

VERSE WISCONSIN

FOUNDED BY LINDA ASCHBRENNER AS FREEVERSE 1998

Even though we did not
see eye-to-eye on politics,
religion, and a raft of other
subjects, we set aside our
differences for the sake of
our poetry.

—Harlan Richards

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They worried that no one
“outside” would care about
what they thought, felt, or
wrote. They mourned the
gap between themselves
“inside” and the
communities they had left.

—Anne Farrer Scott

FEATURES

A Community of Poets
by Harlan Richards

Inside / Out
by Anne Farrer Scott

Editors' Notes

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This is it: the official countdown. With the publication of this issue, we have two VW issues left, Spring 2014 and Fall 2014. For the month of October, we're reading poems around one last call for thematic work: "Midwest Remix"—see our submissions page online for details. We're no longer reading for the print issue, as we have enough poems to fill the rest of our remaining pages. One of our goals is to finish this project with zero backlog. We will read book reviews through March 1. Books Received will be updated through August 31, 2014, online and in the last issue (Fall 2014), but any books sent after January 1 will most likely not get reviewed.

So as fall comes on in all its glory, we also face a transition. We've written at length through the past few years about our role as editors, our goals, our thoughts and how those ideas have changed as we've grown and changed with the magazine. You can find all that stuff online in our archives. We've talked at length with you at a multitude of events about our vision, our beliefs, and our excitement at the possibilities for poetry in public spaces, poetry of place, poetry around the kitchen table and in the office board room or the Capitol rotunda. As much as possible, we've tried to find poetry in each of those places, spread the word, and celebrate with you all.

We've put pressure on words like "excellence," "publishing," and even "poetry" itself. We've stretched ourselves as we've stretched the definitions of what we're looking for. You know this. You've been along for the ride. You, more often than not, provided the ride.

The theme of VW 112 is "Parents & Children." You'll find more material, poetry and prose and art, online. While working on this issue, we've published two collections of poems by Cathryn Cofell and Moisés Villavicencio Barras as Cowfeather Press. An anthology of work by more than 100 authors, *Echolocations, Poems Set in Madison*, is also close to publication. We've worked on an essay or two and various projects and events in collaboration with other groups, including conversations at the South East Wisconsin and Wisconsin Book Festivals and the Wisconsin Historical Society, and partnerships with Poetry Jumps Off the Shelf, the Madison Common Council, the Dane County Water Commission, Forward Theater, Wormfarm Institute, First Wave at UW-Madison, and Madison Metro Bus. If you're interested in upcoming events this Fall in a variety of Wisconsin locations, you can check the schedule online at versewisconsin.org/events.

By the time you are reading this, we'll be almost through what turned out to be an incredibly busy season for us. We're both looking forward to a winter of retreat and reflection. A little more writing time for ourselves. More time to ask "what's next" and ponder the answers, in the coming season of dark and rest.

Thanks to volunteer intern Marina Oliver. Thanks to Dana Alexander Kaleta and LynleyShimat Lys for volunteer proofreading help. Lingering errors are, of course, the responsibility of VW's editors. **Contact us:** editors@versewisconsin.org.

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Co-Editors
 Sarah Busse
 Wendy Vardaman

Advisors
 Linda Aschbrenner
 B. J. Best
 Cathryn Cofell
 Ron Czerwien
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New from Cowfeather Press 2013

Sister Satellite by Cathryn Cofell

Luz de Todos los Tiempos/ Light of All Times by Moisés Villavicencio Barras

Echolocations, Poets Map Madison (Late Oct)

Available in print & Kindle editions.

To Order: Visit cowfeatherpress.org. Questions?
Email: cowfeather@versewisconsin.org.

Additional supporting materials (audio, video, book group questions, and information about authors) available at cowfeatherpress.org.



Cowfeather Press PO Box 620216, Middleton, WI 53562

Books Received March-August 2013

Publisher & author links available online

Dante Alighieri, *The Inferno*, selection of translation by Kevin Ducey, cannot exist, 2013
Antler, *Touch Each Other*, FootHills Publishing, 2013
James Babbs, *The Weight of Invisible Things*, Finishing Line Press, 2013
James Babbs, *disturbing the light*, Interior Noise Press, 2013
Paul Baker, *I=M=P=L=A=N=T*, cannot exist, 2013
Mark Belair, *While We're Waiting*, Aldrich Press, 2013
B.J. Best, *But Our Princess Is in Another Castle*, Rose Metal Press, 2013
Rick Burkhardt, *the foreground*, cannot exist, 2013
Maryann Corbett, *Credo for the Checkoutline in Winter*, Able Muse Press, 2013
Dallas Crow, *Small, Imperfect Paradise*, Parallel Press, 2013
Philip Dacey, *Gimme Five*, Blue Light Press, 2013
Sherri Felt Dratfield, *The City*, Finishing Line Press, 2013
Thomas J. Erickson, *The Lawyer Who Died in the Courthouse Bathroom*, Parallel Press, 2013
Ari Feld, *A Straight Line Shaped Like a Knot*, illus. Amanda Huff, Plumberries Press, 2013
Trina Gaynon, *The Alphabet of Romance*, Finishing Line Press, 2013
Brent Goodman, *Far From Sudden*, Black Lawrence Press, 2013
Barbara Gregorich, *Crossing the Skyway*, Philbar Books, 2013
Phiroze (Phil) Hansotia, *Looking for America*, Caravaggio Press, 2013 [P.O. Box 41, Ellison Bay, WI 54210]
Hartford Avenue Poets, *Masquerades & Misdemeanors*, Peblebrook Press, 2013
Karla Huston, *Theory of Lipstick*, Main Street Rag, 2013
Lowell Jaeger, *How Quickly What's Passing Goes Past*, Grayson Books, 2013
Dave Kemper, *Busy Work, Teaching in a Middle School*, Popcorn Press, 2012
C. Kubasta, *A Lovely Box*, Finishing Line Press, 2013
Susan Landers, *from Franklinton*, cannot exist, 2013

Quincy R. Lehr, *Shadows and Gifts, Three Poems*, Barefoot Muse Press, 2013
James P. Lenfestey, *Earth in Anger*, Red Dragonfly Press, 2013
Darrell Lindsey, *Edge of the Pond, Selected haiku and tanka*, Popcorn Press, 2012
Ellaraine Lockie, *Coffee House Confessions*, Silver Birch Press, 2013
Jeri McCormick, *Marrowbone of Memory*, Ireland's Great Famine, Salmon Poetry, 2013
Chloe Yelena Miller, *Unrest*, Finishing Line Press, 2013
Rick Mullin, *Soutine, a Poem*, Dos Madres, 2012
Kathy Nelson, *Cattails*, Main Street Rag, 2013
Cristina M.R. Norcross, *The Lava Storyteller*, Red Mare 7, 2013
David O'Connell, *A Better Way to Fall*, The Philbrick Poetry Chapbook / The Poet's Press, 2013
Kristine Ong Muslim, *Grim Series*, Popcorn Press, 2012
Jeff Poniewaz, *September 11, 2001*, Inland Ocean Books, P.O. Box 11502, Milwaukee, WI 53211, 2013
Charles P. Ries, *Girl Friend & Other Mysteries of Love, New and Selected Poems*, Propaganda Press, 2013
Jeannie E. Roberts, *Nature of It All*, Finishing Line Press, 2013
Marjorie Saiser, *Fearing Water*, Parallel Press, 2013
Jane Satterfield, *Her Familiars*, Elixir Press, 2013
William Schulman, *97 Views of Lake Menomin* [art & poetry]
Noel Sloboda, *Our Rarer Monsters*, Sunnyoutside, 2013
Lester Smith (ed.), *Cthulhu Haiku, and Other Mythos Madness*, Popcorn Press, 2012

Jim Stevens, *The Book of Big Dog Town, Poems and Stories from Aztalan and Around*, Fireweed Press, 2013
Richard Swanson, *Paparazzi Moments*, 2013 [rswanson@tds.net]
Chelsea Tadeyeske, *Totem*, illus. Erin Case, Plumberries Press, 2013
Catherine Theis, *the june cuckold, a tragedy in verse*, Convulsive Editions, 2012
Sandra Miranda Tully, *Every Fleeting Thing, Poems for Prayer and Meditation*, Durnford's Landing, 2013
Angie Trudell Vasquez, *Love in War Time*, Art Night Books, 2013
Anna Vitale, *how we know who we are*, cannot exist, 2013
Frank X Walker, *Turn Me Loose: The Unghosting of Medgar Evers*, The University of Georgia Press, 2013
R. Scott Yarbrough, *A Sort of Adam Infant Dropped: True Myths*, Ink Brush Press, 2013
Timothy Young, *The Mississippi Book of the Dead*, Parallel Press, 2013

Books Reviewed & Noted Online

L. Ward Abel, *American Bruise*, Parallel Press, 2012, by Judy Barisonzi
Marilyn Annucci, *Waiting Room*, Hill-Stead Museum, 2012, by Wendy Vardaman
Antler, *Touch Each Other*, FootHills Publishing, 2013, by Charles Rossiter
Sharon Auferle & Ralph Murre, *Wind / Where Music Was*, Little Eagle Press, 2013, by Charles Ries
B.J. Best, *But Our Princess Is in Another Castle*, Rose Metal Press, 2013, by Lisa Vihos
Ron Carlson, *Room Service: Poems, Meditations, Outcries & Remarks*, Red Hen Press, 2012, by Morgan Harlow
Cathryn Cofell, *Sister Satellite*, Cowfeather Press, 2013, by Mark Zimmermann
Paola Corso, *Once I Was Told the Air Was Not For Breathing*, Parallel Press, 2012, by Margaret Rozga
Joanie DiMartino, *Strange Girls*, Little Red Tree Publishing, 2010, by Marybeth Rua-Larsen
George Eklund, *Wanting to be an Element*, Finishing Line Press, by Kenneth McNickle
Chris Emery, *The Departure*, Salt Publishing, 2012, by Morgan Harlow
Nausheen Eusuf, *What Remains*, Longleaf Press, 2011, by Margaret Rozga
Thomas J. Erickson, *The Lawyer Who Died in the Courthouse Bathroom*, Parallel Press, 2013, by Mary Riley
Brent Goodman, *Far From Sudden*, Black Lawrence Press, 2013, by Richard Swanson
Karen Kelsay, *Amytis Leaves Her Garden*, 2013, by Annabelle Mosely
Jeff Holt, *The Harvest*, White Violet Press, 2012, by Marybeth Rua-Larsen
Karla Huston, *A Theory of Lipstick*, Main Street Rag, 2013, by Marina Oliver
C. Kubasta, *A Lovely Box*, Finishing Line Press, 2013, by Wendy Vardaman
Carol Levin, *Stunned by the Velocity*, Pecan Grove Press, 2012, by Margaret Rozga
Ellaraine Lockie, *Coffee House Confessions*, Silver Birch Press, 2013, by R.A. Davis
Jeri McCormick, *Marrowbone of Memory*, Ireland's Great Famine, Salmon Poetry, 2013, by Kathleen Serley
Richard Merelman, *The Imaginary Baritone*, Fireweed Press, 2012, by John Olksi
Chloe Yelena Miller, *Unrest*, Finishing Line Press, 2013, by John Olksi
Laurel Mills, *Rumor of Hope*, Encircle Publications, 2012 by Ronnie Hess
David O'Connell, *A Better Way To Fall*, The Providence Athenaeum, 2013, by Richard Merelman
Michael Rothenberg, *Indefinite Detention: A Dog Story*, Ekstasis Editions, 2013, by Lisa Vihos
A.E. Stallings, *Olives*, Triquarterly Books, 2012, by Sean Gilligan
Sandra Miranda Tully, *Every Fleeting Thing, Poems for Prayer and Meditation*, Durnford's Landing, 2013, by Mariann Ritzer
Doug Woodsum, *The Lawns of Lobstermen*, Woodsum, Moon Pie Press, 2010, by David Gross
Wanita Zumbrennen, *All Mortals Shall Dream Dreams*, Finishing Line Press, 2012, by John Olksi

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Ellen's

Where all the words hang out
Some straight up
Others shivering in blue ice
Most of them know each other
Been hanging around all their lives
Sitting in familiar corners
Sifting through the jazzman's blues
Adrift and loose on the barroom floor
Always in search of that perfect partner
Becoming loud, unruly, insisting
On being put in their rightful place
Once in a while new ones show up
And the short ones insist on combining
Ending up lost in the mixing it up
But during intermission, Ellen appears
Takes the mic and yells *turn up the heat*
And without missing a beat
They take their places on line
Perfect partners, perfect feet
Never forgetting their days unattached
Finding refuge at Ellen's, alive in her head
The words spill on paper, a life of their own
Becoming her legacy, becoming her poem.

—SUSAN KILEEN, WATERTOWN, WI

I have written in response and gratitude for all Ellen Kort has done for poetry. She has set the bar high for all who love poetry and wish to share it with others. She has enriched the lives of all who have known her.

Editors' Note: Susan Kileen's poem was accidentally omitted from the celebration of Ellen Kort in the April Issue of *Verse Wisconsin* (#111).

Young and Old Look at a Garden

I can see my mom in her garden
from the kitchen window.
She is not particularly productive,
and there is so much to do.
She digs a little,
moves some mulch.
Often I see her standing in a sort of reverie,
growing daily more accustomed to the earth.

—MEREDITH MASON, APPLETON, WI

Cabbage Rolls

"Stay behind this cabbage truck. Don't pass,"
my grandmother told my brother. We were hungry,
ready to be home from crossing into Mexico. The Rio
Grande Valley is a pregnant mother earth,
pushing forth Ruby Red Grapefruit, plump
with spraying juice, 1015 Sweet
Onions the size of softballs. Out our windshield
cabbage was stacked like a bed full of sleepy heads,
riding the wooden rails of the transport truck.
"Wait for the railroad track." The truck rattled
over the track. Five cabbages peeked up and over,
fell to the asphalt, rolling into an onion field. "Stop.
You little ones go get those and pull an onion." We did.

That night we ate boiled cabbage with salt pork fat,
1015 Onion fresh, cabbage squeaking against our teeth.

Grandmother knew cabbage would fill our young
bellies up enough to sleep, even without meat;
we went to bed faux full, content watching my Chickasaw
grandmother exercising her instinct:

The practice and patience to follow the food,
to know where crossroads lie, and to gather
her pack content with action not words.

—R. SCOTT YARBROUGH, PLANO, TX

Rules of the Game

*In the rules of croquet, a player may not strike another
player's ball twice without going through a wicket.
This is called being "dead" on the other player.*

*"...deadness does not apply to the rover."—Croquet,
the Complete Guide, James Carlton and William
Thompson*

In the transforming moment
after clearing the last wicket
and missing the post by a grass blade
the rover, freed of mortal concerns,
rearranges the cosmos of the court:
gathers with a whirlwind of deft strokes
the balls of straggling teammates,
shepherds them to their tutti finale
and gleefully sends opponents' balls
streaking to the darkest, coldest
corners of the universe.

—NANCY SCHMALZ, OSHKOSH, WI

red-winged blackbirds
red-winged blackbirds
jealous crow

—AYAZ DARYL NIELSEN, BOULDER, CO

A Necktie and a Hijab

I wondered how far this woman had traveled to stand in this grade school lobby in Plano, Texas: Middle-Eastern, coal-eyed, young mother, Hijab, looking in desperation at her son, her fingers trembling over an untied American tie.

He was due onstage in several minutes. Her eyes pleaded, locked with mine—against her culture. I took the tie, stood behind the boy, turned his collar up. He looked up, backward at me, smiled upside down.

Fix the length of the short end and around once,
like every time I went to work after school, Piggly Wiggly;
up and through and over back like getting ready for college graduation;
around and through like I did for my son's first recital;

pull tight, down to snug, square the knot like before my daughter's funeral.

I turned him around and showed him his reflection in the trophy case's glass. He gave me a "thumbs up," the mother's smile reflected over my shoulder; I moved to hug her. "It's disrespectful," she whispered to me, "Instead, I will hug

you with my eyes." I, then, realized how far I had traveled from a West Texas farm town to be hugged by a woman's eyes in this grade school lobby of Dallas suburbia. A Necktie and Hijab woven together in one dignified embrace.

