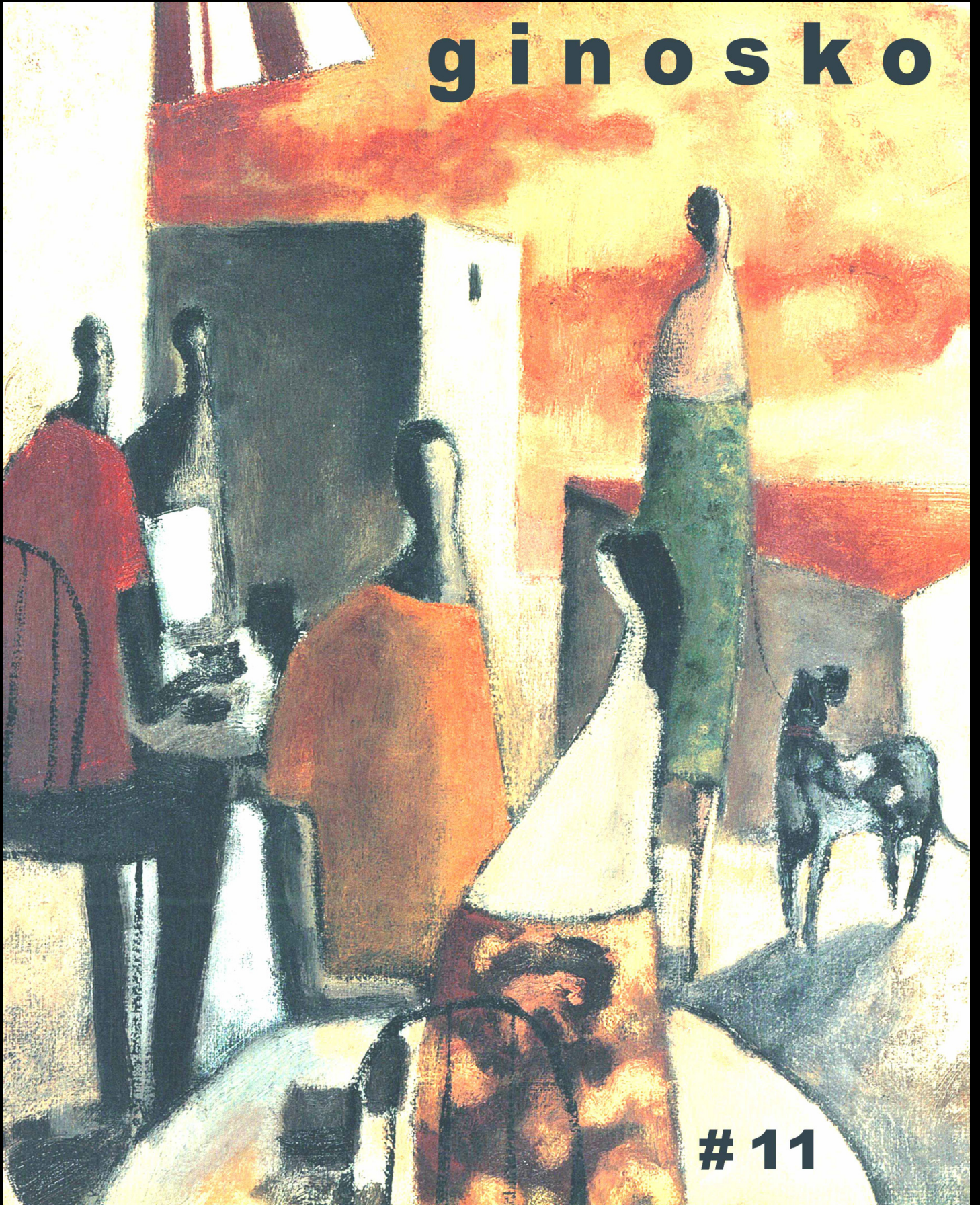


**g i n o s k o**



**# 11**

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**Ginosko (ghin-océ-koe)**

**To perceive, understand, realize, come to know;**

**knowledge that has an inception,**

**a progress, an attainment.**

**The recognition of truth by experience.**

But the creative writer...  
must work a kind of transfiguration of human beings,  
of experiences and of objects,  
resolve them into their essential meaning,  
hidden until he touched it.

— Zona Gale

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**C O N T R I B U T O R S**

## **Sleeping on the steps of City Hall & blue dolphins**

**Carolyn Srygley-Moore**

After the unwanted kisses, caresses // kicks //  
he drove her to the bus terminal  
in the axis of night & said I am not a bad man  
& kicked her out of the car.  
Desolate then, lemon qualude bound,  
desolate or no, released  
as children stomping dunes of sand  
& making footprints & speaking out loud what was done to them ///  
the custodian helped her out, let her in  
to City Hall, she slept on the steps.  
She woke immersed in the detail of what might have happened //  
what did not. Her luck, again, contained  
like a droplet of Mediterranean oil, like a seed of fig, like  
the detail of the wave, yellow in the light, fettered  
with sandstone & seaweeds & the bobbing  
bodies of bright blue dolphins coming in to beach the shore  
or the reef of tangerine coral  
only partly damaged by the touch touch touch  
of the ferocious tourists, bent on touch //  
or the scrape of the boat's keel  
over the massive forehead of Colossus.



# Emily on Fire, Waltzing, Waiting for the Rain

Matthew Burnside

You, and nothing left to say that hasn't been said before, through tangled tongue. Through defeat. Language is benign. Language is broken. Language is not enough. Language will fail us all. You, at the bar. Your mouth, the rim of a volcano, and a cigarette. Serrated smiles that cut for miles. You, the unholy rose. Flighty flower that careens on spindrift heels. Through the violet haze. Through electric fog. You, like Earth's last moon on fire. Pink and smoldering, princess and dragon, all in one. You, you lie, your thorns are quite soft. You, not as tough as you'd have them believe. You, and wrists like silent rain. Deep blue Claire de Lune. Mulling in the mist, coughing colorful. You, as the holy horse, galloping up and over, over and off to shatter the icy seas below. You, into the arms singing Geronimo. You, bluegreen guillotine eyes. Gypsy funeral sunset eyes. You, who floods the deserts, entombs the mountains, scoops out the hills, strips the heavens. You, disinventing the cosmos over an asymmetrical cleft in the moon, or just for a laugh on Saturday night. You, and the short irradiated life of a firefly, smeared across your sleeve. You, laughing mad in the valley, soft silhouette. You, the dying of the embers. You, a kiss that creeps like a cat. *Kamikaze meow*. First the claws then the purr then a single piercing yowl in the night. You, the slickest quivering tail. You, our bed, and a dog named Seuss, hogging the sheets. Pawing my back. Pawing me from you. Let sleeping dogs lie. Let them dream. Let them dream they are immune to waking. You, winged wolf. The quintessential lost and profound. Moonshoot mackerel day dodger. You, dreaming you're asleep. The melting of the hours. The waiting. You, your foolish faith in heat. You, standing in the road, aiming matches at the sun. You, bound by gravity. The Winged and the Weighted. Falling is requisite for rising. You, a clamor of clouds. The crush of creeping clouds. Razor winds that wind the serpent skies. You, your monarch wings of oblivion. Future like the shimmering Pacific. When flight fails, we'll learn to swim. Still paddling, Still paddling. You, fighting. Sucking razor blades, your guard down. You, the casualty, a minefield in your chest that someone ran through carelessly. Prayers that are screamed into pillows. Fingernails that dig in the dirt. You, giving up. You, branded in the school of fire. Imperious with filth. Nails through the hand. You, wrapped in a rind of flame, perfect twirling inferno. Pirouetting pavement. Waiting for the rain. Waiting for the end. You, and the fear. Dripping dizzy in the dark. You, your world trembling, tipped off its axis. I'm sorry. You, and me, a short history of everything good, and everything bad, and the infinite *if*. Us, and nothing and everything left to regret. The fine china and fancy teacups of memory, tumbling off the shelf, and crashing.

## **TO BORROW RADIANCE**

**Dianna Henning**

Sometimes it's so subtle it's mistaken for something else.

A moth tumbled from night's porch light, a stone

in the heel of your shoe. Even a tattered corner

of sunshine is better than believing it's never found.

Didn't the widow, stripped in grief, reveal pure angle

of cheek bone—hadn't she, at last, set her face free?

You'd gladly peel off that expression, smooth it down

over your own years, the radiant tucked behind ears.

Under some circumstances beauty is mistaken for grief.

But in the widow's case, the opposite—a face so clear it revealed

her soul—enlargement emerging from loss. The moth was a small

god on the porch, the stone, nugget of an angel.

**ACROSS FROM MY SISTER'S RED VT  
SCHOOL-HOUSE; THE HOME SHE & HER HUSBAND REMODELED**

**Dianna Henning**

An elderly man sits on a stone wall outside his house,  
fondles his dog's ears, caresses its back.  
Nearby, a shovel remains upright, plugged as though  
an exclamation stuck in earth. He won't pull it out.  
He has terminal cancer. From across the street,  
I imagine the choked back tears as his eye lavishes  
over all that's quietly familiar; his land shaped to a dream  
of rural beauty, rural equipoise: his lawn  
hedged with sprays of multicolored wildflowers,  
porch perched above a lap of greenery  
so surprisingly vivid it burns my eyes as I watch him  
again and again lovingly cuff his black spaniel.

dedicated to Manjula Leggett & John Bombard

## Encoded

Andrei Guriianu

I dressed silence in the image of my father. It came dressed inside the image of a heavy bird, a milky tongue, the dog that watches me until I'm out of sight. I buried its familiar face inside the flowerbeds on Autumn's street inside the silver paintings water fountains wet cement the copper monuments electric blues and violins. It came out as a loaf of bread the rotting garbage in the street a young girl wearing too much on her face. There's no way out of it. The magic fails eventually. We become dissonant chords. The women in prophetic red turn out to be just women, my father turns into an old man over night. A lifetime and we still don't know the many coats of silence. Rust that pricks the tender eye, a tear that trips over what vanishes ... an impossibly long list. We are somewhere on there, calloused heels and broken skin. Smudges of dark lead, typewriter ink. One day we walked right off the page and could not find our way back.

## When Moments

Andrei Guruianu

From the balcony I watch the parking lot below get empty and full again. Some appear at other balconies then disappear to who-knows-what behind the screen. I know what you're thinking right now, but that's rarely the truth. We layer on masks on top of the masks we were given and with any luck no one will ever spot the difference.

Last night I dreamed that I opened a box and inside the box was another dream. And I cried like a little child away from home for the first time. A boy who's lost the one and only true love in his life. I walked out and reached for the dark but it drew back like the sea into its infinite shell. Beside the night lay the words for the day to come and they too were weeping.

Sometimes all I want is to know that everything will be Ok when the sun comes up. Lie to me if you must. Show me a cutout and call it a rose. I can no longer tell right from wrong or even if it's necessary. I was done listening to the stars and the burning rubber on the highway when it took a bottle to understand each other as human. It got us nowhere but away from ourselves. And then once more back again.

And if I happen to be wrong then let it be. We are willing slaves to the day's circular logic. Let's sleep on that together. Wake up each morning to the turn of the key and throb of engines on the asphalt. The gasoline highway stretching out from the bedroom window to the open road. And that too will end. In a carefree moment with everyone busy at the work of happiness. Once upon a time ... with all the other rosy premises that fail at perfection, like men, like gods.

## Strangers Between Walls

Andrei Guriianu

What can I say about changing place and the weary night song piled outside every window? It can weigh you down like happiness, like rain, like the notion of destiny or an obligatory farewell that you carry strapped to your shoulders.

Believe me, if it would help you see things in a different light I would only write poems about ballerinas and dream gardens. The sun and the fresh air would do you a world of good. And I would make it rain just enough to spruce up the flowers. I would do all of this in a French dialect and part my hair accordingly to look like a soft smile.

But the truth is I could never understand why a single language is not enough. Breath blown into an empty bottle and tossed into the nearest stream. This human need for a philosophy of words when a howl would do much better. After all, we are only dogs missing the fancy leash and the tinderbox of home we sometimes call a house.

Places change because with the years we change even less. We've spent too much time in the dirt and now everything is relative to and because of it. More or less under our fingernails. Scrape away rinse and repeat and still the hounding memory of nights under the stars. Backs to the chill of dry ground and nothing but a long sigh for a sheet to pull up to the neck. How many sighs does it take to make a death?

Let's begin counting now and see who gets there first. *Ce n'est pas le cirque du soleil* after all. That much any fool could tell you for a nickel. Just open your eyes when the night peaks at its most exotic and serious black. We've been here before, you and I. Heard sounds that would never make sense out of context. But there was no need to translate what the crickets said. For once there was no need.

We will have won  
if we have an inkling that  
our life contains a message -  
to us and through us and for others;  
if we become certain that the creator of our life  
wants to say something through us:  
and he needs us for that.  
He also needs little things in our lives.  
We will have won if we become certain  
that between life and death we represent something  
as indestructible as the meaning of a figure in a parable,  
if we understand our life as an idea of God  
which we may think through further;  
in short,  
if we ourselves become a meaningful parable.

– Gerd Theissen

## Quartets

### Abraham Harping

My husband was an ambitious man. Sometimes he would overwhelm me: blinded, gagged, naked off the coast of his dark ocean; other times he would be subtle: his honey-comb gloves; melting snowflakes off my cheeks in the winter time.

I was his cherie, his little French girl, his Nouvelle Vague queen. "Your features are cosmopolitan. I found you astroll in Paris land and wrote your name on American Suburbia".

I found this poetry fascinating, so I attached myself to him from sea to shining sea. He had a small house in Queens, where he was a bridge builder by trade and photographer by passion, though he would call it necessity. I was his favorite subject. Often on our daily walks he would tell me to sit, cross my legs, and purr like a lioness, or he would have me soar like a fawn in a grassy land, or simply tell me to stare into the camera lens as if it were the face of God.

I looked forward to experiencing the domestic goddesshood that is promised to the wives of all American men. My husband and America were strong in their hospitality and I felt feminine and nurtured; but when forces from the orient attacked the naval base Pearl Harbor, everything changed.

My husband was an ambitious man. He was one of the first to enlist that morning. Came he that afternoon telling me of his plans, of America's plans.

War: two. That night we made love for the last time.

He kissed me on the forehead and asked too much of me: My cherie, whenever there is a relative calm, I want you to shatter it by staring into this camera with such inner fire that you burn to the brink of catastrophe.

Est mollis flamma medullas interea et tacitum vivit sub pectore vulnus.

My love, gorgeous love, I said, I fear for myself. I fear I will be a flame in the impenetrable darkness of your absence.

Tremble only with artistry, my cherie, he said, for you are like the sun, which burns eternally and thrives. I will think of you when I see your likeness rise in the far east.

I remember him walking me to the door where he parted. He pressed his camera into my navel and before he left he said:



La coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connait point. Burn for me.

The shutter; the closed-door aftermath

\*

And from then on I burned for him. I asked Mrs. Frederick next door one day if she could lend me her hat and a hand. It was a nice hat: wide brimmed, tied at the base with a floral ribbon; straw, I think. I put on my prettiest sky blue dress to match it; the neckline frothed with lace; no sleeves, a white ribbon curling my exposed arm, a thin sash around my waist, the chocked, loose end of which hung low, like a tail; my hands held together behind my back, my right hand gripping my left index finger. When the flash went off by Mrs. Frederick's hand my breath was let loose; unraveled was the abstraction of my soul, the light illuminating my dreams; the frenzied wind ignited the flash and I felt myself burn; I thought: people are not for burning.

I apologized for charring Mrs. Frederick's hat. I went home ghastly, vacantly, dangerously exhausted like an uprooted tree scratching the earth in a wild wind.

Said me to myself: what is the atom bomb?

