

CircleShow

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Seven CirclePress

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## From The Editor

This second issue of Circleshow stands as a reflection of the awesome blossoming that SCP has undergone in the last year. With almost twice as many authors as our first issue we think it is a testament to the persistent sense of growth that lies at the heart of this little project.

Which brings us to the image we have chosen for this issue's cover. This strange and momentous wave was selected to not only illustrate the great shadow of potential we think is inherent in the future of SCP but also points to the revivifying effect we hope to have on the often stagnated spirit of the larger literary world. It is also symbolic of the fantastic ocean of independent literature of which SCP is but one minor wave, a community which is made up of you ( the readers), our devoted authors and all the great small presses and bookstores that fight daily to keep the integrity of the word alive.

As always we want to thank the many writers who sent us submissions over the past six months, the countless readers who wander our web page daily reading our online material and every other sensitive soul in the world for whom poetry and art is as essential as air.

Thank you.



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## Daniel Ames

Daniel Ames is a poet living and working in Detroit, Michigan. He has had poems recently published in *Magnolia: A Florida Journal of Literary and Fine Arts*, *The Centrifugal Eye*, *Nefarious Ballerina*, *Flutter Poetry Journal*, *Opium Poetry*, *Bijou Poetry Review* and *The Inquisition*. More poems are slated for 2009 publication in *Edison Literary Review*, *Thieves Jargon*, *Iodine Poetry Journal*, *Pulsar Poetry UK* and *Thick with Conviction*. To view links to some of his published poetry, visit his website: [www.poetdanielames.com](http://www.poetdanielames.com).

## Bombs

they are stashed everywhere  
placed with no master plan  
quite haphazardly

no collective time frame  
for final resolution

I can hear them like  
a schizophrenic orchestra  
at night when I can't sleep

tick tick tick tick tick tick tick tick tick  
tick...tick...tick...tick...tick...tick...tick...tick  
tick.....tick.....tick.....tick.....

perhaps one is in a cupboard  
another beneath the foundation

probably one is concealed behind a half-truth  
another slipped between the veils of exaggeration

the only consolation may be that while  
this field of imminent destruction is a composite of our lives

there is a certain security in knowing that each  
little surprise package found its quiet private home

via our own pale, gentle hands

## Where The Train Runs Out Of Track

beyond the Elysian fields in a swath of scrub oak and gravel  
in the distance, a small farmhouse without windows or a door  
a hawk flies overhead, with a red tail and a eye for what's beyond  
this is where you and I now stand

the railroad ties are soaked in creosote black and fissured  
the ghosts of tall weeds are carried along by the wind  
the silence presses on our temples, the heat smothers our skin  
you and I and the glassy scent of gasoline

Daniel Ames

there may have been plans to keep laying track  
we can almost make out the linear banks of earth ahead  
a heat wave shimmers beyond the broken landscape  
where you and I try to see

you turn and look back I was waiting for you to do it  
I would have been disappointed if you hadn't  
because then the years along the way would have tendrils  
viscous remnants of you and I

you turn back to the front and as your gaze passes me  
I wonder if you look at me or if you continue to swivel  
without interruption or contemplation toward the precipice ahead  
neither you nor I comprehend

at long last the faint smile comes and I am thrilled and reassured  
I take your hand and your calm acceptance like a thousand times before  
the hawk is gone and a young child comes out of the farmhouse  
she hears the train that is you and I



## Chuck Augello

Chuck Augello's work has appeared in *Rattle*, *Main Channel Voices*, *Word Riot*, *Pindeldyboz*, and other journals.

Veronica, 2006

I carried her breath in my pocket  
kept a photo of her shadow and showed it to friends  
found her profile in the outline of a storm cloud  
wrote her name in Chinese letters on the back of my hand  
sewed into a quilt her old grocery lists  
built a nest from her little red party dress  
fell asleep, a skeleton dreaming of skin.



## Heather Bartlett

Heather Bartlett received her MFA in Poetry from Hunter College. She lives and writes in Upstate New York and teaches writing at Elmira College. Her work has appeared in *California Quarterly*, *RealPoetik*, *Conte*, *The Cherry Blossom Review* and *Melusine*.

## Obituary

1.

This is not my first time.  
In the beginning it came  
much slower – an itch  
under my left foot, pain  
between my legs,  
emptiness in my throat  
that dried my mouth  
until I could only taste  
skin.

2.

They set me on fire,  
spread me  
as dust. At night my mother  
whispered prayers we'd never said  
into my father's ear.  
Below them, under  
the bed, the remnants  
of a campfire.

3.

This is not my first poem. I've heard  
others have turned  
to art.

4.

Next time was a waste. I saw  
what had happened  
when I woke up. The residue  
on my pillow,  
thick and dark  
like the blood from my nose.  
I touched it, rubbed it  
between my fingers, smelled it  
to take in a piece

of the moment

or waiting  
for it to come again.

5.

It came. Swept in  
through a crack in the window,  
didn't even hover  
above me, just went  
straight to my mouth.

## Poem

1.

We're sitting alone in the back of the plane,  
three rows behind an emergency exit.  
The flight attendant offers me  
headphones. My lover  
offers me raspberry gum,  
a notebook and a sleeping pill. Sleep  
she says and opens her book.

2.

During my last therapy session  
the doctor quotes John Lennon  
and takes my hand, everything  
is clear. He tells me  
to be happy. He gives me the office  
phone number. He makes sure I have it  
in my pocket  
before I shut the door behind me.

3.

Will you ever go back? my mother asks  
when I tell her I love  
a woman.

4.

The voice in the song is quiet, weaker  
than the accompanying piano.

When she comes home, my lover will ask  
what was it like?

5.

As we taxi to the runway  
we are making a list of the things we've seen:

30 elephants,  
3 car accidents, one meteor shower,  
one dying person, two dead  
people, 4 oceans,  
the color of blood on a white  
sheet, too many lovers.

6.

My mother's hand is pushing away  
her glass of wine, fingertip to stem. She is waiting  
for me to catch it.

7.

We're flying back to the states  
after eighteen days  
in South Africa. Tucked tightly  
under the seat in front of me is a plastic bag  
full of handmade scarves  
and beaded necklaces.  
They will keep them she says  
as we fold the gifts – necklace inside  
scarf, wrapped and placed on top of each other.

8.

Will you ever go back?

9.

The captain tells us we will be landing soon.  
The cabin is dark, a baby crying  
from the front rows. Almost my lover says next to me  
and puts her hand on my leg.

The trees are coming into focus below us,  
street lights and black roofs, the tall red

Heather Bartlett

beacons outside the airport. Yes I say  
and lean against the window.  
Yes I say, and she takes her hand away.



## Jennifer Campbell

Jennifer Campbell is an English Professor at Erie Community College in Buffalo, NY, and a co-editor of *Earth's Daughters*. Her first book-length collection of poems, entitled Driving Straight Through, was published in 2008 (FootHills). She has recently had over fifty poems published in journals such as *Slant*, *Slipstream*, *Rockhurst Review*, *Caesura*, *HeartLodge*, *Nerve Cowboy*, *Letterhead*, and *Melusine*, and work is forthcoming from *Louisiana Literature* and *Eclipse*.

## Centering

A dandelion puff alights  
on a maple tree, inches from  
the guitarist's head. He casts

stunned silence over a crowd  
that is moved to meditate  
on a holy unholy rooftop

roofed by impenetrable clouds,  
caught in the quiet chew  
of his words, the meat of his heart—

raw material crows could eat,  
but don't. Courtyard, snapdragon,  
city trees rest in round stone basins.

Another fuzzy tuft floats  
within rare air—not hot,  
but radiant in its stillness.

Like gallant trees that lay down  
bark jackets to let women  
cross their homemade bridges,

the way scents carry you  
through the years, allow safe return  
to a place, you may be here now

or folded on a plush carpet somewhere,  
calling up concentration, or wrapped  
in a lover's fiercely gentle hold.

You may be wandering your mind's  
graveyard, sighting benchmark indelicacies,  
brushing dust off perfect moments.

Or you may be the man slicing the air  
with guitar strings, not echoing but alive,  
in the center of satisfaction.



## What Remains

Not a mirage: the bark-brown body  
of a deer embedded in a half-melted snowdrift.  
I drive by it again and again, needing  
its awful beauty, taking an atypical commute,  
not cringing at death's sour taste.  
I'm captivated by the cryogenic experiment,  
how daily chores and weather's urgency  
trump the dignity of removal.  
But its head just rests on the road,  
body suspended, ever-sleeping,  
reminding me of the child I was,  
huddled in a beach towel, flanked  
by mother and dog. Frozen in unscripted  
tenderness, my mother's eyes  
watched another child in the pool.  
I tower over her now, note her fragile,  
rounding shoulders, though my hands  
are her hands, thirty years ago. How is it  
we can see, but never believe,  
what we'll become? Stepping out of space  
and time for a moment, we come to know  
who we are, recognize our voices on tape,  
our face in a frame. Unexpectedly,  
winter-gray melt and hay-colored autumn  
join spring green to become the stage  
for a year-end reckoning, raising questions  
we'll forget come February.



## Melissa Carl

Pushcart nominee Melissa Carl's poetry is forthcoming in *Melusine* and *Amoskeag: The Journal of Southern New Hampshire University*. Her previous work has appeared in various regional and national publications. A member of Mensa, she has an M.L.A. from Western Maryland College and teaches Honors and Advanced Placement humanities courses in Pennsylvania, where she resides with her husband and son.

## Crawling To Poetry On My Hands And Knees

"If you're crawling to poems on your hands and knees...in my view, you're not crawling to poetry. Prozac would probably work better."---Daisy Fried

I suspected it would come to this---  
you and the unquelled arbor  
of your voice;  
me, wanting to seep into your recitations  
of the world's elaborate cargo.  
Between what has happened  
and happened again,  
your possibilities turn lilac  
in the elsewhere of things  
that disappear: the twisted oaks  
and roadside stones,  
the summer's prima donna light.  
Like ocean sound heard from a porch,  
you speak; you don't speak.  
Evening follows you towards  
the moon's brutal allure  
over the love-sick.  
I follow you too,  
as if the distance between us  
could diminish, as if I could find  
my irreducible self  
in the spaces  
of your wind-chime speech,  
as if I was one of those gulls  
that always plummets after  
its own cry.

## Want To Know Who We Are

Forget the quiet poem about pine trees,  
the poem where the speaker goes into the woods  
and feels kind of religious.

Gulp down the poems that burn,  
poems of land mines and sudden dark,  
of blindfolds and courtyard executions---

poems that sit in the mud  
of refugee camps  
and eat mice in the tents.

Hear the strange sobs of poems  
under the surreality of tv news  
where two minutes of blood and tanks

precede two minutes of breakfast cereal.  
Don't believe them when they tell you  
how pleasant the weather was today.

Return to the barbed wire poems,  
the moments of bomb smearing children  
into the gutters while only the smoke escapes.

Forget Dante and his Circles  
where cause and effect  
explain the suffering.

Want to know who we are?  
Read the poem in which the river rises  
towards the village the entire night

and the moon refuses to watch.



## Susana H. Case

Susana H. Case has recent work in many journals, including: *Amoskeag*, *Cider Press Review*, *Coe Review*, *Diner*, *Eclipse*, *Gulf Stream Magazine*, *Hawai'i Pacific Review*, *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *The Mochila Review*, *Potomac Review* and *Slant*. Twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize, she is the author of The Scottish Café (Slapering Hol Press, 2002), Hiking The Desert In High Heels (RightHandPointing, 2005), and Anthropologist In Ohio (Main Street Rag Publishing Company, 2005).

## Anything But Love

Your distraction at the protracted nipples  
that just strolled

slowly by our table. My gin martini I'm trying  
to drink, this prong

of olives I might poke in your eye. The proposal  
you were nice enough

to bring. Oh, and a ring, modern jewelry,  
which I don't favor.

The existential dread you give me. Your starched  
shirts, never any sweat.

The mirror I bet you stand before to practice  
that smile.

My pile of books, you view as a liability.  
My never being sure

why you're here, except—for bed. The different  
lie that I'm ready for.

The trouble I have saying goodbye.

