

# CHAOS

A Poetry Vortex

Edited by Marc Rosen

Chaos

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# Foreword

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# Kim Acrylic

## **Neon White**

Articulate souls that are fused dance naked upon Graves of un  
known apathetically marked creatures.

I taste with my spikey buds, the bitter cold winter they had been  
laid upon the tombs.

Grey matter is regurgitated on the flat, round ball of beings  
dressed in politics and hate.

The immaculate conception of your dream is projected in black  
and white strobe lights

Neon white horror shows sing the story of your invisible star  
crossed lover's beautiful homicides

I taste test your smile that burns to black as the wars of the world  
begin and end again

## **Star Crossed Birth**

A death based upon a true phantasm, echoes the premonitions of your star-crossed birth.

The being of your human sews grotesque wishes into dolls made of fictitious voodoo

Chronically ominous, you begin to atrophy like a woman without the right to bear child.

Phantom limbs hug your decrepit body close, swaggering to the opera of the worn ones

The melancholia of the harmony will lead you to follow the umbra of the psychopomp

A rhapsody of fevers peak and break within your alphabetically placed fringe of muses

Irregular heart and souls, terminal in their sick, lie in a death bed of yellowed, dense clouds.

Morning after deceit, wounds the adolescent spirit of men, woman, and beasts looking for purity.

You let the mad, rabid dogs gnarl on the recess of your father's poorly formed fetish

What will be your redemption?

## **cartoonish Religion**

I kiss the sun from your plump, pink translucent cheeks.  
My brassy hair falls into my sad tired with time eyes.  
Your eyes are deaf to the blind sounds of my abandonment.  
Cascading through my cartoonish religion, I kiss death.  
Feeble are my tired, pill shaped pupils that never bloom.  
Read to me my eulogy spoken in an abstract, mute dialect.  
Karma refuses me time and youth, diseased and pretty, I die.

# Austin Alexis

## **Crisis Mode**

Sirens in the distance,  
lancing the air.  
I don't panic,  
unless not eating for two days,  
not venturing outdoors for three,  
spells the story of a rattled psyche.

Something is "off."  
The feel of the world  
is that of treading, treading  
in one glued place  
upon a pile of used tissue.  
Citizens rub their eyes in vexation  
until they're told to stop  
by society's shrill voice  
they could be contaminating themselves.  
But they are only trying to focus on  
the emergency that lingers, invisible.  
They are only trying to gauge  
how far the Earth has spun  
off its axis, off its rocker.

I wouldn't and I don't attempt to calculate  
the miles-crazy trek our planet has plunged

from where it should be.  
I tell my fellow citizens  
to put optimists' lenses on,  
then kick back with a voodoo bombshell,  
leisure themselves to sleep.

I hide my shaking hands,  
am glad all others fail to see  
my sweat-stained back.  
I want no jangled nerves, no alarm.  
Playacting, I hum a lullaby,  
while, in my head,  
and in the world, symbols  
clash, whistles blow.  
I'm aware of sirens  
squealing in the distance.

Dee Allen

### **The Silversmith**

It took a silversmith  
A Tsalagi\* silversmith  
To give seven clans,  
His tribe, a unique voice.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the silversmith  
The Tsalagi silversmith  
Had found, scattered by the wind,  
Snow white leaves  
Not seen on any bushes he knew

Curiosity drew the silversmith  
The Tsalagi silversmith  
To closely examine  
Snow white leaves  
Bearing unusual marks he couldn't read

Inspiration stirred the silversmith  
The Tsalagi silversmith  
to avoid using the  
Hammer, anvil, sheetmetal, flame  
In forging the new items his tribe needed.

Imitation drove the silversmith

The Tsalagi silversmith  
To pick up a feather dipped  
In ink and copy 26  
English letters, designed 60 more  
                  behind them.

It took a silversmith  
A Tsalagi silversmith  
To give seven clans,  
His tribe, a unique voice

Written on  
Crisp, flat  
Snow white leaves  
That talked back  
To the eyes.

*\*What the Cherokee Indians called themselves.  
Pronounced "Chah-lah-gee".*

## **Spirit Horse**

*For Loreal Tsingine, 1989-2016*

Every Spring, as  
Trees sprout new leaves,  
Aboriginal nation  
Reflects and grieves

Long after Justice  
Failed them – one more slight -  
They remember a beloved sister's  
Departure from her family's sight:

At close range, muzzle flash  
From a policeman's gun  
Panic from a petite Dineh\* woman  
Dissipated – her life was done.

Street-bound transition  
From flesh to spirit  
Hoofbeats pound, a steady gallop  
And only she could hear it.

Sky-blue eyes, grey spotted body,  
Stray horse drew near with a neigh  
Instinctively, she knew  
It came to carry her away

From a White man's world that shown her

Nothing but disrespect-  
She climbed onto the steed's bare back,  
Wrapped her arms around its massive neck

And finally rode off  
On a distant course  
To her peaceful, eternal repose  
On the Spirit Horse

*\* What the Navajo Indians call themselves.  
Pronounced "Dee-nay".*

C.B. Anderson

**The Libretto of the Spheres**

Extreme compression is to brevity  
As puerile humor is to mordant wit.  
How many auditors will gladly sit  
For episodes of worn-out levity?

We like to pride ourselves on our concision  
While posting entries in our daily logs,  
As though the sloppy tongues of friendly dogs  
Would save us from a feral wolf's derision.

We mend our fences, we restore our walls,  
And ordinarily defend our borders,  
But sometimes we must disobey our orders,  
Especially when a higher duty calls.

We write long letters in response to mail,  
Which doesn't mean our praxis is inept,  
But promises that we have never kept  
Remind us of how frequently we fail.

## **Unexploited Providence**

“Why am I here?” I was afraid to ask,  
While walking—half asleep—this land of wonders;  
So, stumbling on, I took myself to task  
And totted up my many glaring blunders.

Creation offered me its very best  
To satisfy my least advertent leaning,  
But tendencies of wastrels never rest  
And rarely lend a life sufficient meaning.

A universe that’s made of scattered dust  
Will not suffice to keep the trains on track,  
And transits way off schedule, as they must,  
Ensure that ennui keeps on chugging back.

But if the world should suddenly stand still,  
With me, before all others, at its center,  
Then more than likely I’d have time to kill  
When facing pathways posted: DO NOT ENTER!

I’ve failed to take advantage of the gifts  
Profusely strewn along my winding path,  
But if the fog of self-absorption lifts,  
I might behold a brighter aftermath.

Matt Anstett

**Low Tide**

The Cicada In Your Ear  
Restless  
Even on the coldest night  
Buying  
Lululemon Board Shorts with  
Pink Triangles and a  
Three Quarter Open Bottle of  
French Toilet Water  
Cock out on eBay

It doesn't sate  
the deafening years  
of boy bands, nightcore ballads, music for the girls  
and other faggoty odes (though none less faggier than nightcore)  
and maybe

being the one they talk about  
as you imagine  
as you are  
wrapped in cute board shorts  
with those frilly triangles  
wearing french cologne  
in the pursuit of colon  
you consume to become

the shameless hussy

you paid for  
if only for the weekend  
from the job  
that pays for it

I've spent years selling cloud storage to businesses  
Just to sell myself

**In the line at Glo on the Saturday of Pride at 12:22 AM**

I may go in alone  
And walk out with someone.  
I might marry  
Likely not  
I may not even get in  
This fucking bar  
Waiting longer to get in  
Than to take a drink out  
And leave  
With someone  
Likely not

If there is a cover  
I'll leave this line entirely

Even if I stumbled on  
Forever tonight  
I'll die alone  
No cock  
Nor its tail variant  
Will fix that

There's a cover

# Lynda Scott Araya

## A Poem for Petra

The first time I met you  
You sat  
All hard edges, on edge  
Eyes the frigid blue of glacial ice.  
Your blonde hair sat fat upon your shoulders  
The elegance of the scarf at your neck  
Was pocked with dandruff  
Dead skin sloughed.

You spattered English  
Like harsh guttural shots  
Surprising yourself at the words so short.  
Without the picture book clarity of German:  
*Die Nacktshneke*, a slug is a naked snail  
*Der handshuh*, a shoe fit for a hand  
The words demanded a dictionary.  
You spat your words with effort  
Sharp bullets punctuating the air between us.

Over time, though, we became friends.  
Speak your German, you would tease  
And so, I would  
Perfect school-girl German:  
Wo ist die toilette?

We formed rituals:

The town's street markets in January  
Visits to the second-hand clothing stores  
High teas with china plates and  
Thinly sliced cucumber sandwiches.  
Once, in the pool changing rooms  
I glimpsed your shaved pubic region.  
I had looked away quickly -  
Embarrassed.

It was,  
If you excuse the pun,  
Too in the face for me,  
Too raw.

Then,  
I had thought that you had it all,  
Was jealous that your body played the game  
That it allowed you to wear matching bra and undies.  
So beautiful with their black lace, rich reds.  
Powerful.  
Like blood.  
Like death.

Beside you, I felt dowdy  
With a body shaped by children  
Underwear colours determined by cost.

In the same neighbourhood,  
We had cooked, laughed, discussed our men and their foibles,  
Books,

Religion and politics.  
When you moved away  
The friendship continued.

Until....

I told you that my son had died  
By his own hand  
In his garage  
One solitary chair kicked away.

You would call me back  
When you were less busy  
You said.  
You were at an international airport terminal  
In Germany to visit with family.  
The phone line was poor  
It shat shards of splintered words  
Thick rough and glottal.  
Your voice was disjointed  
Colder than ice  
Like the finality of a lonely metal gurney  
Carrying a lost life.

A week later  
And the funeral done  
I wondered  
How to gather up everything that there was  
With everything that had once been  
His birth, his life, and achievements.

His death.

His belongings were strewn over the floor  
Remnants of a young man leaving panicked  
And too quickly  
A refugee from his war within.  
An internal conflict he had never revealed.

There was a pile of shoes,  
Tongues falling slipshod out of gasping mouths,  
Jackets, sweatshirts, undies  
A tattered primary school spelling chart  
Dotted with tiny stars  
Curling up at the corners.  
A file of his academic certificates  
And his powerlifting medals  
Glinting gold.

Yet still you made no contact  
So, at 5am after he and I had sat in my dreams  
Trying to puzzle out the reasons why  
He did what he did  
After a walk again through his final day  
I looked you up on Facebook.

Without warning,  
There was no writing on the wall, the doors, the windows,  
You had blocked me.  
Numbed,  
I imagined you cutting me out of photographs,  
Binning the letters I had written

Gifts I had given and  
Deleting emails sent.  
As though you had never known me  
As though I had never been.  
You attempted to erase me.

Faced with raw bald sorrow  
Unsure how to act  
Of words to say,  
You had tossed me aside.  
A deliberate choice.  
An electronic crossing of the road.  
For you,  
Suddenly, I had the wrong family  
Had done the wrong thing.  
My grief, unknown to you  
Was now a threat.

15 years of friendship,  
I bawled to my husband  
And yet you had betrayed me  
Though we had shopped, eaten and gossiped.  
Watched my toddler outgrow clothes  
And grow into himself.  
In the end, that all counted for nothing.  
So callous and  
With no words  
You simply decided to end it all  
Coldly.

Now,  
I realise I had nothing to be jealous of  
All that time that I had thought we were friends.  
My unravelling of reason, of, for a while, being  
Was also yours.  
A friendship unraveled  
Forever  
Your honour gone.  
But perhaps  
Your conscience  
Still  
Nagging.

## Bud R. Berkich

**(drown)**

Outside  
the inside  
you've  
been  
living in  
side of  
a little  
too long

A strange  
new familiarity  
different  
from the  
not feels right  
you've known  
all too well  
a little  
too long

You're strong,  
right?  
(Enough)

This bad

good  
(a little)  
then

fall in  
(drown)  
get out

get back on--

## **Memo**

(to W.C.W.)

In William Carlos Williams's  
poem "The Yachts,"  
the yachters look straight  
ahead or not at all,  
oblivious to what lies  
just underneath.

The yacht, their symbol  
of wealth, power and security,  
will steady them through  
on course to that far distant shore.

Aye, but if it should bottom out,  
if it should spring a leak--

remember the Titanic.

Think.

## **End Song**

(In Memory Of Neil Peart, 1952-2020)

On the evening  
I first heard of your death,  
I listened to Signals  
once again;  
my introduction to you  
all those years ago

(the intersection  
of the perfect union  
of your precision playing  
and cutting edge lyrics  
in time and space),

and it seemed as though  
only a moment had passed  
before the last song  
"Countdown" was reached--  
all too quickly ended--

just like your life.

Cristina Marie Bernich

**The Blackness and Whiteness of Now**

It is the grief of the death of hope  
that seeps through the holes.  
A trickle, permeating, unnoticed,  
A drip drop of discouragement,  
A confounding culmination,  
Puddling, pouring,  
All that was in, full and spilling over.  
The in to the out.  
The flow feeding the fall.  
Roaring thunder mourning rain overflow.  
Drowning in a deluge of despair,  
Immersing dark the light,  
The peace,  
What was hope.  
Buried in the flood-muck and sludge of grief.  
Rooted and tangled in the mire,  
Faith swallowed, soaked and sodden.  
Left grieving in the flood plains'  
Barren black and whiteness of now.

## **A Slip of a Girl**

Just the bones, a slip of a girl, a fallen ghost of me  
my trusting heart long ago from this body did flee  
Leaving a dark faulted shadow where there used to be light  
Smothered by your pleading that no one should discover our  
plight  
To protect that fragile, gullible girl who couldn't possibly  
understand  
You spun your sticky webs while my buzzing questions you  
reprimand  
Arguing and reassuring yourself under your breathe while  
we drive  
your deception nurtured by naïve trust then still alive  
But glass houses do break and sand castles do crumble  
Feeble webs do tear and the honored one day will most certainly  
stumble  
Never again to stand  
never again to hold my hand  
without remorse in your eyes, without seething blame in  
your heart  
that your treachery was discovered, our sunny bluebird life just  
a farce  
Your carefully constructed world, just twigs of wishes and hopes  
stacked and teetering high  
with nothing to tether them, and no foundation to which they bind  
Tangled and piled sat all your brittle, spindly lies  
until she plucked one hard, and we fell, buried in a tumbling  
snarled mass never again to rise

Haunting me still, are those choices that were forever to be  
the end of my childhood, the end of me.  
Now left wandering, forever broken  
trusting not a promise, only fabrications I hear spoken.

## Sayan Aich Bhowmik

### **Somewhere Else**

I don't need alcohol to want you  
And you needn't be sober to refuse.  
You could just move your fingers  
Around the rim of the glass..  
Again and again  
Like the earth around the sun.  
I'd still be at the table  
Plucking the stars from inside your clothes.  
I'd still be at the table  
Working on the order of words  
To adorn that letter of parting  
I've been wanting to write.  
Isn't death another way  
Of being accepted somewhere else?

Larry Blazek

**The Land Grab**

someone has moved  
the portable chicken house  
that you built out of  
the dog house that  
someone built out of  
an old shipping pallet  
that looks like  
an outhouse  
a too -smooth man  
wants to purchase the land  
as far as the fence  
around the chicken house  
leaving you with a tiny  
splinter of land  
not big enough  
to use for anything

## **The New Rifle**

looks like the old one  
but it has special  
electronic cards  
that must be inserted  
with the magazine  
you aim out the window  
at an old oil filter  
in the trash  
the rifle fails to fire  
you get a cartridge  
to explode outside  
of the rifle  
you continue  
to tinker

## **The Young Artist**

has a desire  
to draw motorcycles  
he studied magazines  
and a catalog  
to observe details  
he goes to  
a motorcycles shop  
no motorcycles  
are displayed  
in the showroom  
the photos  
that once were displayed  
upon the wall  
are replaced by  
photos of a girl  
named Kyra  
taking up his sketch pad  
he leaves the shop  
walks by the  
members-only door  
a dark-haired man  
opens the door and asks  
if he is going to work  
he says no

## Edward Charles Bossong

### **Shutter**

Polaroid photos shimmer sentimental love  
Capturing vibrant memories in white-bordered cages  
A fluttering of images cascade their visual story  
Yet blind and despondent, deeper love exposed lighter

Ignited its corner, a flame catches hold  
Gripping the confined figures to seek their own refuge  
Colors once married spill dewey-eyed tears  
Dismantle all framework to prevailing embers

Packed cardboard box ruffled of its contents  
Vivid commemorations blackened.  
Devoid in meaning what once formerly soared  
Now rendered flightless, these disposable Polaroid keepsakes,  
But for the flick of feathered ashes  
Released into the wind

## **Alewife**

Broken people swallow the bottle  
Allow its glass to cut them only deeper  
Swish with Jack, Jim and Jameson  
Different sips have different trips  
Will their numbing fill your void  
When your last drink doesn't have  
A closed tab

Michael Lee Bross

**Las Vegas, Nevada**

*For Adrienne*

when I am old my love,  
and the seasons are sick

with the threat of loss,  
I will vacation in Vegas,

on the Strip, to pick showgirls.  
She'll be death as promised,

in a pink boa,  
she'll be a holy peacock

in this El Dorado made  
white lights and lipstick.

She'll dance to slots,  
curl into my lap like a genie

I rub for wishes, deep throat  
my ring finger and swallow.

She'll smell like candy and the womb.  
breasts too small, teeth too white,

Curves too thin, all leg  
and a birth mark. too wet—too perfect

too immortal to be a threat  
like you, my love, so great a danger.

So let Vegas deliver me baby,  
too much a coward to love  
and die last.

## The Magic Kingdom

The day Dad got AIDS  
we're plucked from school and packed  
into a Geo Prism, with the Goofy plushies,  
and overnight bags, a pilgrimage into the sun,  
counting the distance from home in license plates  
and the scroll of the pink and caramel sky.

Body heat burns us to sleep,  
heads rested in the hammocks of the seatbelt,  
dreaming car windows are Monorail's Plexiglas,  
Fantasyland rising in a halo of lost balloon,  
a triage of mouse ears and the damaged souls of vacationers,  
who come for the Miracles of this Wizard Walt,  
idol in brass, miracle man on a pulpit of awe,  
were we congregate in a mass  
circling in wishes, a fanfare of the fatal,  
wheelchairs whisked to the front,  
first in a fiction of flight

*"Come children of the world to this happy place!  
Come oh limping, oh amputated,  
oh lonely and polluted!  
Dream of magic mountains, scented in chlorine,  
And living cartoons. Dream of sing-song parades  
Oh you hitchhiking ghosts!"*

And come night,

with captured stars in sorcerer hats,  
we'll have forgotten, sold absence in Spectromagics,  
dancing brooms sweeping away the debris of our days.  
Sweep clean the blood and lost limp.  
Sweep clean into picture frames  
Where we are invulnerable,  
asleep in the hammock  
of my father's arms, starving  
while dining on the food of dreams.

## Summer Vacation

At 19, I finally got around to sex and I'm cool with the wait how a horse is cool with a full bladder. And on the day of the deed Pam ditches her parents and I shoplift a condom out of a porn store which is blue with a Superman wrapper and unwrap her from her t-shirt as if breasts were a birthday present, her teeth with braces grate against the shaft of my penis, I gag at the taste of her vagina and we grind like we're assembling a bicycle but the instructions are in Mandarin as I try to penetrate with my eyes closed for mood lobbing lawn darts and planting a few pokes into her pelvis bruising our trust on the sacred tradition of teenagers misunderstanding each other's mechanics because sometimes when I kiss I mistake it for the act for chewing my spit dissolves her tongue looking for flavor mistaking her for my own biology mistaking color for flavor and flavor for color firm in my belief that if blow jobs were a color they would be rainbows and fireworks but I'm bad at being a man because I am bad at invasions I can't climax because Pam fails to be the women I was raised on women mistaken for porn store mannequins but she can't bend backwards or twist her tits back like a cat falling and photo'd mid-flop, she doesn't slink, her underwear doesn't match her bra, she gets her foot stuck in her sock, winces from pain of the hymen snap and bleeds a trickle of blood that I am scared is made of death limping home on the one-good leg my father grinding from his body, as she lies still like a beautiful and boney pillow with too much truth in her biology and I'm making love to the rubber I mistake for her vagina, our sex set to "Me and Gun"—her pick—because I am made a weapon by my want, my want of my tongue tip to her nipple, my

finger tip to her clit, as if I could tell the difference between a clit and a horse, or a girl and joke whose punch-line is a real girl.

# Kathy Burgin

## **Infection**

I don't know how to navigate  
This new normal we now know  
I cannot wrap my head around  
The dread this virus grows

My mind is paused on frozen  
No plans, no hopes, no joys  
This ghastly threat around us  
And the sickness it deploys

Broken lies my lonely heart  
The people I love I so miss  
It's hard to keep a grateful soul  
When terror like this exists

I want to scream out and holler  
I'm fighting to punch back my fear  
As I try to get a handle on  
The madness occurring here

I must hold to my own mortality  
Stay home now and just lay low  
I'll be patient and kind and loving  
In defiance against this new foe!

## **Recovery**

Our world is crashing around us  
Consumed in a frenzy of fear  
We're steeped in angst and in worry  
For ourselves and those we hold dear

Life seems so stopped and silent  
Eerie in lack of display  
We need to rely on each other  
To get through these difficult days

Don't let the darkness deflate you  
Don't dwell in the well of despair  
Kindness stabs with its brightest light  
When each of us chooses to care

We share only one world amongst us  
As we travel this journey of life  
We need to ensure it continues to spin  
Without such division and strife

So, let's hear it for small acts of kindness  
Being mindful of each other's plight  
Old earth will discover a notable change  
A resurgence of peace, love and light!

Ryan Buynak

**eat the things that don't believe in you**

I wonder if trees know we exist,  
like humans, and specifically,  
you and me and love.

Do redwoods look down  
and know we are there?

Do cypress trees  
sit on their knees  
and see us hills or haunts?

Do willows weep  
for our treasons and triumphs?

Do old oaks wanna share  
their wisdom, but just  
don't know how?

I know tigers and fire  
both believe in us,  
because they eat  
our hearts, hungry.

Frames and furniture and firewood,  
all felt in the bark of the best,  
I feel it in my chest.

