

FRESHWATER

2011

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FRESHWATER'S thirteenth issue, to be published in May 2012 is open to submissions from August 15, 2011, through December 15, 2011. Send up to five previously unpublished poems and a brief biographical note, with name, address, phone number, and e-mail address on each poem. E-mail submissions must be Word attachments. One submission per submission period. An e-mail address is essential for electronic notification and re-submission of accepted work. By mail, include stamped, self-addressed #10 envelope. Poems will not be returned.

Submit to
FRESHWATER
Asnuntuck Community College
170 Elm Street, Enfield, CT 06082
or
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Editor's Note

Needless to say, this issue would not exist without the incredible time and work put into the process by a fine group of editors. I cannot even imagine putting out an issue without Editor Gay Paluch, who has generously volunteered an enormous amount of time and energy for the past six years. Gay has a love of poetry that never falters, and she and I have worked together for so long that we don't even need to say what needs to be done. We just read each other's minds, then laugh out loud. She is a blessing. Associate Editors, Katy Beebe, Roberta Whitman Hoff, and Melissa (Dixie) Izzo have been invaluable in putting together this issue from beginning to end. Katy's quiet efficiency, insight, and an ability to pick up on nuances in a poem combined to make her a very important part of the editorial process and a joy to work with. Roberta's fine intelligence, enduring passion for poetry, and delight in learning illuminated many a long session of discussion, while her rich, deep laugh constantly reminded us all not to take ourselves too seriously. Dixie Izzo was not only incredibly hardworking but also brought a youthful, quirky energy and great wisdom to reading and selecting poems, never letting us give up on a poem until we were absolutely sure it didn't meet "Freshwater standards." Assistant Editor, Eilish Thompson, joined us for the second semester, bringing with her considerable experience in reading and editing a poetry magazine. With an unerring eye for excellence and a delightful enthusiasm, she quickly became an essential part of the process of final selection for the issue. Sadly, Elizabeth Szewczyk, another longtime Editor, was not able to be with us this year, but happily she will be joining us again for the 2012 issue.

Once again, I must thank Elaine Folkers for help and guidance in formatting the issue, and most of all for making the process fun; Falcon Press for their ongoing and valued partnership; and Duncan Morris, who has worked so efficiently over the years to ease the process of getting the journal printed. Finally, my deepest appreciation to Asnuntuck President Martha McLeod and Dean Barbara McCarthy for their energetic support of and great pride in *FRESHWATER*.

Edwina Trentham

Bert J. Nitch

FRESHWATER

Lazing along between the muddy banks
Its hide scaled with wind, and scathed
By Puritan charity. Once, it had a name.
A voice. One could hear it in the rocking
Stones. In the hwait song of the birds.
In winter, the ice could be suckled,
The fish eaten raw, and my Father plucked
Arrowheads from the cold water.

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**Nineteenth Annual
Asnuntuck Student Poetry Contest Winners
and
Winner of the Third Annual Cover Contest**

FRESHWATER is proud to announce the winners of the Nineteenth Annual Asnuntuck Student Poetry Contest, which was open to students from the twelve Connecticut Community Colleges, the Connecticut State Universities, and selected local high schools. This year's judge, Sue Ellen Thompson, selected six winners. Following are her comments on the prize-winning poems, published in this issue.

First Place: “Leitmotif” by Carolyn Orosz (Granby High School)

What I like about this poem is its prevailing tone of grief and longing, borne out by its imagery, in which the human and the natural worlds commingle. There are so many memorable phrases—“whispers of flesh,” “the brevity of your body,” and “the leitmotif of your bones” among them—that are emblematic of the poem as a whole. It is rare to find a poem as tightly woven as this one is, or as compelling in its portrayal of loss.

Second Place: “Hospital Room” by Roberta Whitman Hoff (Asnuntuck Community College)

Illness and death were a popular theme in this year's contest, but this poem is the only one that approaches the subject from the patient's perspective, re-creating for the reader the confused state of mind that so often precedes death. I find the form of the poem—short, parsing lines with frequent stanza breaks—very effective, and the simplicity of the language a helpful counterpoint to the complexity of the state of mind the poem so successfully represents.

**Third Place: “Paper Doll” by Allison Zaczynski:
(Asnuntuck Community College)**

What I most admire in this poem—aside from the extended image of the cut-out paper doll—is its use of sound. Those repeated hard k sounds in words like sticker, cartoon, cut-out, cutie, make, cookies, cobalt, tuck, etc. —strike the ear like the thwack of a newspaper on an open palm, leaving little question about the speaker’s emotional stance.

**First Honorable mention: “The Water is Gray Today” by
Hannah Watkins (Middlesex Community College)**

This is a very quiet little poem, and I almost overlooked it at first. It talks about grief and loss in a way that is not at all sentimental or self-indulgent; in fact, the speaker almost disappears. I thought the poem’s best lines were “settle/ in river silt, heavy/mud between reeds” —lines in which language itself can be heard to “settle” in heavy consonants and long vowels.

**Second Honorable Mention: “Fingerplay” by Julia
Martinez (Asnuntuck Community College)**

This is a good example of how imagery can make a poem come alive. When I got to the line, “combing through hair that descends/like horses running down a mountain,” I knew that I had entered a strange new world where “hands” teach us a lesson about what it means to be human.

**Third Honorable Mention: “Torn Together” by Graham
Martin (Norwalk Community College)**

I admire this poem for its sheer bravado. Taking its cue from rap music, the poem features energetic and sometimes brilliant rhymes—Tactical gimmick/every minute/maximum limits/pacifist cynic—and a kind of headlong momentum that I

found irresistible. Even its title, “Torn Together,” pushes us out of our comfort zone—where we have no choice but to remain.

FRESHWATER is proud to announce that Manchester Community College student, Brett Pinedo, won the **Third Annual Cover Contest** with his beautiful photograph featured on the cover of this issue. (This award was made possible through a grant from the Asnuntuck Community College Foundation.)

Dennis Saleh

Wait

There are little eternities
everywhere unobserved
The fingerprint of a penny
The arrowhead of a pencil tip
Atoms Molecules Stars
Scars Errors Prayers
Time ignores everything
that ignores it Time is
just learned behavior and a
clock can be a paper weight.

Julie L. Moore

(There Is No Violence Here)

What do the birches teach us
as their orange leaves tumble
to the ground, exposing
limbs to whatever raw
and consequential wind
may come? Trunks stippled
with dark eyes. Branches now
boasting only the robust breasts
of crows. I will not mention roots.
This is not about them,
those long siphons stretching
toward water's deep
horizon. Look closer. See
the lenticels across the white bark.
They look like scars, as if a cold
blade striated the surface. But no.
They are not slits in the trees' bloodless
throats. (There is no violence here.)
They are pores through which oxygen
passes, as simply and surely as sunlight
slips through a spider's silk net.
Lean in. Listen to the soft
cellular breath tell you what it can.

Gaylord Brewer

For Now, Rise

Maybe you control it, maybe.
Perhaps already the choice is ceded.
What difference? Either way,
night is night. No bird mimics,

no wind relieves this desert
where you've arrived. You're through
with astrologies, gypsy nonsense.
Bring on a bitter end. You'll conjure

despair once too often
and stay there, dumb enough
to wonder when the ceiling fell,
when doors slammed shut for good.

Not yet. Hell, maybe you can live
like this forever. When sky
lightens and the blade of moon is lost,
that still means it's morning.

Better yet Sabbath, best day
for rising from self-destruction.
Start rising. Clothe thyself
in the robes and scarves of loathing

required by your cockeyed church.
Dry sticky sweat of dreams
from forehead. A commandment
hammers there. Listen. Rise up.

Strap on cracked sandals. Shame's
out where you left it. Wanderer,
seek it out. Pretend this
could happen any other way.

Susan Johnson

Hard-Crack

A man grapples with his inability
to grip the wind, grasp with clarity
that which appears so clear. His head
a whale of wire, furred with rust.
How to lift the blur from his brain?
What pulls water to the tops of firs
and makes a basket overflow with bread,
pulls us into a vast emptiness where
a window climbs a fly and mountains,
peopled by no people, leave no leaves
to fence the view. One returns
hungry and stays hungry searching
for connections, or is it confections?
In the great book of discovery, hard-ball
is for fondants, soft-crack for taffies,
not to be confused with toffees,
at which stage there's an audible snap.
At which point the crystal dissolves
and sleep unfolds like fingers from a fist.
Are those chess pieces or tombstones?
A man asks as he hurls a stone into a lake,
a lake into a stone, and watches
as the ripples fade into a film that washes
up as foam, a film of the nothing that was
something that is now nothing once again.