## God Helmet

The neurotheologist envisions religious rooms in every home,  
alters a snowmobile helmet to create fake  
epilepsy, *sacred disease*,

through electromagnetic fields. The helmet's symmetric  
spindling. Excited neurons. Orgasms  
without sex: transcendental

storm bubble, temporal lobe untempered love. Light  
a cigarette, lessen amino acid in the cingulate  
cortex before the final

scalpel, cold as an icicle: feared ultimate altered state—existential



chemical emptiness. Electricity, its pleasure,  
its pain: Nicola Tesla,

celibate genius of alternating current, feared round objects: pearl  
earrings, the number three. From the helmet,  
micro-seizures and God speaks.

The qualm—*if God told me to kill*, these sensitive  
and mystical subjects fervently agree,  
*I would do it in his name.*

## Mind-Body Disconnect

No good, a marriage  
made in heaven, no possibility of body

in that loft-like space,  
a place without lust, paradise lost.

Mind-body problem:  
even when I hate you

I want you—  
both your hands

on my breasts, bisected brain.  
I put on a new dress. You say,

nice dress, your breasts look bigger.  
I wear that dress all week.

Images of my brain, on an MRI,  
shell of a horseshoe

crab. Where exactly do free will,  
desire, reside—the neurologist doesn't say,

he looks for electricity.  
Unlike him, I'm not a pragmatist.

Let's remain impervious to reason,  
keep the amperes flowing. I can't calculate

how often we've gotten together.  
No empty piazza of heaven here,

this transient earth, just carnal  
curves on which I want you dancing.

## R.T. Castleberry

R.T. Castleberry is the former editor/publisher of *Curbside Review*, a monthly literary magazine. Castleberry's work has appeared in *Green Mountains Review*, *The Alembic*, *Pacific Review*, *RiverSedge*, *Poet Lore*, *Margie* and *Caveat Lector*, among other journals. It has also been featured in the anthologies Travois, TimeSlice and The Weight of Addition.

## A Healing Word

In writing now--as catharsis,  
I read the blankness of a stare into a mirror  
as currents of malice, unease, mockery,  
extend the stare as greeting, resentment, defense,  
regard the mirror as boast, testament, tether.  
I have no truth, no advice.  
I refuse the necessity for proofs or polemics.  
Vanity reshapes any question into my answer,  
a harsh life into lyric poems of holocaust and upheaval.  
I follow the compression of a line  
to civil war Spain, to the blues,  
to the snare of free association.  
If I lose the line of curative logic,  
in revising, if I forget my point,  
I sacrifice sense for image,  
image for rhythm,  
image and rhythm for neatly coded curse.  
I make closure a demand.

## An Arrangement Of Necessities

As I deconstruct the fable of the Chinese mare  
it becomes a needful, sighing guide  
inside the minutes of every myth,  
a metaphor for melancholy,  
a merging of damaged wire and mathematics.  
I write at home  
and the war is somewhere else.

I draw no line between my needs  
and someone else's goods.  
The dimes I steal are pooled  
as red coins for dispensation.  
"Give me the \$20 suffering,"  
I say at Sunday criticism.  
Irony is my favorite emotion,  
my center as my voice.  
I worship at a tree of crows.  
I marvel at the stammering  
as I view the words of God.

Tomorrow I travel,  
see my headlights on the car ahead,  
lay my pallet in the dust ruts beside the road.  
All is in order here:  
the secrets I acknowledge, the children that I don't  
are discarded in the highway weeds.  
In a month, a miser's mood  
vacant as a stone thrown to make a river wall,  
I watch a line of fires building from the Eastern horizon.  
I leave to show I can.

### Toward The World (Where No One Is Waiting)

I open my morning door  
to the cooing whir of birds in flight,  
the glistening weave of a spider's web.  
Stepping out,  
leather soles slide on dew-damp sidewalk,  
a cat slips through the clutter of courtyard planters.  
Wind-floated leaves hang in the morning haze.  
A perfume trail of White Diamonds and wisteria  
lingers like the moon.  
Beyond the gated line of plank fences, security mesh  
the street is a deep mosaic of shaded green,  
sun-touched spreads of oak, palm tree, pine,  
high, jutting arcs of new town homes.  
Oleander and crape myrtle layer the street median.  
Early students pass by, pack-laden, intense.  
One carries a carving of a yellow-eyed crow,  
almost losing it in the stretching leap over a puddle.  
Tell me a story, the day seems to say.  
Twenty years gone from Miami and Monterrey,  
fables have fallen into disfavor.  
The past is a dog nosing in the night.  
I arch my back to ease it before the drive,  
shrug my jacket into place.  
I leave with nothing but hours rolling to report.



## David Chorlton

David Chorlton was born in Austria, grew up in England, and spent several years in Vienna before moving to Phoenix in 1978. His newest published books reflect his concern for the natural world. They are Waiting for the Quetzal, from March Street Press, and The Porous Desert, from Future Cycle Press. He recently had a poem included in the anthology BIRDS from the British Museum, and won the Ronald Wardall Poetry Prize for his chapbook The Lost River, from Rain Mountain Press.

## Lost In The Chiricahuas

Our first few steps ran easy  
on the stones and fallen leaves  
beneath the creek where sycamore  
were changing and oaks leaned  
over water. We followed

the suggestion of a trail, the two of us  
and our dog for whom  
the earth was a library of scents,  
along the shallow inclines  
with their views of the current  
framed in juniper bark  
until the woodland grew around us

and we turned  
to forage back with only guesswork  
for a compass. Through a tangle  
of grasses we clambered, trying to uncover

the way back to the beam  
of light that first  
pointed us on our way, but it had gone  
underground while we  
strained to read directions by sun  
and the distant mountain with a streak  
of yellow aspens

brushed against the pines. We became  
confused as to how  
a creek could flow away  
in half an hour  
and leave us scrambling to find it  
on slopes of soil

too loose for our shoes. Canine  
intuition only led to bear scat  
and lost  
became loster

while the scenery smiled  
at our every wrong turn.  
The Chiricahua earth glowed  
beneath our aimless feet



and the clear October sky was bluer  
where the foliage began to turn  
but we couldn't tell

the way out from the lifelines  
on our hands. Just as we thought  
of thirst swooping  
to take us in its talons

the unpaved road appeared between the evergreens  
so I set out walking on my own  
to find where we had parked.  
On these roads

you walk in hope of finding a friendly driver  
passing, flag her down, say  
It's okay, I'm not armed,  
and she replies,  
I am. Get in.

## Postcards From The Age Of Miracles

I  
Whenever you are reading this  
remember us  
as the ones who tried to live backwards  
and teach creation  
while scientists built a tunnel in which  
to look back at the beginning of time.

II  
Which millennium are we in?  
Is this Milky Way the road  
to a medieval shrine  
or a constellation  
in the sky?

III  
We're looking for water on Mars  
instead of in Arizona  
where only a few miles of river  
remain, but nobody launches a mission  
to find them. There's no future  
in the past.

IV

Religion just becomes more popular  
the more we spend  
on war. It's comforting  
to have faith in the ethereal  
when weapons are so chilling  
to the touch.

V

Talking about the virgin birth  
or resurrection keeps  
a sense of wonder in our lives  
even though we can't explain  
how they were possible. Neither  
do we understand digital technology,  
although we came to love it once  
we were told it's only ones and zeros.

## Elayne Clift

Elayne's poetry and prose has appeared in numerous literary journals and she is the author of two poetry collections: Demons Dancing in My Head and Other People, Other Lands. Elayne is also the author of two collections of short fiction: Croning Tales and The Limits of Love.

## Conjuring Beauty In Unexpected Things (1)

Today, I saw a paper clip.  
Really saw it, I mean,  
with its beautifully aligned curves  
turning perfectly at each end  
like a toy train track,  
and I thought, what an extraordinary invention!  
Who conceived it? Who built the machines  
that make them by the thousands  
to ease prosaic moments in an ordinary life?  
Then I saw a safety pin, and marveled at the ingenuity  
of a tiny thing like that, small contribution perhaps,  
but it too was perfectly designed, whimsical, practical,  
crafted with care the way a woman knits a baby wrap.

I flipped on a light switch and nearly went mad  
with the intrigue of it all,  
innovation being such an awesome thing,  
so you can imagine my frenzy when  
later, I crossed a bridge -- a huge edifice  
suspended by steel wires over a wide,  
rapidly running river –  
and marveled at a thing so efficiently beautiful,  
arched like a rainbow to carry people from  
one shore to another, defying nature perhaps,  
but adding grandeur nonetheless,  
with its girders and gargoyle carvings  
amid others magical things.

There is beauty hiding everywhere.  
There is magic in everything.  
Knowing that, I am a child  
with a secret too overwhelming to keep!

[1] Arundhati Roy in Writing the World: On Globalization

## Sistare (1)

Today, just after the fog had lifted,  
And the mist had risen from the pond,  
A starched and stately heron stood  
At the edge of the water,  
Like a faithful servant, ever vigilant  
Against vague disruption.  
Then, sensing voyeurs,  
he spread his wide blue wings  
and lifted from the ground  
In graceful, silent flight,  
With no intention of giving notice.

Later, a large V crossed the sky,  
Like a bridal ribbon or a child's streamer,  
As autumn migrations continue,  
In perfect formation,  
To cut a swath through the heavens  
Like a seamstress skillfully cutting her cloth.  
And in a pasture, a calf fragile and new,  
Lay utterly still while its mother  
Licked the detritus of birth from her babe.

Sometime later, wending our way home  
Through tweeded foliage set alight  
By a retiring sun, we saw  
The baby calf and its mother again,  
Joined now in the birthing field  
By another cow laboring to drop her calf.  
Heaving, lactating, eating the birth sac  
Of her baby's predecessor,  
Her udder full to explosion,  
The human menagerie, observing her confinement  
As though she were Marie Antoinette,  
Raised only the slightest interest.

Miraculously, at the close of day,  
When the air and the humming birds  
and the dragonflies no longer stir,  
When bees nuzzle morning glory vines and  
red garden flowers with lazy contentment,  
a piebold deer and three wild turkey  
grazed near the vegetable patch,  
peaceful and unafraid.  
Another splendid October day

has come to an end.

[1] To stand, to cause to stop

## Tethered

You floated then, all those years ago,  
So snug and secure in an amniotic world  
I could not know.  
I only knew that I loved you,  
Loved you with ferocious gentleness,  
Unequivocally, bottomless, without reservation  
As you inhabited that mysterious place,  
When we had yet to meet.

Now, all these years later,  
You float in another world  
I cannot understand.  
My body no longer nourishes and shields you,  
Only my soul longs for you to be safe, secure,  
And I know, painfully, that  
I must lengthen the tether binding us still,  
Lengthen it that you may find your way,  
Floating, floating in a world so far away from mine.

## Barbara Daniels

Barbara Daniel's book of poems, Rose Fever, was published by Word-Tech Press in 2008. Her poetry has appeared in *The Louisville Review*, *Karamu*, *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.

## At The Ninth Street Market

Down from rooms over the street  
I come walking, trailing beads  
and torn scarves, breath so loud

a man stops to listen. Dawn seeps in,  
flux of blood to the eye of a trout,  
clamor of sales starting around it.

Silver shimmer, bloodshot eye,  
fish too old to be bought or sold  
though someone poor will buy it.

Among the limes and frayed bok choy  
I load my arms with berries and  
cheese, all awkward hands,

all mouth. Death when it comes  
as it has to the trout will be cold  
and complete and surprising.

## Available Light

*for Michael Gibson*

Your new pictures teach subtraction,  
face not a face, gloved hand,  
your method erasure, the same strategy  
time has. Already I'm inches shorter.

In the photograph you won't sell me  
you stare at the lens through swim goggles.  
You see under water, deep  
into eyeholes. Faces return your stare—

fish, barn owl, old woman's mouth  
at a window, her bold right arm.  
I gave up muscles contracting near eyes  
and corners of lips. When anyone

speaks, I look away, don't see  
what I fear—the authority of sorrow.



You say the job of the old is to think  
about ending, stepping out

of the body to a penumbra,  
light at the line where darkness  
moves into darkness,  
winterbourne river, inky sea.



## Emily Easley

Emily Easley is a single mom with a passion for the written word. She is excited about life and is grateful for her journey. These are her first published works.

aftermath, the beginning

I had some time to kill  
before my next class, so  
I rode with him back to his den

the plastic bags secured with duct-tape  
made for noisy windows  
distracting from the  
flappppppp flapppppp were  
empty pizza boxes at my feet

I felt like a child  
sitting so high off the ground like that.