## **Sub-Suburbia**

Bourdain is rolling over in his grave  
as I devour this microwaved meat patty,  
watching terrible television,  
washing it down with generic sparkling water.

Tonight, I will have sweet dreams  
with sweaty legs, tossing and turning,  
running but not getting away,  
but right now this grin is made of lead.

Midnight means more to me,  
because I rarely see it these days;  
too tired, too wired, as the world is wild  
and getting crazier, therefore exhausting.

It's music and memories,  
coffee tables propping up my lazy legs,  
which walk with hands around green lands,  
where my tattoos stand out.

This is organized crime,  
trapped in hashtags and tiny acorns,  
bungled and bribed to be beautiful,  
but has my best interest.

The indecipherable sounds  
of baseball in the background,  
and wind chimes in the foreground;  
the place that I love is no longer my home.

## **Bowery Philosophers, We Were**

running up tabs  
and doing coke in the bathroom  
at the poetry club.  
jumping turnstiles to get  
to Willytowne and back  
before our midnight sets.  
we called ourselves  
visceral interns of the word,  
but we just helped Gary.

and mooched for beer,  
stage time, strange poet girls  
who wanted nothing to do with us.  
the young bucks,  
with the world by the balls,  
we pissed off the old beatniks.  
dancing this way  
and that,  
we gave our poems to people on the rumbler.  
Tom put his under  
the windshield wipers  
of all the cars on Bleecker.  
happiness was still  
attainable, even if  
it was just behind the bar.  
the loud jazz of the city  
was the soundtrack  
to the movie that was my young dumb life.

it was a blink of the eye  
in time,  
but it still lasts long into my nights.

## Mehmet Büyüktuncay

### **Havoc Wrought**

The asphalt, the pavement, the cement blocks  
are evolving; they are transforming into fragile  
cracked clay pots  
out of which wild weeds creep forward  
with the force of a coil spring in a haiku,  
brave and resilient in deep reticence  
proceeds the wilderness  
into the very heart of civic virtues,  
surfacing as the dandelion, the thistle, the mold, the virus.  
The meek and the long subdued  
are paying off a score with hefty thorns,  
a layered thickness of parasites and poison seeds  
to crown the fake industry of numbers out,  
to weed out the concrete plants of incarceration,  
to pave the way for the procession of the elder races,  
the earthbound giant species  
from non-human times,  
bringing on a lost language of the earth  
spoken in inhuman syntax.  
In the rage of the wild on the anthropocene  
resounds the wrath of Tomyris on the ill-starred Cyrus II,  
the Massagetaen blow on the abusive Persian patriarch  
that ended in blood libation.  
There sure is pattern in decay

and purity in rebirth is to be sought.

Yet, goes the ancient wisdom,  
matriarchal violence is a big tamer,  
not a pretender for any earthly throne,  
as with earthquakes, eruptions, pests  
and the relentless uproar of storming winds.  
It is thus no genocide  
but an urgent call for change  
leading into a sincere arena of work,  
of cooperation, human and non-human,  
of interplanting perennial seeds towards  
mutual existence,  
towards the garden of three sisters

where the stalks, the vines, the mulch,  
companions of the same big plot  
empower a hive politics  
over the infodemics of autocracy  
with the urge to wind up into the sunlight,  
to poultice the scraped skin,  
to mend the broken bones,  
to save the human race from iron lungs.  
To exist demands bitter methods  
learnt after witnessing epic havoc wrought.

## R.T. Castleberry

### **Walking Out**

Clouded spring,  
I slip on twice-worn jeans,  
high top Chucks, ironic uniform shirt.  
Mingled musk of hibachi barbecue,  
wheat beer, Marlboro lights  
press balcony and stairs.  
Leveling whine of a service dog,  
twist of a Piaggio scooter  
disturb the courtyard.  
Stepping to the sidewalk,  
a rushing whistle warns as  
downtown rail lights a lane of  
oak limb overhang,  
  
painted chains and guard posts.  
Open hours, no work for the week,  
I take the liquor store sip.  
Walking to the car, I weave  
across root crack sidewalk,  
stretch a weary, shaking hand  
to drop spare coins into a beggar's palm.  
Blood shadow darkness carves  
a high rise Southern horizon.  
Tension seals the day.

## **The Season We Knew Sickness**

In the spring, we reap a smaller harvest,  
roast pigs on empty playing fields.  
We read from the plague Bible,  
clean gutters with firebomb and bone.  
The ring hangs loose on the lover's hand,  
ribbon twisted tight on a supplicant wrist.  
Winter scars seal on sunlit skin.  
The plague summons is absent cause or penalty.  
The chase continues in rain, a gritted fog.  
Mastiffs scatter suspects across the hills.  
No harm, little charm in the plague roses.  
They grow gruesome along forest battle trails.  
We cross the headwaters of the plague river,  
drink as anointed, drained of spite.  
Take the bridge. Take a ferry.  
We'll scrape the caves of lamentations.

Jamie Ann Colangelo

**Blizzard Here – Tropical Breeze Elsewhere**

Expectedly and furiously  
The blizzard snow came barreling in  
The news forecasted it correctly  
Yet, mom, nanny, aunt, didn't listen  
Off they went to a bridal shower  
From Queens to Brooklyn by subway train  
To partake in the event for hours  
From Brooklyn to Queens by subway train  
Trying to return to a warm home  
Stuck overnight, with themselves to blame  
No service, no connection, no phone  
On foot, they travelled, home their aim  
Braving the freezing cold and wet snow  
I wonder what their thoughts might have been  
And how they kept themselves on the go  
Perhaps, a fresh pie from the oven  
Or a tropical island escape  
Lying on the white sandy beaches  
Soaking up all the heat they could take  
Caressed by fresh and balmy breezes

## **Snowflakes**

Clouds engorged with more like me  
Release us into brisk air  
Floating ever so gently  
We make our earthly descent

Lightly, setting down  
On ground that awaits  
Blades of grass still brown  
Our new resting place

Glistening in the suns' rays  
Bouncing off each ice crystal  
Melting slightly in the day  
'Till the evening cold sets in

A bright new day calls  
Childrens' laughter surrounds  
Rolled into a ball  
Thrown up in the air

Smashing down on hardened ground  
Quickly, falling back to earth  
No more a mass of snowflakes  
Ice crystals are now rebirthed

## Ushiku Crisafulli

### **The Language of Lies**

Society's fucked up,  
but how do we handle this?  
Allow me to take a step back  
and play the role of analyst.  
Linguistic Leonardo,  
words are my easel.  
They pull shit together,  
I decimate evil.  
Poetic anarchist,  
allow Indigo to handle this  
I grope the grotesque  
so I can have my hand on it.  
I see past the division with my IMAX vision  
my lyrics are my TARDIS as I make my incision  
on society, in all it's notoriety  
I let out a primal scream **\*growl\***  
and I won't go quietly.  
You see the language of lies is intellectually insidious  
my soul hijacks radio waves to make sure you're hearing us,  
poetic piracy but it ain't plain sailing  
I'm like Robin Hood as I challenge our assailants.  
So even though the perjury is very well encrypted,  
I'm a son of Turing, so I shall resist it.  
I leave you split like the atom then I fire bard ballistics.

You say resistance is futile,  
I say it's fertile.  
Your threats are as weak as your minds are puerile,  
you say brainwashed, I say brain-infected  
there's nothing clean about corruption  
in fact it's septic.  
But your corrosion is nothing more than a placebo  
every me beats every you every time that we go.  
So bring it,  
you can't wing it.  
When clipped wings heal,  
we're rowing and we're sowing as we glide toward greatness  
authentic as our auspices so you can't take this.  
So quit your mama jama our goals are MC Hammer,  
I didn't stutter stammer – you can't place it in a planner  
it's organic,  
you're in panic – cos you just can't touch this...  
I laugh at the schemers and yell  
“I'll disrupt shit”.  
I'm a wave of flashing lights when you're feeling delirious,  
I discard my scars like Why So Serious?  
You use words free market, when it's really an oligarchy  
then you call it trickle down as you commoditise essentials.  
You call yourself job creators – then accept workfare,  
if work truly pays then end corporate welfare.  
I can feel the force awakening as there's no pennies left to drop,  
you gave them all to Disney for them to set up shop,  
while Google dodge tax... like Saville dodged convictions  
and Rotheram? They just get let off the Abu Hamza.  
I'm free flowing, so no change of stanza.

You call it grooming when nothing is improved  
just a paid off judge and kid that's abused.  
You call yourself pro-life but you're really pro-birth  
cos when a poor kid is born then what are they worth?  
To you? Yes, in the eyes of the insidious they're just a number  
for sociopaths they're just booty to plunder.  
Anyone who challenges the system's a pariah.  
They're crazy,  
you're a bunch of Bowser bozos,  
society's Daisy.  
I'll create a rainbow road from your entrails,  
I'll tell you what that entails...  
It's the ending of injustice,  
a gift from God that's amongst you:  
that's Ushiku – I wear the name proudly  
I'll protest evil loudly  
and do it publicly too.  
The Indigo Angel binds crooks for eternity,  
I'm ending this nightmarish enmity  
all lies in wake are my vanquished enemies.  
To truly beat evil... you must leave the demons eviscerated...  
cos humanity's my church **\*choral sounds\***  
and I shan't see it desecrated...  
BITCH!

## Lyndsey Collison

### **That Familiar Song**

Today I heard you on the radio  
It felt like you were talking to me  
I thought my mind already let you go  
That my heart already set you free

Then that song begins to play  
The song that brought back memories  
Our song when things were going our way  
That song that made you fall in love with me

The tears begin to fall  
I want to change the station  
But I hesitate and stall  
My thoughts filled with such irritation

Why do I let this song get to me  
Then the thought crosses my mind  
This song brought you to me  
When our love was blind

## **You Make Me Smile**

When the world shuts me out  
Your right there to lift me up  
When I let out a loud shout  
You remind me to let up

When my world is falling apart  
You just hold my tears in your hand  
You love me with all your heart  
Always giving me a safe place to land

Without you to come home too  
Where would I be  
Honestly, I have no clue  
Finally, for once I am allowed to be me

## Noah Count

### **Where Dreams Go To Die**

Hate, that's where  
And, you want a fine line,  
how about, retribution and revenge  
Now there's a nano line,  
makes the love/hate demarcation  
the chasm of despair it was meant to be

Linda M. Crate

**an angry god**

if you didn't want chaos  
you shouldn't have  
broken bread with loki's daughter

you wanted someone you  
could control,  
someone who would bend to your  
every whim and desire;  
someone who wouldn't question  
your motives—

big bad wolf was actually a puppy  
hoping there would be no murder  
of ravens to slaughter him,  
but i am not the chickadee you wanted;  
rather the immortal of the flame  
the phoenix whose tears don't only heal  
but whose wings will burn vampires into ruin—

you joked that a vampire shouldn't be  
sent to buy the garlic,  
but i don't need that to slay you;

i have the power to defeat you in my wings

and i will afford you as much mercy as you spared me:  
none—  
& i will not be sorry for it,  
i'll send you back to your bride death  
laughing;  
because i'm an angry good.

## Shawn Creech

### **Of Ghosts and Goals**

"Of Heritage and Hate" (part 1)

Like screeching and moaning freight cars lurching forward  
through endless nights.

Shrieking and howling past transgressions at the dark-thirty of  
history's horizon.

Wishful thoughts and thoughtless gestures weep at hopes of stoic  
measures that reap the countless spoils of pointless treasures.

Unrelenting rot in soil 'till it's tilled and newly roiled, torn asunder  
and freshly nurtured.

"Of Change and Compromise" (part 2)

A nightmare born of dreams and the means to quiet the screams, a  
silent stalker that never sleeps so in your own home you fear and  
flee.

It gnaws at the very fabric of the spirit like the gnashing of teeth at  
the resolution of battles.

The sword was the shield but now the sword is the pen to shield  
us from a self fulfilling end.

Now we grow our olive branches but must understand the distrust  
of bloody hands that cultivate stolen lands.

## **Earth**

When tides retreat along a rocky shore,  
Where ranges cloak the ending of the day,  
Survival, so sublime; a seldom bore,

With engineering cogs of molten core  
And windswept pines that genuflect and sway,  
When tides retreat along a rocky shore,

The droning bee, its nectared honey-chore  
And birds in ceaseless flight that never stay,  
Survival, so sublime; a seldom bore,

The rise of Man brings science to the fore  
And animals are reared to hunt and play ,  
When tides retreat along a rocky shore,

Of fishing-lines cast out to catch a score,  
Of flowers blooming, celebrating May,  
Survival, so sublime; a seldom bore,

Now pollinated, seedlings start to spore  
Producing cities set across the bay,  
When tides retreat along a rocky shore,  
Survival, so sublime; a seldom bore.

## Mike Croghan

### **invaded**

get out of my house  
take off those shoes  
they're not yours  
spit out that sandwich  
i made it  
not you  
DON'T TOUCH MY DOG  
why is he letting you pet him  
you with your stranger smell  
you with your stench  
give me back my phone  
don't you dare text my friends  
my family  
THEY ARE NOT YOURS  
get out of my skin  
let me back in

## **wickedness**

the stigma had been stitched to him  
since he was six and skinned his knees  
ascending quick the crooked tree  
to nest and see and sense

the neighbor kid  
who flicker-lit from kindled wick  
eked eden from a cherished book

he arched his neck to nick a look  
until he slipped and skidded  
sinking

then the sidewalk kissed him  
and he cried out loud  
and slowly drew a crowd

they always called him wicked and  
as nicknames went this sucked  
and stuck

as week and decade sunk and died  
he staked out sin as his, like ink  
soaked deep inside his skin, in sinew

wickedness defined his psyche  
itched and tickled at his sides

until he dined on wine and liquor  
wed himself to growing sicker

embraced his pain and bitterness  
like weeds wound round his neck and breast  
he knit himself a thick and sticky shroud of styx  
and sewed his bones inside

sixteen septembers after  
the kid from that old luckless scene  
shows up and snickers at the trick  
and all the broken moments since

and offers him a warm and wayward hand  
beneath a dewy eye  
and wide and wicked grin

## Why We Roam

This was late July, you know?  
So what I'm saying is:  
Damn hot outside. I mean  
Just really flippin' hot outside  
Ridiculously hot outside  
You know? The air so thick and humid  
Burning on my skin like fever sweat  
And blackening my mood

OK, I'm pushing this old mower  
And I'm wearing shorts and flip-flops  
'Cause it's hot outside  
(I mentioned that, I'm pretty sure)  
And so I get to this back corner  
Of our yard, this one dark corner  
Back between the shed and fence  
That's almost always in the shade

I kinda shove the mower back there  
Really quick, because  
That gloomy corner sort of  
Creeps me out. You know?  
The weeds grow extra thick there  
Even though the sun can barely  
Shine. And so I shove, and feel the first  
Hot stinger pierce my tender foot

And then it's like the flippin' blitzkrieg  
Man, they're coming fast as lightning  
Goddamn yellow-jackets  
Jamming fiery toxic daggers  
In my feet and toes and ankles  
Even underneath my sandal straps  
I did what any normal man would do  
You know? I turned and ran like hell

Now roughly two or three hours after this  
My wife comes home from work  
She finds me sitting in the living room  
With ice packs wrapped around my feet  
Of course, she wonders why, and also  
Why the lawn's half-done. So I  
Explain, and say there ain't no way  
I'm going back to get that mower

So, she rolls her eyes and goes  
To get the mower, then two minutes later  
She comes running back and says  
I didn't see your yellow-jackets  
But there must have been  
Eight copperheads! The one  
Coiled on the mower struck at me  
And I'm not going back out there, uh-uh

I figured she was mocking me  
(Despite my glaring stinger-wounds!)  
So I got up and winced

(My poor feet called me dirty names)  
I went back out there to that corner  
And I wish I didn't have to get  
So close before I trusted my own eyes  
We're seeing crocodiles

I turned and went back to the house  
My wife and I grabbed weapons  
We approached the corner carefully  
I can't remember which I noticed first  
The smell of sulfur or the smoke  
But when the reddish-purple demon-thingies  
Flexed their wings and turned our way  
We ran, and we will NOT go back, uh-uh

# Ginger Dehlinger

## **Room of Doom**

I enter this chamber of horrors  
three times a day,  
dreading the torture of its  
buzzing, screeching, whistling things,  
hissing griddles  
and razors that prefer my blood  
to that of the tomato.

Choppers and beaters roar  
like Sikorski war machines,  
slaughtering whatever comes near.  
They are especially fond of fingers.  
To avoid their slashing blades  
I switch to a stealthy grater  
but end up bloodying my knuckles.

Hot, hot, hot!  
Gas broiler and indoor grill  
throw tongues of flame  
as they try to incinerate me.  
Tea kettle scalds  
oven rack bites  
fryer spits blisters.

Merely a rib of the one I serve,  
I receive no medals  
for vanquishing these conspirators  
that lie in wait for an opportunity  
to ambush my modest objective  
of putting a meal on the table.

## **A Rose Is a Rose Is a Weed**

Noble bloom, pride of queen and pharaoh,  
centuries of breeding grace your face.  
A blueblood now your palette runneth over  
on velvet petals crowning shapely legs.

Yet ancient meadows tell of baser roots,  
of tangled limbs and blossoms pale and small,  
a prickly past your breeders cannot stem  
nor halt the thorny legacy you bear.

Aristocrat of weeds, your rowdy cousins  
ambush country fences, blight the harvest.  
Outlaws from distinguished family tree  
or spoilers of your pretty pedigree?

You blush at such denouement (*tres outré!*)  
and pucker lipstick petals for a kiss,  
seducing those naïve to the deception  
with mesmerizing wafts of French perfume.

## **A Bar Stool's Lament**

Though I have no acorn memories  
I cherish those from my mighty days—  
birds nestled in my arms in spring  
brow warmed by summer's rays.

Cloaked in gnarly sun-bronzed skin  
I stood tall on a hard-as-granite stalk.  
My deep underground footing  
made me solid as bedrock.

Then along came the saw  
the planer, the lathe.  
Spindled and stained I'm furniture now  
with a bar as my grave.

Legs wrap around my legs  
nervous legs jiggle.  
Butts of all sizes warm my seat  
and bare thighs make me sweat a little.

How I ache for my forest home—  
smoke-free, no bright lights  
no twangy tunes  
keeping me up all night.

Polish me, please  
stroke my gorgeous grain.

Don't scrape your muddy boots on me.  
Sit lightly, honor my roots, feel my pain.

Abby DeSantis

**abandoned house**

abandoned house  
shuddering on the hill  
waits for golden rays  
to warm shivering walls  
tangled cobwebs dangle  
in stagnant silence  
mangled silhouettes  
*vestiges*  
of forgotten lives  
cracked windows  
bitter shards of glass  
colorless fragments  
*reflections*  
of shattered dreams  
peeling wallpaper  
stained with tears  
faded distortions  
*remnants*  
of empty promises  
abandoned house  
shuddering still  
echoes the history  
of lives unfulfilled

## **old woman**

she stares at her reflection  
tracing the lines and hollows  
of her hands and face  
her beauty weathered  
by time and age

prophetic eyes looking  
backward bespeak  
memories bittersweet  
forever etched in  
the furrows of her mind

pieces of her paper soul  
torn into tiny fragments  
broken and scattered  
in the shadowy abysm  
of time and thought

lost never to regain  
she takes refuge  
in her solitude  
silently listening  
to the echoes of her youth

## **monochromatic musings**

listening to the distant disquiet  
enveloped by a tattered quilt  
I gaze at the ceiling  
wall papered poppies dancing  
in shadows of a flickering streetlight  
amorphous shapes beguiling  
altered silhouettes seducing  
from the sweet temptation of slumber  
I avert my eyes  
seeking solace  
in the dark penumbra of the moon  
against the tenebrous starless skies  
monochromatic musings fill the night  
was Cain banished to the Land of Nod  
or forever doomed to circle the earth  
as the man in the moon  
was Eve led astray  
by half-truths and self-deception  
am I too in danger of eating forbidden fruit  
or do I share her hopeful promise  
unburdened  
as the night turns into day  
beginning to understand the truth  
I surrender  
to the furrows of my unmade bed

## John DeSantis

### **negative spaces**

dog lying in the congruent folds of her body  
her legs languishing in fitful sleep  
he watches them there  
silently thinking of black holes  
and alternate universes  
dimensions within dimensions  
are they numbered ad infinitum  
reflections of reflections  
before and after regarded  
behind and in front of  
the barber's chair  
do they reflect forever  
or do they finish in spaces  
unseen and untouched  
negative spaces more potent  
than the visible ones refracted  
in the spectrum of seen light  
unseen visions sweeter more  
than visible ones and mind  
meandering around the edges  
of his imagination go  
for the name of spaces  
negative but as they posit  
in the mind his mind

your mind my mind  
the conscious appears  
from out the unconscious  
collective of all the spaces  
we are wont to call negative

## William Doreski

### **Freewheeling**

Bicycling downstream on back roads  
from Walpole to Keene I feel  
as supple as well-worn suede.  
With grave ancient empathy  
the brown hills flex in the breeze.  
Brooks twinkle in gutters of stones.  
The roads pour down through valleys  
scraped by glaciers, smoothed by age  
to resemble flesh folded on flesh  
after acts of bristling love.

I remember everything: turtles  
basking in the emerald marsh,  
herons lancing the ooze for newts,  
minnows shivering like chain mail.  
That was the moment I became  
the self that bicycles downhill  
at terrible speed, lathering  
shadows that surf across landscapes  
with reckless but actual purpose.

I haven't plied that marsh in decades;  
but as I flash past wooden houses  
that withhold their grim expressions

I free myself from scalded cities  
and silt-encrusted suburbs  
of the adulthood I've never earned,  
and let a single note fly.

No one hears me or cares if  
I crash into a friendly boulder  
dumped from an ice sheet ages  
before I fully evolved. Knit  
and purl of the last bird call  
caresses the flight I've taken  
from one lost town to another—  
the roads left clutching their scripts  
and the small uncharted places  
fulfilled for one sunny moment  
while treefrogs gather their breath.