Simon Perchik

*

You mourn the way this sand
has no strength, keeps warm
between one day and another

and your closed hands
that need the place
left by a small stone

dropping slowly in water
though what rests here
is the emptiness already mist

and nothing starts again
—you dig as if this beach
blossoms once your fingers

open and these dead
lose their way among the flowers
that no longer come home

—you kneel easily now
pulled down by your shadow
following head first as rain

heavier and heavier
tracing a face with just your lips
and worn out nod.

Barbara Daniels

Dying Day

Everything wants in or out, you, your last
words, puffs of steam, no, oh, a train

huffing backwards to a stop. People
lie, say, "He said he loved you, Joe.

Said take care of Mom." Be easy.
Bills die with you, turn into ash,

rise in the air and disappear.
Bits of ash will pelt workers slung

on the sides of skyscrapers, blow in
from where you were. Where you were

will be wiped clean. Your glass
will be emptied, washed. Joe will keep

your leather coat, stroke the dark
sleeves, fold it in his arms.

Rebecca Clever

Frances Packs Away Her Son's Clothes

Wounded
by the unnatural order of things
she sorts through his closet,
her hopes to be the first to go
ashes

holds the frayed flannel fabric
of his favorite shirt to her
throat soft as calla lilies

waits for the empty
sleeves to embrace her,
face smothered in the collar—

B r e a t h e . . .

Grief
is a bloom within
a bloom
within a bloom

a splash of whisky,
tobacco smoke, East Tennessee
woods still thriving
in the threads like holy oil.

Steve Parlato

Communion

It is nothing like the sacred wafer,
this oblong of gauze and tape. But my mind
metaphors as I strip back adhesive.
His flesh, plump as a baby's fist, submits,
lifts, drops back. Yellow-cast, the skin seems to
pulse, expand. Tracing the edge where pigments
bleed—workman's tan to sub-bandage pallor—
I count the sutures, their meticulous
march, and lift the tube worming from his back.
Latex spirals to his waistband, ending
in a picnic cooler spigot. Sliding
notched cotton beneath the tube, I recoil
it, press fingers to my father's skin, close
the circle, re-swaddling it in fresh gauze.

Roberta Whitman Hoff

Hospital Room

People would drift in and out
of his room
through the sunlight
and days
like thoughts.

He would remember
a friend had been there
when he woke up
and not know if
it had been a dream.

It was as if
the body was in the mind
and his reality
mere thoughts.
Memories

like pastel colors mixing
in the sunlight
on the bed
that was not really his.
Homesick.

He thought he was
eight years old
and rode the horse
through the Sunday sunlight
over the hill
home to the farmhouse,

as the fluid filled
his lungs and
dark stuck
to the window
and death came
with city lights.

Edward A. Dougherty

Quartz Light

What fuel for the fire? What hospitality?
The teaching is clear: its statements
are metaphors: neither if-driven nor sown
and tended by logic's fat thumb.

I am salt and you are salt.
I am light, you are light.
But flames die, rooms go cold.
So I say

 : beware of believing
 in only one figure

 : speech limits
 as it illumines

: draw close—embers even now
 ripple red and are lively

You are light, and you are more:
you are sage long gone brittle
and you are the drying, the disintegration,
flow of fragrance

 and blend of flavors,
 guest and host
 and the meal itself,
 one seat empty for the wanderer.

You are light and you are more
You are quartz
catching in tiny alcoves all the dark light

 : write in the mysterious
 language of crystal

Love's the emptiness
we seek, the oneness
of no selves.

Darren C. Demaree

Emily As A High Window

How bird, to gloss
only for the sky, to stare
only at the blue, to find

more blue when the cloud
collides with the glass
& to never give in

to the altitude. Look up,
further up, that non-shatter
is exactly where she is.

Leslie McGrath

Call

Come, love. Turn your gaze from the firs.
The eagle's left to tend her young.

Come. Our stone sheets, laid down
a thousand thousand tides ago, now trimmed in lichen.

A glass garden blooms soft bottle blue
& the wrecked boat shifts westward in her berth.

Three restive compass stars guided us here & left us
with the dark, bewildered. Then I left you,

followed a bankrupt gust that until this hour
held me a league's length from our shore.

Rudder wind, pin feathers on the water.
Sail wind, pin feathers in the firs.

Steady me. Wrap your arms in my plait of bracken
before I'm carried, love, back out to sea.

J.S.Watts

Summer Bronzes Over

The fish are dreaming
safe in their sanctity of water
clouding as the sky comes clear of sin
It's the end of year time
summer turning sacrificial
giving up on the hope of miracles
the world drowning down into autumn
sun warm groggy on leaf brown
the wind too heavy to lift
Blackberries leak purple fluids
blackwater stains milky
as the fish hold steady as
the birds singing silence as
everything waiting
for the chill crouching at the heart of late summer warm
to beat and stir
itself into winter
giving up on an autumn
already secreted
in depth of copper tinged green
the fallen weight of fruits
purple stains and bloodied berries
cut down fields lost like hope
and the cold clear water waiting
at the bottom of the pond
Light is bronzing over into dark
beneath a fading canopy of sleep
a ripe time to drowse away what's yet to lose
like the fish sleeping away the last blessings of warmth
preparing to dream of summer

Jean Esteve

Summer

How many ripe pears, I wonder
did the Borden woman eat
upstairs of the barn
 in suffocating August heat.

Two, three,
or a full half-dozen –
horse-flies buzzing around her head
 glinting their metallic green.

She'll shake loose her hair
as the horse or cow will twitch its tail,
lips dead-pale now
 around the next pear

 having decided what to do
with the next hellish hour
 shortly before noon.

Carl Auerbach

Clinical Interview

When I tell you that I saw my husband beaten—
so strong a man he could straighten horseshoes
with his hands—beaten to his knees,
saw our six babies' severed bodies thrown
into the river, that I was used by men
as if I were a dishrag—many men, for days on end;

and from your unscarred face you ask me how I feel,
it's like you're speaking in a language
I once knew but have forgotten.

We used to speak like that. He would say,
I'm happy, and stroke my curly hair,
and I would say, *I love you*, and cover his huge hand
with my two small ones, and we would watch
the children running up and down the hill
and say, *How beautiful our children are*,
How glorious is God.

I can't remember what it means to mean,
the way you wake up in a desert from a dream
of water, trying to remember, the taste
of what is not, but there is only sand.

I do not understand your question: *How do you feel?*
How I feel is that it happened.

Edward A. Dougherty

Look to the Past, Look to the Future

*after Robert Taplin's Jupiter, 2000
(rice paper, plaster, and lights 7 x 8 x 12')*

Jupiter sees and Jupiter wants. He says
oooh la la says *hey baby* and *My wife's*
all the way in Argos, won't know a thing.
Jupiter's idle and Jupiter's strong. We
are human and so we're mortal.
We only reach the great god's thigh.
We fear for our lives
and fear for our daughters.

Handling thunder requires big hands.
Jupiter's lonely and Jupiter's bullish,
when Jupiter's a swan, who will get it?
We start to wonder what will break
so we look at the gods, look at each other.
We are cold. We are iron.
It's easy to imagine
better versions went before:
gold then silver, brass then bronze.
We look at ourselves, look to the future.
We hear oak leaves start to whisper:

*when this race forgets its shame
when it loses its ire
and loves its violence and loves
its lies, then Jupiter will spin,*

his great arms will rise, the dust of the earth
will plume toward heaven as Jupiter turns,
for Jupiter will stomp and Jupiter will dance,
and the dance will end it, the dance will,
end our little race, end these little ones.

Rebecca Clever

Elegy for a Former Marine on Suicide Mission

He wrote he did it to reach hell sooner—

killed too many Jap boys to make heaven possible

too much
or too far gone to click the mind
out of its holding pattern.

The intricacies of premeditation

shotgun snug
in the tool bench vice

double barrels aimed
dead center forehead

trigger wired and set to kick back
with one sharp tug

could've been patented.

Surrounded
in his basement crypt
by war medals, retirement plaques
engraved with years at U.S. Steel

the weapon cocked and ready

maybe there were butterflies
the palms' nervous sweat
like a first kiss.

I remember him from family reunions.

He wore tinted glasses, smoked
and talked in a deep
gravelly voice, some rage
held back.

I liked that he called me *hon*.

Dianne Bilyak

Untethered

A heavy anchor moors us between the black lines of our lives
and the white lies we tell to stay grounded.

Whether embedded or aweigh, the smallest increments of love
are objects we must name again and again.

Instead we distract ourselves with false comforts of inquiry
to fix death and mold what we cannot name.

He told me: *the hole keeps getting bigger and bigger until I feel
I am only the whole of it, only the emptiness.*

I imagined this space as round, like some pills, the end of a gun,
or a noose—but it could have taken any shape.

Hannah Watkins

The Water Is Gray Today

The color of the river
reminds me of you.

You say you want your ashes
sprinkled in the river,

to be carried under
the bridge, to drift against

heron's legs, settle
in river silt, heavy

mud between reeds. I
can see your ashes set

on fire again by river-
mirrored sun. Tell me,

is this more beautiful
than life?

