

The Orchards

Poetry Journal

December 2016



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Cover painting by Sally Cook “*A Celebration Of Fruit*”



Inspired by the small plot of apple trees near Cambridge, England,
where writers have gathered for years with their books and pens,
we welcome you to pull up a chair
and enjoy poetry in the orchard.



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Biographies

A Note For Posterity

in memory of Sarah Lundberg

Someone will try to put you in a book
for reasons not specifically declared—
homage, perhaps, a footnote for research
and peer review. Or maybe it's the thought
that all we have's each other. Nothing lasts,
not even posterity, that lame excuse
for something like the afterlife, a salve
for pains of being mortal, the sense our woes
matter to someone—someday, if not now.

You could state it, mumbling with contempt
as happy hour approaches; you could gripe
or lose yourself in your iced latte, books,
or vinyl. The same outsider dodge
lands you ten blocks further from the train
where buildings stay bodegas—at least for now.
It's victory in the form of unsucccess,
the sell-out unsuggested, subsidized
by unbelieved, anachronistic dreams.

Psychotic guardians send the public home
supperless and scolded. Fingers crossed,
lovers look elsewhere than the homes they share
in various dilapidated states,
and in the end, the pastor plays you out
to songs from the old hymnal by default.
Apostate or faithful, the congregation stands
as indicated, the sky's uncaring blue
kaleidoscopic in this stained-glass room.

This Town Is Empty Buildings

This town is empty buildings
of traps already sprung,
haunted by the anecdotes
and ghosts of being young.

Her name implies an echo
of something I once said,
a scar gone white and rarely seen
from virulent and red.

I always knew the ending.
This is the late-night slog
when bars are closed and lights are off
in the epilogue.

Contacts

Oh, 'tis the season to cull cards
That fill my Rolodex,
For I had rather not incur
A new year's jinx or hex.

So let me toss the cards of those
Who died or moved away,
Went bonkers, bankrupt, off to jail,
Lost on election day.

Regarding who did what to whom
At home or club or church,
I should distinguish those that left
From those left in the lurch.

As for former colleagues, few
Have time to stay in touch;
Most are too busy working hard,
Or not, to ring me much.

Without a doubt I can remove
The cards of folks who call
Too frequently or late at night
Or simply not at all.

[originally appeared in *WestWard Quarterly*]

Ailurophilia

It is a fact that cats are much
Superior to dogs and such.

They walk and even wash themselves;
They sweep the dust from floors and shelves.

They sleep for hours, day or night,
Howl only in a fearsome fight.

A little food, a little litter
Is all it takes to keep this critter,

Plus drops to kill those awful fleas,
A shot to ward off rabies, please,

A pill for worms that go astray
(No need to lose a life that way),

Perhaps a brush for excess hair,
A cozy bed too small to share

So each may have a special place
As well as more communal space.

In recompense most like to bring
A mouse or mole, that sort of thing,

To people they co-habit with,
Whose ownership of cats is myth.

Plentitude

Even near the very end
the frail cat of many years
came to sit with me
among the glitter of bulb and glow
tried at the very last to drink water
and love her small world
would not give up on her curious self.
And though she staggered – shriveled and weak
still she poked her nose through ribbon and wrap
and her peace and her sweetness were of such
that when I held my ear to her heart
I could hear the sea.

Spring Tide

Green I wore green
that night when we
danced how we danced
at the picnic during
 spring
lustrous and green.

Rainfalls flooded the
air where we danced.
You left whispering
sweet words
 kissing
my eyes closed.

Sliding under green green
waters slipping sliding
over night
 hiding
in nebulae
turning we dance
finding your hand
how we dance
this endless night.

Last Summer

Golden sunshine spilling
over cathedrals of trees
forest of summer.

Your eyes are oceans of light
beams of light soft beaming
dancing through rivers of memory.

Forest of rivers
drowning in oceans of eyes.
Your eyes when sunset spreads
over sand dunes warm golden.

Stars gliding past heaven
as night explodes in
cathedrals of light.

We bed down together in
forest of memories
your body so strong golden
last summer with you.

Desolate

Pier 11, Manhattan

Nothing that I see here sings to me.
The air is helicopter-heavy, loud,
desultory, and The Bridge, its legacy
a famous song, is laid against the cloud,
a reckoning of so much stone and steel.
A fact. Whatever spirit would reside
within this stale humidity received
its notice, acted promptly and untied
its signs and attributes. I'm undeceived,
the world reduced to objects, the appeal
of gadgets named and auras data-streamed.
Without a pencil or imagined other
I'm set free against this banister. Redeemed.
No pressure as I feel the city smother
my imagined self in everything that's real.

De Profundis

To my father

These dark tunnels you traversed to John Street
are entirely reengineered but for
the darkness laid behind the glass, the black sheet
that belies the mystery of a mirror.

And I see you two years older than you were,
your face, now bearded white, above the tired
faces of the living. All too often

I have seen you, which explains the beard,
my compensation, an attempt to soften
the resemblance, my intent to blur
the brutal aperture. And still you dangle
like the shroud of Turin in a windless
night, a ghostly king set in the strangle-
hold of your unconscionable windlass,
up from where our common monsters stir.

Mercurial

We ramble, circling in your beat-up car,
Hurtle down shaded city streets where we
Once lived, past memories where houses are.
Singing a silly song, we laugh to see
Stiff flowerbeds, neat zinnia faces placed,
Then stop, to brush away the psychic rust
That clings to each odd moment we've embraced,
Erasing years we've held them all in trust.
Mercurial, we're in pursuit of things.
Forget that you've ballooned, can barely walk,
And my eye's clouded grey with memory's stings.
We're still two supple spirits here, who balk
At death; who speed our feet, wings on our heels
Against the time we learn how absence feels.

The Ice Cream Lady

She copied bars of ice cream in her art,
When finished gave a grunt of satisfaction
For representing what was in her heart,
Cold passive thought, well layered with inaction.

As dulled down slices of pastel striation
Marched neatly, left to right, in dim array
She felt quite justly proud of her creation—
Just loved to work with ice cream every day.
Puce, violet, greyed down mauve, some chocolate, too,
But not too bright. It was too much for her
To wrap her mind around an intense hue.
But when she added faded bits of blue
The critics loved it, knew they would be paid
For saying nothing. Nothing could be said.

Clutter

A waning strength from things of mine
Exudes from walnut, maple, pine,
A phone that rings, then no one's there—
An empty table and a chair
Are crowded in, awaiting me;
The cluttered sensibility
Of such a place exacts a toll
On every grape within the bowl.

The smallest thing is waiting for
An easy exit out the door.
What sits atop tall towering shelves,
An aggregate of former selves,
Sings of the one I was, will be—
A mote within eternity.

Isolde's Song

After the deaths of Tristram and Isolde, a hazel and a honeysuckle grew out of their graves until the branches intertwined and could not be parted.