—R. SCOTT YARBROUGH, PLANO, TX

Buttons Buttons.
Mom cut them snip snip,
green, brown, and white popped
into an old tin. She had graduated from
fashion school, ingenuity and thrift the main
courses. Our corduroys outlasted the shirts she
tore into pieces. The long strips Dad used
to stake his tomatoes. Mom avoided the yard, gnats
and horseflies bit, left pink welts on her young skin.
The corn stalks grew tall, she did not see their green
thick stems or the tassels' gold silk in the wind.
She cooked corn chowder. We helped wipe tables
and scrub sinks with clean rags. She carefully
bought white shirts for Dad. Doll clothes
and puppets made with clean rags and
lots of buttons are stitched by
my five granddaughters.
Buttons Buttons.

—MARY ELLEN LETARTE, LUNENBERG, MA
visit VW Online for audio by this author

I Picture My Mother's Hands

Sailing out sandwiches, chopping vegetables,
cooking steak till it's tough as a shoe
because that's the way he likes it,
conveying something delicious
for which she is not thanked,
on a bright tray, to the living room,
in front of a TV.

A long time after I decided she was a fool,
and years after the first time I thought:
that will never be me,

I remembered my great-great grandmother,
Maryann,
who raised white children
who could grow to own her,
whose love sailed out pure
like clean sheets on a line,
straight on down to me.

One of those babies grew up
to have a daughter of her own,
whom she named Maryann,
and I am more careful now
of what I throw away.

We are descended from
mothers and grandmothers
who set boats in streams and let them go,
because that is all they could do, but also
because the insurrection that matters most
has always been and always will be love.

—MEREDITH MASON, APPLETON, WI

Of Ice And Mimm

A mythical governor once declared
 "A hockey rink in every park.
 A skating rink on every lake."
 Skates are standard issue

Snowbanks glaciare into icebanks
 Bus stop sherpas
 Navigate with cramp-ons
 and ropes

Local lore tells of black ice
 Auto-exhausted
 Hidden from sight
 Motorist killer

Bored and desperate souls
 Fish from bucket seats
 On desolate ice
 Eelpout and chips

Skiing the fifth tee
 Down the fairway hill
 Into the rough
 Winter's mulligan

Castles of ice
 Carnivals of cold
 People of warmth
 This is Minnesota

—JIM LANDWEHR, WAUKESHA, WI

river-bend dreams

draw me out, crook-end by elbow-
 bend, in *color* so i know
 one-by-one the willow tree's
 cares shooting up into the sky
 would i too then constellate-
 another shard too low
 to the ground to know any better
 ?

—ELENA BOTTS, RESTON, VA

Yesterday was her 15th birthday.
 She had it planned for months,
 walking with her girlfriends arm-and-arm
 on the barricaded side of the road
 in the bright chill air,
 snow melting, fur-lined
 boots crunching
 on the crowd
 gleaming blacktop,
 Garden of Lights
 on the other side
 of the big gate wrought iron,
 spelling occasion
 in a million blinking lights.
 Standing in line
 wearing too-thin gloves
 I stepped off the edge
 of December,
 unable to come up with the currency,
 my credit card spitting out
 one rolled up receipt
 after another,
 a t e r r i b l e word
 in asterisks
 repeating
 repeating
 repeating.

—TORI GRANT WELHOUSE, GREEN BAY, WI

Collars, Blue

waiting in a corner behind a picture
 the un-signed work
 of mason
 of carpenter
 within the wall
 the nameless electrician
 lighting even December
 hidden there
 the plumber
 piping forever in and out
 at the end
 no credits rolling
 for clean towels
 or swept floors
 the deep-shoveled snow
 no signature
 on the unleaking roof
 yet the artist
 initials the painting
 my name is on this poem

—RALPH MURRE, BAILEYS HARBOR, WI
 note: first line (italicized) is by Anna Swir

Purgatory Ticktock

Evolution of everything today and over time or at least the opportunity for a double dose of tortured screams. Which scream for thee? Meanwhile you can whisper into the void or vocal-fry your day across a video-conference and an unspontaneous booty call or text me when you can. What gives? We've been flipping at the bottom for so long it's hard to imagine the skimmers overhead but then I think about that snake-blooded shit whose shimmering act of switcheroo at a hundred and two was enough to plop hot tears of pity onto his smoldering tombstone and sizzle his odium.

—DANIEL MELTZ, NEW YORK, NY

A Game of Dice

The passing of time
in a small town café,
four men at a table,
playing dice, splitting the check
for coffee and rolls,
bitching, in turn, about the Vikings,
today's farmers, politics
and the cost
of prescription medications.
Two are bald, another headed that way,
and the fourth has thick hair yet, not even gray.
All four did hitches in the service,
two in combat in Korea,
although it's never brought up.
They'll look at their watches,
and the round-faced clock on the wall
behind the register,
thinking: another day that is too long.
One of them steps outside,
lights a cigar,
watches grain trucks unloading
at the elevator a block to the south,
and thinks of his father,
the day he busted a stubborn steer
across the forehead with a two-by-four.
Laughs, snuffs out the cigar.
Half his index finger on the right hand is gone,
but it's no big deal.
He returns to the table in the café,
and says he'll be gone tomorrow:
has to see the doctor because it's been
hurting him to piss.
The others nod, and the thick-haired man
passes him the dice shaker.
His fingers smell like cigar
and he shakes the brown cup,
dice rattling inside,
like picked-over bones
in an empty field
on a windy day.

—DANA YOST, FOREST CITY, IA
visit VW Online for audio by this author

Great American Dream

Clouds once painted possibilities
above a horizon yet to be explored.
Probabilities now lurk, of storms
and rising insurance rates, contract
provisions that exclude floods
and other acts of god I am
unsure acts in my world
anyway. Now I wear rain
coats and drive only to places
clearly stamped on maps beside
route numbers and distances.
Now I know where I am and
what will happen next. I have
arrived in a world much
smaller than promised. Now
I want to wake up from this
great American dream and find
that waking up is just the beginning.

—RICK DINGES, LINCOLN, NE

Mornings After Thirty-Eight Years

for Bunny

Dear Amy, you begin, then glance my way,
Brow lowered, eyes raised, stage-waiting for attention.
You give the paper a shake. *My sister's boyfriend*
Is coming to my wedding. He's in jail. . .

Two squirrels out back chase up and down the ash.
Lighter late August air bespeaks the fall.
He tends to be high maintenance. I don't want
To hurt my sister, but I also don't. . .

It's our new breakfast ritual. You read—
Aloud—Dear Amy's daily correspondence:
Problems, pure trivia to life and death;
Each finds an answer (more or less), as if

Things could go on like this forever. We
Suspend our disbelief with Amy's help,
You reading almost earnestly, me turning
From breezy windows toward your voice. *Dear Bride. . .*

—CHARLES HUGHES, PARK RIDGE, IL
visit VW Online for audio by this author

The Daughter I Don't Have

could counterfeit my
face and sighs. She
puts on my cashmere
from college, my
new sheer baby T.
She's clever,
wits me as only a
good counterfeiter
can. She used to
leave her hair in
the sink. Now she's
more subtle but she
still plays tricks,
hooks a belt on the
hole I'd never use
so I won't forget
her. Her profit
comes from watching
me squirm, knows if
I had just made a
reproduction of my
self, she wouldn't
have to spy on me,
tend to details,
perfecting what is
not real so well
she never may be
recognized

—LYN LIFSHIN,
VIENNA, VA

After Reading “When a Year Goes By After a Mother’s Death and the Daughter No Longer Thinks of the Mother Every Day, She Feels Guilty”

I think how even on the metro
past Arlington Cemetery
I remember only small pieces:
your grin, crutching, you called it,
to meet me on a day as the most shrill
startling fall. Your eyes that blue.
In the morning that rain goes
sleet, goes rain again, I don't want
to pull from blue quilts, pull on
clothes or sip cold coffee in
the kitchen where the old cat just
nibbles, walks away, I think of those
agony, ecstasy months, how I would
have chosen calm, something
safe if I had to. Now, when little is,
I think of lying under other quilts,
it's as if only my body remembers
the feel of when you said after Nam,
with a leg missing, you can move
closer, deeper. “Don't touch me while
I'm sleeping,” another vet said, “I might
leap up with my machete.” That was
like going into a war zone. The other's
blue eyes were a drug and he held me
sleeping as no one has. The quilt had to
be lighter than air so his mangled foot
wouldn't throb. With him, I felt the
bed was everywhere but he'd learned to
live without planning ahead, card board
box furniture. He left what had mattered
for a freeze frame behind fast: a tape, my
long hair, any warning. The snow fell on
the outline of his last bed a son
told reporters, a ghost I'm losing the
scent of already, trying to get thru
the winter, the snow that will be icier,
colder.

—LYN LIFSHIN, VIENNA, VA

She Mothered

She sailed to America from Ireland,
earned an education, not ordinary then.
After teaching school in Michigan she moved,
established herself by dressmaking in Chicago.
Wander lust sent her to Memphis. She married
a staunch union man, an immigrant from Wales.
She learned that unified workers gave hope
and strength to poor laborers.
In 1867 yellow fever struck her children
and her husband. She nursed them to no avail.
Mourning, she stayed in town, helped others
until the scourge burned out.
Mary returned to Chicago, sewed
for the rich, but remembered families
who struggled. The cost of her creations
could feed a houseful for two weeks.
The great fire of 1871 destroyed Mary's
business and her home. She took refuge,
found welcome in the Knights Hall,
a union formed at the end of the Civil War.
To shutter her grief she adopted the hungry
and the oppressed as her family. She traveled.
When asked, “Where do you live?” She answered,
“...wherever there's a fight against wrong.”
Railroad workers, textile workers, miners
and millions of others called her Mother.
She labored for their behalf.
In Arnt, PA she organized the miners' wives
to beat their empty pots. The strike-breakers
and mules fled in confusion after a week.
In Philadelphia thousands of textile workers
left their looms, including ten thousand children.
Mary gathered the young, many maimed and under age.
They walked, she talked. People listened—
they cried while newspaper men wrote the headlines.
Mary took the children's story to New York.
Her eyes blazed as she spoke, “Children sold
on the installment plan for two dollars a week.”
They listened to Mary Harris Jones, “Mother Jones”
A magazine by that name keeps her message alive.

—MARY ELLEN LETARTE, LUNENBERG, MA
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Daughter, Curator:

You remember the thick, purple lines drawn,
saw how they bordered my spine,
boxes laid like tile, aligned

to receive the tread of radiation
(like sunlight machined, on good days).
Someday I hope you can stray

from that memory. Those marks did not define
me. My cross body did not
embody me. As it rots

now, it wrings new worry from you, leaves you
fewer motes than I'd have you sheave,
like how a tidy room pleased.

The time I spent ironing, cleaning,
didn't bring me through your teens
nor scour and rinse your genes

of the sequence that might end in your death.
But, breath like steam, I restored
order, pressed the clothes we wore,

released creases and the dust that muddled
and dulled the house. I sang, suds
to the elbows, my flesh blood-

flushed. Such singing colored you too. Recall
it all, from carpet shampooed
then covered in old sheets through

the drying hours, to my favorite swear: Shit.
How it proclaimed—in its bare
earthy way—a thought, declared

sentiment. Anger, surprise, even joy.
Coiled in the word, the sweet
history of humans, complete

as any other: the Sullivan farm
starred by dung, the Wisconsin
soil renewed. All things begin

and end to begin. In the letting-go,
the slow return. The setting
sun yields to the moon, threading

time orb by orb. Yes—the thread is tinsel—
miracle it holds weight, as thin
as it is, miracle that pinned

somewhere along it like a damp bedsheet
is the fleeting day we spent
healing at an amusement

park. Remember—we rode in carts on tracks,
our backs strong as cornstalks (strong
enough), our voices nearing song.

—ANDREA O'BRIEN, DENVER, CO

And this is how she enters the living

world, with the energy
of the ocean, cresting and splashing,
or simply lapping at shrunken toes,
but always, always, she arrives
unannounced. It could be when you move
clothes—sleeve by wrung sleeve—
to the dryer where they will tumble
like brave or raving souls who ride
over Niagara in barrels. Or it might be
when a finch lights upon the edge
of a chair, a chair where she could burn
herself with the warmth she never got
enough of. Maybe it is when you stand
before the butcher counter, struggling
with the names of beef cuts—
something she would have taught you,
certainly, had you not been a child
when she died—but instead you turn
the words over in your mouth
like another language: brisket,
eye of round, skirt steak, tenderloin.
Then there are times when she blows in
with the absoluteness of church names:
St. Aloysius, Our Lady of Sorrows,
Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Basilica
of St. Josaphat. Maybe you are tying
red ribbons into bows to hang
from pine branches. Other times
it is when you drive past exit 275
and look to the town where she was a girl,
to the school where Lester—the man before
your father—penciled his name once
over her whole dance card, to the farm
she left behind as soon as she was old
enough, and to the cemetery
where she couldn't possibly want
to have been buried. No matter—
her visits, though uncommon now, must end
the same, with her questioning
who among you is lost.

—ANDREA O'BRIEN, DENVER, CO

Uncle Jake Dates the Polish Woman

What can I say?
The meadow drew me in like a drug.
I smoked its deep grasses with my backbone.
I inhaled daisies of all things,
yellow and common as dust.
And meadow-larks, aptly named,
larked about me.
And all the time you were out driving.
And the woman beside you
was speaking half-English, half-Polish.
You weren't expecting beauty.
That wasn't where that talkative navigator
was leading you.
But it was the real world
and you expected nothing more
than this mere churning of time,
filling of spaces,
like work did, like hunting did,
or cutting up logs in your back yard.
I could have thrown words out there...
indigo, angel, svelte,
and you would have swatted them
like buzzing flies.
So I didn't explain the delicacies
of reed rubbing against cheek,
eyes going back to the blue sky well,
how if I get low and slow enough,
the earth turns without me,
is like a shuttle I can hop back on any time.
The Polish woman was filling you in on
the ordinary details of her life,
like chatter was the fuel that motivated the world.
To me, life was whatever senses
drew from sudden evidence.
To you, it was something called Cracow
twenty years to the day.

—JOHN GREY, JOHNSTON, RI

What They Left

broken dishes mainly,
as if the old house
was the site of some
Greek wedding,

and a beat-up kitchen
chair, seat removed
like it was the only
part worth taking.

newspapers,
the Monroe County Appeal,
scattered about from
the Missouri wind

through glassless windows.
one white sock, one black,
their mates hitching
rides with their owners,

and a woman's left shoe,
flat heel to negotiate
the cracked floor. a toy
truck with three wheels.

Volume One of a set
of encyclopedias bought
from Hy-Vee Foods,
and a 1982 calendar

dates circled with doctor
written. Along a far wall,
dash lines with heights and dates
penciled in and close-by

a shoe-box of crayons
with a drawing on the lid:
stickfigures of a man, woman
and child all holding hands.

—RICHARD LUFTIG, POMONA, CA

After Pissarro

He entered a room
for a view of the oldest
standing bridge in Paris.
Pont Neuf,
a strength of architecture
stands without houses.
Here the bouquinistes
tried selling books, pamphlets,
before being driven away
to the banks of the Seine.
His early canvas
for a new, tragic century,
a glimpse of people,
those anonymous shadows
with hushed umbrellas
on a snowy day,
observed through rented panes.

—BYRON BEYNON, SWANSEA, WALES

One Hundred Percent

You are more than a statistic.
You are blood and bone.
You are purpose and spear.
You are part of a symbiotic whole –
an organism
that moves together,
grows together,
strives together
and thrives together.

You are a person,
not a ruffled piece of paper.
There is no refuting
your truth,
your beauty,
your authentic walk to grace.
You are here
because we are all here –
reaching for
a book on the shelf,
a roast chicken on the table,
the prescription for an ailing heart.

You are part of the 100 percent.
We are not divided.

—CRISTINA M. R. NORCROSS,
OCONOMOWOC, WI

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Checklist

When you've smoked several hundred thousand
cigarettes and
have wizened down to ninety pounds, when
you've become permanently oxygen starved and
close your eyes and
see the cosmos and God or no God smiling over
a thousand shades of green,
at this time, ask for your list— sneakers, to head
for the hills; razor,
comb, and nail clippers, to enter eternity well
groomed; toothbrush, though you've let most of
your teeth rot out,
still, there will be so many friends and relatives to
kiss hello;
alarm clock, as to not miss these last few sunrises,
which are suddenly become beautiful.

