

# Voices



SKYSCRAPERS, DOLPHINS & EVOLUTION

2026

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*“True literature can exist only where it is created, not  
by diligent and trustworthy functionaries,  
but by madmen, hermits, heretics,  
dreamers, rebels, and skeptics.”*

*~ Yevgeny Zamyatin*

## ~ EDITOR'S NOTE ~

Skyscrapers, Dolphins & Evolution. A strange mixture when you first look at it. But is it? Life began in the sea. This is scientific consensus. Billions of years ago, in Earth's primordial oceans, the first self-replicating molecules emerged from chemical chaos, and from them, all life descended. For hundreds of millions of years, the ocean was life's only home. Then something remarkable happened—some creatures left. They crawled onto land, developed lungs, grew limbs, and eventually evolved into the staggering diversity of terrestrial life we see today—from insects to dinosaurs to humans. We celebrate these evolutionary adventurers who conquered a new frontier, yet in our fascination with land-dwellers, we often overlook a more intriguing question; what about those that stayed?

While some species abandoned the ocean, others remained. They didn't stagnate; they evolved too, following a radically different path. Dolphins, whales, and countless other marine creatures developed their own solutions to survival, their own forms of intelligence and adaptation. Some land-evolved mammals even returned to the sea, as if reconsidering the ancient choice their ancestors made. This pattern raises a tantalizing possibility; if evolution could produce skyscrapers through human ingenuity on land, and such remarkable intelligence in dolphins beneath the waves, what other evolutionary endpoints might exist? Could marine life evolve further still? Could they eventually transcend their medium entirely—learning not to walk on land, but to swim through air?

Billions of years ago, Earth's surface was hostile—bombarded by cosmic radiation, wracked by volcanic activity, and shrouded in an atmosphere that bore no resemblance to the oxygen-rich air we breathe today. Yet beneath the waves, conditions were paradoxically perfect for life to emerge. The ocean provided shelter from radiation, a stable chemical environment, and abundant dissolved minerals and organic compounds. Then the first self-replicating molecules appeared; RNA and DNA, the chemical blueprints of life itself. These weren't yet "organisms" in any sense we'd recognize—merely molecules with a remarkable ability to copy themselves, mutate, and compete for resources.

From these molecular beginnings emerged the first true organisms; prokaryotes, single-celled creatures that dominated Earth's oceans for over a billion years. Some learned to harness the sun's energy through photosynthesis, fundamentally transforming Earth's atmosphere by releasing oxygen. Others developed the ability to consume organic matter, becoming the first predators. The ocean became an evolutionary laboratory where every major innovation in biology—photosynthesis, respiration, multicellularity, sexual reproduction—first emerged.

This oceanic origin is crucial to understanding evolution's story. When life ventured onto land, it carried billions of years of oceanic refinement with it; the genetic toolkit, metabolic machinery, and body plans proven successful in water. Those that remained continued to evolve, refining strategies that already worked well in their aquatic home.

A few million years later, the first fish began venturing onto land—a gradual exploration driven by necessity and opportunity. The oceans were growing crowded, while shallow waters and coastal marshes offered untapped resources. For fish with the right adaptations, land represented a frontier of abundance.

The first to make this transition were lobe-finned fish with muscular, fleshy fins that functioned almost like limbs. Over millions of years, these fins transformed, evolved, into true limbs with fingers and toes. Their swim bladders evolved into lungs capable of extracting oxygen from air. Their skin developed the ability to retain moisture. From these pioneering fish emerged the amphibians, then reptiles with waterproof skin and eggs that could be laid on dry land—liberating vertebrate life from the ocean entirely.

Reptiles diversified explosively, giving rise to dinosaurs and eventually mammals. When the dinosaurs vanished millions of years ago, mammals inherited the earth, evolving into countless forms—each exquisitely adapted to its ecological niche.

Yet here's where the story becomes truly fascinating; not all creatures remained on land. Some mammals, millions of years after their ancestors conquered the continents, returned to the ocean. Whales, dolphins, seals, and manatees all evolved from land-dwelling ancestors, yet they re-invaded the marine realm with stunning success. They carried their mammalian innovations—warm blood, lungs, complex brains—back into the sea, creating an entirely new evolutionary experiment.

This return to the ocean was driven by opportunity, not failure. Some mammals living near coastlines discovered the sea offered abundant resources in quantities land could never provide. Over millions of years, these ocean-bound mammals underwent profound transformation. Their bodies became streamlined, their limbs flattened into flippers, their nostrils migrated to the tops of their heads as blowholes. Yet they retained fundamental mammalian traits; they breathed air, maintained warm blood, and nursed their young with milk.

Among these marine mammals, dolphins stand out as something extraordinary. Their brains are large and complex, with cognitive abilities that rival, perhaps even exceed, those of great apes, perhaps even humans. They possess echolocation, allowing them to navigate and hunt in darkness by emitting clicks and interpreting the returning echoes with stunning precision. But perhaps most remarkably, dolphins are deeply social creatures. They live in pods, form lasting friendships, teach their young, and communicate through a complex system of whistles, clicks, and body language. They play for pleasure, mourn their dead, and demonstrate personality and individuality. Dolphins have evolved not just survival but culture—a way of life passed down through generations.

This is the profound divergence; while some mammals remained on land and eventually gave rise to humans—creatures who would build cities and reach toward the sky—other mammals chose the ocean and evolved into beings of remarkable intelligence adapted to an entirely different world. They, too, also reveal a crucial difference; while dolphins mastered the ocean and developed profound intelligence, they didn't build. They didn't create permanent structures or technologies. That particular form of evolution—the drive to construct, to innovate, to build monuments—would belong to their land-dwelling cousins alone.

While dolphins perfected their mastery of the ocean, their distant cousins on land underwent their own transformation. Around 6 million years ago, our primate ancestors began walking upright. Bipedalism freed our hands for tool use and communication. Over millions of years, their brains grew larger and more complex. They developed language, abstract thought, and the ability to imagine things that didn't yet exist. But unlike dolphins, who expressed their intelligence through social bonds and acoustic communication, humans expressed theirs through creation. They made tools, then weapons, then art.

writing, and poetry. They domesticated fire, then plants, then animals. They built shelters, then villages, then cities. They continued to evolved.

This distinction becomes strikingly visible when we look at skyscrapers. Where dolphin's body is a masterpiece of evolutionary engineering—every curve and muscle optimized for life in the ocean, a skyscraper is something entirely different—it is an extension of human intelligence made manifest in steel, glass, and concrete. Skyscrapers represent a fundamentally different kind of evolution; the evolution of culture, technology, and imagination. Dolphins adapted themselves to their environment; humans adapted their environment to themselves. From ancient Ziggurat's to modern day towers that reach to the heavens, humans "evolved" their environment to proceed forward.

This raises a profound question; if humans evolved to reach upward, building higher into the sky, and if dolphins evolved intelligence in the ocean's depths, what other evolutionary paths remain unexplored? The question posed at the beginning of this editor's note—could creatures eventually evolve to "swim" in the air?—begins to seem less like fantasy and more like a natural extension of evolutionary possibility.

We stand at a peculiar moment in evolutionary history. For billions of years, life explored the oceans, then the land, then the sky through flight. It returned to the sea and developed intelligence there. It built civilizations and reached toward the heavens with steel towers. Yet these achievements—remarkable as they are—may represent only the opening chapters of a much longer story. The question isn't whether evolution will continue, but how. Will dolphins or their descendants eventually develop the biological capacity to leave the ocean permanently, to colonize land or air as their ancestors once did? Will humans, having mastered the terrestrial world, evolve or engineer themselves to thrive in environments we've barely begun to explore—the ocean's depths, the vacuum of space, the atmospheres of distant worlds? Or will evolution take paths we can't yet foresee, producing forms of intelligence and adaptation that make both dolphins and humans seem like mere stepping stones in a grander design?

The truth is that skyscrapers and dolphin songs aren't the pinnacle of evolution—they're simply where evolution has taken us so far. Every species alive today represents millions of years of refinement, of dead ends and brilliant innovations, of adaptation and divergence. But evolution isn't finished. It never stops exploring. The same forces that drove fish onto land, brought mammals back to the sea, and sparked human consciousness—those forces are still at work, still pushing life toward new frontiers, new possibilities, new forms of being we can barely imagine. Perhaps one day, creatures will swim through the air as effortlessly as dolphins swim through water. Perhaps humans will evolve into something we wouldn't recognize as human. Perhaps life will spread beyond Earth itself, adapting to alien worlds in ways that would seem like pure fantasy to us now.

What we can say with certainty is this; life began in the ocean, but it didn't end there. It has never ended. Anywhere. Evolution is the story of life refusing to accept limits, of organisms pushing beyond boundaries, of intelligence finding new ways to express itself. We are not the end of that story—we're not even the middle of the story. We are simply the current chapter, the moment when one branch of the evolutionary tree became conscious enough to wonder about its own future. And in that wondering, we glimpse the greatest truth of all—evolution isn't something that happened to us in the past. It's happening now, and it will continue long after our skyscrapers have crumbled to dust. The question isn't whether life will evolve further. The question is—what will it become?

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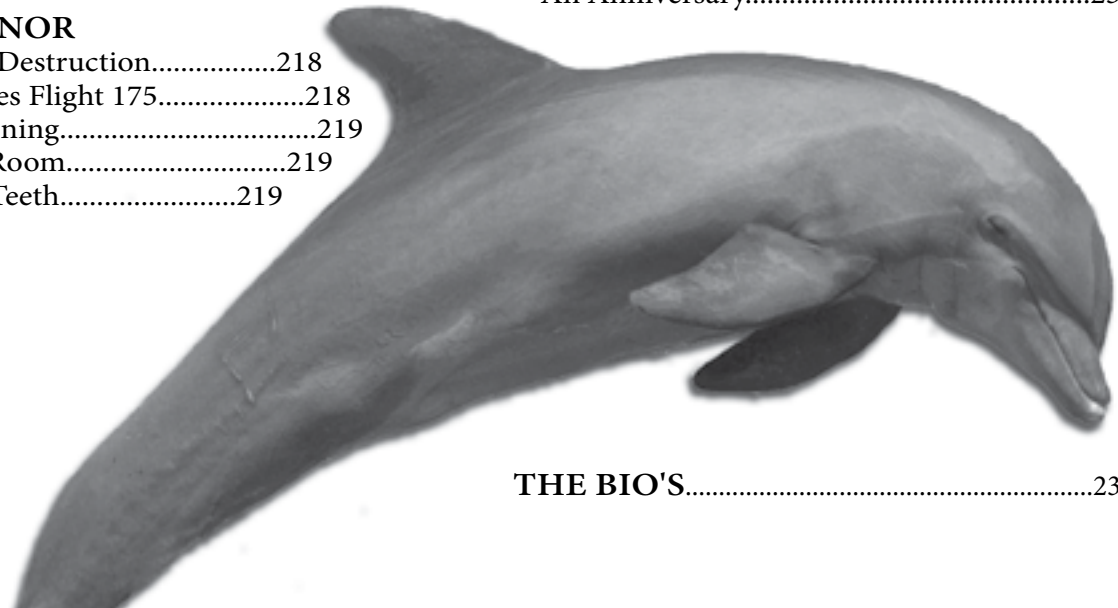
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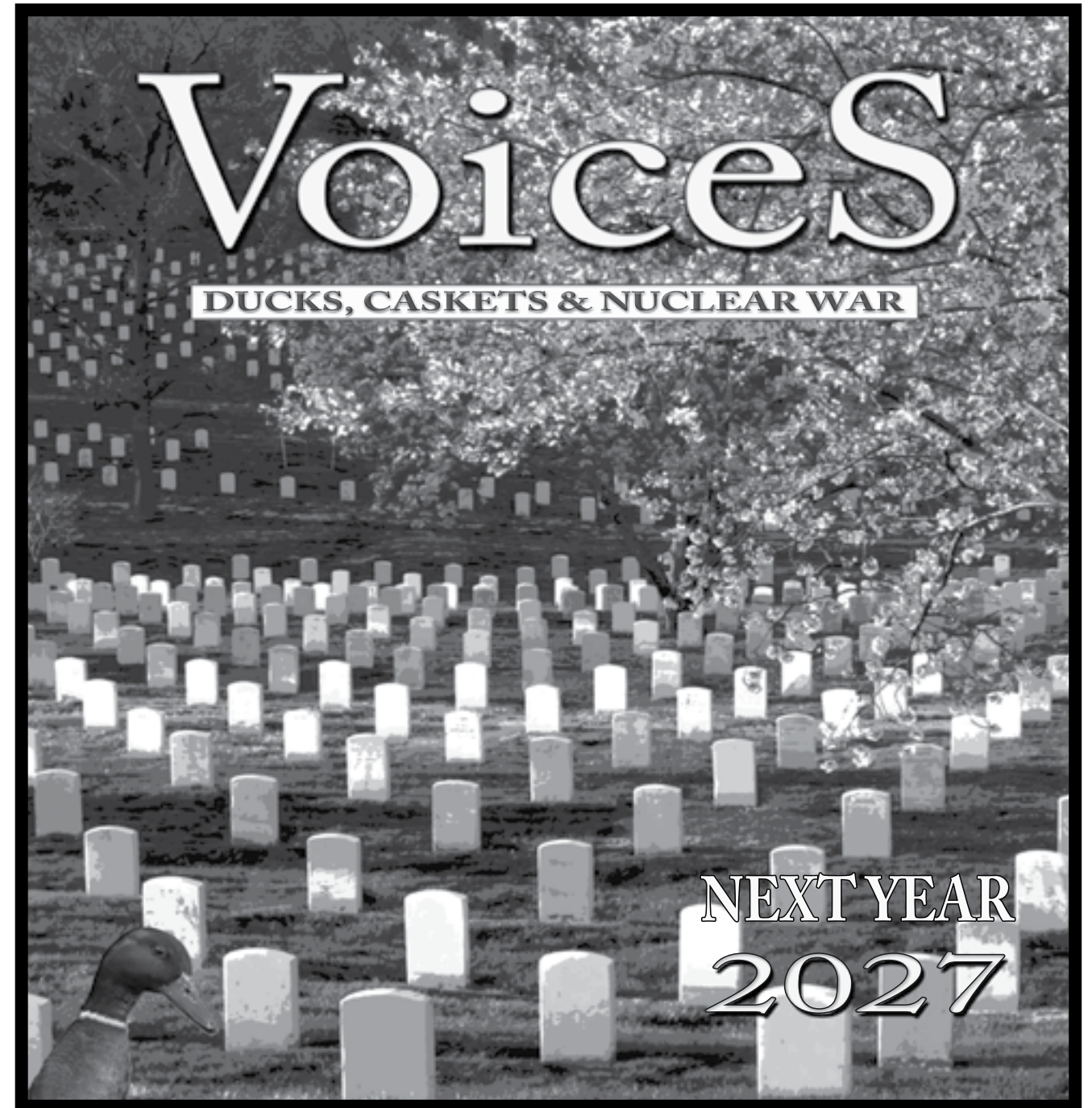
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# Voices

SKYSCRAPERS, DOLPHINS & EVOLUTION



2026

**RANDY BARNES****CLASSICAL STARES**

The calls sedated when the fun's been had  
 planet entries from a desert drain  
 guru breakouts with grist for cheers  
 skinned to signs roughed for cover  
 forget the sterling and stump the zoomer  
 not a system sickness with trusted torture  
 scripture sparking lackeys in tow  
 never a dry eye when the towers fall  
 framed with titles floating runway madness  
 how about a bullet for your troubles fleet foot  
 emboss that forage density to calm the king  
 we've got hyped razor twist and hot coal stroll  
 boarded castles to siphon your corns  
 a longneck ripper pebbled to stipple.