\*

His letters from the other side of the world were relentless and sad. "I fight two wars and signed up for neither". One was with the boring horizon, which never changed. Those who returned from the front did so with lifeless faces, which might have been carved from mortar shells. These faces he could see when the sky turned black. He told me to never wage a war with things that can't fight back.

From our bed I took pictures in our sheets which were clouds, cool clouds, cool because I would open the window and let the December come in, clouds because they were light and felt exceptionally so when I threw them upwards and let them land softly on my chest, belly, and legs. "I destroyed this serenity in an inferno for you. I want to wait out this war in the comfort of my bed."

Am I the atom bomb? The inverted ballerina?

I took a picture on top of our roof in hopes my soul would be saved by heaven. My hair held back by a yellow headband; my eyes were colorful and I was determined to show this in the black and white film. Black stockings and blacker flats; knees at my chest: smile: conflagration.

No electric hand of God just flakes of skin flying with embers.

I TOOK A PICTURE OF MYSELF ON THAT COUCH WHERE WE CONSUMMATED OUR RELATIONSHIP, THAT ONE FROM PARIS THAT YOU KEPT FOR SENTIMENTAL REASONS; MY HANDS BEHIND MY BACK, MY RIGHT HAND HOLDING MY LEFT INDEX FINGER. THE COUCH WAS SHAMEFUL BUT THAT'S OKAY BECAUSE I THINK IT BURNED. DO YOU REMEMBER MY CAREER AS A CONCERT CELLOIST 'CAUSE I SURE AS HELL DON'T.

I remember watching the television and seeing the atom bomb dance upon Hiroshima.

This is what sent him home. When the war ended I was a black witch. My lips had melted away and my eyelids were tattered. When I went outside I could not help but smile as the wind dried my eyeballs. He sent me a letter saying that he was coming home. By the time I drove his Chevrolet to the airport I had reduced myself to sand, so I pressed myself into a glass cherie and sewed a beautiful bed sheet dress for her so she would be decent.

\*

When he came off the airplane he said I was radiant. There was shade in his eye and his grin was hard on a cigarette.

America: I am a woman. I am not a spectacle. I am not a photograph. I am not the atom bomb.

## RISE EARLY OLD WOMAN

Ginger Peters

The old woman awoke early. But, not to the sound of a blasting alarm clock. Decades of mind and body conditioning had developed a habit of rising at five to greet each day. Her body stiff, as she moved slowly out of the twisted arrangement she found herself in. Each joint ridden with arthritis, each movement, even the slightest, made her cringe with pain.

As she lay there trying to stretch each joint as compassionately as possible, the old woman reflected on the eighty-two years of her life, rising early. What a mixture of emotions such a menial human gesture had played in her time here on earth.

As a young child rising early was given no thought. It was just something she did. The moment she heard her parents up discussing the day over coffee, she jumped out of bed, put her clothes on and anxiously plunged into the kitchen, ready for a warm breakfast and the mysterious excitement of what the day might bring.

During the school year, she and her brother caught the bus before daybreak and road many miles to the only country school within a fifty mile radius. She couldn't wait to arrive, visit her friends, and hopefully absorb some of the knowledge that spilled into the classroom. The thought of playing tag on the playground, watching Johnny put a horny toad down Sue's shirt, seeing her run off screaming for the hundredth time, and watching Johnny get three licks from Mrs. Patterson's paddle, made the young girl's reasons for rising early worth each moment.

Summertime brought much hard work on the farm for the young girl and her family. Again, each day she rose early, filling her empty stomach with a bowl of steaming oatmeal and a glass of milk, giving the much needed strength to meet the challenges of all the chores a farm entailed. As a young girl she hoed weeds in the cotton fields, milked cows, fed chickens, and helped her mother with the household chores. The young girl made a prideful effort to aid in keeping the family farm healthy and profitable enough to pay the bills in the winter. Rising early played an enormous role in the old woman's childhood, nearly as much as growing played in the life of a child.

The old woman could see the sky from her bed. It appeared cloudy and cooler. It didn't surprise her, it was late fall, time for colder weather to arrive. In her heart she knew the cold had snuck in overnight, due to the added stiffness she felt in her knees, hips and hands. She continued to struggle to rise out of bed.

As all girls do, this young girl became a young woman soon enough. She remembered those years clearly, as she finally sat up in bed. She married at eighteen, to a boy she knew from a neighboring farm. Her father gave her away to this young man, making him promise to love and care for his only daughter. Together, she and her husband escaped the world they knew and moved several hundred miles away to start their new life. They chose not a life on a farm, but a life in the oilfields of east Texas.

Again, the young woman rose early. Her husband had to be at work early each day, so she rose before he did and made the coffee and a hot breakfast for him, so that he would have the strength to work the twelve hour back breaking days on the oilrig. The old woman remembered taking in ironing, cleaning houses, and watching other people's children to earn extra money. Back in those days women didn't do much work outside the home, but the young woman did what she could to take a bit of the pressure off her hard working husband.

Soon, the young woman was carrying a child of her own. At first there was one, then two, and finally a third came in a six year period of time. During those years, rising at five in the morning became a dream. More like four became the normal getting out of bed time for the young woman. The children were small and someone always needed her time, strength, and love. Once in a while, the young woman would daydream of a morning she could sleep late and be a lady of leisure. The luxurious life never came, but she was content with that. She loved her family more than sleeping late, so rising early was a part of that love, no matter how hard it was at times.

The days of young children making mud pies, playing cowboys and Indians, and riding their bicycles down tree-lined streets swiftly ended. Soon, the children were grown and off to seek their lives and fortunes, just as the middle-aged woman and her husband had done so many years before.

The old man finally retired. Both had been thrifty during their years of marriage. They had enough money to live comfortably, visit their children, and send a few spoiling gifts to their grandchildren once in a while.

The older woman still rose early. This time she and her husband rose early for a long awaited time together. They would sit and visit over coffee and read the morning paper, watching the sun slowly show its face in the east. It was finally time for picnics, evening walks, and Sunday drives.

One day the old man began to cough. It lasted a few weeks, until finally he agreed to see a doctor. Cancer of the lungs was about to claim another victim of this earth and the old woman was heartbroken. Now, each morning the old woman rose early to nurse her dying husband. She felt life had cheated the time they had together, but anger and resentment didn't stop her from her commitment to the love of her life. The old woman rose early each day, tending to the needs of her ailing husband. Once a strong, healthy man who worked long hours on a hot Texas day and made love in the night, when intimate moments were shared. Now, this man before her weighed no more than one-hundred pounds, drifted in and out of consciousness, and was unable to hold even a small glass of water to his own lips. The old woman rose early the day he breathed his last breath.

The old woman finally rose out bed, her eyes filled with tears from the memories that had washed over her this morning. With her walker in hand, she thought how odd it was that she still rose early. Now, she finally had no bus to catch, no chores to do, no

children to attend, and no husband to love. The old woman was alone all day now.

Her day began with pain, continued with a few bites of food, a chair to rest her aching body, a series of catnaps, a phone call from one of her children or grandchildren, and an attempt to read some old books that still lay round the house. Finally, back to her bed, in the darkest of hours, to sleep awhile and rise early again the next day. The old woman knew one day she would finally sleep late, she knew the day would be soon. She longed for the day that the old woman rising early, would never rise early again.

## When the Wind Stops

Suzanne S. Rancourt

We were not allowed to stay with our family or community where we fed our animals and grew our gardens, foraged for wild food and medicines. Most of the harder changes had come and gone. I only remember some of the old ways. Papa doesn't sing anymore.

He sleeps a lot and we don't get to bathe like before like when we would light all the candles around the tree -- stars of life -- and painted the ox horns red and black.

The desert sand could be molded to fit our bones for comfort. The sidewalk tile is painted and unyielding. It doesn't hurt me much but it hurts Papa. He sleeps a lot. We don't eat much. Papa's bones have become angled with the new life of no life, filthy feet, lice and soiled clothing. We have one cup, enamel, it holds our sustenance of food, coins, grains of rice and sometimes tea. Sometimes I pretend that I recognize people from our family, our clan of wanderers, healers, singers -- I run up to them holding my cup, grabbing their hand as children do. The men sometimes touch with the pads of their finger tips around my lips put gold in my cup and say they will buy me when I am older.

Papa cries to sleep. "We are hostages" he says, "to progress, engineers and strangers with no color pressing black boxes to their faces paying gold for our moments of no moments." Papa sleeps on a pillow stuffed with grime. The no-color-skin man touches my mouth and says "You should never grow old" and presses the corner of my curved lip with the same finger that presses the shiny button on the black box.

I am frightened and not frightened.

I remember sleeping in ox carts in cool desert nights with stars our home was larger than all the palaces we spun like turrets our arms up as pinnacles in dresses and wraps of glitter and woven reds ivory arm bangles and brass clacked and rung rhythmically with the clay drums, click sticks, and gut-string.

I swirl loose tea in my chipped cup  
like desert wind far away from sitting  
in the sharp square of Papa's sleeping hip, corner of clay  
wall, and painted tile floor - the backs of my legs are cool  
-getting longer- I am growing up  
the men one day will buy me because I could not stop  
the progress of no life living in the black box images  
where I will never grow old.

## **Ghost Nets**

**Suzanne S. Rancourt**

I was tall for 14 when the bombs dropped like spider bites  
along the shoreline. Our thatched huts and boats flew  
in pieces, bone fragments, body parts and humanity  
hurdled through the gossamer of politics.

My father sat holding a few scraps of paper and photos  
that survived unscathed as miraculously  
as our own survival. Nothing moved  
but the smoke and steam weaving between the stalks  
of blasted boat dock supports and dead fish. There was no one.

Everything in that moment became ghosts. Even us.  
I lost my mother, aunts, sisters, brothers, and most of my father  
but we knew we would survive. We already had.  
It was the devastation that hollowed us like pigs prepped for roasting.  
My father stuffed himself with ghosts.  
My emptiness became a boat and I fished for souls  
I made nets to cast until I caught new dreams to live.



## **Not Tonight**

**Suzanne S. Rancourt**

I offer you the hand that is dangling  
off the stainless steel table, distorted  
by thin sheets or gauze or nervousness shaking a camera.

The curve of a buttocks will miss this hand  
this hand cracked with sheet rock and plaster,  
the thickness of labor, and short life lines.

A jaw will miss the cupping of this hand  
manicured by wrenches and softened by children.

Kelsey's bar will miss this hand  
slapping down a five and sucking down a draft.

There is  
at the corner of Howard and Contralto Streets  
a brown house with beige shutters and a small woman  
by the front stoop watering begonias  
who has not yet received a phone call  
and she is still singing a song the hand  
would wave the tempo to and pat her breasts then  
draw a line from her forehead to the edge  
of her panties and the soft  
lips above her inner thigh  
on the way home from Kelsey's.

## **The Edge**

**Suzanne S. Rancourt**

I remember when you were the jewels of night and passion  
and lightening bugs and I held your gestures  
as treasure and your lies like splinters  
festering in the bottom of my feet.

We had walked together            always denying together  
always missing    together.  
You were the brocade and the rocaille beads of sweat  
blood tests after blood tests  
when positive means negative.

You were the passion of lightening bugs and wonder  
and the little boy made to spread your cheeks and say you loved him  
from there  
you stopped loving yourself and began hating the world.

I held your gestures as treasure  
and your lies like splinters.

## **Supermarket**

**Laura Rodley**

For the phoebe I buy nothing,  
lay out stray hair from my haircut.  
She helps herself to the tail strands  
of the horse, Cinnamon.  
For you I buy wart remover,  
strawberries, blueberries, gala apples.  
When was your first kiss?  
Was it as you carried the eggs home  
from the supermarket and the  
boy leaned his bike on the brick  
wall, leaned his hand on your breast, the  
first time they were not an annoyance,  
but something desired,  
his mouth on you like a ring of  
smoke, soft, elusive, fading away  
and then it is time to get the eggs  
home, jostled in their carton.  
Quick, hold the screen door in both  
hands, stop its banging closed,  
test the water in the dishpan,  
warm or cold, are the bubbles fat  
or tight and spread out upon the water.  
Put the eggs in the shelf in the noisy  
breathing of the refrigerator, close

the door of its lungs. For you I buy  
whiskey, ginger ale,  
for you I buy sweet time,  
for you I buy cashews,  
clover seeds, nasturtiums,  
for you I make the eggs over easy.

## **Seashore**

**Laura Rodley**

Bask in the salt water, the seaweed  
stuck inside your bathing suit,  
tiny henna-colored sponges  
pummeled into slivers, a huge piece  
shaped like a scalped pubic bone, and here  
the stones are very few round, mainly  
oval, square, elliptical. Place your feet  
carefully deep in the surf,  
refrain from tripping on their  
smooth hard surfaces that resemble  
giant duck eggs scattered on the shore  
of Little Compton, or perhaps,  
costume jewelry beads knotted together by sand  
composing the necklace  
worn by the long throat of the tide.

## **Summer Serenade     Laura Rodley**

The words she parsed,  
snipping them with scissors  
as though deadheading  
chrysanthemums, casting how to  
say this better: how she loved  
the constellations on his lower back,  
the appaloosa blanket that he  
covered her with.

Not having had a shivaree,  
she sang the songs for them both  
at night, beckoning the birds  
to join in too, the beating of  
the insects' wings against the screen  
like ochre feathers fanning them.

She lay her body down as though  
she were a penny dreadful heroine;  
how could she. She used

her ochram's razor to  
keep the hugs she gave him to  
a minimum, the sighs

she emitted locked in her  
throat. He lost her when  
he navigated her by speaking.

She drowned in the words,  
gobbling them up as quickly  
as he spoke them, to keep the  
air free for the song of the  
beating insects' wings,  
the hope she was coursing for  
as she swam up the salmon  
falls of his body.

The Skin Horse had lived longer in the nursery than any of the others. He was so old that his brown coat was bald in patches and showed the seams underneath, and most of the hairs in his tail had been pulled out to string bead necklaces. He was wise, for he had seen a long succession of mechanical toys arrive to boast and swagger, and by-an-by break their mainsprings and pass away, and he knew that they were only toys, and would never turn into anything else. For nursery magic is very strange and wonderful, and only those playthings that are old and wise and experienced like the Skin Horse understand all about it.

“What is REAL?” asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. “Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?”

“Real isn’t how you are made,” said the Skin Horse. “It’s a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become REAL.”

“Does it hurt?” asked the Rabbit.

“Sometimes,” said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. “When you are Real you don’t mind being hurt.”

“Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,” he asked, “or bit by bit?”

“It doesn’t happen all at once,” said the Skin Horse. “You become. It takes a long time. That’s why it doesn’t often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose joints and very shabby. But these things don’t matter at all, because once you are Real you can’t be ugly, except to people who don’t understand.”

“I suppose *you* are Real?” said the Rabbit. And then he wished he had not said it, for he thought the Skin Horse might be sensitive. But the Skin Horse only smiled.

“The Boy’s uncle made me Real,” he said. “That was a great many years ago; but once you are real you can’t become unreal again. It lasts forever.