—TIM McLAFFERTY, BELLEROSE, NY

The Sketch

My father once sketched
my mother recovering in bed
from a miscarriage,
the hurt he never revealed
but exorcized in their room,
corners of silence
as she slept unaware;
a hard pencil
working the shadow of moist grief
from his mind,
his hand moving across the page
to capture the crystalline mirror of the moment,
losing himself on the paper's cheekbones
in rhythm with senses which gazed
for so long
as the rain-swept afternoon
continued without respite,
a wasteland of hope
under a patchwork
which neither memory nor heart could erase.

—BYRON BEYNON, SWANSEA, WALES

Like is Because

"Like is because, while "love" is although.
Where bike neighbors share trails, soda, spare tires,
Seemingly haphazard child rearing gets smoothed over by
Casual telegraphs, frenetic barking to the next generation.

Folks who wear pants can ill-afford missed honor
Even upon sighting mummified squirrel bodies or laundry.
Better to jump in piles of leaves than to ask permission; outside
Newly constructed supermarkets, "fine" ladies' cars gets dinged.

Researching building materials used to mean tree houses, forts,
Snow palaces. Today, flipping blue prints, stalking viridian wonders,
Brings, usually, some sighing among acanthus-like herbs, hyssop,
Also the specter of studies. Algebra gets put together one way or another.

Given adolescents' butanol scale, I've embraced the molecular level
Of social magnetism veracities, especially types found with pimples and braces.
Grand striding, not superficial longings is called for when you're fourteen.
Aqua-colored stuffed animals remain optional.

—DR. K. J. (HANNAH) GREENBERG, JERUSALEM, ISRAEL

The Viewing

When I heard the local news guy
announce on the radio
the body of the slain city councilman
would be laid out for the viewing

in the city's Fine Arts Museum,
I couldn't help but think
it was a pretty odd choice, even if
the ceremony required an adequate space.

I've always found the practice
of viewing a dead body
disturbing, ghoulish,
not that I've ever attended one.

"How life-like Philip looks!"
"What a beautiful job
the mortician has done!"
"I don't remember that wart on his lip."

How like a reclining figure by Henry Moore!
But so realistic! Like a figure from
Michelangelo's *Tomb of Giuliano de' Medici*.
How does it compare with Rodin's *The Kiss*?

How about *The Venus de Milo*
or a bust of Caesar Augustus?
And will the museum shop
be open for the event?

—CHARLES RAMELKAMP, BALTIMORE, MD

Angela Wheaton Attends a Wedding

I'm always nervous as a mother
in the emergency room with a sick kid
when Daniel takes my car
to make one of his deals.
Last time he wrecked the fender
at Wanamaker and Vine
hurrying to meet somebody.
Of course, "it wasn't his fault."

I wish I hadn't promised his mother
when we were kids out in California
I'd look out for him.
What hold does an aunt have
over her niece, anyway?
It's hard enough trying to make it
as a freelance journalist
without having to wipe up after him, too.

But here we are at Margie's wedding
and Daniel just has to buy or sell
something—I don't want to know what—
because he has these Jersey City connections.

When he comes back,
I don't bother to ask if my car's okay.
Instead I go along with the line
he's been watching the playoff game.

"Who's ahead?" the bald guy
at our table asks.

"Eagles, twenty to seven,"
Daniel shoots back.

"What inning is it?"
I ask, acting the dumb blond
just in case he made the numbers up.

—CHARLES RAMMELKAMP, BALTIMORE, MD

No Option

"White or wheat?" she asked.
"White," I said choosing
The bread of my childhood
Thinking how many other
Things I would choose
From my childhood if
I could.

—BYRON HOOT, WEXFORD, PA

Ice Maiden

"Married the job," but at what cost (Mum talk),
way back? Dad's two pints proud: "Inspector in
the Force, retired with cataracts, own house."
Like rusty headlamps on her goggled Sprite,
tight-lipped, not able to relax, knick-knacks
at risk, those frog eyes follow me around.
Thick lenses wither, halos of white light,
garaged, widescreen, gimlet-gaze magnified.

That photograph of her, at home amidst
a band of men, dress uniform, hair in
a bun; one bloke has pinned her medal on,
stout-chap handshake, "Hold it!" smile like the sun.
I ask in vain. No one can tell me what
she's done: "Dark deeds," nod and a wink, "Hush-hush."

—PETER BRANSON, STOKE-ON-TRENT, UNITED KINGDOM

Almost Sisters

Bea's "signature dish" was macaroni and cheese,
Heavy on the macaroni, light on the cheese
Served with raspberry Jello, watery on the top, gritty on the bottom.
Made especially for Edna, who years ago, on first having it,
Was polite and said it was her favorite meal.

Bea was a clubwoman, played Bridge during the week.
Searched the society page of the Sunday paper,
Hoping to find her picture.
Edna, a farm wife, tended a big garden, raised chickens,
And served up chicken and dumplings, spiced peaches and applesauce cake.
Neither of the women had a sister.

Married to brothers, they visited every two weeks.
The men went off to smoke and talk,
To fiddle around with cars or anything that needed fixing.
The women had tea while their children squabbled,
Edna's older girls bored with Nancy's doll collection,
Ten-year-old George teasing Edna's youngest until she cried.

Not much to talk about.
Edna had no interest in fashion. Bea had never grown a flower.
Yet, Edna named a daughter Beatrice,
And Bea, always trying to please,
Continued to make her special macaroni dish, which was,
After all. Much better than her meatloaf.

—ESTER PRUDLO, FITCHBURG, WI

A Derelict's Response

Jalapeño music never drifts
It skips and beats and thumps and jumps
And you're gonna have to tie me down
'cause ya know I like dancin'
And ya know I remember shirts off
In the rain
Boppin' in the fountain
Drinkin' them cold dark beers and howlin'
At ya all under the canopy
Some of ya's laughin'
And some of ya's lookin' real mean
And some ya's tryin to look away
And some of ya's wonderin' what it's like
To be dancing shirts off in the rain –
It feels good

—ROB HARRINGTON, MILWAUKEE, WI

Earshot

In a lucid moment between vodka straight up with a splash of tonic, squeeze of lime, he tells me about a hip hop group he thinks are just about the finest thing since sliced bread. I listen and then he tells me about his trip to Mexico with his girlfriend, how his wife doesn't have an inkling and he feels kind of guilty, but after all it's only a weekend and then I tell him about a band I think is the best thing since sliced wheat bread and he sort of listens, glancing at me, at the two young women in shiny halter tops behind me. I say something nonsensical like bubbly water on ice with a dash of bitters and he says yea I know that band, I'm a fan. It goes on like this for another five or ten minutes and then I tell him my mother is calling and he says yea I know that band. I go back to my 6th row seat as he careens off the wall and drops with a dull thud.

—MARC SWAN, PORTLAND, ME

Sometimes it feels like I'm living on coffee and wine then I spend an evening at a rural venue with a solid fiddle player, bass, guitar—the singer playing the hits from the listeners' history. This is Maine and the rain is coming down hard, the amp is turned up and blue light alternates with red on a small stage's amplified sound with wine and beer on every table, audience getting up and swing dancing, sharing iPhone photos, laughing at what the singer says, laughing with one another between songs. It's a joyful time in the land of moose and barns and singers who came out of far corners of this very large state and carved a pathway from those lonely coffee house one nighters to a time of amplified sound, blue and red lights and that feeling of love shared by an audience that by-God really cares.

—MARC SWAN, PORTLAND, ME

Fishing With My Dad

I was going to call this poem
“Fishing With My Father,”
but that sort of formality
isn't appropriate to the situation.
We're just not the kind to use words
like “father” or “son.” In fact,
when it's the two of us out fishing
we seem to have little use for words at all,
waiting as we are for the answers
to questions strung with plastic worms,
rubber-legged jigs and pork rind trailers.
I suppose there are lots of things
I could ask my dad at times like these
but, for whatever reason,
the relative silence feels sufficient.
And maybe that's a cop-out.
Maybe I should take advantage of these opportunities,
as few and far between as they've become,
to drop a line down into his murky depths
and I see what I can't pull out of him.
But I don't, and I'm okay with that
because it's enough to know we're both listening
for the spaces in between the words
and that they speak to us as eloquently
as the sound of water
lapping gently against the hull.

—MICHAEL HILL, AUSTIN, TX

Something Happened

In Memoriam: James Hazard, 1936-2012

Something happened, that was your phrase—
a moment opened like a fig, and kept
you in its spell while your classroom
waited, finally leaving
early while the day is younger,
a dusty box of poets
not sure how to be fully alive.
They're saying it now,
all over the place, but it's
hard to believe that something happened
to you, that you have felt
the heel of the shoe,
the seed press,
the dream cried out.

For you it could never be over.
There must still be
time for you to go home, put
Charles Ives on the stereo, have
a martini, make love with your wife;
time for the ringing phone, for
the two brass bands,
for one of your children;
for your hand on the cradle,
for a compass of light.

Maybe the world produces
fewer wonders when one of its lovers
leaves for good. Maybe the wave
has less of a curl, or the sunset
loses the pink but keeps the rust.

Maybe, when children laugh
it's a fraction of a second
shorter because everyone else tries to
make something happen, and we
miss the whole, long, ridiculous and delightful phrase.

—DANIEL BACHHUBER, ST. PAUL, MN

Cousin Vinnie

He loved a fight almost more
Than a touse with his Saigon girlfriend:
like when he was on leave stateside,
and saw you picked on by a kid
old enough to be drafted,
who'd terrorized the neighborhood
like Jack Palance in *Shane*.

Sal was poking his index finger
into your chest, laughing,
daring you to do something,
when Vinnie grabbed him
by his collar—the guy's smoke,
tucked behind his ear like something
out of *West Side Story*, flying away
like a spent arrow—Vinnie pounding him
with a left-right, left-right
that landed like a pistol whipping.

The cops had to drag Vinnie off the guy,
but let him walk away with you,
after shaking his hand, for his uniform
and they knew that one day Sal
would walk with a priest by his side:

It was not so much—Vinnie confided
years later—to protect his adoring
younger cousin, but more the pleasure
of beating on someone: his wife leaving
after he'd brought her home to the States.

—ROBERT COOPERMAN, DENVER, CO

Good Honest Dirt

My father taught me never to be afraid
of a North Dakota farmer's heavy paw,
a shy-downed Amish kid's grimy neck,
an apprentice plumber's P-trap hand.
They may wipe their palms down the side
of their pants and give you the option of
declining, but don't, my father showed me.
They do for us what we do not do
for us and the least we can do for them
is to give the courtesy of an honest hand.
One on one. Fingers touching, rough to smooth,
tooled and not. Split nail, cracked thumb, two joints
missing; their calluses hot against our paper whites.
Loam, chaff, or the grey of that pipe, whatever they
offer, don't back down, They don't.

—YVETTE VIETS FLATEN, EAU CLAIRE, WI

Soft Spot

For the woman with sleek knees,
The man with muscled forearms,
The favored child, the Benjamin,
Billie Holliday, Gary Cooper, Casablanca,
The lakeside cottage, Tolstoy, Tosca,
Golden Retrievers, Appaloosas, grilled cheese,
Chocolate milk, old quilts, peonies,
Autumn leaves, pocket watches, honeybees,
Garrison Keillor, Grey's Elegy, Chopin,
The planet Venus, Virginia Woolf, pearls,
Walk-in closets, Monopoly, little sisters,
Porch swings, open windows, new moons,
Charlie Chaplin, *Grapes of Wrath*, lonely roads,
Hummingbirds, birch trees, first day of school,
Mayan temples, Hershey bars, pinot noir,
Apricots, Isadora Duncan, well-worn jeans,
Flannel pajamas, good sex, luggage with wheels,
First class, first frost, first love,
Crossword puzzles, making lists
Like this, a delicate chasm, the
Fontanel of preferences
That gradually closes, hardens.

—JOAN COLBY, ELGIN, IL

Sunday, My Father

Making a peace sign behind my mother's head, in his white shirt,
he hands her a birthday card that says "For My Darling Wife,"

watches as I chop broccoli, carrots, "Oh, so you want to do that
for the rest of your life. What's wrong with patting a hamburger?"

He squints at my arrangement — a blue bowl with marigolds.

The gray day feels happy as he heads for "church," posing
in his navy suit, tucking a hand in the breast of his jacket,
being Dean Martin.

His umbrella is so broken it will make him look humble.

He tap-dances a few stairs, shoots out in the downpour
to his gold Pontiac, that will boat him four streets over

to Campbell's Tavern, where Mike and Gene
wait to furrow the day with beer and chasers.

Sometimes he weaves back home on foot.

When our roast chicken is long out of the oven,
our pie just done, my father's heavy steps
sparkle on our skin. At the back door he calls me — "Apple,
I fell. I'm bloody. Come clean me up."

—NANCY TAKACS, WELLINGTON, UT

Vacation from Myself

My house burns down.
No casualties but
habit and grandma's
iridescent plates,
their rainbows
a puddle of eels.
Sea-foam motel
room these days.
Weekly rates
and raisin pie
at Sam's Café.
Taking smaller bites.
Taking my sweet
time deciding
whether to rebuild.
Wary of a second
marriage to the world.

—MICHAEL KRIESEL, ANIWA, WI

Making Tomorrow

My bed and pants are soaked.
I am groggy, the bathroom's dark.
I search for deep water.
Both bathroom and kitchen
need remodeling, but the loan officer
will not return my calls.
She has no respect for me
as an artist.
In the absence of light
I try to find my voice
but keep biting the edge of my tongue;
nick, nick, nick.
There may be no more excitement ever.
I've spoken face-to-face to Bob Dylan
and there simply isn't any place to go from there,
so I am sick instead.
I've actually been ill for two years
but avoid the confession of it,
'cause I can make tomorrow anything.

—MIKE LANE, DELAFIELD, WI

Hurt

Skiping rope at seven, I hurt my knee.
No one took me to the doctor.
Instead, I was told to walk with a crutch.
I thought goblins were trying to crawl
in my windows. I feared my dreams
each night of swirling trees, threw up
the pizza they kept giving me.
I had my knee wrapped for weeks,
my grandmother rubbing it
with her coriander poultice.

I sat in the backyard with my leg up
acting as the teacher my friends
said I could be. We practiced
writing, picking words up around us
like “garage,” “sparrow,” “tulip.” We were
careful with the empty spaces in a’s and o’s.

Back then writing was penmanship,
and we were in love with letters
as if they were tears, and we were
the ones who had cried them,
believing each word should be slanted
like a ship trying to cross the Atlantic.
Then we threaded our pages
through the peach tree.

Meanwhile my knee was rebuilding
its cartilage, and all I could feel
was the poultice working,
my house of relatives going to work,
coming home to check on me,
my grandmother always there,
sweeping the porch or throwing
bread for the birds. My own summer
opening like poetry and fireworks,
when the world seemed like
it could always heal itself.

—NANCY TAKACS, WELLINGTON, UT

Yellow Sand

we load up our post-apocalyptic fortunes
of flower bulbs and bright-colored beads
take to the road. tilted blue street signs
of dead civilizations mark the path
streets built wide enough for ox-carts
crumble under our feet.

sunlight glints through the hollowed-out eyes
of battered skyscrapers that loom like mausoleums
for headless mannequins wearing scant threads of fashions
forgotten long before the end of the world.

—HOLLY DAY, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Bamboo

Bamboo has an eerie sound
late at night when the wind
knocks stalks together

I still remember the way I latched on
to the rustle and echo, grasping
something outside those moments when
his body pressed mine—
even the pillow he shoved over my face could not stifle
the steady drumbeat of hollow shoots
colliding together outside his window

Decades later I remember the way I woke
the morning after, grabbed
my Swiss Army knife,
carved a flute

—SARAH HAYES, ST. PAUL, MN
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Catholic High

I don’t know why our wet cement
was fragrant with rainbow puddles
riddled with cigarettes. Or why
the sure way we breathed silence
at Holy Family’s retreat always
translated into excursion.