Through our long years of dreaming to be one
we grew toward an enigmatic light
that gently warmed our tendrils. Was it sun?
We had no eyes to tell; we loved despite
the lack of all sensation—all but one:
we felt the night's deep chill, the air so bright
at dawn we quivered limply, overcome.

To touch was all we knew, and how to bask.
We knew to touch; we grew to touch; we felt
spring's urgency, midsummer's heat, fall's lash,
wild winter's ice and thaw and fervent melt.
We felt returning light and could not ask
its meaning, or if something was withheld
more glorious. To touch seemed life's great task.

At last the petal of me learned: unfold.
And you were there, surrounding me. We touched.
The curious golden pollens! Ah, we touched,
and learned to cling and, finally, to hold.

[Originally appeared in *The Raintown Review*]

Spiral

That inward turning you might call your soul,
a shifting current coursing down from brain
to heart, a hidden channel bell that tolls
a joyful ode or dirge to dark night's pain...
that soul might spark a shiver down your spine
when your little daughter's eyes alight on yours
in awe. You hold her near the swells that shine
like mirrors, rise and crash in mighty roars,
reveal a conch. Its rosy throat retells
the ancient lore of surf-and-body echo
when spiral ear is pressed to spiral shell.
Is that the sounding of your souls? Let go
and dance there in the sand, enfolded, swirled
in spiral arms of stars beyond this world.

Garden Party

Violet, Laurel, Lilac, Iris, Phlox,
Pinks and Snaps and back-row Hollyhocks
are blending voices, bending stems to Heather.
She leads their invitation sung together:

*Come to our party on the twentieth of June,
when Summer Solstice dawns behind the moon.
Join us as we celebrate the sun
beaming on our blooming just begun.*

*Come to wave your petals, dance on roots!
(Don't hesitate to bring along young shoots.)
Water and nutrients provided by the park—
arrive at dawn and revel until dark.*

*Let us drive all fears of fall away
and gather, Glads and Rosebuds, while we may.*

For Melina, 8, Sleeping

A few more days and winter will arrive
bearing gifts — the plaintive minor keys
of chickadees, the dissonance of jays,
heavy-heartedness on Christmas Eve,
imagined times of joy, of jingling bells,
the sunrise low behind the barren trees,
the Spirit Moon, the seasonal malaise,
the herald angels and the decked-out halls.

Soon enough some callous, hard-nosed kid
at school will razz you for your artless faith,
and blab the truth you sense behind the myth.
I wish you sugarplums, as my unsaid
revelation, like an axiom,
swirls above the silence. Does no harm.

Secret Swig

To the frail and the fragile,
the fugitive and the shallow;
to the irrational,
the illogical and the immoral;
to all that is frivolous,
flimsy, fickle and finite;
to smoke-rings,
to thyrsus roses,
to waves of sea foam
and the mists of oblivion . . .
to the scanty bindles
carried by migrants
in this transient world;
sober and mad, I raise a toast
with fleeting words
and heady wines
sparkling with bubbles
in brittle glasses . . .

Translation by Catherine Chandler

María Eugenia Vaz Ferreira,

Vaso furtive (Secret Swig)

from La isla de los cánticos, 1925

Por todo lo breve y frágil,
superficial, fugitivo,
por lo que no tiene bases,
argumentos ni principios;
por todo lo que es liviano,
veloz, mudable y finito;
por las volutas del humo,
por las rosas de los tirsos,
por la espuma de las olas
y las brumas del olvido . . .
por lo que les carga poco
a los pobres peregrinos
de esta trashumante tierra;
grave y lunática, brindo
con palabras transitorias
y con vaporosos vinos
de burbuja centelleantes
en cristales quebradizos . . .

The Iliad

for Jerome Murphy

Death changes nothing. Priam still is king.
Horses run. Fresh flowers—lilac, rose—
Still lift the spirit out of time to sing
Their everlasting song. No heroes

Here. Only towers made of sound. The wind
Sweeps down, across the breastworks, like a hand
Across a harp: a vortex twisting in
Agony across a devastated land—

A land hard to define. A voice. Not
One in particular: the cry of dust,
One speck among millions. An arrow shot
Into your throat. The voice of one who was

Not famous: faceless, nameless, ageless, drowned—
A loss so trivial it seems—profound.

The Well

for Cody Waters

Deep inside this ruined well,
Within a silver pool of ink,
Reflections beckon. A villanelle.

Holy shrine, or shaft of Hell,
The stars have come tonight to drink
A toast to it. I wish them well.

Every cup exhales a smell—
Infernal, sour, the greenish stink
Of graves. I'll pass. A villanelle.

I'm told by bones with tales to tell,
Temptations dance around the brink—
One foot in the air, one in the well—

Just dangling there. Incredible.
Pennies, people, planets—plink:
I drop them in a villanelle,

Then try to hear celestial
Music. Nothing. Plink. I think
My life is pointless sometimes. Well,
Without you. Plink. (My villanelle.)

Disbelief

The silent wrong
 says love is fraught,
a turbulent sea
 with vanishing skiffs:
the unsingable song,
 the afterthought
with waves so high
 they swallow cliffs.

The Little Dollhouse Family

If we peeked quickly into that dark room
within the painted wooden dollhouse door,
surrounded by a modicum of gloom,
Mrs. Little moved across the floor.

Forever in her wedding dress: her face
a painted oval, and her lips; a touch
of blush around her cheeks, her smile a trace
long lost. And there were rubber babies, much

too large for her, a pink and naked clan
who didn't fit the chairs meant for their rest.
Where was the father, and a father's hand?
There was no father. Mrs. Little guessed

the house was quieter without him there.
The Little family moved within the space,
and sadness rose, escaping up the stairs
where moonlight struck that carefully-made place.

In Cordoba

Against the cool white walls,
the odor of geraniums
ablaze in wooden boxes
in the narrow streets of the old city.

The odor of geraniums.
The girl leaning from the upstairs windowsill
in the narrow streets of the old city
gazes at pedestrians below.

The girl leaning from the upstairs windowsill
(tousled hair aflame with the retreating sun)
gazes at pedestrians below.
A woman smiles slowly.

Tousled hair a flame with the retreating sun,
she lifts her gaze to meet her gaze.
A woman smiles slowly;
memory calls.

She lifts her gaze to meet her gaze.
A blaze in wooden boxes,
memory calls
against the cool white walls.

The Great Sewer

In the area known to oceanographers as The North Pacific Subtropical Gyre, there is a huge floating mass of plastic debris. This flotsam covers a stretch of ocean roughly the size of Texas.

Toothpaste caps, toy soldiers, styrofoam;
Cheap soda bottles, packing pellets, crates;
Handles, knobs, components of machines;
Bic pens, old combs, barrettes, and wristwatch bands;
Cassette tapes, garment bags, Venetian blinds;
Used tubes of sunscreen, pillboxes, the skein
Of artificial netting, coffee lids,
Containers, and the severed limbs of dolls.

The estimate? Three hundred million tons.
A sea of plastic garbage, cast adrift
And now caught in the swirl of ocean currents.
Debris from California and Japan;
Detritus from Korea, Singapore,
Australia and New Zealand—every coast
Where industry has brought things up to date
And bubble-wrapped us in its loving grip.