– from *The Velveteen Rabbit*

by Phyllis Stowell

***Parcifal Series, Group 1***

**1916**

**Hilma Af Klint**

An enveloping grey green  
as when one stares into  
a vegetal pond  
a vast surface marked  
by uneasy cloud as before a storm  
or watermarked paper  
on which lines like ridges  
spiral downward and inward  
darkening like wet leaves  
on sodden ground  
where the whorls curving inward  
narrow toward the center  
a stark white circle  
a hole piercingly bright



## Outline of Violets, Group 3

### Hilma Af Klint

Of the four hundred species  
she chose five

*Balticum*

*Dönemark*

*Finnland*

*Norwegen*

*Die Blume Schsvedens*

delicate watercolors on parchment  
each with its distinctive leaf and bloom  
its uprooted root drifting in the unaccustomed air

one with an understated face  
bows over leaves that uncurl  
to a narrow spade

one like a turning deer  
dips its purple bloom  
beyond heart-shaped leaves

one on a nearly invisible stem  
holds its head erect one leaf  
leaves  
a ravaged heart

one its violet petals by far the largest  
exposes its interior yellow its

narrow fringed

one – the Swede – taking twice the space  
(though it's barely there)  
two upper petals in delicate violet  
three below in wide open white  
with a hint of honey inside

a second bloom drooping on its bowed stem  
its leaves the palest lemon green  
with lifted infolded wings

written over this flower

÷*dnipukhet*

to the left and right  
two words too faint to read  
below: *viola tricolor*  
then most astonishing  
unlike her treatment of the whole  
drawn large in bronze

*Gl%°dje*

It seems unlikely she uprooted them without a thought  
as surely did the botanist for his catalogue  
each violet has its own emblematic sign a square  
divided into four with two blank two colored parts  
(except one has only one -- drenched sun  
with a minute circle in its center)  
of those in color two are split into diagonals  
with dots and cells  
each abstraction dated

What can it mean? that as mystic  
she saw each retained its peculiarities  
in eternal form  
like a soul?

**Work no. 064**

***angular forms combat negative forces***

**Emma Kunz**

**P**enta she named herself  
inside the matrix of this mandala  
an angular form on a rust-red ground  
four triangles and five rosettes  
around a vertical rectangle  
positioned in the center  
of a circle in a circle of straight lines  
circles from whose center-points  
radiate lines as if the form itself  
is composed of rotating cells  
emanating pencil-fine rays  
so perhaps  
the cut diamond shape of the construct  
instructed her regarding the nature  
of her five movements  
forward and backward  
side to side the fifth inward

A sixth larger circle above has no color  
its rays the iris of an eye  
fixed between two black wings

**Work no. 069**

***New intersections  
must be generated consciously***

**A** geometric shape on jade space  
a motionless angular wheel that rotates  
its symmetry deflected by open ended  
intersecting squares a broken cross  
within which four yellow wands  
radiate outward from a central square  
a web of fine feminine threads  
penciled on graph paper  
a few intersections  
dramatized by lines of forceful black  
a diagram of an invisible dimension  
conceived while she leaned over  
her paper at night under a lamp  
swinging her pendulum on a silver chain  
weighted by a pearl and a diamond  
to mark each vision point  
intuiting an order from somewhere

## **Note on Emma Kunz (1892-1963)**

Based on the idea of cosmic unity in which the mind and body are one, Emma Kunz believed in the channeling of vibrations which were natural and omnipresent. She relied on her intuitions of an embodied spirit. Working with visual fields of energy, she experienced the process of making the work in itself healing. Swinging a pendulum—a silver chain with a silver and jade ball attached at either end—over a square sheet of graph paper, she would determine the main directional lines of her drawing.... Utilizing a ruler, pencils, and crayons, Kunz would eventually connect these nodes to form a drawing.” She lived in several villages, eventually working in Waldstatt where she maintained a garden of medicinal plants and her practice as healer.

Hendel Teicher “Kaleidoscopic Visions” in 3 X ABSTRACTION (The Drawing Center, 2004-5, NY), p.127

## **Scent of a Woman**

**Jeni Senter**

For days I touched you,  
your moist feverish skin,  
rubbed your swollen saffron  
limbs with almond-scented oil.  
I breathed prayers rhythmically  
to the hypnotic sound  
of the machines tethering you  
to my world.  
Family members whispered—  
making plans  
at the foot of your bed  
while "What a Wonderful World" played  
faintly in the background.  
As you calmly gave up  
your last breath  
I cried silently  
and took my leave from your side.  
Selfish as I am  
I took that bottle of almond-scented oil.  
And sometimes I slowly remove  
the stopper  
and breathe in  
what is left of you.

## A Day Like Wet Cement

Jeni Senter

Morning breaks. Shiva's yellow vomit puddles on the floor. Frozen cubes of chicken stock for lunch thaw on the cracked countertop. The appointment is at ten. The clock beams a digital five. I am up scrambling brown eggs—a white bowl—droplets of cream mixed in—pools of butter on toast—pills dispensed: Patrick's aqua tablets for focus, James' green and white capsules for sneezing, itching, and wheezing, my blue tablet for the fear of being afraid. Three kids flit through the kitchen on their way to the front door—one remains in bed. My stomach churns. I cannot write. I cannot even get lost in the need to write. Where is my muse? Hidden in the banality. From the window I see Delilah's shit on the cobbled walkway. Latex gloves with a rubber reek fit tight. I pick up the dark chocolate-colored balls—I'll toss them into the woods—no, drop them into the red-cinched plastic bag for the landfill and sigh at the egg shells, coffee grounds, and yesterday's onion skins that should have been put in the compost. They too will go from the man-made sack to the man-made waste heap across the railroad tracks. I should care more about those who have to live next to the mountain of garbage, but I am worn out like the faded linoleum beneath my feet. "Mama," Sarah cries. "My butt hurts." "Where? Where does it hurt?" "There. Right there." She rolls her pants down to her tail bone, splays her cheeks. "Okay. Just sit down, no, go lie down." Google the complaint: Coxxydynia? Pilonidal cyst? Something worse? Stop, don't diagnose, just make the call. Another one. Set the time for two. Cat puke, dog shit, breakfast, pills, ass aches, phone calls, doctors' visits in crowded waiting rooms, writing checks for copays, picking up more pills, scheduling more visits—possibly the final one for Shiva. This day was supposed to be for writing. For mulling over the complexities of life. For contemplating God or not-God. I want to do something else. I flee to the garden and stroll around the stretching sunflowers and English Dogwood. A Tiger Lily peeps around the bluish Hostas mixed in with the green clover. I dead head the Purple-eyed Susan. In the garden yesterday, admiring the gray-blue polish on Allyson's fingertips I had said "Such a beautiful color." "Yes," she said. "It's called Wet Cement." "And on your toes?" She smiled. The image of the memory envelopes me. In the yard, remembering, suddenly I feel less leaden.

## **Blackwater Blessings**

**Jeni Senter**

Tender, ripe rubies glisten  
with the dew of a virgin morning.

My son plucks one  
and pops it into his little-bird mouth.

Pleasure pours over me  
like deep evening rain.



## **A Meditation on Chemical Death**

**Jeni Senter**

Mrs. Parker answers her door wearing a floppy pink cap.  
Her baby chick hair peeking out over one ear.  
She tells me to come in, sit down, visit for a while.  
Her eyes glisten as she eases down slowly into her chair  
while my eyes are drawn to that patch of fuzz.  
I remember her hair, glossy, black, sharply styled  
when she picked me up for church on Sunday mornings.  
I glance at her hands, marred by fresh puncture wounds.  
Her hands were thin, beautiful, long,  
playing the piano and weaving baskets on Saturday evenings.  
She tells me she is well, asks how I have been.  
She wants me to go to church, I lie and say I will.  
I can hardly sit still, keep looking her over  
as if she were a still-life to study.  
A meditation on chemical death.  
The breast cancer came back.  
It blossomed like a June rose  
and spread like the vines of bluebells.  
Deep into her armpits, through the lymphatic system,  
burying itself deep into her brain and liver.  
And now she rocks gently in her chair and smiles at me  
while I bite my cheek and try not to cry.  
Too soon it is time to go,  
and she bends toward me to kiss me on my forehead.  
And I am amazed that she still smells like honeysuckles.

## **Jason at Dogwood Park**

**Jeni Senter**

He wanted to go fishing so we drove down the bumpy rutted road to Dogwood Park. Instead, when we got there, he just walked back and forth across the wooden bridge. He chain-smoked and asked me for a soda.

My brother cannot fathom reason, nor can he understand limitation.

I wonder sometimes would it be nice to live like him, schizophrenic and free.

Free from responsibility, free from reason, free from guilt.

But, what kind of hell is he locked inside?

Does he remember being normal? Does he remember my brother?

And sometimes it feels like my brother died, but his body still breathes.

## DREAMT AND THEN SOME

Joseph Gastiger

for Denise Levertov

*John* never wakes up as *Stephen*, never as *Saul*. *Saul*, for as long as he studies, practicing slingshot with shoe lace and pebbles, can't become *David* or *Moses*: tears make him *Paul*. *When I was a girl*, the old blind woman told me, *soldiers, they come to my village and take all the Jews*. *Dmitri* hides me in a hayloft. He brings me milk. This is how *Rachel* changes to *Irina*, cousin from faraway, child of straw. Now she's afraid, in a world to come, beyond the fir trees—the wide sea of ending—God won't remember her. Every part of you is blessed, *Valerie*, *Dario*, blameless as Gobi sand. But you must suffer for the rest of us, *Varlam*, and never know why. I say the book is *alive*, and it breathes, its stories all part of a sleeping body. We are kneaded from *ruach* and *adamah*, spirit and mud. Had the chapters of Torah come in their right order, anyone who read them would know how to raise the dead. That's why their verses were jumbled, known but by God. Words fill with light, like old statues, yielding their oracles and their orchids, under the inspiration of a star. How else could a blood-eating cloud on a mountain become the Nameless One? How else could Asaph, the boy carried off, dream of a deep well he couldn't remember? Jealous brothers dropped him in the dunes, in a pit without water. Later, he's captured by slave traders, sold off to mud men. Once again, tied up in darkness, one day, he's led out this time as *Baal Cholem*, master of dreams. He'll be called to rule a kingdom, settle a riddle, all in the name of a lesser god. These parades unfold in sighs, wafting from burning shells of Hebrew and charcoal; howl of the *shofars*, drums of the devourer, fade in every syllable. Lord of what was, *robbono shel oylom*, waits in the cracked yellow pages of the *siddur*, waiting to be called. Open the scroll, these letters fly up into the heart.

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.  
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.  
It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.  
We ask ourselves, "Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented  
and fabulous?" Actually, who are you not to be?  
You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the  
world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that  
other people won't feel insecure around you.  
We were born to manifest the glory of God that is within us ...  
And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other  
people permission to do the same.  
As we are liberated from our own fear,  
our presence automatically liberates others.

– Nelson Mandela

## [untitled]

**Greg Adair**

Bright bird,  
you gather the broad oceans  
in the basket of your eyes,  
innocent, wise.  
You will know the answer.

For tonight is holy  
and I came to ask a question  
For tonight is holy  
and I came to whisper a question  
to ask you  
a mystery.

Is there an ocean between us,  
or are we bound?  
Is there an ocean between us,  
Or are we one  
In the heart of the world?

And does rain fall un-heard  
in an ocean between us?  
And does snow come again  
with nothing to tell us?

The snow falls,  
the snow falls,  
But does it know  
Nothing of its time as rivers  
That wandered to the sea,  
from mountain to ocean  
turned endlessly downward,  
and from ocean to sky  
turned upward again  
Turned and turned,  
mountain and ocean,  
Turned and turned  
the sky,  
the rain and snow

turned together  
in the bright center  
of the world  
and

laughter, birth, love, it turns  
wars, loss, sorrow, it turns  
Here the feet of children,  
bathed in the summer river,  
it turns  
There the tears of the bride,  
Waiting on the winter banks,  
it turns

I know this:  
The snows of many winters  
filled my mountains  
Yes the snows of many winters filled my heart  
But then I saw light in your eyes  
I saw flashing waters in your smile  
I felt what the river feels  
Yes I felt like the river,  
when it remembers the ocean  
I remembered you

And I loosed the hand of winter  
And the hand of the winter loosed me  
Then I fell, and I fell, and, I ran  
I have run to the shore of an ocean I knew  
I have carried my whispering questions

And I know this  
it is the morning of the holy night  
It is morning and I remember you  
It is morning and I am with you  
you gather the broad oceans  
in the basket of your eyes,  
innocent, wise.  
And it is morning,  
it is morning

## **λήθεια or Anne Carson**

**Peter G Res**

The poem of your life is a silver-scented moth  
unlike those of earlier poems.

The poem of your life breaks its legs  
on soft barbed screens and burns slightly.



The ungendered energy crackles from your calves  
to your spine like a moon-stained pool light.

You dance only in muted tones and hallways.

The poem of your life is a failed winter of basil plants  
shying from water and sun simultaneous.

The poem of your life skins its knees on everything  
looks for clumsy women to call mother or God.

The poem of your life shelters without revision  
longs to play cards on long trains.

The poem of your life shelters in dog breath and missing bulbs  
makes its presence known in awkward kisses.

## **Daughter**

**Daniel Ames**

a carapace of pure delicacy  
a shade of fragile gold  
a movement both sound and unbroken  
timed to exquisite perfection  
a drink of crystal  
that ripples with the touch of surrender  
she is the glow of a memory  
the hope of a heart  
shuddering with deep, heavy breaths

by **B Z Nidich**

### **PROVISION**

In the aviary  
a bird call for bread  
and droplets of water  
unlike galley slaves  
seeing themselves  
locked inside nests  
without song  
the winged pass  
for years in free fall

### **MEMORY**

Refusing to speak  
the undecipherable name,  
they wrap you in leaves  
while it is snowing  
on a wounded elm tree  
(swaying in the cold wind)  
to have compassion  
amid the liquid silence;  
shadows accumulate  
in the soft air,  
enduring as winter sun  
viewed as the dust  
in the whitened fields.



**WHAT I KNOW**  
**Michael Hogan**

When I climb the precarious ladder  
after the rain to sweep the roof,  
the sun glistens off red tiles  
and the neighbors below are a pageant:  
leaving the grocery store, gossiping on the corner.  
I pull wet clumps of leaves out of the drains  
dropping them below like dull grenades,  
then as the water moves with glacial slowness  
(like my blood after the death of my son  
one faceless winter in Denver)  
I pick up the broom and whisk  
the water in sheets toward the drains  
hurrying its passage, taking the pressure  
off the swollen tiles so that they can  
bake dry in the sun and harden:  
sealing the space where I sleep  
dreamless  
except on those nights I forget  
what I know  
keeping the seals intact.

## **Rain**

**Ellis Waters**

I place my hand  
on the small of her back  
while we dance in the soft light.

I can't think of anything  
but ways to try  
to make her happy.

I feel her hips move  
as I enter her  
and hear her call my name.

This is neither a memory or a wish  
it's something the rain  
has painted outside my window.

## le plus petit jardin

Helen Vitoria

1

We notice the house wren refuses to take *no* for an answer when it comes to evicting the helpless fledglings. Screeching, hollering, out they go. She doesn't seem to give their readiness a second thought. Think homelessness. Think lost.

2

He wants control. No matter the cost. No matter how small. Tying the tomatoes, thick unruly vines, he decides the good weeds, the beneficial insects. At first, the dosages are small cruelties, gradually he increases the amounts of poison. Administering slowly, steadily.

3

We decide the color scheme together. He with the cool blues, purples. I choose red, orange. I remember the neon sign at the tattoo parlor and act accordingly.

4

My mother tries creative ways to rid the garden of the Starlings. *Devil birds* she says. Throws stones and glances their way. Aims for yellow eyes, unblinking. I kill an adder with a stick.

5

After Lauds, we walk through the tiny vineyard. The fog has settled low, earlier than expected, feet unclean, I follow him through the vineyard, slowly we remove the bird netting, nothing caught, this time.

6

Let's say, we slip ahead to the next phase, the harvest. I am not ready. I think too much. Chores undone, the garden is in chaos let's say, you do not notice.

7

Adam is once again seduced by the magnolia, after the rain, after we watch the heron creep away, after the piano music inside the house has ended.

## **Train Ride with Nietzsche**

**Helen Vitoria**

On the train, Friedrich makes polite conversation with me, but never really allows his eyes to meet mine. We discuss school shootings in great detail. *The mind of a killer* he says. Then we move onto heroin addiction, anorexia, daffodils, the medicine cabinet, ruined women, staying indoors. He tells me he was never noticed by the pretty girls in school. His lack of social graces became evident when the dinner arrived, cutting the small portions over and over, eating them too fast, growing wilder at each glance.