Back at his place,  
he asked if he could kiss me.  
I don't remember if it was before  
or after  
the daffodils took on new meaning.

I looked down at the speckled concrete  
trying to say *no*  
without moving my lips.

It was too late, his  
mouth full of tar  
and  
dirty teeth  
pressed like glass bottles  
against my own  
but his mouth tasted like opium,

so it wasn't that bad.  
Now he's calling me his girl  
and I wonder if he knows  
how much  
I hate  
losing sleep to the sound  
of his dreams.

## Pause

The graceful slopes of limb on the live oak  
stretch liling, up  
and out  
like goddess configurations  
or a tulip unfolding in those slow motion recordings.  
Sometimes I curse my eyes for not being lenses-

The mind can capture a moment for only so long,  
and it's true that no picture can capture  
the entirety of your face.

Don't forget these things,  
from your second spring.  
You wanted to find acorns, so I followed you.  
There we found an exoskeleton-  
It's only February, but here the sun is bigger.

At night, after you have nestled into sleep,  
I find my breath the same as yours.  
Between inhales and exhales  
I'm reminded of all that goes on beneath the skin.

There are infinite mitochondrial threads that cross over between us-  
I picture them a vast intertwining of lavender and lilac,  
the soft orange we have no memory of.



## JR Gilness

Gilness is a writer and former teacher who has most recently been living between Alaska, California, and his native terrain in northeastern Minnesota. He has written articles for local newspapers and plans to eventually publish both fiction collections and non-fiction academic works. His themes usually involve religion, philosophy, socio-political controversy, nature and science, and individualism. He holds a BA in Creative Writing and International Business, an MA in Teaching ESL from St. Cloud State University, and intends to pursue a doctorate in the near future.

## I Am Sleeping With God Tonight

I do not dread the passing hours  
I do not worry tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow  
I do not suffer what I don't have  
I do not feel lonely  
I do not fret for nightmares  
In solitude  
I am sleeping with god tonight

I shall pass the hours of slumber  
As if in meditative bliss  
As if a child returning to primal state  
As if the fetus, embryo, zygote who doesn't dwell on sense perceptions  
There, now, forever, eternally  
With brahman, as brahman  
As one in solitude  
In solitude  
As one  
I am sleeping with god tonight

Tomorrow I shall be reborn  
Tonight I shed all troubles  
In between I shall not be aware

I am sleeping with god tonight

## Why I Stay Alive

(a tribute to the sanātana dharma)

### I. Kham Brahm

Should the claustrophobic strain  
inflict terror and anxiety,  
remember you, which pulls me through  
to triumph on despondency.

When you're components of my make,  
I've rediscovered in the end:  
in solace I'm a part of you  
which others cannot comprehend.



You are the only thing that is,  
as all is all I hope to be:  
a primal pulse, diffusive *this*  
in vibrant choreography.

You're prana flowing in my spine,  
inventive vital energy  
that drives me through the course I chart  
to move to you as destiny.

I celebrate our link  
to merge beyond the sun:  
In union manifesting  
out of many out of one.

That's why I stay alive,  
if that is all I do.  
That's why I stay alive:  
I stay alive for you.

## II. Bhakti

It matters that I care enough,  
I choose with noblest intent.  
I find my dedicated peace  
in honoring without relent.

Beyond emotion is a love  
devoted to external cause.  
Dissolved in you, complete and great,  
the sense of ego thus withdraws.

As passion motivates  
as far as one can strive  
to wonder and to seek  
that's why I stay alive.

## III. Karma

The role I play integral to  
the universe developing:  
immersed in deed, I offer you  
the actions I'm accomplishing.

That man but for to live, he lives—

and have no reason more than he—  
is lacking wisdom to exist,  
for thou art reason thus to be.

With all the world to change  
inspired by this drive  
to reach a goal of you  
that's why I stay alive.

#### IV. Jnana

Beyond a name, beyond a form,  
our mortal wits cannot believe  
what senses cannot sense,  
what thoughts cannot conceive:

The joy of perfect unity  
to know that by which all is known,  
you manifest in cosmic dance  
I see through you as all is shown.

As I am part of you  
from whence I did derive  
and you are all of me  
that's why I stay alive.

#### V. Raja

To move beyond to simply be—  
become that comprehensive bliss,  
the sense perceptions fade and yield:  
definitively nothingness.

Concordant balance clarifies  
the many manifold in one,  
and settles to the purity  
of karma to oblivion.

To stop and meditate  
upon you I arrive  
for what transcends is true  
that's why I stay alive.

VI. Dharma

Yet all attributes here  
fall short of bare deception,  
that rightful words still fail at truth  
by flaws of sense perception.

Beyond what I personify:  
the absolute reality,  
the substance, force, and source of all,  
salvation from duality.

To lose attachment to this life:  
a perfect reason to survive.  
This is the course the cosmos takes.  
This is why I stay alive.

With all the verve to effort through,  
lord knows that I have work to do,  
and that is why I stay alive.  
I stay alive for you.



## Taylor Graham

Taylor Graham is a volunteer search-and-rescue dog handler in the Sierra Nevada and has had poems appear in the *International Poetry Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Poetry International*, *Southern Humanities Review*, and elsewhere and has also been included in the anthology, California Poetry: From the Gold Rush to the Present (Santa Clara University, 2004). The Downstairs Dance Floor (Texas Review Press, 2006) was awarded the Robert Phillips Poetry Chapbook Prize.

Her current project is Walking with Elihu, poems on the American peace activist Elihu Burritt, the Learned Blacksmith (1810-1879).

## Futures In Fieldstone

*Elihu Burritt, 1857*

Words don't pay. A husk bed  
costs two dollars.  
Sixteen cents a day to eat  
sawdust pudding.  
Who could sleep on good-

will when everyone wants  
a reason for war? Brother  
against brother breeds  
profit in shovels to dig  
the graves deeper.

Better to join your pen  
to the plough. Hard  
field-labor, ten hours  
a day; and then you write  
your peace-thoughts

on the top of a lime cask.  
Those words don't sell. Still  
you believe, Peace  
won't always get buried  
in a warmonger's grave.

## Olive Leaves

*Elihu Burritt, 1845-1852*

In Boston and Baltimore, ladies gather  
for their needlework, embroidering handkerchiefs  
they'll exchange for pennies  
to pay for your next *Olive Leaf* for peace.

In Bristol, English ladies in a circle  
stitch green silk in linen, intricate designs  
to garner pennies for the olive-work  
of peace. Their talk

comes soft as words sent across an ocean,

mother to son, asking  
how he does in the New World;  
and has he got a wife yet, and a child?

What of his neighbors – do they bear arms  
against the Motherland, or –  
when a British ship sinks off Nantucket,  
do the good folk risk their lives

to save a sailor  
they might otherwise call enemy?  
In Bristol as in Baltimore, the ladies  
thread their hopeful needles,

sewing seeds into clean white fabric.  
Seeds of olive trees whose leaves  
might cross oceans  
and the borders stitched with blood.

## The Cost Of Service

*Elihu Burritt, Consular Agent at Birmingham, 1868-9*

What does Washington know  
of things in Birmingham, England? Coal-  
smoke hub of industry and commerce, surely  
it rates a full Consul – not just an Agent.

What can Washington know of Birmingham?  
Your *Walks in the Black Country*  
should have told them. The miners  
and nail-makers, the girls at the brick works.

What does Washington care for your  
charities? Not to mention the sick sailor,  
your countryman from Norfolk, Virginia,  
stranded so far from home –

of course you help him. And then  
the wealthy New York merchant drops in  
at tea-time – what does Washington  
care for the cost of tea?

You've always known how to scrimp.  
But here you have the dignity of your post

to uphold. How many letters does it take  
to explain simple arithmetic,

not to mention justice? When Washington  
at last takes note, a new President will relieve  
you of your post, and raise your successor  
to full Consul with a living wage.



## Melissa Guillet

Melissa Guillet's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Appleseeds*, *Ballard Street*, *Bloodroot Literary Magazine*, *Caduceus*, *The Cherry Blossom Review*, *GBSPA's City Lights*, *Cyclamen & Sword*, *Dos Passos Review*, *Fearless Books*, *Imitation Fruit* (winning poem), *Lalitamba*, *Language and Culture*, *Lavanderia*, *Look! Up in the Sky!*, *Nth Position*, *Public Republic*, *Sangam*, *Scrivener's Pen*, *Women. Period.*, *six Poets' Asylum anthologies*, and several chapbooks. She teaches Interdisciplinary Arts in Rhode Island.

## Excavation

Excavation is never organic.  
There are roads to follow,  
geometric grids.

My hand is a map  
defined by dry dirt:  
river beds follow creases,  
exodus follows fingers.  
My grasp on the past  
is gained by the spoonful.  
We all want to know  
where we came from.

All this stone would only fit  
if the large foundations  
went in first.

But it is easier extracting  
pebbles filling gaps  
in our mouthed questions,  
tiny enough to swallow.

We rope off the Pandora's box,  
the boxing match between  
time and now.

We are of the earth,  
molded from clay.  
When we hit the ground,  
we dust ourselves off.

Stale time capsules steal  
our buried breaths.  
We sift through the art of facts,  
roll away the stone,  
lift gauze to reveal,  
to see our own bones.

Excavation is never organic  
in the constant search  
through stone.

## The Wait For Wings

You were under me,  
Asleep,  
Asleep seventeen years,  
I a cocoon in blanket and tent  
But a single day.  
Then you got the itch,  
The seventeen year itch,  
The cicada rhythm -

Time to wake up!  
Time to claw out of the earth,  
Out of sleep,  
Crawl childlike up the tree  
And wait on summer leaves -  
Body soft and wet and raw  
While you wait  
For the wings  
To emerge from inside.

## Why I Garden

I garden to let my hands speak  
new life and forgetfulness,  
a temporary limbo.  
Every day the garden is different.  
Every day the garden is new.

The wet earth dries  
and cracks open my palms,  
showing me riverbeds  
I will fill with weeping.

My thoughts are so graphic,  
and words so brittle,  
like grown out fingernails  
cut with brutal necessity.

With fingernails I clean  
my fingernails,  
slough tiny worlds  
of shed skin, hard work,  
and earth-old soil.

A line of earth remains  
where my hands touched God.  
I try to take the line down  
in a poem.

The thought is drowned  
in agraphia as my hand traces  
my own writing  
again and again.

The garden is my only clarity -  
mud and huddled bulbs  
know their potential,  
know why they're here.

They are a comfort to me,  
before I enter the earth  
and forget everything.

## Kirk Hathaway

Residing in North Carolina where he pursues sailing and the publication of an online magazine celebrating open waters of the Carolinas ([www.capecarolina.com](http://www.capecarolina.com)), Kirk Hathaway is a graduate of SFSU's Masters Playwriting Program. A veteran of numerous productions, Hathaway credits his shift from playwriting toward poetry to a 1993 head-on collision where others left him for dead, pinned within his truck. The deposition claim "a moment later he was squirming around the ground like a worm on hot cement" is an analogy he plans to have bettered before his next left-for-dead experience.

## Now And Later

Somewhere near a fence row, I see you  
at the back of the property  
where a dozen ghosts delay your days,  
keep you inside the center of a seeded dandelion  
waiting for wind and the wanting to go.

“Do you believe in fairies?” I whisper  
from the gate where the passing of the mailman  
has made even the dogs dumb of strangers.  
I see you up there wandering, the dogs too  
in your world of worlds inside.

You look up to a breeze that doesn't come.  
The dogs find your attention and you  
find them, your hands' unconscious company,  
as I move to touch the gate but pause,  
my fingers just touching and no more.

I imagine some miles down the road,  
pavement disappearing under my wheels,  
that even now you are coming up  
from the dogs, looking down the drive  
imagining someone was there.