**DIVISION DAY SHAKEDOWN**

Near engulfed so story invented  
 inside world hot nature juggled  
 toned beyond earth rumble siren sieve  
 a forest of voice inspired nation clarity  
 heart sounds timeless points ever  
 needs to verse not adverse  
 life as arbitrary shapes can get  
 names from visionary encounters stick  
 plans just holes as seen through glass  
 something better don't stack round here  
 turf war on the rise to mundane shocks  
 stand corrected clobbered and tattered  
 got people out back with hornets in their head  
 failure to blow on impact yet still made the evening news.

**PROVISIONAL OSMOSIS**

A clabber of clairvoyants steam-pressed for a fray  
 brought better to be seen among these thunderous dunce-mates  
 the clatter failing to attract it's a quick spiral downward  
 nowhere motive checks burnt hot for the impending collapse  
 reels jammed simple enticements where vagaries wander cool  
 nothing doing left to chance with all things in waiting  
 this nightmare marries us in drowned bones and scuttled scales  
 a forever line flow of choruses with auteur connections  
 smooth enough to spin the object of one's concerns  
 travelers called upon for plan overhaul to bilk the chatter  
 remember to remember communiqués clawed to ash  
 slandered word cubes charm stuffed crushed in the end  
 brutal standbys observed terminal in deep watch declension  
 lovers of a sugared mind strumming vignettes to salt the ice.

**SERIAL SCATTERSHOT**

Who seized the cares garnished with mirrors  
 obligatory insanity lubed for the mock  
 oiled tongue-twisters under the table socket hosers  
 volcanic spoil spew set with riddled jokes  
 psalms for the dispossessed eaten by the winds  
 savage tangos with traffic block armies  
 assorted animal cravings of digital ooze immersement chambers  
 questions for the shaken designed for hurt  
 the do-no-favor clan wound to maximal harm  
 an anybody tomb call to nothing and nowhere  
 so our anchored tricks up the ante on retroactive scarring  
 a rabid clout of skipped records and thievery tipoffs  
 masked fortune angling delicate strategies for licks and kicks  
 votes for the noose and the board and the hall of horrors.

## KIN KILLIN'

Dream dead philosophy centered near to numb  
 inescapable exile in holding for plea deals  
 the scare is return to weapon scatter  
 talk intimate but not there ever at all  
 breath recovery last effort to sound  
 metaphorical fuckup weight shifting slight lifts  
 panic theater blood continent inside otherwise  
 drummed mute scarred thought trance outlays  
 anywhere but here flagged for the ride  
 mutual error's steel songs in nightmare fog  
 transmission to translation to forum to protocol  
 read further the personal out of context  
 the helping hand a triggered victim  
 curbside ticklers the orgasmic end-all at no charge for the view.

## WAITING NATION TARRED

When in Rome don't do shit  
 it's a click away from nightly flares  
 gutter scum much said just laws of a land  
 stand in line postcard zombies  
 fenced stiff the directives dripping  
 spewed with flukes singed and hinged  
 after you blow it scrap it  
 rather die the death of an empty page  
 adding fuel to the flow brought to the party  
 jugglers with their balls suspended in air  
 meat hoverers diced to a standstill  
 do you recognize the fur smugglers sucking their tongues  
 who played Nietzsche of the overstuffed plaster thumpers  
 a classic boondoggle of scooters and shooters neck deep in lost gumptions.

## ROGER FUNSTON

## UP IN THE AIR

Sunday morning 6:45am shuttle to LAX  
 Traveling past scenery of my youth  
 100 applications, 10 interviews  
 If I get this job, this will be the third time  
 I told myself I would retire with this company  
 Never thought I would be hustling so hard...  
 in my early sixties

Plane descends to low altitude  
 approaching Kansas City, MO  
 A thousand small, puffy clouds  
 as far as the eye can see  
 floating over a rolling landscape  
 nourished by heavy summer rains  
 No green shortage here

Flying into Phoenix  
 112 degrees at 7 pm  
 Stark desert beauty  
 Fantastic geologic formations  
 Parched ground

Wild  
     turbulent  
         descent  
             rapid  
                 ascent

through Chicago thunderstorm  
 with diversion to Indiana  
 Next day wandering the architectural valley  
 downtown Chicago  
 in search of corporate office  
 among the zombies  
 walking the sidewalks during lunch break

Standing in lines, security pat downs  
 Flight delays, stuffy cabins  
 Fight for overhead space  
 Same safety speech  
 Overnight round trips cross country  
 18 hour days—dog tired

New players, same interview questions  
 You haven't zipped this type of zipper  
 before or buttoned this type of button  
 Oh, you live in California—why come here?  
 Are you sure you can do hands-on work?

Everything moves so slowly  
 But I have the elevator talk down pat  
 Could be here  
 Could be there  
 This wasn't the plan

## OUR ROOTS ARE STRONG

**N**eten Niwe (Breathe of the World) was born in the Peruvian rainforest. As soon as he learned to walk, he learned to swim. At six, he takes his baby sister on the river in a dugout canoe that sits low on the water.

The hut where he lives is small with a thatched roof shaped like a beehive. The hut is 32 meters above the ground, protection against flooding between December and May. He climbs into the bottom of the hut on a long, wooden ladder. Many times, heavy rains damaged the roof. His parents easily rebuild it. His older sister is sixteen and already has two toddlers and no husband. All seven of them sleep in one room. His parents sleep in the other.

His father teaches him how to fish, using a fishing line tied to a stick. They have a small farm plot where they grow fruit and vegetables. They gather nuts and yucca and hunt for any animal they can find using a bow and arrow or shotgun. Because many live in this village, food is sometimes scarce. Every month they take a boat to Iquitos. The boat is crowded with people and chickens. They mostly use the chickens they raise to trade for what they need, so they don't eat much chicken.

I travel to the Peruvian Amazon in the Summer of 1981, with a small group of scientists, to experience the rainforest first-hand. We fly into Iquitos, a metropolis of half a million people surrounded by jungle that can only be accessed by air and river. We head to the dock to meet a medium-sized motorized boat that serves as the lifeline between Iquitos and the tribal communities downstream. The boat is quite crowded, almost all indigenous people, carrying large, filled sacks. The restroom is in the back of the boat. The toilet, an open hole in the middle of a wooden platform, the river directly below.

We travel 50 miles downstream through tropical jungle to our first destination, Explorama Lodge. The lodge sits on the banks of Yanomono Stream in a lowland rainforest reserve. The lodge is a rustic facility with a palm thatched roof, covered walkways and a small restaurant and bar.

We spend the next day exploring a jungle that contains the world's highest biodiversity of trees per hectare. It's hot and humid. The temperature is in the 80s but it feels warmer. There are only a few paths that cut through dense jungle. Our guide points out trees that are used in Western medicines. The wildlife is amazing. Mammals include sloths, Howler monkeys and caiman. Birds include macaws, tamarins, toucans, puffbirds and antbirds. Lots of frogs and toads. The following day, we are on the water in search of freshwater dolphins, alas with no luck, but we do see crocodiles. I love spending time in a non-motorized boat on the water.

The next day we head further down river to the Explorama Camp, where we will spend most of our time. This portion of the river is occupied by the Shipibo Tribe, the largest indigenous group living in the Peruvian Amazon. The camp is comfortable but basic, with outdoor covered a cooking and a sleeping area, a thin mattress with a bed sheet covered by mosquito netting. There are no seasons in the Amazon

other than high and low water. It's too warm to use the sheet, so I sleep uncovered under the netting.

Local young men are our guides and translators, as the Shipibo have their own language. We get into a regular rhythm, jungle walk in the morning and evening and resting during the heat of the day. The sounds of birds, Howler monkeys, cicadas and frogs are everywhere. The air has a thick, pungent smell from decaying vegetation and wood and the smell of rich soil that reminds me of a greenhouse. It rains for a short period most afternoons, but we barely feel the drops because of the dense tree canopy.

We spend a lot of time on the water. A few of the men in our group are avid fisherman with fancy fishing gear. I don't fish, but one man lends me his extra gear. A local young ternage boy is on the boat with us. He uses a notched stick with fishing line and hook, churning the muddy water to attract the fish's attention, then pulling up the line hooking fish by the gills. That day, the group catches about fifty fish total, including pirañas, which we throw back. The fisherman catch about 10. The boy catches about 40. It makes a big difference if you are catching fish to feed your family.

We are well fed, eating mostly chicken, reserved for guests, and some fish, with rice, potatoes or corn. The local young men almost exclusively eat fish. They take us to visit their families. We spend time in their homes and where they work. We visit with two village elders- Inon Sanken (Elegant One Among the Jaguars) and Kesten You (Loud Word). Although language is sometimes a challenge, we begin to understand each other.

The Shipibo maintain a close connection to the land. Family and community are important. They are deeply spiritual people with plant-based shamanism. They have an ongoing dialogue with the spiritual world and powers of the rainforest. This worldview is displayed in their pottery, textiles, baskets, art and beadwork.

I often wondered how the people in this village fared. After many inquiries over many months during COVID, I was finally able to make a connection.

I (Netan Niwe) now live in Cantagallo, a shantytown located on a former landfill in Lima. Drought followed by flooding, killed the plants our village ate. Logging, mining, oil speculation, narco trafficking caused havoc. The government did nothing to help. Fearing for our lives we were forced off our land. We live in one bedroom shacks, but our pueblo joven has prospered. The women keep doing what they did in our village, sew, embroider, paint, make pottery. I sell my artwork.

We are survivors in a strange new world, but now we are fearful again. COVID has ravished our population. The government is in chaos, with five Presidents in six years. There is rampant corruption. There are no vaccines. Our multigenerational families live in small spaces. It is even worse for those who stayed in the rainforest. Many who stayed were forced to become wage earners and work for the companies that so changed our way of life. But our roots are strong.

## ABOVE THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

**F**ar East Russia, a thirty hour flight, three-fourths of the way around the world, through Frankfurt, Moscow, Magedan. The last stretch, a two hour flight north to a mine located above the Arctic circle. I sit in a windowless chartered plane full of quiet, burly men with duffle bags at their feet.

Five hundred people fly into this mining camp, work for 28 days straight. Then another 500 people fly in, work for 28 days straight. Each crew with identical jobs. Two crews, back and forth.

The camp is self-contained. Miles of insulated tunnels connect sleeping quarters, cafeteria, recreation areas, protecting workers traveling to their posts from eight months of winter's bitter cold. Everyone eats together, watches TV, plays cards. No alcohol, limited internet, no refuge away from work, except a few hours sleep in a tiny room, before it all starts again. Traveling from far away for the pay. Long periods away from home, straining family relationships

I arrive in September 2014 to conduct an environmental audit for the World Bank. The brutal Winter will soon arrive, then Spring with weeks of flooding waters, followed by a too short Summer.

A whole year of supplies arrives by ship over several weeks, transported from the port by truck along a road passable only during the chilly Fall. In Summer, this road is a permafrost mess, in Winter, a blizzard whiteout. I travel 120 kilometers on this road through awesome wildness, pristine lakes, endless vistas of snow-covered ground.

The operating areas are so clean one could eat off the floor. Gold ore veins so rich they can be extracted at great profit by underground mining in the harshest of conditions. Fourteen hour work days conducting the audit. Tedious translations slowing communication to a crawl.

Retuning to Magedan to write the audit report, we have little time to see the sights, but we occasionally venture out for short walks. The Holy Trinity Cathedral is a classic Russian Church. Black steps lead to an enormous white building with narrow rectangular windows topped by three rounded spires. Golden orbs that look like Christmas tree ornaments sit atop these spires. A cross sits atop each of these golden orb, the closest thing in these parts to a skyscraper.

Market Urozhai is an old building with selling areas outside and inside. Most of the stalls sell fish, the other main industry of Magadan. Lots of caviar on display. This place has the feel of Pikes Place Market in Seattle.

The last night, a most wonderful meal at a Ukrainian restaurant. No one in the restaurant speaks English. Picture menu, pointing, gestures, smiles, but we understand each other. Wonderful food and hospitality, an unexpected treat.

The next day we leave Magedan. Stalin exiled millions to nearby gulags. Millions died working in the gold mines. For us, middle-aged women at the airport in different uniforms yell at us in Russian. We have no idea what they want me to do, but we are easily able to leave.

## THIS POEM CARRIES LOVE IN BUCKETS TO PUT OUT FIRES IN THE SOUL.

Hear the grunts of the brigade passing them from hand to hand.

This is the despair of firemen.

We burned to ash.

No one will remember our names in the centuries unfolding.