The flotsam drifts forever, and each day
More is added to the floating dump.
This is only fifty years of stuff—
A century from now, the experts warn,
The mass will be as wide as Canada.
Such is the modern world—a tidal wave
Of kitschy, worthless, polymerized junk
Choking the surface of the unplumbed sea.

8 A.M. Literature Class

I've stayed up all night marking their exams.
They've done well, with the usual exception.
I'm weary, and exhaustion's hammer slams
Me into half-sleep. I have no conception
How I can lecture on the *Tales* of Chaucer.
I set a pot of coffee up for perking
And when it's brewed, I spill it, and the saucer
Holds a brown puddle. Man, this isn't working . . .
Maybe some Benzedrine will clear the mist
But that won't kick in for another hour.
I have to teach right now. I know the gist
Of what I plan to cover, but a sour
Taste in my mouth is pushing me to say
Class cancelled . . . take your tests and go away.

Xenophilia

The tickle in my ear brings thoughts of
childhood—pupal stages. Dear Lord,
I can't help but swat out against it;
God's creature, so they say.
I wonder how much soul He
really did pour into that observant beast
clinging to the edge of my water glass,
cocking its tiny head at me?

I try for Xenophilia in my dreams,
In fantasy novels, in dark aureoles;
In my own supposition about the normalcy
of the forward-facing eyes of a predator.
I wish I could wish for clinging toes—
feet that may leave dusty prints along the
meringue texture of my ceiling;
for a long, spongy tongue to soak up every
scent and granule of the atmosphere around me—
smoke, vapor, tiny flakes of skin and the genetic code
imprinted on each. I say: what I'd give for eyes
that see in facets more than three dimensions.

My rancid breath might, then, fill another being
and turn them from stone to flesh,
or from flesh to fire, as any God can raise
the dead to life, and a person
in his way of seeing—
not strictly black & white
or even gray, but in tones and shades far beyond
man's ocular capability.

I would bend myself into an
impossible position and look out through my heels,
my head where my feet ought to be, finding
new angles of humanity.

To a Catalpa

Most of the year, you look like a buffoon,
Your pods awkwardly long, your outsize leaves
Like oafish hands that gangle from their sleeves.
So when, for one unlikely week in June,
Your air froths festive and your earth is strewn
With blossoms frilled around a color scheme
Of sun-gilt tear tracks, twin streaks gold-on-cream,
Amid fine spattered freckles of maroon,

And fragrance syrup-rich though light as dew,
You startle us with hope we, too, might be
Capable of that moment, or those few,
In which quotidian absurdity
Contrives somehow to conjure or renew
An efflorescence of divinity.

(originally published in *14 by 14*)

Vultures

A filament of stink kitestringed them, hauled
Them down, these birds the color of dried blood,
To perch fence posts above a gut-streaked road
Where pickup skidded, barn cat yelped and sprawled.

A skyline of serene asymmetries,
They shrug their wings askew to catch the sun,
Then lumber to the asphalt one by one
To dangle slick, pink morsels from their beaks.

Aloft on the postprandial largess
Of carrion-spiced air, they soar and savor
Freedom from need of grace, of loveliness,
Of any living thing's esteem or favor.

(originally published in *Measure*)

Spectrum Reflection

Red is our name for hair as orange as flame,
Or fuchsia blossoms on a redbud tree.
Yellow's for cowards. (Lemon-cheeked with shame?)
Green envy, meet green immaturity;
Blood of aristocrats, here's skin-flick blue.
Indigo means—well, nobody knows quite.
Violets are blue we rhyme, but it's not true;
Violets are purple (though they're sometimes white).

In short, our language colors us half mad,
Belying us with every tinted word.
Geraniums run up debt? Clear skies feel sad?
Yet on we babble, garishly absurd,
Of hues we do not see or cannot know.
Reality eludes like indigo.

Bowdoin Street

A box of correspondence from his forties—
birthdays, thank you notes, sympathy cards.
Toward his sixties they become less frequent.

A few near-miss romances, a career
that never did release the parking brake.
No one remembers the decade his last hair fell out.

Coming back home from a game of bocce
with other elders he still fails to chat with,
he smells one more dead mouse in his apartment.

He recalls the perfume of charred bridges:
his youthful pride, his red torero mind
dismissing people, always with good reason.

Wallpapers look like maggots. Napping in a twin bed,
he talks to his imaginary rascal son:
“What a long life I’ve lived! Don’t let your guard down.”

He takes the graveyard tours at Beacon Hill.
The buses boast, “We’ll drive you to an early grave!”
He dreams of death and at the same time wishes

that his death would have a little impact,
that someone would exclaim, “Yes, his grave *was* early!”
instead of shrugging, “Dying was his job.”

Tourist eyelashes all around the bus
bat themselves, impervious to his sight.
He wants a strawberry. The guide ushers him out.

Beacon Hill is more of a hill each evening.
Someday he’ll fall and break one of his hips.
Someday he’ll fall again and break the other.

On Halloween, a bloody hand hangs loose
from the balcony above his bedroom.
He wishes his own blood were still that red.

Anton Yakovlev

The night he walks back for the first time
not remembering his own name
his head will fill completely with traffic noise.

(originally appeared in *The Rutherford Red Wheelbarrow* and *The Ghost of Grant Wood*.)

A New York Moment

Near breaking point, you walked into Grand Central
and threw a hundred in a busker's hat—
not generously, just for the endorphins,
the kind a gambler gets on losing nights.

The busker told all her friends about you.
You were a legend for a couple of days.
She bought a new handbag, covered in cupcakes,
and basked in sunlight like a lady bug.

(originally appeared in *The Rutherford Red Wheelbarrow*.)

Turf Wars

Your cheeky friend, an ace at turning tables,
channels Pope, Swift, the Bard, and Kevin Smith,
then gets all huffy when you start ignoring
the invitations to his open mic.

You—who grew up surrounded by drug hitmen
dumping dismembered parts behind your school,
who never walked in flip-flops in the summer,
too scared to stumble in a pool of blood—

you linger on the hill behind your building,
dig through the dirt to check for human bones,
then gulp a Coke and send your friend excuses:
that looming deadline, that flak-jacket cold.

(originally appeared in *The Rutherford Red Wheelbarrow*, and *The Ghost of Grant Wood*.)

Construction and Demolition

I built a house once. The walls were slats
of weather- beaten and splintered wood
pulled from a wrecked boat by the lake,

the roof a sheet of tin from a collapsed shed
on my father's farm. From abandoned buildings
I collected furnishings: a set of chipped plates,

a table and chair. I swept the dirt floor every day.
I never sent invitations for an open house.
This home wasn't open to anyone but me. I built it

deep in the woods and memorized a path of trees
and stones, going back and forth so often I made
a trail. One afternoon I found a child in my house

setting up a tea party with my plates. She seemed
surprised to see me but smiled and asked me
to join her, an invitation by improvisation—

something I could learn. When the afternoon
became evening, she returned to people who
would worry if she stayed too late. I watched her

walk the footpath until she reached the clearing.
I stacked the plates. I pulled a board from the wall
and the walls fell.