Don Shockey

Just Across the Dry River

Late last night, a typo in my search query
turned up an ad for the latest must have—
eye glasses that let you see what's on the other side.

What a deal for those of us curious about the other side of an
hour
or a dream.

But the government warns: A cool wind relieving the unseen
face
also tumbles trucks along the Interstate like plastic cups.

The way the turtle with bones of smoke
brings a cheap ticket to a low-budget try out.

Now I'd be afraid to look at a mirror.
Feeding off the eyes from the back
risks sea sickness in an infinite loop—
or as long as the power's on.

Seems I may not see me as she
with the long, black hair and gift of corn sees me.

Too bad there's no special eyeball for humanity,
some DNA for love nor futurity.
We'll race the probability curve down any county road
while Rock with a back beat rides shotgun.

The ditch serves as a grave.
Without us, a sunny day still delights
in a white bison ripping out barbed wire fences.

Kristina Bicher

To The Woman Seated At My Left Praying

You were never safe
and there is nothing left
to lose but your protest.

Even before the last-minute
flight change,
blood test,
the drunk jangling keys,

before the snows
socked in the convention
where your parents met,
buried the last mastodon,

your flight foundered
when the first cell
was struck,
pulsed,
and grew legs.

Kristina Bicher

Gestures (for Kie)

You should have seen
how we flocked
to your tragedy—
dark cars clogged
a snow-crowded lot,
crush at the door,
a wash of friends
you never knew.

We did our part:
became the social animals
that took us out of caves,
wore smiles, scrawled
names in a guestbook,
witnesses to the effrontery
of death, yours
and then ours.

The undertakers thought
of everything, plates of mints
separate in cellophane
stainless steel carafes
chilled water.
Someone remembered
to wrap your sons
in dark blue blazers
so they wouldn't crumble.

Then you, commanding
as never before,
on the dais eloquent
with the wide white band
of ancient kin
around your head
softly knotted.

*Could you feel it later
in a hushed dark room
your husband's kiss
and how it became
the foot that launched
your leaf-boat out
of the reeds along
a slow stream
tipped with willows?*

Darren C. Demaree

Emily As More Applause

Such kick,
such wing
& belief

in the clap
of her hands.
Again

& again,
my love
is only meadow

when she allows
the sun
to rise above

the grass.
Think of death.
Now, think

of Emily
& the green
she inspires.

Susan Johnson

Study In Gray And Gold

At the daylily hour we pause to relax
our fists. Our collected thoughts collect
at the corner, recycled into ancient bins.
Henry's the best bundler: oaths and oafs
wrapped in a familiar ferocious green.
Five years pass and I step into the sun.
A wren wrenches my shoulder, tying me
into knots—not nautical ones, more essential
and cyclical, like how turning off lights
allows one to see more. Or how father
in his last days kept demanding
the painting at the foot of his bed
be turned off, always tuned to the same
jeezless show, the one where the dying
no longer see you in you but only
a guard who won't lower the gate.

Naomi Ruth Lowinsky

The Angel of Rot

The roof rat does what roof rats do—
crawls into the pipes under the sink
and dies. The smell of his death

dominates. We can't find
his body. We can't liberate
his corpse. The smell

of his death is master
in this house—bigger than
grandchildren coming for tea, bigger than

Uncle Solomon going to pot
in a shit motel in the valley. The poet
invokes the sweet smell

of night-blooming jasmine, an Arabian garden—
a peacock shrieks. The rat stinks. The smell
of death is big news on TV—in Haiti

the earth opened her alligator jaws
and swallowed hundreds of thousands—and we
can't abide with one dead rat? Buddha sits

in the kitchen window—looking inward.
Even Buddha can't clear his head
despite incense, despite handmade

beeswax candles. He who has left us
his body, looks down upon us and smiles
for he is the angel of rot— He
will be Master.

John McKernan

The Giant Kept Whispering

With my one good eye like the plate
Of a sundial I will dine on you

With the hands
Of your grandfather's clock I will pry
Open the twin halves of your skull

With the tick of a watch
In an endless rhyme
I will hypnotize you
Until my teeth feel like kisses on your skin

With nothing in the fingers of my opened fist
Whispering the blank spaces on a calendar
I will peel a name from your body
In a reverse tattoo Indelible
Soft & sweet You will never forget me

Elizabeth Kudlacz

Because Memory Is Only Miasma

When your father has lain in the clay long enough that you
crave

his presence, like the beets you would not eat as a child,
find your sisters and reconstruct him from what little he left
behind.

Start with bleached bones of the weatherworn chair
he sat in, bare-chested, every sunny day after April.
Add violin strings for sinews, bear claws and rabbit's feet.
Fill his veins with kerosene, soup too-goddamn-hot
and one beer too many. Cover with the musky hide
of some animal trapped in the backyard. Plant
a red Roma tomato inside and listen for its thrumming
beat, feel for heat of wood burning stove and for eyes,
two brass Army buttons that shone for dark-
haired Portuguese women, never spoken of through the
horrible

gaping mouth of muskellunge whose mounted head
hung on the basement wall, always gasping for air.
And because you are Polish princesses,
garnish your sovereign with a cardboard crown,
and the priestly garb he never wore: alb, amice, chasuble.
Form a procession, parade him past your dear mother
who sits on her loveseat making tiny boxes from old cards
while watching *Dancing With the Stars*. She will smile
a crooked smile, compliment the handiwork of her clever
girls, never say that she knows you can't remake
the snake from its skin.

Carol L. Gloor

The Gift

On Father's Day mine waits in the wheelchair
on the second floor of the Methodist Home,
the halfway floor, between the competent and the crazy,
dozing a little, dreaming of 1965,
tallying freight rates at the office, a beer at home,
his oldest daughter just married,
no more borrowing the car

then wakes to see he is holding a purse,
brown vinyl with shoulder straps, a gold tassel
and a clasp he can't open. Then he remembers,
he won it at bingo, two, maybe three or four, days ago.
I open the door to his room.
He smiles brokenly and thrusts it—
It's for you—lots of secret compartments.

Gaynell Meij

Ivy Nevada Cooper's Escape

Silver service rolled in felted wool,
refined sugar in Lennox china bowl,
stiletto heel pointed away from silk stockings,
neglige rubs against emery board.

Textured pairs, coarse with sleek,
packed 2 by 2 into her valise.

A hat pin secures cover for curls,
salt shaker in left pocket,
pepper grater in right,
sensible black shoes laced tight.

She's had enough of patch worked quilts
and fresh berry pies.
Alzheimer's is her cure for pragmatism.
The doctor prescribes 2 shots of sherry each night.

She clutches a coin purse
pursuing a one-way ticket by Greyhound.
The depot-man, a consistent accomplice,
hands her a ticket to Philadelphia.

She throws a dash of salt over her shoulder
before she is taken off the bus.
Her coarse existence repeats,
her sleek mind
saunters on to Philly.

Allen Strous

Essie Mowery

What looked like a bicycle reflector on the metal card of the
roadsign,

so little, so much.

I had it, watching with me the hole
into the bank, into the edge of the road,
past no one else thinking of it at all,
into the plunge and the little creek—

Father stopped to talk to the farmer for some reason
and Mrs. Mowery came out—like other old women,
but she didn't come out to see children.

Adult commonplaces, more eager than an adult's,
her talk poured like wheat into a bin,
beat against me, fast and dead-heavy,
but broke into sense for me,
broke into a crack I might get through.

Then for her the reflector was like bits of stone
from the oldest smashed gravestones, like bright scraps
holding the value they had when whole.
Richness stretched out,
the flash of the jewel that existed between us,
bridge, each of us an end.

In a year or two she stopped cars along the road
to talk, or demand a long ride—
though not going, always going, I'll suppose,
like our conspiracy, wide-open.

Laurel Peterson

Abandonment, or Eulogy for the Living

Tell me, sister, what it is
to be lonely,
tell me, so I can share your pain.

Is it the color of rice milk,
the sheer liquid pooling in a glass,
like spilled breast milk?
Is it the taste of oil bittered by burnt garlic?
When you cross your legs,
does it matter because no one
hopes to uncross them?

Who brings you hope?
Does it arrive on a tray,
silver and polished,
with teapot and tuiles?
How will you keep it warm
when spring snow swirls its last wings
across your arms?

I am lonely, too, sister.
I have been lonely a long time,
like the shape of winter
frozen in the heaved up earth,
like the fat grey clouds
that dominate
January's faint
silvery bands of blue.

Longing shoves itself
into the arms of my coat,
splinters itself under my palms:
when I touch, I feel its stabbing.

I am weighted by your absence,
the weight of a thousand-thousand feathers,
pressing, pressing,
light and deadly.

José Antonio Rodríguez

The Taste of Feathers

As he runs past the door
that swallows the sun
every morning, his mother
hits him over the head
with a large spoon.