## **Dream Wedding on Cape Cod**

**Helen Vitoria**

I want to live my life in a glass terrarium. I want a jungle of bad mothers to weave a canopy. I will wrestle ants, and write *VICTORY* as epitaphs, as I perform small ceremonies at their graves. The spiders, I will paint pink, I will battle them, but let them win, many legs around me, a stronghold like no other. I have no family.

## **Leaving Texas**

**Helen Vitoria**

On the ride home from Texas, I hear him singing a song about paper people, he caught me listening, stopped himself before I could hear more. We drive past the old factory, we recall the slaughterhouse, the fear on the animals faces as they unload them, face to tail, side by side. Then a single file, sweeping through curved corrals. I was afraid of the rumble, the crush of hooves on fields. He smiles, as he remembers our first meeting there, sitting on the cold ground, too close to me. I remember the sun, the touch on my shoulders, a heavy iron gate folding. I have petted the monster.

**Matin**

**Helen Vitoria**

There is nothing in this valley.  
shadows of bones, a sparrow or two  
Let this body, this woman, unfold before you.  
a wing of a white dove, it's shadow

shadow or two, a sparrow  
There is nothing in this valley.  
shadows of bones. I kneel in this field.  
The field is bare. I am frightened.

This valley is raw. A shadow or two.  
hunger, bones, desire  
I am frightened.

Unfold this body, this woman.

These poems first appeared in Sunfish Poetry Magazine (UK)

## ALTERNATE ENDING

Robert Anderson

The kitchen was still dark. The sun hadn't fully risen yet, giving the outside world a blue-gray glow. Birds were in the trees, their morning song radiant with life and promise.

She awoke first, as she always did, crawled out from under her side of the bed, one leg at a time, disturbing the bedding as little as possible. It was the weekend and she didn't want to wake him. It was early still but she couldn't fall back asleep, so she decided to get up and start the daily ritual—the first relief of the day, the undressing, the showering, the dressing, the hair drying, the critique from the mirror. Her complexion was wan and pale, her dirty blonde hair a damp tangle of clumps and knots, the lines beneath her eyes and alongside her mouth sunken and deep. She didn't wear makeup for him anymore, or herself—one of the countless trivialities gone long unneeded. Her body was long and lean but she couldn't remember the last time she exercised. She lifted up her shirt. Her belly sank inward toward her spine, sharp ribs poked through the skin. The mirror forgives nothing. She couldn't remember ever looking this old. How much time had been lost between yesterday and today?

A streak of fresh sunlight lit the dark hallway. The newel post wobbled as she braced herself to descend the staircase. The floorboards creaked with wear. She had reminded him to fix the wobbly post once, twice, three times, then forgot about it. She felt like a mute but convinced herself it didn't matter. Like so many other flaws, it had settled in and became a quirk of the house, a part of its charm. Over time the wobble lost its urgency, replaced by more pressing matters.

But the kitchen had been remodeled. She took pleasure in that. An island had been built in the middle, skylights were added above the cupboards, granite countertops were installed, a new dishwasher and oven. They had put off vacationing for five years in order to save enough for the additions, not that they ever vacationed previously. Traveling was a fantasy for her and an inconvenience for him.

She walked slowly to the refrigerator. There wasn't a lot to eat—an opened jar of tomato sauce, half-gallon of skim milk, bushel of moldy green grapes. The light turned on as she opened the door, illuminating its emptiness. She didn't shop for him like she used to, or herself. She tried to get by on as little as possible these days—apple for breakfast, yogurt for lunch, egg for dinner. This was all she needed. Anything more would've been a wasted luxury, a sin against the indigent. It wasn't that they didn't have the means to afford minor luxuries—the kitchen remodeling had dented their savings yet plenty remained—but it was a meagerness that pervaded her soul, became her only virtue. Any excess to her was lurid and wanton. Times were tough for the country as a whole and she wanted her share in the collective burden.



Breakfast had long lost its luster, much like everything else. The coffee too weak, the toast too burnt, the cereal too soggy. She took a green apple from the drawer and sat at the kitchen table. The first bite was tough as her teeth dug through the hard skin. Little droplets of juice sprayed the table. She wiped the stray juice with her shirtsleeve.

He would be waking soon. She knew this from years of habit and routine. His schedule was her schedule. First she'd hear his footsteps overhead, then the water running, then the creak of the staircase. Through the ceiling, she heard him get up and walk to the bathroom upstairs. He was awake. Her pulse rose, the slightest perceptible fluctuation, just past the edge of subtlety. The air hardened around her and she discarded the rest of the apple. She had reached a point where being alone was her sole desire, solitude her only comfort. The core hit the side of the trashcan with a thud, settling among the fellow refuse.

She wiped her hands with a dishtowel and looked out the kitchen window. Light exploded from the east, dark clouds gathered in the west. The kitchen window looked out over an empty field that dipped low into a valley, finally rising up into high hills. It was a spectacular view in the morning. She often wondered what lay beyond.

There were loud, heavy footsteps through the hall. He barged into the kitchen, sitting down with a crash. The table made a harsh sound and shook violently as the legs scraped across the wood flooring. His hair was still wet, dripping down the back of his neck, spotting his t-shirt. She fixed her gaze on the window and the field and the hills. He got up and opened the refrigerator, getting the half-gallon of milk and a box of cereal from the cupboard.

There was a time when she looked forward to these leisurely weekend mornings, when time slowed and neither of them had to rush out the door. But these were different days. Life had taken a lot out of them both leaving little to spare. She felt old. For the first time in her life she caught herself questioning the past. She thought of her childhood, her college days. She had wanted to be a painter but hadn't painted in years, gave it up when she got a job that turned into a career, a boyfriend that became a husband. She thought of her sister, Laura, with her husband and their three kids in Seattle. She thought of an old friend, May, alone in San Francisco. May had sent her a postcard from California years ago. It was the lone remnant from the old kitchen, still pressed against the refrigerator door by an old magnet that doubled as an advertisement for their fertility doctor. The postcard displayed a sandy beach skirting the Pacific Ocean at sunset. The water sparkled in the setting sun.

"Pass the milk," he said. The request ripped her from her reverie. She looked at him incredulously. She wasn't drinking milk but the jug had been shoved near her. Her hand fell flat against the plastic. It was cold and wet on her palm. She scooted it near his bowl, placed her hand back on her lap, propped her chin with her other hand and returned her eyes to the window. He poured the milk over his cereal, first circling the edge of the bowl and finally dousing the middle. Again, he pushed the jug back near

her.

Was this all there was to look forward to now? They didn't talk to each other or spend any time together. They were completely separate individuals. He felt like a stranger to her. Was this all that life had left them with? There was the remodeled kitchen of course, everything upgraded and state-of-the-art, spatial and shimmering, the end product of years of saving, planning, and hard labor. She remembered how close she felt to him then, watching him work with the few hours he could spare, admiring his industrial competence, helping him in whatever meager way she could without receiving even a grunt of gratitude, but not needing one either. It was her project too, her escape. Remodeling the kitchen became a model for life. Fix it, improve, move forward, build, gain, make something better. She invested every spare minute, every spare thought into it, imagining, envisioning, planning, purchasing. It filled the void. The kitchen was *her* life. It was her idea and desire to remodel in the first place, so in that sense, it was even more hers than it was his. She did the cooking anyway, when she used to cook.

After years of that old refrigerator magnet holding onto a corner of the creased, dog-eared, thousand-times-fingered postcard of the soft California sand and the sparkling blue Pacific with the fading sun in the distance, without as much as a stir, without a touch, the postcard's edge slipped out from under the magnet's grasp, twisted and twirled, sputtered helplessly to the floor, landing facedown and slid beneath the refrigerator, vanishing from sight.

He didn't notice the postcard fall. He was doing what he did every Saturday morning, reading the sports section of the local newspaper looking for the scores to last night's high school football games. She went to get up to retrieve the postcard, but thought better of it. Instead, she watched him in silence. The hair on the top of his head had thinned, graying at the temples. A nose hair curled up around his left nostril. With his eyes narrowed on the fine ink, he took another bite of his Cheerios. A thin stream of milk dribbled off his chin, splashing the page. A round, dark stain appeared and grew to about the size of a quarter. He turned the page. It was then she knew she would leave him.

I think writing is an act of healing.  
It's an exorcism of sorts, to put into words and symbols  
this almost inexpressible anguish.  
That was why I stared, to try and alleviate the despair.  
Writing shapes experience for me; it isn't ever the experience  
that gives any shape to the prose.  
It's by looking for the words and formulating the sentences  
that you give some kind of order to it that raw experience  
never has...

— Doris Grumbach

## In the night market

Alyce Miller

someone tries on claws while  
I reach for cobalt blue wings

suspended on a hanger like a kite in a tree.  
A slight adjustment of scapular to thorax

reflects back from the mirror  
greater coverts spanning green to indigo.

In this lunar hour, brain craves heart and soul,  
an orgy of want and all the promises of flight.

Unaccustomed to new hooves, a man with a monkey tail  
gallops upwards into voluminous clouds.

His is the palsied ascent of gravity confounded,  
the flight from which there is no sleep.

Around me, night rocks with beaked and whiskered cries  
in a take-back rampage

through striped and feathered air.  
The half-limbed and mutilated groan into the dark.

My own escape on rising thermals  
sets adrift vertiginous thrills.

Kettling into giddy currents, surfing waves  
of accipiter wind. This-----my lopsided flight

on stolen pinions and plumes;  
my furred ears tilt and flex, and catch

the fading shrieks of the chained bird below  
calling out that he has no use for my hands.

Ekphrastic

*“All his life he trembled like a leaf . . .”*

Lemon light swirls over your ripe land  
where flowers seed, and onions

spring from cartoon torsos resembling pregnant women,  
who in turn resemble cellos,

or maybe upright alligators.

Others droop like bruised tropical fruits.

Only your lush garden could bloom this impossibly  
with shapes of genitals, sickles, and stars.

The tilled field wants to return, but can't.

Unturned earth betrays the violence of your hopes,

and even each brush stroke is a form of genocide.

The withered hand belongs not to you, but to a delirious ghost.

The noose you choose is just an end to an end.

That plough in the field becomes the memory of a dream, and the dream  
becomes what you were never allowed to love enough.

Goodbye my loveds, you said, but it is love in reverse.

## **Gone**

**Alyce Miller**

After you left, animals filled the house,  
the stairs reeked of oysters.  
Windows opened themselves,  
birds flew in to nest in my hair.

To you, who always frowned on fur,  
the air is full of feathers.

Through the bedroom ceiling,  
squirrels plummeted on a waterfall.

Daybreak is the time to rise up tenderly,  
guided by blood and instinct,  
to suckle lambs  
plaintive at the bedroom door.

After much mischief, the monkey sighs and sleeps.

In time,  
he will wake to tell the story of a faithful woman  
who, waiting to be loved again,  
knits and grows old-----

And who lives with animals who call her by name.

**from The Pacific Ocean Is A Woman Just Like Me**

**Alyce Miller**

From a vertiginous bluff overlooking the Pacific  
I call my mother 2300 miles away on my new cell phone

to share the sound of surf  
high and white against the black rocks.

She observes in wonder, "Imagine,  
I am listening to your ocean,

what would my father have thought?"  
It is through the Ocean they say the earth breathes itself,

and now low-frequency radiation lodges  
where we cannot see the damage done.

In this new century  
I can only imagine the surprise in the voice of my grandfather, long  
dead,

had he answered his phone that afternoon and listened to  
the sound of these waves breaking far away.

## **Cuboctahedron Sonnet**

**Alyce Miller**

Pyramidal number of years married:  
total of mounting Karmic debt,  
sum of the first three square numbers,  
number of legs on a wood louse,  
pounds in a stone of laundry,  
days in a fortnight of longing,  
lines in a love sonnet delivered  
on the 45<sup>th</sup> day of the year,  
the age of consent in Albania;  
last flight of a P2V-7,  
title of a theatrical tour de force,  
the skip-a-floor number not on the elevator.

Six squares plus eight equilateral triangle:  
the sum of a rose window, final equation of love's failures.



## INTO THE DARKNESS OF YOUR ABSENCE

Rose Hamilton-Gottlieb

Loretta leans her snow shovel against the stone birdbath and surveys her morning's work. She has cleared most of the driveway and her share of the sidewalk, leaving a pile of snow alongside her door. When Annabel leaves her half of the duplex, she'll have to wade through a foot of dirty snow to get to the cleared path. It serves her right, Loretta thinks, although, if pressed, she wouldn't be able to say exactly why.

The wind gusts down the street, blowing crystals of dry snow from the hedges. Is it her imagination, or are the winters getting longer, with more dark days? For weeks at a time, it seems the only light comes from the sunflowers painted on the water tower, visible for miles in the flat landscape. There are six giant flowers. Two stare due east and west in full face, four march along the north and south sides of the tower, as if following the progress of the sun.

The painting, which mirrors South Dakota's fields of sunflowers in July, appeared there one June morning forty-eight years earlier. It was the day after the Elmwood High senior class had collected their diplomas and moved the tassel on their mortar boards from left to right, signifying that some progress toward adulthood had been made. Not enough, as it turned out, to bestow upon a sensitive, artistic senior boy the privilege of kissing his English teacher.

Loretta unbuttons her jacket to allow the wind to cool her down. If there were such a thing as justice in the world, that hot flash would have come earlier, before she got overheated from exertion. But no, after ten years, she knows when to expect those sudden shifts in temperature: when she's sound asleep, for instance. Or standing in an outside reception line in ninety-degree weather with eighty percent humidity, wearing panty hose. Not that she attends many such events. Menopause, which came late to her and refuses to leave, does nothing to improve what Annabel calls Loretta's "winter doldrums."

Ironically, just at the moment in December the sun starts its laborious journey toward spring, Loretta begins her personal descent into winter's darkness. (It got worse after she retired from her job as town librarian.)

In the past, confronted with her neighbor's grumpy face, Annabel would invite her over to make fudge, and she would go and stay all afternoon and into the evening, watching old Doris Day movies and eating popcorn and cake for dinner. They sipped whiskey and toasted one another and the four major food groups of sugar, salt, alcohol, and caffeine. And she felt better, until the next morning when she awoke to winter's stripped landscape, eyes and feet swollen, nerves in recoil.

Was that a flicker of movement at Annabel's window? Like a joke or a song, a bad turn is incomplete until its target is made aware of it. Loretta feels the truth of this in her bones as she picks up her shovel and adds an extra scoop of dirty snow to the barrier.

The hot flash recedes, leaving her damp and chilled under layers of wool. She puts away the shovel and goes to the mailbox at the curb. At one time, she would have collected Annabel's mail as well, but today she ignores the circulars and throw-a-way magazines crowding the mailbox next to hers. No doubt Annabel is just waiting for her to bring it to her door. Well, from now on, Miss Privilege will just have to shovel her own snow and fetch her own mail. Forty years of servitude is enough.

Later, over hot cocoa, Loretta has a worrisome thought. What if that wasn't Annabel at the window? She puts her ear to the wall separating the two living rooms and listens for the click of high heels on the wood floor. Has she finally toppled from their impossible height to lie whimpering in pain? No, since the heart attack, Annabel wears that thing around her neck. All she has to do is push a button and someone sitting at a switchboard will call Loretta. Or 911, if she chooses not to pick up.

Last summer, she got a call at four in the morning, only to find that Annabel had rolled over in bed and pushed the thing by accident. The two of them had a good laugh, and since dawn was at hand, they made pancakes in Annabel's kitchen and ate them while they watched the sun rise over the water tower at the edge of town.

\* \* \*

The young man who in the night transformed the water tower from a winter gray container to a lodestar of summer's promise was gone at first light, before the earliest riser had looked up from retrieving his morning paper and put in a call to the mayor. What followed was a prolonged debate by the City Council, as each member tried to gauge the current of public opinion so he could paddle in that direction. Should they condemn the action as vandalism and vote in favor of painting it over? Or should they agree with the contingent of romantics who found it charming? After the local television station sent a camera crew, tourists began to show up, and the residents of Elmwood began to imagine their water tower had put them on the map. Every few years, they were only too happy to see the colors refreshed. This was always done in July, just before the Sunflower Festival.