Pulse and Stone

Mornings I wake and feel my sorrows
beside me, humming a song I then
hum throughout the day. I keep the sound
deep in my throat so no one can hear.
Into work, into the supermarket, into the car
I carry the sound of my sorrows from wheel
to ground. No one notices how I change:
my face becomes stone, my voice a whisper.
I still move through every crowd, every line.
I observe the movement of hours from morning
to night. My sorrows always sing, the sound
a single note held at the back of my throat.
It is not the sound of blood traveling within
my body nor is it rhythmic like my heart.
Oh my heart—sweet pulse that wants
to hammer the heavy chord lodged
in my throat, impossible to swallow.

The Afterlife

“It’s almost coming into sight,
The other side, but vanishes.
And then this waterfall of light
Comes spilling out of where the slit is,

A sort of torn place in the air,
And you can hear a river flowing,
Then something like an evening prayer
Floating where the birds keep going.

Soon everything’s a blur, and all
The folks that I have ever known
Are standing by that river, calling
Me, but I’m here, blood and bone,

Racked with all this crazy stuff:
Like when my wife picked up the kids
From school and left, to call my bluff
About how we were on the skids.

I mean, what am I, nuts? I see
These things, but when I try to tell
Folks, they think I’m going crazy
And say stuff like ‘Okay’ or ‘Mellllll . . . !’

But tell me this, how come I found
That piece of sky in my back yard,
Sticking up out of the ground,
With stars inside it, smoking, charred?”

Piracy

Listen to how this wind of body
Blows against its fleshless soul.
Moon and sunlight seed you ready,
Where the oceans of it roll
Eternities of you and me.

Soon the “otherness” you’ve felt
All your life will wash away,
Leaving what the days have spelt
Of you on their shore to say
How the rocks of time must melt.

Don’t you see it, plain and clear,
This ship of flesh you’re sailing on,
Its prow stuck in another year?
When you see it, then it’s gone:
This voyage of our being here.

“Here” that seems so natural,
So chiseled out for you and me.
It isn’t real. It’s just a hull.
A ship of soul in piracy,
Plundering these bones and skull.

Sister Maggie

She knew too much of love and much too little.
A day that didn't beat her up was love.
She knew the edge of things but not the middle.

Her days were knives that stabbed, or they would whittle
Her light to what some john was dreaming of,
And that was love to her (though way too little),

As he would lick her face with drunken spittle
And pull her on as if she were a glove.
She knew the stink of that, mashed in the middle

Of paying bills and figuring love's riddle,
That whispered at her ear, "You've had enough.
You've heard so much of love but seen so little.

Come to us now and know the soul's acquittal.
Search out where grace has gone, below, above.
You've known the edge of love. Now know its middle,

That place where flesh meets soul, that's oh so brittle."
And then the voice was gone, as with a shove.
Soon she began to heal, little by little,
And worked with us at solving love's great riddle.

No Longer Cherished

*After all, my erstwhile dear, my no longer cherished;
Need we say it was not love, just because it perished?*

—Edna St. Vincent Millay

Love dies a small and silent death: grows dust
Dry and feather light, falls into thin grey
Nothingness. There is no pain at all, just
Emptiness where once blood and passion played
But will never play again. When they are
Gone, after love dies, they take sensation
With them. There is nothing, no reservoir
Of unbidden hope, no inclination
To suddenly try and stir the cold
Ash and see if any warmth remains, no
Desire to care that love is dead. Old
Mythos hold that love is eternal, so
Much for the old Mythos then. Love does die—
So thoroughly it doesn't say goodbye.

The Seasons

The seasons are quick to pass forgotten.
There is no reason to recall them. In
Every year we have a harvest, a first
Snow, drizzled rain, green growing fields, hot thirst
Followed by another harvest autumn.

Autumn, as always, passes on and then,
As always, fades away to a frozen
But a temporary winter. How cursed
The seasons are.

Is there anything else that must begin,
End, begin like this? Another pattern
Always repeating itself, so rehearsed,
So accurate, so evenly dispersed
Yet still so unremarkable as when
The seasons are?

Autobiographic Sonnet

I cough in sonnets, I breath out fourteen lines—
They flow from me like energy waves, each
Line following each line. I do not find
Where they lead until I'm led. I don't reach
For words so much as they tumble out in
Bits and pieces that fit together as
A sonnet becomes. There was a time when
I thought I was the poet, that I was
The driver—but I am not. I am driven,
I write the poems that come to me, as they
Come, when they come, how they come. Each written
As they want to be—as sonnets mostly.
Iambic pentameters: the heart beats
That flow from me to cover paper sheets.

Tempest's Eye

Full fathom five I penetrate and plumb,
As if twelve years of yearning, swollen fruit,
Compel the branch to bow as tensions hum
The arrow's length, and hold the archer mute.

My tender furies blow you to my shores,
And see you clasped in harbor of my arms;
You shrug away your rudder of wherefores,
And pound the snooze on ladylike alarms.

Convulsing with spasmodic prophesy,
Near passed out from what stroke has come to pass;
From sorcery augmented ecstasy
Of forces astrophysical in class.

But having claimed sweet stars above Milan,
What virtue's drowned in such sweat-slaked élan?

Leave off a Friend

What is it lives in the dull devoid
Of intently discarded embrace?
It's all strain, all impossibility,
All fresh stain and graceless, sudden fade
From memory; already null, her face.

Who shall inform whether and when eyes
Reorient their north and south to meet?
It's bitter root meal till old affection
Can be regrown in plot of passed time, to bear
Them fruit that's for its bruises twice as sweet.

2280

I buy the storage lockers of the dead, that's how
I earn my living. I buy mostly from next of
Kin who can't, or just don't want to, deal with it. You
Can usually get good deals, they're often in
A hurry to be done with it. Items once held
Dear, worn with the familiarity of one
Who is no more, everything collectible that
Has ever been collected, old photo albums
That have not been gone through in years. The survivors
Take the prepackaged wealth, but can't dump personal
Stuff fast enough. And so I make my living by
Buying and selling the lives of others. I spend
Lots of time pondering the muted tales told by
These antiques, and I miss none of the irony.

Death and the Maiden and Schubert

The second movement of Franz Schubert's 1824 String Quartet in D minor, D. 810, features five variations on his own 1817 song, "Death and the Maiden." Words below in quotation marks come from the text of the song, by Matthias Claudius.

Her panic must have haunted him—her plea
that this “wild man of bones” pass by, her cries
for mercy that met only treachery
from one who offered “sleep” and wore the guise
of “friend.” The young composer transcribed fear
into a spiky line that rises first,
then falls, then fades, the maiden's terror clear
but impotent. The demon sings his worst,
but need not roar or coax; he merely chants,
almost serenely, but from depths more chilling
than any banshee shriek, as if a trance
imposed by bass notes might make her more willing
to yield, as if he knows her desperation
will quickly turn into capitulation.