Alex Edwards-Boudrez

**The Plague of COVID-19**

Too much Merlot is slowing me down...  
humor has left me behind  
faded in a Twilight Zone fog  
and drowned in NBC's phlegm.  
Insidious symptoms ravage  
my digestive and nervous systems,  
and lodge their permanent effect  
deep in my primal brain stem.  
We will all be one with the alligators:  
we will live through this and on forever  
along with the cockroaches that feast  
on the craven and callow myopia.  
Such is the evolution of our times:  
a frightening, accelerated return  
to the glory of the emperor Nero  
raising a toast to his consuming dystopia.

## Carousel

I want to plant a little garden in myself  
of indispensable things to cultivate—  
I'm overwhelmed by possibilities,  
infinite, coursing through  
my paralytic fantasy head—  
Tightness tingles just above  
my ankles I stroke  
my eyebrows rhythmically  
spinning on this carousel  
posting up and down my stomach,  
excited, sinks—  
I whiz by you  
in your stillness firmly planted  
in the fertile soil you grow  
an ever-evolving life  
with roots and aspirations—  
an inspiration for my jealousy  
and shame of missing my chance  
again and again in revolutions  
of whizzing and spinning and sinking  
and clinging and clinging  
and never letting go—

Lynette Esposito

**Addressing the Issues of Veterans**

*A Poem in Response to: A Veteran for Bernie Digital Print by  
Dr. Kurt Bonze*

The logic of the analysis is always the same

It is

RED.

What price is paid?

What happens to retired soldiers

when the

WHITE

paperwork is processed?

How many steps are free? How much

Help is needed? Who comes forward with

a workable solution?

What price are we willing to pay signed in

BLUE

ink on multiple dotted lines,

A cup of coffee from WaWa? A gym membership?

A job, insurance, practical things?

These are not political questions.

These are humane questions on how to protect our protectors?

We should shake the veteran's hand. Stand with them.

Share an experience, a story,  
Sit on the cement steps. Look them in the eye like family.  
Share the burden of war like cousins.

## **Untitled**

Sky birds fly above  
tigers' flight from fire's rage,  
unafraid of smoke.

Melissa Esposito

**The Dating Game**

Hi, my name is,  
Hey, I'm,  
What do you do for fun, for a living?  
Answers I'll never remember,  
Questions I've prepared like flash cards.  
Names I don't bother with.  
Because really, none of them compare to you.  
And I know, I know I'm not supposed to do that, to compare.  
But when you're driving late at night listening to Taylor Swift's  
"All Too Well"  
It's impossible to not think of you.  
I don't even know why I bother to remember you instead of them.  
They are here, they are willing, when you weren't.  
You were scared.  
Until I meet someone that can sweep your memory under the rug  
in my brain,  
I will continue to play this game.

## **To The Boy I Loved In Mexico**

I should have left you there,  
With the sun, and the sand, and the tequila.  
But I didn't.  
I couldn't.  
I carried my feelings home for you like a souvenir.  
They weighed my suitcase down, crammed in between my bikinis  
and skirts.  
I almost had to pay for overweight baggage.  
There were two thousand miles and a screen between us.  
But then it wasn't two thousand miles,  
It was a plane ticket, a time difference, just for now, not forever.  
It was meet the family, and long stemmed roses, and I love you.  
It was a long-term puzzle and future plans.  
And then it wasn't.  
Twenty-four hours after whispering I love you into the phone,  
You used the same whisper to tell me you were a coward.  
You were scared, you were giving up, you were a boy.  
And now it hurts to breathe, hurt to think.  
Now it's fingers shaking, ten pounds lost, dry heaving into a toilet  
bowl at three a.m.  
And you're fine.  
You're fine.  
I was a sugar skull you picked up in the gift shop, beautiful, but  
not something you  
planned to keep forever.  
Nothing more.  
Like the tequila bottle,

You should have come with a warning:

Consume responsibly.

Just like the drowned, engorged worm at the bottom of Mezcal,

I wish I never tasted you.

## Timothy Paul Evans

### **Longwall**

tides mingle,  
fatigued of night,  
shearing half remembered  
dreams: heroic utopias  
clamoring down rabbit  
holes searching for  
the next “big thing”  
Gideon’s Bible lies  
unopened in a peeling  
wallpapered motel drawer  
(guess there’s no one  
needing saved today)  
distilled into an icon  
of mom-and-pop  
American Flyer-Red  
Ryder downhill slide.  
a dingy-grey bed sheet  
“praying 4 our Miners”  
bows its head and weeps

Paul Ferrell

### **The White Apple**

The shape. The shape of an apple. I'm out of shape and I drain the apple until it's white. All of this sexless grinding. A head full of exploited stars. All of this breathing is like a full time job. You never learn to bite the hand that feeds you because they don't teach biting in school. A sharp right turn with burning rollover symptoms. You wake up one morning and your body is on the other side of the room and you apologize for being late.

## Tom Fillion

### **No Shoes, No Socks, No Funeral Service**

There was a large, barefoot man  
walking his dog  
during the coronavirus pandemic  
he had on a striped, tank top  
and khaki shorts  
he stepped gingerly over sidewalk cracks, roots,  
grass, asphalt, and cobblestone  
the muscular white dog on a leash  
followed suit and social distance  
both seemed oblivious  
to any contagion  
the contagion preferring unwashed hands  
and open mouths  
instead of bare feet or paws  
hardened and callused by the ground  
behind my flimsy, cotton mask  
that filtered and shuttered  
the invisible virus  
lurking everywhere  
I whispered  
to the contagion  
no shoes, no socks, no funeral service  
for takeout or delivery:

## **Pandemic of Lies**

The real pandemic,  
the pandemic of lies  
started on inauguration day  
Sean ‘Dancing With the Stars’ Spicer  
Spun his podium  
about crowd size  
truth and facts were  
shredded into a Whopper  
and a Happy Meal  
of American carnage  
every lie since then  
has increased  
as a logarithm of acquiescence  
and culpability  
those infected with the first lie  
have let it incubate and fester  
with impunity  
simple truth and facts got quarantined  
at the border  
like children in cages  
repetition, false flags of praise  
and patriotism, bluster  
and bigotry  
have scarred, fissured, and blistered  
the american landscape  
they have no known antidote  
or test kit

except for truth  
and veracity  
which are living elsewhere  
disguised in exile  
waiting to be repatriated

Robert Fleming

**Earth becomes Venus**

rain to snow  
a promise made long ago  
birds sing Turn, Turn, Turn  
in the galaxy's foremirror earth's destiny  
Venus, a planet of CO<sub>2</sub>  
as earth & Venus remain miles apart,  
they turn closer in CO<sub>2</sub>,  
when im no more,  
the snow wont fall,  
the earth ends in CO<sub>2</sub>

## **dear chemistry teaching assistant**

If chemistry lab is life,  
    i choose Death -  
Boil poison into a beaker,  
    down the throat with a pipette -  
until, until,  
my electrons buzz,  
my arms break ten test tubes,  
dont make me separate H<sub>2</sub>O,  
Again, into H & O,  
leave my protons alone,  
my pulse pulses to a puddle,  
nd my remains r neutrons.

## Joanne Kennedy Frazer

### Sea Change

Off-water wind too brisk for my comfort,  
I sit at the cottage window to watch ocean life.

Waves curl into themselves  
roll over, break onto ebbing tides.

Brown pelican queue leans left,  
wings sailing along surf bends.

White gull grasps, gulps  
a still-wriggling fish.

Exquisite sand art sculptures  
wash away, licked by tidal tongues.

House finches in winter brown  
coats chitter on the deck railing.

A submerged truth drifts  
to the edge of my reverie:  
rising sea levels  
will drown this house,

wipe out its memories.  
Our era has disregarded  
the evidence.

## Tony Gentry

### **It's Easy To Fret Over Failure**

It's easy to fret over failure. It's American as apple pie.  
I do it. Every time an old classmate makes the Times.  
Roads not taken, opportunities waved away, fear.  
You look back and can't imagine what brought you here.  
A faded Kodak with the rippled edges of a fat boy  
smug in a row of cousins in a jumble of plastic toys  
looking into the lens and the face behind it with just --  
Well you can read what you want in that pudge,  
a hint of the tremble to come in the chin, the creases  
at the eyes. They call that callow youth, who sees  
the highway not the ruts, the pie and not  
the rolling pin, the venison not the guts.  
Except, that something in the chin and lips,  
a shadow at the eyes, checking the box for a slip.  
I guess that was me, but who can say?  
And the thing is, what you forget today  
is where you were, what mattered when the call came.  
You forget that you knew epiphany by name,  
threw off your clothes on mountaintops and sang.  
Sought what seemed true at the time, what really rang  
beyond the phone. Maybe you ran on heart,  
misjudged, screwed up, never knew where to start.  
Maybe you didn't do your best, never found your voice.  
Threw days away and friends like so many plastic toys.

Figured that ending up tired at dusk meant a job well done.  
Figured that leaving any place only meant you'd gone.  
It's easy to fret over failure. To think of what might have been.  
It's easy to stitch up a different life with different decisions  
that add up to wins. If you'd turned to the mountains instead of  
the coast. If you'd partied least and studied most.  
If you'd followed the road that ran through the trees  
instead of the one that seemed, for you, a breeze.  
It's easy to fret and easy to wince at  
what's left of you today, when at last you glimpse  
through the camera lens a telescoped perspective  
to the choices you'd make, the chances you'd take,  
in a fat boy on the floor among relatives.

## Door to the Floor

When I shut the light another appeared  
like a louvered door to the floor  
running south to north at the foot of our bed.

In that tremulous hour when I woke and tossed  
got up with my twanging frets, what's that?  
The door was gone, another imprinted  
exactly the same but beamed down now  
from the west-facing pane, a tic then a toc  
of that slow lunar trek.

Which helped somehow re larger tossings  
than my own, that roil in the heights of  
night in that place we call space.

It's good to feel small.

It helps to be framed by the milky wash of  
moonlight in your windows.

That finger pointing here then here  
that marks your place, conducts  
a silent lullabye:

*Now sleep and heal  
awaken and reel.*

*If tomorrow the sky  
is clear I'll peek  
in again to tuck you in  
tut-tut your  
swollen fears.*

## **How Puny All We Perceive**

Our eyes bathe in waves  
an ocean of light  
but along the crossed trail  
to the back of our heads  
look at all that's lost.

The lens warps.  
The processor pixillates.  
What they say about the workman  
and his dull tools.

Envy hawks their piercing gaze,  
gulls that glare through glare.

Same with our dogs  
and the maze of molecules their long snouts  
sniff, decode, and categorize

or whales so weird  
we shiver to go there --  
how they sing along with mates  
a world away.

We sure do miss a lot.  
And what if that's part of this longing  
for some heaven? After all, right here  
in the kitchen it's all too much.

I mean, look how little we get.  
As if someone has whittled us pencil sharp  
to just this width of line  
despite our telescopes and audiometers,  
our smellotrons and force plates,

slotting us into this pinched  
particular area of investigation  
a little prison where we etch  
four lines and a cross then same  
on a wall another being with what  
we would call super powers  
might ascend beyond.

More than enough, really.  
Yet how we yearn, burn.

## F.I. Goldhaber

### **Normal Life**

You have a nice home to shelter in,  
food to eat, shows to stream, games to play.

You don't live with an abuser or  
parents who misgender you; insist  
your orientation is sinful.

Yet you complain you're deprived of your  
social life, restaurants, bars, park visits.

You don't need to risk your life and your  
loved ones for minimum wage  
without protection, sick leave, health care.

You've enough to pay your bills; credit  
cards to order online; connected  
devices allowing well-paid work.

But you miss the ball games, parties  
band performances, church services.

You don't shiver in the cold, snow, and  
rain under a tent if you're lucky,  
or just a cardboard box, or blanket.

If your throat is sore, your head feels hot,  
you can telephone your physician.

You don't have to stand in line for a  
clinic that sends you home when they run  
out of test kits. Or just keep working.

You know what the virus looks like, how  
to prevent exposure and illness.

You don't toil next to those who could be  
infected with no information  
how or supplies to protect yourself.

You fret about event and concert  
cancellations, missed graduations.

You don't worry about untreated  
broken bones; forced sex without access  
to birth control; deadly pregnancy.

The only people desperate for  
life to return to normal are those  
privileged to enjoy "normal" life.

## **Essential Services**

In normal times (remember those?)  
we buy most of our groceries  
at the local Farmer's Market.

Pandemic panic makes shopping  
dangerous, negotiating  
grocery store aisles fraught with peril.

Local Farmer's Markets devised  
plans to save growers, produce, those  
who still want healthy, tasty food.

Many can't risk encounters with  
selfish, shoppers oblivious  
to social distancing orders.

As food purveyors, the market  
qualifies as an essential  
service, now safer than most.

Dedicated managers have  
designed pre-ordering systems,  
plotted lowest contact options.

No wandering to see what might  
be available. No metal  
carts requiring disinfectants.

Farmers survive. Food doesn't rot  
in the field. Consumers thrive. Yet,  
some demand markets terminate.

They claim violation of the  
governor's stay-at-home orders  
for all but essential outings.

Demonstrating how in normal  
times Farmers Markets serve many  
purposes beyond food exchange.

Folks gather to catch up with their  
neighbors, listen to music, eat  
and drink with friends and family.

But for us and others, markets  
are just a source of fresh produce,  
meat, milk, bread, occasional treats.

Altered Farmers Markets permit  
healthier quarantine eating  
and ensure small farmers survive.

Those who come to hear music, dine  
al fresco, gossip with friends can  
return when quarantine's lifted.

## Hister Grant

### Untitled (1)

At times we float around the ceiling  
In our dreams,  
We good people,  
We're up there bumping around in our dreams,  
We are dumb and maybe a just little worried  
But mostly it's a gay time,  
These are shop's ceilings or school's  
Or occasionally, it will be a church hall's ceiling  
At a fete,  
The people in these rooms  
Always try their best to ignore us good people  
They usually keep their heads down,  
seeming a bit flustered  
But getting their work done in a fine productive manner  
Though there will always  
Eventually be some frustrated man or woman  
With a rod or a stick, trying clumsily  
To knock us good people down to earth  
But the dream will have none of it  
and we'll float out of the way  
this will make us feel guilty  
We good people don't like to disturb  
So we wake up  
And as we are slowly awakening from our reverie

feeling the floating sensation relax into our muscles  
The happy memories of skylarking  
Are soured a little with the memory of having vexed

## Untitled (2)

Sometimes I hear the voice in my head  
Such as it is  
And I find it very strange  
An unstoppable chain of thoughts  
Anything:  
ideas,  
Pictures,  
Shapes,  
Colours  
All from nowhere  
And unstoppable  
All passing through my head  
It's very hard to explain  
It's like  
How bizarre it is  
To find the shape of a dog bizarre  
(All right angles)  
These questions thrust at me  
As bizarre and out of place  
As the things troubling me seem  
As bizarre and out of place  
as the whole world is  
'why is there something instead of nothing?'  
you could agree,  
but I would say  
unreality in extremis is a lack of size  
it cannot be reduced  
there are no parts of it

therefore it cannot be whole  
but then the next question  
how is anything?  
Because there is something  
instead of the impossible nothing  
if it wasn't this it would be that  
and if 'that' is impossible  
maybe everything is impossible  
but just less impossible than nothing

## **my viciousness**

have you ever gasped  
and pulled in the whole universe?  
at the sight of some loved one  
blinking out?  
their body slackening  
knowing death in that moment  
seeing the infinity of it  
in the face of someone  
you once knew

there is a moment  
between realisation and grief  
you can live in that moment  
shell shocked and able  
and long may it continue  
without humanity  
is the easiest way to be  
no words to put things into  
not daring to touch the morbid  
but it comes, it comes

and the sorrow will come  
as a gift from the gods  
humanity is being human  
and knowing death  
is the most human of all  
you are well in the sickness  
of agony

so cry a little  
as I remain cold  
my stony face  
in the face of the missing

I cannot cry  
and I do not care  
I cannot feel

## John Grey

### **Tight Connection**

Rare night of sleep,  
my head can't find a parking space,  
keeps going around in circles.  
No one's leaving apparently.  
Maybe I should stop where I am,  
block them all in.

Here is a tight connection  
to the good life  
except there's no place for me.  
And if I can't have it, nobody can.

I'm endlessly chewing gum.  
It's stuck to the insides of my mouth  
and resists all effort at spitting.  
Sure I can relate this  
to my current relationship.  
The effort. The waste.  
Damn commitments. Damn obligations. Damn gum.

I'm eating broken glass.  
Just like I do on the job.  
It's a hospital.  
I'm the doctor. I'm the patient.

The operation is a draw.  
And here comes a giant pretzel  
to symbolize my twisted perceptions  
when it comes to women in general.  
Where oh where can the pickle be?  
At least a giant penis would earn me some respect.

Rare night of sleep  
but my dreams are emotionally cosmopolitan.  
I'm being chased into a dead end.  
I don't even need my subconscious for that one.  
I'm falling. I'm falling some more.  
I've let myself down again.

And then I awaken.  
But the connection's too tight to let me go.  
I build a house of cards.  
I paint the house with a toothbrush.  
I'm frustrated. Then I'm humbled.  
Dreams, how right you are.

## **I Tried Listening to Music**

Music is sentient:  
sad bass's secret grave,  
tremolo's mocking tremor.

I listen to relax,  
adopt this aboriginal state,  
but my life catches up with me,  
as a new tune evokes the last tune.

My heart is here  
in its faded battle colors  
I owe its pain  
to the instruments of others.

Heidi C. Hallett

**Pattern Play**

Cornfield quilts reveal  
The contour of the land.  
Pattern play can have a lot to say.

A marshland weave may deceive.  
Intricate paths seem random  
Until learn to read.

Why did the lemmings jump?  
What incites the group to act this way?  
Migratory behavior they say.

Lemmings could react out of fear, another survival instinct.  
Read the signal that triggered the group.  
What caused it and why?

Is it a lie?  
What are you afraid of?  
Are you a lemming?

A “jumped” lemming can’t go back.

Better to try to adapt.

Analyze the pattern play.

Even step away.

## **Chez le Coeur**

Home base, safe from chase  
Family hearth space  
Home fires burning  
Home is where the heart is truly.

If flame-to-ash displaced,  
Memory coal carried  
To reshape, rekindle,  
Try to replace.

A new heart haven  
Same sun and moon  
Pero sol y luna  
Ou soleil et lune

Some memory coals fade,  
Slip and slide,  
Too hard to retrace.  
Sequestered in a secret place.

Coals asunder,  
Search for another glimmer space.  
Help from caring hearts  
At least creates a hint of grace.

There, but for a twist in fate,  
Go I.

## **Moonbeam**

The moon sees the Earth  
As a jewel in its onyx sky,  
A boulder opal with flash,  
Swirling clouds over sea glass.

For the moon, Earth shines  
And tracks time,  
A reassuring buoy,  
Partner crystals in space.

Near enough to gauge  
Change in the blue teal whirl.  
We know the moon feels  
The Earth's pull; an alliance.

Is there perchance another sense,  
Signals we can't trace?  
And so describe the moon as dense  
When density is depth in space.

## Sean Hanrahan

### Emma

Emma's psychedelic quilted coin purse—  
lays abandoned on trash day. It calls

to mind Anne of Green Gables on acid.  
The odd bag must have been dropped

after a drunken spree, while fiddling with groceries,  
or perhaps by a child practicing minimalism.

Admit it, we all like our names on things—  
the twirling thrill of us dangling

from a key chain, or sipping coffee  
out of mugs with our monikers. Often

,  
the key chains and the mugs feature  
illustrated, idealized scenes of places

we've been like when we carve our  
names on trees and benches. Humans need

to take ownership over time and space.  
The cute trinket, discarded, will be stepped

on soon. Emma will be swept away by a storm or  
a zealous garbage collector. I can see the

psychedelic quilted coin purse swirling down  
a drain. Emma on her last, grand, deteriorating

adventure. But for now, Emma is sunning herself,  
smug and pleased by her new dispossession, her

emancipation from holding grubby, unwanted coins.  
She frustrates the birds who initially think she's food,

but discover she's cottony.

Eventually, they will find another use for her,

and rip out the personalized stitching  
and the hippie-inspired patchwork

to build their nests.

Emma will become repurposed.

## **Mammoth Sunflowers in Francisville**

Mammoth sunflowers herald a new city age—uncurbed by man, taller than fantasy. So in love with this increasingly hotter sun, they are mutant beauties of climate change. They flourish in overgrown vacant lots in flowerpots of abandoned shoes, signs from failed political campaigns, Skittle wrappers, and Wawa coffee cups. Nature is fighting back against our waste—multicolored remnants of a former urgency we cannot recall—were we late to a sports game, perhaps? Closer than ever now to Armageddon as opposed to mid-twentieth century America. Kids can't even hide under their desks for this doom. The city seems intent on fast-forwarding to latter peopled days during this record-breaking summer. Barely any faces on these streets, just things. The birds and I miss spring as robins seek tepid bathwater leaking out of a Dasani bottle. I suspect there is this overwhelming feeling of thirst across the world now. A bunch of us miss the taste of natural strawberries or making pies out of rich soil. We've woken from our tasty dream and now confront the reality always

awaiting humanity. Skyscrapers sure, but no stars. Rain, but no relief or hydration. Flavorless food lasting forever, with us 'til we die. I walk through this new sense of emptiness. Hoping, at least, to spot a friend or a butterfly.

Jamila W. Harris

**STUCK!**

Now, you know how I feel  
To be stuck, for real  
Have to remain where you're at  
The new definition of TRAPPED!  
Can't go out, be on the scene  
Neo definition of COVID-19  
Can only spread love through a computer screen  
The new defining  
Of Computer Love  
Hope it doesn't crash, catches a Virus  
So, either way the Corona Virus, could still be spread  
Even from the confines of our homes and our beds  
Have to worship from our screens to our Glory  
Crying, sneezing, wheezing, difficulty breathing  
We're still affected by our respiratory's system  
Reminds me of the Criminal Justice system, Too  
So, here's my suggestion for you  
No matter what happens, or wherever you have a seat  
Even when they pressed DELETE!  
Whether you are WOKE or still in a deep sleep  
Your mind can still be free  
Internally, Mentally, Eternally, FOREVER!  
Whether, you're trapped or cuffed physically  
You can still fly, navigate through all frequencies

Be free as a bird, Like the Eagle in me  
Escape any prison, your soul can't be chained down  
And only when "YOU" decide to return  
That's TOUCHDOWN!