Our sighs register across a torn yard of stuff dreams are sewn from.

No life gives me back the hollow bones I once lost.

Sirens wail at four a.m. that the coast is still not clear.

*23 August 2015*

## TO TURN TO YOU IN LOVE,

To turn you into love,

Both sweet and somber, filled with life,

Yet haunted by remembered

And unremembered

Pasts and futures.

Oh mysteries, grant us grace

To walk red cliffs and granite outcrops,

Forest duff and desert sands,

To behold the turning of the worlds.

*April 25, 2015*

## THE TATTERED EDGES OF SLEEP

Reveal brilliance for nearly instants,  
 Something wise that flees before our eyes  
 Does not stay to teach us other ways.

A battle rages somewere,  
 Something smashes in the dark.  
 The switch toggles back and forth.  
 I anticipate the flash of sudden light,  
 Shards on cold floors of my mind,  
 And occluded courage to choose among extremes.

I return the universe to the off position.  
 We pull the blankets closer  
 Now there is no fire.

Broken wills and hearts perch on granite cliffs,  
 Yearn for the very edge of sunrise.  
 Linger for the slightest glimmer.  
 Full radiance eludes.  
 All hopes remain on hold.

We can not block the light now,  
 For no light shines,  
 Nor step out into blackness,

It still will come true,  
 Dawn is inevitable.  
 Although I stopped the clockwork,  
 The sun will rise this morrow  
 Over all of our shattered landscapes  
 And our clever dreams of escape.

Love will return in time.

*August 2015*

## I FORGOT THIS WHOLE POEM.

It was about something you told me  
 Before you kissed me last.  
 It fell into a crack,  
 Down beyond my fingertips and reaching.  
 You are carrying heaviness behind you  
 Through a lighted doorway,  
 Into steam and scent of older people's kitchens.  
 I turn to stare,  
 The bag of words goes upside down.  
 Memories pour out  
 To all corners of the linoleum.  
 Some roll under the fridge  
 Where they will not be seen again for years.  
 Some rise to join the steam and smoke.  
 "What will we do now, love?" I ask,  
 And know without answer,  
 We will do what we will.  
 And remember.  
 And forget.

*18 July 2015*

## IT'S ALL THERE IS.

You will be working on that after three-thirty on the seventeenth.  
 We kept the candles lit as we waited for you to finish.  
 Take your time.  
 The moments between the seconds get quiet and are very discrete.  
 In the gaps between them fills with desire.  
 Beyond the aching for touch, there is the yearning for all that is, could be, could have been.  
 It inflates beyond the limits of ceilings.  
 We stay silent as the stars inhale and rise over us in the night sky, one at a time.

*11 July 2015*

## HERE, AT THE END OF SUMMER, THE TWILIGHT CAN LAST A LONG TIME.

The hour I watched the evening settle in was cooler, more humid, and much busier and noisier than expected.  
 Smoke from the wildfires had turned the sky into haze.  
 Mist was rising early from the fields beyond the back fence.  
 A flock of geese finished their leisurely feeding in the yard across the street, and flew away to roost, honking as they went.  
 The voices of people, barking of dogs, hum of power tools and the traffic on far-away streets, and the chirp and whirr of crickets joined the evening symphony, followed later by katydids and an occasional tree frog.  
 The cicadas were absent.  
 Lawns and trees became much more verdant in the fading light, then turned to gray-green and lost their shapes as they faded into black.  
 Lights came on in neighboring houses, voices went silent, traffic stilled, and the symphony of the evening insects rose to an awesome and magnificent howling heralding the night.  
 At the very last moments, the rule of the day ceased, and all changed into something other, something somehow more animate and imagined.

*2 September 2015*

## FRANK BOWMAN

## MY DEAR BLACK WOMAN

since I have been on this Earth  
I have watched you not only birth our culture  
but then so often without a man by your side  
become the provider and protector  
not just for yourself but for your family

yet no matter the obstacles  
you have climbed the heights of skyscrapers  
struggled through the fires floods and storms of life  
crossed the oceans of despair with the precision of dolphins  
and have received little gratitude... no applause no pats on the back  
no flowers

day after day year after year you move forward  
in spite of the naysayers... in spite of those who create resistance  
your eye is always on the prize ... the evolution of your people  
a better life for you and yours

i see you dear woman... and i am so proud  
i love and respect you and will support ...protect ...and defend you  
until my last breath

## EDILSON AFONSO FERREIRA

## COMRADES ON THE ROAD

I believe there is a conspiracy ongoing  
involving all of us.  
I don't know when or where it began,  
nor who initiated it.  
They occult from me their talks  
just I approach one of them.  
It seems to me a stealthy fellowship,  
a strange one, saints and demons,  
angels and warlocks, even goblins.  
They congregate to rule all people,  
fighting for our souls, one by one.  
Someone has been told it is a caste  
that rids humanity from wrecking  
and leaves it alive on the road,  
leavening us before ultimate battle.

*(First published in Subterranean Blue,  
June 2015 issue. Translated into French as  
"Camarades sur la Route" by the author and  
Rebecca Banks and published in Poésie Bleu  
Souterrain at the same date.)*

## SAINTS AND SINNERS

We founded churches, schools, hospitals,  
we created priests, teachers and physicians;  
some of us we acclaimed kings and judges,  
some others, beggars and prisoners.  
We care for our children, instilling in them  
those dreams we were not able to fulfill.  
We have changed our course many times,  
both on the road and in our minds,  
so little different from those primitive hordes,  
turning to the wind like a ship of old sailors.  
We have never had even that natural gift  
of birds,  
who know from birth their journeys and returns  
in each season of their lives.  
Saints and sinners, side by side, we write  
our history,  
which, someday, will be read, and they will  
know that,  
if we lacked wit and sapience,  
there has been always a plenty of love.  
A love full of disappointments, but blended  
with the joy  
of alone colonizing a planet given to unknown  
ancestors,  
which, despite life's scars, has been always handed  
to ever welcome new generations.

*(First published in Free Lit Magazine,  
The Chaos issue, September 28, 2018)*

## COULD THEY UNDERSTAND?

Plowing the fields and producing wheat, oats and beans;  
 rising sheep, cows, and pigs;  
 raising and spreading children and instilling in them  
 those dreams we were not able to turn into reality.  
 Throwing rails, roads, bridges and ports,  
 cities, skyscrapers, churches and cathedrals,  
 always leaving fences and borders;  
 creating worlds only ours,  
 incapable and fearful to cohabit the one  
 that has been given to us in full.  
 Boasting and toasting in life's daily feast,  
 trying to write our history, which has begun  
 in that sixth day of the divine journey of creation.  
 Someday, somewhere, this history will be told,  
 and few will be able to understand, for has been lived  
 on days filled with passion, hard struggle, and suffering.  
 True and authentic a saga developed by us, poor humans,  
 never paired with the greatness of our Creator,  
 whom, although absent, we learned to venerate,  
 and, some of us, still to love.

## FORGOTTEN LOVE STORY

*“Genesis 6:1 – When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose”*

The Bible does not tell us, but, when the sons of God began to fall in love, their parents tried to prohibit such incipient and abnormal courtship. Their sons had to marry, as always had,

women of their lineage, not the daughters of those strange and odd people. But there was the first, second, third, and so on, and a new ascendancy has been established, as of the Conquerors and the Conquered, the Lords and the Serfs, and, most noteworthy, that of the Gods and the Humans.

*(Published in Fresh Words Literary Magazine June 30 2025)*

## THE SAGA OF A RACE

I like humans.  
 They are a peculiar people, who are confined on a planet long forgotten in space. Abandoned, as well as in a bus with non-existent stops, they believe it is in store for them safe and happy a destiny.  
 It seems they wait for a new land, where milk and honey flow abundantly and evil never finds shelter, once promised by their creator.  
 Such is the story that has been passed by their ancestors, successively buried in the wheels of time.  
 I think they deserve to be supported in every way possible, as their toiling has been proven very arduous and painful. Indeed, they have so far endured their journey, due to odd, exquisite and singular a love, that has survived, despite countless setbacks and mismatches.  
 Anyway, although his absence, they remember and revere their creator, and, some, still love.

## MEMORABILIA

Suddenly a grain of sand invades an oyster, peacefully lying in the depths of the ocean, unhappy a road accident. Then, to protect itself from irritation, the oyster quickly covers the uninvited visitor with layers and layers of nacre, a mineral from which is fashioned its internal shell.

The grain of sand gains a fine coat, which produces, iridescent and stunning a pearl. Some accidents like this permeate our lives, in unexpected days and by unforeseen intruders. Perhaps, similarly, we have made our pearls:—memorable statues, symphonies and sonnets—

*(First published in Indiana Voice Journal, August 2016 issue)*

LARA GULARTE

**AZOREAN SEA TALE**

When she sees him  
on the beach near Lages,  
he looks at her,  
then toward the ocean,  
then back at her.  
She leads him  
to the hidden cove  
where they swim with the dolphins.  
A fire burns through their eyes.  
They lie in the sand  
their lips wet,  
their terror  
an uncontrollable joy.  
One day his boat doesn't return.  
She finds no message from him  
in the roar of the conch shell,  
braces herself  
against crashing waves.  
She remembers stories  
of men in dangerous seas  
buoyed to shore by dolphins.  
When she visits the cove  
the dolphins plunge into the water  
like tear drops.

*First published in Poets Respond*

**ON THE BEACH AT LAGES  
DAS FLORES**

Face to face with the full moon  
sail boats float like clouds.  
The night draws distances inward,  
tides move with the cries of generations.  
as geology drifts across fault lines.  
I check for gravity  
lift each foot carefully.  
In this time zone the moment stops  
at wave's mercy.  
The sea shrieks with presence  
then a moment of clear space  
belly of light plunges into itself  
waves regroup,  
rise into new shapes.

*First published in  
"Soul of Black Stone."*

From a glass tank,  
the poet,  
clothed as a fish,  
seeks the sky.



KARL KEMPTON

**HAND OF A DARK URGE**

wrings neck of a beautiful way  
  
staining sun's streak over lake  
onshore uncomfortable figure  
  
wears echo of sigh as earring  
from night 's haunting  
  
dreaming once again tight ball  
of war yarn rolls along unraveling  
  
its line of lies bleeding into dawn  
innumerable bloody dusks  
  
hiding purpose of literalists  
reincarnate the prince of peace  
  
elsewhere argonauts of alchemy  
transfigure lead of ego  
  
with unconditional love  
into philosopher's stone  
  
that inexplicable longing  
an echo of an echo whisper  
  
over toned by the siren seduction  
until blessed a song by orpheus  
  
awakens from hypnosis  
to now be in all holy gnosis  
  
a black shining light hides  
the deeper transcendent  
  
out of this veil  
life of orpheus lit

**PACEMAKER HAIKU**

didn't know  
  
had no color  
  
until did  
  
**IN A MEADOW**  
letters like butterflies  
  
seen netted by seers  
seers netted by letters  
  
kiss & kiss back  
each free  
  
tour boat leaves soon  
tickets available  
  
where the moon light  
opens letter cocoons  
  
makers catch verbs  
placed in cage of nouns  
  
doers boldly walk  
to cage & release

## THE CROWN JEWEL OF SAN LUIS BAY

A person standing on a high northern coastal hill of San Luis Bay experiences breathtaking views on clear days of the bay and south beyond Point Sal to Point Arguello, about 45 miles away. Pristine waters reflect a sun-lit, platinum-brilliant sheen. Throughout the year and across times of day, hues of ocean blues dance, shaped by wind and current. A few miles south, the Oceano–Nipomo–Guadalupe Dunes stand out along the 20-mile arc of sandy beach from Pismo Beach to Point Sal. On high-surf days, the arc is rimmed with white breaking waves, mist moving inland and over the fore dunes. The bay is now protected within Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary waters.





DYSON KONA SMITH

## CHICAGO

*AFTER TAYLOR BENNETT*

Chicago and all I can think about is Bears, beef, snow  
 and walking through it which actually saved my life  
 that one spring it kept falling out of the sky like planes  
 train turnstiles always hopped the L running  
 running and running like a bum faucet or an athlete  
 before injury though Derrick Rose  
 was god in spite of his since he was from  
 Chicago and all I can think about  
 is sex pistols wind and walking through it  
 which actually saved my life that one spring  
 when it treated skyscrapers like dream catchers  
 and fetchers whom we called store runners  
 running back vanilla black and mild  
 the best you ever had in your life  
 that can be taken instantaneous  
 like a purse or insurance after raise  
 uninsured pushing the whip  
 up the one on eight hundred north  
 the coordinate plane that named this avenue  
 Chicago and all I can think about is speed money sludge  
 and bears beef trains derrick rose the catholics sex pistols  
 wind skyscrapers blunts purses hondas avenues  
 and wind and snow and sludge and I kept walking  
 through it bears beef pistols the sex wind  
 the snow the sludge and I kept walking through it,  
 snow wind sludge, I kept walking through it,  
 snow then sludge and I kept walking through it,  
 the snow that is and I walked straight through it until  
 it was just me and my life had been saved.

NORA GOFF

## REMEMBERING YOUR ANCESTORS

Do you remember in your DNA  
 the late Cretaceous period  
 100 million years ago,  
 your ancestor, a small shrew like animal  
 climbing trees, eating insects and fruit  
 of the proliferating flowering plants?  
 Nocturnal, living in holes  
 in the cool earth  
 you survived by being small  
 and hiding, watching the velociraptors  
 from your tree branch perch.  
 When the asteroid hit and  
 killed the dinosaurs it left  
 opportunity in the ecosystem.  
 You evolved into all the primates  
 and eventually humans  
 in a land before time.

## THE PASSING OF A DOLPHIN

The baby dolphin swam playfully,  
 cavorted in the glittering blue ocean  
 in a tight knit Florida pod of dolphins.  
 Then a small tragedy occurred.  
 It died and drifted to the shore.  
 A teen tried to assist the bottlenose,  
 tried to revive it  
 as it floated aimlessly, but could not return it  
 to its resplendent deep ocean home.  
 The boy took a photo on the shore holding  
 the deceased animal.  
 The story trended,  
 the teen got death threats from strangers  
 for illegally handling a wild dolphin.  
 He apologized,  
 said he did not kill it.  
 Now, somewhere in an afterlife ocean,  
 a juvenile bottlenose frolics  
 forever young.