Then Schubert, haunted by his own creation,
must have imagined Death had more to say.
He borrowed from the eerie confrontation
to fashion lines a string quartet would play.
Fear in four parts grows fiercer, amplified
by time and texture, as the score traverses
the measure of unsung unease, now cried
in chords that carry darkly tempting curses.
Each strain seduces as it parses dread,
the song's grim skeleton now framing five
elaborations of alarm, bows led
by dried-up ink to pulse as if alive.
Though Schubert and the maiden died too soon,
Death lives on in the bones of Schubert's tune.

She Brought Me Berries

for Jane

She brought me berries, sweetened by the hands
that plucked them, by the island air that fed
their gaudy blush, by nearness to the sands
where our own skins had once turned pinkish red,
and by our confidence that they would burst
with juicy richness in our mouths, the way
they'd always done, each summer from our first
as girls at "U-Pick." Now, well past the day
of our first blush, but at their season's peak,
green baskets full of red would start to fix
the damage that had left me pale, my bleak
outlook subverted by her clever tricks
with taste and time: she started mending me
with fruit, affection, and shared history.

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Here's something sure to peak your interest,
an option tailored to your expertise,
an opportunity you can invest
your patrimony in, may it increase
tenfold—a venture into currencies,
with your shares cut directly from the flank
of an authenticated Golden Fleece.
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In no time, you'll be feathering your nest
aboard a yacht along the coast of Greece;
you'll pick your lovers from among the best;
you'll rent a villa just outside of Nice;
withdraw the necessary funds from Credit Suisse,
or your offshore accounts, your piggy bank;
be careless of the snares in your sublease.
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Your future furnishings, all will be blessed
with marigolds & gilded fleur de lys,
which you will purchase as a family crest;
indulge your most ridiculous caprice,
a dancing fountain that plays *Für Elise*,
a full Olympic pool sized goldfish tank
in which your Koi can grow to be obese.
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But bear in mind, there will be casualties
to bury, mercenaries yet to thank;
only the cruelest fool would promise peace.
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Unforeseeable

He always knew his sight would fail,
 & summer sun would sting
his eyes. A solar flare-up would impale
 both corneas, & twilight bring
angelic figurines,
 protecting with an outspread wing
his dreams of dark imagined scenes,
 his shadowy sensations,
from an assault of radiant phosphenes!
 Eschewing all illuminations,
he only knew the stars
 by dint of their celestial reputations;
he made them each new avatars.
 A blinded ram, a bull
rampaging through its labyrinth, twin scars
 in matching sockets, claws, the growl
crouched in a lion's den,
 young skin untouched, the old proverbial
Blind Justice, self-stung scorpion,
 an arrow out of nowhere,
impossible subaqueous specimen,
 hands cupped together in the shower,
or splashing through the skies,
 a sightless pair of Koi. He was the sower
of seed unseen in paradise.
 His prophecy was Braille.
He held the unforeseeable in his eyes.

A Service Economy

Just in: on breaking TV news I hear
the cops have busted human traffic rings.
Offscreen, there's way more pimps than hookers here.

Authorities mixed up their perps, I fear,
with John Doe names on warrants for the sting.
Just in: on breaking TV news I hear

no news of brokers who so deftly clear
their fees, that age-old service economy thing.
All clean, the way more pimps than hookers here

can look legit on tax returns each year
without an inventory, businesssing.
Just in: on breaking TV news I hear

no news that all our goods are made by mere
kids in Honduras, Seoul, Hong Kong, Beijing –
this way, there's more for pimps than hookers here.

Rings of consultants, factors, financiers
all favor *outsource* over *trafficking*.
Just in: on breaking TV news I hear
them spiel. There's way more pimps than hookers here.

Just a Rondeau for Cassandra

I told you so, but do you listen? No!

As teenage sons look down at screens, she scolds
them both, appealing to the sides of heads
where earbuds go. Cassandra's words instead
are bouncing off, fall mute somehow. *Hello?*

You'll bring a girl and trouble home — I know!

Her warnings meet with sighs, the eyes that roll,
the mocking mimes behind her. Just forget
I told you so.

Their wooden horses wait — they have to go.
They'll text or post, of course, but can't be told
how tragic plays and epic losses get
replayed in repetends she sees ahead.
They've gone. Cassandra's left with this rondeau.
I told you so.

Cento Pantoum #1

*(Sylvia Plath, Mary Oliver, Dylan Thomas, C. S. Lewis, John Keats, Wallace Stevens,
Walt Whitman, Richard Wilbur, Tecumseh)*

I took a deep breath and listened to the old bray of my heart: I am, I am, I am
Listen, are you breathing just a little and calling it a life?
What can we do but keep on breathing in and out, modest and willing, and in our places?
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Listen, are you breathing just a little and calling it a life?
Beauty is truth, truth beauty—
rage, rage against the dying of the light.
Drink the whole summer down into the breast.

Beauty is truth, truth beauty—
smeared with the gold of the opulent sun
Drink the whole summer down into the breast.
The morning air is all awash with angels.

Smeared with the gold of the opulent sun,
I sing the body electric!
The morning air is all awash with angels;
live while we're alive.

I sing the body electric!
What can we do but keep on breathing in and out, modest and willing, and in our places?
Live while we're alive.
I took a deep breath and listened to the old bray of my heart: I am, I am, I am.

The Last Rose of Summer

I droop, then drop my petals one by one
 in penitence for having loved the sun.
“Too much,” you say? That’s just a damned cliché –
 like whacks your children give you when you stray.

But first things first. This bloom must try to cope
 with upstart petals clinging to the hope
I’ll spot in them some crummy little thing
 that might induce a cuckoo clock to sing

by hunkering down with thorns to get a fix
 on those who mark their prominence in pricks
and would reduce me in their mindless rage
 to kindling – unheard of in an age

when fires are a dread domestic chore
 that even middling dunderheads abhor.
And Love-lies-bleeding? Just some lame excuse
 for silt to bed a flower on the loose.

You could’ve plucked me in my gravid prime,
 but let me go to seed upon the vine
like some ill-gotten gain, some stolen kiss
 that aphids run amok affect to miss.

So now, before I ask, like Salomé,
 of Herod, for Herodias, a tray
to offer up my pistil to the sun,
 I’ll shed for you my petals, one by one.

A Letter to My Mother

Hallo one last time, dearest mother of mine,
I trust that you're keeping my bed
as white as our birches; as starched as our pine;
as clear as our sky overhead.

The rumour now runs: my old mother misses
some devil—apparently me.
That devil, in truth, remembers her kisses,
her ratty old coat and her tea.

Some evenings, I'll wager, the vision's perverse:
a tavern; your boy in a brawl
with sailors whose cunning eviscerates; worse:
his verse scuds blood-red down the wall.

Now pause for a moment to think this one through;
and tell me I've failed to comply
with wending what may not seem homeward to you,
but *is*, with a kiss, on the fly.

