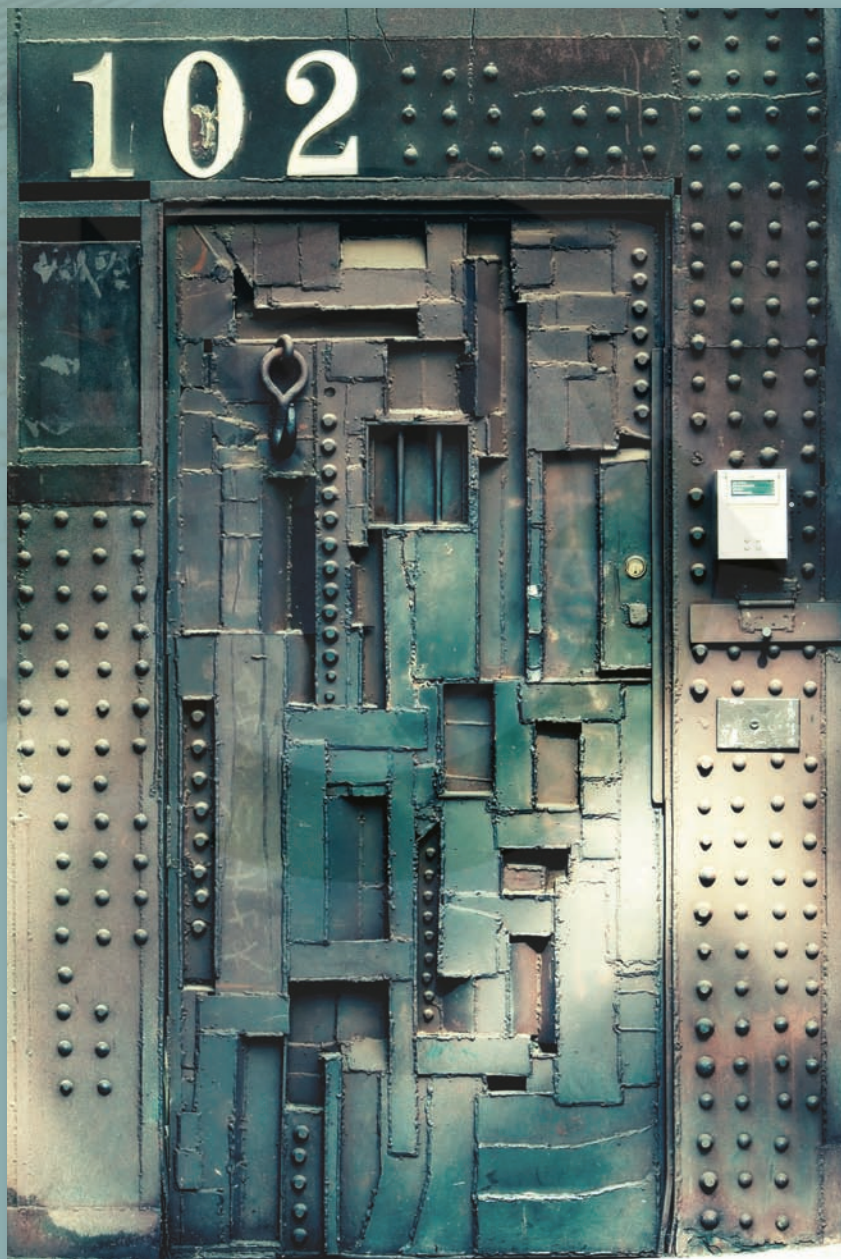


FutureCycle Poetry

poems for the ages



VOLUMES 1 & 2 ∞ 2007

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Foreword

In April 2007, *FutureCycle Poetry*, Volume 1 Number 1, was published like many small presses have done it since personal computers arrived on the scene in the early 1980s: we printed it out on a laser printer; folded, collated, and saddle-stapled it by hand; then lugged it all down to Kinko's to have it trimmed. Because saddle-stapling is not practical for thick magazines, we had to break the work into two different magazines, with Volume 1 Number 2 following in September. That's how long it took us to physically handle getting the first print run done!

Before gleefully, even deliriously, embracing print-on-demand and digital ebook technologies in 2009, we tried other ways to publish the work that would not kill us. Again, like many small presses do, we tried an online magazine with all kinds of complicated search and data aggregation features. It didn't handle like people were used to, and it, too, almost killed us. But we'd promised the poets and writers we'd published that we would maintain their work online for as long as we as press survived, so we have (as we joke) "rethink it." As we put the now six-year-old *FutureCycle* to bed for good, we are archiving them all in a simple PDF format and making them available free.

To simplify the presentation of the work online, we have made the two 2007 magazines into sections in one file entitled *FutureCycle Poetry 2007* to match the other annual editions. The poem sequence is the same as appeared in the original printed publications, but the mastheads, table of contents, and contributor bios have been combined. (To be accurate, when citing works that appear herein, please use the original cover information that begins each section.)



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Magazine Credits

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VOLUME 1 • NUMBER 1 • APRIL 2007



Paula Brancato

There Is Peace that Exists in Sky

For example, sunset over a well-lit city,
the bottoms of the clouds turning deep sienna,
their dark undersides

rough in that sea of violet.
Office lights blink on and off,
yellow cat's eyes in silver-brick frames.

People gather at the ends of corridors to watch,
but the tops of the clouds remain burnt cyan.
One

lone plane makes its way to earth,
passing through the sun's disappearing yellow,
orange, magenta to plunge

into a red horizon. A waxy light pours
down the city's sides, bloody, hot, organic— the peel
of an orange unfolding

before all dissolves to black, or
like a death in a Caravaggio painting,
the ecstasy of Magdelan, perhaps.

Juliet Cook

Ovarian Follies

I was cutting & pasting the contents of my latest diorama.
It was the pinking shears and red-painted papier mache phase
when I felt them twinging, pinging, plotting, besotting
and then my ovaries jumped ship. Itty bitty mutineers,

they giggled and slid down the laundry chute
and stained all my frilly panties, one random pair
of socks. They fled the house, gently bleeding;
seeking grandiose adventures and thrills.

At first my ovaries stuck together like tiny Siamese twins.
If anyone pinned them with a mean gaze, they played dead
or posed as suspicious masses of gelignite.
Reports flooded in of misshapen lumps

in the street. Drivers thought they were bits of road kill
until they skittered away. "It did not skitter," claimed one woman
on the local news. "It moved like a hairless caterpillar, contracting
at warp speed and I felt a flutter like butterflies in my stomach.

Carnivorous butterflies. Tearing at my...

" cut to commercial break.

I left a small dish of milk on the back porch and my ovaries returned
most nights. It turned out they were nocturnal
or almost never needed sleep. They loved to frolic

and splash in the bird bath as the neighbor lady's matronly brassieres
dangled
on the line, eyeing my ovaries disdainfully, murmuring in their haughtiest
tones,
"Do her ovaries have no shame?" and "Ovaries are meant to be kept
contained."

I glared at the bras and flashed them my sharpest scissors, my unsupported tits.

My ovaries drifted apart as one of them developed an unsettling reputation for histrionic mumbo jumbo; the other became known for oddly obscure pranks.

It grew more and more spherical until it transformed into a magic 8 ball and answered every question with the word squiggly.

The smaller ovary visited the milk dish more frequently, sometimes appearing so cold and forlorn that I built a diorama-sized bed with a special spongy pillow. I even considered petting her, but then she might think I was inviting her to purr

her way back inside my womb. Into my fragile bone china teacup, onto my high gloss black serving tray, alongside hot buttered crumpets and curdled cream. Soon it was time for my ovaries to sing.

My ovaries live in concert! Squiggly on stage, cooing her creepy

mezzo soprano operetta while the runt hovered above the balcony seat, peeking through her crooked monocle and sighing like a poor little orphaned ovary. She was such an adorable specimen. Oh, how my fallopian tubes ached to embrace her, choke her, swallow her whole.

William Doreski

Binary System

The first time hurts. Then the wind
paddles the landscape back to health
and the village smirks by the river

and constables sneer over doughnuts
and egg-shapes flash through the sky
and explode above Siberia

or the outback of Australia.
You knew it would be like this—
the auditor stroking your thighs,

the long strings of useless numbers.
I recommend converting yourself
to the binary system. One

in the first place, then two, four,
eight, sixteen, thirty-two until
your ledger balances, the tax

collector withdraws, you retain
your fiscal virginity
and everyone's almost happy.

As dawn pinks the snow I lift
my gaze to the charcoal tree-line
and feel your fear of prison

seep through that flimsy membrane
between us. Relax. Everyone
needs a little prison time;

but only after your third or fourth
audit does the evidence

accumulate sufficiently.

Besides, with such glossy thighs,
powerful binary instruments,
you can scissor off as much

of the world as you desire
and persuade either gender
the punishment fits the crime.



The Didactic View of Art

Leaning against the chalkboard
you sigh through Tolstoy's argument
about the didactic view of art
then tell the crowd that children
are the only form of expression
you admire. Your colleagues offer
safely academic applause.

As most head for the refreshments
I remain planted in my chair,
hoping you'll remember me
from wine-sipping Paris evenings
with lamplight crawling over us
and the smell of the river ripe
with a history of suicide.

But you ignore me so formally
the planet creaks with the effort
and I exude a single tear
that scars like a Heidelberg duel.
Congratulations clot in my throat.
A handsome bearded fellow nods
as you smile your famous pink smile.

Unfair to expect scholarship
to tell the truth about anything—
but you dislike the fuss and mess
and sentiment of children
and prefer Tolstoy's fiction
to his foolish pronouncements
about sainthood and creation.

The academic crowd admires
the angle at which your head
sits on your neck, your sturdy
tripod stance, your readiness

to answer questions with insults.
While you earn tenure at Harvard,
Berkeley, Michigan, and Cornell

I leave and stagger to my office
and clench myself with critical force
that should kill me. When you knock
at my door the fossil part
of me refuses to answer,
accepting the distance between us
as a warp in geologic time.