The contact makes sparks,
triggers memories of his birth day.
She wipes the sweat
off her face with the tortillas,

they boil on the grill. Salt crystals
that he pretends not to notice
form on his hairless forearms.
The hen builds a nest
behind the television set.

The salt crystals scatter, fall
on broken weeds, and he remembers
salt is expensive.
I don't like you, she spits.

The hen is startled by the soundtrack
to the telenovela: the scene is a close-up
of a severed hand on a plate
with a side of Mexican rice.

She flutters away
dragging the television
through the torn screen door
to the outside dirt.
His uncle walks in
with the cheapest part
of a butchered chicken.

He swallows his voice box
and rolls his plastic car
over his chest. The hen apologizes
for the television debacle

while she helps him place it
back on the shelf.
The nest is destroyed.
He's having beans and eggs
for dinner but does not mention it.

The hen offers him
her wings for the night.
He nestles beneath her.
His mother calls out to the spaces
between the leaves of the mesquite,

"I have your toy car."
He does not respond.
As he breathes in the soft feathers
over his dorsal self, like he's a kite
up against the roof of the sky,

the hens talk about who went that day
and how well or how badly they handled death.
His tongue touches the feathers
and he smiles because they taste
like nothing he's ever known.

José Antonio Rodríguez

Like a Bar of Soap against a Washboard

I asked the man—

Is it sick to miss the cot of my childhood?

Only if the cot is still with you, he smirked.

If I had a house, I'd have rooms turned
into replicas of the places I've lived,
dirt floor and all, a kitchen
with its dim light bulb like my mother's face—
all her love worn down like a bar of soap
against a washboard, her wrists reddened—
with its one cabinet, a can of Spam on its lip
like a buck tooth, with a corner
where cockroaches never die,
with its cute little door and maybe a mouse
with a broken neck behind it, a hungry mouse
reaching for the smallest lump of flour dough.

Bright light jaws my pupils.

I want the two-foot Christmas tree
a 2nd grade teacher substitute gave us,
planted in a Crisco can full of dirt
with eight blue lights that spoke beauty
like nothing I've ever seen since.
We should have never thrown it out.

I miss the cot and everything around it,
the walls that press against your shoulders at night
so that you retreat under it,
risk a bump on the head when you wake,
the rude light bulb in the room
naked and wrinkling my eyes.

I know. I know.
No one's going to lull me
in the backseat of my life.
May as well take the wheel
and ride through the nightmares,
thirst for what's on the other side.

Patricia O'Brien

*From the New York Times:
Some Homely Advice on Buying a House*

Give up thoughts of living
rooms, the arrangement of things like seasons,
sun and moon circling the house you dream:
next center of the universe. We would suggest

no house is safe for dreams. Door frames bruise.
Oak trees darken the baby's room. Bread burns.
Seasons re-route air, the traffic pattern. Your family
and friends are caught in storms. Windows jam.

You can't get out. Measure instead, the progress of light
across the room to the bed where you'll be propped, every
pillow
in the house plumped against your death. Bedside,
the obligatory glass of viscous cure, abandoned as useless.

Visitors pass in ante-rooms, clucking the shame of it, words
drowned in held back tears. Your own tears held bravely
in a handkerchief. Down the hall your child comes heel-to-toe
carrying tea. In the study the doctor and your spouse

no longer speak. Head tilted
toward that unfamiliar quiet, imagine each room
in the narrowing light. In the darkness that follows
choose a house.

Sue Ellen Thompson

Home

The place your parents brought you straight
from the hospital, where you spent
those endless years of grade-
school. Or maybe it's the place
where you raised your own
children, where you were never alone.
The place you retreat to after the divorce,
or when circumstances force
you to go there. According to Frost,
they have to—but you know the rest.

Who can say how many weeks
after moving you will lie awake,
staring at the clock-radio, before
you stop listening for the pre-dawn roar
of traffic down your former street—
before the word begins to rise from deep
inside somewhere as you approach
the yellow blinker at Main and Oak,
which, like the porch light your mother
flicked off and on when you and your lover
were parked at the darkest edge of the lawn,
reminds you where you belong.

Joan Colby

In the Shade

From the road you can't see the house
Secluded in trees, the barrier
Of lilac bushes, maples, hickories,
Interiors dim in filtered light
Like undersea grottoes where eels lurk
Or mermaids comb their seaweed locks.

Living in shade is similar
To reading complicated novels
Full of Russian patronymics,
Plots that mislead lovers
Stations where trains rarely stop.

Some people would cut everything down
For clarity, bless the raw light
That pours its benedictions equally,
The blacktop that glistens and melts
Sunflowers grimacing in satisfaction
Noontime drinkers, shadowless.

This place though is for the griever
Those who know how darkness
Indemnifies. The ray at sunset
Edging through like a believer.

Marianna Hofer

***The Apprentice Photographer And One Theory Of
The Narrative***

The wind. That lonely lovely hollow note
come through dense pines. She lowers
the Minolta, shifts her weight, listens.

The house she kneels in front of long ago left
paint, window glass, screens, behind. Now
thin plywood snugly boards up doors and windows,
keeps spring dust, winter damp, from loosening
floorboards, warping door frames, staining baseboards.

She thinks about words she could use, holds
suspuration against susurrations, prefers
that deep sigh over a whispering sound.

How far out into the country, away from a studio
drenched in off white light, stacked in papers and
words, prints and negatives, to here, a whole land
scape rinsed clean of sharp colors all the way across
a picked over cornfield to a static horizon line.

Every so often one of these houses
shifts hard, collapses under its own
lassitude or burns in a careless moment.

Too often ghosts walk past a doorway, glance
into a window, just a white shape in the corner
of an eye that doesn't stop, doesn't deliver
the story because there really isn't one, just
that restless need to walk again on solid ground.

Graham Martin

Torn Together

As the rain splashed on the stained glass, tapping a rhythm,
The laughing visage of an apparition trapped in his
prison
Back in the distance cast an image of a dead reminiscence,
Cleverly hidden 'til his ghastly grimace slashed the
incision.
I masked a splash of crimson with a classic distraction,
Acting as if this masochism hasn't hacked me to
ribbons.
My stature's rigid, but I'm fractured by this tactical gimmick,
Battered and livid as internal clashes pass every minute.
I'm half collapsing under an infinite mass,
Taxing my tattered parameters past their maximum
limits,
Yet when the wrath has diminished inside this pacifist cynic,
I'll still be grasping a shadow of this battle that has us
both
Torn together.

My emotions drown in scores
In this ocean where spoken sound's ignored.
My soul is shouting louder
While choking down a resounding roar.
My hopeless floating ghost is roped and bound with an open
frown
Robed in gowns of swords
Adorned with a cloak and crown of thorns.

I brave the day with a shameless brain
And no place to pray.
I'm staring into space
While I dig my grave with the ace of spades.

My patience waves as the matrix fades
And I waste away
Replaced by face and name
Now I'm just waiting to remain
Torn together.

Ann Robinson

Red Queen

Marie Antoinette played her
and lost her life.
Dryden spilled ale on her.

Shakespeare folded her into the heart
of Desdemona.

Alice banished her down a well of loneliness.

The Red Queen was tired of the hands playing
her again and again.

She longed for closure.
Outside, flowers, sounds of children.

While her lover, the Knave, slept with odd numbers,
she dreamed of open windows.
She was seized by sunshine
and bird-like trees.

Freedom was a wilderness.
The Queen smiled in solitude.
The grass smelled sharp, roses grew against her skin.

Carol Frith

Hagar-flowers

You tell me women turn their backs,
forget themselves. I tell you that
morning-glories have climbed
the fence across the alley.

I saw the blossoms just today,
lupine-colored blooms in the early
heat. I have rested all morning
in their lavender shade.

Morning-glories . . . Hagar-flowers
sent to bloom here and where,
I cannot say.

You're not interested in the
blossoms on these vines.
You'll prune them back tomorrow.

"Destructive to the fencing stakes,"
you will say, and I won't
disagree.

I wait for further commentary,
but you turn to go inside.
I remain here, in the margin
of ragged grass at the edge
of the alleyway to watch
the crumbling afternoon
take on the color of closing
morning-glories.

Allison Zaczynski

Paper Doll

Remove me from the glossy pages
of your sticker book setting.
This paper doll wife never fit
into the cartoon family portrait.

Some other cut-out cutie will make
you cookies and bear you children
with cobalt eyes and tuck them in.

When the next model arrives, punch
her out of the card, fold the tabs,
stand her up, slide her into my old
spot and hope this one won't fight back.

Kiely Hultgren

An Autopsy

The slabs of her soles pound into the floor,
as if the wet meaty feet of a toddler
were tenderizing the hardwood
on the way into the kitchen. She
opens the cabinets just to slam
their doors shut, the aluminum and tin
of the pots behind them, clanking
as they tumble down stony shoots to hell.
She spits winter wasps from her tongue and
they swirl up around the ceiling fan, waiting.