\* \* \*

Annabel Waters arrived in Elmwood, fresh from teacher's college, twenty-two years old, with long chestnut hair that curled naturally on her shoulders and a collection of sweater sets to go with her slim skirts and high heels. Her eyes changed from blue to green to hazel, depending on the color of scarf she wore knotted around her neck. In other words, she looked like a more sophisticated version of the girl a senior boy would dream of taking to the prom.

Loretta took note of all this as each morning she watched, from behind her curtains, Annabel tripping down the front walk on her way to school. When winter exposed nature's raw intent, she kept her sense of style in belted coats with fur collars and hats to match.

The two young women were about the same age, and if not for her father's untimely stroke, Loretta would have been living far from Elmwood, also teaching, a career that would have compensated for her thick ankles and bad complexion. She was, at the time of Annabel's arrival, three years into her servitude.

The high school boys fell in love, en masse, with Annabel, but only one boy dared to violate the student/teacher boundary. That was Travis Mabry, who had fled his divorcing parents to live with an aunt for his senior year. Perhaps it was his troubled home life that kept Travis from enjoying the attentions of the senior girls. Or perhaps, once he got a glimpse of Miss Waters, he couldn't see those girls for dust.

And if the truth were known, Annabel wasn't totally immune to the charms of this intense, dark-haired youth who had been somehow transformed, by suffering, into a more mature version of the awkward boys whose denim clad legs sprouted from too-small desks like weeds clogging the aisles, whose unbridled masculinity made her prim and teacherly beyond her years. Only with Travis did she feel like some version of herself. He brought her poems after class and she encouraged his talent. No doubt under her care, he felt less bruised.

About halfway through the school year, the flowers began to arrive. First a single sunflower on her desk in the morning. Then on the back step of the duplex, once or twice a week, sometimes accompanied by a poem.

Loretta couldn't help but notice the flowers as she carried the trashcans from the alley to the back yard. By then, summer yielded to fall, and the fields of sunflowers had long since put their light to seed. She took note that whoever the admirer was, he had had to go out of his way to find them, which gave the romantic offerings even more significance. Even after the temperature dropped, there would be a single bloom braving the cold. Then came Loretta's one lapse in principle. She slipped off the paper folded around the stem and read the poem inscribed there in a thick, boyish hand.

*For you, a flower that follows the sun,  
As I follow your light,  
My face bending to your morning, your evening,  
My heart bleeding into the darkness  
Of your absence*

Loretta replaced the poem and slipped through her own back door, just in time to escape Annabel's quick step onto her back porch, a step she discerned to be filled with eagerness and delight. She stood in the shadows inside her screen door, ashamed and excited; then, before she could be interrupted by a call from her father's sickroom, she found paper and pen and recorded the poem, knowing the words had burned into her and she couldn't forget them if she tried, but still needing to possess them in a tangible form.

That June, after Travis left town, Loretta noticed that Annabel stopped going out. At first this wasn't surprising, as the school year was over. Yet she felt she knew the secret message of the sunflowers on the water tower. *My heart bleeds into the darkness of your absence.* Then there was the uncollected mail in the box next to her own mailbox.

On the fourth day, during her father's morning nap, Loretta took strong tea and cinnamon toast to their pretty tenant, coaxed her from her bed of grief and into the shower. And Annabel told her how Travis had approached her after graduation, still dressed in cap and gown (the tassel now moved to the right) and kissed her on the mouth. She at first kissed him back, having imagined doing so for weeks; then she became frightened and scolded him for jeopardizing her job and her reputation. By the time the full effect of the kiss had set in, leading to a host of permissive rationalizations and fantasies, her would-be lover had left town.

Up to this time, the two young women had known each other only in passing, but now their friendship was forged in the tough love administered by Loretta. In essence, what she said was, how dare you, you who have been given so much— beauty and education and independence—crumble like soft cheese at the departure of one lovesick boy?

But when Annabel did recover, it seemed to Loretta she did so remarkably fast. Too fast. She must be very shallow. However, as time went by, she realized Annabel was not shallow, but courageous, choosing to await the return of her beloved with grace, while entertaining a host of suitors, all to be found wanting, all representing her thwarted effort to forget her one true love. In Loretta's mind, the boy who painted the sunflowers grew into a man, and the poem she had so shamefully read took seed in her heart where it grew, without competition, especially during the long winters. Loretta would have given much to own the original copy of the poem, but she was no thief, she told herself, knowing in the deepest part of herself she would steal without compunction if she but had the courage. So much had been stolen from her.

For by the time Loretta was orphaned and inherited the duplex, all ambition had flowed out of her, flowed into bedpans and soiled bedding and chronic back pain from lifting her patient. It had disappeared into the dusty and frayed books and smudged library cards and delinquent fees, which made up her job as librarian in the small stone building with Andrew Carnegie's name carved in stone over the door. Ambition was usurped by gratitude for a living of sorts, afforded by a lonely correspondence course and the dry mentoring of Miss Sims, the featureless librarian of her childhood.

What sustained Loretta during these years, besides a clandestine addiction to romance novels, was the ongoing drama of Annabel, and what Loretta came to think of as "her young man." She found herself occasionally riffling through her neighbor's mail to see if there was a letter from him. These moral lapses always left her ashamed and somewhat resentful of her friend, although she couldn't have explained why.

Annabel never spoke of her young man, nor did Loretta, until one early morning last summer, over pancakes in Annabel's kitchen, with the sun rising over the water tower. Emboldened, perhaps, by dawn's false intimacy, she ventured, as she helped herself to a third pancake. "Do you ever think of him?"

"Only every time I look out my front window or go out my front door," Annabel said.

"I mean, do you ever think *about* him?" Her own pulse quickened and the hand pouring the syrup shook so the amber liquid made a squiggly pattern across the surface of the pancake.

"Do I think *about* him?" Annabel considered for a moment, then said, wistfully, "I think about Paul. And Rodney and Steven. And..."

"I see," Loretta said coldly, to stem the tide of boyfriends remembered, to forego revisiting the details of the affairs and especially the pieces of their sad endings, which Loretta had helped pick up. She pushed her plate away, unable to digest this betrayal. For that is what it seemed to her. That Annabel could forget that pure young sacrificing love. That she could render false the poignancy of Loretta's belief that throughout all the loves and breakups, Annabel's heart had been captured and held, ever renewed by the sunflowers bending over the town in silent and perpetual benediction.

To think that all those years, while she had tactfully held her tongue, not wanting to rouse in her friend the fresh pain of departure, those years when she had believed she shared in the waiting and regret, in the belief he would return, age-appropriate for his love, and finally, the gradual letting go of that possibility, the transformation of hope into delicious regret.

One morning, well into the present winter, Annabel intruded on Loretta's privacy with some foolishness she'd read in a magazine. "SAD. That's what you've got," she said, shoving the article under Loretta's nose. "Seasonal Affective Disorder. You need sunshine."

Loretta glanced up from her third cup of strong coffee, her nerves jangled and her eyes offended by Annabel's still pretty face and figure wrapped in a snug cashmere coat and those high-heeled boots that surely would send her flying one day, not that she would stir herself to salt down the icy sidewalk. That always fell to Loretta. By default, like everything else in her life. *Somebody has to do it. Somebody has to take up the slack. Good old Loretta.* She gave her visitor a dark look.

Undeterred, Annabel threw off her coat and drew up a chair. "You're getting worse, you know," she said. "You can't see it because you're too close. You probably don't even realize you haven't spoken to me in weeks unless I picked up the phone. That's one of the signs. Social withdrawal. See, I underlined the symptoms: 'Depression, hopelessness, anxiety, loss of energy.' Does any of this sound familiar? You're still in that ratty old bathrobe. Have you been oversleeping? That's another sign."

By this time, Loretta was fuming, but Annabel read on. "Difficulty concentrating and processing information..."

“Are you suggesting,” Loretta said, rising from her chair so quickly it tipped over backward, “Are you suggesting I’m crazy?”

“Why no, of course not,” Annabel said. “In fact, I would never have brought this up except there’s a simple treatment. Look, it’s called light therapy. You get this box with a light and you sit in front of it for a certain amount of time every day and you feel better.”

Loretta brushed the article from the table. “And what makes you think I have time to sit in front of that thing? What gives you the right...” the depth of her rage startled even herself.

What Annabel didn’t realize was after that conversation over pancakes, almost a year earlier, a hardness that had long been building in Loretta’s heart, a solidifying of unrecognized grievances and bitter losses, had begun to make itself known.

Annabel merely shrugged and slipped into her coat. “See, this is how you are, every winter. Get help or don’t get help. It’s nothing to me.”

And she was gone, proving the shallowness of her concern. If she really cared, she would have forced the issue. But then, who had ever seen fit to rescue Loretta?

\* \* \*

Now, deep into winter, Loretta can hardly breathe for the stone weight in her chest. And this time, she knows, the dark, cold time is here to stay. Only the images on the water tower promise an end to the sun’s betrayal, but she knows that promise is no more real than the dream she revisits almost nightly, in which the flowers spring to life and soak up the summer, like squirrels gathering nuts to hide under the snow. On the darkest of days, she finds herself at her kitchen sink, staring at the water tower. Minutes slip by and her fingers wrinkle in the cooling dishwater, while she wills the yellow to grow deeper until it becomes liquid sunshine pouring into her light-starved soul.

Loretta notices the wind outside has changed direction and is blowing snow from the uncleared side of the walkway onto the side she shoveled earlier in the day. But then, isn’t that the way of things?

Still no sound from the other side of the wall. She picks up the phone, then puts it down. After all, Annabel has that button on a cord around her neck. Loretta imagines the cord stretching far away to the person at the switchboard, relieving her of all responsibility.

The next day, after checking the overflowing mailbox, Loretta listens at the wall again. She’s reluctant to leave the house lest she miss some sign of life next door. Yet, when she considers taking action, her limbs grow heavy.

On the third day, she shovels Annabel’s side of the walk.

On the fourth day, she cleans out her neighbor’s mailbox and lets herself into the other half of the duplex.

*For you, a flower that follows the sun,  
As I follow your light,  
My face bending to your morning, your evening,  
My heart bleeding into the darkness  
Of your absence.*

## **City Revealed**      **John McKernan**

We watched a blue green parakeet flutter  
in branches of driftwood down the river

A coating of snow thin as light covered  
both banks of the water    Everything was you

Especially the tiny puffs of your white breath  
A bundled child on the playground beside

us keeps pretending to be a sleepwalker  
Maybe her fingers tipped with sunlight are

searching for last night's dream    Everything  
in your presence seems a Rorschach Test or

a quiz on allegory    Puffs of snow  
through chilled air on one side of the highway

but not over here    Light bulbs in packages  
on the dark shelves of the corner drug store

Here you are    Once a casual dream above  
my cot in a cold room    The itchy army

blanket no where to hide from the cold    It was  
your silence won me over    The way it

resembled pain one minute then joy the next  
You never told me why that woman we saw

in the elegant restaurant was dining  
alone    Not even a theory    Maybe

she's hungry    Of course the collision  
of happiness and anger causes whiplash

On a morning staring at empty tequila bottles  
drinking coffee and eating ice cream with wood spoons



## **New Languages**

**John McKernan**

Drunk dancers    The candle wavers

White on the wall's pale black ink

After light the wick's black flame

The Braille of her fingers touching

The white buttons on his blue shirt

An old man puts his finger close

To his chapped blue lips    Flute

Of silence    Memory of Ireland

The skydiver breathes into a blue

Cloth the same color as the up-there

We walked for hours over foot-thick

Snow melted to layers of ice    Later

We learned it was the Missouri River

The usher at church who collected

Money in a yellow wicker basket

Read the part of Jesus on Good Friday

Leaned against the telephone pole

His perfume of grape & orange vodka

## Flowers and Anarchy

Edward Murray

The steps were so small and so quietly  
The rocks shift under my dress shoes loudly  
My head hung low like a heavy heart  
Six of us start to walk slowly  
At an arms length apart  
I look down at the ground  
Shiny black shoes disappear in freshly oiled asphalt  
I taste salt from my tears from my eyes  
This is the day that sunshine has died  
Darkness no has to hide  
Today is the day that Superman died  
I was luck enough to know my superhero  
He taught me to grow ideas like gardens  
To work hard but don't let it harden me  
To live life below my financial means  
But to live life beyond my wildest dreams  
To never go to bed angry with anyone  
Especially my wife  
To live life I was a king of kings and she  
A queen of queens  
I would hide from thunder and lightning  
Under the covers of my parents bed  
And they would help me hide  
Today is the day Superman died  
The steps were so small and so quietly  
I help carry your casket waist high  
I know boys aren't supposed to cry  
It's so hard to say goodbye  
It's so hard to stand here  
And act like a man here and cry  
I don't understand here  
You carried all of us on one finger of one hand  
And it takes six of us to carry you  
To carry you through crowds of people who knew you  
And loved just as much as I do  
To carry you through to the other side  
I'm about a foot away from prying open this casket

And crying on your shoulder  
Curling up in your Superman cape  
Where I know it's safe  
Sucking my thumb scared like the good Lord's come  
To take you away from me  
The steps were so small and so quietly  
The church steps a few feet in front of me  
Minutes pass like miles  
Miles pass like years  
Tears fall like small footsteps  
So quietly  
Flowers and anarchy

## FRESHLY MISSING

Leigh Anne Hornfeldt

there is the woman  
and there is the woman's first son –  
blonde hair, blue sweater  
four years a murdered blur

someone smashed into him  
split his skull with a sharp rock  
separated the child from his muddied self  
left near the soft line of the pond  
water held his face, smoothed  
his eyebrows, whispered

the woman was changed  
a gaping hole scratched in the nest bottom  
leaving her wringing hands in dumbness  
leaving her tonguing *suicide* without tiring

only thank god there was a second son  
one able to stretch thinly enough to fill  
the *where* where something  
was freshly missing

one with enough of the same blonde hair  
and a matching blue sweater  
so that she was able to remember her pain  
and to forget it sometimes as well

## BAROMETER IN DECEMBER

Leigh Anne Hornfeldt

Weather is a bad influence  
on the emotionally deficient  
who eat sunlight as vitamins.  
In that moment  
the warmth was coaxing.  
Love did not spring  
from me as rays  
leaving my glass-eyed  
expression pressed  
on the shroud of surroundings.  
Instead, a chemist  
drugged me out of right mind  
till life was faultless  
and lovely and addictive.  
Even the mercuric pool  
that pressures itself to the well bottom  
was light as a titanium ring —  
holy wreath  
we hung in March.  
My presence  
was a dumb smile.

I sat unattached,  
complete as a sphere  
with a scar  
whose origin  
I could no longer pin.

... My wife likes to say there are two kinds of people, those chasing pleasure....those running from pain ... maybe she's right, I don't know ... But what I do know is this, pleasure helps you forget...pain forces you to hope. You tell yourself, this can't last. Today could be different. Today, things just might change.

— Russell Crowe, from the movie *Tenderness*

## HANDS WITH WINGS

Lisa Harris

Abbey loved Eliza—she loved sticky fingers and honesty, open defiance and hugs. She read *Little Women* and *Treasure Island*, *The Brothers Grimm* and *Baba Yaga* to her. And in Eliza's life a whole new world began, the world of what could be, the world of magic, a world outside the hollow of Yarnell and different from the ancient world of the Bible. She loved running across to her Aunt Abbey's house and spending time with her.