I don’t know why the sound
of a foghorn still reminds me
of Roy leaving Kathy drunk
in the 5th street gutter all night
in the rain, and how my best
friend then, knew. I don’t
know why the nights seemed
to lead somewhere beyond
greasy pizza parlors and phone
booths, cherry bombs over
bulkhead, cold back seats.

I don’t know why Tony
caught me in the dark to force
a kiss near the rectory garden
after Stations of the Cross.

I shoved an elbow in his ribs.

I recall the scent of win.

I don’t know why for a field trip
our English class was bussed
to the Mystic Seaport, where
we learned how witches
got burned, or why we were
surprised that some were men.

We were all confused on how
a wicked town council decided
who was guilty. I don’t know why
we were reading the devoted-wife poems
of Anne Bradstreet. It seems like we were
also reading *The Scarlet Letter*.

—NANCY TAKACS, WELLINGTON, UT

Professor Stein Reports to Lord Palm Storm

Herpember Sixteenth

Dear Lord Palm Storm, Our Kind Heir in Fur,

The cock interrupts the hen air. Broccoli brothels inundate mouths. Deer prick bean signs.
Gulls eye detours. Declines in hopscotch, urn bombers.

If a chicken,
say it aloud:
It belongs to him. It belongs to him.
The Hen.

I'm morgue and shoe. Toss war. Mind your deer mittens! And sprinkle some muck tea.

Spleenfully yours,

Professor Stein

—LISA GROVE, LOS ANGELES, CA
visit VW Online for audio by this author

Missing x,v,c

When Ann's omputer keyboard
ga e up three letters,
the usual le el of e llen e
gave rise to omple theories.

Rather like Helen of Troy,
who apparently, ne er
was in Troy, but in
Ale andria.

But now things are fixed:
the computer, gives
a new level of
complex excellence—
after *on a e* caved in,
and convex filled in its *on e*.

If you have to lose three letters,
v is definitely hard to part with—
no love, but then again, no violence;
violet would reduce to purple, etc.

and without *c?* et etera for you,
and so forth rendered
to apple rumble.

As for the X,
theatre would need to invent
a new term for *Deus e machina*—
and we'd be stuck
like Trojans
with no exit.

—KITTY JOSPÉ, ROCHESTER, NY
visit VW Online for audio by this author

Welcome Under, Under

Cough air held warm in the Polish Sigh Bureau.
Get harnessed. The air sighs under.

I

Welcome words buzz another war,
welcome under over-hopped,
under boring tag, under jar.

We will gild air—
hats, hares under zeppelins.
Welcome words buzz another war.

A man falls in warm flecks,
arrested for fur and murder under
the borrowed sky. Heck,

we cough air with dirt.
Welcome under, under.

II

“Hold hens on stilts! Lick them!
Untick all nicked existence! Imagine sin—

only a burger lickers' convention.”
Hares cough bigger feathers:
“Die, berserk bee herders!”

Welcome words buzz another war.
Dare and be better off? Nay, Chief, nay, I cough nay.

—LISA GROVE, LOS ANGELES, CA

Hello, Hacker

Do you come here often?
you skive through
the edit distance
flipping out words I'm not
convinced I used:
love and lust got lost forthwith
dove and dust went dovetailed,
distanced, moving more to mire
and mist. But that rope won't swing:
you swirl, you swingle
trailing your scythe
skiting of schoolyard swives
swell from the dreaded ether
pixelated again
sweet as

—MARY CRESSWELL, PARAPARAUMU, KAPITI,
NEW ZEALAND

Visiting Marie

The smell penetrated.
Even the flies banged against the windows.
But it was nothing.
She was just making cabbage
'boiling it with old socks', I thought to myself.
Everywhere I looked,
Jesus was watching me
with concerned eyes.
She rolled to her bed and sat down
with no help.
Her eye was black.
She fell again.
She said, "They don't care if I fall."
She always gets up.
She knows no other way.
I had so many questions
but I never asked.
Everything was loud:
our voices,
the bubbling water,
the tv set,
the wind against the glass,
the flies against the window
the questions in my head.
I'd heard the stories.
She was kidnapped by gypsies.
She was in a labor camp in World War 2.
When the war was over she met her oldest child
Raised by someone else.
"They nurses gave me bad medicine Lisa" Marie declared.
"They want me to die."
She was still sick from the error.
The books were all bibles
The newspapers were Ukrainian.
The pictures were family.
My wife kept smiling, as her grandmother talked about
newer immigrants.
"No-one helped us when we came to the country," she said.
The backs of my leg began to sweat.
My hands lay still, on my thighs.
I could taste bile in my mouth.
Jesus wouldn't let me off the hook.
Marie was happy,
But she never smiled.
She was cooking
and
time was passing.
And in that moment
no-one
was trying to kill her.

—ROB HARRINGTON, MILWAUKEE, WI

Sunset

we watch the bombs bloom through the windows
pass the potatoes, turkey, corn
say grace over tightly-clenched hands

here is our peace.

through the windows, the sky grows dark, then red
we turn up the gas on the propane lamps
clear the dinner table, light a fire

spread blankets over the children, falling asleep.

the sky grows dark, then red, then black
the window glass glistens against the heat
I lie next to my husband, put my head on his chest

close my eyes and make one last little wish.

—HOLLY DAY, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Dinner

When Jesus came to dinner
He was perfect. He complimented me
on my silverware pattern
although He didn't seem to notice
I'd put the good china out.

Later, over coffee and cake
He'd admitted that He hadn't been following
politics too much
had been absorbed in tracking weather patterns
bird migrations
global things.

"If it's on television, I probably
haven't seen it," He explained.

—HOLLY DAY, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

The Surf

The shrug of
The gods shoulder
Seemed to heave against the
Shore, unremitting to
protean innocence
Haloed by the green
Sickly wet leaves of
Sea crisp weeds,
The mollusk heaved
And collapsed with the tide
In rhythm to worlds turning.
We walked out among the rocks
Surf surging
And it's a damned shame
You said
A damned shame to have to die.
I thought it strange
and could not muster more than
A comment on the weather for the
Torrent I knew was deeper
And ready to flow
The rocks were warm and
damp.

—APRIL NERISON, VIROQUA, WI

Beach Construction with Lighthouse

An abstract, after-the-storm
arrangement: clusters of
weathered wood, tree limbs and
random debris.
Dead center, a bare pole,
almost as solid as the real
one in the lighthouse
courtyard.

—ALAN CATLIN, SCHENECTADY, NY

Newtown Square

My wife does not believe
in Newtown Square,
we drive through it on
a wide highway due west
but it does not impress her.
At the exact moment
I exclaim, "We're here,
we're right in the middle
of Newtown Square!"
She scoffs observing
there is nothing here,
she looks left and right
and through as if it's all
prairie and desolation.
Weeks go by of driving
through Newtown Square
on various errands,
I scheme and scheme again
to make my point but
she is adamant.
Until one afternoon
I swerve down a side street
to point at the post office,
the town hall, the fire station
which all say in some way
"Newtown Square."
"It's a nice little town" she states,
so we stop at the Fishbone Grille
to take a real bite out of the town.

—RAY GREENBLATT, CHARLESTOWN, MD

Boyhood Lust # 37

David Aasen showed me the centerfold
Naked, a woman looked up from the page, longingly
Saying, "let me show you something."
Dave chewed his nails, "I climbed a tree to get
that."
I handed it back to him, "Why
Wouldja do that?"
I was so pretentious.

—THE SKRAUSS, MILWAUKEE, WI

Vote Fire.

The painting is taut and raging
On the antiseptic wall in
This photograph
Clipped from a magazine and pasted
Into the margin of this notebook that I rescued
From that estate-sale dumpster
Out of that box of moldy *Horizons* and
National Geographics.
I can smell the decades on it.
The painting can't wait to burn the world down.

—THE SKRAUSS, MILWAUKEE, WI

(e)the(real)

1.

on deck being
whitewashed
on winter's
side;
streaked on
spring's
thorny approach.
he was not so
fit as to
say "hello,"
yet he let
the flock go.

—GUY BEINING, GREAT
BARRINGTON, MA

(e)the(real)

4.

coatings on
a caption,
on a night
of fighting
with loose
ends, looking
at a trampled
morning diagrammed
on the blackboard.
a statement
was set within
harsh brackets,
now jarred
beyond the point
of speaking while
wheels for eyes
traveled far off.

—GUY BEINING, GREAT
BARRINGTON, MA

Denial Drone Chronicles

A rooster crows
disturbing
Miss America's
decades long siesta slumber nap
America the Beautiful

glutgrabs a fistful of Red White & Blue pills
slams em dwn wid a 40 rolls over
& crushes the babe
send in the drones a patriot
drones shoots the rooster

Is it always this foggy here?
DR i have these urges
have these urges
Here smoke urges flye
have a pill smoke a pill a caterpillar a butter drones
ryde drones

No (*just sayin*)
really have a pill it's OK
trust me I have a white coat & my
opic is cool watch the assistants
pretty TV have
variate the psychotropic variable colorful PJ's

Guilty your Honorness! With the proviso that my sentence be stoning!

this is your brain on denial
ditorted Duuude maaaaaan Do you feel
i believe i'd like a cocktail a
shaken & stirred molotov buzzing
with a twist of fear & sound?
a sprig of loathing

Candyland® is a fun game
Sippy cups & cellphones send in the drones
drones
credit cards & cash carry trade traitors
PurchaseTradeSellDebt =PTSD =
IOU =
Let's play Cram Down
(*We can cram this one
all the way to China*)

Yessir! IED
Helluva deal on debt today! methmatics
Step right up!

naked (What a wonderful
credit suit Mr. NEWMATHSPEAK:
default Emperor Sir!) $\frac{2+2}{4}$ [TAINT
swap
Duuuuude maaaaaan check out that
BUBBLE >sum X itz 3
somytmz it b 5<

What's that smell?

please sir may i have some more coolade

unusually uncertain future of lexicon market rape liquidity

a village was eaten by quantitative easing shat out & spun off
freddie may mac my fanny i gots da bottom boy bailout blues

EVERYthing's fine kids)pinky swear(
it's just a synthetic derivative sheeple shearing machine
lipstick it needs lipstick

The possibility of recriticality is....

LOOK! A coliseum—burning like a house of cards aflame in a stiff wind!

htam this is your brain on denial

Please speak with a Care Representative about our new line of exploding debtvests

your purchase will require a contract you fucking liar

spoons spoons we need more spoons

Monopoly® is a fun game

Don't be silly, we're not killing anyone, this is merely kinetic military action

WE the People don't kill people—Drones do

(Besides, they're poor, brown, ugly, oily and VERY, VERY SCARY!)

Nary a shepherd,
mother,

Jesus loves war or CHILD dies
this i know in OUR interest\$ never ever
for the TV this is your brain never
tells me so on denial

Duuude maaaaaan
this is just like
the video game

send in the drones
drones don't bother
they're here
a cat bit a dog they're right
for no apparent reason here
a missile skims the surface of the sea HERE
for no apparent reason HEAR
a cat bit a dog

Play Ball! Play War! Play War Ball! Ball War! War Porn! War Torn!

torn
ecaep fo yrevals cht morf raw eerf torment
bloody cock up torture
terrorize
specify isticism terrorist terrorism

Big Brother can
& knows it when He sees it

He never looks in a mirror
but rather relies on rulings of robed jesters of court
to testify to the efficacy of his beauty

*Gory Gory Halleluiah!!!
We will freakin put it to ya!!!*

Risk® is a fun game

—JUSTIN ROGERS

incubus (agony)

31

the egg of spring
was not aglow
being out of step
with cheeks full
of cavities.
weather can be
like rustlers
on the prairie.
a lark
skies up over
a poet's brow
there is no
wink in what
is noted, nearing
stuttering sounds
by snow plow.
the landscape
has slipped
under the mat
in the tiresome
caprice of spring.

—GUY R. BEINING,
GREAT BARRINGTON, MA

incubus (alert)

unhatched in
disabling moon shot
over moor,
eying the frighten-
ing white egg.
dark water be-
comes the alarm.
the years like
worn ropes
hang about one,
& on the isle
of one's verse
songs spring apart;
each knuckle
of a word
scraps the harrow
ing front.

—GUY R. BEINING,
GREAT BARRINGTON, MA

Atheist Blows Up Baby Jesus

Walking through sleepy Christmas-Eve Milwaukee,
go by house where no one's home but
Outdoor life-size inflatable Nativity Scene is illuminated,
Inflated Mary & Joseph, inflated Wise Men and inflated gifts,
inflated shepherds, farm animals and stable,
inflated angels with inflated wings and halos,
inflated Star of Bethlehem, inflated manger
but baby Jesus is deflated!
So I spoke to the deflated baby Jesus
I might be an atheist agnostic nature worshipper not a Christian
yet I would kneel and blow up and re-inflate you
and patch the leak or re-plug the air spigot
for doesn't baby Jesus say as much about love
without speaking
than all the words Christ said?
Kneeling down discovering spigot open
I gently blow air inside Jesus—
cold winter Wisconsin fresh air
inhaled into my lungs and exhaled into Jesus—
Hoping no neighbor calls police or shoots me!
I'm not a terrorist who explodes Nativity Scenes
but an atheist who blows up deflated Christ-child.
Now you look like a baby again, Jesus—
your eyes of wonder and wisdom gaze up at me.
Here, let me tuck you in, little one.
It's okay your mother and father and the rest
don't acknowledge me or thank me.
Even you remain silent looking up at me.
I understand, little one.
We're all looking down at you
with love.

—ANTLER, MILWAUKEE, WI

1962 Valiant Station Wagon

Aunt Lidie, you handled that thing
like Mr. Magoo and believe me when I say
that the patron saint of close calls was peeking
though her fingers when you made your famous
U-turn on the Falls Bridge at rush hour.

Who could bother with signals and brakes
when from the rear view, between maples lit
by fireflies and arched over the East River Drive
there were Morgan horses from Valley Green
keeping pace along a split rail fence

with the cartoon of your sensible car,
tank half full of City Service regular,
cruising in its cushion of good fortune,
decency and the pure dumb luck of a protected
pilot whale. Grey with fins, red inside.

—SARA CLANCY, TUCSON, AZ

Against Economy

I know my sin is profusion,
an offense against the polished
geometry that dictates elegance
at the expense of plenty,

though even I agree that blackberry
vines are a nuisance, an empty
beach and single orchid are always
beautiful, squalor rarely is.

But when your engineer's aesthetic
wants only the necessary and elevates
parsimony to some kind of moral
imperative, I will offer you

walls stacked with books,
40 years of top 100s,
the spice rack, the studio,
the wood-box and pantry,
guests in the spare room.

—SARA CLANCY, TUCSON, AZ

Snow-Angel Deathbed

Old men and old women in nursing homes dream
escaping alone late at night in winter
Wandering off dressed in warmest clothes
through sleeping snowy neighborhoods
Seeking snow-angels children made
to lie in to die in.
They lie down in snow-angels
gracefully, graciously, gratefully
As if they were the most comfortable
beds in the world.
They spread their arms and legs to feel
the shape of the angel's wings and robe.
They no longer know who they are,
or do they?
They look up at the winter stars
so silent.
Not a soul in sight, yet in a way
every soul that ever was is present.
Time seems to stand
still.
Their Mother greets them as children
with a hot cup of cocoa with marshmallows in it
As they come inside from outside
after making snow-angels in the new-fallen snow.

—ANTLER, MILWAUKEE, WI

Safety First

Poecile montanus: the Willow Tit
(Recent steep decline, now Red List)

They're drawn to feed, give sway to Blue Tit, Coal
and Great. Brown back, buff under-parts, black cap;
Willow or Marsh? No notion till you find
the nest, in bole so rotten woodpeckers
have upped and left. While clearing leaves you hear
the snarling chainsaw. Council's pruning dead
wood out, so flailing boughs don't injure folk.
Their homes demolished, birds have flown, perhaps
for good, but does this matter in the scheme
of things, when others neither know nor care?
It's now a country park, access for car
and wheelchair, orange gravel pathways, bins
habitually jam-packed with doggy doos,
by seats, where you can pause and contemplate.

—PETER BRANSON, STOKE-ON-TRENT, UNITED KINGDOM

Crossing

I see you in the crosswalk
with our daughter
limp on your shoulder,
whose bare foot is bobbing
in the surrender of sleep,
who grew tired
on your lunch date—
the smaller, wilder version
of you.