I think rather not—and trust you'll make haste
to give this old rumour the lie.
The truth is I'm homesick and don't want to waste
one swinish night more in this sty.

In spring, I'll come running back home to your arms
outstretched, bearing handfuls of sage,
if you'll just relinquish those motherly charms
that can't come to grips with my age
and leave me to suffer my hedonist's binge
on wine-baited women and song,
the better to serve them my head on a fringe
of lace—as they've asked all along.

But please don't suggest that redemption and grace
can somehow be gotten by prayer;
you are the steeple I mount for the chase,
the blue-ribbon prize at the fair.

So, empty your pail full of nettles and needs,
and don't let our cabin grow cold;
then strip your decrepit old coat of its beads
and hang it outside to be sold.

Translation by **Russell Bittner**

Sergei Yesenin

ПИСЬМО К МАТЕРИ (A Letter to My Mother)

Ты жива еще, моя старушка?
Жив и я. Привет тебе, привет!
Пусть струится над твоей избушкой
Тот вечерний несказанный свет.

Пишут мне, что ты, тая тревогу,
Загрустила шибко обо мне,
Что ты часто ходишь на дорогу
В старомодном ветхом шушуне.

И тебе в вечернем синем мраке
Часто видится одно и то ж:
Будто кто-то мне в кабацкой драке
Саданул под сердце финский нож.

Ничего, родная! Успокойся.
Это только тягостная бредь.
Не такой уж горький я пропойца,
Чтоб, тебя не видя, умереть.

Я по-прежнему такой же нежный
И мечтаю только лишь о том,
Чтоб скорее от тоски мятежной
Воротиться в низенький наш дом.

Я вернусь, когда раскинет ветви
По-весеннему наш белый сад.
Только ты меня уж на рассвете
Не буди, как восемь лет назад.

Не буди того, что отмечталось,
Не волнуй того, что не сбылось, -
Слишком раннюю утрату и усталость
Испытать мне в жизни привелось.

И молиться не учи меня. Не надо!
К старому возврата больше нет.
Ты одна мне помощь и отрада,
Ты одна мне несказанный свет.

Так забудь же про свою тревогу,
Не грусти так шибко обо мне.
Не ходи так часто на дорогу
В старомодном ветхом шушуне.

Knot Garden

(Portsmouth, New Hampshire)

I yearn for the old place called Strawberry Banke,
where buoys clang from the icy Atlantic

winter and summer. In May, a score or more
white houses open like shells, invite us

to pass through rooms lit by sun through wavy glass,
to wend from gate to gate through brick-lined gardens

where knots of healing herbs tumble and nod
in the salty wind. Strawberries grow low;

flower, leaf, and vine all at once with fruit;
later, leaves redden like berries, like sunsets

or the dawning of bad weather. Gardens,
Gordian, emblematic of all I

have not got, all I would slice through, for truth, but, failing,
build here, in the land of my own heart: fruit and paling.

Christmas Season—Lake Charles

This sloping garden withers as it must.
It is damp winter, past Thanksgiving
Already. The lilies are gone, the fig
A grey cage, the roses blown and done,
The sycamore peeled clean as bone,
Its crashing fall of bark, that rang like hail
Or stone on the tin porch roof, finally still.

If only it would snow. But it stays bare.
I know from last year there is no white hush
To bank this rottenness or screen it,
No cold oblivion, no pure season.
Only, here in Louisiana,
A noxious mist, grey as mistletoe,
Reeking of scum, of sulfur and crustacea.

All Things Lost

for Uncle T.

God answered her novenas with a baby,
Yet my handsome father was so ugly
(The forceps unforgiving in delivery)

She wouldn't *waste* the name that she had chosen.
She had come of age in the Depression,
Thus saved *the good name* for the second son.

My father's would-be name she gave to you
And shared that fact—not cruel, only true.
A matriarch does what she has to do.

Like when you found a cat, a coal-black stray,
She let you keep him. But Inky ran away.
Or so her story went, until one day

I asked if you and Dad had owned a pet.
She liked to keep the house immaculate,
And, coming clean at last, she would admit—

Hard enough to raise you boys alone—
She'd taken Inky for a ride 'cross town.
A trifle next to losses yet unknown:

Your friends in Vietnam (black granite names),
Your hearing (marred, artillery close-range),
Your full-grown son, your only child (estranged).

Yet cradling you, Uncle, to her chest,
She'd named you for the saint she loved the most:
Anthony, the saint of all things lost.

Dear Reader

Is not the most erotic portion of the body where the garment gapes? Our attention is drawn toward the intermittence of skin flashing between two articles of clothing . . . between two edges . . . it is this flash itself which seduces.

—Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*

You come to hear me come undone, the diction
Taut then loose from my chameleon tongue.
You sometimes wonder if it's fact, the friction
Of my lover's stubble where I'm stung.
You gape at what the gaping might expose.
What will my inky fingerprints betray?
I lie sincerely. My words conceal, disclose
No more, no less than paint or bronze or clay.

Yet what I thought was simply ink grows thick
And hardens, forged like opalescent stone
Or bee-flecked amber, set in a mosaic
I can't stop. In truth, I'm not just shown
In deshabelle. However crude or sacred,
Soon all I've offered God, to you, lies naked.

Embrace

Against
tuxedoed night,
I stand at the window,
and in the champagne of moonlight,
undress.

Biographies

Mike Alexander was born in NYC, & now lives under the Lone Star. Since *Retrograde*, his first full-length collection (P&J Poetics, 2013), Alexander has been nose-to-grindstone. He contributes his time to Public Poetry, a monthly series in collaboration with the Houston Public Library system. To this, he has added Poetry Fix, a bi-weekly salon at Fix Coffeebar, & supports the Houston Poetry Alliance. While poems continue to appear in *Measure*, *River Styx*, & *Raintown*, this year he has proudly appeared in *Peacock Journal*, *Domesticated Cherry*, *Long Poem*, & *Rattle*, as well as the latest Mutabilis Press anthology, *Untameable City: Poems on the Nature of Houston*.

Russell Bittner is one of many happy “smatterers of other men’s matters” (pace Robert Burton, author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*) now living in Red Hook—Brooklyn, New York—where he flings fish by day from behind the Seafood counter at Fairway Market, but in full, round-the-counter view of Ms. Liberty and her torch. It was, however, as a student in the former Soviet Union that he first became acquainted with the poetry of Sergei Yesenin and with the unique significance “Letter to My Mother” holds for the Russian people. That—plus a winter of snow-bound alienation spent at Donner Summit, California—resulted in his translation of Yesenin’s poem. The same translation appears in Russell’s novel, *Trompe-l’oeil*, albeit in its own erotic/thanatopic context.

Jane Blanchard lives and writes in Georgia. Her work has recently appeared in *Angle*, *Blue Unicorn*, *The Dark Horse*, *Lighten Up Online*, *Mezzo Cammin*, *The Rotary Dial*, and *U.S.1 Worksheets*. Her first collection, *Unloosed*, is available from White Violet Press of Kelsay Books.