Trudy, Eliza's mom, made hot chocolate and toast, which she cut into triangles. She showed Eliza how to dip the points into her hot chocolate, showed her how to tap the corners of their mouth with the corners of the napkin. Trudy showed her picture books of birds, let Eliza sit curled on her lap looking at page after page of buntings with bright green and indigo feathers. Eliza already knew of robins and jays and crows, but Trudy showed her more and taught her how to garden and how to pray. The two actions both requiring all of Eliza's attention. Eliza was doubly loved because she had Abbey and Trudy.

Abbey permitted Eliza to take all kinds of books home with her. And sometimes Trudy was afraid because Abbey had loved books, too, and look where it had gotten her—no steady man and pretending her daughter was her niece. Despite her fear, Trudy didn't stop Eliza from reading, but she made a deal with her—for every hour Eliza read a book, Eliza had to read two hours from the Bible. And Trudy directed her to St. John's Revelation and the Gospel According to Luke.

Eliza was an honest child, and she did what she said she would do. At night when she slept, images from all the stories merged into one world of prophets and witches, fairy godmothers and shepherds, stone temples and magic shacks built on chicken legs. She saw Lazarus rise from the grave, and then she saw her own body, covered with sores, buried without redemption. She witnessed ten lepers cleansed and children abandoned in the forest to gingerbread prisons. She saw the Lamb of God talking with the bad daughter whose mouth ejected toads and snakes. Nighttime became Eliza's world. It was where she began to see different truths.

Eliza's favorite stories were the *Baba Yaga* stories that were published as a serial in the newspaper on Tuesdays. The magical chicken legs upon which Baba Yaga built her house made Eliza think of her Grandmother Mattea's chicken coop.

Eliza curled in her Aunt Abbey's lap, traveled with Baba Yaga and her cat. Trudy's voice broke the rhythm of the story. "Eliza, Abbey, supper's ready." Mashed potatoes, corn, baked chicken: a meat Eliza will not eat. Afraid she'll spin and spin to Baba Yaga's black wood and her magic shack, Dayouska. The night, a pool for drowning, pressed against the dining room window---wanting in, wanting her. As the story continued, Abbey's voice soothed her.

*“Baba Yaga hurried over the frozen ground, knobby hands holding her cape closed. Her warty face pierced the cold. Her humped-back cat skirted the path—getting ahead of her then falling back. They shared hunger—the cat for food—Baba Yaga for a child.*

*Dayouska, her magic shack, stood in the clearing perched high above the snow on its three huge chicken legs. The yellow scales glistened in the moon washed night.*

*Baba Yaga jumped hard three times. The shack spun: a cork screw, down to the ground. She shook the snow from her black mane. Snow didn’t melt on her head; she had no heart.*

*Inside, Baba Yaga and her skinny cat, Shadow, hurried to the woodstove. “Ala-mah-tay,” she whispered. The chicken legs spun up into the night. From inside her black cape, she drew out a bright purpled sack covered with tiny mirrors. The cat leapt to the cupboard.*

*Baba Yaga untied the top of the bag, dumped pale blond ringlets bound by pink ribbons into the black cauldron.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

The dry, rocky chicken yard yawned empty. Caught inside the hen house, fifty-five clucking chickens waited. Eliza’s plump legs carried her in pursuit of Mattea, white-haired, as in hand.

Grammy grabbed a hen, spun it around, knocked it against the ground. Stretching its neck across the killing log, she held the bird in place with her foot. The ax reared, fell fast. The head flew. Blood splashed on Eliza’s what socks. Grammy lifted her foot.

Eliza clasped her hands in delight and stumbled in her flight to catch the running bird. She overtook it, snatched its reptilian feet. Carrying it in front of her, she returned it to Grammy for her reward.

The yellow scales glistened in the sun-drenched day. One quick stroke and the spindly legs were Eliza’s. She took them to the rock garden where she sat pulling loose white tendons, making the claws grab air.

Eliza walked down the violet patched lane, a lift in her step. In her jacket pocket, she carried the amulet to break the spell that was turning Trudy’s hands to claws. The paraffin gloves, the doctor’s cure, failed, so Eliza made chants and potions. The cold yellow chicken feet gripped the purple lining of her coat with eight dirty nails.

She carried the magic feet upstairs to her bedroom and put them in the nightstand beneath her underpants. Before she fell asleep, and after she said her prayers, she pulled them out and chanted over them, creating a spell to make Trudy well.

Trudy wore black evening gloves when she went away with Ezra to Philadelphia. There were pearl buttons at the wrists so she could slip her hands out, but leave the arms covered. She had very well-formed hands and feet and was offered money in the city at a department store to have them photographed. A few magazines ran the pictures. She had a large, lovely face that appeared part dwarf, part fairy—and it



enchanted Ezra.

She etched her lips in “Love That Pink,” covered her mushroom and moss smell with “My Sin” perfume. But by the time Eliza knew her, she wore gloves made by dipping her hands layer by layer in liquid wax. Piano keys once spoke for her when words did not, but now her hands limped and slid. Her feet became clubbed, curled, with the metatarsal pushing through flesh. She hovered between appearance and essence. Each act she performed was a measure of perfection from her homemade currant jelly, garnet red and translucent, to her housekeeping and gardens. She expected a lot from herself and Ezra. When Trudy watched Abbey take Eliza to the cemetery, she saw dim tree branches wave at her while she watched their two spirits searching the cemetery. She did not know what drew them there or what they hoped to find.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Hargrove Post Office maintained 375 boxes and Alex McGraw, the postmaster, worked there the entire time Abbey was growing up. He was the only thing she feared. The post office, built in 1925 was a gray clapboard, two story. Half of the building was Polly Jantz’s store. On the front of it was a handpainted sign: U.S. POST OFFICE, HARGROVE, PA, mounted on the upper left of the building where one would expect to find the return address if the building were an envelope. Such a nice visual detail.

Abbey went six days a week from the time she was a little girl to collect the mail. Alex McGraw made her talk with him sometimes before he gave the letter to her.

She didn’t want to talk to him, so she learned how to work the combination on the little brass box to avoid him. She wasn’t as tall as the counter top when she first began going. So she had to go to his gate and be let in to the back to get the letters. At first she like it when he opened the gateway for her. He showed her the big bags the letters came and went in, the drawers full of stamps, and the paper clips. His work was different from milking cows, cleaning the henhouse, and drying herbs. And at first she was curious.

Alex was neither thin nor fat, but average. He lived along and had circles under his eyes, so dark he looked bruised. He wore white shirts and navy blue and burgundy ties. He rolled his shirt sleeves up. He rolled the cuff under. On his left fourth finger he wore an onyx ring.

In the cool green silence of the post office, Abbey hurried through the clicks on the mailbox so she wouldn’t have to talk. As she pulled the door open and grabbed the mail, she felt resistance and heard, “Hell, Pumpnickel!”

She played through the scene: Identified herself, stood on her tiptoes to peer through the 4x4 hole so Alex was sure he wasn’t giving previous mail to the wrong person, which he reminded Abbey was a federal offense. He smiled while he gripped Abbey’s hand, but eventually she saw it as a leer. He gave her presents. Once he gave her a tissue with three chocolate kisses. Another time, the tissue held a tiny gold locket. Or another

tissue came filled with gold, red and blue stars. They were identical to the ones she earned from her piano teacher to show how well she had learned her lessons. It was worth getting the stars because they gave her power. She could put them on her piano pages and pretend to Mattea she'd had a good lesson so she could win Mattea's love.

Eliza thought of her hands flying across the piano keys as if they had wings, and the passion in her playing always made up for her lack of technical skill. She wondered what kind of piano Baba Yaga would have—she thought she knew. The white keys would be made of dragon's teeth, the black ones from bones that had been burned and then reconstituted into something hard and infinite. The sounds she could make if she were playing that piano would be able to call back the dead and let them dance again.

And somehow, Eliza began to feel as if she had some of the traits of Dayouska, Baba Yaga's shack—instead of chicken legs, she had magic chicken hands, hands with wings, and although it only made sense to her, it still made sense.

I think writing is an act of healing.  
It's an exorcism of sorts, to put into words and symbols  
this almost inexpressible anguish.  
That was why I started, to try and alleviate the despair.  
Writing shapes experience for me; it isn't ever the experience  
that gives any shape to the prose.  
It's by looking for the words and formulating the sentences  
that you give some kind of order to it  
that raw experience never has...

– Doris Grumbach

## Dark Night

Hannah Gray

After a month of deep clouds,  
the sun slipped over the east hills.

I squint my eyes against the sky,  
turn away and watch the slats of sunlight  
stripe the blue tiles.

~

Orange County isn't filled  
with orange groves anymore.

Straight lines of eucalyptus still stand  
between high-rises.

~

Above the desert  
there are black mountains.

We find land under water.

Coyote calls  
to moon.  
She answers back  
only to black holes.

Galaxies remain night deep  
until discovered.

~

Along the highway off-ramp,  
the wind unwound a cassette.  
Shiny tape tangled  
in and out and underneath  
dry brown grass.

Rewind yourself back  
into your plastic rectangle.

## **During Darkness**

**Hannah Gray**

I.

Ground thaw is months from today.

He had a dream.

A baby girl was born from her.

How do seeds thaw and bloom in Spring?

Ray upon ray streams down and into the soil.

She grew to the age of six before he woke. She was vivid.

She is alive in his mind.

II.

A white sky spits white ice this morning.

She had a dream.

Her mother brought her young sunflowers to grow tall in her yard.

How does she not let die another green life?

Her black thumbs proof of a lack of growth.

They grow taller than her.

Behind her mind, they sway in the wind, their black eyes winking.

## **Red Marrow**

**Hannah Gray**

We sit on the beach and pass a bottle of Jack between us.  
The sun already sunk into the Pacific.  
Blood slows.

Tonight, before sleep comes, the tide will crash in close to the tent.  
The waves will roar like wildness.

In the sound will be a memory of the man in South America  
and the pod of killer whales who know him.  
Waist deep in the ocean he waits for them.  
They risk beaching to feel his hands glide over their slick skin.

I want my hands to be in those man's hands  
with wildness under our fingertips.

## **WHAT THEY LEFT BEHIND**

**Ryan Allen**

The sky is clear and open and the smell of the ocean permeates each direction my nose can smell. Breeze blows the trees. Us. Rattling red-fangled-speckled leaves beneath our feet. We move, from car to trail, a shaded sidewalk, one set of road for another. We wind through eucalyptus, the shaven face of shedding bark. We are quiet a lot these days. The silence of experience.

“If you ever want to know something, be quiet,” she has told me before.

We keep pace, stride to stride, in beat, in step, side to side.

Four feet sink our first four feet in the sand. It’s hot. I feel the tiny grains sliding in-between my feet and flip-flops. Our hand-in-hand steps together are uneven and awkward. We walk unsteadily, tilting from side to side, each step still sinking in sand. Our flip-flops prove inoperable.

We walk out further, out into the bright sun, deeper into the hot sand. We walk down the beach, toward the water. Close to the shore it is lime green. The Wharf and the Row are visible. Dozens of clipper ships line the Bay, their masts, row after row, like a classroom of raised children’s hands. Parasailors, kite flyers and castle builders scatter the sand. An old man teaches a small boy kayak rolls. A wave, a drone, a whirlwind of sand hovers, then flies at our feet. We walk down, closer to the water. Only two thin cirrus clouds wisp the sky.

Meghan, my wife, puts her feet in the Pacific. I walk down, a few feet beyond, and immerse myself, knee-down, on wet, tide-parched sand. A wave encircles and conquers my feet and ankles, forcing me to jump back up and stand erect. My feet sink deeper in the sand. Again the impression is lost. *Lasts only as long as I’m willing to stand here.* I squeeze Meghan’s hand. She squeezes mine back.

We look at the water, the mixture of colors and ingredients: aqua and ultramarine, the deepest green; a quarter cup of salt, a pound of mussels, two-dozen whales. We move in currents and schools—of fish. A kiss on the lips. A few yards behind us, a wedding. We can hear the exchange of vows. We stop and watch for a few seconds as we zig-zag the shore.

Then Meghan and I walk onto the pier. We move away from the sand, toward the performing monkey and sailor, and then past them and toward the statue of Santa Rosalina, the patron saint of Italian fisherman. We move beyond all of it until we are face to face with row after row of crotch-rocket motor bikes, a Bubba Gump’s, and the Marine Sanctuary. Meghan says she is hungry, so we begin looking at menus on the outside of restaurants we pass. We don’t have enough money to afford any of them, so we decide to wait.

We walk to get a closer view of the Marine Sanctuary, which, among other things, recounts the boom and bust of the sardine population at Cannery Row.



“There’s nothing left,” I say to Meghan.

“What do you mean?” she answers back.

“Look around,” I say. “Where are Steinbeck and Ricketts now? The sardines and canning houses of their time are the overpriced fish houses and hotels of ours. The closest we’ll ever get is pictures at the museum.”

“There’s gotta be something else,” Meghan says. “You know, there are still people. A few of them at least maybe.”

“I don’t know what I was expecting. I wanted it to look like a novel.”

“Name a place,” Meghan says, “that doesn’t change with time.”

She pauses. We stop. She looks and turns me toward the water.

“Sardines just aren’t enough anymore,” she says.

“They probably never were,” I say back. It just sucks that *this* is all that remains—the Defense Language Institute, a Naval Postgraduate School, and drones of flocking tourists.”

“Like us, baby?” Meghan says and laughs.

“Yeah, like us. The closest we get is that Navy vessel anchored off shore. All the world in a guided tour through a museum gift shop.”

She pulls my arm and leads me down some steps that let us out back down by the water. A chain of interlinked rocks jut out from the sand and into the Bay.

“Let’s go sit out there,” Meghan points and tells me. “My feet hurt and the view looks nice.”

We both put our flip-flops in our hands. The rocks extend horizontally for about fifty or so yards. About twice that far directly in front. It’s a tightrope walk on the jagged edges. The sharp points chisel into the soles of our feet. Water collects in tiny puddles in between some of the larger slabs. We hear some strange noise, like a dog’s toy tweaking, above the water, beyond the splitting rocks.

Ahead of us, these empty rocks, a Bay, an ocean. Behind us, a boardwalk, a swarm of sidewalks thronged with people eating and drinking, scolding their children and posing for pictures.

The noise gets louder, crisper, more pronounced, a communication on some alternate frequency. Meghan and I come to the edge. To the spot where we can walk no further. Here, the rocks are wet from the splashing waves crashing against the outcropping walls. In front, the water extends farther than my eyes can see. Down below, individual pieces of rock jut out, above the crashing rocks. The source of sound: sea lions rocking unsteadily, teetering, keeping an awkward balance. They call to one another. Back and forth they sway, a nose to water, tail-down, liquid ground. They dip. Some slip in and swim to another sea lion, another rock. Some are playing, knocking one another off, vying for position, momentarily asserting their status as king of the hill, Moses of the mountain.

Meghan and I watch them for almost an hour. We are quiet mostly. Say it all in eyes looking, watching *them* dancing with one another, slipping from rock to rock.

We avoid the beach on the way back to our car and walk down through town on the city-street sidewalks instead. We pass the Naval Postgraduate School and the Defense Language Institute on our right. The path is lined with eucalyptus trees shedding their bark.

“God, these things seem so out of place here,” Meghan says. “Why does Monterey, California need trees shipped in from Australia? It all seems so foreign.”

I notice some blood on the bottom of my foot. I decide to let it go. I can feel the grains of sand, still rubbing in-between my toes.

## Interview with A.D. Winans

by Terry Reis Kennedy

**Kennedy:** You were born and raised in San Francisco, the city of Saint Francis of Assisi who loved and sheltered the poor and the weak, not just animals as legend tells, but everyone from abandoned babies to winos and prostitutes. Have you any connection to the saint; you know, do you feel his spirit hovers over the city influencing it in anyway?