She hoists the windows open in every room,
the friction of the frames grinding
upon the splintering slots until the roaring,
echoing, impact at the cap,
a collision I expect will send shards falling,
falling through the pane
of the floor, down to my basement bedroom and
pierce me through one of these days.

Perhaps when the bones of the house
rattle under her wrinkled knuckles
or when the cats scurry and hide
beneath the wigwam folds of the carpet,
she feels a sense of power
displace her boredom. Or perhaps
to jolt with arctic electricity
her hung over heart back into the rhythm
of some twisted state of passion,
she pries open the windows of our home,
thinking of them like bodily valves and membranes,
reminding the morning
of her stinking resurrection.

Carol Frith

Slow Drift from Morning

She won't remember this—the way she stands,
young, against the liquid light—an interrupted
argument of chastity. She combs her dark hair before
a framed mirror. Behind her, enameled wainscoting.
The flocked wallpaper is a powdery dusk of blue.
No woman lives in her own life.

Who can keep track of the orderly minutes?
The slow drop from morning? Memory
will open for her one day like a dark peony.

She doesn't see Harlequin lurking in the silver
of the mirror's glass. Too world-weary for a back
flip or a cartwheel, he's more a mime than anything,
drunk on the nitrates of reflection.

Memories folded like dry goods stock Harlequin's
shop: everybody's memories, scissored into shape
like Klee's Tunisian gardens: Reconnected palms.
Stairs for going down. Stairs for coming up.
Watercolor walls in tangerine and apricot.
A coral-colored mosque. A muezzin issuing Ahdān. -

The girl continues combing her hair. These memories
are not hers. She has no prayers to offer. At least
not now. She closes her eyes against the blue
wallpaper. Against the bright enamel paint.
A passageway stretches out before her.
Three sunny doors and one that's closed. She thinks
of peonies, knows nothing of the closed door.

This is the door that darkness will enable.

Alyssa Mazarella

Walking Under the Moon

That white-hot stone hangs
heavy in black sky, boding level city buildings.

Neighboring barbs glint uncertainly,
threatening to fall, so I tread beneath the smaller ones.

Insomniac sparrows huddle in roadside bushes,
awaiting morning to speak. Trees reach

for what's hidden behind the moon,
heaving sidewalk bricks with their roots. Somewhere

beyond the rectangular stacks of stone and glass
firmament meets ground, pressing all things

thin and black. During these cold hours,
I force-fit inside the horizon, bear the pressure

of closed bird beaks,
of gravity on bark, metal, and stone,

of fences that cannot be opened.
The rows of houses I pass

will become as flat as pavement by dawn,
the people inside forced underground

to mouth dirt like worms. I envy
their gardens—places outside themselves

to store the shapeless, unseen loads they carry.
There is no space here, not for open

mouths, sap-leaking branches, or unquiet
hands—not for gestures that cost little air.

A spidery hedge catches my arm:
Two warm beads escape my skin.

The earth opens its pores begrudgingly,
obliged to swallow the weight

I have failed to trap inside me.
Dawn begins to spill over:

The horizon grows heavier—
it always has room.

Rennie McQuilkin

Good News

The coyotes have been coming closer.
Last night they sang in the backyard.
Thank God I'm clapboard, not straw.
But dangers abound—it's raining
too much acid, and black to come.
It's no surprise a prophet arrives
to predict the Apocalypse today
except I don't think of her that way
despite the Lighthouse she has in hand.
You know what they say—
always welcome strangers who land
at your door. Anyway she's pretty
in bare feet, and then I've always been
a sucker for revelations. So we talk.
And the sun comes out,
a little too bright and hot, but still . . .
After she leaves, the storm begins
to re-accumulate, but there they are—
the wet-on-brick prints of her feet,
so slim and fine and blessedly naked,
not yet vaporized. I'll stop right there.

Mary Clare Powell

On The Honda

next to me in the parking lot,
that small cave below the lift-to-open handle
has 10,000 tiny scratches on it.
As if someone has removed a mat of fine hair
from around the shower drain,
scooped it up, let it dry to a filmy nest,
and pasted it onto this car door.

This happens to my brain waiting 15 minutes
in the sun for you to pick up hot dogs and rolls,
godeyes examining with no judgment
the firmament of the lot, loving the whole kit
and caboodle, as if seeing is loving,
even discarded hair or the nails of the bird
seeking to nest just in the spot where someone
will open the car and start it up.

Bessy Reyna

At the Meditation Garden

At the meditation garden
the Japanese cut-leaf maple was covered with raindrops.

My lips longed to touch the leaves, absorb their peace.

The stone path pointed East and West,
while trees planted for each season waited to emerge.

Autumn was in bloom that day.
How I wished summer would be nearer.

Far away, at my desk, I imagine the tea ceremony
I can not attend and the taste of the raindrops on the maple tree.

Askold Skalsky

Manual Labor

I have been meditating upon them,
the floating hand of Trotsky
remaining on a photograph
after Stalin tried to erase him
from his empire's collective memory;
Rodin's ponderous bronze palms
splayed harshly in the gray museum air;
God's wrist on the ceiling,
not far from the Tiber,
his tough finger touching Adam's,
tight threads of power, grasping,
weaving like ceaseless seaweed
at the bottom of the sea.

I note what hands have done—
the execution's writ resolutely signed,
the ax gripped by its haft, the knuckles
aiming at the victim's head.
I see the Incas' bloody stumps of wrists,
their hands cut off by the cruel soldiers of Cortez,
the same hands that ripped out the pulsing heart
with its taproot veins dangling over the altar stone.
They're evil's instrument, I think,
ingenious organs given us in a grim paradise
where God punished the serpent by taking his away
but saved ours for the labor that we do so well.

I remember my father telling me
about the Eastern front of '41,
how he'd found the German officers
tied to stakes with their tongues cut out
and pinned to their chests.

*If I had to do that, he mused, I'd try
somehow to pry open the man's jaws,
grab his tongue with my fingers,
which would be difficult enough,
then somehow stick the knife down
into the throat, probably waste a lot of time.*

*But these guys knew what they were doing,
he said, in a kind of wonder, allowing himself
to speculate about such technicalities—
one smart incision under the chin,
a quick jerk through the bloody gash
of fat and skin, and out it slid*

*into the hands, steady and strong,
adroit executors of every craft.*

John McKernan

In The Odyssey The Arrow Slid

Right through the man's skin & Adam's apple & neck
Stopping when the feathers bunched up at his throat

A thousand yards away
A small goat was munching some random lilies
To document the absence of causality

All this occurred before Mary learned Hebrew
The day someone planted a birthday cedar
Whose wood would make a yoke & some nails
A lance & a club A door frame & a thick cross

If I were History I'd take a break
Lie down for a long nap
Wake up to stare for weeks
At some anonymous mill pond
Especially the stars sliding across a spring night

John Stanizzi

Promises After Ellis Island

Your names separate
from English sentences
and knock against the teeth,
small pits of words, hard as stone
and always what they always were,
despite the promises that must have
echoed off the high ceilings
in the The Great Hall.

Tsue Pap is moving to yet another apartment
because they raised the rent;
he is frantic in the dirt cellar,
digging hole after hole,
looking for the money he buried one night,
drunk on Guinea Red.

Jit Ate is rocking and chanting,
waving the framed picture
of a young soldier,
telling and retelling the story
of her handsome Johnny Boy,
who never came home from the war.

Jah Doze, frying medallions of chicken blood
in a tiny cast iron frying pan,
is tightening the rag around her shattered right wrist,
pulling the rag with her teeth and her left hand,
the tattered bracelet squeezing
the break she could never afford to fix.

Zeta Zeen, the sexy one,
is flouncing across Albany Avenue,
pocketbook locked at her elbow,
stocking-seams nose-diving
down the backs of her legs
and into red second-hand stiletto heels.

And *Sdunny Ale*, pragmatic and kind,
is peeling an exotic banana for the very first time,
gnawing the bitter yellow skin,
and tossing aside the long white pit,
deceptively soft
and as easy to choke on as disillusion.

Ruth Holzer

Black Cat

Magda scrubs the kitchen tile,
plants fall bulbs all afternoon—
narcissus, lily, hyacinth—
cuts the pale hydrangea

to dry in a hand-painted vase.
A vague pain slides
again into her spine.
Ah, the five good years.

What's left to do?
Bag her husband's
pants for charity,
she thinks, as the blue-eyed tom

she saved from the pond
knocks everything over.

Charles Rafferty

The Man Laments the Bees That Didn't Sting

A swarm of honeybees veered into the reception, alighting on the canvas ceiling of the bridal tent. The huddle of bees was big as a carving station ham, mumbling above the bar. Everyone fled of course. The band laid down their red guitars, the bridesmaids scooted in with a rabble of ugly cousins underneath another tent, and the bartender refused to mix more drinks beneath a frothing ball of bees.