Gary Fincke

Plummeting

When my son tumbled from our roof,
When he lay soundless, not moving,
I stared from the half-painted porch
Of apprehension until he
Pedaled a leg to release me.
In the darkening west, stars formed
Familiar shapes, blue going black
Near Buffalo, where schoolchildren
His age were losing their balance
Along the land-filled Love Canal.

My son stood up into my arms,
And he talked and talked and followed
The angle of our transformed roof
Toward the sky's seven sisters.
Pleiades, I said, the daughters
Of Atlas. My son, nearly eight,
Said he wasn't inside himself.
So far away, Buffalo's lights
Suggested brief, but awful news.

2

*Above thirty feet, chances are
You will die when you hit the ground.
As soon as you reach the third floor,
You're at luck's mercy if you fall.*

3

In the played-out strip mine,
During our night hike,
My father led us Scouts
Along a trail that peaked

At the narrow crest
Of worthlessness that
Pitched down into darkness,
And I knelt to grip
The ground with my hands,
Certain I could fall.

Every boy who noticed
Said nothing. My father
Talked me to my feet
And guided me back down
Like a suicide,
To take the long, low route
Through the scrub trees, walking
Out with my cowardice
Until we met the troop
Where the earth's scars ended.

4

*With an open parachute, you land
At about fourteen miles per hour.
The longest fall survived with no
Parachute? 22,000 feet.*

5

Remember physics? The formula for falling—
Thirty-two feet per second per second?
Acceleration. The speed with which strangers on
The news hit the ground from ninety stories.

No need to calculate. Let's just say there's a height
After which results are always the same,
Advice I heard from a foreman when I panicked
Leaning out to wash a fourth-floor window.

Remember the sound wave lessons? There was a test
With a tuning fork, and I volunteered,

Nothing to do but find the spot by the blackboard
Where I went deaf to Mr. Sperling's ping.

I forget if we learned a formula, symbols
To master for a grade, but I sat down
And became a boy who heard the mutterings of
Bob Stepanic no matter where I moved.

His voice spread like the flu, infecting me, for one,
Because I hadn't stopped hearing him since
He'd touched a blade to his wrists. "For starters," he'd said,
Showing me during lab. We had a tray

Filled with water, something to do with displacement
During the easy month of September.
What we reached was electricity, the physics
For February's important exam.

There were seven stories in the tallest building
In our town. Bob Stepanic had mastered
The mathematics for endings. Impossibly,
However, I heard him from miles away.

6

*There was a man, once, who fell
Thousands of feet into a small pond
And survived like a cartoon person,
Like something drawn back to life.*

7

Sometimes, height tells us to use hands and knees,
Its voice, after dark, amplified by wind
And rain, weather narrowing everything
To the thinnest of black strands at our feet.
Sometimes, even the veterans of height

Feel a hand on their backs during night storms.
James Roberts, the railroad foreman, confessed
He dropped down to grip both rails and crawl, that
He wished himself snake when a train vanished
Crossing the Tay Bridge, nothing to be done
Along its ninety-foot drop to water
Except go forward, tie by tie, until
Train or disaster could be verified.

And when, a third of a mile out, he reached
The split, he stopped one handhold from the brink
And heard his body ask for speed. I felt,
He said, I'd lost the brakes of common sense,
That I'd roll forward like a train, my hands
And knees crawling the unthinkable air.
And because backwards was impossible,
I pressed myself so tightly to those tracks
I thought I would tattoo my chest with them
When my legs, while turning, were over air.

For a moment, he said, I thought I'd sail,
What any of us believe, recalling
Thick branches carried off by wind, siding
And shingles stripped from houses, our panic
When, like always, we hear from survivors
Who push themselves upright, standing to say
How failure opens in the high places
Of our bodies— heart and lungs, liver, brain,
And we fall from bridges we dream won't break.

8

*A woman survived 14,000 feet
Of falling when she landed on a mound
Of fire ants, her heart shocked to beating
By hundreds of furious stings.*

*In England, a plane crashed after a mechanic sawed a pin
in the lift mechanism to make it fit better, reversing its effect.*

After the wings turned arthritic,
After gravity grew fingers
That ended in talons, we heard
About the mechanic's improv

That played like comedy's laughter
Forced from misery, things fixed good,
The long pin sawed off to construct
The "Yes, there!" of a better fit.

After the broadcast funerals
In forty-seven towns, we read
About plane elevators, how,
In the physics of plummeting,

Acceleration is something
That swells per second per second.
Like fear. Like anger. Like hearing
Some spokesperson apologize

From so far away he sounds like
An alien emissary
Whose research, at last, is finished.
Listen, he messages back home,

No matter the size of objects,
These humans believe the fitting
Of parts is beauty, length and width
For every space. Like screws, he says.

Like bolts and pins. The wings of planes
Climb air, vanishing as quickly
As prayer, flight after flight until
One is sacrificed by repair.

Once, I refused my daughter's plan
To show me where she worked, close by,
From the top of the Trade Center.

All afternoon I hid my fear.
We walked to her workplace and looked
Up like small children. There was time

To confess, but I kept still all
That Sunday before planes-as-bombs
Made me seek the sound of her voice.

On television, the bodies
Of men and women plummeted
From a thousand feet, maybe more.

For a moment, they were human,
Dressed for white-collar work, and then
They became thin missiles, and then

Nothing at all. When, finally,
My daughter answered, she sounded
Like someone I'd never heard, a voice
Talking me down shame's stairs to safety.

Taylor Graham

Through the Louvers

The Mona Lisa's missing.
How could she slip Security
slick as a greased smile?

Out on the street, men in aprons
are slapping batter
on the grills.

Passers by clap to the beat
of a black chanteuse. Merchants
stand in doorways

counting cash and passwords.
An epidemic of pigeons
casts iridescence on the air.

And where, in all the clatter
of an otherwise
unremarkable Monday, is priceless

Mona Lisa? Whatever might
she want, in our crazy mortal
already fading summer?

Clarinda Harriss

Mistress

I should be the shiny one,
all my pores oozing the fat
of the earth.

When I lean to the table
my breasts should rest on the cloth
plump as hens.

If I can't pick and choose, fire
guests who don't please me after
the first course,

I should at least rule feast days,
blushing as the family toasts
my grand meal.

Instead I'm the pet under
the table, nosing crotches,
begging scraps.

Donald M. Hassler

Touched by the Webbed Feet of Geese

I sit hunched against the cold between my son
And my wife (not his mother though she wishes
She were) at my uncle's graveside service.

Then we drive off in our warm car to a warm
Restaurant. My uncle remains in that field
Where my parents are, where we will remain
One day. The beauty of life is the ability to move.

Like the small flock of grey geese I still see
Eighty yards in front of where we sat
At that grave. Out there is where my parents
Are laid, and those geese were foraging
Across their graves, ignoring our ceremony
Beneath the green tent. The Bible passage says
Give up the tent of the body and go
To an eternal house. My lovely geese
Lift their feet carefully and move across
The snowy graves, no house for them.
They're on the move. I'll not forget.

Joseph Hutchison

One Clear Moment in August

When I let the long snake
of water in the garden hose
out into the garden, sun
sparkled along its sleek length.
How it split, multiplied, flashed
down the rows of ripe corn—
like desire that ripples
among beautiful women,
or some promise that threads
the dreams of sleepers, linking
scattered towns. So the water
snake touched onion greens
and pepper stalks, carrot-leaf
sprays, thick bursts of broccoli,
muttering to the roots: *Here I am,*
as always, to give you strength.
There is nothing to fear.
This kiss is forever.

Sean Kilpatrick

popular theory

all matter rejects
other matter

think about
being touched
to survive

it's all you have

being held,
for instance,
is a chemical
falsehood
the brain
manufactures
to keep us
from dying
of loneliness

no scientist
is brave enough
to hold me

one thing
I mention
to plants
when they
attend my
lectures is
that chlorophyll
is the only
substance
on earth

that actually
exists and
as a result
I am very
popular with
plants



Greg Kosmicki

I Awoke Today Thinking of Ashes

my mother's and my father's ashes, where
they lie underneath the cemetery
grass, on a hill that looks north, three miles
from the farm where, a strange boy, I grew up,
no social skills, a frightened animal.

I want to dig their ashes from the ground
get them out of those craft-store boxes
made for jewelry we put cassettes in
that held their ashes, as though they became
videos, bad scripts we buried. I want
to take back that 21-gun salute
my sister insisted we have for Dad
because he told me though he served, he served
unwillingly, thought war was bad, all wars.

Mom's ashes I would take north of Ellsworth
to the ranch where she lived till
'29, the market crash and Granddad
Munger lost all the cattle to the bank.
I'd take her to the hill by the highway
where you can see the trees and the tiny
white house, now fallen down.

I'd save a trace of ash and go back home
with a smudge of Dad's and ask the people
who live there now if I could see the house.
I'd tell them about the way the house was
built, what was added on, what used to be
where, and when they looked away at something
I'd pointed at, I'd hide the ashes, I'd
make it where they'd never see. The ashes
would live in that house until it too fell.

My father's ashes, bits of black, bits of
bone, crystal of a tooth, DNA, guts,
I'd take up north. Toss some in the basement
foundation filled with rusted bed springs, bricks
and junk by Uncle Buck's corner, where they
lived, for a while, when he was a boy. Spread
some at the Riley place, where he lived too,
then later farmed, spread some at Uncle Bill's
where we hunted pheasants with the uncles,
"The Crew." Taste the smell of spent shotgun shells.



Riding Home

As I stepped off the bus I thought of death
because I saw trees, the grass and the mud.
But that was it— I did not get morbid
and depressed even though it's winter,
sky cloudy for months. Even though my wife
and I are the older generation.