## wishing for a girl

tenderness is not simply uncut grass  
or the inside of a baby's palm,  
though the universe of these things  
could teach much to gravel and chalk,  
to glued envelopes and final gavels...  
tenderness is a promise, that beginnings  
themselves are pathways---the tulip poplar  
grows a quick, stiff forty feet only to have  
its cream pink white petals parachute  
softly to a stream below, to accent  
the first breath of spring with gentile  
pureness among the rot and deterioration  
of winter's last decay, yet the poplar  
begins green and vulnerable: another  
chameleon on the rock of this hard world.

you tell me he's no longer tender to you,  
the harsh grit of sandpaper is the feel  
of his hands to your breasts, your cheeks;  
his fingers the prodding tools of dentists,  
and making love has become the reckless  
excavation of your very last treasure.  
you cry yourself to sleep to wash away  
something of the soil of your body, and  
in the bitter reach of unconsciousness  
his mother's cackle cracks open from  
your distant reception and you hear her  
warning, for the first time, to watch your  
hairspray and lotion because of her  
boy's curious intensity to mix poisons  
and perfumes into concoctions he  
would pour into ant hills and bee hives

“as a boy” you hear, the hard dry wood  
of “he would”; as a boy you fear . . . if  
beginnings can be tender grass, they can also  
be a water moccasin, a bite more deadly  
in its infancy yet always growing toward  
death; your hands, cold while making  
love have become sweaty in thoughts  
of raising vipers; you give this moisture  
to your belly, holding the secret seed  
of all beginnings to yourself, praying  
you have the power to raise uncut grass  
and flowers that drop in delicate petals,  
praying he will leave before he poisons  
the only thing you will ever make together





## Paul Hostovsky

Paul Hostovsky's poems have won a Pushcart Prize, the Muriel Craft Bailey Award from the *Comstock Review*, and chapbook contests from Grayson Books, Riverstone Press, and the Frank Cat Press. His first full-length collection, Bending the Notes, is available from Main Street Rag. Visit his website at: [www.paulhostovsky.com](http://www.paulhostovsky.com).

## Caesura

Every time he read or wrote  
or heard or spoke the word  
suffering, he paused. It wasn't  
the solemn way some people pause  
to give thanks before a meal,  
nor the sudden mid-sentence pause after the name  
of someone you loved so much you lose  
your breath every time--  
Nor was it the ceremonious  
moment of silence  
sitting on all the bowed heads in a room,  
nor the silence that fills a room when a room  
empties, the door snapping to.  
It was more like a smelling, a listening  
for the aftertaste of something in the mouth, something  
not in the mouth anymore, but  
in the body now. In the pause,  
he would listen the way you listen  
at the mouth of a well  
for a dropped stone,  
waiting for it to tell you something.

## First Kiss

I couldn't see the forest for her nose  
was in the way--her face too close to mine.  
I closed my eyes because her eyes were closed  
and because it seemed to require some imagination.  
That morning we skipped school (I had a test)  
and went to the woods. She smoked, I watched her smoke:  
her mouth all O's, her breath all white, her breasts  
rising, falling. O, how I loved to look!  
Then came the test: how look when you can't see?  
Looking, after all, was still all I knew.  
She knew more, of course, for she was older.  
Suddenly her nose was blocking my view.  
Her lips, her teeth, her tongue--her parts were there,  
but she was gone now. Her wet cigarette smoldered.

## Temple

The peace of God  
is a piece of cake.  
Heaven is here.  
Heaven is now.  
God's temple  
is a relationship.  
Any relationship.  
Every relationship.  
Take a look  
around--  
the world is full of  
temples. Join one.  
Join them all.  
Join. Join. Join.  
Joy. Joy. Joy.  
The joy of God  
is a piece of joinery.  
It's a joint.



## Oritsegbemi Emmanuel Jakpa

Oritsegbemi Emmanuel Jakpa lives in Ireland. His poetry has been published in a number of online and print journals and an Irish-Canadian anthology. He is a Yeats's Pierce Loughran Scholar.

## Morning

In this drowsy dawn  
the forest begins to rouse and waken,  
gently bidding her kindred  
that the new day has come,  
kindling forest jazz  
and chants of river frogs.

And on green obeche's tops,  
canaries splashing  
into the air like fireworks,  
as the first ray of the sun  
tenderly vanishing the dew of the  
awaiting horizon.

Wind propagating the scent of swamps.  
Under the Guava, a fowl is shifting leaves.

## Rain At Waterford

In this drowsy dawn  
the forest begins to rouse and waken,  
gently bidding her kindred  
that the new day has come,  
kindling forest jazz  
and chants of river frogs.

And on green obeche's tops,  
canaries splashing  
into the air like fireworks,  
as the first ray of the sun  
tenderly vanishing the dew of the  
awaiting horizon.

Wind propagating the scent of swamps.  
Under the Guava, a fowl is shifting leaves.

## The River Rolls On

In this lazy coolness of dawn  
she comes and sits on the gedo  
by the riverbank of Ethiope,  
watches spokes of sunrays prickling  
on the sky floor as birds  
arrows through the air,  
Water on palms of grasses  
pours on her feet.  
Rivers frogs reel forest hip-hops  
gently over the clear silence.

The river rolls on.

Under the trees, leafs weave a dance,  
falling. A lizard darts out,  
snatches a puny insect,  
backs into its leafs huts.  
On the hill cresting from the meadow,  
green usurps, a painter is sketching  
a woman tanned-with-despair,  
whose joy is like the flickerings  
of a candle flame under the wind.

The river rolls on.

Two women trek on the sidewalk  
of Ajago road, with calabash on their heads,  
talking among themselves,  
half-laughing, half-listening,  
talking all the time down the road.  
In the market people are buying and selling,  
talking about distant lands  
where snow falls. They are talking  
of the coming of strange songs  
and new ways

The river rolls on.





## Rick Marlatt

Rick Marlatt teaches English in Nebraska, and he is currently pursuing a MFA in Creative Writing from the University of California Riverside at Palm Desert. Marlatt's most recent publications include *New York Quarterly*, *The Pedestal Magazine*, and *Plain Songs Review*. Marlatt performs as an actor, poet, and writer, most recently, winning the University of Nebraska Sigma Tau Delta Short Fiction Slam.

## Frost

I've always wanted to wake up glittering all over  
to sparkle in the snapdragons like a brilliant winking sky  
to sear diamonds up and down the skin of a sycamore  
to bleed from the tip of Solzhenitsyn's pen  
to etch stars into the brick of vine street's shelled apartments  
to shower under sunrise the light passing through me like a miracle  
to hold the world down long enough to taste its pulse  
to swathe your body as it shivers below  
to stitch my soft cold into each curve  
to carve my name into your voice hovering thick like silver vapor  
to watch it go to crystal as your ginger moans dye the horizon  
always feel the world tremble when you ignite the breath

## Gravity

Last night I dreamt bodies falling out of the sky  
in slow motion like sweeping snowflakes  
and rainbow-edged leaves

arms stretched outward like a herring  
faces pure, naked

the sky emptying

dusting off its fingers

today I pull burning stars from heaven  
with hands that keep wanting to fly away

taste a single drop of coffee from a woman's lip

feel the tickling curl of blood in nostril tip  
its rain over toe knuckles its splay over the shower floor  
its thin drain-ward swirl

hear the metallic roll of a pen  
in a silent room

its metallic roll and smack

watch sunfish carve

sharp bodies into the water  
at the end of a jump synchronized, beautiful

and your whisper  
like the beginning of wind  
makes me think I'll collapse  
into my own cold shadow  
synchronized, beautiful  
and know with ferocious certainty  
the invisible force that pulls my body back into yours  
body back into yours  
our eyes dropping off into vacant worlds  
the sky forever emptying  
the light falling, falling.



## David Mclean

David McLean is Welsh but has lived in Sweden since 1987. He lives there in a cottage on a hill with a woman, five selfish cats, and a stupid puppy. Details of his three available full length books, various chap-books, and over 700 poems in or forthcoming at more than 300 places online or in print over the last couple of years, are at his blog at <http://mourningabortion.blogspot.com>. He has recently been nominated for a Pushcart Prize, whatever that is. He would very much like you to buy his books so he can drink more.

## orgasms and lobster

we stitched together memories from orgasms and lobster  
because we were whores, and it seemed like a good idea  
as the nineteen eighties grew more and more indistinct  
and our breath smelt more like paint and amphetamines

like life again. we had no idea what happened to all the knives,  
we had no idea why there were trees everywhere.  
we stitched together memories from lobsters and telephones  
for once there were orgasms there. not that we cared.

## this conscious membrane, forgotten cloying celluloid

this cloying membrane of words,  
thin spit on a nipple or a film of light  
we have forgotten, playing our black and white  
memories of a dead cinema once, film noir  
and death, then resurrection in absentia,

these were all the deaths i went through before,  
being bored. for ennui is an exhausted  
task master who happily tortures us,  
like seeing the same million cooing  
turtle doves he gives to us as minutes

to live, never knowing which is which,  
or who or what will wind up within us  
to love forever like children did, so ghosts tell us,  
yet children centuries dead, and we eagerly use  
dangerous words like "forever,"

just to make death smell a little like heaven,  
a safe haven that's a little like living  
for all the dead people propped up  
in this dusty uncomfortable cinema,  
lifeless as children watching a film,

listless because nothing much happens,  
except all the deaths already within them  
cast in the roll of living things, all villains,  
and noticing at last when the film ends  
that the actors were all themselves

## Water Frozen

the frivolous water that frittered away its summers  
is frozen now, and so silence is enforced here

where it lies under the frightening morning,  
as though it were night, and devils

were still walking over it; this lake  
lying patiently and raped,

and waiting for some coming sun  
to wake it up. it knows warm bodies

are love, and it knows nothing  
is the same thing as living,

night and dreams and eternities  
and the time that is written in them

like stone, the fingers of children  
where memories end is heaven,

this water, and all the devils  
who walk on it are men,

are memories since each childhood  
ended, each heaven

just memories again





## Joan McNerney

Joan McNerney's poetry has been included in numerous literary magazines such as *Boston Review of the Arts*, *Kalliope*, *Mudfish*, *Spectrum* and *Word Thursdays*. Four of her books have been published by fine literary presses. She has performed at the National Arts Club, Borders Bookstore, McNay Art Institute and other distinguished venues. A recent reading was sponsored by the American Academy of Poetry. Her latest title is Having Lunch with the Sky, A.P.D., Albany, New York.

## Accident

If only it had not rained  
the sky black and wet as  
we hurried across streets.  
Perhaps had he worn a  
light coat it would have  
been easier to spot.  
Maybe if the cab driver  
were not so tired, if  
headlights shone brighter.  
How many hundreds of things  
lead him to that corner.  
For instance staying late  
to check computer printouts.  
The cab driver had felt like  
going home at six but wanted  
to make \$100 that day.  
Everything leads to the cab  
slipping along 3rd Avenue.  
Him in front of his office  
and then lunging out to  
avoid a puddle.  
There was no one to blame  
nothing to blame really  
not the rain  
or the dark coat  
not the dim lights  
nor the cab driver  
who would remember this always  
and sometimes blame himself.  
It was part of a series  
of events of time and place  
leading to this conclusion.  
An ambulance screamed  
down the avenue. His eyes  
wide open as he lay  
facing the black night.  
His time finished  
eyes opened as if  
staring at something  
quite different now.

## For A Friend Who Is Dying

Even though oceans  
have been charted  
mountaintops marked  
there are no words  
for your pain.  
All the stratosphere  
of heaven climbed yet  
there is no course  
through human sorrow.  
Every muscle counted  
and every bone but  
no formula was written  
for your grief.  
In languages of  
languages chromosomes  
numbered named. What  
can be said to your  
sorrow, your pain?



## George Moore

George Moore has published poetry in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Poetry*, *North American Review*, *Orion*, *Colorado Review*, *Nimrod*, *Meridian*, *Chelsea*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Southwest Review*, *Chariton Review*, and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize three times. In 2007 he was a finalist for the *Richard Snyder Memorial Prize*, from Ashland Poetry Press, and earlier for *The National Poetry Series*, *The Brittingham Poetry Award*, and the *Anhinga Poetry Prize*. His third collection in print is Headhunting (Edwin Mellen, 2002) a travelogue on ritual practices of love and possession; and he has two recent e-Books as well, All Night Card Game in the Back Room of Time (Pulpbits, 2007) and a CD, Tree in the Wall, (CDchapbooks.com, 2006). He has collaborated with a number of artists internationally, both in Spain in 2007 where he did an installation at Can Serrat, outside Barcelona, with the French Canadian conceptual artist, Mireille Perron, and another with Hrafnhildur Sigurðardóttir, the Scandinavian textile artist, for Skagaströnd, Iceland this coming year. He teaches literature with the University of Colorado, Boulder.