The two of you appear
and disappear,
your hand firm on her back,
as you wind toward me
along the crowded street.

We meet to make arrangements,
sign documents with a witness.
I can't look at this friendly man
who is attesting to our demise
pretending to ignore my wet face,
and our daughter, who,
having woken, is now a puppet
bouncing awkwardly
from one side of the desk
to the other.

We don't even shake hands at the end.

Later, on the swing set
in the late slant of light,
as we swing side by side,
she sings:

Mama and a baby
Mama and a baby
We're all shadow when the house blowed down
We're all shadow when the house blowed down

—HEATHER SWAN, MADISON, WI

All That Keeps Us From

Aware of all the ways
we separate ourselves:
the insulated mug,
the mittens,
the screen doors—
I was well-equipped;
I was safe and sound.

And then there you were
sitting on my couch.
You were crying,
saying, "Look how beautiful.
This light.
This sleeping child."

And still
I wouldn't
let anything through.

Still I was thinking:
rubber boots,
picnic blankets,
all that keeps us from —

But now, see?
So many years later,
I am putting
my hands
into the earth.
I have dirt
under my nails,
my hands sore
with digging.

—HEATHER SWAN, MADISON, WI

Survivance

We enter the wheat-colored limestone building
from the east, walk past a misplaced tobacco plant
and a man-made wetland to arrive here:

The National Museum of the American Indian.

A black man in the lobby is tapping
an acoustic drum-set;

we are told that we have missed the afternoon story-tellers
and there will be no Indians dancing today.

A security guard pokes the inside of my purse with a wand.
There are no Indians here.

We take an elevator upstairs,
to watch a thirteen-minute film,

A good intro to the history and culture of the American Indians

It is a fragment. Too many Indians.

Too little time. Completely lost,

we are guided by fake celestial references
to an exhibit, more like a swap-meet, a trade-show of sorts;
each tribe, allotted a small showcase:

In this booth we have the Seminole tribe of Florida,
here, lies the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, and in this corner
the Eastern Band of The Cherokee Nation.
Whose ceremonial clothing do you like best?

There are over 825,000 items here
from 1,200 indigenous cultures:
Arrowheads, blankets, beads and corn;
pottery, weaved baskets, photographs, thousands of archives.
Yet, this place is a motel, with too many vacancies.
I do not hear the whispers of lost languages.

This museum is not enough. But at least it's something
after starvation and small pox, lies and murder.
After false histories taught in school
a mid-western white woman can find some sad truths
in a massive glass display cage filled with guns
and bibles. The bibles are translated into numerous languages
some of the covers are made from animal hides
decorated with intricate beaded designs.

If I had been an Indian,
If I had been sent to praying camp
In my dreams would I still be Indian?
I would pray to the earth... remember me.

Even a rock has a soul

If I were an Indian today, what would I believe?
Would I be converted too?
Maybe just in time,
for the Anti-Christ is here to stay:

In a glass table, sits an oval-shaped, flattened rock;
there is twine wrapped in a web
around a piece of paper

and the handwritten,

*Rev 6:2 And I saw, and behold a white horse:
and he that sat on him had a bow;
and a crown was given unto him:
and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.*

—KRISTIN LAUREL, WACONIA, MN

Haywire

Any field is Adam's garden
where *keep-out* translates to welcome
in the mind of sheep.
It smells of mud and trespass,
morning air pale as wool caught in wire.
It tingles.
The solar charger blinks,
saluting a sun bright as brass washers.
Sheep are in the hayfield
again. Mother-ewes eye us from behind
their lashes; murmuring soft,
guttural lullabies to grass, the tang
of wild mustard. Lambs
cavorting like the young who already
have inherited the earth.
Why does our fence not work?
Mended with tie-wire
and baling twine, trips to the farmers'
co-op, telephone-calls (*your
sheep are out again*).
This morning, a fox dead
in the road, right on centerline
where he didn't belong.
Why must life always leap
out of bounds?

—TAYLOR GRAHAM, PLACERVILLE, CA

a farthing in the fountain

for you if a person with gold
rings and fine clothes

comes into your assembly?
have a seat here, please.

my terry—he 55 years would
be—subject, object, verb.

nine/nine/two thousand twelve.
seven/six/nineteen forty.

sit in walker—swallowing mike.
kitty, coloring kids.

podia, lecterns, facebook.
out of the black forest.

our stories rest in the silence
between the notes.

hetero may be—maybe—
obstructionist.

*pero—sino—la familia es
la familia.*

she looked in the mirror—
bustles & farthingales.

sauce robertand camel hoof.
a dry reuben with fries.

if i were a truck, i'd drive home
and tip myself 5 buckaroos.

is it because we are now afraid
that we carry cell phones?

worthy is the new rosebush at
olbrich—dubbed the fran.

the group consists of a bored
madman—malicious goat!

don we now our gay apparel —
born all shiny and sweet.

josette: *are you doing pipi caca?*
papa: *I am shaving my beard.*

neither a borrower nor a lender
be—c. marlowe.

—LEWIS BOSWORTH, MADISON, WI

Wish You Were Here

I would like to tell you
that we pass the time on the bus
discussing Tibetan sky funerals
and the one-child policy,
but the truth is we talk a lot
about what does or does not
come out of our butts.
On any given day,
most of us have diarrhea,
some are constipated, and one
(who must have bribed the Buddha)
feels fine.

We commiserate
about squatting over troughs
and porcelain holes in floors,
clutching the bottoms of doors
(when there are doors).
When I had heat stroke,
I didn't know if I should throw up
before or after squatting.
I don't wear a belt anymore
(takes too much time).
Not splashing is everything.

We are running out of toilet paper
and sanitizer,
pay to use facilities
you couldn't pay us to use back home,
and have developed an odd intimacy;
one guy admitted
to having the runs in his sleep!
(Panti-liners - not just for ladies anymore,
and how much do you tip the maid?).

We eat rice porridge for breakfast,
rice soup for lunch,
rice for dinner;
and a celestial burial
sounds like Heaven right now.
After the monk cuts me into pieces,
vultures will carry me skyward.
These vultures are gigantic
and not as ugly as ours.
I am impressed.

—JOAN WIESE JOHANNES,
PORT EDWARDS, WI

Sunset

Not by my wisdom:
the hawk's cry snags in the pines
as evening comes on.

—CAROLINE COLLINS, QUINCY, IL

The Museum of Natural History

This afternoon the sky is a wide river
so transparent
I can see its sandy bottom
where light reveals in great detail
the fossil of a primitive fish,
fins spread out to fly,
a bird's skeleton,
complete with teeth and shriveled wings,
and prehistoric lizards
with filigree scales.
Light washes
the thin bones, claws, and wrinkles,
and the fossils expand with every second,
and hang lower
so I can have a closer look.
The fish takes flight,
and the bird merges with the lizard,
and I wonder what sort of shapes
will float overhead
10,000 years from now?
Will there be mammoths,
monkeys, humans?
No answer.
It's so quiet,
I can almost hear the sound
of the archaeologist's brush.

—CLAUDIA SEREA, RUTHERFORD, NJ

The Cows

(with all due apologies to Edgar Allen Poe)

I.

Hear the lowing of the cows—
Guernsey cows!
What a deluge of dairy their bellowing avows!
How they chaw, chaw, chaw
In the early morning light
While the farmer fits the claw
To the teat cups that will draw
From their udders pure delight;
A steady suck, suck, suction
In persistent fluctuation,
Brings bovine delectation that voluminously flows
From the cows, cows, cows, cows
Cows, cows, cows,
From the milking and the suckling of the cows.

II.

Hear the snorting of the bulls—
Brahma bulls!
What a mix of mad emotions compel their stamping
hooves!
From one end of the field
To the other they won't yield,
They charge and fight
Like mindless goons,
To the delight
Of the crowds that chortle at the sight
Under the pale-faced moon!
Oh, from out those flaring nostrils
What a gushing chuff of austral
Temper swells!
How it smells
Of the bullring!—how it dwells
In the swirling capes and countless spectacles—
The running and the fighting
Of the bulls, bulls, bulls,
Of the bulls, bulls, bulls, bulls,
Bulls, bulls, bulls—
In the barter and the slaughter of the bulls.

III.

Hear the sizzling of the beef—
Packaged beef!
What would fast food be without this mystery meat?
In the hissing of the grill
How we marvel at the skill
Of teenaged cooks,
For every burger flipped
Is another perfect patty stripped
From some bovine.
And the patrons—ah, the patrons—
They without the grease-stained aprons,
Stand in line,
While the grilling, grilling, grilling,

Takes no time,
Nor does the art of filling
A jumbo cup with coke and lime—
They are neither man nor woman—
They are simply modern humans
Bought and sold:
And their king is a Burger with golden arches
And he sells, sells, sells
Sells—
The registers ring!
And his quarterly profits swell
Even fatter than the burgers
And the fries and onion rings!
And he dances and he yells
As he sells, sells, sells,
Even more, more, more—
See them queuing at the door?
Eating more, more, more
Jumbo Whoppers by the score!
Order more, more, more,
We need beef, sizzling beef,
From the cows, cows, cows, cows,
Cows, cows, cows—
From those overfed and quickly-dead poor cows!

—MIKE ORLOCK, STURGEON BAY, WI

A thought

People say,
“I think best in the shower.”
It can be nothing but best
if it is only.
Maybe people
don't take time
to think
removed from running water.
Maybe
people don't take time to think.

—DUSTIN RENWICK, MONMOUTH, IL
visit VW Online for audio by this author

The Other

The Barbara who is not me
loves cats, is wise, temperate,
slender, beautiful and young.
Mother of ten, homemaker
of the year and blue-ribbon cook,
she volunteers at the food pantry
and sings in the Baptist choir.
Her three calicoes and two Siamese
love their indolent life.
Sometimes as a favor they bring
to that other Barbara a dead mouse
or permit her to stroke their fur.

—BARB CRANFORD, HANCOCK, WI

Drinking Sour Milk at Aunt Pauline's

A thick, earthy odor from my uncle's cigars
lingered heavily in my Aunt Pauline's house
for years after his death, even after fresh paint
the wood still issued the heavy pungent scent.

My brother and I went to her house for Red
Skelton night on their new TV from her husband's
appliance store. My dad wouldn't allow one
in our home, they cut into his theater business.

Sometimes, when invited early for dinner
our mouths watered in anticipation,
she had Grandma's molasses cookie recipe
the brown moist meat soft to chew, the ginger

bit into my cheek, the hard vanilla frosting melted
on my tongue. Once she served a meal
with an ice cold glass of milk, the sweat
dripping down the side of the glass, a bit of froth

on top, but well past the expiration date sour,
making us gag. Taught to be polite and not wanting
to offend, we said nothing and drank the milk
hoping to score a sweet thick biscuit.

Outsmarting the fates, I drank my glass empty
the bitter liquid almost boiling back up,
exchanging knowing glances with my brother.
He smiled gleefully as she said,

*My, you finished that fast, you can have the rest
of the bottle. And she refilled my glass.*

—JAMES BETTENDORF, BROOKLYN PARK, MN

Maynard's Love

meant life jackets for his milk cow
during the flood
and howling like tire chains in the wind
when she died.

He sported neon lime coveralls
and one
slightly irregular eye
so farm kids made fun of him

but his capacity to care
awed the rest of us into believing
being human is still possible.

—SCOTT T. STARBUCK, FREELAND, WA
visit VW Online for audio by this author

When I got home from school

When I got home from school,
my mother was a tree,
a fallen maple
on the bathroom floor,
blood foliage blooming
between her knees.

—CLAUDIA SEREA, RUTHERFORD, NJ

Cancer, a Squirrel, My Niece in Love

"I never thought raising a teenage daughter
would be more difficult than cancer treatment."

The text was from my sister-in-law. Don't text
and drive. I looked up, tried to veer. The squirrel,
start-stopped in that comic book pose. He went
under the back right tire. I stopped with a steering-wheel,
two-palmed, "Dammit." His tail shook
like a surrender flag; the girl squirrel
sat behind the Oak tree, peeking out: mating season.

I got out, picked the squirrel up by his tail.
My mother's voice called, "Touching dead
animals will give you a disease." That made
me hold him to my heart harder, blood
on my shirt trying to reunite him with himself.
Cancer, squirrel, my niece in love.

He's not dirty; he's my mother's fear of the unknown.

Blaine, sixteen, my niece, her grades have dropped
in spite of being brilliant and talented. Like a squirrel
in heat, she's a growl and a puff around Spencer, her boyfriend.
Her mother knows that sound; that sound made her child.

Her father knows that sound. It's the same one that made
his child; Blaine had only purred until this point. They've
never heard the guttural longing of their daughter
who understands them now, except in the embers
of their coal fire brains and red hearts they've hung
loosely in the licorice closet on bended hangers.

We fear what we have survived.
Youth consumes a product all at once.

Lori's cancer is playing hide-and-seek in its infancy, being a
reclusive, entitled bitch, and I don't want it to find
puberty. I want it to die a comet flying into the sun,
so I can have her lecture me about tomatoes and soccer and
how hard her grandchildren are to worry about while holding
hands with her stoic husband who made it across the street.

—R. SCOTT YARBROUGH, PLANO, TX

Pandora

Swarmed, a flash to the heart, she wants
to grab it back, wants to fan out with the forms:
be winged. And understands why she'd been
warned. Nothing would ever fit again.
Straight scattered into zigzag and myriad –
a fluvial harmony she's only, in dreams.
Her mother's wishes, Father's protection,
even her hiking boots and down vest,
she'll have to beg for them now. Oh honey honey,
blending skin to dazzle. Fecundity a fragmented
architecture, her body filled with fluff and too much
laughter. Sky, earth, animal legs, ears,
total voice, how can she hear them all,
now she's dedicated to float and flow into
every interstice, all the wrinkles in the elephant's hide,
dedicated for the rest of her life to find, to find.

—GRACE MARIE GRAFTON, OAKLAND, CA
to Mary Frances Judge's painting "Pandora"

Musician and Mother

Forgetting the date, the musician
steps into the purple, hard-lined morning.
He longs for the yellow gate, wants to remember
the way his mother laughed at rain, and
their trip to the puddle land. Before the war.
His dreams, his timpani, crash into
the red uniform landscape, lightning that skews
all plans. White towers, clean towels,
running water in every garret. He imagines,
even feels, the garrote slip tighter
around his gullet. Mother didn't last long,
he blames the rain, her unstaunched love
for wet grass. The tip-tap tappeta continues
in his mind, all the steps they stepped together,
her violeta dress, the way she swung
her beaded bag to the campanile's chimes.
Percussion of the streetcar. The escape route
requires the ladder-climb his mind relies on,
absent angel ascending, her click-clack,
tip-tap shoes drip on his fontanelle as he
follows her into clouds.

—GRACE MARIE GRAFTON, OAKLAND, CA
to Paul Klee's painting *The Musician*

The Wet Motorcycle

1.

of the wives and of the son
are sane, are vest and savage.

of the movements, and repose
are riot, and Samaritan

2.

to follow kit and medal. laying by.
the eye, in evidence

is making prayer
is counting money

a giving thanks or self congratulation
a giving thanks or self congratulation

a person, a principle, who bind and loose
the parallel legs

the parallel arms
the body of straight lines

3.

the ways are few but roses
and there are caterpillars everywhere

and everything is real and everything is illusion,
my love.

4.

at fortune, or pasture, a summons
or

roster. a melody or loot
The stilted boot and recollection, charged, delayed

A landscape of one's own. A caper, in recruit.
And darling, openly.

—GREGORY VINCENT ST. THOMASINO, NEW YORK, NY

Vocabulary

“remote as the glittering trash of heaven”
—John Ashbery

In the bar room of adjectives sit the shaven languages inquiring solemnly about their barracks. Where to rest their syllables in safety and benevolence? Alas, they sip the poisonous cup, delude themselves into believing the spectacle of omniscience. License to practice *meaning*. Clearly they have failed to study history, or even everyday humanity’s blizzard of incomunicado. To learn *meaning’s* permeability. The story of leaves’ disintegration, assisted by microbial mouths and incessant weather, the jukebox of eternity. Nevertheless, they help us ruminate on possibility and potential, so long as we remain aware that their shoes get scuffed and their hair ascends into a place past communication’s comb.