When the beekeeper got there, everyone cheered his ridiculous suit, the little gun that shot smoke and stupor. The bride was all but forgotten as he climbed his tipsy ladder, scooped the bees into an old UPS box, and drove off with that fury in his pickup bed—as if he had selected the best present from the sagging table of gifts and made off with it unimpeded—something vital that everyone would miss decades later when they told the story of the bees again. No one was stung. That was the problem. The bees could have sent people dancing into the koi pond, or under the skirted dessert cart, or into the arms of lovers who couldn't do anything anyway. Instead there was a bee man and an armload of bees apparently happy to assume the shape of whatever box he opened.

John Repp

Garbage Night

Garbage to schlep to the curb in the glow
of love (where all acts are gorgeous), he strums
a dulcimer, chance chords and dissonance
echoing in the room he's painted red,
as they agreed. She's gone for milk, pizza,
a pack of off-white, French stationery
for the thank-you notes. How can cheap paint smell
like honey? The bees of Lebanon hum
in his fingers, the Chiapas rug lies
rolled in the hall, low sun through the oak dapples
the cat he absolutely did not want
but now loves to feel stretched armpit to knee
on the foam mat they unroll each night. Content,
he strums the box mowing graves bought him.

Trisha Nelson

Sing Me

a hot-summer torch
song, one that scorches
my skin, ends on an up-
beat, begins again. Whistle me
a road song, a red jalopy rollicking
song jammed with jazz and dirt-
road jounce. Not a swinging, low-
down, go-down, empty bucket
sort of song, a crumpled letter
sighing song you can hum
to forget. Sing me a porch-
swing song, a bluesy, sun-gone
lullaby. Croon me
into dreams
where I calm
to a quiet clucking
song tucked under
a big, soft wing.

Julia Martinez

Fingerplay

Those warm and soft hands yearn to be touched
Fingers grasp whoever is near and hold them firm
Sometimes they say hi and greet with tenderness
Combing through hair that descends
Like horses running down a mountain
Lingering across the bed they search for pillows to hide under
With each day they begin to develop feelings
When they are alone, they shiver and even whimper
No, pockets can be dark and clammy
Gloves can be too suffocating
These hands seek strangers to fill empty voids
To squeeze tight when they are nervous
Stroked gently when soft and supple
If you look closely they even blush when held
They get excited when fondled
Their heartbeat starts escalating
With each pull and caress their pulse races faster
They want to be embraced
Knowing people often ignore them
But you can't hold on forever
Seeing that hands tend to wander

Lauren Fisk

In Praise of My Body

I.

Arms—my left
over your right shoulder, and curving
around your neck, fingers lacing
into the curls of your hair, and
my right, wrapping around
your middle, hand pressing
into your lower back.

Face, mirroring yours, and lips
grazing the tip of your nose,
your forehead, your cheeks. Tongue
slipping between your teeth
to mate with yours, then
tracing the slope of your neck.

Legs encircling yours, toes
rubbing your calves, pulling
you into my body, cradling
your flesh into mine, knowing

That night, you needed
to be reminded of anything except
your best friend, dead two hours.

II.

My pale skin,
it is membrane, a covering,
entrance and escape, molded
around each groove, fastened
to every tongue-traced curve,

porcelain-colored and sun-pinked,
stratified, hair-lined,
creased around knees and squat
toes. Surface-scarred from sun damage,
and trying to save my brother's life.
It holds everything in, perfectly
encapsulates the soul.

III.

Lying in bed on a Saturday morning is
when I remember why I don't worry
about the laundry until
there are four loads piled
by the machine, or when
we run out of clean spoons
and need to engineer ice cream
with slotted forks.

Decades from now, when our
not-yet-born children are grown
and you have shed your curled-hair
that I love so much, you'll thank me
for the long hours we spent
tangled into each other,
neither of us speaking.

Kiely Hultgren

Kapoc Tree in Highland Park

Under the yolk colored bulbs of the subway train,
You jaundice like a newborn.
I think of your blood,
And how they say
It is a matter of time and filtering.
But if she pressed her tongue to your cheek
In your ripened, walking-cane, and grandchildren years,
The taste of cocoa and mango would still be rich.

I think of things she could be saying
When she tells you, “Brooklyn es bonito,
Que lo que la gente dicen no
es verdad.”

And you respond with a poem about birthing that you read
backwards,
Footage of the push and ultimate parting,
Rewound in the flash of subway windows,
A pilgrimage in the hollow of matriarchal tunnels
So that suspended in a few moments of delivery pain,
The heartroot might be replanted.

A Kapoc Tree grows in Highland Park
And as we travel through the urban dark,
I filter out meanings she meant to convey
“. . . what they say, it isn't true"
For here in Brooklyn where roots reside,
Is she,
And she always loved you.

Carolyn Orosz

Leitmotif

Sometimes I think of your hands,
or what they could have been,
and your feet,
whispers of flesh
at the ends of your legs.

If we could have had you,
you would have
Danced,
lifted your head to
the sky and laughed.
The sharp angles of your bones would
have slowly softened into life.

But you came with bones as hollow as dandelion stems.
Nerves limp as wildflowers in August heat.
Axons, dendrites, the thin pulp of terminal fibers
like crop circles,
rivers,
the feathers of a bird.

I like to think that wherever you are now,
your hollow bones will help you fly.
That the brevity of your body won't matter
so much in a place
where the leaves don't fall,
disintegrate,
rot under the frozen snow,
and return to earth in time for tulips.

our sorrow blooms.
the leitmotif of your bones
always in the air around us.

like a current—
we breathe you in.
like a current—
we must exhale.

Lana Orphanides

Last Poem

So sit with me here for the last poem.
Let our eyes
 connect, deep as the heron and the fish.
Don't wander. Sit with me
 and listen
 though
 I have nothing new to tell.
The mockingbird still sings its crazy
 numberless tunes.
 The sea,
 still holds the fisherman
 with his orange shirt
 in his small hopeful
 boat.
The full moon still
 lingers over the porch, and you
 with your shards of misplaced
 hair
hold my hand and listen
 as the breath
 of bells
leaves my mouth and the green
 of your eyes
 is my last sight.

CONTRIBUTORS

Carl Auerbach is a Professor of Psychology at Yeshiva University, specializing in the psychology of trauma. His poetry has been published in many literary journals and he has been nominated for three Pushcart Prizes, two for poetry and one for short fiction. He lives in Manhattan, New York.

Kristina Bicher's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Inkwell* (where she won the MAW poetry prize), *The Westchester Review*, *California Quarterly*, *Willow Review* and others. She received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University and a master's degree in writing from Manhattanville College. Kristina lives in New York.

Dianne Bilyak has had poems, interviews, and stories published in *Memoir(and)*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *Freshwater*, *Peregrine*, *Drunken Boat*, *Meat for Tea*, and the *Tampa Review*. She is currently working on a monologue and a memoir about her sister with Down Syndrome; a book of interviews with poets focusing on writing and spirituality; and a book-length poem about her hometown. AWA Press is publishing her first book of poems called *Against the Turning*.

Gaylord Brewer is a professor at Middle Tennessee State University, where he founded and edits *Poems & Plays*. His eighth book of poetry is *Give Over, Graymalkin* (Red Hen Press, 2011).

Rebecca Clever is a writer and musician from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, whose poetry, non-fiction, interviews, and photographs have been published or are forthcoming in *cliterature*, *ECollective*, *Finishing Line Press*, *The Fourth River*, *Lumina*, *Lunaroosity*, *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *shaking like a mountain*, *Magnapoets* epiphanies and love anthologies, and *One for the Road*, an anthology by Split Oak Press. She has served as a contributing reporter, community

newspaper editor, columnist, promotional and technical writer, managing book editor and designer, and currently works within the healthcare technology industry. An MFA student in her final term at Chatham University's Creative Writing program, Rebecca is the 2007 recipient of the Laurie Mansell Reich poetry prize, co-sponsored by the Academy of American Poets and Chatham University, and is a past nominee for the Associated Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) Intro Journals Project.

Barbara Daniels' book *Rose Fever: Poems* was published by WordTech Press. Her poetry has appeared in *Ars Medica*, *Switched-on Gutenberg*, *Slab*, *The Literary Review*, and many other journals. She earned an MFA from Vermont College, received two Individual Artist Fellowships from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and was granted a Dodge Full Fellowship to the Vermont Studio Center. With her husband, David I. Daniels, she wrote *English Grammar*, published by HarperCollins. She is on the staff at Peter Murphy's Winter Getaway in Cape May, New Jersey. Many of her poems are about "facing loss and death, weighing their cost and meaning, and learning how to go forward."