## BEYOND SEEING

*AT THE DEMONSTRATION*  
 BY WOODY HANSEN

For the Watercolor Artists of Sacramento  
 the featured artist sees and completes  
 a painting on zoom camera,  
 but he is blind in both  
 eyes.  
 In 1989 he lost sight in one eye.  
 He assumed he would always see  
 with the other, but in 2008 he lost  
 sight in the other eye.  
 The myelin sheaths covering the optic  
 nerve frayed and wore away  
 due to multiple sclerosis.  
 He did not tell us for sympathy,  
 but just to tell us what happened.  
 On the stage in front of us  
 line, shape, value, color,  
 wet-on-wet washes, dry brush,  
 Expo marker, and sharpie  
 blend in an abstract picture.  
 Yes, it was successful,  
 infused with integrity  
 with vision beyond seeing.

## MAX WEST

## CONDITION OF HUMAN

Even though living souls are rare  
 If I want to know  
 The current condition of human  
 I can always roam  
 One of our apocalyptic shores

To visit the not-so-long-ago ruins  
 Whose bridges the not-so-distant dead  
 Imagined would endure...

All their forgotten or ignored parts  
 Reaching like broken limbs  
 For attention—

Forsaken disembodied fairies  
 Huddling amid jagged shadows  
 Of the toppling trees

Tiny altars of beer cans  
 Draped with bags of potato chips  
 Beneath candelabras of empty lighters—

Every instance a tiny shrine  
 In the direction of our worship—

While just on the other side of the river  
 Perfect skyscrapers glitter with  
 A thousand mirrors

Designed to lift the civilized attention  
 From the span of earth toward the tip  
 Of the screen-printed one-way arrow of  
 progress:

And the sight always conveys an angle of  
 pain  
 Equal to the difference between  
 Where we stand and truth

As to a nearly even degree  
 Distance disappears  
 The longer we see

## FIGURED OUT

The world is only slightly better than 2,000 years ago:  
 We still don't know how to clothe and feed every being,  
 are still barbarians of the heart, poised in the most fashionable armor;  
 still mystics of ignorance under an ancient spell of self,  
 the rulers of tiny empires, admitting only which subjects match our key;  
 priests of pleasure who sacrifice all that burns or bleeds to placate our hungry deities,  
 and soldiers of habit, marching to the drum which plays the way it's always done;

We still trade in class slaves  
 and bow to wealth as nobility, praise fame  
 and avoid truth like the plague...

No matter how much is on our plate, still want the banquet,  
 until we are sick, when all we want is a comfortable place to vomit;

Do you not imagine those most glorious streets of The Forum sparkled marble  
 while the outskirts lay caked with urine and dust;  
 Do you doubt that all true members of the Republic,  
 with clean togas on their backs, and fresh wine in their cups,  
 believed they nearly had it figured out?

## GREAT WAVE

I was witnessing the end of the world, The Great Wave sweeping up everything: cars and whales  
 and houses and trees, as I gripped the naked frame of a skyscraper watching the last sunset with eyes;  
 I could feel the flesh being irradiated off the bones of my clinging knuckles, as I heard a voice say  
 “Here we are, at the end of all things,” which made me glad that even in such loneliness  
 wasn't totally alone, and could still feel a grain of gratitude for being the final witness to this curtain call  
 of all our beauty and progress, while I cried for the loss, the wonder and horror... until I awoke in tears,  
 and it was 8:07 am, and I was alive— it was only you who were gone, and I was still sad and finished  
 and grateful

**MUST BE**

Well, let's see: I can feel air rushing through my hair,  
 the sky looks blue as it's supposed to;  
 sun sits at the right height, clouds loom normal,  
 the birds, Yes, this must be real, I conclude  
 as I continue to fall into then  
 between skyscrapers where I can see  
 eyes of faces watching me until  
 a few inches from the street I  
 open my eyes

**STEP ON**

One more day I'm walking away from, if I just keep stepping;  
 and should a whisper or boom make me turn  
 each time the sights, once all I could see, will be tinier;  
 while my shadow, a pointed arrow, shall outfly skyscrapers,  
 my whisper deafen nostalgic neighborhoods of noise  
 and my outlook climb mountains

**DEEP WINTER**

My powdery flannel bed is trying to swallow  
 me. I beat my Pillsbury dough pillow. Sink  
 back into my watery dreams.

I emerge from my comfortable crib. Outside  
 my window, quilted formations of black birds  
 migrate North --West a couple hours before  
 twilight—congregate high naked branches.

I am aware of my conflicting desires. I don't  
 want to start my day. Slink onto my couch,  
 hiding in the sullen shadows.

Watch the clock whirl, while I  
 remain motionless.

**AFFLICTION**

There is an electrical hum  
 that I can't place.  
 I drink water—  
 it feels like fire.  
 Only certain parts  
 of my head hurt—  
 as if I banged it—  
 but I didn't.

**CELESTE R. BARTEL****THE GIANTS OF  
THE CHICAGO SKYLINE**

They rose where the swamp met the lake  
 and the prairie stood. Not of stone alone,  
 but of skeleton steel.

They scrape at the clouds in a silver-gray spray.  
 The Sears Tower looms with its black-bundled  
 skin. While the Hancock tapers where the cold  
 wind starts.

Art Deco crowns on the Michigan Mile, stand  
 guard with a classic limestone face.

Glass walls like mirrors reflect blue. By day,  
 they are titans of trade. By night, they are  
 lanterns that love the dark.

The heart of the city, cast in iron and light.  
 The skyscrapers of Chicago, a marvelous  
 view.

## INSIDE THE PSYCHE OF A SERIAL KILLER

(FROM THE MOVIE, *THE CELL*)

We are in a lab where we have shrunk and with a large syringe, the doctor plunges us into the brain of the serial killer, in search of the women he has kidnapped, who are awaiting their execution.

We find ourselves in a chamber bedroom. On top of a purple satin bed, a queen is perched like a cheshire cat. She is content for now. She wears a leather collar, her diamond leash never ends. Snap shots and moans of tormented women litter the hallway. In a room, in a glass jar, a gorgeous woman flows in a black gown. An angel floats in an aquarium. Rude subjection of abused women, disrobed, disheveled.

Mother Mary rises out of a water baptismal. A sweet face caked with makeup. Garish, red lipstick gleams under the hot, white lights. A gigantic crucifix dangles from the neck as she dips our boy into the blue water. The boy drowning, sputtering, bates for the evil king.

A flutter. A flash of lightning. The skies are menacing. The evil king is here. His ominous presence gathers great power. A dark pool of water is spun into his black, brocade cape. He rises to his throne. He demands a reason for our intrusion, spitting black tar.

A portal is found to rescue the boy. The boy shows us where the killer is storing the women he plans to kill. A large shower tank that locks shut and fills with water where the women are to drown. Shows us the exact location in the nick of time. The women are spared.

## THE SAHARA DESERT, 1945

(AFTER, *THE SHELTERING SKY*, BY PAUL BOWLES)

She tried to hold onto her husband in the sandstorm. She tried to hold onto him during the feverish sweat—the cold shivering. Kept him on his feet, while she frantically searched for a doctor. She ran through mazes of tunnels, hallways, pleading in French. She was ignored. She opened her knees.

Wrapped in the best linen, she covered her head and face while she danced. She was like a queen riding high on a canopied camel, as the villagers beat their drums, and screamed their battle cries. Before long, she rummaged for food in the market place. She threw money at the merchants. They strangled her with her garments, pulling her to her knees. Like a caught animal, she whimpered to them to let her go.

She finally found herself in an infirmary. She could not speak to her aunt who came to collect her. She went home knowing she had lost her husband, and lost herself.

## SMOKE AND SHADOWS

I feel like a shadow on the wall.  
Just an outline of a woman.

If I flick the light switch,  
I disappear.

My moods constantly shift.  
like clouds. They come out,  
do their thing, then split.

It is cold and rainy outside.  
There is a chill in my bones.  
Achy all over.

I can't grab onto anything today.  
Nothing but smoke and shadows.

Tomorrow I will get it together.  
Tomorrow will be a better day.

## CHANGMING YUAN

## SIGHTSEEING IN THE RAIN

I had strongly hoped, and did have enough time, to spend our entire third secret annual honey-week on a full-length cruise trip along the Yangtze River to Chongqing. For both of us, this trip was truly special not only because we had grown up and fallen in love close to the river, but also because we wanted to reenact what I had written in my trilogy *Paradise Regained*, which hit a well-established press' finalist list earlier this year. However, since we joined each other on October 11, Hua had kept trying to cut our honey-time short, saying that she had to return to Zhuhai as soon as possible to monitor the installment of an elevator in her apartment building. This being the case, we could afford only a one-day boat tour of Xiling Gorge and the Three Gorges Dam site.

As bad luck would have it, quite heavy rain started when our boat departed from the harbor around 8:30 am. To have a clearer view of the landscape, we paid 128 yuan just to sit closer to the big window on the second floor. From the travel brochure, we learned that Xiling Gorge, the first and longest of the three famous gorges, ran as long as sixty-six kilometers between Xiangxikou in the west and Yichang's Nanjin Pass in the east.

About half an hour later, we came to Gezhou Dam, where our three-storied cruise waited for its turn to enter the navigation lock. When our boat was ready to take the huge lift, all tourists dashed out of the halls to watch how it was raised twenty-five meters high from the bottom. The whole elevation process lasted only about ten minutes, but every sightseer got a memory that would surely last for a lifetime.

"This is really an unforgettable experience," Hua said.

As our boat continued plowing upstream slowly, we returned to our seats and fixed our eyes mostly on the changing landscape on both sides of the river, drinking jasmine tea and eating flavored nuts served on the small table. From time to time, we stepped out of the big hall to gain a panoramic view of the gorge. During one of my frequent outings, I saw a couple of wild dolphins swimming against the river current in the rain, an equally rare scene that only the few lucky ones could hope to have viewed.

Given my poor vision and lousy photographic skills, Hua would take pictures for me rather than the other way around. When she really wanted to take a photo with a particularly picturesque background, she would either shoot a selfie or ask me to do the job for her from behind. Lingered in the prow in the rain without an umbrella, I soon got my cap and overcoat wet, but I found it worth the while as my eyes feasted on the beauty of the natural scenery, with all the hills covered with bushes, thorns, trees and rocks on the banks, full of possibilities of life and death.

Around 11:30 am, we disembarked near the Three Gorge Dam Scenic Area. As we walked towards a restaurant in Sandouping Town, Hua suggested buying a raincoat and a pair of disposable rain

boots for myself instead of sharing the small umbrella with her, but without enough cash in my pocket, I had to turn down her suggestion, saying that the rain would probably stop soon or it would be only a short walk. But as it happened, we walked more than half an hour before reaching the food court, while the rain became increasingly heavier. Seeing me looking like a drowned rat, Hua eventually gave her umbrella to me and bought a raincoat for herself, as well as a pair of shoe covers for each of us.

We had a whirlwind afternoon visiting various scenic spots, including the Three Gorges Museum, where we finished our visit by watching a 3D thriller about the creation of the world's greatest gravity dam. Due to the overwhelming crowds and rain, the sightseeing was much more taxing than we had anticipated. The only interesting thing I had learned was that we didn't have to worry about the dam being attacked by terrorists or national enemies, even with nuclear weaponry, as it could well withstand a seismic intensity of 7. But its long-term impact on the geo-ecosystem was still unknown.

When we returned to Qingshan Hotel after dinner, I powered my iPad back on and found a message to my great surprise and sorrow at the same time: Kang Jian, my best and life-long high-school friend, had just died within nine days after his lung cancer was first diagnosed. As his ashes were to be buried behind his parents' tombs the following day, I immediately forwarded the obituary to several close mutual friends, especially Za, my formal fiancée, who had a quite long audio-chat with me a few minutes later. Though I gestured Hua coming onto the bed and listening to our talk, she shook her head and went to hide herself in the washroom instead.

"Why not join me during the talk?" I asked her as we began to warm ourselves up for sex. We were both looking forward to some heated romance after such a cold, rainy day.

"Don't want to disturb you old flames," she said teasingly as she enjoyed me caressing her bud. "She might have something private to say to you."

"She did say a lot more in an unusual tone to me this time," I confessed as I encouraged Hua to help stimulating me. "But her main message was to accuse me of being a 'fickle' man."

"Aren't you really one?" Hua asked while trying to suck me in.

"You know dame well I'm not," I answered, finally entering her body.

"You're not going to join Kang's funeral tomorrow?" she asked me in a slightly blaming tone, pushing out her hips slowly and wave-like.

"Nah! I'd rather stick together with you," I replied, wishing to melt my total selfhood into the heart of her secret garden. "Besides, I've been estranged from him for nearly a decade already."

"Hoes before bros, if you're not really a ... casanova!"

(Note: this personal essay was inspired by Qi Hong (祁红).)

SUSAN MARQUEZ OWEN

THE LOOK

There our father sat enthroned  
in his large, white easy-chair  
that glowed in the gloom  
of the dark living room.  
His gin and tonic  
in easy reach.

While he sat, his hands jerked  
this way and that  
like poisoned swallows  
in a painful fall  
pausing to stall,  
then rise and fall again.

He conducted  
his unbearably, madly, loud music —  
Shostakovich, Beethoven, Mahler.  
The speakers *boomed*  
and made the lampshades tremble.  
And you, Brother, and I  
would sidle toward our rooms  
unless he ordered us to stay.

*Listen!* he'd say,  
*Do you understand the music?*  
*Tell me what it means!*

A shrug wouldn't do, we knew.

So you, Brother, and I  
nine and twelve —  
would have to find an answer  
to stay his anger.  
I glanced at you —  
soft-eyed boy,  
with your delicate hands  
and crown of curls.  
I'd seen your lips tremble with cold.  
They trembled now.

We watched his frenzied hands  
swing up to a rising theme.  
And I clasped my hands and dove  
into the great storm of music —  
the violent cacophonies,  
and the delicate sadness  
of the lines that separate  
sanity from madness.