## Quest!

On a Quest to find my love  
Took a moment to realize, nearly forty years to look inside  
And see that my Quest started with “Me!”  
Mission now complete  
I love me, but still at the bus station  
Mission two of my next destination  
Man sat down next to me, and I feel his heat  
Opened my mind, conversations deep  
Suddenly next week, between my sheets  
Trying to wife me, playing for keeps  
But my heart still leaks  
And speaks to my ears  
Might feel lovely, but your Quest does not end here  
So, the next year , I’m still on this journey  
Full of desire, heart still burning  
Emptiness consumes my soul, I am still yearning  
Then next comes the one with the huge earnings  
Multiple dollars, and capable of making me holler  
Matter fact SCREAM! And did I mention again?  
About his CREAM  
Because Cash Rules Everything Around ME  
So glad that he found me  
But, sadly I still had to let him go  
Even with all that dead Prez  
Couldn’t fill that hole, that void in me  
So, I voided him too, you see  
Avoided everywhere that he could be  
Still on my Quest, what’s next

On this journey for me  
Then Suddenly! “She” arrives, catches me by surprise  
Never imagined I could be attracted to Misses, MS.  
But, she delivered to me the sweetest kisses  
Never did last tho, could you imagine two Bitches  
On that time of month, Right!?!?  
Only ended up in fights  
Will I ever date “Her” again , I don’t know  
I might!  
Don’t really know what to expect on this Quest  
Swear ,I love the one who shares the name on my neck  
But, He’s nowhere to be found  
So, maybe I’ll skip this town, or jump on the next Greyhound  
This journey may lead right back to me  
The Earth is round!  
So, I’ll settle with me, perhaps self-love is GREATER  
Or maybe I’ll continue this Quest later  
Or maybe that is it!  
The Alpha and Omega, begins and ends with “ME!”  
The only Quest that I needed to complete on this journey  
Of “SELF LOVE!”

Mark Heathcote

**Playing the hand of God**

To divert the wind wouldn't that be good  
To turn back the tide, remove the torrent.  
Wouldn't that be me playing the hand of God?  
Wouldn't that be virtuous, not abhorrent?  
Life is a little slow at times pedestrian  
But when chaos presents itself, it comes  
Like a bolt from the blue on a chariot  
In a head-on collision course, it comes  
Ah, it comes to level the playing field  
And flatten our sandcastles, meaningless  
We're all stood in its path—of stand or yield  
Inquiring, if it'll be redeeming-us.  
But I wouldn't want to play the hand of God  
Change-will-come, come as it-must-for-us all.  
To divert the wind wouldn't be that good,  
It would just be another kind of curveball.

## **Wasn't it curiosity killed the cat**

Wasn't it curiosity killed the cat  
I-truly-believe intelligent people do nothing  
Knowing to do something unbalances the scales  
Tips the world into further chaos  
They're the true-observers of intelligence working.  
They don't mind suffering the successes of other fools  
As long as they don't have to share, swim  
In the same overpopulated koi pools.

AI is coming all our way,  
Soon it will be integrated into all our daily lives  
And we will be consumed by our last free-thinking thoughts  
Like a stone plunged into the deepest water  
Till our ripples no longer individually, separately, cross,  
spill-over.  
Ridged as ice - with the forgotten-acumen to one day, thaw  
We will become robotic and forget all that love and war  
Forget we ever had a single fundamental flaw.

## Wendy Hoffman

### Recognition

My old dog sleeps, doesn't care to walk.

Now I go alone.

Couples stroll close together.

A large black dog  
with beseeching eyes

circles me, sniffs hedges,  
circles back.

I turn a corner  
at the wisteria vine  
by the neighborhood park.

The big black dog sculpts  
figure 8s around me.  
Are you asking me to help?  
With all the sunny people on the street,  
the dog chooses me!

Light flashes on tag numbers  
jingling from his red collar.  
But needing space and time,  
I don't carry a phone.  
A kind-looking man with two dogs,

big and little standing in the middle of the field,  
calls from his. The owner drives up, hollers  
*Peppy*. Peppy swooshes to her like wind.  
Still I feel the dog stretch his paw into the air,  
unfurl a thread, tug me toward life.

Also published in *Trees in a Garden of Ashes*  
(Local Gems Press, 2020)

## Kevin Holmes

### **All Saints Day**

He and she Harry and Marian  
All saints for the day  
Marian , Miss Star  
Harry her pupil  
What wonder and warmth  
I had to sign the reports  
I. M blessed

It is in this  
Happiness  
Marian a rock like Peter  
Harry a hug like Peter  
Me a hermit like Kevin  
Claire a heart like Claire  
Tim a light like Timothy  
Donovan a strength like Donovan  
Joe a calling like Joseph  
Arlene like Joan of Arc  
My house a table for them all

Called.

Mark Hudson

### **Howard Street in Chicago**

#### 1: The Scents of Howard

Upon exiting the Purple Line on Howard,  
I am bombarded by a deathly perfume,  
that emulates from an ancient creature,  
which is no less pleasant than a skunk,  
is it to mask a feeling of guilt and shame?  
Then I step on to the bus stop at Howard,  
where a pretty woman sucks on a  
nicotine lozenge. These smells infect my  
nostrils as another man lights up a paper  
rolled of torturous tobacco, tormenting  
the timid transportation troopers.

#### 2: Noises

As I board the bus, people who were born  
speaking English seem to lack basic  
communication skills, while foreign  
born riders speak better English and are  
more polite. A mean mom gets on and  
yells at her child, and tells her child  
to stop making noise, but the child  
is not being noisy, it's this loud

mother that I hear echoing through  
the whole entire bus, like the wrath  
of a thousand poor parent passengers.

### 3: Sights(Pink is the new Orange)

On the bus a woman in a pink jacket  
gets on, and two men walk by in matching  
pink striped shirts. Are they brothers?  
Lovers? And what do the stripes symbolize?

Then we go farther on the bus  
and a man walks by with his daughter in a  
pink jacket, her hair done up in two identical  
buns.

Then we get to another bus stop and  
a woman with a pink jacket gets on. Then a  
Pilipino man in with a pink jacket and a  
cane gets on. Then a woman gets on with  
a pink pocketbook.

As I walk through the parking lot to  
my church, I think about this poem that  
I'm going to write. I look up, and a  
Hispanic woman is standing by the  
door of her car, looking at me in  
fear. What is she thinking? That I'll  
rob her in broad daylight? Oh, and by  
the way, once again, she is wearing a  
pink jacket.

I guess the only place I could  
see more pink in Chicago is on the

pink line, but on the train they have the brown line, the purple line, the red line, the green line, and so on.

Howard Street is like suburbia compared to some hoods in Chicago. One friend said, “I never go down to Howard street because it’s always swarming with cops.”

I usually don’t go because I’ve heard its always swarming with rats. Under the tunnels of many restaurants, rats eat crumbs that man has disposed into the ecosystem. But rats don’t bother me that much. I can deal with that better than skunk-scented perfume.

The only poetic alliteration that is prevalent in Chicago is the four B’s, Bulls, Blackhawks, the Bears, and the Blues. We feel bad when our sports teams lose games, but they get paid either way.

There are those who have the blues for legitimate reasons. So before you judge those around you as weird, which I suppose I’ve actually done in this poem, try to picture what people see in you as you get on the train. One day, you may be the oddest oddball of all. Or you could move to Portland, where they have to try to maintain their weird image. But we’ve got them beat. We’re known for deep dish pizza. And deep Lake Michigan,

where people drifted to the bottom with cement  
on their feet. But this is where the poem ends.  
Otherwise, I might be in deep trouble!

Maria Iliou

**Traffic Madness**

Traffic strangers  
Visualize your laughter  
See's your smile  
Seeing you for awhile  
Traffic strangers goes away

Your life stories is  
Hidden from unknown

Traffic madness

Unfolding people's attitude  
Opinions or their reactions  
Has no baring upon you

Be still in moment

Scenes of reoccurrences  
Replay in corner of your mind

Traffic people of  
Unknown strangers  
Fading in distance  
Disappear through the night

## **Fading in Distance**

Hidden tears of  
Silent cries  
Fading in distance  
be still  
Sensing her pain  
Her despaired

Longing for her  
Recovery...he  
Walks away  
In distance

Finding tides of  
Connection within  
Writing...send  
Waiting for his responds, she  
Disconnect her own emotions  
Of self worth

Be observing  
within hearing  
Repetitively stories  
Recollections memories  
Love she felt for him

His passion...floats  
Floating in distance  
His responds

Wheels...wheeling her in  
Grasping on hope

Tears floating  
Sobbing cries  
Flood her  
Fluffy pillow

Pummeling thoughts of his  
Unkind words

His love for her  
Once exist  
Buried emotions

Glimpse of her  
Future with out him  
Within time  
She gain her  
Strength of  
Self worth

Narrator of storyteller

Brian Donnell James

**Hispanic Girl (Recuerda)**

Maria sits contently,

Her head nodding drowsily  
Against the window seat of the bus  
Looking across freedom plains stolen from bush Indians  
Where the bloodstained bones of her ancestors  
Have colored canyons of clay crimson and copper  
And their tears have made rivers, forming spines in desert terrain  
She hears the drums in her heartbeat  
The ancestors do not rest in peace  
For they know of her intent  
They are chanting in the echoes  
They arising from the mist of a forgone past

Trying to wilt her, kill her light

Like black wolves in chase, they are hungry  
She hears gnashing of teeth, the screams of the dead  
She runs for shelter  
Surrounded in dark clouds  
She feels hands clutching her neck  
She is losing her breath  
They want to wilt her, kill her light.....

Awaken suddenly to safety by a bump in the road  
Maria kissed the golden cross upon her neck

She clutched the dream catcher (abuela)grandma gave her  
Yes, Maria remembered grandma's secrets spoken through thin  
broken lips

With a crack of her back and the aid of a walking cane

Grandma leans in and says:

“When the bus stops your hair is blond

And blue are your eyes

Chase the dream,

Reinvent yourself in American lies”

But Maria's Light is from within

And she had just been reminded

That it can be reclaimed

So she would persevere

For those who only speak in dreams

(Recuerda)

## **Transition**

As my breath fell short and my body released  
Fear was replaced with a sweet surrender  
Suddenly I was all, existing and formless  
There are no restraints  
In the shadows of pulsars

In loneliness and afloat  
I folded the universe  
To travel with light speed  
Further into blackness  
Further into myself  
To learn all there is to know  
Further, farther still...

## **Mermaid**

You are my mermaid of the night  
You summon me, with delicate whispers  
In the hours of darkness  
Your chant is primeval  
And your seductive ways are  
Reminiscent of Eve

Let your hypnotic song sway me my love  
Take command, guide me down to Neptune's door  
Shipwreck me against the rocks,  
Abandon me on distant shores  
I care not, I am yours

You are my mermaid of the night  
You summon me, with delicate whispers  
In the hours of darkness  
Your chant is primeval  
And your seductive ways are  
Reminiscent of Eve

Nancy K. Jentsch

**What Good is a Smart Phone**

if it can't

sing a phoebe and parula duet  
as slumber's dust  
falls from my eyes

fit warm into my hand  
like morning's first-laid egg

boil elderberry blooms  
to an ambrosial potion

warn of approaching storm  
by air's scent leaves' dance

let dark chocolate's finish  
linger on lips and gums

play rain's mantra on an old tin roof  
as sleep's wet clay slip  
cools my face

for these carve my journey's staff

## Barbara Kent

### Sympathy for Nero

Buses rattled thick summer city night  
no open window caught any cool breeze  
just hot thunder from the el and wheezing  
from the buses painted blue and white  
sporting saggy signs that proclaim  
Amer. Zion and Temple E-Man-U-el  
I,  
perched high above the street  
soft tar sticking to my feet  
watched Brooklyn burn.  
Nomad Jews fled East to Rockaway and Babylon  
another galaxy to me  
caravans of U-hauls and Mayflower trucks  
snaked endlessly  
slithering away secretly at night so no-one would know  
Mamma laughed and said “Where would we go?”  
“This is our home, they won’t hurt us.”  
she glanced at the sputtering flames  
on Broadway  
And prayed they wouldn’t hurt us  
while Brooklyn burned.

Lily Belle Boone my best best friend  
called me “honky bitch” then smiled

flashing white teeth “just practicing”  
she sang “for now” but never played with me again  
changed that year to steely-eyed and grim  
had twin boys she named Abdul and Ali  
her mom asked “Hello, why don’t we see you anymore?”  
but Lily called her “Oreo”, I felt ashamed,  
and Brooklyn burned.

Slap-dash boarded windows line decaying streets  
sprayed with shards of glass  
where we once played  
dying junkies nod  
in mounds of rotting trash  
becoming arid desert  
Brooklyn burning block by block and

I  
watched Brooklyn burn.

## Kathleen Kinsolving

### **Pan**

Yawning, deep into his woods,  
Pan lays down his pipe,  
And stretches his sinewy figure  
Over a bed of moss,  
His stalwart arms curled above the curves of his horns.

Slumbering in the seclusion  
Of another afternoon nap,  
A disturbance rapidly going viral  
Awakens Pandemic

His crimson-faced roars of outrage  
Now hold every nation hostage  
In their own panic-stricken seclusions.

Jerry Kirk

**Chaos Troubadour**

SHOUT

at the indignities  
the transgressions  
the crimes against God  
and Earth.

HOWL

(like Ginsberg)  
at the inhumanity  
the futility  
the certainty

that man will never change.  
Technology does not equal  
evolution. We are all still

children immature wrestling  
on an expanded playground  
of land, sea and sky.

“Bang you’re dead!”

“I’m telling Mom”

“Wait till your Father gets home!”

News flash: Father is home.

God created Man.  
Man created religion  
to redefine God  
to make God in Man's image  
to use religion as an excuse  
to murder, judge, sin.

SCREAM  
at a future  
in jeopardy.

CRY  
because a voice  
of reason goes  
unheard.

Order, like peace,  
is hard to evoke  
without marring  
the very definition.

Chaos is easy.

## **Uploading Bombs**

Deep in the bowels  
of this flight-line are the men  
the lights the hum the whirr;  
the heartbeat of this war game.  
I am a sentinel of this dark corner  
far removed. The closest plane  
recognizable only as lights playing  
off the wings of a menacing shadow.  
A soulless mass patient and dull.

My task is to guard this line posing  
as a threat to any not allowed to cross.  
This is an illusion. I am only cold  
and tired with an endless walk  
a heavy gun and a numbing hate  
for the hours left before I rest.

## **Thanks to Lawrence Ferlinghetti**

Long dormant  
my soul stirs and  
I am inclined to write again  
poetry

Taking the long trek down  
deep into the heart of things  
wrestling

with feelings, ignoring  
blather, hoping to return  
with something that constitutes  
meaning; something of importance  
that will make the effort worth the

folly

## Judson Klein

### **Hills in the Morning**

All my toil  
surrounds me not today  
only this grass  
and the curvature of hills unto the sunrise

the orange and red simmering between  
brush strokes of deep blue

voices rise, without phrasing  
in my language – or anyone's

again come to realize what I've known

Part of me boils up  
and asks, should I not be working?  
or doing something somewhere  
because certainly time fizzles away  
to no more left to waste

while causality causes causes  
making all at best not worse  
at least too quickly

and I, with the guise of eagerness

am a well-integrated part of it

but not at this moment

every duty's done  
nowhere are commands  
the timeclock's not blinking  
all deadlines are undone

the light flooding these hills  
certainly has purpose, or it wouldn't happen  
every day  
and if we never see this,  
whatever brought us here will try again

perhaps those who never transcended their darkness  
didn't know  
they had every right  
to see this  
to feel this

to live

so here I'll stay, for now  
until every until is reached  
'til what this morning reveals saturates all  
and no process need describe it  
through every night, where these hills wait

## Caitlyn Lacovara

### **I'm a Hurricane**

How do you sleep so peacefully  
Next to the hurricane in your sheets?

How do you find love in its  
Tempestuous mind and  
Comfort in its ever-changing eyes?

How do you sleep at night  
While my eyes flood  
As the wind picks up  
And the lightening strikes  
My already shaken body?

How do you sleep at night  
Growing more uncertain of me  
As the thunder slams above  
And our relationship flickers out?

How do you sleep at night  
Without realizing the current  
Is too strong and I am  
Caught in its riptide?

How do you sleep at night  
While I slip away.

Tom Lagasse

**Questions on Immortality**

After several decades  
do redwoods wonder  
if they will survive  
the winter and see  
their leaves reappear in spring?

Do the mountains believe  
when their chins turn slack  
to scree that one day  
they will crumble entirely  
and turn to dust?

And what of the salmon  
which spend their lives  
fighting the powerful  
river current? Do they  
question if their creation  
was worth the struggle?

## **When The Last Page of History is Written**

When the last page of history is written  
white paper will be imprinted with black  
lettering or with an electronic post in binary code.

When humanity recedes into extinction  
what was hailed as progress will be seen  
as folly.

When no one will be left to take responsibility  
how long will it take the deep scars to heal  
and for waters to be washed clean?

What evolutionary roads will be passable when  
everything has been choked by power and greed?  
A new language will be necessary.

Jim Landwehr

**In-Network Provider**

She was a bathroom surgeon  
out of necessity, not aspiration  
never took a medical board  
or swore to a Hippocratic Oath.  
But she was good with gauze  
medical tape, Neosporin  
and liberal applications  
of homeopathic black magic.  
Cuts that should have been stitched  
took twice as long to heal  
but the cost of an ER visit  
will buy a lot of butterfly bandages.  
She's an insulin cheating, pill cutter  
heavily reliant on self diagnoses  
with second opinions from WebMD.  
She is a product of a health care system  
that cares mostly for  
the health of the system, not those  
it allegedly serves.

## **Cretin High**

My military high school was  
ten-hut, spit shines and yes sir  
keeping in-step and inspection day  
white gloves and scratchy wool trousers.

Bits and pieces of my military high school  
remain with me after 40 years away.  
Self-discipline, preparation, hard work,  
and a handful of lifetime friends.

Some of my military high school teachers  
were Christian Brothers.  
Urban, contemporary Friar Tucks  
some stern, others lenient and forgiving.

And when I talk of my military high school  
people are always intrigued and fascinated  
like I'd gone to Hogwarts or Mordor.  
But it wasn't like that at all.

My years at military high school  
were as good as any teen could expect,  
full of angst, hijinks and bad acne  
dances, buddies and covert drinking.

## **Apologies**

My son and daughter walk  
in the shadow of the two  
who brought them life.  
As they move ahead with  
purpose, direction and hope.  
We recognize they must  
hold with them better answers  
than those who preceded them.  
We've shortchanged their future  
with wars on our brothers and sisters  
killing them in the name of US.  
We've maimed our environment  
by quenching our thirst for oil.  
Yes, our children will be better  
of that I am certain,  
and for our transgressions  
you have my profound apologies.

## Edward Lee

### New

A part of my heart  
I never knew existed - if  
it existed at all before  
that moment - began  
to beat the day  
you were born.  
That first new movement,  
a chamber opening, filling  
with bright blood,  
stilled my breath  
and whitened my vision  
as you emerged into the world,  
all eager lungs and failing limbs.

Later, your fresh skin wrapped  
in layers of blue towels,  
I held you and lost myself  
in your closed eyes, the cries  
which announced your arrival  
echoing through the new and tender chamber  
of my suddenly meaningful heart.

## Sorrow

I birthed a moon of my sorrow,  
poured it forth from my eyes, nose  
and mouth. It fell  
to cruel gravity  
rolled to, fro,  
then settled,  
this moon of sorrow  
bigger than I.

I rubbed my hands,  
stretched my back,  
and lifted this moon of sorrow high,  
high, pushed it far into the endless night.  
It floated back down, slowly,  
defying gravity as much as any law may be defied,  
another moon already ruling  
the sky, while stars shaped like regret  
were spread far and wide.

## **The Bird Above**

I could only see the bird  
because it was darker  
than the night  
I woke in, the repetitive song  
of its turning wings  
the noise that woke me  
from a dream  
I could not remember  
but vaguely knew contained oceans of pale skin.

It hovered above me,  
like a hummingbird designed  
by a man without light,  
its black eyes  
pouring down upon me,  
my soul twisting like a mutated bone  
as it felt itself weighed  
and found wanting,

but before such judgment  
could give way to solid punishment,  
the bird of dark disappeared,  
and I lay there  
for the remainder  
of the night, wondering  
if it might return,

wanting to know it  
as morning light  
illuminated the room.

Elaine Leet

**Heroes Fall Heroes Rise**

Only I awakened  
To the rubbish monuments  
    and endless tombstones  
On the battlefield  
Of my expectations.

At the darkest edge  
    of the battleground graveyard  
In the cold wind  
Rising through the snow  
A single daffodil  
Lifts its golden trumpet  
Defiant  
Refusing to yield the field

A morning glory climbs quiet and serene  
    across abandoned dreams  
Heart shaped leaves lift petals  
Gathering the faintest ray of light  
To set its heart aglow

Tiny forget-me-nots  
Oblivious to the larger carnage  
Gather in tiny communities of

Hopeful remembrance

Pristine white blossoms with yellow hearts

The possibility of sweet strawberries

Peaceful purposeful violets

Perfume the air

Reality is greater than my expectations

The battlefield of the fallen is

but a corner of the universe

Full of unexpected possibilities...

## Amanda Little

### **Paradoxes of Truth**

Freedom--being given the choice  
to choose your own destruction  
while being handed the tools for your liberation.

Empathy--temporarily becoming  
someone else only to return  
as a better version of yourself

Unity--surrendering to others  
completely while cultivating  
your own unique purpose fully.

You are important precisely because you  
are a part of something far more  
important than yourself.