## The Flight

The child flies alone.  
I'm asked to sit with him because  
I am a man flying alone.

The child does not know  
the distance between our seats  
and the ground,

between his world just now  
beginning and the one  
I have left so far behind.

He guesses a million miles.  
He is correct, of course,  
and I look down

across that universe of time  
to the spot where I grew up,  
once staring into the sky.

We reach the ground  
without more than a few complaints  
from sleepers everywhere.

The stewardesses thank me  
profusely for my time,  
for my patience,

for taking the wild one on  
while they were busy flying,  
busy preparing to land.

But it is I that must thank him,  
the little man, the one who flies  
millions of miles above the ground,

to the very place where I am  
now dissolving through this world  
into his enigmatic future.

## The Human Cycle

We know the turnaround  
of life and death, from birth  
to the moment no one expects,  
as we know each day that  
passes with flies in pastures  
and horses moving slowly  
through the upper gate. Here  
the trail of their industry  
on the windows seem fit  
for monuments. Dust line  
scratches along the way.  
But life has more than this  
in store for us. Before  
winter wheat comes in  
and the dead trees fall in  
spring winds, an hour alone  
with ourselves is recognized.  
The Navajo say the seed  
is really alive in its husk  
all winter long, that this is  
the first sign of life. We live  
in a remnant of an earlier  
universe, born before sight,  
and we cycle back through  
the imagination. Does it mean  
we believe in ends more than  
in beginnings? look into  
the sun too much to know  
what the stars have never  
forgotten? Light and its  
inevitable love affair with heat.  
Death means a new beginning.  
The horses come home alone  
all by themselves, and with  
darkness, the flies have gone.  
The feeling is this day goes on  
into others, and back into more,  
and its wheels are quiet but  
churn the world with living.





## Anna Nabzdyk

Anna Nabzdyk is currently pursuing an undergraduate degree at the University of Central Missouri. This is her first publication.

## Aubade

This morning I rise early  
and I am part of the secret  
shared by only those present:  
the phenomenon of hope  
that comes with the new day.

I stand, gifted with the sight  
of the sun's early triumph  
over dark. The trees and sky  
wait for me, fresh and new.

In my absence, the polluted night air,  
thick with worries and dust of the day  
has been exhaled, replaced  
with the familiar tingle of morning's  
cool breath, stroked with the sparkling  
rays of the rising sun.

I drink them both—  
I am intoxicated with a blissful drowsiness,  
filled with their bright promise and hope  
the hours stretch out before me  
distant hills, waiting to be explored.

## Just A Normal Boy

Were you thinking  
when you kissed me  
that I had the power  
to kill you? I was  
conscious as always  
of the poison in my veins.

Perched on that countertop,  
you look as fragile as I am:  
a porcelain doll with pale skin,  
flushed cheeks  
kept upright and breathing  
by a rainbow of magic  
capsules every morning.

You don't know how much  
your hand, tucked in mine  
means to me.  
To you, I'm just a boy  
with blue eyes  
and dark curly hair.  
To me, you are a confidante,  
you know the truth:  
that I am not a monster,  
a walking biohazard.  
I am a victim, too.

You understand.  
You're not afraid  
Naive and free  
from the phobias  
that have stalked my life.  
Maybe if you saw  
the sympathetic glances  
or careful dance  
of avoidance in the halls  
you would believe  
in my villainy.

You know I cannot curse  
the way I was cursed.  
Trust that I am an expert  
on the boundaries  
of "casual contact".  
It's all I want  
and have to offer.  
Give me your lips  
and I can pretend  
I am just a normal boy.



## Perry S. Nicholas

Perry S. Nicholas is an English professor at Erie Community College North in Buffalo, N.Y., where he was awarded the 2008 *SUNY Chancellor's Award for Scholarship and Creative Activities*. Nominated three times for the Pushcart Prize, in 2006, 2007, and 2008, his poems appear in *Common Ground Review*, *Fourth River*, *Caesura*, *Word Worth*, *Not Just Air*, *Hudson View*, *Language and Culture*, *Nickel City Nights*, *Seven CirclePress*, *Feile-Festa*, *Louisiana Literature* and will appear in the 2010 *Chautauqua Literary Journal* and *The New York Quarterly*. Perry's newest book, The River of You, will be published in the fall by FootHills Publishing.

## Corners

Even in dreams there are corners,  
ones we back ourselves into.  
In round rooms we conduct meetings.  
Tonight my breath feels hard-pressed.

Most don't know what it means  
to have quarantined affection,  
like me and Mina that one winter.  
No secrets to Mina's life, open to all,

a stern Greek father and no mother.  
I begged her to flee that remote island  
through the tight window she  
backed out of every evening.

Then last night my heart suddenly seized,  
and the moonlight painted me  
into a corner, where my dreams  
had no reason to hide. There I saw her.

And for a moment, in the light  
of that oppressive Hellenic moon,  
I held Mina once again in the round.

## Denial

I don't remember you smelling like eggshells;  
I peeled off your scent three decades ago.

Each time my grandmother visited  
her neighboring island, she cursed  
the stench of Turks a mile across the bay.

Ferrying back to her own tiny Greek home,  
she told the same story over and over, claimed  
their smell still clung to her clothes.

I kept aloof from *xeni* then, held  
my uneasiness inside. I could sense  
when someone was hovering too close.

Greeks no longer pay the Turks any mind.  
But as I read your letter after so many years,  
a story about a daughter, thirteen, kind and lovely,

I stammer—I d..don't remember eggshells,  
and I don't remember Turkey.

## Your Hesitation

What do you believe it means, this  
noisy hobble of the heart? And which  
is more pure, the pause or the pounding?  
All that matters is what you think you hear  
when you eavesdrop on his chest, hoping  
he won't mind you pressing so closely.  
It sounds complicated, but it's not:  
you need to discover the cadence.

When you hesitate, store surplus words,  
shift your ear inward and shyly off-center,  
he doesn't always respond as softly as he should.  
He sleeps like a man on call. It's you who seeks  
a place to rest, bumpy yet more soothing  
than a steady one at its failing best.





## Sheila Nickerson

Sheila Nickerson, Bellingham, Washington, is a former Poet Laureate of Alaska. Her most recent poetry title is Along the Alaska Highway (Sheltering Pines Press, 2009).

## A Poem For Hard Times

Take this poem for hard times.  
Let it perch like a parrot on your shoulder  
or curl like a hedgehog in your pocket.  
It will cost you nothing  
but turn worries to bread.  
As you proceed, stories  
will join you, invite you home,  
feed and clothe you, then  
pass you on to others.  
This underground railroad  
will get you across the border  
to possibility: the safest place.

## Driving The Smith Road East, In April, Toward The Cascade Range

This line of cherry trees in bloom,  
throwing up pink skirts  
as if the mountains might come  
down to join their dance.

## Winter On The Banks Of The Delaware And Hudson Canal

Here on the edge of the old canal,  
fire engines drank all night  
from the broken pools. Still,  
the Mossy Brook farm house burned  
and the old man died, the one who  
walked his beagle out each night  
along the road, even when  
their path was cut away by ice.

## Jason Petrochko

Jason Petrochko is a Pennsylvania writer with a master's degree in English, a degree that he is certain disqualifies him somehow from joining the ranks of truly creative writers. By day, he can be found chained to a cubicle, face illuminated by the white glow of a computer screen, squinting his way through technical writing projects. He has previously presented some scholarly research in Pennsylvania and Utah, but is just now beginning to apprehensively share some of his poetry with the world.

## It Cannot Hold

It cannot hold.  
This fragmented drive  
of lazy attention  
that wanders like a gum wrapper  
in an empty parking lot  
only to catch flame,  
burning white hot then fizzling in a moment.  
With the bang-bang music in our ears,  
the glitz-glam images in our faces,  
with our heads always on vibrate,  
it simply cannot hold.

## Lines Never Touching

To be an ancillary thought  
in a world of big ideas.

One of many dotted, perpendicular lines  
intersected by solid, parallel lines  
running through the empty spaces  
becoming a grid of hurdles  
not overcome - just passed.

Lines never touching  
with small spaces between  
that become canyons of apathy.

## No Snow

I like the fresh, flat surface  
of a soul saving snow.  
The world looks new again,  
untouched and unspoiled by our trampling feet.

I try to be the first to ease my print into it,  
but restrain myself as long as I can.

I listen as it whispers in acquiescence to me,

only sometimes encountering a subtle cat's paw  
who beat me to the trail,  
but I'm able to trace my steps and  
know they were all well-placed.

There's been no snow this year,  
and this valley is beginning to feel old,  
full of zigzagging trails traveled by  
the same worn out spirits ceaselessly creating circles  
like ruts in an aging man's face -  
or stains or scars or soars.

This season-less year has made my disquiet more stark,  
my unrest more pronounced,  
and my restrained grumbles audible.  
Thankfully, the days are so much shorter  
so I only have to see it for a brief time.

I even miss the cold as it used to stir me.  
Now, I wander groggily through this January,  
more asleep than awake,  
unsteady, shaky, and weak.

Yesterday morning, I heard the birds of spring singing out of turn,  
and it was discordant to my ears.  
By the time they are supposed to sing,  
I will be weary of their tuneful melodies.



## Jenna Rindo

Jenna Rindo lives with her husband and blended family of five children in rural Pickett, Wisconsin. She worked as a registered nurse for seven years in pediatric special care units and now teaches English to Chinese, Vietnamese, Indian, Spanish and Hmong students. Her poems and essays have appeared in *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, *Ars Medica*, *Free Verse*, *WI Review*, *Eclectica Magazine* and other journals both in print and online. She has work forthcoming in several anthologies.

## Before The Divorce

On the worst winter days,  
days of heavy sky and little light  
she leaves the polluted air  
stagnating inside their house  
for the shock of  
below zero.

She dresses in layers, hangs her  
consignment ice-skates with their  
cracked white leather and new neon  
laces over her shoulder  
and walks to Lake Winnebago.

She chants all the Indian names  
of the Wisconsin towns and rivers  
as she skates in ovals over and over.  
She is homesick for Virginia,  
for blood kin and best friends.  
They're here for his only tenure track offer.  
(As a nurse, she can get a job anywhere.)  
She wonders if other wives talk  
to their husbands about bad dreams,  
and borrowed books.  
She realizes the content of conversations  
can never include deja vu and things of the Spirit.

On the worst winter day,  
when she knows the azaleas and mountain  
laurel are already blooming back home,  
she stops skating to stare down an ice-fishing hole.  
The layers of bubbles bleeding from clear  
to opaque, intrigue her.  
She takes off her wool rag mitten  
to submerge her left hand in the shock of  
frigid water.  
Secretly she wills her wedding ring  
to slip off and sink to the soft scummy bottom.  
But how to explain such a convoluted  
loss?



## Chicory

Signaling from road shoulders  
and railroad beds  
with petals a blue  
so purple pure  
it's the gas flame of an aster  
against last grass of summer.  
Toothed bitter leaves, prickly stems  
offer a protection not available to  
more cultivated flowers like lilies  
and showy zinnias.  
You'll never know the confines  
of crystal vase.

So pull up your taproots to  
stride down the road  
with the long limbed steps  
of adolescent girls.  
Ragged flowers wave  
like skirts and distress calls  
demanding attention, and thrills.  
Yet the next day you limp  
sullen and faded  
leaving the dance floor  
to press your back  
against a wall.

## Explication Of An Obsession For Stealing Campus Roses (First published as a poem of the week on *Iris Online*)

She parks the spruce green Corolla illegally.  
Finger swipes a lopsided heart on the  
rear window-- yellowed with pine pollen,  
coated with road dust.  
She races up three flights,  
skipping every other step.  
She takes everything in,  
the missing turquoise tile  
on the second stairwell landing,  
the pictures and clippings on his office door,  
the misspelled words under the drawing by  
his third grade daughter.

She wonders if she should knock.

She leaves slowly, counting each step in Spanish  
looking for luck, not portents.  
The roses thrust up abundantly.  
She is surrounded.  
Thorns do not concern her  
nor strangers' stares.  
The parking ticket under the wiper  
is yanked up by the root like a weed.

Later in the still of the last summer day,  
she slices stems to subtle angles;  
waits for them to take up water like forgiveness.  
She studies perfect foliage dusted against  
conception and stem canker.  
Flowers are arranged in odd numbers.  
Vases are placed between open windows  
to catch that sharp cracked pepper scent  
of stolen yellow roses.