Julie Brooks Barbour is the author of *Haunted City* (Aldrich Press, forthcoming 2016) and *Small Chimes* (Aldrich Press, 2014), as well as three chapbooks, most recently *Beautifully Whole* (Hermeneutic Chaos Press, 2015). She is co-editor of *Border Crossing* and Poetry Editor at *Connotation Press: An Online Artifact*. She teaches writing at Lake Superior State University.

Michael R. Burch’s poems, translations, essays, articles and letters have appeared in publications such as *TIME*, *USA Today*, *Writer’s Digest*, BBC Radio 3 and hundreds of literary journals and websites. His poetry has been translated into nine languages and set to music by composers Alexander Comitas and Seth Wright. His poetry has been translated into nine languages and set to music by composers Alexander Comitas and Seth Wright. He also edits www.thehypertexts.com.

Nicole Caruso Garcia’s newest poems are forthcoming in *Measure* and *The Rotary Dial*. A past winner of the *Willow Review* Award, her poems have appeared in *Mezzo Cammin*, *The Raintown Review*, *823 on High*, *Frogpond*, *Antiphon*, *The HyperTexts*, *Sow’s Ear*, *Soundings East*, *The Ledge*, and elsewhere. She is Assistant Poetry Editor of *Able Muse Review*.

Catherine Chandler, an American poet with dual U.S. and Canadian citizenship, was born in New York City and raised in Pennsylvania. She is the author of *Lines of Flight* (Able Muse Press), shortlisted for the Poets’ Prize, *Glad and Sorry Seasons* (Biblioasis), *This Sweet Order* (White Violet Press / Kelsay Books), *The Frangible Hour* (University of Evansville Press), recipient of the 2016 Richard Wilbur Award, and two chapbooks, *For No Good Reason* and *All or Nothing*. Her poem, “Coming to Terms” won the 2010 Howard Nemerov Award, judged by A.E. Stallings. She also won *The Lyric Quarterly* Prize and the Leslie Mellichamp Prize. Reviews, a full list of awards, nominations and testimonials, as well as SoundCloud recordings and audio clips of her work, are available online at her poetry blog, *The Wonderful Boat*, at www.cathychandler.blogspot.com. Catherine, a retired lecturer at McGill University’s Department of Translation Studies (Spanish), currently lives in rural Saint-Lazare-de-Vaudreuil, Québec, where she teaches music and French to local children. She spends the Canadian winter months in Punta del Este, Uruguay.

Ted Charnley holds a BA from Quinnipiac University, a JD from University of Maryland and has studied poetry at Johns Hopkins University. His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Road Not Taken*, *Think*, *The Lyric* and *Slant*. He lives with his wife in a 200-year old farmhouse they restored in western Maryland. There, he herds woodchucks, practices chainsaw topiary and makes offerings to the nymphs of the springs.

Terese Coe's poems and translations have appeared in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *New American Writing*, *Ploughshares*, *Poetry*, *Threepenny Review*, *Agenda*, *The Moth*, *New Walk Magazine*, *New Writing Scotland*, *Poetry Review*, *the TLS*, *The Stinging Fly*, *Warwick Review*, and many other publications and anthologies. Her poem "More" was heli-dropped across London in the 2012 London Olympics Rain of Poems, and her latest collection of poems, *Shot Silk*, is from Kelsay Books. Terese has a play in circulation, *Harry Smith at the Chelsea Hotel*, a biographical black comedy. Further information is at:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terese_Coe

Sally Cook is both artist and poet. Her written work regularly appears in national print journals such as *National Review*, *Chronicles*, *Lighten Up On Line*, *The Orchards*, *Pennsylvania Review* and *Trinacria*. She is a former Wilbur Fellow and six-time Pushcart nominee. A 2013 Aldrich Press Poetry Book Award Competition resulted in her third book, *The View From Here*, which may be seen on Amazon.

Also a painter, she began her creative life in Manhattan's historic Tenth Street Cooperative movement., Her present Magic Realist style is a perfect foil for her imaginary portraits of Emily Dickinson, which have been extensively reviewed in the *Emily Dickinson International Society Bulletin*. Additionally, she is represented in national collections as diverse as the N.S.D.A.R. Museum in Washington, D.C. and The Burchfield-Penney, Buffalo, NY, where an oral and visual section on her work in both venues is presently being assembled.

In both mediums, Cook's work may be described as idiosyncratic, representational, and colorful—but always with an ironic twist.

Julie Cooper-Fratrik has an MFA from Goddard/VT College. She is the winner of an Achievement Award in Poetry from the Leeway Foundation in Philadelphia. Her work has been published widely. Kelsay Books published *The Slow Separations* in 2016, and *Breathing Lessons (a remember- ing)* is forthcoming in the spring. She lives with her partner, a conceptual artist and sculptor, in a rural area of Pennsylvania between NYC and Philadelphia, where they enjoy organic gardening, reading, making art, discussing ideas, and enjoying life.

Sarah Dunster is an award-winning poet and novelist. Her poems have appeared in various online publications as well as in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, *Segullah magazine*, *Sunstone magazine*, *Psaltery & Lyre*, *Victorian Violet Press* and in the collection *Fire in the Pasture: 21st Century Mormon Poets*. Her two novels *Lightning Tree* and *Mile 21* were published through Cedar Fort, Inc. She loves gardening, hiking, skiing, international cooking, raising and breeding butterflies, and hanging around watching her family of eleven grow into wonderful human beings.

Juleigh Howard Hobson's poetry has appeared in many places, including *The Shit Creek Review*, *Victorian Violet Press*, *14 by 14*, *The Asses of Parnassas*, *Blast Furnace*, *Enchanted Conversation*, *The Alabama Literary Review*, *The Lyric*, *Able Muse*, *The Raintown Review*, *Sugar Mule*, *Mezzo Cammin*, *The Flea*, *Quatrain Fish*, *Soundzine*, *Poemeleon*, *qarrtsiluni*, *Autumn Sky Poetry*, *Umbrella*, *The Chimaera*, *Fickle Muses*, *Postcard Poems and Prose*, *Caduceus: The Poets at Art Place Vol 8* (Yale University), *The Best of the Barefoot Muse* (Barefoot Pub), *Poem, Revised: 54 Poems, Revisions, Discussions* (Marion Street Press) . . . and many other venues—both in print and in pixel. She has served as assistant poetry editor at *Able Muse*. Among various awards, she is a Million Writers Award "Notable Story" writer, a *Predators and Editor's* top ten finisher (single poem), she was shortlisted for both the Morton Marr and the Angels and Devils Poetry Prize (Holland Park Press), and has been nominated for the Best of the Net and the Pushcart Prize. Juleigh's fourth and most recent formal poetry collection is *Remind Me* (Ancient Cypress Press).