## **Shackles**

When we know the truth  
we curse others with it  
handing it down from one generation  
to the next

When we know the truth  
we box ourselves in it  
loafing about in the simple beauty that  
others apparently reject

When we *know* the truth  
we bludgeon others with it  
cursing their ignorance and willing them  
to see the light

When we know the truth  
we lock ourselves in its hold  
so secure in our place in the world  
fearfully avoiding the unknown

But when we are merely open to the truth  
we release both the shackles  
of ignorance and of assurance  
those trappings of the mind

the one an imposed prison  
the other an unbolted cage  
which is up to the imprisoned

In remaining merely open to the truth  
we float on the waters  
of indecision until  
we arrive at the distinct moment  
action requires resolve

Paulie Lipman

**Kaila, Patron Saint Of Earthbound Passengers**

Faith is the only thing  
that makes the busses run on time

No one wants to be passengers anymore  
Everyone wants to drive

This isn't new  
I've just been around  
long enough to see it  
come back

the first of any vessel  
held only enough room  
for one/the driver  
responsible/liable  
only to themselves  
Once they were  
beholden to passengers  
they were all too quick  
to conjure me and I  
was overjoyed  
to serve

It didn't matter

where we were going  
just that we were going  
to get there together

Given enough success  
*anyone* will forget their patron  
the debt and prayers owed  
this is what together  
gets you, *this* is  
their gratitude

I didn't just safeguard their journey  
I got them back home  
Problem is they don't  
know where that is anymore

But they know  
what gratis means  
that's what they expect everything for  
but can't seem to remember  
the meaning of tribute  
or sacrifice

How convenient

Once they could  
leave the ground/pierce the heavens  
they anointed Joseph with  
smug little Christopher  
hitching along for the ride

“We will deliver the chosen and with them  
touch the face of God”

Even among the saints, there  
is a class system

Bitterness sets in when  
you see the limitations of  
what you once thought  
infinite

Resentment blinds and  
allows even the faithful  
to fall into Neglect

I allowed too many  
ships passage with  
shackled human cargo  
Thousands even leaping  
to certain death rather than  
accept the capricious fate  
that waited across the sea

Trains packed with bodies in Poland  
stacked like cordwood, they  
not even given the option  
of escape

Even in the sky above New York  
seconds before collision, all

65 passengers turned their  
prayers to me and rather than  
be grateful for the opportunity  
I told them to save their mewling  
and give Heaven  
my resignation

Millions dead  
felled by restless ego  
and still I have the nerve to ask  
where have all the faithful gone

I have no idea  
Destination is no longer  
my province

*Ave Kaila quia ego sum nunc solus viatoribus*

“Hail Kaila, for I am now my only passenger”

When your last follower abandons you  
all you can do is pray to and for yourself

## **Elliot,,, Patron Saint Of Small Town Escapes**

Jesus may be the way up  
but devil on your heels is  
the only way out of  
Memphis, TX  
Natchez, MS  
Ames, IA  
Poe, WV

or

any place where  
they'd run Christ  
out on a rail in  
his own name  
right along  
with you

the streets  
too narrow  
for flight  
church  
too puny  
for any  
deliverance  
walls  
metaphoric  
but buit so  
solid with

every sin  
fabled or  
not painted  
bold and  
high and  
thick along  
with the  
most sincere  
thing they  
can take  
from you:  
your name

If who you  
are or what  
you do in  
any way  
threatens  
to push  
out the  
walls or

expose  
blood  
in the  
mortar  
or take  
fire to  
their  
bedrock

they  
will  
bury  
you  
body  
and  
name  
under  
it

and write  
any eulogy  
they please  
your name  
forever theirs  
just like  
mine

So take  
it back  
my name  
and yours  
but never  
speak them  
we are built  
to stick in  
the throat  
keep us  
clandestine  
sacrament

and run

8 blocks

from the end

of the parade route

one tick past midnight

beyond the town limits

just over the county line

shout our names out of your

mouth and wear us 'round the neck

We have no reason to hide anymore

## Jeff Livingston (Annie Manildoo)

### **Regardless**

I order dumplings;  
I see something on my phone that makes me enraged

Is this real?!  
Suddenly, I'm not hungry for dumplings.

Open up Facebook.  
Let's plan a fucking protest and

show those fuckers.  
Within about two or three days

we go viral.  
I go on interviews with news, magazines, politicians, legislators,  
town officials...

even the police...  
The anger and heartbreak and emotions run high, gotta remember,

keep it peaceful.  
Hate brings hate but love brings change.

The day comes,  
We're here, we're queer, we're just trying to stay alive.

Don't erase us,  
Don't ignore us, we'll only come back ten times stronger.

We'll be here.  
We'll be loved.  
We will thrive.

Re. Gard. Less!

Patricia Lynne

**deafening quiet noise**

Threatening terror trembles  
Bodies viewed in mass graveyards  
Life trimmed to fundamentals

Once secure lives now upside down  
Revolving restlessly from inside out  
Uncertainty creases a once smooth sky  
Living confined lives, scream, shout!

This virus chooses indiscriminately  
Ripping through the lungs of all  
Surreal in its naked nasty nature  
Yesterday reality only in one's recall

Cristian Martinez

**My Superpower**

My superpower is to fly  
Fly into the air everyday  
Saving lives like Superman  
They will love me  
Like a Florida palm tree in Miami  
When I fly into the air  
I see kids making games fair  
When I get home  
I do my hair with a comb

## **Power**

Those with power often use  
hardworking people who end up in defeat.  
Since we have a smaller voice  
we are taken advantage of and have no choice.  
However, our voices have gotten louder,  
protests and marches have created our power.  
Hope has been given back to those who were once powerless,  
realizing power in numbers is our choice.  
Equal treatment for all is the fight.  
We can regain the power  
and cause the change that is needed.  
Power is attainable  
if we never stop fighting for what we believe.  
Power can be the change this world needs.

## **Kindness**

How hard is it to be kind?

To me it is clear some struggle with this.

Instead words of hate are used

Without thinking of the consequences

Shattering hearts like a sword

Causing more harm than if no words were spoken

Why is it so hard to be kind?

Being kind is drilled into our minds

However only a few listen

Spreading a swarm of love

Choosing to lend a helping hand

Putting others before yourself

Such a simple concept

Why is it so hard to be kind?

## Louis Mateus

### **The Drummer**

I don't always get recognized as the drummer,  
but I syncopate the beat and I'm there.  
That's all I need. I may sit on a chair  
inside the cage of a twelve piece drum set  
on the back altar of the stage, but my spirit mingles  
with the city's high-rises, the traffic below  
as bright as a thousand lit lighters.

It's all about sublimation. I embellish the politics  
of the vocals and the guitar solo's wail  
in the finesse of fiberglass with the flicker of broken  
sixteenth notes on the balancing act of cymbals.  
It's all on the wrist and the grip.

Then there's the solo. It's always a solo.  
I take this beauty in a hair-do with barrette,  
roll with her on the gut skin of a Jembe  
and play a beat beneath her, when one pat  
on the Jembe's hourglass  
is all I need for stealing her for the night.  
It's all on the palm of the hand.

Yet best of all, is my feel of the soul-blasting  
guitar rhythm on my ribs and face,

the keyboard's chords out-tonguing Satan's  
in their arpeggio-sequence; the feel of my feet  
bouncing off the floor of a torrential bass-line  
and my view of the flipping crowd  
knowing I tickle the standing hairs  
of concert goers in their own drum fire of light.

## Michael McCarthy

### **Fragile and Faith-Bound**

I guess we have to be squeezed  
into a corner  
where cold darkness  
looms.

No place to go.

When usual routines  
become shattered  
like that glass coffee pot  
which slipped out of my hand.

The death of a colleague  
unthinkable  
it cannot be  
I dread the thought  
of remembering his kind, vibrant face.

So I look to the news  
for something  
some kernel of hope  
but the distant light  
no longer spreads.

Just the virus.

Fretting in the moments  
I turn to my backyard  
to clean the beds  
to trim hedges  
to stay occupied.

Only to realize  
I've been seized.

No place to go.

Or do I head  
to the only place  
I know  
deep  
down  
to  
wishfully pray  
and  
stay  
with  
what  
I can never  
know.

Let's talk about  
faith.

Rosemary McKinley

**Great Ball of Fire**

My eyes were riveted up while I drove east  
A great ball of fire in the sky  
Could it be? A harvest Moon  
The giant orange orb hugged the horizon  
Larger than any moon I ever saw  
I felt I could touch it, if only I moved closer  
So near and yet so far  
Holding my attention  
Until I reached my destination  
Missing the unique sight  
Until next year

Joan McNerney

**This Savage God**

Calamity hides under cover  
lurking in corners ready  
to rear its head.

It lies in neat lab reports  
charting white blood cells  
run wild.

*What is this savage God  
who pushes us down to comas?*

Sneaking along icy roads  
daylight ends while sea gulls  
circle steel grey skies.

Brake belts wheeze and whine  
snapping apart as we careen  
against the long cold night.

*What is this savage God  
who lunges us into storms?*

An official white envelope  
stuffed with subpoenas

waits at the mailbox.

Memories of hot words  
like razor blades slash  
across our faces.

*What is this savage God  
who rips open the heart?*

So we stand on the edge  
breathing mean air  
smelling fear.

Fires leaping out of rooms  
where twisted wires  
blaze from walls.

*What is this savage God  
who stabs us with flames?*

## **Eleventh Hour**

Wrapped in darkness we can  
no longer deceive ourselves.  
Our smiling masks float away.  
We snake here, there  
from one side to another.  
How many times do we rip off  
blankets only to claw more on?

Listening to zzzzzz of traffic,  
mumble of freight trains, fog horns.  
Listening to wheezing,  
feeling muscles throb.  
How can we find comfort?

Say same word over and over  
again again falling falling to sleep.  
I will stop measuring what was lost.  
I will become brave.

Let slumber come covering me.  
Let my mouth droop, fingers tingle.  
Wishing something cool...soft...sweet.  
Now I will curl like a fetus  
gathering into myself  
hoping to awake new born.

## Gene McParland

### **Cosmic Sense**

Deep in the core of every man  
lies the sleeping core of  
Everywoman.

Deep in the heart of every women  
lies the restless dragon of  
Everyman.

Deep in the bosom of the dragon  
dwells the spirit of Mother Gaia.

And deep within her earthcore  
is the fiery birthplace of our  
conception.

We are all islands in the majestic  
Milky Way of existence.  
Separate, but connected, joined  
but each our own spirit.  
Dreams with our own realities  
existing within the cosmos.

I close my eyes and am reminded  
that we part of the true vision.  
One within the all.

Bruce McRae

**Hell's Kitchen**

Today's special is pride pudding,  
smothered in poor choices.  
On the menu is a rare insight,  
with a side order of lifelong regret.

Chef recommends the fear of success.  
Our sorrow pie is very popular.  
Would you like a glass of tears with that?  
Are you ready to order?

## **To Deny Consensus**

The Hollow Earth Society meets Fridays.  
Formerly the Flat Earth Society,  
the landscape has changed greatly.  
Formerly the Illuminati. Formerly Druids.  
There is no little thing as unfounded wonder.

The Golden Order of the Dawn is now in session.  
Ignore the funny hats and peculiar handshake –  
in ritual is comfort and community.  
We welcome mass hysteria's warm embrace.  
We are the engines of our own destruction.

## **Empire of What**

Comets crashing and the emperor  
has new clothes, new teeth, new girlfriends.  
Continents adrift and the emperor  
has a new car, new haircut, new horizons.

But what state of his empire?  
The empire has fallen upon difficult times.  
Fallen like a last soldier or archangel.  
Like a fiery stone from the auspices of heaven.

Rose Miller

**Wild Cards**

We were wild cards  
Conceived in the eerie quiet between wars  
Born in the eye of the storm  
We cowered under desks  
Dreading the phantom bomb  
While the cries of the righteous were muffled  
By teenage love songs playing on transistor radios  
In our time cities burned in the night  
Glowing like the vanquished moon  
Reflected on flickering TV screens  
In our name ungodly manna rained down from the skies  
And fell on blood soaked rice paddies  
Madmen with rifles defined our history  
We were wild cards  
Our numbers had never been seen before  
When we stood, the wind shifted and blew the past away  
When we raised our voices, the roar shook the mighty and  
the meek  
Told that we were born to change the world  
And drunk on the fearsome power we possessed  
We believed the charlatans who crooned New Age lullabies  
While we dozed, our dominion passed to the greedy and the rich  
We were wild cards  
Awakened too late, sober now

Our hours are measured by the colors of our pills  
With unsteady gait we trudge off  
A half-smile playing on our lips  
We do not glance behind  
We were wild cards  
We had our turn

## **Gentrification**

These derelict rooms speak of the past  
Through spider-web cracks and stains on the floor  
A record of human tenderness and despair  
Is written in the pattern of holes where pictures once hung  
Shattered windows mirror the crowded passions  
And reflect the cold solitude of the souls who lived here  
Can the dark specters of hate and fear be swept away?  
There is much faith in new plaster and paint  
To exorcise the ghosts of dreams unfulfilled  
And banish the oppressive sorrow of love gone wrong  
Can they linger to taint the air of those who come after?  
Condemned to repeat the damage that is done  
As we clumsily grasp at life and love

# Chris Montgomery

## **Absurdity**

What dark  
splendors

you enthrall  
smooth skin

pale as  
porcelain

doll  
and glide

gayly down  
the hall

stupified  
by

love at  
all.

## **Contentment**

In stride with  
the rhythm

of a new day

bird chirp music  
dewy grasses

sweetness

the cadence  
of my heart

thudding like a

lost ship  
finally ashore.

Kathy Moore

**The Appointment**

The answering machine goes off  
“Please be sure to keep your appointment on Friday.”  
*I always keep my appointments*  
Friday is here  
*Can someone watch Ron*  
*I'll drop him off at Mom's*  
Running late  
Oh, ok, you're going with me Tom  
Let's get moving  
You park- I'll go in  
Oh that's right, you've never been here  
Let's go  
Sign in  
Show ID card  
Look at all the pregnant ladies  
Been there- done that  
Loved it but now I'm 42  
Come in Mrs. M  
How are you?  
Weight, height, blood pressure  
Room 5  
Get undressed  
Doors open  
Hello Mrs. M

*He's smiling, this can't be too bad*  
Get dressed  
Meet in my office  
Tell your husband to come in too  
Or we could talk here  
Chatting waiting for Doc  
Door opens  
Mrs. M some of the biopsy  
results came back  
with early stage cancer  
*What! He can't be talking to me.*  
*I don't have cancer*  
Well differentiated  
Be able to get it all out  
Hysterectomy  
Took the liberty of making an appointment  
with the specialist  
*He can't be talking to me.*  
*Is that my file?*  
Might not need chemotherapy  
afterward  
Think we caught it early enough  
*Why would I need Chemotherapy?*  
*I don't understand*  
Let me know when  
surgery is scheduled  
I wrote up a script  
for chest x-ray and blood work  
Get it done early  
This way you're ready

ASAP

*Did he say I have Cancer?*

## Guna Moran

### **Time Will Write History On You**

(translated from Assamese by Bibekanada Choudhury)

*Dedicated to those who have lost their lives in the  
COVID-19 pandemic*

Time how cruel you are  
My devotion is still far tougher than it

Fighting on  
I would continue penning  
on your bosom  
The history of my triumph

You would remain a spectator  
To my indomitable entity  
You would remain a listener  
To my fame and glory  
You would turn into history  
To carry to my progeny my motto

You would lose on the brink of winning  
I would win on the brink of losing

I would stay alive even after dying  
You would die even though living

You'd rise again  
Like Phoenix from the ashes  
Our Progeny would fight again with you  
Pages in the  
history of triumph would keep added on  
countless diyas would blow on my altar

Time how cruel you are  
My devotion is still far tougher than it

Fighting on  
I would continue penning  
on your bosom  
The history of my triumph

You just watch

Ann-Marie Murzin

**Something From Nothing**

A brown butterfly landed on my shoulder as we shared stories in  
Central Park:

John took my twenty-dollar bill and gave me back the wrong  
change with a smile.

The banana bread that yearned to be eaten slid off the oven rack  
crashing to the tile floor.

I climb to the highest hour ... sometimes.

Dense dandelions thicken the soup.

In my dream a purple pony rushed through the gate snapping it  
into jagged white pieces.

And then I woke up singing about a salad.

Grasshoppers grow into good luck charms for boys dancing in the  
outfield.

Always caress your mother with words.

The notebook never notices when I stop writing.

## **A Mom's Midlife Decisions**

1

I unpacked the bin of Barbies you made me save even though you were a teen when we moved.

I am sorry, but the roof was leaking, and I had to slide them away from the dripping,

And protect them, but now I wish I hadn't.

2

Remember we shopped at the mall to find outfits to match? I donated them.

Forgive me.

I just could not decide what to do.

3

I gave away your varsity jacket that you saved in our hall closet even though you have not worn it in years.

A teenager came to the door with no coat on;

He seemed to need it more than you do.

4

Last month at Parent's Weekend we got a table on the balcony for dinner and you had to pay because I forgot my wallet.

Forgive me. I was forgetful.

I wanted you to track the expenses, reporting to me as the accountant.

## **Cream of Wheat**

Her mom made a home,  
From a box of red square comfort.  
The granules doused in warm milk,  
And sugar swirled in with a wooden spoon,  
Like a magic wand  
Stirring in warm wishes.

Gracie peeked into the pot  
Standing by her mom's side,  
Sloppy pigtails resting on her shoulders,  
Brown-eyed waiting,  
Tooth-fairy-like smiling,  
Wanting to see the bubbling and believe.

The aroma filled the kitchen,  
And splattered onto the stove.  
Together they broke the lumps by force,  
One callous hand holding one soft hand,  
Avoiding the gas flames.

Now the box is almost empty.  
The cardboard spout is worn down,  
From opening and re-sealing,  
With pale masking tape,  
Evidence of the simple and sweet.

Grace is grown up now.  
Starting to grasp that grain alone

Can't be enough anymore.  
Missing those moments with mommy,  
Stuck to the bottom of the pot.

## Roxana Negut

### **We're running**

We are running from shadows, from chaos

We are running from pain, from regrets

We're keeping our heart locked with our secrets and our doubts

Without knowing that these are the keys.

We're running from gratitude and unconditional love

Without knowing that this is the only key

To eternal life, eternal journey, eternal mind

For our souls, enlightenment is the only way.

We're running from sadness, from shadows, from darkness

Thousand of hours from our life

Seeking for joy, seeking for happiness

For our soul, for our journey

Without knowing that these are the key.

We're running from questions about life

We're hiding deep in our souls

Sad thoughts about the sense of humanity

Without knowing this is the only way.

We're running, we're running without rest or peace

Day after day, year by year  
From loneliness, from truth, from life

Lost in common, ordinary days.

We are running from everything that is too hard, too painful  
Without knowing that this is the only way.

Embrace these moments  
When you don't know where to go.  
They will be one of most useful experiences  
You will ever undertake  
Explore the shadows  
This is the only way.

## **Broken glass of love**

There is an ocean between us  
A thousand of shadows, lights and regrets  
A thousand of lost memories,  
A broken glass of unseen hearts.  
Expecting the end.  
But i know, I just know  
I just feel in my soul  
A love without light, whithout hope  
There is nothing  
It is just  
A forgotten love.

## Michelle Oram

### **Autumn Cleanse**

The trees strip away  
The sharp, icy rains  
Of yesterday's  
Sun-baked blossoms

The moldy moss  
Clings to bark  
Like trophies  
Never to be forgotten

Distant memories  
Wrinkles of time  
Make room  
For a new tomorrow

## **Mother's Helper**

I scrubbed and scrubbed  
until the porcelain  
chipped away  
from my heart

I hammered my head  
against the dark  
wood paneling  
until the fighting stopped

The chapped, slapped  
enraged face snapped  
as I ran into my room  
eyes slammed shut

I am my mother's helper  
I clean the dirt from  
dark secret places  
ashes scattered in coffee

Pasty, broken, runny  
eggs prepare me  
for life's journey  
as I try and pass

Invisible from her wrath  
sculpted on the sofa  
once with paint brush

in hand, no more

As slumber erases  
all dreams  
nightmares multiply  
replacing day with night

and night with day  
pills get popped, dropped  
adding to the decay  
I pick up the pieces

I am my mother's helper

Carl Palmer

**Confronting the Enemy**

What reason do you have to steal into my marriage,  
confiscate my husband with your morbid romance,  
of all men why did you choose my man, Whore?

Why bring yourself into our house, disrupt our life,  
arrive unexpected, unasked, unwanted, unwarranted,  
can't you realize what you're doing to us, Trollop?

Why wrangle his thoughts, mangle his memories,  
infiltrate his mind, defeat dreams, doom his future,  
obscure consciousness, confuse reality, Harlot?

Why not come out, confront me, face me, who are you,  
what name are you calling yourself today, Bitch,  
or is it still Alzheimer's, Senility or Dementia?

Tom Pawlowski

**Newtown**

Monster and his means

Semi-automatic bursts

Twenty empty desks

## **Orlando**

Flags fly at half mast

Honoring the rich fabric

Mourning the madness

## **Pittsburgh**

Searching for reasons  
Baruch dayan ha'emet  
Ad infinitum

Joseph S. Pete

### **The City That Split Asunder**

The attorney in the wool overcoat,  
son of a Pullman-Standard worker,  
stood tall against the bracing Lake Michigan winds  
like the august 9-foot bronze statue of his likeness  
that would eventually tower as a steely silent sentinel outside  
city hall  
in the long shadow of the smoke-billowing mill,  
a sonata of rust and molten iron.  
He quietly beamed amid all the jubilation,  
the thronged masses in the thrall of a raucous liberated revelry  
that stretched for six whole blocks along Broadway.

The bigots decried him, the hidebound feared him, and skeptics  
doubted him.

His own party's establishment stood against him.

But Richard Hatcher defied odds, overcame half-blind spittle-  
flecked hostility

on a depleted budget, won the mayoral election, and made star-  
spangled history.

Everything had changed.

The sepulchral clouds split and sunlight spilled forth.

Whole new apertures and avenues opened up

in Gary, Indiana and the wider world.