—GRACE MARIE GRAFTON, OAKLAND, CA

Brise-Soleil

you shoulder something I made you louvers: they shiver
in moonlight, close to shorelines rebuilt and feathery each flap
of springtime stand for me now still in ice and rock
they pock and mark like barnacles quiet, sunbird wind and light
gone restive and waiting for years I kept putting things into you
baseballs, fallen hairs, pebbles caught and songs forgot them
swear I heard you say easy I’ve seen you salvage
a great shadow on shoreline quiet against you pocket
and hum what was it you say a tune and I knew it
could have sworn against your will, that I will wouldn’t
remember me mostly that you can rest here
shoulder, shoulder I’ve seen it anchor to my
pocket and hum

—JAY DESHPANDE, BROOKLYN, NY
visit VW Online for audio by this author

Brise-Soleil

light drifts through you happening constant as the fall
a frame for the takeoff alight, alight when landing
wasn’t happening not to you, to me false recovery
these my louvers lift let sun lake imagining
stretch out fall water waking when a lifting
presents itself wide in sun like a water light pales
to position falling off these the breakers
a condition of solace imagining lifts speak in shiver
wide water a presence enough wide sunshone drifting
collapse into nightstream you become a wind knowing
louver alight

—JAY DESHPANDE, BROOKLYN, NY
visit VW Online for audio by this author

if the night is long, remember your unimportance

Everyone gathers for the rehearsal.
He is forced to wonder what his part is,
anxious now about his dribbling verbosity,
his dedicated need to peacock.
Equanimity has not been his hazard.
He loves costume, buckles in too-obvious places,
elocution pinned like a badge to his cravat.
How his longings mock him, how the sunset
truncates his would-be’s. His best friends
won’t allay his fears of anonymity,
they too vie for the mermaid role,
no one wants to be the bramble. “Oh me,”
he thinks, “how can I bear to be the wraith,”
who never makes it past sunrise, who hasn’t
even a speaking role, cannot put a dent
in the action. How to make the best of it,
quell his fears: the loss of Mother’s esteem?
The wraith’s one strength is abundant time
to ruminate on self-improvement courses.

—GRACE MARIE GRAFTON, OAKLAND, CA
title from poem by W. S. Merwin

After a Photo from Minnesota

For Judi, who asks “Why are the canoeists facing each other?”

The lake’s weight is palpable as distrust, as two people
betrayed,
those who have given their love to each other,
and, now,
they stop paddling.

Mists spread—like the sun, that dying star, so much
is missing.
Another stiff shot of cognac, books
carried off,
or misplaced.

The far shore’s lonely stones hold their breath
like pure theater.
The two face each other—does he long for dry land,
its lack of complications?
Does she realize all it takes

to make a journey? A benign place to begin
from—someone to leave
behind?

—GAYLE ELEN HARVEY, UTICA, NY

It’s How The Moon Is Cupped By The Sky

Standing in The Anvil parking lot,
we are speaking of death
when I look up to see a heron
a silent silhouette of midnight blue
angling south-southeast against the cobalt evening sky

and I slip into the universe
as easily as my pelvis angles, slips
and locks into rightness
with yours

—TESS ROMEIS, CEDARBURG, WI

Bardo: Flight from Orlando to Milwaukee

Heads nestle like cobblestones
or eggs in a tray
vestmented threshold guardians
manage, hydrate the embryos
as they journey
from one state to the next

—TESS ROMEIS, CEDARBURG, WI

In Memoriam

*There will be a celebration of life and lunch.
Will be served for family and friends at noon.*

In me more I am
alive in you now,

in old tales endearing,
in good deeds enduring,
in humor out of sight,

a slice of life,
a dollop of death,
a doleful a la mode,

on a plate so clean,
with cherries still warm,
so cool through the crust
ice cream.

—DION KEMPTHORNE, RICHLAND CENTER, WI

turista

why are we here
dwelling in the romance
of an old slave plantation
a high brick gated wall behind us
shaded under the flowering magnolias
the handsome black-barked walnuts
the eccentric dangling drooping
branches of the tall pines
goldfinches scoot out of the heat-bent
haze-green hills on the opposite bank
the slow flow of the gray-blue James
turned twisted bent wrenched
to run back
towards Richmond

—ROBERT SCHULER, MENOMONIE, WI

49 Dead on a Mexican Highway

49 dead on a Mexican highway
Nameless victims in a brutal drug war
Mangled and mutilated, found in a by-way
A drug cartel trying to even the score.

Nameless victims in a brutal drug war
Fueled by America's thirst for euphoria
A drug cartel trying to even the score
Protecting turf in illegal pharmacopeia.

Fueled by America's thirst for euphoria
Can't tell if body parts are women or men
Protecting turf in illegal pharmacopeia
Drug gang massacre happens again.

Can't tell if body parts are women or men
49 dead on a Mexican highway
Drug gang massacre happens again
Mangled and mutilated, found on a by-way.

—HARLAN RICHARDS, STANLEY, WI

Going on a Trip

In a place where eyes are starved
For a view of humanity, the way
A shipwreck survivor wants to
See the shore,
It's considered a treat to get
Shackled up and bundled off in a
Van to see a judge or a doctor.
And I was the envy of the pod
When I had to make yet another
Trip to the shoe place, to
Fix up a special pair for me, the
Way a hot dog eater wishes he could
Afford the steak dinner at the
Next table over.
Yet it angers me, the chains,
Condescension, getting trussed up,
Forced into playing the game
That says I'm dangerous
When everyone knows I'm not.

—HARLAN RICHARDS, STANLEY, WI

Infinitude

Sometime between
late last night and early this
morning a hundred years ago

this afternoon the radio
grammarians declared
there's no need not
to split infinitives anymore.

The rule never had anything
but some Latin reason for it.

It was just the way it was

a rule for such a long time.
So consider it a good deal
not to have to keep certain

words or whatnot together
anymore, not to have always
to worry about whether it is

To be, or not to be, or
To be, or to not be, or
To see a difference, or
To care to care, or not.

—DION KEMPTHORNE, RICHLAND CENTER, WI

Do I Have To?

There's really no reason why
I should let myself be
Annoyed by standing up to be
Counted four times a day,
Except that I know it's only
Because the bullies in charge of
The prison system must have taken
A course in criminal justice
Where they learned that compelling
Us to submit with blind obedience
To inane commands makes us
More likely to obey every order
Instinctively, in a Pavlovian manner
That would have us salivating on cue
If only we were given something
Appetizing enough to make it all
Worthwhile.

—HARLAN RICHARDS, STANLEY, WI

Inside / Out

by Anne Farrer Scott

The cliché—go into prison and the door slams shut behind you. True enough, but once inside, the clichés and stereotypes go all wobbly.

I was part of a writing workshop at a medium security prison for men. We called ourselves the Inside/Out Writing Collective, and we met in the library of the Newton (Iowa) Correctional Facility.

I was there to help these guys put words on paper. I tried to give them the simple, basic, hard writing stuff. The big question was always what to put in and what to leave out. Following Anne LaMott, we wrote shitty first drafts, and certainly we agreed with her that “grim and horrible is Okay if it is done well.” We read Rilke: “There is only one single way. Go into yourself.” To borrow from Natalie Goldberg, we fought a lot of tofu.

We wrestled words to the bare, blank page. We tried, in the words of Eudora Welty, to make feeling felt and reality real. We wrote about the kitchens of our childhood (a pitcher of Kool-Aid in every fridge.) We wrote about what we believed as children (white folks don’t have to go to the bathroom). One of the guys described our process as blooms sprouting from soggy, rotten waste.

According to Richard Hugo, “A creative writing class may be one of the last places you can go where your life still matters.” For this moment, this hour, these guys were not statistics. We found that we were, after all, each of us, simply human and trying the best we knew how. We worked with what we had—the bits, the fragments, the shards of our lives. In this hard, gray, rough, harshly lit world, we wrote, we revised, we laughed, we cried, we mattered to one another. “Something birthed in me,” said one of our well-fought tofu.

We launched a literary journal, *Concrete Perspectives*, which the administration thought not necessary to edit. The irony was not lost—the correctional official not wanting corrections in our publication. We edited anyway.

They wanted poetry. I am not a poet.

What to do? The administration seemed to expect the worst of the guys. I hoped for the best. So I invited Iowa’s first Poet Laureate, Marvin Bell, to the Newton Correctional Facility.

This is the poet who wrote, “The world is full of broken wings...” and:

I am the big ears and the wide eyes
to whom time happened. I lived in stormy weather
writing songs of love because, tell me
if you know, who can help it?

This is a poet who wants to hear poems

After the fashion of scat singing, the blues, after the manner of symphonies.
And to each the form of its becoming as it becomes.
Ad-lib but knowingly, seat-of-the-pants with long cockpit experience.
Without the looking back of the classroom.
Without stopping short or running over.
Without prescriptions or diagnoses, with no compass, no north.
In the spirit of a circle.

Marvin Bell came to us.

“There is no one way, no right way to write,” he declared. “Give yourself permission to be a writer, to fall on your face. There is no good stuff

without the bad stuff.” Marvin chanted his poems. He pulled words from the air.

This was what they had longed for, but as one guy pointed out, “Poetry is not cool in the joint.”

“So write in paragraphs,” Marvin replied.

He called, and the guys responded.

“Art comes out of a life and where that life is lived,” Marvin said. “Poetry transcends borders and boundaries.” These guys knew boundaries—concrete and razor wire boundaries. They worried that no one “outside” would care about what they thought, felt, or wrote. They mourned the gap between themselves “inside” and the communities they had left.

Marvin helped bridge that gap. “He inspired and gave validation to prisoners who would have not gotten any recognition other than where we were, as opposed to who we were,” says one of the guys. Marvin let them know they had something to offer.

“A poem is dead if it won’t breathe or boogie,” Marvin told us.

An inmate who came into the Iowa Department of Corrections (what he terms “a warehouse for perishable goods”) as a fifteen-year-old with an eighth grade education realized that Marvin “was talking not just of writing, but of life, and not just any life, but my life. I realized that I hadn’t really breathed or boogied in a long time, but I boogied that day.”

Marvin came year after year. “Why wouldn’t I come back?” he says. “Each visit meant a conversation that touched on matters important to anyone. The men always wrote bravely from their hearts.”

One of Marvin’s workshops at NCF was broadcast on Iowa Public Radio—the poems, the voices of these men carried over the razor wire into the wider world.

Our writing together and Marvin’s visits came to an end. The librarian who had made a safe space for our work was laid off because of budget cuts. The rec department took over the library. We were done.

Looking back, I see that I was simply the warm up act for Marvin Bell. I miss him and the guys terribly. But I learned my lesson well. Because of these guys, I know it is possible to shift one’s shape and negative capability is no bad place to be. On their pages, grace became visible.

As one of this group, now on the “outside,” says of his work with Marvin Bell, “As much as it meant then, it means even more now.”

Editors’ note: The poems on the next three pages were written for a poetry workshop with Marvin Bell at the Newton Correctional Facility.

The **Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets**, one of the oldest American poetry societies, sponsors local poetry events, semi-annual conferences, contests, and a yearly anthology.

WFOP offers Wisconsin poets opportunities for fellowship and growth.



See **wfop.org** for further information.

Dirt Angel

Blade of grass
 Draws tobacco blood
Dripping from chap-leather chin

Weathered skin

Bullet-hole clouds
 Bring tears of Lazarus
To tread-dimpled soil

Tender soil

Dirt angel halo
 Illuminating grace
Fills man with mirth

Invigorated earth

...and one less family goes hungry.

—JASON DARRAH

Monster

Silver wax illumines
Your greedy fingers
as you pull me stillborn
from an earthen womb.

And pain betrays the
promise of hope
with words that fall
harder than any blow

(The veil tears and a voice is heard)

Daddy?

Dad?

Father

Life is triumphantly declared and I
manifest
in the illusion of a broken mirror.

Tattooed.

Pierced.

Buffed.

—JASON DARRAH

I'm the concrete dream of
an American nightmare.

A shriveled muscle pushes
crimson stuff through my veins,
but can this be called life;
this amalgam of blood and bone?

Self loathing conflagration
becomes Creator vengeance.

I envelop.

Devour.

Become.

And when all is done,
when the process is complete,
it is my hand digging up a monster.

Dayroom

The voices blend into a hum
with a jazz beat
as my thoughts try to take form.

The slapping of the playing cards,
none too discreet
while each man, in hand, plays his part.

An idea comes fleeting, then goes
such is defeat.
We all must do that which we know.

Then feeling sorry for myself
this thought repeats
to the paper my pencil tells.

Last but not in the least
the discreet beat repeats defeat.
We all must do that which we know.

—BRIAN BUSTER

Ode to a Butterfly

Oh! sweet wisps of gossamer—
Silken on the wind—
Freedom's perfect victory crest
You alone can comprehend.
Inside a spun-web tomb you lived,
A hidden, budding flower,
And life, you thought, had passed you by,
Had whiled away your hours.
But through it all, an artist's hand
Did paint with all known splendor
An intricate design of beauty—
Woven rainbow color.
So that, at last, when you emerged
To waft up in the sky,
The world was greeted by your grace—
A lovely butterfly!

—MICHAEL RINEHART

Prayer

Slowly my fingers slide over
 well-worn beads,
the smooth grain alive in a luster
 that never leaves.
Calm like a summer's eve,
 warm and easy,
I become one with the breath
 the wind of life.
Silence like silk,
 velvety and soft,
eases my spirit into
 quietude.
Unspoken mantras whispered
 in joyful awe.
The subtle depth of
 solitude
intimates a hope of peace,
 of nirvana.

—RANDY EKSTROM

Poet

Hear the mournful howl of the
lonely, grey wolf, searching
for a kindred spirit.
His steamy breath fills the
brisk night air as he leaves
the shadows, coming into light.
Velvet paws pad softly along
the steep mountain trail,
feeling for every loose stone,
each protruding root.
In a moonlit meadow he appears,
warily prowling.
with curious bright eyes
he probes everything...

Looking to the moon for strength,
he opens his silver throat, howling gently, painfully,
singing from solitude.
He wanders alone,
looking for the path
that will lead him home.

—RANDY EKSTROM

You Are

I

You are—
The orchard of my vision;
my niece.
The light that comes through my window when
I can't go outside (when I'm stuck inside).
A signpost—telling me to turn off
this road to nowhere.
An island—after my ship went down.
You are the promise of tomorrow
at sunset, the reason the sun
comes back, around, and you
hung the moon.

II

I am away, still I see you
as a newborn. At 3, 5, and 7.
I miss playing peek-a-boo, lifting you
so you could touch the ceiling, hearing you
speak to your dolls, answering your
innocent questions, holding you when you
cried—breaking my heart with each tear.
To this day, seeing a picture of you
pouting waters my eyes,
so I have to laugh to keep from crying.
I miss those days. I miss you.

III

You are a young lady now, a woman.
With dreams, goals, ambitions, doubts,
fears, and so much potential. I am ill equipped to help.
I will do all I am able.
You are the orchard I see, in majestic bloom.
Bear good fruit.
You are...my niece.

—BRIAN BUSTER

Lazy Eyes

I was with my mother, at home in her kitchen.
We were sitting at an oak wood table.
Sing my song, the one I always want you to sing
she said.
And she took a drink from out of a can and
she looked at me.
Her eyes were lazy.
Sing
She said again with her voice slurred.
Mom!
I said, then I grabbed all the cans that were on
the table and threw them into the trash
I stood away from her
then she got up
staggered toward me and put her hands
on my shoulders
Stand tall, be strong, always,
she said
Her breath smelled stale
I put my head down and looked at all the
cans that were in the trash
Promise
Promise you won't be like this anymore
I said
She stepped away
from me
and straightened out the gray tablecloth
so that it hung evenly
Then she sat down
her hard profile looking out the window
Indian summer day
Mid-afternoon
Partly cloudy
I heard the leaves outside the window
Rustle
making that sound they make when the wind
blows them
Then she opened the window and the breeze
as if the wind spoke to her lifted strands
of hair around her right ear.