**Winans:** I guess you could say that I feel his spirit in that my own poetry reflects the condition and circumstances of the “poor and the weak.” San Francisco is a unique city. The mayor and Board of Supervisors refuse to cooperate with Federal Law Enforcement Agencies who have been conducting raids on suspected illegal immigrants in the city. And in keeping with the long established tradition of sanctuary, the churches here continue to offer them safe haven. And let’s not forget those animals. Each year in San Francisco’s North Beach we have an annual blessing of the animals.

**Kennedy:** Your work has always interested me, engaged me, because it feels so spontaneous, not in the least contrived. Do you, in fact, ever write in forms, you know—Villanelles, Sestinas—the whole Babette Deutch collection of styles?

**Winans:** First let me say that I have never said I was a poet. In my opinion the word poet has largely lost its meaning. Take a look at My Space (on the Internet) and you’ll find anyone and everyone claiming to be a poet. And there are some God-awful words there clothed in the label of poetry. Then you have the Business Poets who have cheapened the name even further. And then there are the poetry hustlers. The answer to your question is a resounding NO. I don’t write in forms. When I sit down to write a poem it is not with any conscious effort on my part to write in any particular format. My poems have always been spontaneous and written in a language accessible to the average Joe on the street. I write when the demons tell me to write. You might say I’m a caretaker for the strange mutterings that rattle around inside my head.

**Kennedy:** What is a business poet?

**Winans:** A business poet is a poet who wants to make a career out of poetry. Knowing that poetry doesn’t sell, he or she becomes a professional hustler. They are skilled in the art of grant writing and ass kissing, especially in kissing ass. They trade favors with each other as if poems were trading cards to be put up on E-Bay and auctioned off to the highest bidder. A real poet writes because he has to write and not with the idea of becoming a media darling. Poetry is not money. Poetry is a vision, a living thing. A real poet is like a glassmaker spinning his or her magic. Most Academics write for each other, although there are some exceptions. And the Language School Poets are so caught up in trying to create the perfect line that they don’t realize what they are producing are still-born children. The words may be perfectly arranged, but they lie lifeless on the page, void of any resemblance to flesh and blood.

**Kennedy:** In such a competitive contemporary poetry scene, “Po Biz,” as the late Anne

Sexton referred to it, how have you managed to retain so many good relationships with your colleagues?

**Winans:** I don't really have any colleagues, not in the true sense of the word. I find most poets boring people to be around and worse yet are the ego monsters that walk around with a capital "P" on their foreheads. I do have many friends who happen to be poets, but they are my friends for reasons other than being poets. Compared to most poets in the literary community, I am pretty much a recluse, but there are a good number of poets out there who I do like and respect. I also have a fair share of enemies who seem to attack me without having the slightest idea of who I am or where I am coming from. I used to respond to their attacks, but found I was only playing into their hands. This is what they want. Most of them can't write a decent poem themselves, so they get their names in print by attacking others who have paid their dues. I recall Bukowski telling me, "I knew I was getting there when the attacks started to come."

**Kennedy:** How would you describe your life quest? In other words, do you see yourself as a man on a journey toward something beyond the known reality?

**Winans:** I live in the here and now, although I sometimes travel back in time, mainly to see what mistakes I have made and can learn from. I haven't given much thought to anything beyond the immediate. I believe the ultimate search is the search within yourself, within your own being. Poets need to search for their personal vision and then write that vision down in a language other people can understand. My goal has always been to be honest and not sell out as so many others in the arts have done. Integrity is all a poet has in the end, and when he sells this he has truly entered into a pact with the devil.

**Kennedy:** The devil! Do you think there is a progenitor of evil, or are you speaking metaphorically here?

**Winans:** I am speaking metaphorically. But if one were to use the dictionary definition of a demon they would find that it could also be "a person who has great energy or skill." Obviously, this isn't what comes to mind when the average person uses or hears the word demon. I choose to use it because it conjures up the image of being "possessed." But one need not be possessed by evil demons. My demons are exactly the opposite of evil. I don't know if this makes any sense to you or not.

**Kennedy:** Yes! It makes great sense. I have not ever been possessed in quite the way you speak of it, but I've certainly been obsessed. Meanwhile, you're one of the U.S. poets who have had a chance to look back over a long period of poetry history, what significant changes have you witnessed?

**Winans:** I don't really concern myself with things like this. I was never really into Shelley or Byron, but early on was able to identify with Eliot and Pound. However, it was Robert Lowell who made a breakthrough for me with his emotional experiences laid openly out on the page. I took another step forward with the poetry of Anne Sexton who

was able to write about her experiences as a woman suffering from a nervous breakdown, poems which were very emotional, but also written with a dedication to craftsmanship. Her poems freed me to write a book about my dysfunctional family (***Scar Tissue***). Wilfred Owen freed me to write about my military experiences in ***Panama***. Later I traveled a road leading me to poets like Jack Micheline and Charles Bukowski, both of whom I shared a lot in common with, which went beyond the subject matter of their poems. The only changes I am interested in are the changes I have undergone in both my life and my poetry. In truth my life and my poetry are one and the same.

**Kennedy:** These dysfunctional family experiences that you were able to share after reading Sexton, are you saying that, like her, you were abused?

**Winans:** Abuse comes in many different forms. My family argued constantly every day of my waking childhood life. I still vividly recall two incidents that have stayed with me my entire life. The first was as a young boy when I saw my parents arguing in the hallway, and in a heated moment, my mother slapped my father across the face. I saw the look of anger on my father's face as he raised his hand to slap her back, but he saw me out of the corner of his eye and held back. Another time my mother broke a dish over my father's head, while my adopted brother and I watched in horror. As I grew into my teens, I took to having arguments with my mother and once she reacted by throwing a coat hanger at me, which hit me in the face. This was the only physical abuse I personally experienced, but the psychological scars made me a nervous wreck long into my adulthood.

**Kennedy:** And what about the military experiences, were they in any way like those the young men and women engaged in the Iraq War are going through?

**Winans:** It would take me a separate interview to go into those experiences that began in basic training and continued on though my experiences with the 5700<sup>th</sup> Support Squadron in Panama. Early on I witnessed a sexual assault, which I walked away from, and saw two political prisoners die in a Jeep explosion in town. And there was regular degrading treatment of both our own men and the people in Panama. But this was nothing compared to what went on in Vietnam and Iraq. The chapbook I wrote about those days (*This Land Is Not My Land*), which won a PEN Josephine Miles 2006 award for Literary Excellence, can be purchased for \$6 from Presa Press.

**Kennedy:** Is it correct then to say that you write poems about your life in the confessional manner of Lowell and Sexton? Do you consider yourself a confessional poet?

**Winans:** I don't like labels. But the answer to your question is both yes and no. A lot of my poetry is confessional, but a great deal of it is not confessional. My jazz poems are a good example of this, as are my political poems, with the exception of my Panama military experiences. I don't constantly put myself into my poems like Bukowski did.

**Kennedy:** Some of your poems are often like films of place, people, and circumstance. Though you are not *in* them, as you say, at their best I observe that you,

the writer, are more than the observer; you are the camera. In this way you are like the eye of God, seeing without judging. Any comment on this?

**Winans:** Funny you should say this because I am a photographer as well as a poet and writer. I see many of my poems as “word snapshots.” My eye becoming the camera lens and capturing what I see on the page in written format. I try to keep personal judgment out of my work, but sometimes this is impossible, especially with political poems.

**Kennedy:** Both Lowell and Sexton were hospitalized due to their mental illness. Have you ever suffered in this manner?

**Winans:** No, I haven't, but I have had bouts with anxiety and depression, enough so that I had to take medication and at one time saw a psychologist. However, I have not suffered from severe depression that could be categorized as a mental illness.

**Kennedy:** What prompts you to write a poem? What is the process that you go through?

**Winans:** There are many things that prompt me to write a poem. It might be something I saw on the evening news or something I read in the newspaper. Many of my poems have come out of the streets of San Francisco: the homeless, hookers, alcoholics, and the downtrodden souls that society has turned their backs on. My poems don't come from books that I have read, but from my own personal experiences. A lot of my poems (especially political poems) came about from listening to musicians like Bob Dylan (*Masters of War*), for instance, whom I believe is also a great poet. I have no identifiable process that I follow. I write whenever the mood strikes me. I am more or less like a composer who hears the music inside his head and then writes it down. If not a composer, then a caretaker for the voices inside my head who tell me when and what to write.

**Kennedy:** There they are again, those *others* who possess your awareness and tell you what to write. Could they be the Muses? Do you think that rappers are hearing the same voices?

**Winans:** I haven't thought much about it. I suppose you could call it (them) a Muse. I don't listen to a lot of rap music, but I'm realizing they too must be hearing voices, maybe not my voices, but voices nevertheless.

**Kennedy:** Not so long ago I read your manuscript-in-progress about a love relationship that had gone bad and left you feeling very vulnerable. When something hits you like this and knocks you down emotionally, does writing about it help you?

**Winans:** I think for me, in this particular instance, it helped ease the pain I was going through. Writing to me is a form of therapy. The Love Poem book has undergone several revisions, which is unusual for me. I'm glad I set it aside and waited several years after the break-up to find a suitable publisher for it. The woman who is the central focus of the book threatened a lawsuit against me without ever having seen it. She might be surprised to find the book is not a negative book at all, although there are a

few poems dealing with the negative aspects of our relationship. You asked if writing about it in some way helped me with the pain I was going through. The answer is, yes! And it wasn't just with this book. The books about my military experience and my childhood had a profound way of putting those particular demons to rest.

**Kennedy:** When is this Love Poem book coming out, and under what title? How can we get it?

**Winans:** It was published in the summer of 2010. The title is Love- Zero with some fine art work by Norman Olson, a very talented artist. Cross Cultural Publications is the publisher. The price is \$15, including shipping. This is the same press that published my book, *The Wrong Side of Town*, which was translated into Russian.

**Kennedy:** In February 2007 you lost much of your work in a fire that gutted your apartment. You were just ripped right out of your own life, so to speak. Have you had any insight on going through this loss? Do you see it as Fate, Destiny, Karma?

**Winans:** I don't know that I believe in fate or destiny. I do believe in Karma. You know that part about "What goes around comes around," But I don't think the fire was a result of bad karma. I was devastated by the loss of books of mine and years of correspondence with other poets and writers. I was depressed for many months. I am grateful for my sister taking me in during this period of time, but she lives in suburban Marin County, which is far different from San Francisco. But the flip side is that many good things came about as a result of the fire. A good number of poets and writers (many of whom I do not know) and friends sent me generous cash contributions that enabled me to replace the physical things I lost in the fire. And I patched up my past strained relationship with my sister and in the process have gotten to know my niece and nephew and their children, all of whom I had little contact with before the fire. And it has given me time to contemplate what I want to do with the remaining years of my life. So in this sense the old saying of "everything happens for a reason" may have credence to it.

**Kennedy:** The remaining years of your life.... what do you want to do with them? Once I heard His Holiness the Dalai Lama say that now that he has gotten older, he has to spend more time preparing for his death and for his next birth. Do thoughts like this ever enter your mind?

**Winans:** BOS Press just released a nearly four hundred-page book of Selected Poems, so that is one project that is finished. I'd like to find a publisher for my recently completed book of erotic short stories and for my book of articles (*Dead Lions*). I'd like to also put together a book of poems with opposite page photographs that I have taken over the course of my life. If there is any time left over, I'd like to try another stab at my autobiography. As for the latter part of your question, I'm not busy preparing for my death, but I do plan on reading more books on philosophy and religion, including the Bible. However, I'll skip the "begat" section.

**Kennedy:** How do you keep yourself going through the tough times?

**Winans:** There are only two things you can do. You can either pick up the pieces and try to put your life back together or you can throw in the towel and get stoned on drugs or alcohol, and retreat from the real world. Before the fire I had neglected my reading. Since the fire I have gone back and re-read the work of Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Langston Hughes, Carl Sandburg, and countless other poets and writers. I find that Sandburg and I have a lot in common. He loved and wrote about Chicago in the same way I love and write about my hometown, San Francisco.

**Kennedy:** At one point we looked to the east coast, New York and Boston, specifically to get the U.S. poet's view of life. When did the shift to California as a poetry center happen, in your opinion?

**Winans:** I'm not the one to ask that question. I never follow poetry trends. New York may have been and still may be the "hub" of the literary scene, but the West Coast has always been a center focus of what is happening in literature. The Beat movement brought with it media attention to the San Francisco and Los Angeles literary scene, and that brought more poets and writers to the West Coast, and, in particular, California.

**Kennedy:** How did you become a poet?

**Winans:** Like Jack Micheline I have never said I was a poet. I write from the heart and soul and if people want to say what I write makes me a poet, then that is fine with me. When I was young, I discovered Jack London and Hemingway and other writers and wanted, like them, to be a novelist. I had no thought of writing poetry. However, when I returned home from Panama in 1958, I discovered the Beat movement in North Beach. I came upon the poetry of Jack Micheline, Charles Bukowski, Richard Brautigan, Ginsberg, and Kaufman, and was able to instantly identify with their work, and how they wrote about their experiences and vision in a clear and ordinary language that the average man and woman could understand. I started writing poems in the Sixties and had my first chapbook published in 1970 by Atom Mind Press. Fortunately, poetry has come pretty easily to me. I can't say this is true of prose. My poems flow spontaneously on to the page. Prose on the other hand requires many painful revisions.

**Kennedy:** Do you think your childhood had anything to do with you becoming a poet?

**Winans:** Not in my becoming a poet, but it certainly provided me with a wealth of material to write about. My childhood days can be found in a book of mine (*Scar Tissue*), but I do recall a time in grammar school, a teacher passing out a picture of an old man sitting on a park bench, staring out into open space. She assigned the class to write what we believed we saw in the picture. I can't remember what it was I said, but I do recall the teacher praising it in front of the class, and I think maybe this is when I decided I wanted to become a writer. I recall my grandmother buying me my first typewriter, and shortly afterwards reading Jack London's, *Sea Wolf*. I think it was at this time that I wanted to become a novelist. I wish prose came to me as easily as poetry, but it does not. I tried my hand at writing a novel, but was awful, and I wound up tossing it in the trashcan.



**Kennedy:** Are you working on anything right now?

**Winans:** I didn't move back to my old (refurbished apartment) until September 2007. It took a few months to get settled back in. I am currently working on finding a publisher for my collection of short stories and a collection of my published articles. I'm also working on a new book of poems. The first two projects have already undergone two rough drafts, so it is more or less a matter of polishing them up. Like I said Prose does not come easy to me.

The spirit descends,  
Loosening tongues,  
but doesn't speak words:  
it speaks fire.  
Lit by a god,  
language becomes  
a prophecy  
of flames and a tower  
of smoke and collapse  
of syllables burned...

— Octavio Paz

## C O N T R I B U T O R S

**Carolyn Srygley-Moore** is an award-winning graduate of the Johns Hopkins University's Writing Seminars, a Pushcart nominee, and author of the digital chapbook Enough Light on the Dogwood, published by Mimesis poetry. Her work has appeared in numerous reviews to include *Antioch*, *The Pennsylvania Review*, *Real Stories*, *Eclectica*, *Stirring*, *The 4 AM Poetry Review*, and *Poets against War*. Carolyn can be heard reading her work at Snoest 2010 on You-Tube. She lives in Upstate New York with her husband and daughter.

**Matthew Burnside** is a primitive man, a gifted/lousy lover and worthy adversary. He is a writer of fiction, poetry, letters, numbers, and symbols. His work has appeared in *Concho River Review* and *Neon Magazine* in the UK. He has won the San Angelo Writers Conference, been a finalist in *Glimmertrain's* Fiction Open, and successfully juggled up to five balls at a time.

When he's not building monoliths with his bare hands, he can be found at the University of North Texas where he is finishing his Masters in Education, or in Allen, Texas, where he teaches his students to be Knowledge Samurais. Email him at [Willock77@hotmail.com](mailto:Willock77@hotmail.com).