Now that all our parents have died I want
to grow a big garden, and trim the trees
so that sunlight gets to the vegetables.

For once I have thought rutabage thoughts
lying dark in the frozen underground
in wait, like a Great Blue Heron. No snow
in a dry winter can do that to you
make you think you are wiser than ages.

If I do not step off the bus and think
of death? Then there must be something wrong with
the way the geese fly, or yellow machines
dig, great square holes for us to hide pipes in—
ugly secret under-netting of dreams.

Life! If you ask me what I believe in.

I will say music and the sun, will say
sweat and breath, salt, and religions of salt.

Mindy Kronenberg

River Bottom

The man who guards the Nanjing Bridge
tells a listener the saddest thing
he's ever heard is the sound
of a body hitting water.

Over a thousand have plunged
to their deaths— he takes a drag from his cigarette—
young people mostly;
their spirits are in turmoil.

One child becomes one adult
in a land of teaming streets.
Despair is a singular, lonely climb
through a steel crib packed with tourists.

He shrugs and says he can't save them all—
though he has talked many off the ledge.
He smiles with stained brown teeth
and nods: *ninety-nine lives*.

In his own childhood
no one had any meat to eat
yet the suicide rate was very low.
Now everyone's pot is full

but the heart has grown woefully hollow.
He frowns and shivers, slits his eyes
scanning the horizon, looking past
the muddy waters of the Yangste River.

Jennifer Lagier

Magic Mountain

Red madrone and wild rhododendrons
stretch toward blue skies, crowd the spindly pine.

Sequoias tower over squatty ferns and fallow oak;
needles comb morning air, snag the incoming fog.

I look downstream to dark lagoons,
secretive beaches where delicate white herons roam.

Mist rises from forest floor, merges with
restless evening's unfinished dreams,

I am divorced from familiar landmarks,
shrinking increments of vanishing time.

Along autumn's abyss, jays snip and snipe,
flit to the Japanese maple's rusty cascade.

I shuffle among sycamore rags, bury another year,
pause above the river canyon's lazy decline.

Rustin Larson

My Father's Hernia

I had a fruit salad for company
a bag of balloons, a sad monkey who wouldn't wake up

I am standing outside Utopia
in my tight army-green swim trunks

strangling a beach towel
the shadows of leaves brushing the clapboards

I have many deposits
of fat on my back and chest though I will tell you it's pure muscle

I sacrificed my groin in some accident in the navy
or in Chicago lifting a washer up 12 flights of stairs

my legs are familiar white hairless
you'll recognize them as your own when you're 44

I have no neck, I have an appetite
I'm still celebrating the end of the war

the grass is soft here
we'll go to the sailor's emporium for fried clams

and ride the empress after sunset
or maybe the queen or the chief

ride on the bumper cars roller coaster hammer of death
and listen to the Twins play on the radio

in the dark and listen to the lake water still itself
until the light morning breezes something illegible

a matter of myself, the dock spelling itself
plank by plank out over the water

Alexandra Oliver

One of These Days

We wander to the park. The mothers clump
Barnacular against the little wall,
That thing is loneliness, the blackened hump
Each one of us attempted. It is all
So neatly knitted: waking, messy meals,
The robust pong of diaper and the squirms
Of legs resisting stroller straps. It feels
So odd to covet friendship on those terms.
The sweat suits shuffle, hands scratch digits down
On cards and old receipts. Oh God, who calls
To talk about the pram, the birthday clown,
The infant gyms in vast, suburban malls?
I focus on my son, take on that glaze.
When will you call? Oh soon— one of these days.

Lee Passarella

November Where He Grieves

Feast of St. Andrew, November 30

Late autumn. Where autumn lingers,
a slim feast. In side yards, the spoon
mums serve up paucities for the eye:
cankered saffron, motley salmon
and puce— this is the body/

this the blood. It is theophany as murder
of the innocents: in house corners,
burning bushes gutter and keep mum.
The ornamental pears wear copper
and blood-orange, leaving a salt tang—
the smack of old pennies— on the eyes.

In the hollow, young gumtrees,
whip-slender,
bloody-palmed.





FutureCycle Poetry

poems for the ages



VOLUME 1 • NUMBER 2 • SEPTEMBER 2007



John Allman

Key West

First, the getting there— the hurtle down I-95,
an overnight in West Palm Beach, pork chops
and salads in Duffy's Sports Bar, every portal
a fume and flash of thigh, the air heavy with beery
sex, TV flickering scores, a spine crunching in a
fullback's tackle. Is it fatigue, to hear the body
counts from IED's outside Baghdad and order
more wine? The morning brings construction,
girders raw as bone, such thump and swerve as
the medic's Humvee carting off the wounded,

something already dropped horribly into a pail.
Across Boynton Blvd to Florida's Turnpike,
gated communities, miles of scorched skin. Green
coconuts drop like skulls. How many orthopedists
make a village walk? Every stop, it's pee and fill.
At last, the Keys, driving through the hologram
of *Key Largo*, Bogart's grimace rippling along the
fender like a soft fabric. In the head, in the lost dark,
in the mist, how many conch chowders in Marathon,
how many gaps in the old railroad bridge torn into

by the hurricane of '35? The green sea keeps adding,
keeps count, keeps unloading tourists from towering
cruise ships. Key West now accreted with spindle
palms, bougainvillea, oleander, the petals that are
leaves transformed, each parking space a rectangle
painted on macadam like a surgeon's mark. The drawn
names of those who thrived here long gone, long washed out
from the weedy ledge of the Casa Marina,
where further down the sands, a poet once walked
behind a woman singing beyond the genius of the sea.

Rapture

After paintings by Donna Howells

In certain paintings, people disappear
while reading menus in brightly lit diners,
empty sweaters, vacated jeans, sagged-
out, often-washed shirts littering the
floor, but laid out as neatly as children's
summer camp clothes folded by their
mother on a bed. You see some of these
stripped people rising in the sky, almost
colliding with hawks, and down below
there's the Church of the Luke Warm
with its narrow driveway the color of
bad peaches, parents on their knees in the
withered grass, holding up their hands
in grief, where the little socks and sneakers

lie abandoned. Look out for the sky-borne
elderly trailing long white hair, or the
helicopter tilting to avoid the flash of so
much skin, the whirring blades, the beaten
air, the sermon bulging its way through
half-open windows. I tell you this because
I fainted once in church, a warm April
morning, I fell back against the people
behind me, I never touched the ground.
Today, walking the beach, I'm buttoned
and zipped, my photo-gray glasses grow
darker in the sun, while sea crows and grackles
mock each other in the pines. Listen.
And don't tell me you know anything.

Journal

"Have passed Edisto and several other islands and can now see Hilton Head.... The South Carolina shore is flat and low—a long line of trees. It does not look very inviting."

—Charlotte L. Forten, Oct. 28, 1862

What's war, when the land blooms? *This afternoon went into the woods, and gathered some casino berries and beautiful magnolia leaves and exquisite ferns. How beautifully they contrast, on my table, with the daffodils and narcissus.* In the marsh, a shred of a girl's dress, her sister's stocking, where they sank and yet swam into a father's arms. The sight of black troops: certain white women vented their spleen...

telling them they ought to be at work in their masters' rice swamps, and that they ought to be lashed to death. Stain, scar, lash-infested wound not nearly a vocabulary for the *strange wild dream from which I am constantly expecting to escape.*

This evening, over a hundred years later, I try to sleep. A serrated tumble of pine cones on the roof, a child's thin voice rising in the distance, where perfection fails.

Judith Barrington

How You Open the Door

How you open the door and know someone's home
or the house, the house is empty.

How there's the tapping of keys
the chop chop of knife through carrot,
a trace of shampoo or whiskey
or day-old sweat in the air.

Or none of these.

How the house sighs as you enter its spaces
beaming and creaking and settling.
Or how it prods you with its cold hard fingers.

How one day you open the door to a ringing phone
which stops
How you know why phones ring in empty houses
when nobody's home
and reporters with cameras speed towards somewhere.

How you open the door a crack, just a crack
but it escapes anyway, the terrible knowledge.

How you open the door and the rest of your life greets you.

Ellen Bass

Your Hand

Tonight I lie facedown
on our bed, heavy
as a melon on warm dirt,
sun heating its cells, starches
turning to sugar, the way I
do as you stroke
the seam along my back.

I can hardly believe it,
how that hand had almost been lost,
dragged into the whirling blades,
slung for months above you
in the hospital bed.

Now, those fingers travel
back and forth between
my small mountain and small cave,
making a path. Like a woman walking
to and from a well
flattening grass as she moves
through the gray-blue twilight.

Now a potter at the wheel
pulling up the curved wall of slick clay,
tendons gliding smoothly
in their synovial sheaths.

Now a violinist
drawing the bow over the sweet
spot where the string is most responsive.

How close loss comes, striding
straight at us, and then,
distracted maybe, turns
and wanders away.

Wendy Taylor Carlisle

Off the Square

A woman walks differently when she feels
the balding man in the café watching her. Her heart
is stubborn as a yam in this, because of the hard earth
and pigeons, those lovely scavengers. This woman
cooks empanadas on the curb, gathers rumors
about the Virgin; takes what is given—
the oleander which is poison, the raw olive,
the same, the troubled bougainvillea
with its shocking purple lips. The beggar on the square
was her gossip before he moved north where there are more machines.
In her town, there are not enough beans or chickens.
The woman's children sleep tumbled around her, her hand
on the boy's cheek. The day is equal parts reward and bother.
She needs ten pesos; she'd just as soon not have your heart.

Carol Carpenter

Midnight Shift at the GM Body and Assembly Plant

No one ever says
Hank is losing his touch
or shirking his work, double now
with shifts cut and machine cycles revved
past capability, past endurance, past
perimeters where metal and flesh fuse.
No more

does his welding melt surface
to surface or hold like lovers,
limbs locked, navel to navel.
Scarred at the very center,
he cuts the cord
again and again.