America's first black mayor of a major city

shook up the settled order  
that confined African-Americans to Midtown slums  
while whites lived on tony brick-clad blocks  
in leafy Glen Park and the lakefront Miller enclave,  
and gave the majority in a long-integrated city  
the political power that had long eluded them  
in a rigged society always so shaped and structured against them.

Hatcher, the newly minted mayor of the second-largest city in  
a state  
where the Ku Klux Klan once ran rampant,  
rid African-American neighborhoods of rundown slums.  
He got affirmative action legislation passed, made city  
government more inclusive,  
and granted city contracts to minority-owned businesses,  
trying to make the municipal government work for the many and  
not just the privileged few.

And he built.

Oh how he built.

Hatcher built up poverty-stricken neighborhoods, Gary's airport,  
the Holiday Inn tower downtown, the Genesis Convention Center  
that bore his name and that hosted the standing-room-only crowd  
of mourners where he was eulogized by national figures like Jesse  
Jackson  
before he was buried in the cold ground on that windy winter day.  
He long tried to build a National Civil Rights Hall of Fame  
Museum,  
but the grandest aspirations often came to naught  
in a company town the company largely abandoned,  
where U.S. Steel shrunk its workforce to a fraction of its

former self.

But more importantly, Hatcher built a new road through terra in cognita,  
paving the way for hundreds of African-American mayors, as well  
as state lawmakers,  
governors, senators, countless public officials, and of course  
President Barack Obama.

Hatcher blazed brightly through history  
as an inspirational figure instilling hope  
for those who followed him.

History however passed by the city he so loved.  
Battered by steel dumping and foreign competition,  
its leaner mills reprogrammed by automation,  
the company that built the Steel City  
forsook its own once-bustling and brightly lit company town.  
Racist attitudes set off a hasty stampede of white flight  
followed by those who feared going underwater in their homes.  
Storefronts emptied, houses vacated, and indomitable-seeming  
institutions faded away.

As Hatcher put it, the city “split in half.”  
Many fear-crazed folks decamped  
east to Portage or south to Merrillville,  
an instant suburb slapped up overnight  
as a “repository of racism” in Hatcher’s phrasing.  
Gary’s population hemorrhaged, property values plummeted,  
crime rose, and hope rotted away along with  
long-abandoned homes and mothballed factories.

In a telling scene, Hatcher was attending a political shindig at a suburban hotel.  
Hatcher, who practiced law, who became the youngest city council president  
in Gary's history, who served five terms as mayor, who forged ahead as a historic trailblazer,  
who emerged as a national civil rights leader, and who left an indelible mark on the world,  
was asked by a random white waitress  
who came nowhere even close  
to his level of education, resume, acclaim, or influence,  
just what the hell he thought he was doing there.  
Bold souls like Hatcher can change the world  
but they can't change every small mind.

Mary C. M. Phillips

**letter to the world**

i wrote my letter to the world  
rolled it up into a ball  
and threw it out into the universe

it bounced against the planets  
igniting some and setting  
others into a  
cold and endless spin  
cold and endless spin

i know it will return one day  
and will call me by my name  
“here I am,” I will reply,  
“i remember every word

allow me now to catch you  
unfold you with my withered hands  
bless each precious crease and  
add a pretty poem  
add a pretty poem”

Kevin Rabas

**James Riva**

shot grandma  
full of golden  
bullets, drank  
from her holes,  
said, "I'm a  
vampire."

## **Weekend Retreat**

She comes home  
her hair woodsmoke  
her things in clear  
Ziploc bags:  
shampoo, soap, says,  
“You would have  
loved it. Come along  
next time,” and I restack  
my set of books  
for class, recradle  
the phone, snap off  
the monitor, and listen  
to L’s new songs.

## **At the Gala**

The fairy lights, like  
fireflies  
in early winter, first nights  
of ice.

## Allie Rieger

### **sylvia**

I'm going to England  
to find your stone  
I want to eat the dust  
of your bones.

Your words have sunk in  
and won't let me go  
insidiously intertwined  
fused to my neurons  
that form all of mine.

A copy cat killer  
find me under the house  
in the damp crawl space  
all filled up with  
little white pills.

Can I follow you  
into the dark parts  
of life? The dark  
recesses of your mind?  
Your corners and edges.  
The shadows that  
haunted you your whole life?

A copy cat killer  
I'll stuff a towel under the door.  
and my head in the oven-  
not to sound crude.  
But I want to be just  
like you.

You have saved my life  
more than once.

## **A thought on COVID-19 (and I'm not even religious)**

The black plague is back in style,

“Danse Macabre”.

People think that this is it

(and maybe they're right)

This is the end of the world.

As we know it, at least.

They picked them all clean,

all the bones

in all the grocery stores.

Fear begets fear

like art begets art.

I do not doubt that things will

be eternally changed.

For the rest of our lives, and

the lives of those who come after

(I just wish my mom had missed this).

But,

But remember back

to that last walk around town

After the drinks you had

and you laughed, unknowingly.

happy,

Walking back to the car

you heard a cough. Throaty.

Unsettling, the drowning cough  
of the dying  
(as if he knew what was to come).

A cough.

Coming from the shadows  
so you squinted your eyes  
to see past the neon lights.

Past the florescent burn  
of the bank next door.

Squinted into the shadow  
of the brick black porch  
attached to the only remaining church  
on Main Street.

To the homeless man laying down  
clearly unable to pull off  
the peacefulness of sleep.

Under his blanket of cardboard  
Atop his pillow of paper.

Horrid headlines screamed  
even before the  
“Triumph of Death”.

Think back to that  
roll it to the front  
That’s the end of the world right there.  
A locked church door  
next to the twenty four hour  
illuminated bank.

## Sarah Ritter

### **Books**

So many books sit on a shelf  
Begging to be read  
“Which one to read first?” I ask myself

Tales of poverty, and of wealth  
Of people living and of dead  
So many books sit on a shelf

Holiday classics of Santa and elf  
Legends of journeys heroes have lead  
“Which one to read first?” I ask myself

Stories to lead my mind somewhere else  
As I drift to sleep in my bed  
So many books sit on a shelf

They say reading is good for your health  
So I hold each open to a full-page spread  
“Which one to read first?” I ask myself

Though time is scarce, I can't help myself  
If I wait for free time, I'll soon be dead  
So many books sit on a shelf  
“Which one to read first?” I ask myself

## **Contained Rage**

I wish you could open your eyes to see  
How I clench my words inside of my fists  
Pin my arms to the sides of my body  
While the fight in me begs me to resist

I'm doing my best to control the rage  
That simmers and boils throughout my veins  
My thoughts bounce off the walls of my brain's cage  
A concussion forms from my thoughts contained

I ought to toss each word at your blank face  
Each letter speckling your ears, nose and eyes  
Megaphone voice speaking in uppercase  
Emotions steaming as they vaporize

Feel the embers of my hostility  
Searing your skin till you finally see

Marc Rosen

**Simmering**

The spokes of the wheel run along my skin  
Soothing an itch ever-simmering within  
I sigh with relief from the much-needed stim  
Yet somehow, I know, I've yet to begin

I yearn for impact, I long for touch  
I desperately seek what I've never known  
Desperate for something I doubt I'll see much  
Needing those foreign things: safety and home

Each thud of the flogger, each lash of the whip  
Brings me ever-closer, yet further away  
I doubt I could ever realize this  
Yet the more that I yearn, the further I stray

The touch of His hand, the touch of his heart  
A need to belong, a need to feel home  
He offers me something, a Master of His art  
Is it acceptance, or am I still alone?

## **Midtown**

Second floor walkup, coated in darkness  
Check the coat, check the phone, check it all  
Hide nothing, show everything, enter exposed  
Spend hours getting to know your fellow man  
Deeply, powerfully, biblically  
Never quite seeing who, or where, or what  
Guided only by the faint glow of old neon  
The scent of amyl nitrite  
The pulsing rhythm echoed in house music and writhing flesh  
Embrace the staccato of flesh meeting its kin  
The warmth of unknown depths  
The joy of passion and its aftermath

## **Sonnet Prick**

First greetings always seem to leave me mute  
I always struggle as words come to mind  
However, when the addressee is you  
Vocabulary seems to flee my sight!  
Perhaps this is the reason my tongue held  
For after all, your face is kind and fair  
And though I dare not suggest our minds meld  
Perhaps, my faulty humor, you might spare  
I ask you not for love, offer no flowers  
I'm far from innocent and far from sweet  
And rest assured, this poem did not take hours  
Though it be faster to play in the sheets  
I could not write a funny limerick  
And so, instead, I am that sonnet prick!

## Matthue Roth

### **Slayer No More**

Don't remember when I stopped carrying stakes in my backpack  
or who told me vampires aren't real

When do you stop believing in things and start  
believing things people tell you

I'm asking for a friend

Told someone I'm sick of this world and she  
thought I meant to kill myself

No, I just want to remember how to imagine  
To trust my mind more than my eyes

And not use words so much like *real*  
or *stakeholder interviews*

How to make my best hours really early and really late,  
and wander the distance between

Not to believe animals can talk  
But to remember how to listen

How to shake myself from drunkenness

unsure if I'm dreaming

and where the boundary would be

I still watch fog hoping for the world to disappear

or to catch sight

of the disappeared world

## Narges Rothermel

### **They Know**

A vibrant crocus in the yard announces, spring is here spring  
is here

Fresh green grass of the lawn hosts a few young dandelions  
Between slabs of cement-blocks, a blooming-dandelion says, *hello*  
Mother Earth's seasonal plants show off their untamed flowers  
Swaying daffodils by the fence cheer the walkers by bright yellow  
flowers

Birds start singing spring songs before dawn and sing all daylong  
Sparrows and finches feed on the birdfeeder  
They spread some of the seeds on the lawn below  
Today, squirrels, morning-doves, grackles, sparrows, and a few  
finches  
all gathered under the birdfeeder for their daily meals

Birds don't mind the squirrels, squirrels don't mind the birds  
They stand side by side they share the seeds, no hoarding no  
social distancing

Do they know that a virus named Corona is spreading around  
its power and its fear?

Do they know that this virus is moving from state to state from  
country to country?

Do they know this unseen-enemy of mankind is moving from  
continent to continent?

Do they know that Corona virus is killing thousands of humans  
each day?

Do they know that the fear of Corona has prisoned humans in  
their shelters?

I wonder if the grass, the plants, the birds, and squirrels know  
that it is

The Corona-time in the world,

Do they know that it is The Corona-era on the earth?

Perhaps they use the given wisdom from Mother Earth and ignore  
the virus

They remember the mysteries of Mother Earth and magic of her  
seasons

They know after dark cold days of winter the spring comes back  
They know sun gets closer and closer to Mother Earth when  
spring arrives

They know the spring-sun thaws the land and softens the moods

They all with their beauty and wisdom tell us,

*It is spring time on this side of the Earth*

*It is time to take a walk outside it is time to till the soil*

*It is time to sow some seeds in the gardens*

*It is time to touch and feel the life in trunks of the awakened trees*

*It is time to notice the green buds on the branches*

*It is time to feel the fresh green grass on the ground*

They tell us, *It is time to sing, it is time to smile,*

*it is time to laugh, and it is time to celebrate the life.*

## Wayne Russell

### **Digital Memories**

Out of the blue, she sent me a text, she wanted copies of the old photos, snapshots of an old life, our life, now two years dead and gone.

I had to resurrect them from the laptop sleeping in the corner, a thin sheet of dust, nestling translucent dreams.

*Wake up, wake up*, I whispered within the thin prison walls, walls that had become the remnants of my life, cell-block C19.

Lights flickered and the motherboard lamented, her slow awakening, so uninspired, an emotionless drone.

Mouse in hand, hovering over icons of manila folders, behind every click lurking old memories, tears blossom like raindrops.

Leaves in the autumn could never outnumber those memories of us, of the children, as they so quickly grew up and how we so slowly and

quietly grew apart.

You never liked reminiscing, reflecting back into the past, you were all about the here and now, caught up in the moment with your friends while behind the camera, I captured the memories, that you would someday return to reclaim.

## **The World is Her Canvas**

Post expressionist  
mistress of the here  
and now,  
shes the painter  
elusive, lost in cool  
shades of  
mystery.

Her life intertwines  
with mine, for  
the moment, I'm hers.

She holds my attention  
within her rainbow blurred  
palm.

Words are sparse,  
captivate me in cell  
phone wilderness,  
paint me in hues of  
your sorrow, embrace  
me within brush strokes  
of your beautiful joy.

She's enigmatic,  
the doctor,  
educating pupils,  
painting her

thoughts upon a tattered  
canvas of life,  
that tapestry of emotion,  
swirling in a dream, serenade  
in cadence, wry smile upon  
a photograph written in my heart.

## Pat Gallagher Sassone

### **Bits and Pics**

Wormholes seduce  
gamblers in a whirlwind  
Two mouths- one faster than the other.

Eagles eating crumbs around a park bench .  
pigeons soar.  
robots picket beside construction workers while  
Savion Glover taps on  
Imagine in Strawberry Fields.

Beethoven and Bach get down with  
Dre and Jay Z.  
drones walk 101 Dalmatians.  
upside down devil card causes psychic meltdown as  
Luke Skywalker's Millennium Falcon blasts  
artists to galaxies unknown.

Beach in Waikiki reduced to sandbox yet President  
plays with plastic shovel.  
Smell of incense fills abandoned building where  
pope blesses the homeless. Soon after,  
Rodin requests sketches for The Thinker of the 21st century.  
Needed: 7.8 billion Apple II pencils.

## Daniel Scenters

### **The Crypt of Baphomet**

A mortified forest of unformed coffins,  
Crowd the conduit of the hidden synagogue.  
Spiritless totems without end drape thee,  
Eyes of the Watch Towers overshadow thee.  
Whose assurance rises like the fallen fog,  
Whose graven image bears the fifth inversion.

Emptiness births lowliness from yon Divide,  
Unfathomed shul, thy tarnished brook treads deeply.  
Wake: in the courts of priests and sorcerers,  
Hierarchy of condemnation enraptures:  
Thy bastard children breathe not remorsefully,  
As the athame refines their conversion.

Hollowing parasites plague their souls with yen,  
Their naked shrines be that abolished, from hence.  
Lain upon the alter of crawling flesh;  
Interwoven candles, the tongues of Dervish.  
Thy glories, thy honors, part from thine chasm,  
Disciples of the fallen Light's last remnants.

Temporal grain of ink and Shadows---becoming;  
Rotting: thy age of divinity wrought ye.  
Thy bestial demi-god unrestrained,

By Baphomet, all thine powers, art they drained.  
Yea, ye apostles, declare his blasphemies---  
Philosophers: works---his verses, ye poets.

Withered fowl perched atop skulls of the conduit,  
Fog of thine infirmity---a broken mist.  
Ye tread thine hour of pre-destiny,  
Destruction wrought of thine naked dignity.  
Hour of preparation cannot resist,  
To grasp thy breasts---to strip ye of purity.

## Marble Empire

The moist soil thirsty,  
Lusting flesh thereof.  
Flames seize ripe meadows,  
Orb of fire blackened;  
Weeping incense rising.

Indulging stones worn,  
Courts where children sleep.  
Epitaphs adorn,  
A lineage fallen;  
Shepherds of silent paths.

Barren veins collapsed,  
Yearning thirst now mine.  
Broken angel wings  
Arousing brittle dust;  
Compromised in my sin.

Summoning scenery,  
Disembodied words.  
Mind-cloaked illusion,  
That God has forsaken;  
The undertaken path.

Searing eventide,  
Sorrowed throng dismayed.  
Sightless wanderer,  
Unveiled in laity;

Marred for obsequy.

Beheld fading hands,  
My corpse they consume.  
No power to foil,  
To disrobe from this gown;  
Leading me deeper down.

Phantom for bodhi,  
Parlance forbade.  
Nexus of voodoo,  
Alembic to the hordes;  
Liege to lyrics of night.

## **Prayers Upon Emptiness**

Dying time greatly spent,  
Fades into the dark sky;  
Lost are the shadows of her scent,  
Lost within her, am I.

Summon I, the darkness,  
Longing for her pale lips;  
Prayers upon emptiness,  
Hallowedness my tongue slips.

A solemn remembrance,  
Forever shall it burn;  
Bitter tears of her abstinence,  
Her kiss for which I yearn.

For how long hast ye wept?  
Wept at the stones of rest;  
By wings, her grave hast been swept,  
She found no more abreast.

Whisper a pagan rite,  
Listen for her faint breath;  
Dark are the candles burning bright,  
Cold and empty I'm left.

## Sofia Senesie

### **A Crack in the Glass**

Downstairs in the cupboard  
on the highest shelf you would find my cup.  
It was tall, sturdy, and crystal clear and  
the way it reflected the light was like  
staring into another dimension.

Downstairs in the cupboard  
on the highest shelf, I stood on my toes to reach  
my flawless cup. I never drank from another.  
The impudence of the thought....

Downstairs in the cupboard  
on the highest shelf, my clean cup always stood.  
But one day, it looked foggy.  
I thought I just had not washed it right.  
I rinsed him good, shoved him in the  
dishwasher, and thought he would be good  
in a few hours: crystal clear.

Downstairs in the cupboard  
on the highest shelf, you would find my cup.  
It was foggy and sad like a cloudy day or a car's  
windshield stained by blotches  
of nature's tears all dry and crisp

on its outer shell and it appeared to  
be on the inside too. It was so foggy.

Downstairs in the cupboard  
on the highest shelf, I firmly grasped my cup.  
I examined it closely and sighed, “foggy still.”  
I rinsed it again and again and again.  
I even bought new soap, but nothing  
could clear the clouds.

Downstairs in the cupboard  
on the highest shelf, you would find my brittle cup.  
I had carelessly dropped it. It was okay though.  
It just left a crack. It was not completely broken.  
There was no way I was getting a new cup.  
The audacity....

Downstairs in the cupboard  
on the highest shelf, you will not find my cup.  
The little crack grew with each day.  
With each fluid ounce of water, I  
drowned it in until it broke.  
It broke. Why?

Downstairs in the cupboard  
on the highest shelf, there once was a cup.  
There was a crack in the glass  
long before I dropped it.  
It was hidden on the inside.  
It was very small until it grew.

Downstairs in the cupboard  
on the highest shelf, there it was.  
A crack in the glass.  
I never knew.

Shoshauna Shy

**How Many Breathed On This Quart of Milk?**

*100 More US Deaths*

*in a Single Day*

Washington Post, March 23, 2020

“Six feet Six feet”

chants the buxom woman

stretching past my ear

for a can of peaches.

Truck driver – pallet loader

– case stocker – cashier –

What are the odds

at the dairy cooler

that this carton I’ve chosen

makes it to my kitchen pristine?

## **We Interrupt This Broadcast**

The skies are wide open  
except for Med Flight  
helicopters on return  
missions Traffic lanes

are vacated except for  
police cars responding  
to reports of gunshots  
outside the ER

In a forest preserve two miles  
from my house, a jogger happens upon  
two bodies in a ditch  
When I bed down for the night

I program 911 into Speed Dial  
Station my phone close

Emily-Sue Sloane

**Not the Founder's Dream**

America's fascination with guns is killing us

Schools hold active shooter drills  
kids certain they're next

Teachers blockade doors  
follow their students into closets  
bursting with fear, they crouch  
in willed silence, amplified  
by ragged breathing  
in dread unison

Hastily composed farewell texts  
await "send"

Phones clutched  
in sweaty palms  
no shield  
against a spray of bullets

Hands raised in the air  
those who can  
run  
single file  
toward safety, a place  
suddenly unreachable

Thoughts and prayers  
cold, cold ashes  
scattered on breezes  
fanned by NRA cash

## **Just Enjoy Life**

“It starts with not stepping on cracks  
and pretty soon you’re turning the light switch on and off 15 times  
before you can leave the house.

Just enjoy life,” a man tells his young son as they walk,  
hand in hand ahead of me, into the medical building  
one winter morning full of sunshine

When I start my car to leave a half hour or so later,  
no sign of the man and his son,  
Paul McCartney sings on the radio:  
“What’s the use of worrying?”

For most, worrying comes  
with the territory  
of minding past, present and future

*Don’t step on the crack,  
you’ll break your mother’s back*

Nursery rhymes confuse young minds  
then, long forgotten, they bubble up  
through life’s layers  
to haunt us

Perhaps that man was right:  
We are stuck inside the house,  
countering the darkness,  
trying to ward off the bad stuff

## Turning Point

This delayed change of seasons  
confounds my to-do list.

Furnace cleaning leaps out ahead of digging up bulbs,  
what with the canna lilies still blooming  
and roses smiling in the autumn sun.

When icy winds swoop in on a sudden sub-zero Arctic blast,  
sweaters, wool scarves, hats and gloves  
spill out of closets and drawers  
along with t-shirts and shorts not yet put away.

This jumble of weather and landscape mirrors my thoughts.  
Uncertainty ahead.

In my little world  
when work no longer fills my days  
and in the wider world  
where men rattle nuclear sabres  
and trade childish insults,  
jealously protecting their thrones.  
Recalling my childhood training, I wonder  
if I can still cower under a desk  
when the air raid sounds.

I look out on the late-November maples.  
Their leaves, still green, cling to branches  
well past their prime.

It is late, this change of season.  
Is it too late?

## Elizabeth Spragins

### **Lava**

in the lightless lair  
restless hunters stir from sleep  
when pumas rumble  
flames of red-hot hunger crouch  
within the molten mountain

~Mount Rainier National Park, Washington

## **White**

*(A Rannaigheacht Ghairid)*

Shades of red  
Mar my daughter's cradled head—  
Perfect ponytail, undone,  
Wet with crimson rivers fed

By cold hate  
Aimed at all who immigrate.  
Fingers stroke her matted hair.  
“Thoughts and prayers” won't change her fate.

Her dark skin  
Holds a body much too thin.  
We knew hunger, thirst, and fear—  
Years that stole her gap-toothed grin.

My child bled.  
Bullets burned with racist lead.  
Sixty seconds, sixty rounds,  
Lifeless sounds, then shades of red.