Then she turned away from the window
and looked at me
blinking blood shot and her cheeks a kind
of red cold weather causes
Sing my favorite song now
With her right hand she tapped on the table
Sing
Tap tap tap
She wanted me to sing a victory song
about winning battles about honoring those
who fight
But it's also about preparing to fight
preparing to win
I started to sing Lakota
She barely heard me

Then I sang louder and pretty soon I
was singing so loud that my
mother's eyes
weren't lazy
anymore

And when I finished
Hoksila...little boy....*Chase niyo*...you will never cry
She said and stood up and threw

all the trash out the door.

—DAVID ST. CYR

Still...Thoughts

In your newborn picture, taken days after birth,
Your eyes were closed. And both of your hands,
two little fists, laid under your chin.

At the bottom of your picture it read: 7 lbs., 5 oz.
September 28, 2000...I held it between my
fingertips. I thought how appropriate... a
small picture... of a small being of life.

I imagined holding your little warm body,
hearing your short...little...warm breath
if the both of us were in a quiet room.

A father spoke about when he held his
daughter for the first time...it wasn't
about him anymore...and that he changed
without explanation. Then
he talked about how men should care.

And your hands are still in two fists
and your eyes still closed, which
seems appropriate because this world
with its beautiful honesty...
can be painfully bright.

—DAVID ST. CYR

A Community of Poets

by Harlan Richards

Poetry is the dance of life made manifest in words. Since becoming a poet (only a few short years ago), I have looked for poetry and poets everywhere I go. It is amazing the places they can be found.

When I arrived at Stanley (Correctional Institution) in 2011, one of the first things I did was look for a creative writing group to join. Since I first participated in a prison-based creative writing group when I was housed in Oakhill (Correctional Institution) in 2010, I have sought out opportunities to share poetry with fellow prisoners in a group setting.

There wasn't any type of program at Stanley, so I wrote to the education director and asked for permission to recruit volunteers from UW-Eau Claire to come into Stanley to teach a class. At the time, I had only been writing poetry for a little over a year and hoped to benefit from the expertise of someone possessing or working toward an MFA. However, I soon found out that a non-staff member could not teach a creative writing group in Stanley without a staff member being present. My request was denied due to an ongoing staff shortage.

My plan seemed doomed but I'm a firm believer in the axiom that God's delays are not God's denials. I bided my time until I saw an opportunity about nine months later. The prison library had been operating for years with a "temporary" librarian, i.e., an administrative assistant who was assigned to run the library. Plans were made to hire a librarian so I tried again, this time asking the education director if it would be possible for the newly replaced administrative assistant to oversee a creative writing group when she ceased running the library. Instead, he referred the matter to the new librarian and suggested that she create the group.

Valerie Carter-Brown had never worked in a prison before. She had pursued a career as a librarian in academia and public libraries. But she was a fast learner and very supportive of the idea. I was a prisoner library worker at the time which gave us an opportunity to discuss the idea and figure out what a creative writing group should look like at Stanley.

Another six months passed as Ms. Carter-Brown learned her new duties and became acclimated to working in a prison. She then prepared a proposal and submitted it for approval. At first, there was some discussion about including prose writing in the program as well but it was deemed unworkable. Poetry and prose are too dissimilar and there would not be enough time to teach character development, plot, etc., for prose writers while simultaneously teaching poetry. A meeting was held between the librarian and education director to finalize the details. It was decided that fifteen poets at a time would participate in a twelve-week program, meeting for one hour each week and featuring weekly writing assignments (prompts). The class was to be held in the basic education classroom and the teacher, Ms. Decker, would help supervise (she retired midway through the first group and was replaced by Ms. Hoffstatter). Notices went out and requests to join poured in. Ms. Carter-Brown and I got together and worked out a 12-week syllabus which covered a broad range of poetry-related subjects. Participants were asked to write one or two poems each week utilizing a specific form or technique. We included assonance, alliteration, simile, metaphor, villanelles, pantoums, and other writing prompts. I was part of the first group and both participated in the exercises and helped facilitate the operation of the group.

It was amazing to watch, and be a part of, this group of diverse poets. These men for the most part did not know each other very well and there were many differences in culture, background, and commitment offense. Even though we did not see eye-to-eye on politics, religion, and a raft of other subjects, we set aside our differences for the sake of our poetry. We all knew that in Stanley starting a group like this and making it successful would be very difficult. One incident, one situation where the class got too noisy, or a guard had to be called in for any reason, would result in termination of the group.

I am proud to say that the guys in that first group realized what was at stake and rose to the task. The prompts were kept under wraps until they were passed out as assignments. That way, all of us were working on the same prompt each week. Participants could not skip ahead and work on something they liked better. This lent an immediacy to the sessions. The guys never knew what to expect and once they received the prompt, their finished poem was due at the next session. Initially, there was some resistance to trying new things. One guy particularly detested villanelles while another one had a hard time with pantoums. But they all produced finished poems for every class.

By the twelfth session, nobody wanted it to end. From a suspicious, diverse group of prisoners sprang forth a community of poets. We are all connected through our poetry. When we pass each other on the compound these days, talk often turns to the group and our latest creations. Each of the poets in that group came away enriched, not only in amassing a treasure trove of new tools with which to create verse, but with a new attitude toward those who are different from them. Plans are in the works to create a book of all the poems written during the class so each member can have a copy. Meanwhile, the second creative writing group is off to a great start on its way to a brighter future.

Here is the notice we ran to get participants in that first group at Stanley:

Calling All Creative Writers

Here's the deal
What's really going on
And where to go
To get your frisson.
It's the creative writing group
Where you can shine
Learn the scoop
Write something really fine.
So don't delay
Or waste another minute
Send your request today
So you can begin it.



Editors' note: The poems on this and the next page were written at the Stanley writers' group.

Million Dollar Dream

I hear the whistle being blown, and in the
Air I'm tossed, ouch, I'm hit on the left
Side of my head. Black Jerseys have possession
Of me...I'm bounced and dribbled between the
Legs, around the back and passed through
The air until I'm in the hands of a shooter
That's a 3 point threat, and with a flick of
The wrist—I'm in the air—swish—against
The nylon net I go – 3 points.

Blue Jerseys' turn to have a shot with
Me and I'm being handled, dribbled,
Passed, layed up, shot and dunked until
There's no more time on the clock, and
To think about it—I'm the reason why
Million Dollar Athletes are able to take
Care of themselves, family and friends...

I'm that Million Dollar Dream.

—JAMES FOOTE

I Am (the South)

I am a child of oppression, my Mama's third blessing
I was raised in the "Dirty," so I've learned some filthy lessons.
Have been slept on more times than mentioned, but was sent to wake you and grab your attention.
I am the voice of ex-slaves, and have walked the same roads that their blood, sweat, and tears paved,
And when weary have stood in the shade under trees where they once hanged.
I have been on mountain tops and have dwelled in valleys low,
And for the cause I am the first person there, and always the last to go.
I have seen the birth of nations, and have witnessed the demise of Kings,
And have heard the last cries from fallen soldiers; when death the Reaper brings.
I am the crescendo in the symphony, the mellow melody in the blues.
I am a wild fire forever consuming, and the Mighty Mississippi River that gently flows and soothes.
I've been blessed to give meaning to the trials of life, and to make mere words rhyme poetical,
And for those words to live on in the hearts of many, and they deem them angelical.
But did I mention... That I am a child of oppression, my Mama's third blessing,
I was raised in the dirty, so I've learned some filthy lessons.

—JEROME JOSEPH

Man to Man

Hold your head up, you have nothing to be ashamed about,
Keep your pants pulled up and don't be poking your lip out.

Don't ever show weakness and no matter what, don't you cry,
always stick to the truth, but if you have to, tell a white lie.

Respect yourself first, and family, and all women,
and if the water stank real bad, don't you go in it swimmin'.

Always do the best you can and don't make excuses,
read every book you can so no one can ever say you are useless.

When they tell you, you can do anything and then leave you hangin',
even with high unemployment, don't you ever start slangin'.

When people underestimate you, work longer and harder,
even if you're twice as good, someone will still think they're smarter.

There is a big difference between actin' hard and being strong,
don't accept anyone else's ideas of what's right and what's wrong.

If someone is hurting, help them if you can,
but, don't you ever fight a war for the next man.

Don't ever let a White man or Black man define who you are,
because, even during your darkest days, you're still a shining star.

Remember, in the hallways—ALWAYS—walk, don't run.
Now you're ready for your first day of school, my beautiful Son.

—RAMIAH WHITESIDE

Little Black girl, have you seen the Black girl?

All barrettes with Chiclet teeth and a sunrise smile,
only seeing life outside, such a beautiful child.
She's a rainbow of happiness in a grey world.
Black girl, have you seen the little Black girl?
Smiles gone now, erased since her hero died.

Blood saturated steps bring memories of her brother that didn't survive.
His life stolen by stray shots meant for the crack house next door,
never again does she set her precious feet on the front porch.
Her father turns addict and her dismal existence grows worse,
bills become a black hole and her mother's forced to whore.
Black girl, sad little Black girl.

Have you seen the White girl, the little White girl?
Golden pigtailed bouncing, freckles and azure blue eyes.
Precociously prays every night looking to God in a star speckled sky.
She's innocent, sensitive to the world, cries when small animals die.
Little White girl, have you seen the White girl?
A prisoner now, in the trailer she stays,
chemicals from the meth lab next door make outside unsafe.
Hungry but the bare shelves echo because her mom's a customer.
It's unsafe inside now because mom's boyfriend starts touching her.
Tin shell trailer turns canned hell and there she can't stay.
She decides God is blind so she runs away.
White girl, sad little White girl.
Ghetto kids, have you seen those Trailer kids?
White kids, have you seen those Black kids?

—DAVID HARRIS

Contributors' Notes

Antler, former poet laureate of Milwaukee, is the author of *Selected Poems, Ever-Expanding Wilderness, Deathrattles vs. Comecries*, and *Exclamation Points ad Infinitum!* His work appears in the recent anthologies *Poets Against the War*; *Poetic Voices Without Borders 2*; *Best Gay Poetry 2008*; *Comeback Wolves: Welcoming the Wolf Home* and *Wilderness Blessings*.

Daniel Bachhuber is a Montessori elementary teacher in the St. Paul Public Schools. He has published poetry in the *Iowa Review*, *Poetry East*, *The Southern Poetry Review*, and many others, as well as a book, *Mozart's Carriage*, from New Rivers Press, 2003. He was born and raised in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin and attended Marquette University High School and Marquette University.

Guy R. Beining has had six poetry books and 25 chapbooks published over the years, and appeared in seven anthologies. He is in the *Contemporary Authors Autobiography* series, Vol. 30, 1998 (Gale Research). He is also in the *Dictionary of the Avant Gardes*, 2nd Ed., 2000. Recent publications include *chain, epiphany, perspective* (Germany), *New Orleans Review*, *The New Review of Literature*.

James Bettendorf is a retired math teacher who has written poetry for years. His poems have appeared in various places, including *Free Verse*. His other Wisconsin connection is a sister who lives in Amery.

Byron Beynon lives in Swansea, Wales. His work has appeared in many publications including *London Magazine*, *Poetry Wales*, *The Summer Review*, *Agenda* (UK); *Quadrant* (Australia) and *Cyphers* (Dublin). His latest collection is *Human Shores* published by Lapwing Publications (Belfast, 2012). Visit <http://www.poetcasting.co.uk/?p=118>.

Lewis Bosworth lives in Madison. A UW-Madison grad cons ago, he also has a degree in linguistics from the U of Michigan. A writer and editor, he works hard at his poems, reworking things like a love affair with his cat and a bad poem about his childhood boyfriends. He hopes to be noticed by anybody before he turns 80. Visit www.lewisbosworth.com.

Elena Botts grew up in Maryland, and currently lives in Northern Virginia. She is still attending school. She likes to run. And write. She's been published in multiple magazines in the past year and is currently working with a small-press editor on a book of poetry titled 'a little luminescence' (check it out at www.allbook-books.com).

I Can't Breathe

I can't breathe. I'm dying from suffocation, asphyxiation.
This being in prison is a messed up situation.
I'm in a strange place. I see a strange face. I can't
catch my breath. It's like I've been running at a fast pace.

I want to watch the game with my father.
I want a meal cooked by my mother.
I'd give anything to be hanging out with my brothers.
Instead I'm incarcerated about to smother.

Somebody help me!
I'm wheezing! I'm choking!

I'm paranoid sleeping with one eye open. It's like
all day long I'm inhaling smoke and it's burning my nose
and throat. It's hard to cope.

Time is slowly passing. Constantly I'm gasping
trying to get a grip. I'm grasping. Nothing seems to stop
it. I can't combat it 24 hours a day I feel asthmatic. I
can't stand it. Damn it! I'm in a panic, mind racin' frantic.
My life is going down like the Titanic.

It's worse during the holiday season. I really Labor in my
breathing. X-mas time. I've got kids and can't see them.
No chestnuts roasting, no fa la la las or rum pum pum pums.
Just shortness of breath til my release date comes.

I'm trapped in a dark cage. Can you imagine such a situation.
Day to day hyperventilating. Frustrations got you so depressed
and sad you breathing in a paper bag. There's a tightness in
my chest. Is it stress? Or cardiac arrest? Will I survive?
Will I make it out alive?

Inhale
exhale
Inhale
exhale

—MARK ROBERSON

Peter Branson lives in Rode Heath, a village in South Cheshire, England. A former teacher and lecturer, he now organizes writing workshops. Over the last four years he has had work published, or accepted for publication, by many mainstream poetry journals in Britain. He has also had poems published in USA, Canada, EIRE, Australia and New Zealand.

Brian Buster wrote this poem in a workshop with Marvin Bell.

Alan Catlin has been publishing for parts of five decades. He has over sixty chapbooks and full length books published during that time. He is currently serving as poetry editor for the online poetry magazine misfitmagazine.net.

Sara Clancy graduated from the Writer's Program at the University of Wisconsin long ago. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in various journals such as *The Smoking Poet*, *The Madison Review*, *Untitled Country Review*, *Poetry Breakfast*, *Owen Wisser Review* and *Houseboat*. She is a transplant from Philadelphia to the Desert Southwest where she lives with her husband, their dog and a 21-year-old goldfish named Darryl.

Joan Colby has published in journals such as *Poetry*, *Atlanta Review*, and *Prairie Schooner*. Awards include two Illinois Arts Council Literary Awards, Rhino Poetry Award, the new renaissance Award for Poetry, and an Illinois Arts Council Fellowship in Literature. She has published 10 books including *The Lonely Hearts Killers*, *The Atrocity Book* and her newest book, just out from Future Cycle Press—*Dead Horses*.

Caroline Collins is an assistant professor of English at Quincy University. Her poems have appeared in such places as *Fox Cry Review*, *Wisconsin People and Ideas*, and *Arkansas Review: A Journal of Delta Studies*. Her chapbook *Presences* is forthcoming from Parallel Press.

Robert Cooperman's latest collections are *Little Timothy in Heaven* (March Street Press), *The Lily of the West* (Wind Publications), and *My Shtetl* (Logan House Books). His work has appeared in *The Wisconsin Review*, *the Sewanee Review*, and *The Mississippi Review*.

Barbara Cranford was born in Chicago, where she was an encyclopedia editor, poet, sculptor and gallery owner. In her Central Wisconsin woods where she has lived since 1971, she conducts an occasional poem-making workshop and writes when she feels like it.

Mary Cresswell is a retired science editor from Los Angeles. She lives on New Zealand's Kapiti Coast. Her work is in a variety of journals, and her latest book, *Trace Fossils*, was published in 2011. See also www.bookcouncil.org.nz/Writers/Profiles/Cresswell,%20Mary.

Jason Darrah wrote this poem in a workshop with Marvin Bell.

Holly Day is a housewife and mother of two living in Minneapolis, Minnesota, who teaches needlepoint classes in the Minneapolis school district. Her poetry has recently appeared in *Hawai'i Pacific Review*, *The Oxford American*, and *Slipstream*, and she is a recent recipient of the Sam Ragan Poetry Prize from Barton College.

Jay Deshpande's poems have recently appeared or are forthcoming in *Washington Square*, *La Petite Zine*, *Narrative*, *Handsome*, *Shampoo*, *Spork*, and elsewhere. He is the former poetry editor of *AGNI* and he curates the Metro Rhythm Reading Series in Brooklyn (metrorhythm.wordpress.com).