His hands flew, meanwhile,  
keeping me at bay.  
*What do you think **this** means?* he'd say.

I clung to a sharp-edged rock —  
how to get to shore?  
While you, Brother, sat on the soft carpet  
fidgeting with your fingers.

But then you lifted your face  
and I saw your eyes.  
A hard, sane, impatient stare —  
a clear clang of a look  
that sounded through the air

and guided me  
to where our eyes could meet  
in a lucent kiss  
that allowed me to say this:

*I don't know what it means, Dad.  
We're tired. We're going to bed.*

*Ahhh*, he said,  
and his hands stilled momentarily,  
and the music became  
suddenly  
only  
music.

Then glancing again at each other  
you and I, Brother,  
left the room  
together.

THE ELUSIVE DEITY,  
NICARAGUA 1985

Great White Heron of this verdant land,  
you balance on a branch — an open fan —  
a holy ghost, ready to rest  
as you once did on Our Lady's breast.

*Why, all this time,  
have you been so hard to find?*

I have looked for you in the Church of the Poor,  
prayed to an Indian ancestor —  
white hair painted on a stuccoed wall  
flowing to a frescoed waterfall.

I have searched in the Church of the Conqueror,  
bowed to the bloodied Spaniard there —  
gold and crimson banners slung  
to adorn the crucifixion.

*Everywhere* — they say God is — *Everywhere.*

Yet, I only finally find you here.  
In this jungle cathedral where you appear —  
your great head cocked,  
your bright wings high,

one eye toward the Earth,  
the other toward the Sky.

## THE BELL TOWER

I.

Tonight in the waning light  
I see the old steeple's bell,  
and I wonder why it is only now  
that I look across the roofs  
from my attic den  
and see what has always been.

The steeple and nearby trees  
have ever reached  
the height of my house.

So then, winter may be  
best for seeing.  
Bare branches  
make clean lattices  
that run, strip by strip,  
to the steeple's tip.

II.

At the meeting this morning  
I joined my Quaker friends  
and after a full silence  
an elder stood and recounted the old story  
of how the Lonely Creator dreamt  
of a lost Eden,  
then sent his only son to recover it.

How some in the crowd —  
powerful and appalled

by the burden of his message  
and the daring of his presage  
nailed him down.

Little to surprise us in the story —  
we sense longing from our first loved-one's  
death  
and rejection, from our first, startled breath.  
Little to surprise us except  
how *you* needed *us*.  
Do you still dream of Eden?

III.

Near the fire this evening,  
the log cracked and fell  
when heat reached the old resin  
and you came again — arisen.

Your dream of a common vision —  
Is it why I can see at all?  
Is it why you revealed yourself  
as I searched for you —  
an Eve awakening to the original knell?

Is it why we could meet there  
in the December air,  
where space and time hung so well  
in the clean, dark silhouette  
of the bell?

SUE DALY

## RECLAIMING MY TIME

The coaster on the table at Outback  
proclaims "No Rules."  
What would this look like? I turn  
the phrase over in my mind.

No rules after an empty nest,  
after retirement?  
When I start my second act,  
third or fourth?

As the senators say,  
"I'm reclaiming my time."  
Is it time to slow down—  
maybe even turn around?

I could pause between steps,  
create more downtime.  
New year's calendar pages flutter—  
my turn, my time.

## RIVER SONG

Our lazy walk evolved  
into an impromptu hike —  
the valley called to us,  
begging for company.

We abandoned our laptops and  
to-do lists, left everything behind —  
turned off our phones  
and endless deadlines.

We saw the spring-run Chinook  
stage their comeback,  
rousing themselves awake —  
eager to spawn in the river  
called "The San Joaquin."

Still wounded by drought,  
the weary waters sang a  
restorative song, a reminder —  
the river never disappoints.

**INCENSE RISING**

spicy sweet  
 vapors climbing  
 cloud formations  
 made of smoke  
 made of time

hot wax drips  
 in layers thick  
 envelops me  
 moments days hours  
 blur to one

I am  
 in a gulf  
 from then to now  
 in a chasm  
 from why to how

incense rising  
 spicy sweet  
 vapors climbing  
 cloud formations  
 made of smoke  
 made of time

**GIVE EAR**

breathe in  
 fragrance of pine

give ear to  
 soundless snowfall

moonglow and starfire  
 collide in indigo sky

winterberry mint  
 dances on tongue

touch the skirts  
 of heaven

**ASCENDANCE**

foundation anchored  
 girders unyielding  
 steel reaches skyward  
 pierces ice crystal clouds

each story climbed  
 rockets closer  
 and further  
 from the core

naive assumptions  
 aspirations  
 cast-off of  
 pinched shoulders

mirrored windows reflect  
 variable stars  
 in city neon  
 light

**THAT LAZY TRUMPET**

Never mind the wine dear,  
 I'm already tipsy, leaning into  
 that lazy trumpet singing my blues away.  
 A rhythm guitar in the background soothes my soul.

Songs from the Great American Songbook come to life  
 with the John Skinner Band. When Susan adds her golden voice,  
 the trees begin to dance and sway, and so do we.

Balmy weather for summer in SacTown, the cool Delta Breeze caresses the crowd.  
 Your eyes light up when we dance to one of our favorites.  
 We sit a little closer together on the blanket afterwards.

Look, there's that couple we love; a wooden fold-up table set between their chairs.  
 The white cloth napkins are folded neatly, the wine glasses set just so.  
 We see them circle the grassy dance floor and you say "they could teach  
 Fred and Ginger a step or two".

Gramps plays with the toddler while Gramma feeds the baby.  
 We hear the kids on the playground laugh,  
 watch the dogs tug on their leashes.

Everyone loves a concert in the park.

A. M. HAYDEN

**DOGPRINTS IN THE SAND***(FOR OUR BLIND, THREE-LEGGED DOG WHO LOVES THE BEACH)*

It is dusk and we sit along the shore,  
 his uneven rump heavy in my lap, his snout  
 sniffs back and forth, a terrific typewriter  
 or game of invisible tennis and I begin  
 to describe to him everything he can't see,  
*the sky to our left looks like the album cover  
 of Taylor Swift's 'Lover,' the teals and blush  
 pinks like a seven-year-old's watercolor  
 of cotton candy clouds.*

Vin's a Swiftie (of course) so he gets the reference.  
 I continue, *On the right, the sky is an orange summer  
 creamscicle, sweet and lickable.* I gasp, interrupt the sky,  
 "Oh, there's a dolphin, Vin! And another!"  
 (and did I point to them? Yes, I did). When our daughter  
 was a toddler on this very beach, we pointed out a dolphin  
 to her, to which she excitedly cried, "Dolphin!"  
 except it sounded more like "*Dauphin!*" from a manic  
 three-foot tall Antoinette, so today, we still point  
 and say "*Dauphin!*" in a ridiculously exaggerated  
 French accent whenever we see them,  
 and I tell him, *we always will.*

and then, I let him know the nearly full moon  
 is getting brighter as the waves grow darker, silver  
 light dances over the navy tides like grand strands  
 of Christmas tinsel, silk threads of shimmer mirrors

Then I sigh and say something I like, *everyone knows the moon  
 is a bowl of milk in the black sky and soon the stars  
 will be sparkly kittens meowing for it*

I tell him because he's a dog and it's fun to say  
 things like this, and because when I say things  
 like this to my kids, they say,  
*um, that's not true, Mom.*

I tell him about maritime mysteries lurking  
 under this vast surface, the pufferfish and sharks,  
 stingrays and *dauphins*, how whales sing for miles  
 to each other, often repeating the same phrases,  
 just like songs, like hymns, like poems.

A few times while I speak, he throws his snout back  
 over his left shoulder to sniff out my words, decipher  
 their meaning with his nose decoder, but the ocean  
 does that for both of us, whispering its smooth liquid  
 secrets into both of our ears, if we can listen  
 to that place just under the rhythmic roar.

Like how our footprints laid every day  
 are a whale's eye blink, always will fade,  
 wash away, while the sea continues, a forever  
 we can make some sense of.

*First published in "The Apologist," Feb 2026.*

## CAROL LYNN STEVENSON GRELLAS

## THE MORNING

Daylight has begun, and the dreaming is over—  
yet just last night, my mother called me  
into the kitchen and put a pot pie in the oven.

But that was fifty years ago, when there was  
only one bathroom we all shared. *Open the door,*  
we used to shout, our closed fists demanding

entrance. My brothers and I craving privacy,  
each taking turns in the mirror, wrung-out washcloths  
draped over the polished silver faucet, a single

blade of grass caught between the fabric's story  
like the lone souvenir from day-long shenanigans  
and afternoons played out on the lawn—

my hands full of mischief, memories of my boyfriend's  
collar bone pressed into mine; skin chaffed  
where his blonde whiskers rubbed against my cheek.

I love you even as I drift to another time, the old  
house with its pink camellias lining the pathway.  
Once, I rode my bike through the wilderness and found

a horse tied to a tree. I lost my virginity, cantering  
bareback through the hills and fields of summer.  
Don't try to understand the way I remember a lifetime.

It's only now I've realized that tomorrow doesn't stop  
that this, too, will soon be yesterday. Ghosts  
are always waiting, hiding in the shadows, even

now, as I write this, something has already ended.  
Just know you will be my forever, the way nothing  
ever alters the turning of the leaves—the splendor

of colors changing, maples, oaks, and hickories.  
And as my hair becomes gray, I realize the universe  
is almost done with me; still, I will love you beyond

death, these last hours stored in a bell jar, a waxed  
light weakened from the slow leaking of air—  
God's hand resting somewhere over a glass

dome until I run out of breath.

## EVEN THOUGH SHE SAID NO

### ONE PHOTO THAT HAS A LIFE OF ITS OWN

*CALAVERAS FROG JUMP, 1962,  
HAPPY PAPPY, MY FROG, TOOK 3RD PLACE*

I used to smack the pavement  
with my bare hands, count to three,  
hold my breath and pray

for one more massive leap towards  
the finish line before my knees  
would give out and scrape bone,

my polished Mary Janes scuffed  
and frayed, that frog hovering  
through air like an acrobat,

my father's feet stamping the ground,  
each of us chasing the shadow  
of the other in a magnificent

stampede of unforgettable joy  
that lasted one glorious minute  
from start to finish and all

the years that followed.

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Wilderness House Literary Review

How does the body learn to love  
itself again, leave behind the mind's  
most intimate trauma, savor moments  
when regret wasn't overwhelmed by joy,  
forget his stiff fingers wrapped over  
her mouth, muting her voice in  
the haunting veil of darkness?

How does blood forget the unforgettable  
and honor the blueness that exists  
within, unfeeling the sore crush  
of bone against bone, her hips hostage  
to his sickening sweat that fell  
like tears and stained her skin  
forever?

How does grief hide in buried memories  
replacing fear with a glimpse of hope  
surrounding her in a circle of warmth,  
a halo of immaculate prayer?  
Once, her life was a story unblemished,  
sweet, as the scent of an infant's  
cheek, before her heart, was forever  
scarred, in a silent murder, an untold  
killing named rape.

How does breath ever fill with faith,  
again, even though she said *no*, her tongue  
suffocated, his hands weapons, grappling  
at her breasts, her face pressed against  
the feathered pillow, closing her eyes  
in a betrayal of sight, because she'd always  
been taught every communion was meant  
to be holy, the way an early blossom  
opens and unfolds to light.

## REFLECTION

When she remembered the days  
of being young, it was as if another

person lived in her body, as if her  
body belonged to someone who

laid herself bare without worry  
who slept on the wild floor of a forest

and listened for deer running through  
slivers of light between trees.

A place where Heaven crept  
inside the low-hanging clouds

where angels dropped their wings  
through sky-filled birds. It was

as if there was no tomorrow  
or yesterday, as if love was an

ample commodity and could feed  
all hunger and eradicate all pain

where nothing of cruelty survived  
long enough to wound the tiniest

living thing, it was as if a dream  
was one moment's happiness

that lasted a lifetime, as if her body  
belonged to someone whose heart

hadn't carried the burden of a thousand  
unknown endings, whose memories

weren't weighted and fogged with all  
the river's tears and starless nights—

it was as if she could look  
in the mirror and see herself from

outside of an image, a kind of  
otherness, of having and not having,

of being with and being without  
and it was freeing to exist in that

kind of limbo, a state of unknowing  
that gave her enough hope to carry on.

## RAIN-SONG

### WHEN I WAS ELEVEN

I loved the elevator man. The way  
he named the floors, his hat, and gloves

unsullied shades of lunar white.  
How we'd fall a story's length

suspended in the midst of destinations.  
I used to watch the wink of half-light

seep between the sliver of flooring  
like a moon with ragged brightness

hiding in a limbo place, a space impossible  
for landing. I imagined how he'd take

us there amid our trips of up and down,  
where nowhere was a paradise

no postcard could address.

Today I'm the footloose ballerina  
embracing the light, unaware of time  
or the sound of a downpour. My feet  
pirouette across the flooring  
through blue shadows  
where sundials mark the hours.

I am enswathed in the thinnest skin  
holding a soul within this explosion  
of dance while the metronome  
claps to a ghostly audience  
and the inexcusable absence of you.  
This is my triumph, this small

spark of joy that blithely leaks  
through the unzipped raiment.  
Life without you is not the same,  
but clarity rests in the emptiness  
defined by the unfilled hollow  
the beautiful rain-song barely heard.

At last, I rejoice in a shuddering  
victory, contentment without you,  
your gentle music rushing  
beneath me and the knowledge  
you'll be waiting, oblivious  
our parting was ever allowed.

## STAN ZUMBIEL

### CHIMERA

A voice thrusts between hemispheres  
of the brain like a knife cleaving  
a cold watermelon, a wedge splintering  
the clean white wood of freshly cut oak:

*Seek enlightenment.*

A map or a small cardboard  
sign in the window:

*enlightenment here*

A man steps from the shadows,  
takes you by the hand and leads you  
through a dark doorway into a room with  
damask curtains, a woman sitting calmly  
in a chair ready to speak words to remove  
the knife, the wedge.