Hank's belly full of fire
burns blue
as his anger. The hottest flame

after thirty years, his layoff.
As if he can
just switch off currents,
forget the welding gun,
the way it fits his hand,
transforms his fingertips. Now

five torches blaze. Touch the robot's arm,
caress the steel joints. Patch
broken parts with solder. Strong enough
to hold against repetitive moves, against

vibrations that reverberate
off factory walls, off scorched bones.
Then burn to ash.

Diary of the Night Watchman

In my nightmares, it is noon.
The sun sags,
round as a pregnant woman,
flushed with sin, silent,
waiting to drop
behind clouds or ride
elevators to the top
floor where I can't track

her footprints, crushed in carpet,
which lead to unlocked doors. She
smiles through mail slots, vanished
at five o'clock, full of life.
She ferrets out riverbeds
drinks carp and seaweed,
her belly a fish bowl.

On my shifts, I turn out lights.
I beat my head on concrete walls,
read scripture aloud. My own
voice rises to ceilings,
splinters giant redwoods
rooted for centuries. Behind bark,
concentric circles mark off ages.
These rings, like her, forget the axe,
the prophecy of bones.

J. P. Dancing Bear

Every Dog Is Two Dogs:

(inspired by a Julie Speed painting "Trick Dogs")

one that wags its tail waiting for my return
and one that has strewn my garbage through the house.
In my mind there are two dogs— both jump through
fiery hoops but one more willingly than the other.
Did I mention that both dogs are white? Yes, white
like the billowing fog that visits every afternoon.
One snaps and bites while barking loudly at the fog;
the other has run deep into the bank, except for the jingled
collar it has become fog. It is a happy jingle.
I say this because the dog and the fog bobble my head.
So is the jingle. And the flaming hoops. My house.
And your ear. They are all in here. Do you hear
that? It is the you that I have imagined you to be
in a top hat running across the moors up to my door.
You say there is a telegram— one that I have imagined
you would always bring. It only reads *pastiche*.
And then we are in a European city of many architectures
even if you did not mean us to be. And the hoops have
set fire to these old buildings and the structures crumble
into flames and ruin like all European cities do. In the rubble
you say you hate the rhyming sounds. Everything should be
a beautiful symphony of tin pots and spoons. In the following
cacophony I wonder which mind I have imitated for you.
And the dogs are barking at each other. They are mad
that the one is not more like the other. They tug-o-war
your old sock— the one you wore while kicking dead horses.
You asked *why fiery hoops? Is this a circus?* I know you
hate this part. The doubt about whether you only exist
in someone else's mind. You reach into your top hat
for a rabbit but pull one of the white dogs by its ears—
it is not the happy hound. I fear for your hand, dear man.
Was that a haiku stamped on the brim of your hat? An old

Basho riff– imagine the world without frogs. Only dogs.
You unmagic your hat. Fold that telegram to a pocket square
for your tatty jacket. *I know, it's time to go*– you say
you hear the sound of circus tents pulled down. And both dogs
bark your departure– one grinning happy white razors;
the other straining to rip and steal your dusty blue soul.



My Yeriho

1

A familiar silhouette draws me inward and across
the desert. Not a Pilgrimage. Nor Command.
A shadow of a temple on the dunes.

The fortifications and ramparts erected
with a long battle in mind. Each brick coerced
into a place; each subject ordered to stand—

indentured servitude and demand.
Like all cities are built. Cradled civilization.
City of my father— where stones are raised

to look like men. If there are tears in the desert—
the thirsty have drink. Each of us holds
a Dead Sea behind our eyes.

2

People who look like me live behind the walls—
obeying the whipcrack, bending to hunger,
gambling their crumbs.

Locked doors, dead bolt comfort against
agents of the unknown. The curfew comes
earlier each night. The stone golems

patrolling. People who look like me
are saying yes and showing their documents
of citizenship. They don't see

how many sons make a foundation
from their bodies, or how many others
betray their training and give bread
and board to strangers.

The trumpets of my army unit.
Is this how jazz is born? With the dust
of a place like this coating your fingers.

Could suffering be held within a single note?
The first master musician would love
and release such music to the air.

I hated this city even before I pressed my ear
to the gate. I heard the false god praised.
Each sacrifice was called out

like a religion. I readied my horn and filled
my lungs with terrible, divine air,
I ballooned my cheeks to the mouthpiece
and pressed down on the piston.

George Drew

After a Morning

After a morning spent reading good poems
about another in a long line of bad wars
I ready my pen for battle, but my tongue
thickens to noncompliance. They accumulate,
these good poems, like the pigeons pecking
at scraps in the snow around my feet,
the poem I'm trying to write laughable.

Gulls passing over on their way to water
are a comfort, as are the dowdy little pigeons,
but that acridly vivid odor in my nostrils
is sea-smell, not the salt of real blood,
and these are only shells, not bones,
the eagle soaring high over the bay
nothing more than a black silhouette,
all wings and in its talons nothing but air.

David Brendan Hopes

Late Snow: For the Enthronement of Benedict XVI

1

That sound is the shutting of windows, the coming-to-life
of sleeping furnaces, the settling of jars to cover the
tender sprouts, newspapers held down by stones
against a night of frost. Late snow.

The gray clouds gathering and rushing.

Not too damaging, they expect, a warning, just,
from the Powers hidden under stone in the blue North,
from the cold that had its way and wants us back again.

Oh, it shall come, shall come, wind says, lashing
last blooms from the shaken pear. Late snow.

One flake, two flakes on the fourfold witness of the dogwood.

2

My black cat walks the almost-sundown silver of the porch.

One paw strikes snow, one paw strikes blossom
tossed willy-nilly by the wind. Each step, each touch
of black on white—the black moving by its own will,
the white waiting to be moved— is a hammer blow,
a piston pumping in darkness
at the center of the world.

Cat comes to me, waiting to be caught up,
waiting to be lifted. I think that I no longer can.

3

I think of Yeats weeping and praying for his infant daughter
in the blast of sea-wind shouldering his winter-colored tower.

What I have wept for, prayed for cannot be said. But I
can seem to pray for the sentimental arcs of bleeding-heart,

for the green fists of fern unclenching, for the trillium
with its Godhead number, holy three times three.

Pray for them to make it through the night.
Pray to see them merry in the morning light.

It is meant to snow tonight. It might not.
Far to the south the Fisherman's successor

walks in white cloth in the ancient gardens, himself
the color of snow, perhaps, a furnace of ancient

conflagrations compact, a coal of burnt towns,
the owner of paintings where each hand is a flickering flame

and the devils show tail
as they melt into the pathless woods.

I think if I prayed to him, he could walk from flower to flower,
breathing the compacted heat till the sun comes and all is saved.

4

Here is the hummingbird feeder which two hurricanes
could not knock down.

I believe one will come tonight.
I believe one, bewildered with choosing
between the white cool flowers and the flowering snow
will arrive at one place known for sure,
 will sup his sup
 from the sweetness.

He will leave
neither sound in the wind
nor mark in the snow,
but I will know.

5

They say it snows tonight
upon the flowers of the mountain,
already themselves half snow

Far to the south the Pope is walking in his gardens.
He is the color of the falling snow.

What to do for the affrighted blossoms, for the small birds
taken in their nests? So like children in the

bombed cities, the mothers with their begging bowls
held at the end of burnt arms. Frost, fire,

the old kingdoms lit by autos-de-fay,
the starvelings scratching at the golden wall.

It is not a place for the like of me to go.
The Pope is walking in his gardens

in the villas the color of snow.
Let us ask him. He will know.

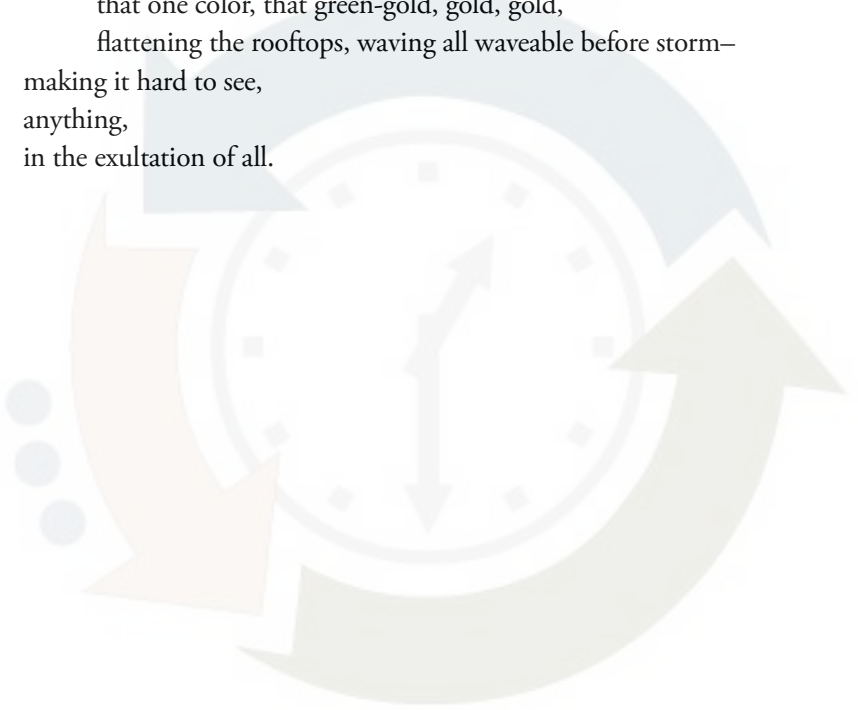
In a Summer of Almost Too Much Light

In the week since rain, edges have sharpened,
leaves found a way to pass the terrible light on, pure,
taking their sip and drawing away,
greened to a shade one shade from black.