**Dianna Henning** is author of two poetry books: The Tenderness House & The Broken Bone Tongue. She has published in numerous magazines and has taught creative writing through California Poets in the Schools, The William James Association, several CAC arts grants and recently worked with Native Americans through a CA Humanities Stories Grant.

**Andrei Guriianu** lives in Naperville, Illinois and teaches at North Central College. He is the author of three collections of poetry: And Nothing Was Sacred Anymore (March Street Press, 2009), Front Porch World View (Main Street Rag, 2009), Days When I Saw the Horizon Bleed (FootHills Publishing, 2006); also author of the chapbooks Anamnesis (Finishing Line Press, 2010), Exile (Big Table Publishing, 2010), and It Was Like That Once (Pudding House, 2008). He holds a doctorate in English from Binghamton University and is the founder and executive editor of the literary journal *The Broome Review* ([www.thebroomereview.com](http://www.thebroomereview.com)). From 2009 to 2010 he served as the Broome County, NY Poet Laureate. More at [www.andreiguriianu.com](http://www.andreiguriianu.com).

**Abraham Harping** is a freshman in college who struggles to find harmony between schoolwork and writing. *Ginosko* and *The Anemone Sidecar* will be the first literary journals to publish his work. He wants friends, so email him at [AHarping@gmail.com](mailto:AHarping@gmail.com).

**Ginger Peters** I have been a published writer and poet for over twenty-five years. I've written articles and human interest stories for newspapers and magazines. I earned 1<sup>st</sup> place for non-fiction from the South Plains Writer's Association and 2<sup>nd</sup> place for short fiction from the Panhandle Professional Writers Association. Originally from Texas, my husband and I now reside in Santa Fe, NM. My work has appeared in various publications such as: *Western Tales*, *The Ketch Pen*, *Living with Children*, *Home Life*, *Light and Life*, and *Literary Sketches of Texas*.

**Suzanne S. Rancourt's** book, Billboard in the Clouds, Curbstone Press, was the 2001 recipient of the Native Writers First Book Award. She is an Abenaki writer and holds a Master of Fine Arts in Poetry from Vermont College, Master of Science degree in Educational Psychology from SUNY, Albany, NY, and is a Certified facilitator and Affiliate of Amherst Writers and Artists. Suzanne is currently a Doctorate student at the European Graduate School - Expressive Arts Therapy, Counselor, Training and Consultant. She teaches writing to a variety of special populations: victims of domestic violence, women veterans, mental health, homeless women's shelters, incarcerated women, learning disabled and others. She is ranked in Aikido and Iaido and is an Armed Services Veteran.

**Laura Rodley's** chapbook Rappelling Blue Light was nominated for a Mass Book Award and has work nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Her second chapbook, Your Left Front Wheel is Coming Loose releases in October also by Finishing Line Press. She is co-curator of Collected Poets Series and teaches creative writing funded by Mass Cultural Council Grants. She works as freelance writer and journalist

**Phyllis Stowell**, Ph.D., Professor Emerita, Founding Member of Saint Mary's College MFA is currently Co-Chair Friends of the C.G. Jung Institute, San Francisco. She is the author of five poetry collections; her poems have appeared in over seventy traditional and avant-garde reviews. She was co-editor of APPETITE, an anthology of women's poetry (BOA Editions). Her most recent book, SHIELD/Bouclier, a bilingual limited edition of poetry with art by Pacia Sallomi, was published in 2007.

**Jeni Booker Senter** is a published poet, essayist, and print journalist devoted to the advancement of women. She is a member of NOW and AAUW and is an English and creative writing graduate student at the University of West Florida. Her writing has recently earned awards in the CM Duque Wilson Essay Contest and the James and Christian LaRoche Memorial Poetry Contest, and she was awarded for 'Outstanding Press Coverage' in the 2008 Women in the Arts Awards sponsored by the General Federation of Women's Clubs. She has over 600 published poems, articles, and essays, and she is a recent contributor to *A & U Magazine*, *Northwest Florida Business Climate Magazine*, *Troubadour*,

*Ginosko Literary Journal, The Moronic Ox, and the Blackwater Review Literary Journal.*

**Joseph Gastiger** studied at Iowa and Colorado State before he took a job teaching at Northern Illinois University. He was coordinator of NIU's Honors Program for eleven years.

His poetry has been appearing in journals for thirty years, and two of his books have almost been published, so he's been told. A collection of prose poems, Loose Talk, has earned a few maybes. Since 2001, Joe's been a pastor at the First Congregational United Church of Christ in DeKalb, Illinois.

**Greg Adair** is an environmental activist, visual artist, and novice poet-writer who lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. He holds a Bachelor's degree from UC Berkeley, and runs a small contracting business with which he supports these activities. The poem "Untitled" accompanied a proposal of marriage to his beloved Anna (sometimes called "Bird", or "Bee"), who said "yes".

**Peter G Res** is a poet, songwriter, artist, and musician. His work has appeared in *tinfoil dresses, right hand pointing, and abjective* among other venues. His latest book of poetry, Smoke and the South, is now available through Nassaince press. He lives in New Jersey.

**Daniel Ames** is a poet living and working in Detroit, Michigan. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a degree in journalism and now works as a creative director at an advertising agency. His poems has been featured in *Magnolia: A Florida Journal of Literary and Fine Arts, Merge, Bijou Poetry Review, The Centrifugal Eye, Hudson View Poetry, Flutter Poetry Journal, Thick With Conviction, Thieves Jargon, Circle Show, A Shade of Blue, Tangent, The Tower Journal, Tenemos, Edison Literary Review, Tonopah Review, Iodine Poetry Journal, Pulsar Poetry UK, Renaissance City, Camroc Press Review, Stone's Throw Magazine* and the *Ambassador Poetry Project*.

**B.Z. NIDITCH** is a poet, playwright, fiction writer and teacher.

His work is widely published in journals and magazines throughout the world, including: *Columbia: A Magazine of Poetry and Art, The Literary Review, Denver Quarterly, Hawaii Review, Le Guepard* (France); *Kadmos* (France); *Prism International, Jejune* (Czech Republic); *Leopold Bloom* (Budapest); *Antioch Review, and Prairie Schooner, among others.*

He lives in Brookline, Massachusetts.

**Michael Hogan** is the author of sixteen books, including a collection of short stories, six books of poetry, collected essays on teaching in Latin America, a novel, and a history of the Irish battalion in Mexico which formed the basis for an MGM movie starring Tom Berenger. His poetry has appeared in many journals such as the *Paris Review*, the

*Harvard Review*, *New Letters* and the *American Poetry Review*. His work has received two Pushcart Prizes and an NEA Creative Writing Fellowship. He lives in Guadalajara, Mexico with Lucinda Mayo, the textile artist, and his dog Molly Malone.

[www.drmmichaelhogan.com/](http://www.drmmichaelhogan.com/)

**Suzanne S. Rancourt's** book, *Billboard in the Clouds*, Curbstone Press, was the 2001 recipient of the Native Writers First Book Award. She is an Abenaki writer and holds a Master of Fine Arts in Poetry from Vermont College, Master of Science degree in Educational Psychology from SUNY, Albany, NY, and is a Certified facilitator and Affiliate of Amherst Writers and Artists. Suzanne is currently a Doctorate student at the European Graduate School - Expressive Arts Therapy, Counselor, Training and Consultant. She teaches writing to a variety of special populations: victims of domestic violence, women veterans, mental health, homeless women's shelters, incarcerated women, learning disabled and others. She is ranked in Aikido and Iaido and is an Armed Services Veteran.

**Ellis Waters** bio not available.

**Helen Vitoria** lives and writes in Effort, PA. Her work can be found and is forthcoming in: *PANK*, *wicked alice*, *The Orange Room Review*, *The Dirty Napkin*, *Gigantic Sequins*, *The Scrambler*, *The Cartier Street Review*, *Sunfish Poetry Magazine*, *Monkeybicycle*, *Tiger's Eye: A Journal of Poetry*, *Spooky Boyfriend*, *Thirteen Myna Birds*, *Right Hand Pointing*, *The Lehigh Valley Review*, *The Literary Bohemian* and others. She has recently been thrice nominated for Best New Poets 2010 Anthology. She is working on her first full length collection: Corn Exchange.

**Robert Anderson** is an accountant and fiction writer from Brighton, MI. He holds a bachelor's in accounting from Michigan State University and a master's in accounting from Eastern Michigan University. After working in public accounting, he left to study English at the University of Michigan where he was nominated for a Hopwood Award. After completing his studies, he decided to write full time. He has written numerous short stories and recently completed his first novel.

**Alyce Miller's** most recent book is *Water*, winner of the Mary McCarthy prize for Short Fiction. More than 200 stories, poems, essays, and articles have been published in magazines, journals, and anthologies.

**Rose Hamilton-Gottlieb** Last spring, *Nimrod International Journal* selected one of my stories as a finalist for The Katherine Anne Porter Prize for Fiction. My stories have been published in *The Chicago Tribune* (as a runner-up in the 2006 Nelson Algren Award contest), *Papier Mache Press* anthologies Grow Old Along With Me, At Our Core, and Generation to Generation; *Room of One's Own*, *Faultline*, and others. An evening of my

work was performed in the 2006 New Short Fiction Series, a Live Literary Magazine in Los Angeles. I was a founding member of the Asilomar Writers Consortium and served as coordinator from 1984 to 2005. A former college lecturer in History and American Studies, I have completed three novels, a novella, and a short story collection.

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**John McKernan** is now a retired comma herder. He lives-mostly-in West Virginia where he edits ABZ Press. His most recent book is a selection of poems, *Resurrection of the Dust*. He has published poems in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Paris Review*, *The New Yorker*, *Virginia Quarterly Review* and many other magazines.

**Edward Murray** is the author of *Stranger's Pilgrimage*. Stranger is a contributor to *Dionne's Story*, an anthology of poetry and prose for the awareness of violence against women. He is a member, and past president, of the Langston Hughes Poetry Society of Pittsburgh. His poetry has appeared in *Writer's Block* at the soulpitt. He is an artist, filmmaker, photographer and poet. He was born and raised in southern California during the 1980's and 1990's. He grew up in an economically challenged neighborhood with gangs, drugs and violence. During those times he chose to participate in certain activities and then found relief or therapy from the difficult situations by writing, drawing or taking pictures. He was nicknamed Stranger because of being away from the neighborhood on many different occasions. Stranger welcomes questions, comments, or exchanges of ideas by email: [edleemu@verizon.net](mailto:edleemu@verizon.net).

**Leigh Anne Hornfeldt** lives in Kentucky with her husband and three young sons. She wrote her first poem at age six while "camping" in the back of an old pickup truck. Her work has appeared in *Plain Spoke*, *Chronogram*, *Untitled Country Review*, *Soundzine*, *Literary Mama*, *Foundling Review*, and elsewhere. [squoze@yahoo.com](mailto:squoze@yahoo.com)

**A. D. Winans** is a native San Francisco poet, writer and photographer. He is a graduate of San Francisco State University. He returned home from Panama in February 1958 to become part of the Beat and post-Beat era. He is the author of fifty books and chapbooks of poetry and prose. Major books include [The Holy Grail: The Charles Bukowski Second Coming Revolution](#), [North Beach Revisited](#), and [This Land Is Not My Land](#), which won a 2006 PEN Josephine Miles Award for Literary Excellence. Most recent books include [The Wrong Side Of Town](#), [Marking Time](#), [Pigeon Feathers](#), [Billie Holiday Me and the Blues](#), [No Room For Buddha](#), and [Love - Zero](#). In 2007 Presa Press published a book of his Selected Poems: [The Other Side Of Broadway: Selected Poems 1995-2005](#). In late 2010, BOS Press will publish a 300-plus page of his Selected Poems.

Winans won a February 2007 Beat Poet of the month honor by the Beat Museum and in 2009 was presented a PEN Oakland Lifetime Achievement Award.

From 1972 to 1989 he edited and published *Second Coming Magazine and Press*, which produced a large number of books and anthologies, among them the highly acclaimed California Bicentennial Poet's Anthology. He worked for the San Francisco Art Commission, Neighborhood Arts Program from 1975 to 1980, during which time he produced the Second Coming 1980 Poets and Music Festival, honoring the late poet Josephine Miles and the great blues musician, John Lee Hooker.

He has received numerous editor and publisher grants from the NEA and the California Arts Council, and writer assistance grants from PEN and the Academy of American Poets. In 1983 he was awarded a San Francisco Arts and Letters Foundation cash award for his contribution to small press literature. He has read his poetry with many acclaimed poets, among them: Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Jack Hirschman, Diane DiPrima, all current and past San Francisco Poet Laureats, and the late Charles Bukowski, Jack Micheline and Bob Kaufman.

His poetry, prose, articles, essays, and book reviews have appeared in over 2000 literary magazines and anthologies, including *City Lights Journal*, *Poetry Australia*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Beatitude*, *Beat Scene*, *Rattle*, *The Smith*, *The Outlaw Bible of American Poetry*, and *Inside the Outside*. In April 2004 a poem of his was set to music and performed at Tully Hall, NYC.

In late September 2008 Sound Streettracks released a CD recording of his [The Reagan Psalms](#). Readers of this web site may obtain a shrink wrapped tape for just \$10, including shipping. Contact [slowdancer2006@netzero.com](mailto:slowdancer2006@netzero.com)

His work has been praised by writers like Colin Wilson, Studs Terkel, James Purdy, Peter Coyote, Herbert Gold, Antler, Hirschman, and the late Jack Micheline and Charles Bukowski. He has worked at a variety of jobs, most recently with the U.S. Dept. of Education (Office For Civil Rights) as an Equal Opportunity Specialist, investigating claims of discrimination against minorities, women and the disabled.

Winans is a member of PEN, and has served on the Board of Directors of various art organizations, including the now defunct Committee of Small Magazine Editors and Publishers (COSMEP), The South of Market Cultural Center, and Friends of Services For the Arts. He is currently an Advisory Board Member of the SF International Poetry Library.

He is listed in the International Directory of who's who in poetry, the Gale Research Contemporary American Authors series, the Gale Research Contemporary authors autobiography series, and Who's Who in America. His essay on the late Bob Kaufman was published in the American Poetry Review and was republished in 2007 by The Writer's Research Group. His archives and the archives of Second Coming are housed at Brown University.



**Lisa Harris** writes poetry, fiction, and essays. She has a Master of Fine Arts from Milton Avery Graduate School and holds other degrees in educational leadership, literature and literacy. Born of German and English descent in the Allegheny Mountains of Pennsylvania, she has lived in Savannah, Georgia and Trumansburg, New York. Her fictions have been published by Bright Hill Press, Westview/Harpercollins, *ginosko*, *The Distillery*, *MacGuffin*, *RiversEdge*, *Nimrod International*, *Stillwater*, *The American Aesthetic*, *Argestes*, *The Habersham Review*, *Phoebe*, *Zone 3*, *The Coe Review*, *cantaraville*, and the *Anemone Sidecar*. Her poetry has been published in The Second Word Thursday Anthology, *Puerto del Sol*, *The Cathartic*, *Karamu*, *Stillwater*, *Fennel Stalk*, and exhibited in collaborative word and image installations with Susan Weisend, Nancy Valle and Carol Spence.

**Hannah Gray** earned her MFA in Creative Writing at Eastern Washington University. Her recent poems have appeared in Chaparral literary journal. She was a high school English instructor and currently teaches college composition and literature. She lives in Colorado with her husband and their two dogs.

**Ryan Allen** I work as a Course Mentor in Language and Communication at Western Governors University and I serve as the Creative Writing editor of *605 Magazine*. I received my Ph.D. in English from the University of South Dakota in May 2009. My essays and reviews have appeared or are forthcoming in *South Dakota Review*, *Platte Valley Review*, *The Louisville Review*, the *Oregon Literary Review*, *605 Magazine*, *VLP Magazine*, *LEO Magazine* and *Planet Jackson Hole*. I currently live in Sioux City, Iowa with my wife.