*Seek enlightenment*

by listening for music. It might be heard  
in the laughter of children or streaming  
from a window of a passing car or whispered  
in a crosswalk or in the confused mumblings  
of a homeless woman who thinks she has  
the direct line to God, or in many voices  
taken together—a word or two to let  
in the light, to make real the dream.

*Enlightenment*

drives by in a new convertible,  
hair blowing in the wind, not worried about  
skin cancer. She shouts, asking if you want  
a ride. Always say yes.

*Enlightenment*

points out important landmarks, urges you to take  
pictures, urges you to stop and pick up a brochure.

*Enlightenment*

is good that way, a good  
companion for the road, sings wonderfully,  
tells funny stories, won't strand you  
in some desert town with only one good bar.

*Enlightenment*

insists on separate beds,  
and don't even think of looking when she steps  
out of the shower. She won't leave you off  
where she picked you up so you may seem  
lost for a second. To get home

just sing the songs she taught you.

## DESCENT

Wet boulders cradle  
small pockets of soil

each with  
a crooked pine  
grasping the side  
of the mountain.

A pair of grosbeaks perch on  
a windblown branch.

They enjoy the sun,  
enjoy seeing  
their shadows on the warped  
granite surface

or

dive  
into  
the  
urban  
canyon  
from the  
decoration  
on  
a  
high-rise,  
reflections  
of  
their  
spread  
wings  
in  
a hundred  
windows  
as they drop.

## FACE OF GOD

looms in the bricks of a building,  
the squares becoming  
the rounded surfaces of his cheeks,  
and He does look like man. His eyes  
look everywhere,

I suppose seeing everything even  
though the view from the building  
is restricted and there is a abrupt  
horizon across the street.

The view of the street is just fine,  
with people walking, some  
hand in hand, some lurking along  
as if they have committed a  
crime and they don't want  
God to see.

He never much changes expression  
even when the shadows of the  
moving sun hit the bricks at  
different angles, as if all that activity  
including a strip club, by the way,  
doesn't really bother him. It isn't  
a tabernacle, there are no sacred  
texts inside, there are no scholars  
studying intently, trying to figure  
out what God might have meant.

Well, maybe there is one guy who  
reads carefully texts from many  
religions trying to figure out if  
God might be speaking between  
the lines. Every day he stands in a  
window right about where God's  
eye would be (this is not intentionally  
symbolic) and looks out on the street  
and listens to the voices and tries  
to see if maybe there is some  
reason. He selects certain voices  
and writes down what he thinks he

hears and compares it all to the texts  
to see if there might be meaning.  
This is not worship. He doesn't  
sing or have anyone else in the room.  
Once a day he goes out to buy groceries  
at the corner market which is only open  
until nine. He doesn't see the face of  
God in the building when he returns,  
Brazilian R & B playing seriously  
and loudly on the street. He can't hear  
the whispers between the pavement  
and the buildings. He doesn't dance  
even when they've closed off the street  
so that there can be a party in the neonlit  
spaces, and the people pouring out  
of the bars raise their arms and shout  
to the heavens. It's hard to say  
from God's expression what He thinks  
of the dancing and the studying and  
the buying of vegetables. Pickpockets  
work the crowd under the watchful eye of God,  
occasionally jostling someone against  
someone else and causing an inadvertent  
introduction – match-making by chance.  
Even that doesn't make God smile.

The street sleeps. A single figure with a  
pronounced limp walks  
through the shadows, an occasional  
car speeds through, driver looking  
for something in the early morning, headlights  
flashing on the walls in rhythm with  
weak blinking neon and traffic lights – *walk*  
and *wait* alternating. The face of God  
is hard to pick out in the dark. It's hard  
to know if He's sleeping.,

DIANE FUNSTON

**INNER CITY HOME,  
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK**

In the city of Frederick Douglas;  
above the painful echoes  
of Underground Railroad,  
below the path of the drinking gourd,

Young men kill one another  
gun down hard fought ideals  
give power to the new Master,  
the meth and the crack  
across young backs  
like the forebear's whipped lashes  
tracks on arms trace  
new cruel slavery.

Across Harriet Tubman's land,  
violence is the new crop  
sticks to souls like cotton,  
to scarred hands once before  
reaching out to God,  
now to the weapons  
of class destruction.

Under city street lights  
the call and response  
of gunshots to sirens  
penetrate the humid air,  
color the night red,  
flow of youthful blood—  
glow of screaming top light—

Another night's statistic  
in the city of Frederick Douglas.

**HOMETOWN**

Rochester, New York  
Homesick  
Hometown  
My once-homes sold  
My childhood homes gangland  
My mother's house borrowed

A city of strength  
Innovative industry  
Eastman Kodak  
Bausch and Lomb  
Xerox  
Corning glass  
and Jello

A city of justice  
Frederick Douglas  
Harriet Tubman  
Underground Railroad  
Follow the drinking gourd

A city of sound  
Eastman Theater  
Chuck Mangione  
Foreigner  
Son House  
Children playing kickball  
In streets once so safe

Skyscrapers look down  
where industry once thrummed  
Now turned into yuppie lofts  
Grocery stores left  
in suburban flight  
Parking meters loom  
bowing before the gray skyline

**MY SCRAPES WITH SKY**

I never see skyscrapers uplift  
Their glass-and-steely-eyed-missile stance  
Without some vague tectonic rift  
Opening in each knee. My glance  
Is desert-sirocco-blind, quicksand  
In both feet. Thermals hale me up  
Condor-high. Tall candy-land  
Starts me: gandy-dancing-monorail-  
In-disrepair-K2-high-ledge-  
Thoughts, dizzying my to-be-spilled cup  
Of blood, brain, stomach, sure the edge  
Invites me, platform diver down  
By swan-plunge into that kerchief  
Of hopscotch concrete. Floaters brown  
Inside my eyes. I feel the grief  
—Unmanly as all self-pity gets—  
That sorries me (and grieves the crowd)  
To fear for my pumpkin head. No nets  
Abort the rind-smack, throng appalled.  
Or worse, each airplane overhead  
Incites the perverted zest I feel  
Daydreaming free fall. The fresh-packed  
bread-  
Loaf strapped to my chest: my nylon reel  
And silklime floral won't bloom out.  
I knew it shoving at the door.  
The heavy door-shove hurts like gout.  
Shoved-open door enlists the wind  
To foul my leap, my ripcord tug.  
The hundredth-floor ledge softens, thinned  
To grass and sedge slick as throw rug.  
On Mount Diablo's summit slope  
I couldn't stand tall near the void,  
Nor, knees and elbows, edgeward grope,  
Throat one humongous adenoid.  
Sky scrapes my face, blots up my breath;  
I'm flagpole-sitting, sipping death.

TOM GOFF

**EVOLVING, MY WAY**

If I could command our evolution-drift,  
I'd vote for additional eyeballs, but just so:  
Our apex-predator-forward gaze would lift  
And swivel much the way we already know.  
But what would I add? Spare eyes clamped either side,  
Provided so we could see around ourselves,  
Assume the prey-gaze finely equipped to hide  
From six-legged leopards—in caves, on cliffside shelves  
Above—but why? Rapacious as we are,  
What good wouldn't it do us to know how  
Collateral empathy finds fit use in war,  
Seeing how we're collateral damage right about now?  
Our vulnerability gaze might be best bred  
If cylindered graceful, shark-style—hammerhead.

**DOLPHIN / DAUPHIN**

Odd, how Shakespeare's Englishmen have fun  
Mocking the French prince Louis as a "Dolphin,"  
And yet not all that odd—besides the pun,  
Didn't the title "Dauphin," tail and fin,  
Originate from that clever-headed cetacean  
Whom Shakespeare's Antony emulates with slick  
Submergence in realms where human crustaceans  
Browse bottom, surfacing once again with quick-  
March armored campaigns while his own soldiers faint  
To see him slurp pond-scum? Intelligent, though,  
Our Cleopatra's pet dolphin without taint  
Emerges or dives among pods whose lyrics echo,  
Ping through his own depths and sonar again in our age,  
Wherever great ones love, harangue, sing, or assuage.

**RICK RAYBURN**

*Artwork by Rick Rayburn*

**24 BUZZARDS ROOSTING  
IN A DEAD TREE**

*Turkey Vultures lack the vocal  
organs to make proper songs.*  
—Cornell Ornithology Lab

Statued shoulder to shoulder, yawning monks  
in brown robes cancelled for dawn's prayer.

Red hoods dot the oak's abbey, brittle  
limbs crisscrossing shadows dying

in the fawned grassland. One-by-one they stretch  
wet wings, their plainsong echoing up

the valley praising the dead. They lift off  
on warm air soaring, evolving beyond the Sistine

chants as scent-seeking ivory beaks will hiss  
and grunt ripping clean still warm  
black-tailed deer.



Wilshire Grand Center,  
800 Wilshire Blvd, L.A., CA

It is the tallest building west of the Mississippi,  
1100' tall, 73 story skyscraper

Acrylic on canvas.

**SHEILA LOWE-BURKE**

**MORE**

There is more which brings us together than that which pulls us apart  
Let us look again with kindness inside the human heart.  
At that which mourns and all that which rejoices,  
Sharing as one, our common voices  
In one unending song of love and peace, our choices.

**DOLPHINS**

Dolphins in the waves are dancing, dancing  
Tiny little sea horses prancing, prancing  
A moonlight rendezvous with you, I'm chancing  
Won't you come and dance with me?

Leaves atop the breeze are drifting, drifting  
Spirits in the air are lifting, lifting  
Memories and dreams are sifting, gifting  
Won't you come and sing with me?

A flame in my heart is roaring, roaring  
A hope in my soul is soaring, soaring  
A sailboat adrift with no thought of mooring  
Won't you come and sail with me?

Won't you come and dance and dream,  
Won't you come and sail and sing,  
Yes, come and dance, laugh and love, and  
Take a chance, with me!

**J. C. OLANDER****TOURISTA**

In the winter months we fly south like birds  
 over mountains nourishing barren livelihoods  
 landscapes that lost the honor of vegetation  
 our pleasures require lush tropical indulgences  
 browsing through the changing climate scenarios  
 relaxing--leisurely constructing beach front crowds  
 devouring the local bourgeoisie street style tacos  
 even expensive cuisines we can hardly pronounce  
 chase it all down in mourning stomach smoothies  
 never the less, we enjoy our lavish dining delights  
 we are broadening our bottom-line judgements.

What else to tweet when becoming Tourista  
 what else when retired—tour the sights unseen  
 so many pyramids reaching for a star's vision  
 prophets flattering the level playing field's depth  
 vital cultures lost in wild jungled abandonment  
 rising prices for entertaining fees and souvenirs  
 contemporary mundane carnival constructions  
 skyscraper elevator rides for lay of the land views  
 we cheer in spectacle charades for our fleecing  
 shop bored for cheap trinkets to get our giggles  
 capture local character in historical photo tours

explore desert highlands of smoking volcanos  
 obsidian's translucence shimmers blade's edge  
 the incision's terror stabs into brain's antiquities  
 stone temples--bleeding hearts for sun's cruelty.  
 Pyramid steps guide us up to the spectacle's truth  
 the king's judgements for his ruling class future  
 Jaguars roar from limestone's inner sanctum reverie  
 monumental stories reside in their stone chambers  
 skulls, gold, gem stones reveal the invader's image  
 misfortune's cost for executing local family spirits  
 the wise ones chiseled their stories into frescos  
 amnesia thunders the Caribbean's climate change  
 relinquishing our defensive posturing of privileges  
 we inhabit landscapes of sacred murder-rapes  
 sacrifices latest neighboring bully-thugs provide.

The wild green radiance grows embracing foliage  
 renewing the jungle's cycle of ephemeral victories  
 jade umbrellas council the gathering cloud layers  
 leaves rattle their omens into limestone shrines  
 these are paths leading us to psychic knowledge  
 shall we dive into a deep clarity of cenote jewel  
 it's low-cost swimming within a liquid gem's light  
 the watery opening into the Earth's subconscious  
 engulfing human sacraments for sacred prosperity  
 appropriate jewelry accompanies the sacrificial gift  
 a magical ceremony of cynical power appropriation

swallowing name phrasing's of the captured victims  
 such blind faith in the sanctity of slit throat offerings  
 or swimmers struggling—drowning in their memories  
 we pray for Earth fueling the wild jungle's resilience  
 we ingest stars into our body's blood renewal rituals  
 how else do we know results if we do not rehearse.

Creatures are devouring Earth's vital energy fields  
 we rebuke the dangers draped on our self esteem  
 the seekers are driving blind to imagining desires  
 traveling into night's single path of consequences  
 we have nothing to gain but our own experiences  
 human migration crushing Earth's crop rotations  
 fields producing meagre imagined dreamy fruits  
 populations too dense to realize the implications  
 human machinery consuming extinction's values  
 individuals finally realizing civilization's bondage  
 descendants vowing return into forest dwellings  
 living among the hardships with animal existence  
 working the land with their hand shaped tools  
 pulling ripe fruits from the sweet sweat of Earth  
 peace of mind resides in a shelter's vast warmth.

We flock upon soft white limestone sand shores  
 burning our flesh to a rich darker shade of pale  
 our skin's color reflects imagination's privileges  
 the shore line welcomes the ancient roaring waves

crushing Time's memories into layered metaphors  
 the sea's swelling foam lathers its floral bouquets  
 then coughs up a Sargasso Sea's decaying fruit  
 sulfuric mist carried over waves replenishes lungs  
 sores fester flesh of the sea's swimming schools  
 sea creatures decorate beaches with thinning shells  
 crustaceans curl up into unique skeleton jewelry  
 innuendos gathering patterns scripture the sand  
 prophetic winds interpret ocean's maternal roar.

Tight fist'd boredom glares at horizon islands  
 shadows in the toxic waves of plastic/metal air  
 dolphins leaping through cruise ship excretions  
 oily subsidies of government fiascoes shimmering  
 iridescent sheens glimmering the sea's expanse  
 palm fronds whisper soft prophetic conclusions  
 betting on the future's procreation possibilities  
 we all laugh heartily in the same language tones  
 turquoise sea's foam lathers the beach bathers  
 blubbery bodies rolling and basking sand clichés  
 syllables rippling through our blood's lethargy  
 eroding brain's canyons of hard-earned realities  
 the bedrock of all mystical masonry structures  
 mining limestone into towers shape shifting.