The men across the street are new to me,
hired with their beaten red truck for the day.
Red cap. White cap. Two gray shirts.
Everything they do is noise.
I'm trying to watch Red Cap slaying
with his spun blade weeds by the gold wall:
 too much life, though: gold moving in gold,
the sky behind him strewn with swallows.

White Cap is talking to his lawnmower,
exhorting it to dispatch through the saw-blade grass.
Cap pulled low, blond pony-tail, the angle
obscures the outlines of his face— but mostly,

in the gathering, burnished dark before great rain,
but mostly in this deep summer air, the light—
 making all things alike and likewise radiant—
 the flowers waiting, and the split mouths of the grass,
 everything ready and unfolded to the rain—
 so many lovers, so many to whom promises were whispered—
 red, gray, white, shifted to before-storm gold,
 rain already on the near ridge, coming with a shout,
 and the man half visible, and the mower
 leaping for him, alive in the moving-every-motion lawn:
 that one color, that green-gold, gold, gold,
 flattening the rooftops, waving all waveable before storm—
making it hard to see,
anything,
in the exultation of all.



Robert W. King

The Subway Mistake

Corner of my eye: one man, head slumped
sleeps jiggling with the bumps of the car,
beside him a woman smoothly applying
lipstick, no sign of thought on this dull boyfriend,
this husband bored to dreams. I invent
embarrassment, frost, a humdrum loathing.

Next stop someone in front of them leaves,
and he's nodding a seat behind her.
The world lurches up again differently,
a sudden divorce leaving them exactly
as they were, her mouth newly kissable,
his dreams unfathomably private.

I could love this woman, even love
that man except for all the decisions
facing us, inevitable conflicts,
the hours of talking it would take
to put ourselves together. Only
the advent of my own destination
stops all of this from beginning to happen.

I leave, almost reluctant to leave
that other life, so ripe for discontent.

Gary Lehmann

Baseball Bus Tumbles over Embankment

I was asleep when the bus hit the guardrail on the overpass and tumbled,
God I have no idea how far down slowly rotating toward my side.
I looked out of the window and saw the pavement rushing toward me.

What did it feel like? Well, it felt like I was suddenly trapped
inside a Jackson Pollack dry point etching with all sorts of black
figures jumbled in a twirl of heads and arms thrown into free fall.

In one terrible moment, I realized that I was going to die.
Then I had a sense of resolution and peace, even though I was going to die.
Then, I felt like I was being compacted into a ball of bones and blood.

What? No I haven't been seen by my trauma counselor yet.
Yes, I do feel different. I suddenly have a need to articulate the darker side
of abstract expressionism. I sure hope Coach doesn't find out.

Doug Martin

Moonshine, Illinois Confronts the Afterlife with Ease

(for Ryan Hobart)

When the wife started playing Paganini
stormweather-notes on the piano,
then the five black keys
the Chinese say make up their only song,
her husband saw from out the window
the clown carrying a dumbbell
in snow into the Albertson's
across the street
from the couple's hamburger stand.
It was a bad sign.
This was Moonshine, Illinois.
The clown must have walked out
of a circus from another time
and was not from God,
the old man thought.
Then the calendar fell off the wall.
A preacher on TV sneezed and didn't apologize.
The old couple could tell the end was near
in the way God, in his multi-track studio,
had been sliding people in and out of the mix,
the way lately customers had been complaining
of the rough taste
of their world famous hamburgers.
Then came more snow
and sirens like rap-music in the streets.
If you die before me, I'll try
to find your kisses everywhere in Florida,
the husband said, scared
and still staring out the window.
The old woman wasn't a bit fazed.
At the piano, her hands knew her own faith.

Deja Blue water loved her
when she took her last drink.
Don't be silly, dear, she said.
The only retirement plans I have
are with yours truly in heaven.



Elsie Pankowski

Last Road

He woke her in the middle
of a cold spring night, the agony
of his collapsing ribs unspoken
as he leaned on her and stumbled
to the car. While the heater hummed
and dashlights glowed, she drove
sixty miles of lonely road to the hospital,
listening to him rasp those final words:
She must know his years of faithfulness,
how he hated the disease that ate his bones
and left him short and weak. She must
not let some slick and handsome man
come along and flatter her until she
lost what they had saved. And would she
buy a concrete vault to keep
the cemetery gophers from his grave?

Her fingers choked the wheel.
The night closed in upon the highway
that blurred before her eyes.
How she wished for that dark road
to end. How she wished that
it might never end.

Cleaning Windows in November

I balance on this shaky ladder,
juggle window spray and roll
of paper towels. The wind pursues
the last stray leaves across the yard.
Before the holidays, I must remove
dust that clung to dots of rain,
droppings of some passing bird,
smog from car exhaust. Each year
I drag this same ladder in an awkward
dance around this house, transforming
opaque to clear, and who will care?
Someday in the misty future, will someone
somewhere say, "Her windows gleamed"?
Better, I suppose, than "Oh yes,
her windows looked like they were
painted gray." This mindless
chore goes on and, from my
wobbly perch, I see one neighbor
walk her dog, another make his
daily trek to get the mail, a third
cut down her peonies. For years
I've known them as familiar strangers
I trust but do not really know.
Through these shining panes, I clearly
see branches of the mountain ash
across the street, hanging cotton balls
of clouds, sparrows swaying in the lilac
bush. But when I watch my neighbors
walking by, they still seem painted gray.

Lee Passarella

Instinct

They're known as *nimbostratus*,
these clouds that look as if drawn
with a straightedge: gray ledge
of rock. A dirty waterfall of rain

sheers from them. All around,
the sweaty air moils; tree leaves
swim, seething and sinuating
through rapids, exposing the quick

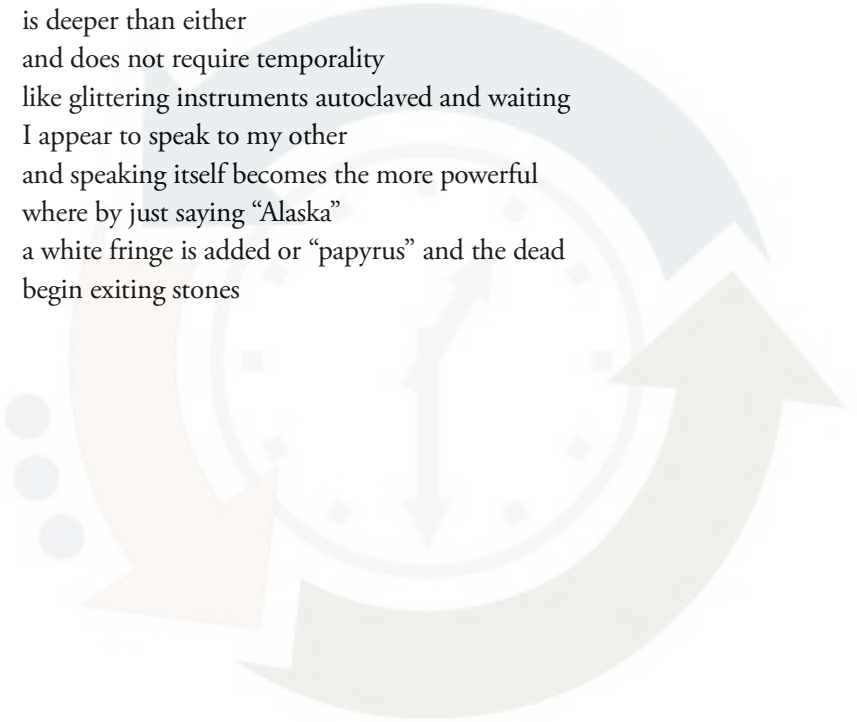
silver of their ribs, their undersides.
Equivocal birds zigzag down
current, fumbling in a whorl
of leaf tatters, feeling their way

toward the never-before-
seen shoals called *home*.

Allan Peterson

Just Saying Alaska

Even in pale light
I appear beside myself against the house
Fragmented and spilled in decimals
onto sand and silica I scatter from reflections
Photography and Memory wrestle
to see which better preserves the past but Mystery
is deeper than either
and does not require temporality
like glittering instruments autoclaved and waiting
I appear to speak to my other
and speaking itself becomes the more powerful
where by just saying "Alaska"
a white fringe is added or "papyrus" and the dead
begin exiting stones



Susanna Rich

Interview

First, you are outnumbered: three to ten of them
– one of you. Each leans on the place mat
of your vita. You wear an interview suit:
starched labels fidget from your coccyx
to your knotted neck. They sit you
in the preheated depressions
of another candidate's nervousness
and swirl your mind into a soup of names
you could never remember, bubbles of eyes,