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Edward A. Dougherty lives and works in Corning, NY, and is the author of *Pilgrimage to a Gingko Tree* (2008 WordTech Communications) and *Part Darkness, Part Breath* (2008 Plain View Press), as well as four chapbooks of poetry, the most recent of which is *The Luminous House* (2007 Finishing Line Press). *Exercises for Poets: Double Bloom*, co-authored with Scott Minar, is available from Prentice-Hall. Edward was given the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activities. Please visit his website at www.edward-dougherty.net.

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Carol Frith is co-editor of the poetry journal, *Ekphrasis*. She received a “Special Mention” in the 2003 Pushcart Prize Anthology and has had work in *Seattle Review*, *POEM*, *Freshwater*, *Willow Review*, *Main Street Rag*, *MacGuffin*, *Atlanta Review*, *Rattle*, *Rhino*, *Poetry Kanto*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *Literary Review*, *Cutbank*, *Chariton Review*, *Spillway* and others, with chapbooks from Bacchae Press, Medicinal Purposes, Palanquin Press, and Finishing Line Press. Her collection, *two for a journey*, was released in 2010 from David Robert Books. She has another chapbook due out from Finishing Line Press later this year.

Carol L. Gloor is an attorney living partly in Chicago, Illinois, and partly in Savanna, Illinois, along the Mississippi River. Her poems have been published in many periodicals, most recently in the online magazine *Pure Francis*, and in the print journals *Cram 9: Poetry in the First*, and *Calyx*. A poem of hers was selected by *Highland Park Poetry* last spring in its Poetry That Moves Contest, and got to ride suburban busses, in poster form, for the month of April, 2010. She loves to read her work, and does so anywhere she can, including coffeehouses, bars, and churches. She a member of a poetry collective called Egg Money Poets, and more about that group and its work can be seen on its website, www.eggmoneypoets.org.

Marianna Hofer inhabits Studio 13 in the gloriously haunted Jones Building in downtown Findlay, Ohio. She has published poems and stories in a variety of small magazines, and her black and white photography has hung in various local exhibitions and eateries. Her first book, *A Memento Sent by the World*, was published by Word Press in 2008.

Roberta Whitman Hoff is a poet, musician, fiddler, Mom, and cat lover. She has taken numerous poetry workshops at Asnuntuck Community College and has published in the 2002 Bay Path College poetry magazine, *Beneath the Surface*. She lives in Enfield with her four beautiful, music-loving cats, who always give this poet unconditional love, and her wonderful son Bohrs is an actor in Chicago.

Ruth Holzer lives in Virginia and works as a freelance translator. Her poems have been published in *Slant*, *THEMA*, *Earth's Daughters*, *Connecticut River Review*, *Slipway*, *Natural Bridge*, and *California Quarterly*. She is the author of two chapbooks, *The First Hundred Years* and *The Solitude of Cities* (Finishing Line Press). Her work has received national and state awards as well as several Pushcart Prize nominations.

Kiely Hultgren is a twenty-year-old whirlwind of contradiction. There are but a few of life's conjectures with which she is in harmony. On Monday she might proclaim she has discovered her purpose, her true and constant source of personal peace, but you can bet that by the time Friday rolls around, she's thrown away draft 10 of "The Plan." One day she speculated that if her idea of happiness is ever-changing, the only possible way to achieve happiness, then, would be to reject the notion of it being solvable. For her, a solution is but a solution for a mere moment before the equation inevitably transforms. She has recently decided to view both her acknowledgement and acceptance of the unpredictability of her equation as the very source of the excitement she seeks. In a Taoist attempt to avoid the construction of glass ceilings with the shackles of the concrete, she's opted to encapsulate her life's equation in time via poetry. She knows that she has triumphed when she resurrects a dusty creation, only to identify with it in an unprecedented way.

Susan Johnson has her MFA and PhD from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where she currently teaches writing in the Isenberg School of Management. Her poems have recently

appeared in *Comstock Review*, *Off The Coast*, *Pinyon Poetry Review*, *Third Wednesday*, *Bluestem*, *Karamu*, and others. Her first book *Impossible is Nothing* will be published this spring from Finishing Line Press. She lives in South Hadley, Massachusetts, with her husband and two cats.

Elizabeth Kudlacz is a full-time scientist and part time poet. Born and raised in the suburbs of Cleveland, Ohio, she currently lives, works, and writes in Groton, Connecticut. Some of her haiku and poems have appeared in journals, including *Cicada*, *Aurorean*, *Connecticut River Review*, *Caduceus*, *Bellowing Ark*, and *Freshwater*, as well as in various anthologies.

Naomi Ruth Lowinsky's poems have been widely published, most recently in *Argestes*, *Ibbetson Street Press*, *The Pinch*, *Poem*, *Quiddity*, *Runes*, *Sierra Nevada Review*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *The Spoon River Poetry Review*, *The Texas Review*, and in the anthology *Child of My Child*. Her poem "Madelyn Dunham, Passing On" won first prize in the *Obama Millennium Contest*. Her memoir, *The Sister from Below: When the Muse Gets Her Way*, tells stories about her pushy muse. Her third poetry collection, *Adagio & Lamentation*, was published recently. She is a Jungian analyst in private practice in Berkeley, California.

Graham Martin has been writing poetry ever since he was exposed to the intelligent side of hip-hop lyricism at the age of fourteen (there is such a thing). Having been heavily influenced by "underground" rap music, his poetry focuses on intricate and tightly articulated rhyme schemes. Graham is a student of marketing at Norwalk Community College, and continues to write poetry and comedy as a hobby. His dream is to one day ride a dinosaur.

Julia Martinez is a student at Asnuntuck Community College; she hopes to finish school at a state university to become a Spanish teacher. This will be her first time published in any

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Alyssa Mazzarella is a grant writer at a Boston-based, non-profit organization. She completed a BFA in Writing, Literature, and Publishing at Emerson College in 2009. Her poetry has previously appeared in *Common Ground*.

Leslie McGrath's poems have been widely published in the United States, as well as in England, Ireland, and Japan. Her work is forthcoming in *SLATE, Tiferet, Long Poem magazine (UK), and PANK*. Winner of the 2004 Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry, her first collection of poetry, *Opulent Hunger, Opulent Rage*, was a finalist for the Connecticut Book Award and nominated for The Poet's Prize. She co-edited *Radha Says*, the posthumous poetry collection of Reetika Vazirani. She is a board member of the James Merrill House (Stonington, Connecticut) and an advisory board member at *The Word Works* (Washington D.C.). McGrath teaches creative writing and literature part time at Central Connecticut State University.

John McKernan is now a retired comma herder. He lives—mostly—in West Virginia where he edits ABZ Press. He has published four books of poetry. His latest is a selected poems *Resurrection of the Dust*. Recent poems of his appear in *The Tampa Review, Interim, Rockhurst Review, and Dislocate*.

Rennie McQuilkin has had work in *The Atlantic Monthly, Poetry, The American Scholar, The Southern Review, The Yale Review, The Hudson Review, Crazyhorse*, and other journals. He is the author of ten poetry collections, the most recent being *The Weathering: New & Selected Poems* (2009). He has received fellowships from the NEA and the State of Connecticut. For many years he directed the Sunken Garden Poetry Festival at Hill-Stead Museum in Farmington, Connecticut, and subsequently founded Antrim House Books, which publishes contemporary American poetry and

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Gaynell Meij has been a geologist, became a naturalist, and was impacted along the way by deep ecologists and mystics. She has travelled the path of rational-analytic mind to sensuous matter and is now immersed in the blending of these ways, learning what it can be to give voice out of "deep presence." She is blessed to have a daily life that includes stillness and opportunities to observe and wander.

Julie L. Moore is the author of *Slipping Out of Bloom* (WordTech Editions) and the chapbook, *Election Day* (Finishing Line Press). She has twice been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and received the Rosine Offen Memorial Award from the Free Lunch Arts Alliance, the Janet B. McCabe Poetry Prize from *Ruminate*, and the Judson Jerome Poetry Scholarship from the Antioch Writers' Workshop. Recent work has appeared in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *American Poetry Journal*, *Atlanta Review*, *CALYX*, *Cimarron Review*, *The Missouri Review Online*, *New Madrid*, *The Southern Review*, and *Valparaiso Poetry Review*. She lives in Ohio where she directs the writing center at Cedarville University. You can learn more about her work at www.juliemoore.com.

Trisha Nelson, a former educator, is both a poet and a spiritual director. She enjoys how these passions dovetail in her life. Her poetry has appeared in a variety of journals, including *Tiferet*, *ByLine*, *Mediphors*, *Buckle &*, *Buffalo Bones*, *Rainbird*, *The Evening Street Review*, *Slant*, *Hawai'i Pacific Review*, and *Argestes*. She has work upcoming in *Bluestem*. Silence, nature and people provide inspiration for many of Trisha's poems. She and her husband live in Boise, Idaho.