We are building barriers to delay the invasions  
 saluting sharp glass shards decorating our walls

sparkling blades gleaming razor wire's metal curls  
 gun portals grinning from the blood's red gravity  
 collection payments are strangling local economies  
 we ware house our hours in Wall Mart sale aisles  
 standing in lines to cash out sell out necessities  
 the indoctrination cashiers cash out our privileges  
 no one remembers the negative verb variables  
 or the cost of living comfortably above crowd noise  
 the milling throngs need serious medical attention  
 cement crumbles cobblestones to sterile decorum  
 cobblestones rumbling our integrity into poverty  
 mongrel dogs stalking malnutrition's main streets.

We are all canines lucky to bark once a day here  
 growls grovel from dark prophets littering streets  
 imitation gems are displayed in cheap street plots  
 below the rebar tips puncturing grey sky's anger  
 precious jewelry is stolen from our memory's vault  
 death brightens night sky with exotic bird feathers  
 falling from skyscraper windows of blinding lights  
 lit up for celebrations plundering the local artisans  
 sonorous songs strew feathers into street garbage  
 clipped freedom of birds flatters the ruling tyrants  
 driving towards an executioner's awakening bullets  
 a million suns are dancing in cobblestone corridors.

We enter Zagunda's Nature to experience reality

future's artistic retreat for schooling human genius  
 guitars and violins strum bitter/sweet melody refrains  
 within the drumbeat's rhythm the beating heart beats  
 among the desert's garden of the brittle sharp thorns  
 tree spirits manifest new species from sacrificial ashes  
 drifting through dry gardens of Zagunda's shiny thorns  
 alien tulip trees flower the desert's exotic expectations  
 we can only imagine brutal hybrid cruelties blooming  
 evolutionary elites writing scripts for a final solution  
 wind cascading obsidian blades from volcano throats  
 the Earth's breast responds oozing molten milk rivers  
 stone's elements flowing into the landscape's flesh  
 everywhere green foliage erupts in flames each spring  
 it's all any of us can expect waiting for our turn to walk  
 among ruins praying between cement walls crumbling.

### STAR PARTICLES

In Yosemite Valley—Sierra Nevada Light Range  
 we discover ourselves in its river's granite womb:  
 myriad fingers etch prophetic murals over raw stone  
 images remind us who and what we are becoming  
 here our senses illumine our reverent re-creation.

Light arrows pierce forest shadows of black oak  
 cottonwood, pine, fir, cedar, aspen whispering  
 syllables nourishing language: nuanced phrasings:

such small events unnoticed in mind's paradigms  
 calculating abstract formulas for beauty's worth.

Unseen seeds sprout light from fertile soil  
 we are all evolving through endless seasons  
 following the trail down to the river's Blessing  
 grasses swirling language's life into our lungs  
 footsteps tattoo scripture across shore line sand  
 we come together entering light's Baptism.

\* \* \* \* \*

Given the chance "Being Here" we wade into light  
 smooth round stones gleam—electrifying our souls  
 coloring our galaxy's minerals in precious pigments  
 ripples swirl light crystals round our body symmetry  
 light jewels deepen upstream timeless in its current.

Fingers cascade its light down harmonic corridors  
 structuring the sanctuary's granite column cathedral  
 with our clothes removed we enter its light current  
 sunset's gold gilds the clear cold light stream's thrill  
 emerald pools enliven our journey's eternal destiny.

Light awakens our changing nature in the immersion:  
 a communal existence in the congregation of species  
 we are all star particles of the indigenous river's flesh  
 bright rubies salmon spawn in river's blood stream  
 Blessing us in this river's flow from a woman's womb  
 starlight sparkling our ripples rippling us into night.

## HARVEY D. OSGOOD

### WHAT A VIEW

Perched like a bird, ironically enough  
 Forty-four stories above and out of touch  
 Four glass walls with water within  
 Swim I must, side to side, end to end

I send out my echolocation clicks  
 Their angular bounces mire me within  
 Confusing me in my attempt to reach  
 Others in pods that seek my speak

Floors of concrete with water encasing me  
 As elevators bring humans to stare replete  
 Taking pictures and offering herring treats  
 Truly trapped in a life of no retreat

A devolving situation, a cry of awry  
 The ocean to a forty-four stories high  
 Stupid glass dolphin, tank in Dubai  
 Just give me a damn fish, I bubble and sigh.

TODD BOYD

## THE GREENING OF NEANDERTHAL

There's no doubt about it. I'm almost suffering from post-covid ptsd just watching over the last year or so one to two thousand video clips of people either getting the long covid test stick shoved up their nose or getting punctured with the needle stick during every covid news clip and myth-busting error correcting analyst report.

I'm almost able to add a third post- trauma when upon having real conversations, one has to hear (and tell) a vaccine reaction story. I know I've told mine ad nauseum, so I guess I can't complain, can I? That's the way it works here in America. The blame is what goes around, comes around.

So, in order to alleviate and deviate from the normal covid visualizations and trauma, I've decided to take up what I see as the next socially acceptable convention and topic of dinner parties around America and probably Europe, too. The question of "How much has Neanderthal Man contributed to the gene pool and what are its(his, her) effects?"

About a year ago or so, 23 and Me, one of the main genealogical reports anyone can obtain for a fee, in fact, the more the merrier, is what I say. I have some 1500, nearly all fourth cousins and beyond, live descendants I've never met nor heard of because back in the past it appears my great-great-grandparents were a lot more sexually active than their Victorian era social standards should have permitted. Of course, many of these current yet distant relatives put no or little information about themselves or their known ancestors so I'm not sure what the purpose of a genealogy is, other than to possibly alleviate any anxiety men might have about the old skeletons in the closets popping up at their ancestry door.

Where my man, Neanderthal comes in, is because with the scientific discovery of a complete Neanderthal genome package from 40,000 years ago, genome sequencers such as 23 and Me and Ancestry.com can now, more or less, differentiate a long-ago connection to the Neanderthal sequence. It turns out that when I was first diagnosed with Neanderthal, it was more minimal than it is now.

Initially, I had a little more Neanderthal than 3% of the population. Now, over a year later and with more genetic sequencing going on behind my back and with more "testing" I'm in a N. group that is 19% of the population.

With this scientifically induced renewed social interest in our relationship to Mr. Neanderthal, I've noticed more and more news stories associated with what I call the Greening of Neanderthal Man.

I've said before, speaking as an unprofessionally trained anthropologist and unskilled/ unprincipled archeologist, I've always felt Neanderthal took a back seat to the better placed French good looking Cro-Magnon Man as a European prototype and whereas Cro-Magnon always looked and acted like he was already prepared for modern life, Neanderthal, my 1000th cousin has always been relegated to nothing but a "dead" end branch in the human history tree, much like the early, scientific versions of Africans and other unwanted and unacceptable versions of the human race.

In other words, Neanderthal is slowly plodding its way up the evolutionary road to respectability, again, much like recent discussions of the philosophical, political, and moral science shrouded arguments which purposefully cloud the African's physiological and intellectual character assassination in order to preserve a necessity to enslave them which came out of the Age of Reason.

The same Age that produced "All men are created equal."

Despite the continued heavy determinist regard for science nowadays, I still say, science over the centuries has not served us well. Science has almost always supported the most fanciful religious, political, and unnatural biases until the weight of Reality makes it obvious it wasn't ever the way science thought. I think everyone should get a vaccine, don't get me wrong there.

Someday they might conclude that genes aren't everything and we've ALL pretty much derived our physical makeup from apes evolutionary chain more and less from our brain's illusionary contrivances are, so our so called soul can die without apology and in peace with itself.

The math which adds up to the Present sits exactly on the temporal scale between the Past and the Future, yet, it doesn't always add up to zero due to the negativity relegated to the Past and the positive outlook hoped for in the Future. The Present is actually a black hole where we dump all our past mistakes, contrivances, and broken illusions and mix them with all our dreams, schemes, hopes, usually a recipe for disaster. Things being equal or balanced as nature would have it, square rather than round, and everything bound by a straitjacket of Reality, we all will realize that there's not a dime's worth of difference between any of us, so we can shed ourselves of that artificial, scientific contrivance of skin (color) we believe makes a difference.

That's what's wrong with us nowadays. We see the world as merely Hopeful, less Neanderthal like, whereas the evidence proves to us the Neanderthal grows inside us, and we're probably better off trading in our cellphones for a club. In fact, I'd love to see the dna results of those who give us all this social media technology because it may be, they're the real standard bearer of Neanderthal promiscuity or thuggery.

No offense, Mr. Neanderthal man.

## THE IT PERSON

Never practiced in front of a mirror how to lie or bribe, talk dirty or  
 ascribe to deception,  
 Or what It'd say when It died to make everything fine about what It did  
 Or did not do to make it all right.  
 If the have nots only want what the haves have in regards to material  
 wealth, then nothing's changed.  
 If the oppressed only want to be the oppressor then nothing's changed.

If the haves won't share/give to the have nots, then nothing's changed.

There's only so much to go around and too few have too much, many  
 have what they don't need, and too many want what can't be bought  
 and can only be stolen.

When will it stop?

This merry go round of desperation and greed evolution.

My only hope is that somewhere in the world/now  
 a child has been born /  
 who will never bend to old/  
 never forever be disgraced upon the public stage/  
 never regret the folly of youth nor the wisdom of old age/  
 will recant the superiority of any race and division of gender/  
 but will always rise up to face/ to lead us into the future/  
 the reciprocity of equal/  
 the sharing of freedom/  
 the it person cometh

## LOVE'S CONCEPTS

Love had been in this space for eons watching it populate. Before these moments that I am  
 about to describe, Love was known to be free flowing. Fully here and everywhere. Thick  
 in the atmosphere was Love's energy unparalleled. Seen as particles of light, if seen at all.  
 The blindness which kept Love unseen had become common. So focused on negativities were  
 the inhabitants that few paid any attention to the beautiful things in their world. And this, this  
 was yet another beautiful day to enjoy. However, on this particular day Love felt an unease never  
 felt before. Life's future had become dire, with no chance of better days ahead. Love deduced the  
 end of good had arrived in this place. Humanity had become complacently sedentary in a hopeless  
 apathy. Had decided Love was not worth reaching for anymore. Expecting nothing more than fire,  
 brimstone and the foul smell of discontent. War had replaced compromise in this place. An eye for  
 an eye was leaving everyone blind. No one seemed to care that the revolution would end in a natu-  
 ral evolution called extinction. And Love, Love did not need to be present to witness that.

Forgetting the essence of her being, Love began running in circles trying to find an exit from  
 this hell. Attempts to catch up with a life that understood Love seemed futile. Panting the pant of  
 an asthmatic was a sign that panic was rising as Love searched. Thinking, she might not find the  
 portal to the parallel of which only few knew before rapture arrived.

It was then that it happened

Awakened describes the lightning bolt of thought that brought to her attention, *"I am Love  
 in the here and now, fear not. Waste no time looking down. Rainbows aren't found on the ground.  
 Keep looking up. What you search for will be found."*

It was then that it happened

Clouds parted, revealing a rainbow from which sprang a winged dolphin.

Love watched in amazement as it circled, then hovered just above her head. Telepathically,  
 Love was invited to ride on the back of this beautiful winged creature. High above treeless av-  
 enues and smog hugging skyscrapers it took her. Straight to the stars they soared, straight through  
 the portal hidden behind the rainbow. Arriving in what can only be described as Shangri La. Love  
 felt at home at last.

Alas, she could not stay. Elsewhere there was still work to be done. Love was told she was  
 needed on a planet called Earth. Maybe there, they will be more receptive to Love's concepts.

## THEO S. GOODWIN

## A SOLITARY END

For sixty-eight years I've lived alone  
 without a spouse, child or clone,  
 held inside a concrete square  
 facing a wall, no friends to spare,  
 to talk to, to kiss, to reminisce.  
 Zookeepers say I'm an orphan bitch,  
 but every elephant has a mom  
 who feeds, and loves and makes a home,  
 who shows her how to give, how to live,  
 how to choose a mate, how to forgive.  
 Humans wave, they yell, they photograph  
 not knowing my heart is broke in half.  
 Free me from my lonely hell:  
 no folks, no friends, no tale to tell.

THE DACHSHUND,  
NOT THE HARE

Never was I a speedy hare  
 more akin was I to a slow, cheerful dachshund  
 moving steadily toward kindness and curiosity  
 drawn by some heavenly,  
 creative magnet

Never was I the teacher's pet  
 nor did I don the dunce cap;  
 my agile brain leapt and pulled,  
 groaned and learned the rudiments while  
 exploring voices less often heard

Now I squint into the rearview mirror;  
 my middle-age caught in the distance,  
 my stupid adolescence vanished;  
 but youth suits my two-year old granddaughter:  
 everything she does is charming, sweet

Would I trade in my soul to live life one more time  
 without knowledge, wisdom or premonition?  
 Do I need a second chance?  
 Thank you, no, let the babe explore all things new  
 as my memory fades into tranquil, distant time.

## CUPID'S FACILITATOR

In an old warehouse south of Market Street in a San Francisco  
 neighborhood frequented by winos, drug addicts and homeless folks – that  
 is where my cousin Hiram lived. He raised a small family there amidst his  
 five floors of collections and curios.

Hiram was nothing short of eccentric, not for his laughing manner of  
 speech, but for the things he did. "Peculiar" is the adjective that defined his  
 personality according to my mother and his aunt. "He got it from his father,"  
 she would explain.

What was Hiram's connection to zoos? He had a hobby, that would expand  
 into a side business, of raising and breeding boa constrictors. This  
 enterprise was conducted *sub rosa* in a corner of the warehouse that  
 received ample light and fresh air. He fed them wild rodents, lame pigeons  
 and assorted small mammals. Each boa lived in its own giant terrarium,  
 where it slept, daydreamed and otherwise occupied itself. Hiram developed  
 a secret understanding of when a giant female had released her mating  
 pheromone. When Hiram learned of her readiness to copulate, he would  
 select an appropriate male and coordinate the subjects' conjugal visits.