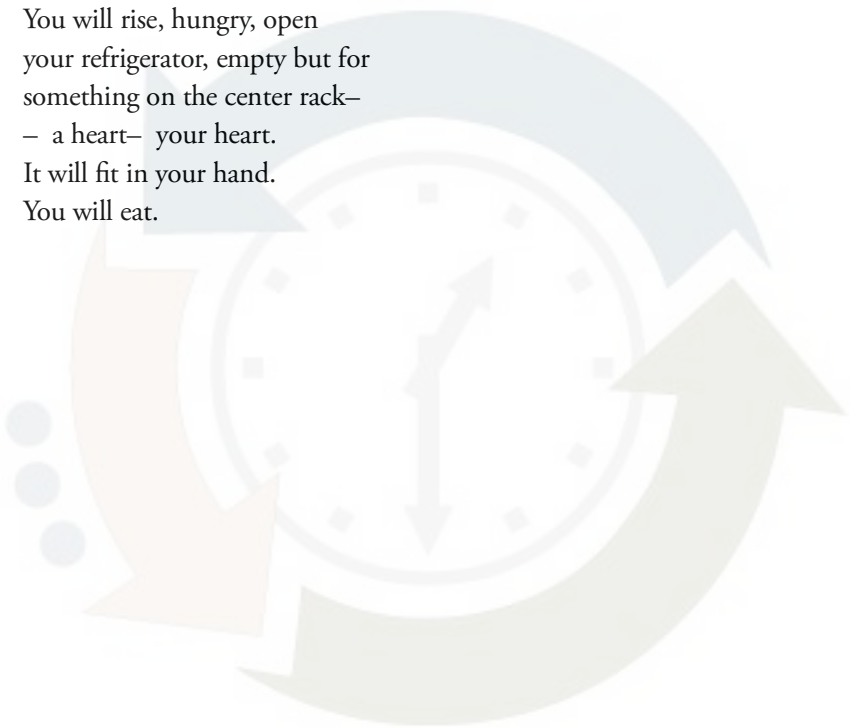
smiles of string beans. Manicured fingers fist
around pencils, twist studded rings. Your tongue
swells into a ripe apple, too large to form
the right words, too slick to bite in time.
Then one pinches your collar, to see if you're
100% or synthetic. Another thrusts
a business card under your arm, to litmus
whether you're poly- or unsaturated. That
something thin worming into

your right ear, coming out the left is
mental floss. Two of them saw it back and forth
– slicing through the length of you–
and open you like a refrigerator to see
if the light goes on. They inspect
your drawers for uneaten spinach, decades
of unfinished glasses of milk. They calibrate
your tomatoes, toast your cold cuts and buns. Someone
unscrews your shelves with a dime and shakes you

like a pinball machine– to see if he can score.
Meanwhile, you must keep cool, pre-shrunk,
so they can truss you with lines of policy,

baste you with a chorus of benefits. Buttered up—
the better to slide you through the mail slot
— you leave. They roll your vita
into toothpicks and joints, discuss if
thirty K is too little, forty too much—
like a commercial estimating prunes.

You will wonder in your bed if you
were the hole for their button, the shell
for their egg, the wallet for their wads of bills.
You will rise, hungry, open
your refrigerator, empty but for
something on the center rack—
— a heart— your heart.
It will fit in your hand.
You will eat.



Mark Saba

Driving Away from New York City

Having left a party of Sardinians
in Lodi, New Jersey, I approach the G.W. Bridge
under studded lights, cars and 18-wheelers
slowly congealing— lanes disappearing
without a trace— wherefore the E-Z Pass?

We crawl, one by one, over the Hudson's
abyss, eyes fixed on a scintillating skyline,
determined to overtake it, but ending up
merely shifting specks. Piping adorns oily concrete
in horizontals. Signs lead to New England parkways,

the Whitestone, Bronx. My radio scans
traces of human voices: a pop hymn
in a language undetermined, rock anthem
thirty years old, DJ offering a prize
to a Riverside man too excited to talk.

It lands on a particular song I like,
shifts to something I think is Greek,
interference from a hum of crisscrossing
desires— voices striving to drown one another
but ascending instead to invisible heights.

Racing on, unentangled, into the radiant darkness
I lose them, one by one. Stretches appear
as black ribbons. Hillsides heave
their heaps of nothing straight upto
the road, and dots of light are no longer

signals of fellow inhabitants, but the cold deaths
of distant stars.

Dixie Salazar

Fiberoptic Angel

Who could want you? Poor
seraph with fire cracker wings
trailer trash trinket, fallen
from heaven's mail order
of marked down miracles.

Only a plastic sconce nailed
to faux oak paneling
could bear your light,
fan it upward to a heaven
of glitter dusted acoustic.

Only an infommercial host
gossiping with Cher
could ever imagine you holy,
able to hark or herald
in hamburger helper fumes.

What could a tricked out
glow-in-the-dark host
tell us about glory
or even suburban tremors?
But sometimes...

a dusty electron or two escapes
into a drop of Pledge
and Colt Forty-five, releasing
a golden strand of light that
pours through the fiberglass drapes

into the rabbit ears pricked
to stray celestial tunings
and limited time offers of eternity.

Then lost scrabble tiles
realign on the console t.v.

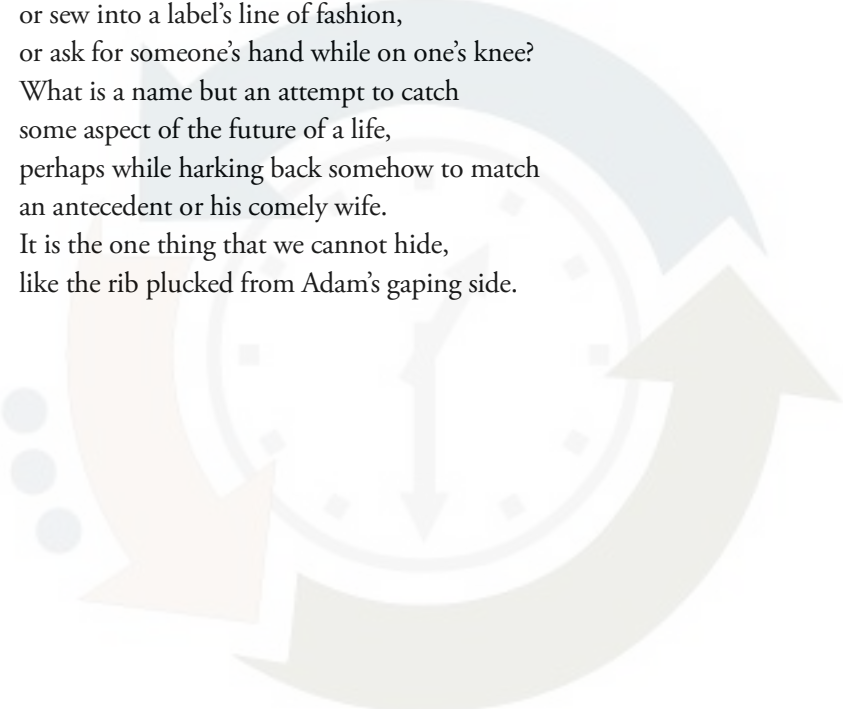
silk flowers levitate, backdropping
her wings of glass, thin as cricket
breath, and a hidden portal opens
so you can enter with nothing but her
subliminal blessing and a credit card.



Roy Scheele

One More Time

What's in a name? Are they not all the same
when viewed as a device to hang upon
whichever person we would praise or blame,
or add an errand to before he's gone?
Something useful in the throes of passion
to cry out in the dark repeatedly,
or sew into a label's line of fashion,
or ask for someone's hand while on one's knee?
What is a name but an attempt to catch
some aspect of the future of a life,
perhaps while harking back somehow to match
an antecedent or his comely wife.
It is the one thing that we cannot hide,
like the rib plucked from Adam's gaping side.



L. B. Sedlacek

Taking a Breath

Is difficult when under water.
When composing a symphony.
While wearing a flammable substance
on your head. As the sun sinks in a
fire's haze. While listening to a
droning speaker. While having a
heart monitor strapped to your skin.
As traffic boils along the interstate.
When navigating a parking deck.
As a glass elevator hustles against
bricks. As luggage bangs against calves.
As an announcement for code blue
blares over loudspeakers. While
people mop under your feet.

Taking a breath is difficult while
under water. While the interstate
bleeds traffic. As the pipes shine in
the sun. While falling from the
twelfth floor with the city's
reflection in the windows.

Marc J. Sheehan

Detour Outside Walhalla, Michigan

I was thinking about other things back then
so I didn't see, there past the road closed sign
I'd driven around, how a washed-out bridge makes
the space over a river emptier
than where there was never a bridge at all.
But don't blame me for that— I had yet to lose
a job, a wife, certain weekends, the wicker
creel I used to keep drafts of poems in.
After all, I didn't cause the flood.
Is it my fault all those letters stored in
the basement bloom with mold like the mottled
bodies of salmon floating back downstream?
Look— see that late-season Coho pushing
itself over the sandbar? From such high banks
lumbermen rolled logs into the river
until you could have walked straight across like Christ,
had Christ not given a damn about anything.
As for me, I just stood at the edge a while,
the engine idling and night taking root
in second-growth oak and rows of pine trees
planted to make work during the thirties.
When I was finally good and ready,
I turned around and went where I was told
to go— although not all the way to hell,
just the next rickety bridge downriver
on the Pere Marquette. Wait, that's not true.
It was daylight, the next bridge was sturdy,
and the calm north fork flowed well within its banks.
As for my goodness and readiness let
me just say that I'm watching my step,
Sweet Jesus, and praying only for the sun
to burn my lost self here a while longer.

The Fishermen

Out on the breakwater they stake their places
firmly as gargoyles, supplicants or women
watching over the tomb. Someone's chrome fish glued
to a tackle box symbolizes Christ who
is not himself a fish, but life itself,
which is nothing without Christ, or fishing—
at least according to this school of belief.
At the foot of the pier the city's raised a plaque
with the photos of those who have been swept
away without warning into the arms
(or fins, after all), of the Lord unaware.
Their lines angle out obliquely from poles
into the choppy water. This mystery
commands their attention more completely
than TV, backs turned to the lovers
strolling hand-in-hand to the lighthouse.
There's a limit to what they can catch, but I
don't know what it is or what they're fishing for.
I head towards shore behind an old man
wheeling a stack of plastic buckets lashed
to a battered golf bag pull cart with all
the love of someone for his oxygen tank.
Who doesn't want to be able to breathe
the blue, unbearable air of heaven?
To which the fishermen would answer, "Ah, Jesus!"
and cast their weighted bait back under the waves.

Larry D. Thomas

Near Pecos, Texas

in the late 1800's,
when their children
took sick with diphtheria,
the ranchwomen

smeared their chests
with black axle grease
and wrenched their hands in prayer.
With God's good grace,

maybe one in five survived.
These women, called "good"
by their men if they didn't die
during childbirth, like good brood

mares, stayed pregnant for twenty-
odd consecutive years, rose
swollen with fluid to bake
biscuits before sunrise,

worked hard till dark,
then offered up their spent
bodies to their husbands' wills.
When they couldn't get pregnant

anymore, they often died,
their sole extravagance, if
of course they could get it,
a dip of Honest snuff.