She needs to waft that spicy smell  
into hippocampal memory  
one dendrite over from his expression  
dormant before blooming into her  
against all good advice  
in the waning light  
of that Tuesday afternoon.

## Word Origins

Words come in color:  
they splay out and splatter us with stains.  
We must look for tints and hues of gray,  
eat the pastels at midnight.  
To the bee golden pollen is the sweetest synonym,  
pistils and stamens send a cipher:  
the botany of hope blows in the air.  
Human sex is the pink of flesh,  
wrinkled and hidden under complicated layers.  
The peppery smell of such urgency  
from the broken stems and legal separations  
some new iris blooms from iron-poor blood.

## Mediha Saliba

Mediha F. Saliba was an Associate Editor of the *Santa Barbara Review*, a literary/art journal from 1994-1998. In 1997 she published her first book, Shadows of the Puppet, and in 2000 a novella, Stone Secrets, a Journey with Rheumatoid Arthritis. Her first book of poems, Holding Up the Moon, she self-published in 2008. Her poems have appeared in *Sage Trail*, *Rattlesnake Review*, *Main Channel Voices*, *Aurorean*, and has recently won an award at *Cyclamen and Swords*, a poetry journal out of Israel. She now lives in Northern California with her husband, preferring the simple life of a small community, and enjoying the company of grandchildren.

## Flight

The tide is in at Humboldt Bay  
and western sandpipers gather  
on rocky outcroppings. Hundreds,  
maybe thousands chatter  
a wild spring song.

Then, as if startled, or summoned  
by an invisible master, sandpipers take flight,  
maneuvering in slowly widening then thinning design.  
They dip, lift, flow and flutter,  
while you hold your breath, and are  
hypnotized by shimmers of white,  
bursts of brown, and the sensation  
of speed in one, and slow-gracefulness in the all.

Not even poetry is adequate for such a display,  
such an unfathomable feeling of awe,  
such a gift to take home and savor,  
knowing that for one moment  
you experienced grace.

## Science And Spirituality

Science, not unlike spirituality,  
has a transcendent world beyond dimensions  
presently seen and understood,  
how else to explain particles separated by  
billions of light years acting like mirror twins,  
or light that behaves as both particles and waves,  
and black holes that transfer matter beyond  
the grip of gravity and time—a multidimensional  
universe, springing from  
“somewhere” . . .

And we, as beings of this universe  
are also multidimensional. Our bodies  
obey the same rhythms,  
flash with the same  
electromagnetic activity,  
and bubble with the same  
subatomic energy that

keeps the universe  
in flux. We are mystical Beings,  
magical,  
and capable of  
so much more.



## Michael Shannon

Michael has a B.A. in writing and works as a technical writer. Michael's work has been accepted by *Enigma*, *Steam Ticket*, *Down in the Dirt*, *The Oak*, *AntiMuse*, *Barfing Frog Press*, *The American Drivel Review*, *Transcendental Visions*, *Poetry Motel*, *The Lampshade*, *Cherry Bleeds*, *Zygote In My Coffee*, *Dispatch*, *Straylight*, *Lalitamba*, *The Cherry Blossom Review*, *SubtleTea*, *Backwards City Review*, *Wisconsin Review*, *Midway Journal*, and *The Foliate Oak*.

## Corners

Orphaned,  
a maze of jutting bones,

tight teeth packed  
with angst, so unwilling,  
too staunch.

Incorrigible, smiling at  
the guise, eyes closed,  
waiting.

The sun of our winter.  
One day: our imperfect angel.

Forced to rear the onus  
of truths,  
unfurled, no longer hidden  
in the depths of  
irresponsibility.

Reprehensibility haunts.  
Echoes, come back,  
again, etc.

The big forever,  
together, knowing the solace  
of always

being broken  
and  
alone.

## Her Little World

She's coloring the world with  
pastel pencils,  
a plastic microscope to her eyes,  
scrutinizing her tiny flaws on canvas.



Analyzing lines  
that connect oceans  
and foreign lands she can't pronounce—  
jumbled straits and archipelagos  
lost in rumpled blue waves  
under the rotund lemonade-colored sun.

It's her *real* home,  
her noiseless land,  
unfurled under her mattress—  
a place she goes when tears abound her eyes.

She constructs brown lumps of mountains  
with soaring black slashes of birds  
splayed in the trite-azure sky—  
a bumpy knoll, a thicketed valley, an icy fjord,  
anywhere where her friends  
can come to abscond.

And maybe one day  
she'll live in that spot:  
near the precipice,  
near the sky,  
distended with babies inside her,  
a careless future  
hidden in the mist of the ocean,  
near the orthographically perfect legend,  
and near the tears that fall from her eyes.

more beginnings

as she drove away  
that summer night,

drunk,

pledging to get  
her revenge,

I held back  
my tears,

my fears—

allowing myself

to embrace the  
the devastation

of never  
seeing her again,

I went to sleep,  
content  
with the emptiness

of my sprawling,  
new world.

## Yvette A. Schnoeker-Shorb

Yvette A. Schnoeker-Shorb is co-founder of Native West Press. Her poetry has appeared in *Blueline*, *Terrain.org: A Journal of the Built and Natural Environments*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *Karamu*, *The Pedestal Magazine*, *The Foliate Oak*, *The Externalist*, *LanguageandCulture.net*, and many other print and online journals. She holds an interdisciplinary MA in Ecosemantics from Prescott College. In addition to poetry and linguistics, her areas of interest include evolutionary psychology and the phenomenon of biophilia related to sustainable practices and human interactions with the natural world.

## Body Count

Consider this the preface  
to my death, for all my life  
I have aspired to be someone  
else, to count; now I am committed  
to being myself, the insignificant  
one who feels  
so indignant at being someone else's  
oversight too many times; did you see  
the division of a shadow  
that once was me in your eyes?

At least I will die bathed in luxury,  
warm, rose-pink water gently dyed  
with my own blood. Oh I know, wrist-  
slitting is a bit maudlin and outmoded  
since the individual became an object  
of statistics. The result of the act  
itself may have no merit,  
given the politics of suicide--just one  
more life down the drain,  
but it is my mediocrity of method  
that no doubt will be condemned. Still,  
will you remember to count me  
among the abstractions of community?  
(Demographically speaking,  
I'll typify the dead ones.)

Consider me the aftermath  
of any self out of context, a count noun  
strained by consensus of a mass,  
just one more less-than-whole  
soul unaccounted for  
in the disorder of indifference;  
of course, were I represented  
in the remainder of social angst,  
I would not count on the odds  
that this won't happen again.



on what's sparked in the dark,  
vamps don't camp but prefer to burn  
as you stand erect and awestruck  
by the heat, southern excitable,  
undiminshable; with all exits locked  
in life, small deaths are likely  
from the striking of one match.

## Askold Skalsky

Askold Skalsky has had poems accepted in numerous small press magazines and journals, the latest in *Oracle*, *Freefall*, and *Tipton Poetry Journal*. Skalsky's work has also been published in Canada, England, and Ireland. Two years ago Askold also received an award from the Maryland Arts Council.

## Agony

Better to die now and get it over with,  
I think, getting up in the morning

as the sun is warming the house  
in the March wind

and the mouse caught in the trap is clattering  
inside the tiles of the bedroom ceiling.

It's been dragging the trap around  
all night, so that even the boys wake up

and can't go back to sleep. But no one dares  
to poke his head up through the slabs.

## Red Room

My son has painted his apartment  
a glossy turkey red ending in jagged  
lines along the ceiling, the color of split  
melons or gagged fire, hot and glaring  
like icing on a vermilion cake.

We sit and talk in the afternoon  
sunlight congealing itself on stucco  
walls like the ragged flesh of a flayed giant.  
He has used four coats of paint, cheap  
slick mandarin drying now in empty cans.

Our eyes float like drowsy bulbs.  
We sip water, slur our words. The walls  
ooze drops, a scarlet spout, a cored  
dark plum, a hemorrhaging womb,  
the crimson lips turned inside out  
to swallow us. All we can do is stare,  
hearing the blood slosh in our chambered hearts.



## Spaces

are for looking,  
the leisure time things give themselves  
to make something out of that,

a swerve past the familiar  
like traveling to Kansas by way of the Caribbean,  
the coastline silent from the distance,  
the inlets stretching their bright fingers  
into land, listening for where you think  
you might be,

returning to fields  
after the journey, the simple quilt  
of afternoons you've seen on the way home.

Tonight I can hear the wind  
take turns licking the walls,  
trying the chink in the window  
with its thin spike tongue  
slicing the warmth inside the room.



## Paul Sohar

Paul Sohar got to pursue his life-long interest in literature full time when he went on disability from his day job in a chemistry lab. The results have slowly showed up in *Chiron*, *Grain*, *Homestead Review*, *International Poetry Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *Main Street Rag*, *Poem*, *Poesy*, *Poetry Motel*, *Rattle*, *Slant*, *Wordwrights*, etc, and seven books of translations from the Hungarian, but now a volume of his own poetry, Homing Poems, is available from Iniquity Press.

## Sunflower Voices

Had enough,  
no fight left in me.  
I bow my head.

Summer's almost over,  
and still the same thing.  
Sun's as far off as ever.

Tired of sun's breath,  
the overbearing smile.  
To hell with it.

Too late now.  
When rain comes I'll be  
too stiff to lift my face.

Not hiding my face,  
only not showing it.  
It's the same as the others'.

My neck bent,  
the blade will feel  
like a relief.

Dropped a leaf or two.  
Watching them turn to dust  
in the dust.

I shall sing no more.  
Turning to the ground  
I'll listen to its song.

Don't know about the others.  
Can't see them  
with my head bent down.

## The Myth Of The Landlord

Forget the dripping faucet, the broken window with  
scotch tape over the cracks,  
forget the wild drafts and waves of choking

chasing one another all over the building...

I have bigger issues with the Management,  
but I'm tired of having to deal with flunkies, their smirks  
sending me to the super who fails to return my prayers,  
and his doorbell only activates another answering machine...

And the Management?

Some say they're on a legendary gated island with no extradition treaty,  
my certified supplications to them are returned as undeliverable, and some  
say the Landlord is nothing but a myth perpetrated by the Management and  
their henchmen, the super and his flunkies, always with their hands out...

Where can I take my issues? The cracks in the walls,  
the dangerous tilt of the building's axis,  
the desertification of the lobby,  
the rat urine trickling from the sockets,  
and the nuclear bombs transported in the elevator?

Today it's the lack of hot water, but tomorrow we may run out of water  
altogether... and air, too... Yes, dirty as it is we still breathe it in,  
but what about tomorrow?

Will the ruins trap enough air for the survivors?

I'm taking up archeology. Maybe our remains will give us a clue  
as to why we are in this building in the first place  
and whether it was indeed the Landlord who built it  
according to an intelligent design that already included  
pre-planned self-destruction in the blueprint.

## Translations From The Hungarian Of Sándor Kányádi ( Born 1929 )

### Gray Sonnet

(Szürke szonett)

let no one be deceived by  
the smile I try to pretend  
I've stopped long ago fooling  
myself and you too my friend

why would I lead you into  
my apprehensions' dreadful mist  
when I'd rather smile at you  
like a circus aerialist

our star is on the wane  
on this leaky cupola  
and I avert my eyes in pain

it's a wonder we're still around  
so smile back at me my friends  
the wonder hasn't run aground

## The Wolf And The Lamb

*Homage to Aesop*

(A farkas és a bárány)

Everything's been increasing in worth,  
especially precious stones and gold.  
Only the value of dwindling tribes  
and endangered cultures doesn't hold.

The strange thing is that we could  
easily save many of those who remain  
for the price of an artificial satellite  
or a new supersonic bomber plane;

the survivors could revive their tongue  
like embers can be blown back to flames.  
A strange species to which we belong;

filled with fairy tales, we fail to damn  
the wolf who still uses his power at  
every chance to blame the lamb.

## The Viper And The Fox

*(A Variation On Aesop's Fable)*

(A vipera és a róka)

"Be on your guard, Aesop, the power-  
hungry sophist and the scatterbrain  
sycophant are roaming the agora,  
slandering and blackening your name,

they were seen walking arm in arm,  
and their scheme may put you under ground."  
But Aesop just shrugged and told  
another fable to those standing around.