Richard Dinges, Jr. has an MA in literary studies from University of Iowa and he manages business systems at an insurance company. *Slant*, *Concho River Review*, *California Quarterly*, *Sunstone*, and *Miller's Pond* have most recently accepted his poems for their publications.

Randy Ekstrom wrote this poem in a workshop with Marvin Bell.

Yvette Viets Flaten's great-grandfather homesteaded in Barron County, Wisconsin, in the years immediately following the Civil War, and those roots have proven fascinatingly strong as she researches the location of his 160 acres.

James Foote was a member of the Stanley poetry group when this poem was written.

Grace Marie Grafton's newest book, *Whimsy, Reticence and Laud/unruly sonnets*, came out in Spring 2012 from Poetic Matrix Press (www.poeticmatrix.com). Her book of prose poems, *Other Clues*, 2010, was published by Latitude Press (rawartpress.com). A chapbook, *Chrysanthemum Oratorio*, 2010, is available from Dancing Girl Press.

Taylor Graham's ties to Wisconsin include a cousin in Wonnewoc, helping instruct at a search-and-rescue dog school in Osceola, and appearances in *Verse Wisconsin*. Otherwise, she lives in the California Sierra with a husband, a dog trained for SAR, an untrainable cat, and four sheep.

KJ Hannah Greenberg has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and The Best of the Net. Her newest books are: *The Immediacy of Emotional Kerpuffles* (Bards and Sages Publishing, Forthcoming, Dec. 2013), short fiction collection, and *Cirrus-Inspired Ceramics* (Kelsay Books, Sept. 2013), poetry collection.

Ray Greenblatt most recently has been published in *Apiary*, *Comstock Review* and *Wild River Review*. His review of David McCullough's new book *The Greater Journey* will be printed in the *Schuylkill Valley Journal* in December. His most recent book of poetry is *Bleached Spines* (Poetica, 2012).

John Grey, an Australian born poet, works as financial systems analyst and was recently published in *Bryant Poetry Review*, *Tribeca Poetry Review* and the horror anthology, *What Fears Become* with work upcoming in *Potomac Review*, *Hurricane Review* and *Pinyon*.

Lisa Grove's poetry has appeared recently in *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *A cappella Zoo*, and *Poetry International*. She was born and raised in La Crosse, Wisconsin, and she still keeps in touch with her first grade teacher from State Road Elementary School. The poems published here are homophonic translations from Christian Morgenstern's original German.

Rob Harrington coaches soccer as a profession, writes as a hobby and thinks often of taking up new hobbies but never does. He lives with his wife on the Eastside of Milwaukee where the characters are plentiful and walking is a way of life. Like all Milwaukeeans, he enjoys breakfast sausage and beer, and he's disappointed he never gets to eat them at the same time.

David L. Harris has always enjoyed reading and writing, and uses these now as a means of escape.

Gayle Elen Harvey lives in Utica, NY.

Sarah Hayes is a writer and visual artist, working in the forms of poetry, creative non-fiction, digital photography and collage. Growing up in northern Wisconsin, she feels most at home in the outdoors and is working on a chapbook of her adventures mountain biking and rock climbing. When not writing or working at her day job, Sarah volunteers as a poetry editor for Red Bird Chapbooks.

Michael Hill grew up in Western Wisconsin, where he learned to fish on local lakes and rivers. A husband, dad, guitar player, fisherman, librarian and dog owner, he currently lives in Austin, Texas.

By morning **Byron Hoot** is a reader and writer, throughout the day, a Quality Director, and during hunting season, a hunter. Father of four, uncle to many, co-founder of The Tamarack Writers, a continuous gathering for over 34 consecutive years.

Charles Hughes is a tutor at St. Leonard's House in Chicago and a retired lawyer. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *America*, *Anglican Theological Review*, *Comstock Review*, *Innisfree Poetry Journal*, *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *Measure*, *Sewanee Theological Review*, *Verse Wisconsin*, and other publications. He lives in the Chicago area with his wife.

Joan Wiese Johannes was born in Beaver Dam, attended grade school in Waupun, high school in Plymouth, and college in Stevens Point; then taught in Wisconsin Rapids for 34 years while transitioning into a poet. She lives in Port Edwards with her poet husband Jeffrey. Her fourth chapbook is available from Finishing Line Press.

Jerome Joseph was a member of the Stanley poetry group when this poem was written.

Kitty Jospé, Former French teacher, (MA Fr. Lit.) currently teacher of poetry and art appreciation; (MFA Poetry). She loves that Jacques Marquette's "Meskousing" turned to a positive "oui" (Ouisconsin), that "poetry" waters gather in *Verse Wisconsin* – YES!

Once a linebacker on Wisconsin's 1963 Rose Bowl team, **Dion Kempthorne** taught English in the UW Colleges and served as CEO/Dean at UW-Richland. Now retired in the woods of Richland County, he spends his days as a tree farmer and writer. His poems have appeared in *Wisconsin Academy Review*, *Wisconsin People & Ideas*, *Verse Wisconsin*, *Mature Years*, *Verbatim*, and other places.

Susan Kileen writes poetry from her century-old farmhouse and is a member of the Stone Kettle Poets.

Michael Kriesel's poems have appeared widely. He's written reviews for *Small Press Review* and *Library Journal*, and has won the WFOP Muse Prize, the Lorine Niedecker Award from the Council for Wisconsin Writers, and the *Wisconsin People and Ideas* John Lehman Poetry Prize. Books include *Chasing Saturday Night* (Marsh River Editions); *Feeding My Heart To The Wind and Moths Mail The House* (sunnyoutside press).

Jim Landwehr enjoys writing creative nonfiction, fiction, and poetry. He has had nonfiction published in *MidWest Outdoors*, *Forge Journal* and *Boundary Waters Journal*. His poetry has been published in *Verse Wisconsin*, *Wisconsin People and Ideas*, *Echoes* and many others. Jim currently resides in Waukesha, WI. Visit www.writerjimlandwehr.com.

Mike Lane has lived in Delafield Wisconsin for almost 40 years with his wife Kathy. Mike's poems have appeared previously in *Soundzine*, *Third Wednesday*, *Echoes* and *Poetry Super Highway*. His first chapbook of poetry, *They Can Keep The Cinder Block*, was launched by Exot Books in March 2012.

Kristin Laurel is a mother of three teenagers, employed as a nurse. She completed a two-year immersion program in poetry at The Loft Literary Center (MPLS) with Thomas R. Smith as her advisor. Publications can be seen in *CALYX*, *Grey Sparrow Review*, *The Main Street Rag* and others. Her first book, *Giving Them All Away* was recently published by Evening Street Press.

MaryEllen Letarte developed and directs the Louise Bogan Chapter of the Massachusetts State Poetry Society. Her father was born in Pepin, Wisconsin. He matriculated at the University of Wisconsin until WWII. Her sister Christine graduated from Marquette University and lived most of her adult life in Wisconsin. Visit versealive.wordpress.com.

Lyn Lifshin has published over 120 books and edited 4 anthologies. Most recently: *All the Poets Who Have Touched Me, Living and Dead; All True: Especially the Lies*, and forthcoming from New York Quarterly Books: *A Girl Goes Into the Woods*. Visit www.lynlifshin.com.

Richard Luftig received the Cincinnati Post-Corbett Foundation Award for Literature and was a semi-finalist for the Emily Dickinson Society Award. His poems have appeared in literary journals in the United States, internationally in Japan, Canada, Australia, Europe, Thailand, Hong Kong and India, and have been translated into Japanese, Polish, German and Finnish. One of his poems was nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Tim McLafferty lives in NYC and is a professional drummer. He has played on Broadway in Urinetown, Grey Gardens, and many other interesting places. Visit timclafferty.com.

Meredith Mason lives in Appleton, WI.

Daniel Meltz's poetry has been published in *Best New Poets 2012*, *American Poetry Review*, *upstreet*, *Audio Zine*, *Temenos*, *Asisi*, *Mudfish*, *Columbia Review*, and *Lana Turner*. He works as a tech writer for Google and lives in Midtown Manhattan on a block with nine restaurants.

Ralph Murre is a recovering Wisconsin farm boy who has taken to poetry instead of plowing, since the pay rate is about the same, and the females involved tend to be human rather than Holstein. His books to date are *Crude Red Boat* (Cross+Roads Press) and *Psalms* (Little Eagle Press). He also admits to occasional blogging at the Arem Arvinson Log.

April Nerison recently graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. She currently works in a law office and as a delivery driver for Pizza Hut. Her degree is in Political Science. Favorite authors include Henry David Thoreau, George Elliot and Louisa May Alcott.

ayaz daryl nielsen, a poet/father/husband/veteran/x-roughneck (as on oil rigs)/x-hospice nurse, is editor/custodian of the print pub *bear creek haiku* - collections of his poetry include 'haiku tumbleweeds still stumbling' and 'Concentric Penumbra of the Heart', blog site at bearcreekhaiku.blogspot.com.

Cristina M. R. Norcross is the author of *Land & Sea: Poetry Inspired by Art* (2007), *The Red Drum* (2008) and *Unsung Love Songs* (2010). Featured in the BVAG show, *ARTICULATE* (2011 and 2012), Cristina co-edited *One Vision: A Fusion of Art & Poetry in Lake Country* (2009-11) and is one of the co-organizers of Random Acts of Poetry & Art Day. Visit www.FirkinFiction.com.

In 2007, the Kentucky Foundation for Women awarded **Andrea O'Brien** an Artist Enrichment grant to begin writing her second collection of poems. She lives in Denver with her husband and works as a writer and editor. Though she's moved around quite a bit, Andrea will always hold Wisconsin—birthplace—as the motherland.

Mike Orlock is a retired high school teacher who splits his time between the Chicago suburbs and Sturgeon Bay. He is the father of two and grandfather of one, and he owes more than he could ever repay to Liz, his wife of 38 years.

Ester Hauser Laurence Prudlo is a UW alumna who has lived away from the state for some 28 years, but who returned in 2008 for summers in the Madison area. A retired counselor to soldiers and inmates, she is mother of 4, grandmother of 4. She lives with her husband, Tony, in Montgomery, AL, in the winter, and Fitchburg, WI, in summer.

Charles Rammelkamp's latest book, *Fusen Bakudan* ("Balloon Bombs"), a collection of poems about missionaries in a leper colony in Vietnam during the war, was published in 2012 by Time Being Books. He edits the online journal, *The Potomac*, <http://thepotomacjournal.com>.

Dustin Renwick has visited Door County every summer since birth. He considers the entire peninsula his second home, but he reserves a special place for Egg Harbor. Follow him on Twitter @drenwick110.

Harlan Richards grew up in Madison, Wisconsin, and earned a BS in business administration from UW-Platteville. He has had numerous poems published in print journals and online in various venues. He is currently working on his first book of poems. You can find more poems and essays on his blog at betweenthebars.org/blogs/637.

Michael Rinehart wrote this poem in a workshop with Marvin Bell.

Mark Roberson wrote this poem from Thompson Correctional Center.

Justin Rogers might be found near Normal; bits of his poetry are scattered about. As for Wisconsin, he was once married to a woman from Ladysmith.

Tess Romeis is a Wisconsin native who tends to hover over, and ferret about, the Lake Michigan shoreline. She is a proud member of the Stone Kettle Poets.

Nancy Schmalz is a musician who teaches young flutists, gardens, and knits at her home in Oshkosh. Her work has appeared in WFOP calendars, as well as in *Flute Talk* magazine.

Robert Schuler has been writing for fifty years. His fifteenth collection of poems, *The Book of Jeweled Visions*, was published by Tom Montag's MWPB Books, PO Box 8, Fairwater, WI 53931. Price: \$12.50 plus \$1.50 postage.

Anne Farrer Scott is a writer living in Des Moines.

Claudia Serea is a Romanian-born poet who immigrated to the U.S. in 1995. Nominated for the Pushcart Prize and for Best of the Net, she is the author of *To Part Is to Die a Little* (Cervena Barva Press), *Angels & Beasts* (Phoenicia Publishing), and *A Dirt Road Hangs from the Sky* (8th House Publishing). She co-edited and co-translated *The Vanishing Point That Whistles, an Anthology of Contemporary Romanian Poetry* (Talisman Publishing, 2011). <http://cserea.tumblr.com/>

The Skräuss lives in a functioning church in Milwaukee where he herds bats, teases children, and performs other sexton duties. His biggest poetic influences are, equally, Kenneth Koch and Milwaukee's Susan Firer.

Scott T. Starbuck is a Creative Writing Coordinator at San Diego Mesa College with a chapbook of fishing poems, *River Walker*, recently published by Mountains and Rivers Press in Eugene, Oregon. Once, while teaching at Lake Land College in Mattoon, IL, he drove over the Wisconsin border just to hear voices of salmon fishermen since he was a salmon troller eight years off the Oregon Coast. Visit riverseek.blogspot.com.

David St. Cyr wrote this poem in a workshop with Marvin Bell.

Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino's latest book of poems is *The Valise* (Dead Academics Press, 2012). In his spare time he writes at his blog, The Postmodern Romantic, and edits the online poetry journal, *Eratio*.

Heather Swan is a Ph.D. candidate in Literary and Environmental Studies at UW-Madison. Her short collection, *The Edge of Damage* won first prize from the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets Chapbook Competition in 2009. Last spring an exhibit of her artwork called "Loss, Longing, and Belonging: Inhabiting the Human Body in an Endangered World" was hosted by CHE (Center for Culture, History, and Environment). She is also a beekeeper.

Marc Swan is a vocational rehabilitation counselor living in Portland Maine, a seacoast town with a vibrant arts and music scene; new work in *Common Ground*, *Pearl*, *Slipstream* and *Owen Wister Review*, among others

Nancy Takacs lives in Wellington, Utah, and in Bayfield, Wisconsin. Her third book of poetry *Juniper* was recently published by Limberlost Press, www.limberlostpress.com. She is the recent recipient of the first-place poetry award in the Utah Arts Council's Original Writing Contest and the 2010 winner of the Kay Saunders Memorial Award in the WFOP Triad Contest.

Tori Grant Welhouse is a native of Wisconsin and holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Antioch University in London. Her poetry has appeared in *Literary Mama*, *The Greensboro Review*, *anderbo.com*, *Melusine* and is forthcoming in *Glassworks*. She has managed in media for the past two decades.

Ed Werstein, Milwaukee, spent 22 years in manufacturing and union activity before his muse awoke and dragged herself out of bed. His sympathies lie with poor and working people. He advocates for peace and against corporate power. His poetry has appeared in *Verse Wisconsin*, *Blue Collar Review*, *Mobius Magazine* and a few other publications.

Ramiah Whiteside was a member of the Stanley poetry group when this poem was written.

R. Scott Yarbrough is The Honored Texas Piper Professor of Literature of 2001 and Editor of *Forces Literary Journal of Arts and Literature*. His full length collection, *A Sort of Adam Infant Dropped: True Myths*, published in the Spring of 2013 under Ink Brush Press, includes the three poems featured in this issue.

Dana Yost spent 29 years as a state and national-award-winning daily newspaper journalist. He is the author of three published books, *Grace*, *The Right Place*, and *A Higher Level: Southwest State Women's Tennis 1979-1992*. He was nominated for a 2012 Pushcart Prize in poetry and one of his works, "Slaughterhouse," is included in the book, *Kind of a Hurricane Press' Best of 2012 Anthology: Storm Cycle*. He lives in Forest City, Iowa.

VERSE WISCONSIN

OCTOBER 2013

Gil Scott-Heron

You couldn't have known
couldn't have imagined
instantly shared messages
with no corporate sponsors.
What a world.
You, Gil, couldn't have known
the revolution before the revolution
the technical revolution.
It's not that the corporations
and the politicians they own
aren't trying to keep things under wraps
they sue
they privatize
they squelch
they jail, even kill
to intimidate.

And what they can't stifle
they try to co-opt.
I once saw Che's image in a Levis commercial
as if Che had fought
for the rights of the indigenous
to wear American blue jeans.

In 2009, I watched from six thousand miles away
my grandson take his first steps.
Imagine. What a world.

But you couldn't have imagined
we youtube
we twitter
we googleshare
we skype
we saw a preview of coming attractions during the Arab Spring
and without a doubt
the revolution will be televised.

—ED WERSTEIN, MILWAUKEE, WI

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