~El Paso, Texas

## **From the Rubble of Camelot\***

*(A Rhupuni)*

A dragon sleeps  
While lightning leaps  
From clouds to keeps  
Of castles wrest

From blood-stained rocks.  
Now rubble blocks  
The moats and lochs  
Kings once possessed.

Fields choke with thorn  
And lie forlorn.  
Aversions born  
Of fear infest

This wretched land.  
The weak demand  
A champion's hand:  
Wrongs unredressed

Breed bitter bile.  
Deception, wile,  
And crafty smile  
Put truth to test.

While standing stones  
Guard sacred bones,

A mage intones  
Spells Druids blessed:

“Wake from your dream—  
Rend moon from beam,  
Rip night’s dark seam,  
Take up your quest!”

~Castell Dinas Bran, Llangollen, Wales

*\*Legend holds that Arthur Pendragon did not succumb to his battle wounds and will one day return to rule Britain.*

CC Thomas

**The Secrets of Oceans**

The ocean is a dark entity,  
jealously guarding the secrets  
of thousands of years.

In his violent, murky depths  
souls perpetually drown,  
bony eyes scourged clean  
by the gritty water;  
the ebb and flow  
of heartbeating in the night.

The ocean is a creature  
of the moon, like  
a werewolf or vampire,  
lured from his lairs  
to swallow whole  
unsuspecting trespassers.

The ocean is the perfect murderer,  
leaving no fingerprints  
or witnesses, the only  
evidence a pottery shard  
spit upon the beach  
a hundred years and

a thousand miles away.

The ocean is the black horse  
of the pirates, until  
the mastered became  
the master.

Then the white foam caps  
rolled and billowed,  
hiding secrets that lie beneath  
the watery dust of their crimes.

## **Decades of War**

War can be seen most easily on the faces of our children  
not yet having learned the politics of perception,  
naked longing marking their age of innocence.  
Blue eyes sparkle above ruby-cheeks, a sacrifice to patriotism,  
waiting breathlessly for the return of a father,  
listening deep into the night.

The first war, the Great one, when the suffering felt most keenly  
at night.

Sleepless for the lonesome wail of the train, the children  
wonder if, at last, tonight will bring the return of a father.  
The iron monster crawls past drooping victory gardens, triumph  
only perception,  
and endless corn fields, returning the family sacrifice to  
patriotism.

Padded feet down the hall, crawling into mothers' beds, the last  
eve of innocence.

Years later, those same eyes, once full of innocence  
now glance eternally skyward, no longer afraid of the night.  
Racing to the backyard, praying for the tipped wings of a biplane,  
patriotic  
white belly glinting in a sky blue, red lips of children  
rounded circles of hope, believing in the perception,  
worlds away from the anguish, the heat, brought on by kamikaze  
fathers.

Having been burned twice, now themselves to blame, the fathers

sign up again, so young they pack faded photographs and innocence.

Images flashed across the screen and colored their perception;  
a green country with yellow enemies, hiding at night  
gun blasts leveled at villages where the face of terror, the enemy,  
is a child,  
and the color red still flows, a tribute to patriotism.

In today's schools the Pledge is a forced patriotism,  
smaller wars bring greater sacrifices for those lucky enough to  
have a father.

Instant gratification with up-to-the-minute news, the children  
see it on CNN, before the official notification, a televised death of  
innocence,  
a 4 th of July firework show, red flashes against a black night,  
orange and yellow terror alerts crawling across the screens of their  
perception.

Little boys, death frozen with the Pause button, perceive  
they should practice at this business of war, as their act of  
patriotism;  
playing games instead of playing outside, late into the night.  
Orphans of divorce or discard, who never knew their fathers,  
having been robbed by crime, or drugs, or man of their innocence,  
having been born, turn instantly to adult, skipping a childhood.

Night after endless night, invisible mothers become the fathers,  
a gentle perception that savagely fights against the sacrifice of  
innocence,  
standing patriotic, one hand on her heart, the other holding the  
hand of her man child

J R Turek

### **Virtual Reality**

I'm playing the best game of my life  
high score toppled all the competitors  
and I've gotten to Level 99, the toughest  
bad-ass play ever invented and

my screen freezes. I click the mouse,  
my controller, the keyboard but I'm still  
frozen in place halfway through Level 99  
and the world seems to stop spinning.

My breaths are shallow and rapid, pulse  
is off the charts, and my level of control  
is crumbling to dust, landing in a heap  
in the pit of my stomach, exploding.

There on the wall beside my computer  
is a cartoon: I hit escape – but I'm still here!  
but I don't laugh or even smile. I hit escape  
and I'm still an igloo in the middle of game play.

I hesitate, press all the buttons on the keyboard,  
click the left right mouse buttons several times,  
yank the controller cord from the usb port and  
when nothing moves in the screen's frozen tundra,

I press ctrl-alt-delete. Lights flash like a disco strobe on/off on/off on/off in tempo to my heart rate, sirens blare, and the screen goes black except for a teeny tiny pinhole of light at the center of the screen.

I wait, fingers hover over the keyboard but touch nothing. Lights and sirens cease – the silence is unnerving, my fingers twitch to do something, anything but I control the urge to commit harikari

on my computer. Breathe in...out. Like the animation to close a Looney Tunes cartoon, the pinhole expands to fill the screen and Porky Pig stutters the worst phrase ever written –

*Tha-tha-that-that's all folks!*

– a tiny puff of virtual smoke, my screen goes dark. Game over is an understatement. I finally flex my fingers which have gone numb in anticipation of continuing play with the hope of reaching Level 100.

I turn off the tower, click my monitor off, pull all the plugs and wires that connect me to this simulated world offering fame and fortune in points and player high scores, and I go for a walk in the real world

where ctrl-alt-del doesn't exist.

Lesley Tyson

**buttercream frosting**

stumbling  
into 23<sup>rd</sup> hour of wakefulness  
my body confuses exhaustion  
with hunger

i begin to envision walls of  
sanctuary as cake  
covered in paper-smooth buttercream frosting  
decorated with strange fondant contortions

message whispered in strange voices  
that might be computerized might be mechanical

tells me i can escape  
this sleeplessness by eating  
my way  
through walls  
finding nuts and raisins  
nails and studs  
carrot wiring

but i can't dream what is on the other side  
and green apple licorice  
ties the package of what covers red

traps itself between my teeth  
to floss sense from wakeful hallucinations

even  
as tired as i am  
i can't look for invisible cake  
to solve my problem

i avoid chipping my teeth on  
the orange fondant of mind's private property  
and swipe a fingerful of buttercream frosting  
letting the hectic sweetness satisfy  
need for sleep/

## story in pieces

maybe if this morning  
wasn't overcast  
i might understand references  
to dinosaurs and spiders in the article  
about the bombed out city  
where candles are the source of light  
after dark  
but the absence of trees in last night's dream  
required a ziggurat journey  
through a mix of rubble  
freshly painted walls and  
chrome and cracked glass tables  
so this morning cutlery seems out of place  
while i find myself looking for the treasure chest  
in a drawer of suddenly rusty knives  
almost as though opening  
a time capsule from my future  
with attempted explanation of  
what today means except  
it hasn't happened yet  
such time travel confuses  
no help to know  
it will make sense tomorrow  
i am distracted  
trying to remember to whom  
the sailboat and the bicycle belong  
and in what tense

## **hidden meaning**

the ghosts i write  
transmute  
dissipate  
into mundane words  
in nonsense order  
creating peculiar metaphors

to hide in plain  
confusing sight  
from everybody but me

others trip over syntax  
scrutinize impossible meaning  
for ordinary messages

i accept surreal images  
turning them inside out  
twisting them round corners  
to blur edges  
of my now and present

i am not inscrutable  
my altered understanding  
reveals chronicles that cannot  
be translated  
into conventional sentences

thoughts discounted

for being outside normal usage  
they give me labels  
reconstruct me  
into what they want me  
to say

mainstream terms become  
my facade  
armor without weapon  
behind this protective skin  
i write the ghosts  
haunting my life with meaning

Steve Wallace

**Figure 8 Racing Legend**

Starting on the front row  
getting ready to go  
Winning is on his mind  
With another win sure to come  
he's tough to beat no matter where he goes  
He knows how to move and groove Through the Crossover  
and get to the front of the pack  
When the checkered flag flies

## **Ten years ago**

Ten years ago I met you for  
for the first time  
Since then I could never get  
you off my mind  
I thought of you night and day  
and knew someday I would  
turn your loving warming heart my way  
Since now you are mine to hold and love  
all the time  
I will always be true to your heart  
and never let you down  
I'll be the hero you been dreaming of  
and rescue you from life's little ups and downs

Patricia Walsh

### **Mandatory Flesh**

Mandatory flesh, cursed by these offspring's  
recycled misgivings, bespoke statements  
filing your own duties as best as possible  
cold over sunshine brought over news stories  
hapless flowers punctuating the weather.

Labouring with hair, dyed to more extinction,  
infernal, eternal tattoos splay their wares  
cutting through miracles, reminded of discovered youth  
tolerated through history, not needed now,  
forgiveness obscured a point worth taking.

Loving and loved, the perfect white elephant  
kissed enough to lead the path of propriety,  
fashionable stations beat a path to your ridicule  
hardwired Catholics blocking comfortable parts  
scarred through results not meant for some.

Poisoning atmosphere at every coffee break  
needing a complication too much for all  
spending loved where lies uncomplicated  
mirroring these desperate hours like a shot  
blowing minds but not enough for promotion.

Being lost and sorry, the hardware quips assimilated  
not being touched is a surprising feat  
sucked up to, under cover of professionalism  
on the way of dead souls, apologies redundant  
informatory, interrogated, won for this history.

## **Slam the Door on Your Way Out**

sweat percolating down your imbued attempts  
thinking of the worst no longer fanciful,  
to apologise for belligerence these desperate hours  
to go for walks and not count the cost  
hiding behind locked doors, loving this aggression  
exposition lighting through the drunken swathe.

This final declaration, seen coming for miles  
scathing through the corridor, poison on a drip,  
little left to lost or any place to go,  
particulars on the table never concerns any  
too lazy for redemption, or misplace a hatchet,  
bleeding footsteps beating a path to perdition.

Loved by little, or by anyone's reckoning,  
massacred by words lubricated by higher planes  
informed by nature, not direct speech  
poetry redacted by an irredeemable statement  
giving trouble to this heartworm, inciting betrayal  
singing for your country well out of this depth.

Children skirt on by, nothing to see here  
a shroud of blood masquerading the higher good,  
vomit and an axe to grind, still some stock-in-trade  
terrorised, sinking fast appreciated, once dead  
killed by courtiers on a studied whim  
replaced too late, visceral out of time.

## Jeff Wasch

### **I hope you see this**

I thought I heard you laughing last night.  
I turned around and I thought I saw you  
smoking cigarettes in your bedroom  
watching *Fraser* or something like that.

I remember we used to go out to eat whenever we went anywhere.  
I always think about how the cheese would hang out of your  
mouth.

We used to talk about everything all the time,  
but now I talk to no one.

I took pleasure in the fact that you did not suffer for long,  
but that just meant that you died faster.  
Maybe I am selfish;  
Maybe I am weak.

Anyway, I hope you see this.

Jon Wesick

**Altar of Bedlam**

I promised  
not to disrupt  
the writing workshop but  
my poems worship  
at the altar of bedlam.  
They come with hip flasks of rye whiskey  
and streetwalkers, in torn nylons, on their arms.

Harvard expelled them  
because there are  
    no safe spaces  
        no safe spaces

So, they slam dance  
to Blink 182 at 2 AM,  
juggle plutonium detonators,  
and offer a pen  
that is an unmarked grave  
in Andalucía.

Pick it up

Lynn White

**Shall I Go Gently?**

I've always been indecisive  
and I'm still undecided  
but soon  
I will have to choose  
whether to build my ship,  
and furnish it  
comfortably  
and sail with you  
gently  
into the dark  
into oblivion  
gently  
or to rage and fight  
scratch and bite  
kick and scream  
so that you have to drag me  
to where I will not follow  
gently  
into oblivion  
into the darkness  
the inevitability  
of the end  
whichever way I choose.

## **The Power of Gods**

He would have had an easier journey  
if he hadn't harmed Neptune's son.  
He should have beat a hasty retreat  
from the sailor-eating giant  
leaving him unharmed by anybody  
or nobody.

And Aeolus's gift of winds to speed them homewards  
was not a blessing when Neptune heard about it.  
So unsurprising that he magicked the sailors  
into letting the winds out of their bag  
with a chorus of "all together now".  
What did he expect!  
Gods are powerful,  
some more than others.  
The blinding his son was a fairly big offence in Neptune's eyes  
and having control of the seas is a pretty impressive power.  
So, Odysseus paid the price.

And then there was Circe.  
Not only the goddess daughter of Titan,  
Circe was also a witch,  
of course she was,  
she was female  
so it went with the territory,  
but her magic skills  
were more renowned than most  
and thus more feared by men

and rightly so.

I wonder if he ate pork in his year long stay.

I wonder if he counted the swine restored to sailors  
or if he preferred not to know if any were missing.

I like to think he knew she bested him  
with her roasted pork and crispy bacon.

## Abby and Hanna Wilson

### **Ole Glory**

When I see Ole Glory waving high,  
She reminds us why heroes die.  
They gave their all for liberty,  
and justice for all

When I see Ole Glory waving high,  
She waves proudly in the sky,  
Faithfully watches over a land  
Where freedom reaches out a hand.

When I see Ole Glory waving high,  
I think of Neal Mccoy pledging her everyday.

Thomas Zampino

**Ordinary Unknowns**

If I were still awaiting a miracle, I could sit alone and rest.  
Today is not that day. Today has been quite  
ordinary.

What yet remains unknown, in the hours just ahead, will never be  
enough to change anything.  
Ordinary unknowns, these.

Ones like us that have long since given in, given up, given over.

Expecting nothing.

Except to wait.

## **Fortress**

Words alone can let me in

or keep me out

A single touch can tell the story

or recall the lies

Morning can overtake the darkness

or fail to change a thing

I can stand here like some stupid fortress

or be just enough to keep you safe

## Donna Zephrine

### **Chaos with COVID-19 Virus**

Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

Help reduce the spread of novel coronavirus and keep yourself and your community healthy.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

Offer your help in getting those most at risk groceries and other goods.

Standard precautions for infection control. Stay at home as much as possible



## About the Authors

**Kim Acrylic** is from Seattle Washington. She is a poet, novelist, and music interviewer. She collaborates with artists all over the world.

**Austin Alexis** is the author of the full-length collection *Privacy Issues* (Broadside Lotus Press, Madgett Poetry Award, 2014) and two poetry chapbooks previously published by Poets Wear Prada. His poetry and fiction have appeared in *Barrow Street*, *The Journal*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Unstamatic*, the anthologies *Rabbit Ears: TV Poems* (NY Quarterly Press), *Poets4Paris* (Local Gems Press) and elsewhere. He has work forthcoming in *Maintenant 14*.

**Dee Allen** is an African-Italian performance poet based in Oakland, California. Active on the creative writing & Spoken Word tips since the early 1990s. He's author of 5 books [*Boneyard*, *Unwritten Law*, *Stormwater* and *Skeletal Black*, all from POOR Press, and his newest from Conviction 2 Change Publishing, *Elohi Unitsi*] and has 25 anthology appearances under his figurative belt so far.

**C.B. Anderson** was the longtime gardener for the PBS television series, *The Victory Garden*. His books of poetry, *Mortal Soup* and the *Blue Yonder* (2013) and *Roots in the Sky, Boots on the Ground* (2019) were both published by White Violet Press.

**Matt Anstett** is a sexually frustrated Torontonion with as much knowledge about gay culture as he has life direction. Through his words, he hopes to bring a brand of masculinity that encourages

others to embrace their own or shamelessly steal another - if it feels right.

**Lynda Scott Araya** is an educator, writer and editor from the South Island of New Zealand. Along with her husband, she co-owns a heritage accommodation provider. She has two children, one of whom is deceased. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *Wards*, *The Pangolin Review*, *Verse-Virtual*, *The Blue Nib* and more.

**Bud R. Berkich** lives in Somerville, New Jersey. He writes in all genres, including screenplays and literary criticism. From 2003-2009, Bud was the co-founder and Director of the Borders Poetry Group in Bridgewater, NJ. From 2004-2008, he served as the liaison between poets and booksellers at three Dodge Poetry Festivals. Bud's favorite poets are William Carlos Williams and Emily Dickinson.

**Cristina Marie Bernich** is a former Teacher's College, Columbia University graduate, pediatric speech-language pathologist and mother of three rambunctious boys. She works full time with a school for brilliant children who have disabilities. She owns a small private practice in a small town in Long Island.

**Sayan Aich Bhowmik** is currently Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Shirakole Mahavidyalaya, Kolkata. A published poet, he is also the editor of the blog *Plato's Caves*, a semi-academic space for discussion on life, culture and literature.

**Larry Blazek** lives in a tiny cottage on the side of a remote hill. He plays his old guitar, gardens, and builds things. He has been pub-

lished in *Unal Songs*, *Red-headed Stepchild*, *Red Coyote*, and *Nightingales and Sparrows*.

**Edward Charles Bossong**, a recent college graduate, just completed his first self-published chapbook *Only From Pain* which explores the emotional demand of one-sided relationships. His poetry and art have been published in SUNY Oneonta's Art and Scope literary art magazine and the Nassau County Poet Laureate anthology. Aspiring to continue his career in higher education, he currently works in a local university's admissions office.

**Michael Lee Bross** hold an MFA in Poetry from Drew University where he was the recipient of the Jane Coil Cole Poetry Scholarship, and the 2015 Arts by the People Chapbook Award. His debut poetry chapbook, "Meditations on an Empty Stomach" was published by Finishing Line Press (October 2019), and his poems have appeared *Lifeboat*, *Mobius Poetry Magazine*, *Let's Talk Philadelphia*, *The Northeastern Poetry Review*, and most recently in ZPublishings *Best Emerging Poets Anthology 2019*. Michael currently teaches English at the University of Scranton and East Stroudsburg University.

Having lived in Southern New Jersey, **Kathy Burgin** has been enjoying the people, culture and beauty of Lancaster, PA for the past seven years. She is a retired educator of 32 years and the recipient of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching (PAEMST, 2010).

**Ryan Buynak** is a pugilist poet from New York City, who hates writing bios. He has published 10 books of poetry, which sit on bookshelves and backs of toilets all around the wide world. Every-

thing Ryan produces is shared under the brand Coyote Blood, which you should Google right away or else! He loves the Yankees, wearing overalls, and eating freshly baked chocolate chip cookies.

Mehmet Büyüktuncay is a Turkish expat currently living in Budapest. As a visiting academic, he lectures on modern Turkish language at ELTE University. He also teaches translation at Dokuz Eylül University, his home institution in İzmir/TURKEY. His publications include a Ph.D. thesis on Don DeLillo's novels of conspiracy and paranoia along with a number of scholarly articles on various topics. His passion is to attest the gradual unearthing of dramatic irony in life histories and to cultivate a sentiment to enjoy the emergence of the inconsistent and bizarre in human existence as conveyed in philosophical life writing, literary interview, extreme music and photography.

R.T. Castleberry is a widely published poet and critic. His work has appeared in *Roanoke Review*, *Trajectory*, *Blue Collar Review*, *White Wall Review*, *The Alembic* and *Visitant*. Internationally, Castleberry's work has been published in Canada, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, New Zealand, the Philippines and Antarctica.

Jamie Ann Colangelo is a Christian, living on Long Island. She is the mother of twins, Liane and Christopher, now adults. She is the author of *From The Father's Heart - A Book of Poems and Suggested Gifts To Inspire, Encourage and Bless Those in Your Circle of Influence*. She found her passion for poetry at the age of 12 and now enjoys using her gifts and talents to share God's love and encourage others on life's journey.

Ushiku Crisafulli is a chef, poet, playwright, actor, performance artist,

musician and founder of the OpenMind Collective. His most recent publication, *Litany of Varied Experiences*, was published by Local Gems Poetry Press in New York and he's currently overseeing their *Buzzin Bards* project in Manchester, England.

Lyndsey Collison lives in Dover, DE. Last summer two of her poems were published in *Delaware Bards Poetry Review*. She enjoys doing open mic nights and sharing her work.

Noah Count refers to the bulk of his "poems" as prose with crappy punctuation. Other than old and in the way, he enjoys late night cigars with the raccoons, preferably under a cloudless sky.

Linda M. Crate's works have been published in numerous anthologies and magazines both online and in print. She is a two-time push cart nominee and author of six poetry chapbooks, a micro-collection, and a novel. She recently published two full-length poetry collections: *Vampire Daughter* (Dark Gatekeeper Gaming, February 2020) and *The Sweetest Blood* (Cyberwit, February 2020).

Shawn Creech has lived the first 37 years of his life in the greater Raleigh area. He has two published works "Where The Oaks Meet The Pines" with NC Bard's and "Quarantine" in the anthology "The Revolution" out of Staten Island New York and hopes to self publish his own poetry book sometime this year.

Mike Croghan writes code by day, which has more in common with poetry than you might think. Mike's poems have been accepted to several anthologies, including NoVA Bards, The Poet's Domain, Thirteen Myna Birds, and The Stray Branch, and his first poetry

chapbook, *Body and Soul*, was published by Local Gems Press in 2018. You can read more of his work at <https://freesourfruit.com>.

Ginger Dehlinger writes in multiple genres which includes two published novels, *Brute Heart* and *Never Done*. Her poetry and short stories have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, and she has won two Pacific Northwest writing competitions for her creative nonfiction. Ginger can be found in Bend, Oregon or at [www.gdehlinger.blogspot.com](http://www.gdehlinger.blogspot.com).

**Abby DeSantis** is a retired fashion executive from NYC who is currently living in rural northeastern Pennsylvania. Her poetry has appeared in *Pennsylvania Bards Poetry Review 2020*, *Thirteen Days of Halloween*, *Tiny Seeds Literary Journal* and *Covid-19 Poems from the Lockdown*. She is a member of Poets Live of Scranton and NEPA Pencils writing group. She lives with her husband and several furry and feathered friends.