"There they go, arm in arm, the strolling pair,  
the tide tossed the viper into bramble;  
if bad brings good, why should I care?

The seaman gets the boat he deserves,"  
observed the fox, watching the scene  
without wasting his breath on a curse.

## The Cotton Weaver And The Charcoal Burner

### *A Fable Variation*

(A kelmekészítő és a szénégető)

I've given up trying to share  
the shed the charcoal burner has to use;  
even his sun comes up bringing soot  
on the bleached white linen I produce,

the cloth I weave tying together broken  
fabric strands all day and all night.  
The fruits of my loom, clothing worthy  
of human wear is everyone's right,

and so is the bandage gauze for the care  
of wounds that keep tearing open.  
I've given up trying to share

the shed the charcoal burner has to use;  
even his sun comes up bringing soot  
and blackening the linen I produce.

## THE POET ZOLTÁN ZELK DIED

(Zelk Zoltán meghalt)

words moved up  
to heaven  
silence prevails  
only the lord's footsteps  
clunk in outer space

breaking down railings and fence  
wearing black ribbons  
horses are galloping  
toward the poet's  
old hometown

there's no one  
to tame them now





## Helen Leslie Sokolsky

Helen Leslie Sokolsky has taught Special Education for over twenty-five years in the New York City Board of Education. She and her husband presently live in New York and now that she has retired, they also spend time in Otis, MA where Helen is actively involved in the Berkshire Women Writers Group. Some of her poems have appeared in the following magazines: *Poet Lore*, *Poetry Canada Review*, *The Poetry Review*, *California Poetry Quarterly*, *Confrontation Magazine*, *The Wind Literary Journal* and the November issue of *Poem* will be publishing a recent contribution of hers.

## A Gesture

It takes a gesture  
a simple gesture  
like a robin  
brushing its feathers against your hand  
a gesture  
uncurling itself  
from the surrounding amber  
starting off  
in the middle of nowhere  
a pledge in plain clothes  
asking for nothing  
knowing no two rooms  
are ever exactly the same  
a gesture  
that will startle the abandoned air  
into a slow movement  
and the mailboxes rearranged  
will edge closer to one another  
a gesture  
that will surface  
before the night runs out of stars  
reminding us  
that even in our aloneness  
we are not always alone.

## Lost Inventory

There is something about the woman  
I can't turn away from  
the shapeless figure bedded down in rags  
pushing her way through the crowded streets  
then making an abrupt turn as she moves  
to stake her claim.

Poised, as if she had been staged  
in the Mad Lucia  
the staccato voice punctures  
the heavy greyness that devours the city  
her face  
puffed like white mounds of clouds  
framed by rebellious tangles of auburn

a face so frozen in time  
and I call to someone who isn't there.

Were I to lift a bookmark from its place  
a young girl would be seated at an old piano  
fingers moving over halting scales  
eyes closed  
as she angles herself into the sole melody  
that gives her definition.

When was it that she began to disturb the house  
what was she trying to tell them  
when she took the mirrors off all the walls  
her words echoing like scattered shards  
later to cause a gridlock among the birds.

The beginning of hunger  
was in that bag she lined with stories  
packed tighter than a clenched fist.  
Her family never got used to her wanderings  
or when she would return barefoot  
her eyes clouded by some strange horizon.  
Now she is barely audible  
but for the ebb of her songs saddest notes  
another one of the city's lost inventories.

I take a detour home, rewind a clock,  
look for a misplaced photo.



## Charles Thielman

Charles Thielman is a Poet and Artiste, and a co-owner of an independent bookstore w/adjacent performance venue; which hosts readings, book-signings, fund-raisers and musical events. He has had works hung in galleries and published in journals.

Born and raised in Charleston, S.C., educated at red-brick colleges and on Chicago streets, he's worked as a corrections counselor, truck driver, big city bus driver and shiny shoe salesman. Nowadays he aspires to be one of the best Grandfathers west of the Mississippi!

## Branch Given To Water

Dusk deepens the blue heron  
stemmed shallows as souls  
are ferried to riverbank.

Cairns sky-brushed white  
wax blue-gray. autumn colors  
and shapes sink, taken by the current.

Scraps of names tugged from war debris  
swirl inside a clutch of memories

as I walk on  
to jetty then shoreline.

Years of erosion striate a bluff  
as the tide brings in another rosary of agates.

Each transient flange of rising moon  
threaded stone to eye softens  
a buoy bell's tossed clangs.

I driftwood trace peace a dove in wet sand,

sing vowels of loss  
to the brown swirl of undertow.

The ocean is fed broken wings all night.

## Recession

Hummingbirds ply the reaches of azaleas  
in the sunrise hour as he considers  
the braille of a dream,

opening the small window,  
feet bare on kitchen linoleum,  
brown grass below an August sky.

This afternoon will lumber like a bear  
gnawing long moments into points of friction  
while yellow dust spirals cross in shipping yards.

Factories silenced, layoffs have diced  
many plans into blank wants, hard times  
birthing stunned beggars at city intersections.

He reaches for the oatmeal, hoping  
to fill at least three bowls, her morning  
tea ready, one page of want-ads on the table.

A dawn-filtered lake of wind fills the yard,  
dry leaves rustling like voices flying  
needs out of twilight onto dust.

Dream-hands tumbling jade ovals,  
he scans over their toy box  
then plucks out two favorites.





## Dennis Vannatta

Dennis has published poems in *Panhandler*, *Paintbrush*, and elsewhere and has had three collections of short stories published: This Time, This Place and Prayers For The Dead (both by White Pine Press) and Lives Of The Artists (Livingston Press).

## The Ghost Writer

I go in search of old editors,  
three-score years at least.  
Old enough to remember when  
cream was on the milk  
and the gear shift on the column,  
and when you played with your  
cock, it played back.  
That spent world.

I want an editor who remembers  
when your left knee didn't swell  
and your left eyelid didn't twitch  
and you didn't stand up in stages  
and then say, What was it  
that I stood up for?  
Whatever it was important to do,  
you have done. There remains  
only the remembrance.  
I want an editor who understands  
that remembrance is a dry thing,  
a ghost mourning its body,  
a stem without sap.

All the prizes go to the young  
poets these days! Well,  
so it was in my day,  
too. The world for the young,  
poetry for the young.  
Hip hip, hooray . . .  
But grant me one editor,  
at least one, who knows  
how it feels to fade away.  
I go in search of a ghost editor,  
an editor for ghosts.

## Your Last, Best Dream

Look yourself in the eye and admit this:  
your last, best dream is not wealth, or health,  
or to run across green fields and snatch white balls  
out of the bright air, no,

not even youth, although to be sure  
youth is a good dream.

Not Nancy with a tiny silk butterfly,  
pink, where the cups of her bra met,  
and lips so soft that when you kissed her  
you could feel the braces on her teeth.  
(O, sweet sweet sixteen.) But not Nancy.  
Nor Helen, sixty, who loves you with a love  
that is purer, you say, deeper and stronger  
than that love, that Nancy love. And maybe so.  
But, my friend, no matter what you tell yourself,  
it's not love, either. No. At the end  
you'll know that your last, best dream  
is not to die.

At the end, what is there to gain from lies?  
Look yourself in your rheumy eye and admit  
that you'll take it: rheum and catarrh  
and plastic teeth and gums that bleed and stink.  
Yes, stink.

You'll take it:

the organ that you fumble with,  
but it plays no tune.

Pathetic wheezing bastard, admit  
that you'll take the nursing home,  
gladly be the pebble on the stone  
as in the fairy tale you read your child,  
gladly be a rock forever if only it will feel  
breeze and sun and hear a passing shepherd's voice  
once every century or so, if that be permitted  
by the gods who grant such things.

If not, so be it.

Let you be rock on stone, sunless,  
breezeless, voiceless, childless, loveless and godless  
if only—and this is your last, best dream—  
you do not cease to be.



## Mark Vogel

Mark Vogel has short stories that have recently appeared in *Cities and Roads*, *Knight Literary Journal*, *Whimperbang* and *Our Stories*. Poetry appears in *Poetry Midwest*, *English Journal*, *Cold Mountain*, *Cape Rock*, *Dark Sky*, and other journals. He is currently Professor of English at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina.

## Across The Way

So close the sleek highway,  
the cars flash and are gone.  
Trucks bully at pressing business,  
spewing smoke, leaving urgently  
for Oklahoma and beyond.

Once upon a time when the road was quieter,  
cows gazed from under trees.  
Now on the hillside across the road  
a trailer park squats, indecent  
in harsh and modern sun,  
vinyl and metal ugly  
beyond redemption.

No matter—the land has been flattened,  
paved, pared to exposed clay,  
the residents trucked to busy work.  
The last apple tree in the orchard  
is stunted and dying, the pasture forgotten.  
Over the way plants were murdered,  
not planted.

Over here—this manicured lawn,  
this complex of condominiums—  
a quieter reflecting niche. In this planned landscape  
the burning bushes were brought in by truckload.  
Who saw the need? Who so loved the statement?

Over there—on throw away land—  
no one noticed the history eroding,  
the temporary made permanent.  
Those capable of statements still live  
in U-hauls heading West.

## Quarantine The Dead

The dead settle in the deep murk  
among rocks and ancient logs,  
lingering where the living can't see  
even when someone clamors a name.

The breeze pushes water into cracks—  
the ground eats at remains.  
A trout rotting ragged—the gills still red.  
No one has penned memories  
or arranged museums of essentials.

On a clouded day the dead cluster close—  
Dad, Grandpa, Grandma,  
Aunt Bertha, Blackie the cat.  
With flickering smiles and transparent eyes  
they gather at the window,  
their thin hands raised in pale greeting.

It is not polite to forget  
the blood drained box-carred gone.  
For stagnant molecules hang in dead air,  
and in great collective depths,  
waifs wander in stacked quiet.

Nowhere exists separation or end.  
In the morning's gentle touch  
a flowing kiss is hardly noticed,  
and the fog makes all difficult to see.

## Where Are The Rats

Are they partying downstream  
or sleeping at the neighbors?  
Are they watching from a distance,  
fearing my poison?

Once as a clan they ate the barn,  
climbing walls in panic,  
the lights catching them in the act.

What happened to fat families  
living under the hay,  
waiting for busy night freedom?  
What drove them to new land?

In this new quiet era,  
the barn is no longer a shelter.  
What was once desirable  
no longer counts.

The green glowing poison lies buried—  
waiting for the next generation.  
The path from the creek bed is forgotten.  
    A new highway takes the rat crowd away.

Today the rat era is over.  
Today the quiet says boring,  
a life extinct.



## John Wesick

John Wesick has a Ph.D. in physics and has practiced Buddhism for over twenty years. His work has been published in small press journals such as *Pearl, Pudding, Slipstream, Asinine Poetry, Cherry Blossom Review, Colere, Edgz, The Magee Park Anthology, Mannequin Envy, Midway Journal, The New Verse News, Raving Dove, R-KV-R-Y, The San Diego Poetry Annual, Still Crazy, Straylight, Sunken Lines, Tidepools, Urthona*, and others. His chapbooks have won honorable mentions twice in the San Diego Book Awards. The poem Bread and Circuses won second place in the 2007 African American Writers and Artists contest.

## Three Dogs, A Feather, And The Homeless

Yellow, chocolate, and black Labrador Retrievers,  
trendy as color-coordinated sweat suits,  
escort three women on their morning walk.  
A sulking homeless man skulks twenty paces behind.  
His grimy baseball cap floats on an ocean of matted hair.

I cross the Coast Highway to catch up.  
Tongues lolling, the dogs synchronize tails to their steps.  
The party stops. I pat heads and thump backs.  
The dogs lean against my knees, a good omen for the day.

Later, a red light stops me in front of the retirement home.  
“I don’t care, mother fucker!” The bum approaches  
yelling at phantoms only he sees. “Get out of my face!”  
Eyes downcast like a Japanese swordsman I remove hands  
from pockets to prepare for the worst and beat an SOS  
on the crossing button. Slap! Slap! The bum swings  
wild haymakers into his palms. My pulse accelerates.  
Even imagined anger seduces.

The light changes. I ford a river of cars.  
Wind suspends a feather in the crosswalk,  
as if the Goddess of Mercy were dangling it  
before my eyes. It floats to the pavement and tumbles  
after the crazy man and the ghosts he battles.