Ann Iverson is a writer, artist and graduate of both the MALS and the MFA programs at Hamline University. Her poems have appeared in a wide variety of journals and venues including *Writer's Almanac*. As a visual artist, she enjoys the integrated relationship between the visual and written image. Her art work has been featured in several art exhibits as well as in a permanent installation at the University of Minnesota Amplatz Children's Hospital. She is currently working on a variety of artistic projects including a series of children's books. Her writing and art can be viewed at anniverson.weebly.com.

Carol Jewell is a poet, teacher, musician, librarian, wife, mother, and grandmother. She is insatiably curious, which is why she reads *everything*: newspapers, novels, poems, poems, poems, the backs of cereal boxes, painting instructions from Home Depot, and, of course, Facebook. She is insatiably curious. She expects to receive her MFA in Creative Writing from The College of Saint Rose in December 2016.

Jean L. Kreiling's first collection of poems, *The Truth in Dissonance* (Kelsay Books), was published in 2014. Her work has appeared widely in print and online journals, including *American Arts Quarterly*, *Angle*, *The Evansville Review*, *Measure*, and *Mezzo Cammin*, and in several anthologies. Kreiling is a past winner of a New England Poetry Club Award, the Great Lakes Commonwealth of Letters Sonnet Contest, the *String Poet* Prize, and the *Able Muse* Write Prize, and she has been a finalist for the Frost Farm Prize, the Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award, and the Richard Wilbur Poetry Award.

Quincy R. Lehr is pretty rad.

Barbara Lydecker Crane has published two chapbooks, *Zero Gravitas* (White Violet Press, 2012) and *ALPHABETRICKS* (for children, Daffydowndilly Press, 2013). An illustrated chapbook, *BackWords Logic*, will be published soon by Local Gems Poetry Press. Her poems—serious or humorous, occasionally both—have appeared in *American Arts Quarterly*, *Atlanta Review*, *First Things*, *Light*, *Lighten-Up Online*, *Mezzo Cammin* and *Think Journal*, among many other online and print journals, and in several anthologies.

Joan McNerney's poetry has been included in numerous literary magazines such as *Seven Circle Press*, *Halcyon Days*, *Blueline*, *Moonlight Dreamers of Yellow Haze*, *Poppy Road Review*, *Bright Hills Press Anthologies* and many *Kind of A Hurricane* Publications. She has been nominated four times for *Best of the Net*. Four of her books have been published by fine small literary presses and she has four e-book titles. She recited her work at the National Arts Club, New York City, State University of New York, Oneonta, McNay Art Institute, San Antonio and other distinguished venues. Two readings were sponsored by the American Academy of Poetry.

Rick Mullin's poetry has appeared in various journals and anthologies, including *The New Criterion*, *American Arts Quarterly*, *Epiphany*, *Measure*, and *Rabbit Ears: TV Poems* (New York Quarterly Books). His latest collection, *Stignatz & the User of Vicenza*, was published by Dos Madres Press, Loveland, Ohio.

Eric Norris lives in Portland, USA. His poems and short stories and reviews have appeared or are forthcoming in: *The Classical Outlook*, *Singapore Poetry*, *Soft Blow*, *Assaracus*, *Jonathan*, *The Nervous Breakdown*, *Glitterwolf*, *The Raintown Review*, *The Goodmen Project*, *American Arts Quarterly*, *New Walk*, and *E-Verse Radio*.

Chris O'Carroll is a writer and an actor. His poems have appeared in *Angle*, *The Asses of Parnassus*, *Life and Legends*, *Light* (where he has been a featured poet), and *The Rotary Dial*, among other journals, as well as in *The Best of the Barefoot Muse*, *The Great American Wise Ass Poetry Anthology*, and *Poems for a Liminal Age* (published in support of Doctors Without Borders).

Uche Ogbuji, born in Calabar, Nigeria, lived in Egypt, England and elsewhere before settling near Boulder, Colorado. A computer engineer and entrepreneur by trade, his poetry chapbook, *Ndewo, Colorado* (Aldrich Press, 2013) is a Colorado Book Award Winner, and a *Westword* 2015 Award Winner (“Best Environmental Poetry”). His poems, published worldwide, fuse Igbo culture, European classicism, American Mountain West setting, and Hip-Hop influences. Among other editing projects he runs [@ColoradoPoetry](#) on Twitter. A selection of his poems was included in the *Best New African Poets 2015* anthology.

James J. Pearce, PhD, is a retired professor of Philosophy who has taken up poetry as his second vocation. He lives in Chillicothe, Ohio, and has become obsessed with the yodel sonnet form, as exhibited in the verse (2280) published herein. He has written a novel and several short-stories, all in verse, all in the yodel sonnet form.

Joseph S. Salemi teaches in the Department of Classical Languages at Hunter College, C.U.N.Y. His poems, translations, and scholarly articles have appeared in over one hundred journals world-wide. He is the editor of the literary journal *TRINACRIA* (now in its eighth year) and a monthly on-line columnist and reviewer for *The Pennsylvania Review*. He is a winner of the Classical and Modern Literature Award, an N.E.H. fellow, and a four-time finalist for the Howard Nemerov Prize. His latest book is *Steel Masks* (White Violet Press).

Leslie Schultz (Northfield, Minnesota) is the author of a collection of poetry, *Still Life with Poppies: Elegies* (Kelsay Books, 2016). Her poetry, fiction, and essays have appeared in a number of journals and anthologies, including *Able Muse*, *Light*, *Mezzo Cammin*, *The Orchards Poetry Journal*, *Swamp Lily Review*, *Poetic Strokes Anthology*, *Third Wednesday*, *The Madison Review*, *The Midwestern Quarterly*, and *The Wayfarer*; and in a chapbook, *Living Room* (Midwestern Writers’ Publishing House). Schultz is also the author of two middle-grade novels featuring a home-schooled main character: *The Howling Vowels* (2011) and *And Sometimes Y* (2013), both from Do Life Right Press. She has twice had winning poems in the Maria W. Faust sonnet contest (2013, 2016). Schultz posts poems, photographs, and essays on her website: www.winonamedia.net.

Gary Whitby is a professor of English at Tarrant County College in Fort Worth, Texas. He received an MFA from the Iowa Writers Workshop, studying with Donald Justice, Richard Murphy, and Marvin Bell, and also earned a PhD in Mass Communication from the Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communications. Gary has published poems in *First Things*, *Slant*, and *The American Literary Review*. His first volume of poetry, *The Weather of One Another*, is available on Amazon, and he is currently working on a second manuscript, *Invisible Waters*.

Anton Yakovlev was born in Moscow, Russia, and studied filmmaking and poetry at Harvard University. He is the author of poetry chapbooks *Neptune Court* (The Operating System, 2015), *The Ghost of Grant Wood* (Finishing Line Press, 2015), and *Ordinary Impalers* (Aldrich Press, 2017). His poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Hopkins Review*, *Prelude*, *Measure*, *The Best of the Raintown Review*, *The Rotary Dial*, and elsewhere. His book of translations of poetry by Sergei Esenin is forthcoming from Sensitive Skin Books in 2017. He has also directed several short films.