**John DeSantis** is a retired NYC high school mathematics teacher recently relocated to rural Northeast Pennsylvania. He has been writing since about third grade. In addition to poetry he writes short stories and plays. His poetry has appeared in numerous publications.

**William Doreski** has published three critical studies and several collections of poetry. His work has appeared in many print and online journals. He has taught at Emerson College, Goddard College, Boston University, and Keene State College. His most recent books are *Water Music* and *Train to Providence*. [williamdoreski.blogspot.com](http://williamdoreski.blogspot.com)

**Alex Edwards-Bourdrez's** poems have appeared in various antholo-

gies and have won recognition in Long Island contests. His collection, "Transformations," which won second prize in the 2019 NaPrWriMo contest, will be published soon by Local Gems Press.

**Lynette G. Esposito**, MA Rutgers has been published in North of Oxford, Fox Chase Review, Philadelphia Inquirer, Haiku Journal, Poetry Quarterly and others. She lives in Mont Laurel, NJ and was married to Attilio Esposito.

**Melissa Esposito** graduated from Chatham University with an MFA. Her work has appeared in *The Minor Bird*, *Gemini*, *Poetry South Review*, and is forthcoming in *Angles*. Melissa lives in Pittsburgh where she is well on her way to becoming a crazy cat and horse lady, which are the same thing, just different animals.

**Timothy Paul Evans** came to writing poetry late (in his 60's). His poems have appeared in the 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 San Diego Poetry Annual as well as the 2018 National Beat Poetry Festival 10 Year Anthology. He has just completed his first book of poetry, *Litanies of the Moon* to be published later this year. He is also a finalist for the 2019 Pushcart Prize Best of Small Press Awards for poetry.

**Paul Ferrell** is a comic living in Las Vegas. His poems have appeared in *Jet Fuel Review*, *Pank* and *The Locust Review*. He can currently be seen performing comedy in his bathtub at home.

**Tom Fillion** is a graduate of the University of South Florida. He is the author of novels and poetry available at Amazon.

**Robert Fleming** lives in Lewes, DE, USA. He is a member of the Rehoboth Beach Writer's Guild. In 2019, he was nominated for a Lambda Literary Award, as a contributor to the poetry anthology *Stonewall's Legacy*. In 1983, he won a US national student journalism award for his review of a Duran Duran concert in the Brandeis University student newspaper *The Justice*.

**Joanne Kennedy Frazer** is a retired peace and justice director and educator for faith-based organizations at state, diocesan and national levels. Penning her life's passions into poetry has become the delight and vocation of her silvering years. Her chapbook, *Being Kin*, was published in 2019. She lives in Durham, NC.

**Tony Gentry** has authored a novel *The Coal Tower*, a collection of stories *Last Rites*, the poetry collection *Yearnful Raves: 50 Poems*, and five young adult biographies. He is an occupational therapy professor at Virginia Commonwealth University and blogs at [tonygentry.com](http://tonygentry.com).

**F.I. Goldhaber's** words capture people, places, and politics with a photographer's eye and a poet's soul. As a reporter, editor, and business writer, they produced news stories, features, editorials, and reviews for newspapers, corporations, governments, and non-profits in five states. Now paper, electronic, and audio magazines, books, newspapers, calendars, broadsides, and street signs display their poetry, fiction, and essays. <http://www.goldhaber.net/>

**Hister Grant** left school when he was 14 as he spiraled into a pit of mental illness which though he is heavily medicated continues to this

very day. A cancer survivor he would describe himself as bitter but not angry. He identifies as asexual and is a moral nihilist.

**Heidi C. Hallett** sees creative expression through poetry as a way to collaborate and converse with others. She is a small animal veterinarian who paints with oils as well as words, often using these two mediums to complement each other. Her poetry has been published in several anthologies. [www.aquaartideas.com](http://www.aquaartideas.com).

**Sean Hanrahan** is a Philadelphian poet originally hailing from Dale City, Virginia. He is the author of *Safer Behind Popcorn* (2019 Cajun Mutt) and *Hardened Eyes on the Scan* (2018 Moonstone). Look out for his forthcoming chapbook, *Gay Cake* coming in March 2020 from Toho. He currently serves on the Moonstone Press Editorial Board, as head poetry editor for Toho, and workshop instructor for Green Street Poetry.

**Jamila W. Harris** is a published poet and novelist of both fiction and non-fiction literature. She resides in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her works include "The Year We Didn't Vote", "When the Roses Smell Like Pooh-Pooh", "40 Rules to Being A True Diva", and "Five". She is currently working on her next non-fiction novel. All of her literature can be found at [jamilawharris.com](http://jamilawharris.com)

**Mark Andrew Heathcote** is adult learning difficulties support worker, his poetry has been published in many journals, magazines and anthologies, he resides in the UK, from Manchester, he is the author of "In Perpetuity" and "Back on Earth" two books of poems published by a CTU publishing group ~ Creative Talents Unleashed that can be found on Amazon.

**Wendy Hoffman** is a retired social worker. Karnac Books, London, published her memoirs in 2014 and 2015, and a co-authored book of essays, in 2017. Her books are now with Aeon Publishers in England and Routledge in New York. Her first book of poetry was published in 2016. A memoir is forthcoming. She has a MFA in creative writing.

**Kevin Holmes:** Criminal, no. Misogynist , no. Right guy, he hopes so. He likes words. Dance dance he says. He hopes they listen. He hopes you see.

**Mark Hudson** lives in Evanston Illinois, right near the border of Chicago, and Howard street which he has written about in his poem. He is a frequent contributor to Local Gems books, and happy to get in again.

**Maria Iliou** is an autistic Greek artist/ poet/ photographer/ actress/ model. She enjoys performing in live theatre. She connects through performing arts and finds solace and quietude within her inner soul self through meditation, energy and yoga. Maria is a published author, and designing her own documentaries. She plans to design her own college and magazine.

**Brian Donnell James** is an emerging writer who has been published in Africa, Europe, and throughout the United States. His work has received a letter of encouragement by the poet Nikki Giovanni, and his work earned him praise as a finalist for the Virginia Prize, sponsored by the University of Virginia.

**Nancy K. Jentsch** has taught German and Spanish for over 35 years. She has recently published poetry in *Eclectica*, *3 Elements Review* and *Panoply*. In 2019, her poetry appeared in *Riparian* (Dos Madres Press) and *A Walk with Nature* (University Professors Press). Her chapbook, *Authorized Visitors*, was published in 2017. Her writer's page on Facebook is <https://www.facebook.com/NancyJentschPoet/>

**Barbara Kent** studied poetry at SUNY Stony Brook on Long Island with the late June Jordan, author of *Things I Do in The Dark* and other books. Professionally, Barbara writes about technology, education, business and industry, but her passion is poetry, which is rarely lucrative. Her inspirations are the news, politics, societal observations and the dynamics of family relation.

**Kathleen Kinsolving** composed and performed rap songs in the 1980s. 25 years later she wrote and published two non-fiction books. She's also written screenplays, film essays, and a play. Kathleen's been teaching poetry to high school students for 12 years, and has written 15 poems since 2019.

**Jerry Kirk** is an emerging writer whose work has been published in Queen's University of Charlotte's literary magazine, 'Signet', 'Tangents' periodical, 'The Charlotte Poetry Review (90s volumes)' and other local publications. In addition to being a writer Jerry is also an award winning visual artist with paintings in many corporate and private collections. He currently lives in Charlotte, North Carolina, with his wife Lisa and daughter Elysia.

**Judson Klein** is a writer of music, poetry and literature with a history of performing at open mics, coffee shops, book stores, small festivals and clubs. Growing up immersed in all genres of music and literature, both fiction and non-fiction, Judson has accumulated a portfolio of self-published novels, short stories and all-original records. Free downloads of the original music are available at:

[Soundcloud.com/Judson-Klein](https://soundcloud.com/Judson-Klein).

**Caitlyn Lacovara** is a true renaissance woman with many passions, one of which is writing. Find her on instagram @caitthepoet.

**Tom Lagasse's** poetry has been published in *Word Mill Magazine*, *Wine Drunk Sidewalk*, *The Monterey Poetry Review*, *Wax Poetry & Art*, [iamnotasilentpoet.com](http://iamnotasilentpoet.com), *Plum Tree Tavern* and two anthologies. Other writing has appeared in *Edible Nutmeg*, *The Feminine Collective*, *Faith, Hope & Fiction*, and *The Sun*. He lives in Bristol, CT.

**Jim Landwehr** has published five poetry collections. He also has two books, *The Portland House* and *Dirty Shirt*. He has non-fiction stories published in *StoryNews*, *Main Street Rag* and others. His poetry has been featured in *Blue Heron Review*, *Off the Coast Poetry Journal*, and many others. Jim is the poet laureate for the Village of Wales, Wisconsin. For more on his work, visit: <http://jimlandwehr.com>

**Edward Lee's** poetry, short stories, non-fiction and photography have been published in Ireland, England and America. His debut poetry collection *Playing Poohsticks On Ha'Penny Bridge* was published in 2010. His blog/website can be found at

<https://edwardmlee.wordpress.com>

Elaine Leet is holed up near Moscow, PA, with her sled dog Cleo near a stream in the woods. She enjoys the woods. Elaine has published a novel titled *Child of a Troubled Land* and is currently working on expanding her repertoire.

**Amanda Little** is a mother of two and a native of Salina, KS who has been teaching ELA and Public Speaking for the last 7 years. Her first publication was published in the local newspaper when she was in kindergarten, a short poem about Christmas trees.

**Paulie Lipman** is a former bartender/bouncer/record store employee/Renaissance Fair worker/two time National Poetry Slam finalist and a current loud Jewish/Queer/ poet/writer/performer. Their poetry collections *from below/denied the light* and *sad bastard soundtrack* are available from Swimming With Elephants Publications.

**Jeff Livingston** is a Long Island based entertainer who performs under the stage name Annie Manildoo. Jeff is a student of English education and a local political activist. More information can be found about Jeff and his performance career at [www.anniemanildoo.com](http://www.anniemanildoo.com)

**Patricia Lynne (Janke)** is a retired court reporter who found a passion for writing at a Hart Part Writing Class. Her works have been published both locally and nationally. Her poetry has won numerous awards including first place in Bo Carter Contest.

**Cristian Martinez** is a 13-year-old 7th-grade student at Ronkonkoma Middle School and award winning poet. *Glimpse of Tomorrow* is Cristian's first book. He has been mentored by Robert Savino for the

past two years which has helped Cristian fine-tune his craft. Cristian also loves to play soccer.

**Louis Mateus** started to share his poetry publicly after many years of cultivating the craft of poetry privately while launching his career in the mental health field. He has been published in various publications: *The Federal Poet*, *The Listening Eye*, *Skidrow Penthouse*, and *Nova Bards* among them. He is an avid reader of poetry, believing this to be the key to good writing, and is very much interested in the therapeutic properties of poetry, in study and practice.

**Michael McCarthy** resides in Port Jefferson with his wife, Toni Ann. He teaches theology at the Mary Louis Academy in Jamaica, Queens. He is a lifetime explorer of the sacred and the author of *The Ways of Grace: A Book of Poems* (Goldfinch Publishing, 2016).

**Rosemary McKinley** is an eclectic writer who has had poetry, short stories, and non fiction published, as well as three historical books. She has been doing book presentations all over Long Island. <https://www.rosemarymckinley.com>

**Joan McNerney's** poetry has been included in many literary magazines such as Seven Circle Press, Dinner with the Muse, Poet Warriors, Blueline, and Halcyon Days. Four Bright Hills Press Anthologies, several Poppy Road Review Journals, and numerous Spectrum Publications have accepted her work. Her latest title, *The Muse In Miniature*, is available on Amazon.com and Cyberwit.net. She has four Best of the Net nominations.

**Gene McParland** is a graduate from Queens College and possesses graduate degrees from other institutions. He has always had a passion for poetry and the messages it can convey. His works have appeared in numerous poetry publications. He is the author of *Baby Boomer Ramblings, a collection of essays and poetry*, and *Adult Without, Child Within*, a collection on poetry celebrating the child within. In addition, he acts in local theater and videos, and has written several plays.

**Bruce McRae**, a Canadian musician currently residing on Salt Spring Island BC, is a multiple Pushcart nominee with over 1,600 poems published internationally in magazines such as *Poetry*, *Rattle* and *North American Review*. His books are 'The So-Called Sonnets' (Silenced Press); 'An Unbecoming Fit Of Frenzy' (Cawing Crow Press); 'Like As If' (Pski's Porch); 'Hearsay' (The Poet's Haven).

**Rose Miller** is a geriatric poet who came late to the art of molding words into feelings and vice versa. She lives in the Village of Malverne, New York, known by some as the "Mayberry of Long Island" assuming you are old enough to remember when TV shows were in black and white.

**Chris Montgomery** is a blue-collar minimalist who cherishes synchronicity and metaphysics.

**Kathleen Moore** is a Graduate of Stockton University. She currently works as a library assistant in Cape May County. She is and administrator of the Jersey Cape Writers' Facebook page. Kathy blogs about

her blessings at <http://kathswriting.blogspot.com/>. Lives by the motto: “Take Time to Watch a Sunset”

**Guna Moran** is an Assamese poet and critic. He lives in Assam, India. His poems are being published in various international magazines, journals, e-zines and anthologies.

**Ann-Marie Murzin** is an entrepreneurial lawyer and emerging poet whose work draws upon images encountered in Westfield, NJ where she lives with her two children, and their feisty hound named Autumn. Find out more about her work at [www.murzinlaw.com](http://www.murzinlaw.com).

**Roxana Negut** was born in 1981 in Bucharest, Romania. She studied at the Faculty of Philosophy and Journalism and worked as an editor, copywriter, content writer and journalist for various publications. She writes children's literature, poetry and satirical prose. In 2019 she published *The dead do not Want Water* through Lumen Publishing House.

**Michelle Oram** is a published author; her book *Songs of the Woods* encourages children to begin and end each day with a song from the heart. Her new book *The Healing Powers of Nature & Music* to be published this year will help adults explore ways nature and music can heal, balance and empower their own uniqueness. When she's not writing Michelle is singing with her jazz band “...and All That Jazz” and performing her Jazz Poetry.

**Carl “Papa” Palmer** of Old Mill Road in Ridgeway, Virginia, lives in University Place, Washington. He is retired from the military and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) enjoying life as “Papa” to his

grand descendants and being a Franciscan Hospice volunteer. Carl is a Pushcart Prize, Best of the Net and Micro Award nominee.

**Tom Pawlowski** (tomp) is a life-long resident of South Jersey. In 2012 he made a New Year's resolution to write a haiku everyday, and he hasn't stopped yet. He has previously been published in *NJ Bards South Poetry Review* and *Bards Against Hunger - New Jersey* in 2019 and participated in *Pitman Poems on Parade* from 2015 through 2018. His day job is in engineering.

**Joseph S. Pete** is an award-winning journalist, the author of *Lost Hammond*, Indiana, an Iraq War veteran, an Indiana University graduate, a book reviewer, and a frequent guest on Lakeshore Public Radio. He is a Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominee who was named the poet laureate of Chicago BaconFest. His literary work and photography have appeared in far too many places to list here.

**Mary C. M. Phillips** is a caffeinated wife, mother, and writer. Her work has appeared in numerous national bestselling anthologies. As a musician, she has toured and recorded with artists such as Matthew Sweet, Chris Stamey, Rob Bartlett, Don Dixon and Marti Jones. Her poetry has been featured in *Bards Annual 2019*, *The Mondo*, and *Pathways to Dreams* (Local Gems). She blogs at [CaffeineEpiphanies.com](http://CaffeineEpiphanies.com)

Past Poet Laureate of Kansas (2017-2019) **Kevin Rabas** teaches at Emporia State University, where he leads the poetry and playwriting tracks. He has twelve books.

**Allie Rieger** is a lifelong resident of Suffolk County. She has a deep love for any and all art forms. She began to write poetry many years ago but only recently started sharing. She has one previous published poem in *Suffolk County Poetry Review 2019*.

**Sarah Ritter** is a poet who published her first collection *Inspirations, Transformations and Revelations: A Poetic Expression of My Personal Journey*. She is also a contributing poet in *We Are Beat* and *Goddess Anthology* by The National Beat Poetry Foundation and the *Connecticut Bards Northwest Poetry Review* by Local Gems Press.

**Marc Rosen** lives, writes, and revels in *CHAOS*, in all aspects of life. He has begun his studies in Law at Hofstra University, and lives in a small studio apartment that is close enough to every place he needs to go. He is no longer allowed to use the Shape Water cantrip when playing Dungeons and Dragons, nor is he allowed to run Halflings after the Tentacle Incident. This is the fifth anthology project Marc has led.

**Matthue Roth's** work has appeared in *Tin House* and *Ploughshares*, and was shortlisted for the *Best American Short Stories*. His picture book, *My First Kafka*, was called "eerie and imaginative" by The New Yorker. By day, he's a writer at Google, and lives in Brooklyn with his daughters.

**Narges Rothermel**, a retired nurse, writes poetry in Farsi and English. Her poems are published in many anthologies. Her first book, *Wild Flowers*, was published in 2010. Her second, *Rays and Shadows*,

was in 2012, and then *Side Roads* in 2017. She is on the NCPLS Advisory Board

**Wayne Russell** has been widely published in creative writing magazines. From 2016-17 he founded and edited *Degenerate Literature*. In late 2018, Ariel Chart nominated Wayne for his first Pushcart Prize for the poem :”Stranger in a Strange Town”. *Where Angels Fear* is his debut e-book, currently out of print.

**Pat Gallagher Sassone** is a novelist and a poet. Her YA book, *Hanging in the Stars* has been a hit with high school students. Her poetry appeared in *Nasty Women Poets* and *13 Days of Halloween*. She believes in the power of poetry, especially in these difficult days.

**Daniel Scenters** has been writing poetry since the age of 17, working tirelessly to better his craft and genuinely express himself through verse. He is currently writing a book of poetry he hopes to have published in the near future.

**Sofia Senesie** is a young writer from Warren County. She writes to combat the chaos going on in both the outside world and her own. She likes to recall the old saying: the pen is mightier than the sword. She wants all writers to know that in these chaotic times we can build up our courage and strength on the battlefield training with our ink blades.

Author of five collections, **Shoshauna Shy** is the recipient of two Outstanding Achievement Awards from the Wisconsin Library Association, and was a finalist for the Tom Howard/Margaret Reid poetry prize sponsored by Winning Writers.

**Emily-Sue Sloane** writes poetry to help her cope with life's accelerating complexity and absurdity. Her poems have appeared in *Bards Annual 2019*, *Suffolk County Poetry Review*, *Amethyst Review*, *Front Porch Review*, *Avocet*, *The Weekly Avocet*, *Medicinal Purposes*, and *Performance Poets Association Literary Review*. She lives in Huntington Station, NY.

**Elizabeth Spencer Spragins** is a poet and writer who taught in community colleges for more than a decade. Her tanka and bardic verse in the Celtic style have been published extensively in Europe, Asia, and North America. She is the author of *With No Bridle for the Breeze: Ungrounded Verse* and *The Language of Bones: American Journeys Through Bardic Verse*.

**CC Thomas's** poetry has been selected for inclusion in various poetry anthologies, journals, and magazines, and has been awarded several prizes. Currently, CC calls Northeastern Pennsylvania home.

**J R (Judy) Turek**, 2019 Walt Whitman LI Poet of the Year, Superintendent of Poetry for the LI Fair, Bards Laureate 2013-2015, 23 years as Moderator of the Farmingdale Creative Writing Group, editor, workshop leader, author of five poetry books. 'The Purple Poet' lives on Long Island with her husband, Paul, her dogs, and her extensive shoe collection.

**Lesley Tyson** from Reston, Virginia, has had work in issues of *The Poet's Domain* and *NoVA Bards* and released his first book of poetry *journey through red heaven* in

2019. Lesley is a regular contributor to several local Northern Virginia poetry groups and co-leads Poets Anonymous ©, Northern Virginia's longest running open reading.

**Steve Wallace** is an award winning Songwriter and poet who has been writing over 35 years. Steve also likes watching car racing at the local race car track in Anderson, Indiana.

**Patricia Walsh** was born and raised in the parish of Mourneabbey, Co Cork. Her first collection of poetry titled *Continuity Errors* was published in 2010, and a novel titled the *Quest for Lost Éire*, in 2014. She has a further collection, titled *Outstanding Balance*, scheduled for publication in April 2020.

**Jeff Wasch** is an MA candidate in West Chester University's philosophy program. His interests include existentialism, phenomenology, and philosophy of mind. He also likes to write poetry and eat a lot.

**Jon Wesick** is a regional editor of the *San Diego Poetry Annual*. He's published hundreds of poems and stories in journals such as the *Atlanta Review*, *Berkeley Fiction Review*, *Metal Scratches*, *Pearl*, *Slipstream*, *Space and Time*, *Tales of the Talisman*, and *Zahir*. Jon authored *Words of Power*, *Dances of Freedom*, several novels and *The Alchemist's Grandson Changes His Name*.

**Lynn White** lives in north Wales. She was shortlisted in the Theatre Cloud 'War Poetry for Today' competition and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and a Rhysling Award. Her poetry has appeared in many publications including *Apogee*, *Firewords*, *Capsule Stories*,

*Light Journal* and *So It Goes*. Find Lynn at:  
<https://lynnwhitepoetry.blogspot.com>

Twin sisters Abby and Hanna Wilson,12, love writing poetry and music. When they are not writing they love bowling, racing BMX bikes and helping others in their community.

**Thomas Zampino** is an attorney in private practice in New York City. He and his wife have raised two daughters, four cats, two dogs, and various other domesticated creatures over the past three decades. He formerly blogged at *Patheos* and now writes reflections and poetry at *The Catholic Conspiracy*. One of his poems was published in *Bards Annual 2019* and another in *Nassau County Voices in Verse*.

**Donna Zephrine** was born in Harlem and grew up in Bay Shore, NY. She is a combat veteran who completed two tours in Iraq. Since returning home Donna enjoys sharing her experiences and storytelling through writing. She has been published in the *New York Times*, *Bards Annual*, *Oberon*, *The Mighty*, and countless others. She is studying for her licensing in social work.