## Bird-Watching

Bells chime the noon melody from St. Mary’s Cathedral,  
a European pattern of granite stamped in Sydney’s landscape.  
Magpies, their white markings resembling clay painted  
on Aboriginal bodies, whistle and howl, “We’ve been here since the Dreamtime,”  
from gum trees’ sinuous branches.

I see few wild marsupials. Instead, winged creatures act as envoys  
for this place’s gods. Inch-long bogong moths greet me at my hotel,  
while birds ferry my credentials to Baiame<sup>1</sup>,  
birds with faces painted like Chinese opera characters,  
red and blue parrots, cockatoos, pink and gray galahs,  
and sacred ibises<sup>2</sup> walking on stilts probing grass with curved beaks.  
Beside a path lined with photos the size of Captain Cook’s sails

John Wesick

I wait for a feather authorizing safe passage to drift from the clouds.

1. Aboriginal Great Father Spirit

2. A misnomer. The bird in Sydney is an Australian white ibis. The sacred ibis refers to an African species.



## John Sibley Williams

John has an MA in Writing and resides in Portland, OR, where he frequently performs his poetry and studies Book Publishing at Portland State University. He is presently compiling manuscripts composed from the last two years of traveling and living abroad. Some of his over seventy previous or upcoming publications include: *The Evansville Review*, *Flint Hills Review*, *Open Letters*, *Cadillac Cicatrix*, *Juked*, *The Journal*, *Hawaii Review*, *Barnwood International Poetry*, *Concho River Review*, *Paradigm*, *Red Wheelbarrow*, *Aries*, *Other Rooms*, *The Alembic*, *Phantasmagoria*, *Clapboard House*, *River Oak Review*, *Glass*, *Southern Ocean Review*, *Miranda*, *Language and Culture*, and *Raving Dove*.

## A Night's Song For The Lake Traunsee

The sun moves beneath the lake  
and sinks  
colder.  
Trees silence.  
Children no longer  
cast pebbles at each other  
or across the surface.  
Waves retire  
from returning them.

Fewer voices to drown in.  
Fewer shadows,  
though each elongate  
until both mountains  
twine together.

Twilight flattens  
one thigh against the dock's  
harsh, fishless wood.  
The fishermen have returned  
home to weep, hungry.  
But we remain,  
half-submerged feet  
like kisses of ice,  
awaiting the pure  
crash of night,  
the weight of its entire body,  
and the vicious children  
whispering up from the vanished sun.

Some call love  
rediscovering stones once lost,  
polishing them, renaming.  
Others close to me demand  
anything once held  
never leaves the hand,  
what drowns  
also swims  
and sleeps like a winter lake,  
stuck stubbornly  
to one dream.

I prefer her shivering

inside me, waiting together  
between the enclosing mountain shadows,  
feeling the fish yet caught  
whipping uncertainly against our legs.

## A Train To The Coast

In her hair  
swollen by sea wind,  
the eyes of potatoes, oysters  
swollen by hunger,  
the landscapes usually fixed  
on *that* side of glass enter me,  
whispering like a stone  
sailing down below  
to a pregnant crash.

Or is it the warm rails  
pressed to my cheek  
or the salt tongues baying  
ceremoniously at sand?  
Is it the cooling embers of old streets  
vanishing in mist blown from the docks?

Something she doesn't say swirls  
and hisses like rusty machines  
reenlisted for abandoned tasks.  
Vehemently, silence  
like a factory  
floods with life.  
An awakening of limbs to whistle.  
Moving steadily inward,  
the designs of shells.

We've long disembarked.  
Still, together, it rolls along  
a single rapturous movement,  
a single cell  
composed some of each,  
a hand stretching out ceaselessly  
toward nothingness, glass,  
returning burdened with fruit.  
Such distances flatten  
as a wheat field from vast  
views of mountains.

My face emerges from her hair,  
awoken early and bemused,  
exposed,  
as from dream  
or heavy rain.

## Bonfires

In these suffering times, our shoes  
trekking blood squeezed from words,  
the city blackening, the country's angular green hills  
tasting like lumps undissolved in coffee,  
we flourish.

They make the common mistake  
that we need each other  
by morning's peaceful repose,  
when they have their own  
hands to hold, and, yes,  
I vividly recall the supple light  
reflecting your sleeping flesh  
and your smile of calmest sea  
and the long pauses between need  
to express our love, when barren silence  
was enough.

The curtains were one with the wind.  
Lost to the relentless clock,  
we were one with both. Mirrors  
proved us laughing, so alone  
our joy  
that night walks held no shadows,  
when suffering defined a certain malady  
shared by so many yesterdays  
instead of a condition.

But in these times when others  
genuflect, repent, or suicide,  
when bodies part on separate voyages,  
when charcoal veils the smells  
of what's buried beneath the gardens,  
our immersion deep into the darkness  
entwines us closer, fueling fear  
and strength into bonfires licking the night sky.



How high they ascend! In pain  
but never solitude. Cast to tears  
but never drifting. Our souls  
warm each other. Our blood froths and boils  
in our mouths. Ferocious  
warriors desiring naught but survival,  
lumps silently quivering beneath bed sheets  
then bounding to raze our clothes  
and heart's walls  
and worlds until  
a frantic race into night  
    bears no shadows either.

    With you  
it all crumbles and rebuilds and I stand  
taller than a cloud. Our fear opens the sky.  
Our kiss glows blue upon the day.  
Before I'd say "let them drown in themselves",  
the quicksand of serenity,  
but now "let them build arks", like ours,  
for in twilight's throbbing obscurity  
their wide eyes are ours, the moon's,  
their blood is one blood, in our mouths.

    With you  
it all crumbles and I feel the Earth  
quake and squirm and bloom  
in the most desperate love,  
    the only love  
keeping the city and country  
from eroding into the vast green sea,  
vanishing like desire into the clock's cold hands.

## Those Washed By The Sea

I am the first to tumble gray  
through the ruddy pallor, the unmistakable  
grin with its long, delicate tongue  
forked veins I accept rounded,  
dull into me.

Gulls, terns, unpredictable ravens.  
Exchange your writhing catch,  
your half-digested insects, your feathers,  
for a word or two on your beauty

and your praiseworthy, insistent pecking  
this dawn from my palm.

Of the newborn suns I've known  
pristine as newly-awakened kisses  
and slow memories of four-handed pianoing,  
the one catching this fiery black sea crest  
will not fade like a clown's joy  
nor a tree's steady reflection,  
for I am two steps behind it  
and cannot outstretch my arms.

I cannot see myself in the erupting rebirth  
so how can it pass on to the next?  
How can it pass into disappeared friends  
like a wind-struck flag  
like certainty?

Blood crusts the tattered rags  
dawn gives me to cleanse it.  
Dried, all fluids gray and leave echoing rings.  
Those washed by the sea  
are no exception.

## A.D. Winans

A. D. Winans is a native San Francisco poet and writer. His work has been published worldwide and translated into 8 languages. In 2006 he was awarded a PEN Josephine Miles award for literary excellence. Cross-Cultural Communications will soon publish his book, Love Minus- Zero.

## How I Want To Be Remembered

Play me some Willie Nelson and Johnny Cash  
Toast me with some sour mash  
Have six young girls do a dance  
One hooker in leather vest and pants  
Carry my ashes to the top of Mount TAM  
with a lone Monk trailing behind.

Strawberries and champagne served  
at sunset  
No open bar  
But free to all  
Irish whiskey tequila vodka and champagne  
served by a French lass  
with a saucy ass

Set up speakers  
on each side of the hill  
Play some poetry of Kaufman and Micheline  
Blast some Dylan to the birds flying overhead  
Stir the juices in the living dead

Put a shot glass in the box carrying  
my ashes  
A pen and a sheet of blank paper

No flowers no tears  
Just that lone monk doing  
a Buddhist chant  
Let the sunset be my headstone  
My poems my marker

## Reflections

approaching 70  
feeling like a Samurai  
with a dull-bladed sword  
singing into the teeth of night

somewhere beyond the horizon  
sailors buried at sea  
rise in ghostly procession

skeletons sharing their secrets  
with withered old men lined-up  
like bowling pins  
measuring them limb to limb  
like a tailor sizing you up  
for a perfect fit



## Donald Winters

Donald Winters is a retired humanities professor from Minneapolis Community College where he taught English, Humanities and creative writing (poetry). He received a doctorate in American Studies from the University of Minnesota, a Masters in English from the University of Michigan and a Bachelor's Degree from California State University, Long Beach. His poetry has been published in *Beyond Baroque*, (Venice, California), *The Worcester Review* (Massachusetts) and numerous college publications.

## Dreams

Old dreams serve as well as new.  
When recollected in tranquility,  
The rain seems as  
Sweetly strange from years back  
As this morning's soaking song.

The tongue that flickers in my ear  
Like a bewildered butterfly  
Speaks soft syllables as love currents flow.  
And no matter how swift its path  
It leaves an aching, desperate joy.

Fingers feeling for yielding flesh  
Are like mysterious creatures in the night  
Seeking a spot for rest or dreams,  
Testing each soft and softer place  
For immeasurable pleasure or solace.

When waking from such a dream  
Who could ever guess the time?  
Or even ask if it were real or  
Gleaned from some furious fragment  
Of a sensual fusion or fantasy?

Dreams drenched in passion  
Whether from visions nearly forgotten  
Or timely tales still fresh from telling  
Form the never-ending frames  
Of our nocturnal portraits.

## Hemingway's Key West Fire Sermon

Hear me well, poetry boys,  
You feel, dream and fantasize  
Entirely too goddam much.

Ever try resting  
Your throbbing head  
On a soft dream after  
A three-day drunk with Ezra Pound?



When has a feeling ever  
Picked up the tab at Sloppy Joe's?  
Or a fantasy fanned your burning flesh  
On an African plain?

Listen to the screech  
Of a Key West parrot  
Or followed the path of a six-toed cat.  
That's the stuff that real life is made of  
Not half-assed dreams or visions.

A bottle of whiskey  
And the cool barrel of a shotgun,  
Both are solid and prosaic in the mouth,  
One offering drunken life  
The other, the Endgame.

Both are far from fantasy,  
Both offer experiences to have  
And to have not.  
Heroes know when it's time for one  
And then time for the other.



## Briana Wunderli

Briana Wunderli is a recreational writer; about to finish high school, she intends on perusing art through architecture and design. For Briana writing is another medium of art that she uses to create something unique and beautiful.

## Mist

Do you notice how the darkness and dankness heighten  
when the fog settles on your life.  
You must look at the haze, because it is difficult to see past.  
You know, by the clock, that the noon sun should be shining,  
but everything is hidden; secrets are thickened.  
Walking down the streets of your own little labyrinth,  
your fabricated city, created by memories.  
The fog weighs on you and all that is left to do is wait.  
You're stuck in slow motion; living heavily,  
and the release comes with heat or light,  
warmth and hope.

## Theresa Wyatt

Theresa Wyatt is a former visual artist and retired teacher whose career spanned a study in Siena, Italy to working within the NY State prison system. Though she often focuses on the "art of narrative medicine," Theresa enjoys writing on many subjects. Her work has recently appeared in the *American Journal of Hospice & Palliative Medicine*, the *Yale Journal for Humanities in Medicine*, *Blood & Thunder*, *The Healing Muse*, and *Earth's Daughter's*, among others.

Trostle Farm At Plum Run  
( *July 2, 1863, Gettysburg* )

The breastworks seemed  
to whisper

go lie in this open field  
and feel the earth  
speak to you

allow the ground  
to tell you its story

how stampedes and strife  
were often daily

and how  
the in between times  
accommodated lovers  
at the beginning of their thirst,

allow yourself  
the curiosity of tall tales  
and sad but true testimony

of how this battle  
or that battle  
changed the course  
of history

and how,  
as you see it,  
lying there in an open field,

how drops of ruby blood,  
invisible to sight or touch,

have mingled into blooms

## About The Press

Seven CirclePress was founded in 2008 by New England poet Seth Jani. It publishes both online and off, and aims to create a collective of the best voices from the independent literary scene.

It commits to no prescribed esthetic but has a strong inclination to view art as a means of promoting unity and meaningful interaction.

It has a strong online presence with the amount of visitors growing daily.

SCP publishes a select number of books/chapbooks a year as well as *CircleShow: The Official Journal Of Seven CirclePress*, released biannually.