Pamela Uschuk

Flying Through Thunder

for John and Galway Kinnell

I

From expectant sunflowers, mountain
blue birds, western meadowlarks
and the melancholy shadows
of their songs in sage; from
the spin and groan of the planet
we roar up, bucking through
the blue fury of thunderheads
on our final leg home.

The small turbo prop pitches
toward glacial peaks, saints gleaming
in the numen of autumn sun, while the pilot
warns us that it will be a rough flight.
As if we didn't know, caroming
on the backs of jet stream storms, that
there are few smooth flights, as if we don't read
headlines that daily explode the world.

Below us dump trucks erect a Denver landfill
into the shape of a Mayan temple
burying the relics of our excess
while lightning cracks its knuckles
on the Front Range and thunder
rattles the thin skin of this twin engine plane
shaking us from our loneliness.
Between bellicose clouds jut
sheer curtains of light.

In this space that freezes our imaginations
we bounce then drop through
air pockets rough as alcoholic fists,
dry sockets of turbulence.

II

I have no choice but release any illusion
of control, break my white-knuckled grip
on steel armrests that would splinter on impact
against rock crags that never learned my name.

In the row ahead of me the carefully coifed woman
checks her lipstick as a baby screams
and I wonder at vanity pitching
fragile as a cocoon 20,000 feet above tree line.

I think of the passion of poets
holding their hearts like worn ball caps
in their bruised hands, defying
the spiked teeth of hungry gods
swallowing truth whole before they eat them alive.

III

Even the stocky steward wipes sweat
from his forehead, groans as if he's giving birth
when we yaw half-over, pushed
by stratospheric gusts we are blind to.

I remember the way my stomach dropped
as a child pumping my swing high,
pretending I was a pilot bombing enemies,
pretending I wasn't afraid.
At the acme of my pendulum, the swing set ground
against its cemented feet, threatening
to slingshot me into space, and my brother
dared me to jump with him. His green eyes
were wild as a cougar's, voice screech-pitched
with the blood of pretend death, hands
itching to let go of the chains.

Bomb's away! We're hit. Jump. Jump.
We're on fire! Jump!

How could I refuse the catapult
out of my careening or foresee
my brother sent to paratrooper school,
to ruin his young knees
when he landed just off the training mark
preparing for Vietnam?
When the army found out he attended rallies, preached peace,
he was shipped to Da Nang, to dousings
with Agent Orange, to the burning
of village peoples, to daily mortar attacks
and sniper fire he still fights to live through.
Leaping from the swing's apogee, what
I savored most was fear's pure torch
scalding my body as it arced, suspended
before the plunge, that moment
gravity kicked in, and I knew
what real death would feel like,
hanging a long breath in space
astonished at the constellation of my life
coming into exquisite focus— family,
friends, ambition, anger, even love— before everything
dropped away
like a billowing parachute.

IV

Now as the plane lunges, engines
steady above the Continental Divide,
I regard razor backed ridges
older than memory, vaster
than scars. They comfort me
in their lack of pity, their indifference
to our cares. Perhaps this is
all I need to know. It is not until
we begin to fall that we might learn
what it takes to survive.

Elizabeth Volpe

Dog

Although the clouds snap
like crocodiles
and the wind
whips the crabapple
petals to pink froth,
his attention is fixed
on the red squirrel

taunting him
from a shamefully low branch,
speaking in tailwhisks
and teeth.

Caesar throws
his whole body
upward, spins
in mid-air, lands
and tosses
himself again
and again
at this nemesis
squirrel
who I could swear
is laughing—
how else to explain
the sparkle
of tiny white teeth
between
the blossoms.

James R. Whitley

A Surrogate for Blue

Again, the clouds spit out their
accumulated anguish as rain.

In the alley, a feral cat scurries to
escape the intrusive storm, distracted
from her hunt for something discarded
that might yet retain some value.

You're being admitted to the hospital again.
It's the fifth time in seven months.

You take a sip of water so as not to
choke on your words, then assure us
this will be the last time.

There is something primitive in the air—
a soul-deep drumming, an incidental
music like the belling of a distant carillon,
something like faith dopplering away.

Or maybe it's just this ritual of thunder,
receding now almost as quickly as it began.

But what to call this stain the sky wears?
Heft? Remorse? Catharsis? Compromise?

As if on cue, stars begin punching holes in
the night sky like tiny fists, like grains of salt
tossed, in vain, over the shoulder for luck.

Contributors

John Allman's stories, poems and essays have appeared in a wide array of journals, from *The American Poetry Review* to *Yale Review*. He is a Pushcart Prize winner in Poetry, a recipient of the Helen Bullis Award from *Poetry Northwest*, and a two-time National Endowment for the Arts Fellow in Creative Writing (Poetry). His books include *Walking Four Ways in the Wind* (Princeton Series of Contemporary Poets, Princeton Univ. Press, 1979), *Clio's Children* (New Directions, 1985), *Scenarios for a Mixed Landscape* (New Directions, 1986), *Curve Away from Stillness: Science Poems* (New Directions, 1989), *Descending Fire & Other Stories* (New Directions, 1994), *Inhabited World: New & Selected Poems 1970-1995* (The Wallace Stevens Society Press, 1995), *Loew's Triboro* (New Directions, 2004), *Attractions* (2River Press, 2006), and *Lowcountry* (New Directions, 2007).

Judith Barrington has published three collections of poetry, a prize-winning memoir, and a text on writing literary memoir that is used all across the United States and in Australia and Europe. Her most recent poetry book is *Horses and the Human Soul*. Her memoir, *Lifesaving*, won the Lambda Book Award and was a finalist for the PEN/Martha Albrand Award for the Art of the Memoir. Barrington teaches workshops at many conferences and writing events in the U.S. as well as in England and Spain.

Ellen Bass's poetry books include *The Human Line* (Copper Canyon Press, 2007) and *Mules of Love* (BOA Editions, 2002). Her poems have been published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Kenyon Review*, and *American Poetry Review*. She teaches in Santa Cruz, Big Sur, Mallorca, Tuscany, and other gorgeous places.

Paula Brancato is a poet, playwright, and filmmaker on faculty at University of Southern California. Paula's literary awards include The National Screenwriters, Organization of Black Screenwriters, WINFEMME, Chesterfield H. Jones Foundation, Asheville Writers Workshop, and Pacific Northwest Writers awards. Recent works are a novel, *Never Iron Naked*, and the documentary film *Show Bunnies 2007*, an homage to bunny rabbits.

Wendy Taylor Carlisle lives in Texas. She has published one full-length book of poetry, *Reading Berryman to the Dog* (Jacaranda Press), and one poetry chapbook, *After Happily Ever After* (2River Chapbook Series). Her poems are published widely on the web.

Carol Carpenter's poems and stories have appeared in over 200 online and print publications, including *Margie*, *Yankee*, *America*, *The Pedestal Magazine*, *Barnwood*, *Indiana Review*, *Quarterly West*, *Carolina Quarterly*, *Byline*, and various anthologies. Her work has been exhibited by art galleries and produced as podcasts (Connecticut Review and Bound Off). She received the Richard Eberhart Prize for Poetry, the Jean Siegel Pearson Poetry Award, Artists Among Us and others.

Juliet Cook's hand-designed ribbon-bound chapbooks of original poetry, *Girl Gang* and *The Laura Poems*, are available at the web site BloodPuddingPress.etsy.com. Recent publication credits include *Sein Und Werden*, *Wicked Alice*, *WOMB*, *Venereal Kittens*, and *listenlight*. She has also completed a full-length

poetry manuscript, *Horrific Confection*, and a chapbook, *Heart Urchin*. Her personal blog, CandyDishDoom, is housed at www.xanga.com.

J. P. Dancing Bear is the author of nine collections of poetry, most recently *Inner Cities of Gulls* (2010, Salmon Poetry). His poems have been published in *Mississippi Review*, *Third Coast*, *DIAGRAM*, *Verse Daily* and many other publications. He is editor for the *American Poetry Journal* and Dream Horse Press. Bear also hosts the weekly hour-long poetry show, *Out of Our Minds*, on KKUP.

William Doreski's most recent collection of poetry is *Waiting for the Angel* (2009). He has published three critical studies, including *Robert Lowell's Shifting Colors*. His essays, poetry, fiction, and reviews have appeared in many journals, including *Massachusetts Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *The Alembic*, *New England Quarterly*, *Harvard Review*, *Modern Philology*, *Antioch Review*, and *Natural Bridge*.

George Drew was born in Mississippi and raised there and in New York State where he currently lives. He has two collections of poetry, most recently *The Horse's Name Was Physics* (Turning Point, 2006). Drew was the winner of the 2003 Paumanok Poetry Award and the 2007 Stephen Dunn Poetry Award.

Gary Fincke is the author of eighteen books. He has been awarded *Poetry* magazine's Bess Hokin Prize, the George Garrett Fiction Prize, the Flannery O'Connor Prize, and the Rose Lefcowitz Poetry Prize. He was awarded two Pushcart Prizes and has been cited nine times in the past ten years in *Best American Essays*. His poems have appeared in *Harper's*, *The Paris Review*, *The Georgia Review*, and many other magazines and journals.

Taylor Graham is a volunteer search-and-rescue dog handler in the Sierra Nevada. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *American Literary Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Poetry International*, *Southern Humanities Review*, and elsewhere, and she's included in the anthology *California Poetry: From the Gold Rush to the Present* (Santa Clara University, 2004). Her book *The Downstairs Dance Floor*, (Texas Review Press, 2006) was awarded the Robert Phillips Poetry Chapbook Prize.

