlmutter says
sugar will be the death of us — first diabetes, then dementia.
I don't trust Perlmutter, but avoid the sugar.
I want to meet the young girls my mother taught to use computers in the 80s.
I try to coax my father to exercise more,
but he says he has too much reading to do, and not enough time.
He says he walks up and down the stairs.
But then says the stairs are a problem.
I cling to life, like to my hat in a strong wind, and cross the road.
Reading Perlmutter reminds me of the *Ensure*
the hospital fed my mother during the chemo —
this product, so full of sugar, must first reduce cognition,

and then, ensure death.
When my mother refused it,
my father would take home the unopened ones.
He drank them for years after she died.
He would take them with him on his hikes.
I inherited my mother's immersion blender.
I used it for the first time last week to blend a soup
right in the pot, so you can't tell the mushrooms from the stock.

I love to swim in ponds, to take long rides.
I hope a pond freezes hard before the next snow.
My ice skates, black, well-padded, enjoy a good zip and twirl.
After the ride, a bath is the heart of a calf, silky, warm.

BEFORE THE FLOOD; OR, WHAT NOAH'S WIFE KNEW
BY SARAH A. ETLINGER

Our therapist said we had to find
the root of the infidelity.
I think I found it: Noah (and his wife).
He built the boat for twos (not threes):
Two this, two that, and it wasn't even raining.

Naamah must have known
how ridiculous it all was, being in a threesome.

She must have seen how his hands
crafted the bow in perfect woman-curves;
curves I see everywhere
in soft ducks' breasts,
in long ears dangling,
in the regular stripes of tigers,
in the lull of the hills
across the horizon.

She must have seen how, as he smoothed
the gopher-wood and pitch
with his soft, worn hands
he was wistful.
Did she see in his eyes
how he loved the way it felt on his skin?

Did his wife see it
the same way I saw it
in your eyes and felt it on your breath
when you came home too late,
came to bed to lie with me
but with the imprint of her curves
on your body?

Naamah must have known
how ridiculous it all was.

Yes, his wife must have seen it all--
within all those cubits and precise instructions--
so when he summoned her to bed
with a promise on his lips
that they would save the world from flooding
to keep everything alive
*(every creeping thing of the earth
after its kind, two of every kind
will come to you to keep them alive).*

Did Naamah ask the same question
I ask you now:
*Did god tell you
how to craft the bow
just right, so it would look like
the curve of her hips--
youthful parentheses given life
by your kisses?*
(the very same hips
whose soothing curves
ruined this whole complicated business
of pairing?)

Yes, she must have known
how ridiculous it all was
as she stepped onto the ark.

CONTRIBUTORS

Laila Amado is a vagabond scientist. Occasionally, she writes stories and poems.

KB Ballentine's fifth collection, *Almost Everything, Almost Nothing*, was published in 2017 by Middle Creek Publishing. Published in *Crab Orchard Review* and *Haight-Ashbury Literary Journal*, among others, her work also appears in anthologies including *In Plein Air* (2017), *Carrying the Branch: Poets in Search of Peace* (2017), *In God's Hand* (2017), and *River of Earth and Sky: Poems for the Twenty-first Century* (2015). Learn more about KB Ballentine at www.kbballentine.com.

Robin Becker writes about zombies, ghosts, demons, and humans. She thinks they're hilarious. She teaches creative writing in the MFA program at Minnesota State University, where she plays sloppy guitar and is afraid to ski. Her novel *Brains: A Zombie Memoir* was published by HarperCollins.

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A native New Yorker, **James Penha** has lived for the past quarter-century in Indonesia. Nominated for Pushcart Prizes in fiction and poetry, his LGBTQ+ stories appear in the 2017 and 2018 anthologies of both the Saints & Sinners Literary Festival and the Seattle Erotic Arts Festival, while his dystopian poem "2020" is part of the 2017 *Not My President* anthology. His essay, "It's Been a Long Time Coming," was featured in *The New York Times* "Modern Love" column in April 2016. Penha edits *TheNewVerse.News*, an online journal of current-events poetry. @JamesPenha

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Carol Tyx teaches at Mount Mercy University in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Her work has appeared in *Earth's Daughters, Big Muddy, Spillway, Minerva Rising*, and *Rising to the Rim*, published by Brick Road Poetry Press. On any given day you might find her rolling a piecrust or picking raspberries to put in the pie.

Colleen Wells admires the powerful role writing has in healing. Her work has appeared in *The Ravens Perch, The Potomac Review, The Voices Project, Veils, Halos, and Shackles – International Poetry on the Oppression and Empowerment of Women*, and *Work Literary Magazine*. She is the author of *Dinner With Doppelgangers - A True Story of Madness and Recovery*. Wells uses this book as a platform for speaking on themes of suicide awareness and recovery. She writes on the topics of adoption, parenting and the environment. She enjoys mentoring high school students who want their voices heard.

Laura Madeline Wiseman is the editor of two anthologies, *Bared* and *Women Write Resistance: Poets Resist Gender Violence*, selected for the Nebraska 150 Sesquicentennial Book List. She is also the author of 26 books and chapbooks, including *Drink* that won the 2016 Independent Publisher Bronze Book Award for poetry. She teaches writing at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and 24 Pearl Street, and has taught workshops on resistance poetry at conferences, festivals, and women's crisis shelters.

Ricardo Zegri is a writer and musician with a deep affection for beer and burritos. His work can be found in the *Welter Literary Journal*, *Rum Punch Press*, *Mind Equals Blown* and various other coffee stained zines. He lives in Vallejo, California, with his wife, daughter, and a pile of animals.

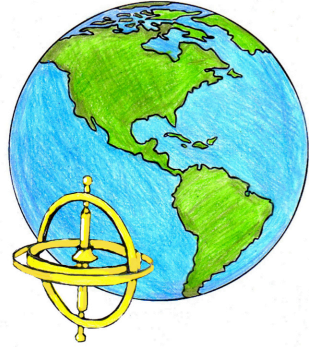
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Our next reading period runs April 1-June 15, 2018. Submissions accepted from this reading period will be published in our Summer 2018 issue. All submissions must come to us through Submittable (gyroscopereview.submittable.com/submit). Please read our guidelines carefully and be aware that any pieces with a distinctly seasonal tone must fit with the summer season.

In addition, we are planning a special theme for our Fall 2018 issue: The Crone Issue (aka The Hot Flash Express). For that issue, we seek poetry from women/those who identify as women who are over the age of 50. Women over 50 are often underrepresented in poetry publications, so we are choosing to offer a space and a voice to the wise women out there. More information will be offered on this special themed category in our summer issue. Please note that this category will not be open until July 1, 2018.

Stay up-to-date with us at our website, gyroscopereview.com, or find us on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. You may reach us by email at gyroscopereview@gmail.com.

Thank you for reading.



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