Patricia O'Brien is a member of the Guilford Poetry Guild. She's facilitated poetry workshops, including at York Correctional Institute hospice program. Pat's been published in

various periodicals, including *Connecticut River Review*, *Embers*, *Pulp Smith*, *Fairfield County Magazine*, *Poet Lore*, *Caduceus*, and *Red Fox Review*, Native West Press. She's won several prizes, among them, from the Trumbull Arts Council, *Embers*, and, most recently, from the Acton Public Library in Old Saybrook where she resides with her husband, John, and not too far from their three sons and their lively families.

Carolyn Orosz is a senior at Granby Memorial High School. She also attends the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts where she has studied creative writing for the past four years.

Lana Orphanides has been published in the journals, *A Letter Among Friends* and *Southeastern Gale*. Her work is also included in a book of poets and painters, *Spring: Rebirth and Renewal*, and in a chapbook, *Sea and the Sound of Wind*. She has done many readings throughout Connecticut, notably The Mystic Arts Café, The Hygienic, and as a poet and artist at the Hoxsie Gallery exhibition, *Poets and Painters*.

Steve Parlato, a college English instructor, lives in Connecticut with his wife and two children. His poetry has appeared in *MARGIE*, *Borderlands*, and the online journal, *Pirene's Fountain*. Steve's flash fiction, "The New Lenses," was nominated for a Readers' Choice Award on the website, 55 Word Stories. His poem, "Her absence shows," won 3rd prize in the Connecticut Poetry Society's Brodine/Brodinsky Contest, appearing in the 2008 edition of *The Connecticut River Review*. A featured poet at The Wednesday Night Poetry Series in Bethel, Steve has also participated in poetry readings at Burgundy Books in East Haddam and the Bradford Mansion at Avery Point, Groton. His young adult novel was named a finalist for a Tassy Walden New Voices in Children's Literature Award. Steve is very pleased to be published again by *Freshwater*.

Simon Perchik is an attorney whose poems have appeared in *Partisan Review*, *The New Yorker*, *Freshwater* and elsewhere.

For more information, including his essay “Magic, Illusion and Other Realities” and a complete bibliography, please visit his website at www.simonperchik.com.

Laurel S. Peterson is a Professor of English at Norwalk Community College. She has written a column for Gannett Suburban Newspapers on local history and served as editor of the literary journal *Inkwell*. Her poetry has been published or is forthcoming in *The Atlanta Review*, *The Distillery*, *Poet Lore*, *The Rio Grande Review*, *The Texas Review*, *Thin Air*, *Yankee*, and others. In 2006, she was a finalist for the John Ciardi Prize in Poetry for her manuscript *Mud Never Forgets*. She has two chapbooks, *That’s the Way the Music Sounds* (Finishing Line Press, 2009), and *Talking to the Mirror* (The Last Automat Press, 2010), and is the co-editor of *(Re)Interpretations: The Shapes of Justice in Women’s Experience* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009). While New York City is just about her favorite place on earth, she and her husband, poet Van Hartmann, live in Connecticut and Vermont, where she gardens, cooks, walks in the woods and, in the winter, reads by the fire.

Mary Clare Powell is a Professor of Creative Arts in Learning at Lesley University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. She has had poems published in journals, and also has three books of her poems in print: *Things Owls Ate*, *Academic Scat*, and *In the Living Room*. In addition, she writes personal essays, and articles about integrating the arts into schools. She has published two books—about the arts in education and social change, and about women’s values and the future.

Charles Rafferty directs the MFA program at Albertus Magnus College. His poems have been published or are forthcoming in *The New Yorker*, *The Literary Review*, *The Southern Review*, *TriQuarterly*, *Connecticut Review*, and *Massachusetts Review*. His most recent book is *A Less Fabulous Infinity*. In 2009, he received grants from the

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John Repp's most recent collections are *Big Conneautee* (poetry, Seven Kitchens Press, 2009) and *Heart of Joy* (stories, March Street Press, 2009). New poems will soon appear in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *The Journal*, and *Slant*, and book reviews in the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* and *Pleiades*.

Bessy Reyna is an award-winning Latina poet. Her Spanish language writing, published in Latin America, includes a poetry chapbook, *Terrarium*, and a collection of short stories, *Ab Ovo*. Her first poetry collection in English is *She Remembers*. A second collection, *The Battlefield of Your Body*, was published by Hill-Stead Museum publications. Her latest work is the bilingual collection *Memoirs of the Unfaithful Lover*, tunAstral, Toluca, Mexico 2010. Born in Cuba and raised in Panama, Reyna is a graduate of Mount Holyoke College and earned her Master's and Law degrees from the University of Connecticut.

Ann Robinson is a clerk in the criminal division of Marin County in San Rafael, California, and owns a farming operation in Arkansas. Her poems have been published in *American Literary Review*, *California Quarterly*, *Compass Rose*, *Connecticut Review*, *Fourteen Hills*, *New York Quarterly*, *Poet Lore*, *Spoon River Review*, *Willow Review*, and *Zone 3*. She is a recipient of a Marin County Poetry Grant and a John Spaemer fiction grant. She is an avid bird watcher whose cat, Lawrence, shares the same passion.

José Antonio Rodríguez was born in Mexico and raised in South Texas. His poetry collection *The Shallow End of Sleep* is forthcoming from Tia Chucha Press in 2011. His work has received the 2009 Allen Ginsberg Poetry Award and a Pushcart Prize nomination and has appeared in *Paterson Literary Review*, *Connecticut Review*, *cream city review*, *The Spoon River Poetry Review*, and elsewhere.

Dennis Saleh has published books of poetry, prose, and artwork, and has a recent poetry chapbook, *Journals*. He has ten pages of poetry in *Little Star 2*; other work is forthcoming in *Chautauqua*, *Hotel Amerika*, and *Illuminations*. Later this year, he will be Featured Poet in *Psychological Perspectives* (published by the C. G. Jung Institute of Los Angeles), with both poetry and prose, and an article on his work. He has read his poetry, and from a novel-in-progress set in Ancient Egypt, *Bast*, at the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum in San Jose, California.

Don Shockey has worked as a reporter and editor for newspapers in Columbia, Missouri, St. Petersburg, Florida, and Tulsa and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. His poetry has been published, most recently, in *Alligator Juniper*, *Plain Songs*, *Red Rock Review*, *Black Rock and Sage*, *Mid-American Review*, and others.

Askold Skalsky, originally from Ukraine, is a retired professor of English at Hagerstown Community College in Western Maryland, whose poems have been published in numerous small press magazines and journals such as *Notre Dame Review* and *Southern Poetry Review*, and most recently in *Cutthroat*, *The Istanbul Literary Review*, and *The Dos Passos Review*. He has also published in Canada, England, and Ireland. Last year he received his second award from the Maryland State Arts Council for his poetry, and one of his poems was recently nominated for the Pushcart Prize.

John L. Stanizzi's first book, *Ecstasy Among Ghosts*, was published by Antrim House Books. His second book, *Sleepwalking* (also with Antrim House) was released in October, 2009. His poems have appeared in *The New York Quarterly*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Freshwater*, *Rattle*, *Passages North*, *The Spoon River Quarterly*, *Poet Lore*, *The Connecticut River Review*, *Stone Country*, *Hawk & Handsaw*, *Gutter Eloquence*, *SNReview*, and many others. John is an Adjunct Professor of English, at Manchester

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Sue Ellen Thompson is the author of four books of poetry, most recently *The Golden Hour* (Autumn House Press, 2006), and the editor of *The Autumn House Anthology of Contemporary American Poetry*. Her work has been included in the *Best American Poetry* series, read on National Public Radio by Garrison Keillor, and featured in U.S. Poet Laureate Ted Kooser's nationally syndicated newspaper column. After more than thirty years in Connecticut, she moved to the Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake in 2006, where last year she received the Maryland Author Award from the Maryland Library Association.

Hannah Watkins is a sophomore at Middlesex Community College, and plans to transfer in the fall, possibly to Wesleyan University. She won the Connecticut Student Poet contest in the fall of 2010, and is spending her spring semester touring Connecticut colleges and universities, reading her poetry with four other student poets. Her work will appear in the upcoming spring issue of *Connecticut Review*. Hannah plans to major in psychology and work with adolescents, particularly through creative writing therapy.

J.S. Watts lives and writes in East Anglia in the United Kingdom. Her poetry, reviews and short stories appear in various publications in Britain, Canada, and the States, including *Acumen*, *Ascent Aspirations*, *Brittle Star*, *Envoi*, *The Journal*, *Hand + Star*, and *Orbis*, and have been broadcast on *BBC Radio*. She is Poetry Reviews Editor for *Open Wide Magazine* and Poetry Editor for *Ethereal Tales*. Her debut poetry collection, *Cats and Other Myths*, is being published in 2011 by Lapwing Publications.

Allison Zaczynski attends Asnuntuck Community College and is a liberal arts major. She loves writing poetry and hopes to transfer as an English major.