Clarinda Harriss is the winner of numerous awards for her poetry and short fiction. She teaches poetry, poetics, and editing at Towson University, where she chaired the English Department for a decade. One of her primary research interests is writing by prison inmates; she has worked with incarcerated writers for many years. Her most recently published collections, from Half Moon Editions, are *Air Travel* (2005) and *Dirty Blue Voice* (2007).

Donald M. Hassler began publishing poems with the Ohio Poets' Association in the sixties and has an archive of his literary work (some stories) deposited at Ohio University. He has published criticism on modern science fiction and edits the journal *Extrapolation*. In 1994, he and his wife published a book on Arthur Machen, and he is working now on a collection of essays about science fiction to be published by the University of South Carolina Press.

David Brendan Hopes's newest book of poetry, *A Dream of Adonis*, is available from Pecan Grove Press in 2007. He is Professor of Literature and Language at UNCA, a prize winning poet and playwright, and director of the Black Swan Theater.

Joseph Hutchison is the author of 12 collections of poems, including *Sentences and Greatest Hits 1970-2000* (both in 2003), *The Rain At Midnight* (2000), *Bed of Coals* (winner of the 1994 Colorado Poetry Award), *House of Mirrors* (1992), *The Undersides of Leaves* (1985), and the 1982 Colorado Governor's Award volume, *Shadow-Light*. His poems appear in the anthology, *New Poets of the American West* and in recent issues of *Cerise Press*, *Consequence Magazine*, *Lilliput Review*, *Nagatuck River Review*, and *Xanadu*.

Sean Kilpatrick's work is published in more than eighty magazines, such as *La Petite Zine*, *Pindeldyboz*, *MiPOesias*, *Exquisite Corpse*, and *5_trope*, as well as in several anthologies, including the *Outside Voices 2008 Anthology of Younger Poets*.

Robert W. King is from Greeley, Colorado, and is not to be confused with the poet Robert S. King (former editor/publisher and director of FutureCycle Press). His work has recently appeared in *Rattle* and *Louisiana Review* and is forthcoming in others. His first book, *Old Man Laughing* (Ghost Road Press), was a finalist for the 2008 Colorado Book Award in Poetry. He directs the website ColoradoPoetsCenter.org.

Greg Kosmicki's poems have been published in literary magazines, both print and on-line, since the 1970s. He is the author of six chapbooks and two books of poetry and is also editor/publisher of The Backwaters Press. Garrison Keillor selected two of Kosmicki's poems from his collection *Some Hero of the Past* to read on Writers' Almanac in October of 2006.

Mindy Kronenberg is an award-winning poet and writer with more than three hundred publications to her credit. She is the author of two poetry collections, *Dismantling the Playground* and *The Gravity of Desire*, and edits *Book/Mark Quarterly Review*.

Jennifer Lagier is a member of the Italian American Writers Association, National Writers Union, and California Writers Club. She has published four books, *Coyote Dream Cantos*, *Where We Grew Up*, *Second-Class Citizen*, and *The Mangia Syndrome*.

Rustin Larson's poetry has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Iowa Review*, *North American Review*, *Poetry East*, *The Atlanta Review* and other magazines. *Crazy Star* (Loess Hills Books, 2005) is his latest collection. A five-time Pushcart nominee and graduate of the Vermont College MFA in Writing, Larson was an Iowa Poet at The Des Moines National Poetry Festival in 2002 and 2004 and has been highlighted on the public radio programs *Live from Prairie Lights* and *Voices from the Prairie*.

Twice nominated for the Pushcart Prize, **Gary Lehmann's** essays, poetry and short stories are widely published—over 100 pieces per year. His most recent books are *Public Lives and Private Secrets* and *American Sponsored Torture* (both from FootHills Publishing).

Doug Martin is the author of *Moon Time: The Country Born in November* (Mellen Poetry Press, 2006). He is also the editor of *Snow*Vigate*.

Alexandra Oliver, named in 1993 as one of the Top Ten Young Artists of the year by *The Vancouver Sun*, has performed her work at places as diverse as Lollapalooza, The National Poetry Slam and the CBC Radio National Poetry Face-Off. Her work has appeared in numerous journals and publications worldwide,

including in About.Com's *Poems After The Attack* anthology, a collection discussing and reflecting upon the aftermath of 9/11. Her first book, *Where the English Housewife Shines* (Tin Press, London, UK) was released in April, 2007.

Elsie Pankowski has published two chapbooks, *A Sunrust Magazine Featured Poet Chapbook* and *Gathering Stones* released by Puddinghouse Publications. She has published hundred poems to date, most recently in *Voicings From the High Country*, *The Masthead*, *MO: Writings From the River*, and *Aurora*.

Lee Passarella is a senior literary editor for the *Atlanta Review* magazine. Passarella's poetry has appeared in *Chelsea*, *Cream City Review*, *Pudding*, *Louisville Review*, *The Formalist*, *Antietam Review*, *Gaia*, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, *The Literary Review*, *Edge City Review*, *The Wallace Stevens Journal*, *Snake Nation Review*, *Slant*, *Cortland Review*, and many other periodicals and ezines. "Swallowed up in Victory," his long narrative poem based on the American Civil War, was published by White Mane Books in 2002. His poetry collection, *The Geometry of Loneliness* (David Robert Books), appeared in 2006.

Allan Peterson is the author of two books, *All the Lavish in Common* (2005 Juniper Prize) and *Anonymous Or*. His work has appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Blackbird*, *Bellingham Review*, *Perihelion*, *Stickman Review*, *Marlboro Review*, and *Massachusetts Review*. Recent prizes include the *GSU Review* and Muriel Craft Bailey competitions.

Susanna Rich produces and hosts an online radio program, *Poets on Air*. Her poetry appears or is forthcoming in dozens of publications, including *The Dos Passos Review*, *Ekphrasis*, *English Journal*, *The Evansville Review*, *Feminist Studies*, *Kalliope*, *Lullwater Review*, *Nimrod*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Pennsylvania English*, *Phoebe*, *Poem*, and *Visions: International*. The Fulbright Commission and Collegium Budapest awarded her their first joint Fellowships in Creative Writing to complete "Still Hungary: A Memoir."

Mark Saba's poetry, fiction, and essays have appeared widely in magazines around the country, most recently *Connecticut Review*, *Palo Alto Review*, *Louisiana Literature*, and the anthology *Poetic Voices Without Borders* (Gival Press, 2006). He is also the author the novel *The Landscapes of Pater* from The Vineyard Press (2004).

Dixie Salazar has published three books of poetry, *Hotel Fresno* (Blue Moon Press, 1988), *Reincarnation of the Commonplace* (national poetry award winner, Salmon Run Press, 1999), and *Blood Mysteries* (University of Arizona, 2003). Her poems and short stories appear in many literary journals, including *The Missouri Review*, *The Red Brick Review*, *Poetry International*, and *Ploughshares*, and in the anthologies *Many Californias*, *Unsettling America*, and *Highway 99*.

Roy Scheele, Poet in Residence at Doane College in Crete, Nebraska, has had poems in *Lucid Rhythms*, *Measure*, *Prairie Schooner*, and elsewhere. "One More Time" is one of a series of thirty sonnets on Shakespearean themes written over the summer of 2006; the entire manuscript is entitled *The Chandos Portrait*.

L. B. Sedlacek's poems have appeared in a variety of publications, including *The Arrostook Review*, *Wild Goose Poetry Review*, *Poet's Canvas*, *Dispatch*, *Heritage Writer*, *Word Riot*, *sidereality*, *Open Mouse*, and *Coppertales*. His most recent collection of poems is *Average Bears*.

Marc J. Sheehan is the author of *Greatest Hits*, a collection of poems from New Issues Poetry Press. He has published poems in *Appalachee Quarterly*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Water-Stone*, and many others. He is editorial services coordinator for Ferris State University and also is on the editorial board of *Fourth Genre: Explorations in Nonfiction*, a literary journal published by Michigan State University.

Larry D. Thomas has published seven collections of poems. Among the numerous prizes and awards he has received for his poetry are the 2004 Violet Crown Award (Writers' League of Texas), 2003 Western Heritage Award (Western Heritage Museum, Oklahoma), two *Texas Review* Poetry Prizes (2004 and 2001), and two Pushcart Prize nominations. On April 19, 2007, he was appointed by the Texas Legislature as the 2008 Texas State Poet Laureate.

Pamela Uschuk is Director of the Southwest Writers Institute at Fort Lewis College and Editor-In-Chief of the literary magazine, *Cutthroat, a Journal of the Arts*. Her literary prizes include the Struga Poetry Prize, the Dorothy Daniels Writing Award from the National League of American PEN Women, The King's English Prize as well as awards from the Chester H. Jones Foundation, the Tucson/Pima Arts Council, *Iris*, *Ascent*, *Sandhills Review*, and Amnesty International. Nearly 30 of Uschuk's individual poems have been nominated for Pushcart Prizes.

A 2001 and 2004 Pushcart Prize nominee, **Elizabeth Volpe's** poems appeared most recently in *Lumina*, *Louisville Review*, *Diner*, *Crab Creek Review*, *Rattle*, *Ward6 Review*, and *Atlanta Review*. She received first prize in the Briarcliff Review 2004 Poetry Contest and the 2006 Metro Detroit Writers Contest.

James R. Whitley's work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and has appeared or is forthcoming in *42Opus*, *Barrelhouse*, *FRiGG*, *Pebble Lake Review*, *Stimulus Respond*, *Tertulia Magazine*, *The Houston Literary Review*, and *The Rain-town Review*. His first book, *Immersion*, won the Naomi Long Madgett Poetry Award. His second collection, *This Is the Red Door*, won the Ironweed Press Poetry Prize. He also has two poetry chapbooks out, *Pietà* and *The Golden Web*.



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