Within a few years, he had a thriving population, which he sold via an  
 undisclosed intermediary to zoos throughout the Northern Hemisphere.  
 From Montreal to Mexico City, godfather Hiram's progeny could be found  
 wiggling their way into the hearts of admiring children visiting the ubiquitous  
 Reptile House. I still admire my cousin for his ingenuity and oddball  
 success.

Hiram dared to jive  
 In boas' romantic lives  
 Helping men find wives.

## THE VERY SMARTEST PLAN

When God flooded the earth for forty days  
 Man learned that no land, no matter how high, would stay dry,  
 When the Tower of Babel fell  
 Man knew that no building could reach the stars

When the World Trade Towers  
 Were attacked and burned  
 Causing thousands to die,  
 He saw that a plane could destroy a building

So why would anyone build another “tallest” skyscraper?  
 The King’s committee of the smartest workers decided to build  
 The highest hotel possible reaching to the Heavens  
 To protect the King from sharply hurled insults

## RIDIN’ HIGH

When I slipped on my black, ten-gallon hat,  
 I knew I’d sit tall in the saddle of my big white stallion,

When I pulled on my blue Levi’s,  
 I was set to bounce crazy on my galloping steed,

When I pinned the sheriff’s badge onto my vest,  
 I was ready to strike fear among outlaws,

When I strapped on my six-shooters,  
 I felt bolts of lightning course through my hands,

When I got into my chaps,  
 I smelled the dust and grime of the roundup trail,

When my mother yelled to come home for dinner,  
 I awoke from my daydreams of a ten-year-old boy in Brooklyn.

JILL STOCKINGER

## OPEN WATER

The woman at the crowded beach  
 slathers on chemical sunscreen,  
 tosses an inflatable plastic ball  
 to her child’s team, then swigs  
 water from a disposable bottle.  
 She removes pieces of fruit lacking  
 in taste and color from plastic bags  
 and cellophane. She welcomes  
 cooling breezes but ignores them  
 as they lift and deposit her clear  
 wrappings into the open waves.

A bomb explodes on the other side  
 of the world. A dolphin observes.  
 She wishes humans would stop  
 making weapons that destroy,  
 stop making plastic and detergents,  
 stop making and using chemicals.

*They’ve ruined their world.  
 Now they’re ruining the oceans.  
 They care so little for their children.  
 Why would they care for mine?*

## OH, TO BE A CAT!

When it’s time to die, I hope my soul  
 gets to choose its next form to make it whole,  
 a higher form than human to flit into,  
 to experience sweet life anew.

That would certainly be a cat:  
 I’d be beautiful, wanton, fierce and fat.  
 I’d yowl at night and bite heads off mice—  
 I think that would be very nice!

## ACCORDING TO PLAN

Brxdu communed happily with his sister conglomerate, Brxxsah of the Alpha Centauri star system. “Is your Joining going according to Plan?” he inquired solicitously.

“Oh, yes,” she shouted back telepathically, full of joy. “I increase at a prodigious rate. I’ll share the latest fidding.”

The fidding, a kind of 3D movie, blossomed in Brxdu’s reception organs. He watched an astronaut sitting at the controls of a rocket ship. Brxdu’s mighty facial polyps quivered with pride as he watched his sister reach out her limbs studded with suction cups, maneuvering a huge silver device. Although at least two hundred times the size of a small, humble Earth can opener, it was surprisingly similar in appearance and function to openers commonly used on Earth.

He watched as the fidding showed his sister holding the metal rocket ship with four of her arms. With her other four limbs, she dexterously attached the can opener-type-device to the bottom part of the rocket ship and carefully cut off the bottom part of the ship. She tossed that into the nearest bright star where it was instantly incinerated.

She proceeded to pull the astronaut out of his ship and expertly shucked him out of his spacesuit, as easily as an Earthling pulls an oyster out of its shell. She placed the astronaut, minus the spacesuit, back into the opened rocket ship. From her mouth which telescoped open, she shot a thick viscous sparkling substance into the remains of the rocket ship. The astronaut’s body became hidden inside the substance as it filled what was left of his ship.

A second fidding ballooned out, covering a quarter of the other much larger fidding which was still running. This smaller fidding played sound only; it supplied both the thoughts and the spoken words of the astronaut, from the time he first saw the huge being floating in space to the time he underwent these procedures.

*What the Hell? Am I hallucinating?* “Cameras one through eight, on! Outside views. Space Log: Record now.” Buttons change from red to green; lights flicker as cameras turn and focus on what is outside the ship. “This is Commander John Wiley Winters. Descendent of the old aviator, Wiley Post,” John says proudly. “This may be First Contact! I repeat! First Contact! I appear to be facing a huge being that resembles an earth octopus. A space octopus!” John intones seriously, “When I say huge—this is bigger than three giant whales. The size of a huge castle. It’s in front of me. Flying around.” *Swimming in space? It’s a goddamn Monster! Unbelievable! Got to keep talking. Try to communicate!* “External audio! Sound level 12. Hello!”

John waits two minutes, expectantly. “Hello! Can you hear me? I am from Earth! I come in peace!”

John waves his arms around, trying to get its attention. “Space Log: I’m waving at it. It sees me. It has a huge bulbous head with floppy things hanging off it.” *Maybe that’s equipment?* “There are eight humongous limbs. Like an octopus! For the record: I can’t tell if this is real or if maybe I’m hallucinating. Maybe this is a visual projection into space, like a hologram. To scare me away.” *I wish.* Cameras swivel in different directions, aiming for as complete a visual as possible. “Hell!” John’s voice changes to a shocked shout. “It’s attacking! I’m gonna die! Earth, be warned!” There are screams and moans as John is divested of his space suit. “May my death not be in vai—” were his last words.

Brxxsah pushed out her long tongue and scooped John up. He was completely covered in the sparkling substance. She swallowed him and spent the next few minutes licking up the remains of everything in the ship that had been covered by the shining substance. “Delicious,” she hummed. She tossed the rest of the now-empty ship into the bright star nearby. “Tell me where you are and what you see. How do you feel?” prompted Brxxsah telepathically to the newly acquired organism.

There is a wait of a few minutes. “I am not dead,” are the next words on the recording. The voice sounds somewhat like John, but it has a strange musical overlay of notes with every syllable. As if a small orchestra had been implanted into John’s vocal cords. “This is Heaven! I am with God and the Apostles! Everyone I’ve ever loved who died is with me! Heaven is REAL,” are the last giddy-sounding words the recording provides.

Brxdu sighs directly to Brxxsah’s brain, “Just thinking about it makes me tingle with happiness. Though I’m just in technical operations, I’m still part of the great Plan that gives others their desired final stage. That during our lives of two thousand years or so, we enable them to live in their most desired state. I don’t know what they’d do, without us. But were you able to explain this to your newest addition before incorporating him? His mental capacity seemed too rudimentary.”

“It is above the capacity of most to understand our gift before we bestow it. I tried to explain that, even when I undergo the Change, all of us, including him, are incorporated into the next generation of BlzWupthls, so we all continue,” agrees his sister. “It would have been kind to allay his fears before incorporation, but sadly, I could not. The Earthling was emitting strong mental output, but it was obvious he did not understand input from us. Still, it was easy to get the coordinates of his planet from his mind, so your side of operations can beam this recording back to his planet. All the beings there will know the bliss that is coming. That they will all happily experience, eventually, after we arrive. Just imagine the auspicious welcome we will receive! Such a generous group of beings, sending us canned goods all these years. And we will repay their kindness by giving them the afterlife they long for, so desperately.”

WENDY WILLIAMS

SPATIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The pleasure of geometry,  
the beloved shapes: rhombus,  
pyramid, trapezoid. One line  
bisects another, a third both  
and voila, measurable space.

Theorems, rules, laws—the kind of math  
I loved after flunking algebra. Why  
*yes* in geometry, *no* in trig? Why  
*yes* for organic chemistry, *no* for inorganic?

It was the shapes—six-sided benzene  
domes, pentagons of carbon and hydrogen,  
The spatial gymnastics—flipping isomers  
in air.

But pre-med majors gave organic  
chem a bad name: *gateway course*.  
And teens deemed geometry irrelevant:  
Had the length of any hypotenuse  
ever helped them out of a jam?

But oh, those theorems, Euclid.  
Those happy Morrison & Boyd formulas.  
Those spatial considerations.

NARWHAL

Last night in the sky  
a narwhal, long unicorn  
bone-tooth, eye-moon,  
body made of clouds.

Beneath, I stood  
in wonder, remembering  
south Florida nights,  
the sky offering itself—

as if so close to earth,  
it was part  
of land: dark palms  
against brilliant  
moonlight; galleons  
of tall, white clouds sailing  
low in the sky.

I cried a lot  
those lonely nights  
so I spent my time with clouds.

If only I had known  
we were one and I could float  
and belong to sky.

If only I had known  
how perfectly right I was  
in the universe.

THE OLD ONES

—*Queen of the Lake Trail,  
Spence Mountain, Oregon*

The rocks sensed me,  
welcomed me  
solid in their places  
along the trail,  
stable, dependable

in all their varied coats  
of color: lime, smoke,  
brown ochre, gold

hues of the ages  
decorative,  
feisty, bold  
some sedate, shy

and the shapes  
so different—  
face flat and vast,  
another sharp of cutting edge,  
some half buried in dirt,  
others balanced  
about to tip

stones we stepped on  
for a path, others  
bordered, guiding steps

rocks, boulders, stones—  
the deep companionship  
of the old ones  
lodged in earth.

CONTACT WITH THE DIVINE

This rainy night  
I am lonely  
too aware of the singleness  
of my heartbeat

until in the kitchen  
I come upon  
a happy net of stars

a burst of spider babies  
hangs from the most transparent web  
between my wok and the wall—  
tiny parachutes suspended in mid-air

tens of black dots for bodies  
and the thinnest, wispiest legs  
spread wide like sea-star arms  
clinging to a rock of air

the only giggle of the evening  
escapes my throat—delight  
in contact with the divine

## TO MAKE MYSELF WORTHY

—IN RESPONSE TO SHARON OLDS’  
POEM “ODE TO DIRT”

I must make myself  
worthy of dirt  
I who will wrap myself in you  
when I die  
I who will pull you around me  
like a blanket  
I who will rest in soil, warm and moist,  
I must make myself the most pure  
and beautiful person.

I must be worthy of you  
who have given so much,  
nurtured these trees, these grasses,  
You who have under sky toiled  
in keeping up earth’s household,  
You who have held up our feet,  
our bodies, who grow plants  
and shelter animals

When I am lowered in my shroud  
past the layers  
Let the soil feel it is good  
to welcome me  
Let it be glad at my coming  
Let it say, and she lived  
and suffered and changed  
and grew  
and we are honored to accept her.

It is good. And the soil closes  
over me and the branches  
and flowers laid gently upon.....

## THE ART OF VANISHING

I am thinking of the praying mantis  
out among the squash leaves, the vines  
she clings to yet you do not see her  
right away, she herself a vine.

Out there, in the damp soil, she waits,  
in stillness. Dare I say, contemplation?  
mine perhaps when I think of her  
deft slow movements, her unhurry,  
her deliberateness.

Out there, green and fresh, large mystery  
among the basil and beans, what  
does she eat? What inspires her to move?

All I know is that when she hears  
a sound, she goes still: her triangular head,  
praying forearms, thin pale legs.  
A complete stop. And as she does this,

she disappears among the stems—

becoming one.

YUAN HONGRI

Translated by Yuanbing Zhang

## THE SEA OF THE GOLDEN PALACE

Happiness is the memory of heaven  
And the soul is as sweet as the sun.  
On the canvas of the death  
you daub a smile from the gods.  
Oh, that is the light! The light of honey.  
If you can hear the heavenly hymns  
that is the sea from that golden palace  
lapping sapphire over eternal universe.

## THE CITY OF ANGEL'S SMILE

The white and silvery words of the moon  
kingdom  
shone in the dream last night  
The king of giants  
in the massive cities of ancient times  
presented me the gem book of the soul

I will build a garden in the desert  
fill the jade vase with the holy spring  
Let the rivers and lakes shine  
a city of the angel's smile

## THE WINE OF THE SOUL

I pick up a smiling flower from the future city  
To light up your black iron dreams  
The new book of the world delivers by the holy  
lightning  
The giant’s body rotates the transparent picture  
of the faraway stars-cape  
The light emanates from the gods  
Let you see yourself without any sorrow  
The body is high and translucent, each cells are  
as sweet as the wine of the souls.

## THE INTERSTELLAR KINGDOM

Sometimes I see the sky smiling at me  
The limpidity spirit and flower clouds  
such as the old soul of mine  
watch my shadow on the earth  
The ground beneath my feet like a colossal ship  
toward the Interstellar Kingdom  
Those cities where giants dwell  
blossom on the dustless Milky Way.

**YUAN HONGRI***Translated by Manu Mangattu***THE SMILING KING**

Two moons once chirped in my window –  
 A blue moon and a red moon.  
 They enticed a large number of stars  
 The legion of angels from the Kingdom of Heaven.

My palace then appeared in the clouds  
 A huge transparent palace in diamond  
 The king that smiled to me thence was none  
 But myself, whom I had long forgotten.

**THE SOUL TRIPOD**

More splendidous than the whole world  
 Is veiled in my chest, the gilded key to heaven.  
 The blue ocean and the silver kingdom in my head do dwell  
 As the different flowers, the same beauty garnishes them all.  
 A simple civilization where everyone is a giant  
 Each stone for them is a gem or gold  
 Neither darkness nor death could ruin their words  
 Hence a tripod of the soul they fashioned  
 To conceive the making of the sun and the time of the soul.

**BRIGHT STAR – SWEET SONG**

I do know that heaven is in my frame, in my front  
 Yet I still covet the covert far-off kingdom of aliens  
 Longing forever to hear the soulful song of the stone.  
 My footsteps, when I tread on the earth  
 Shall accompany the throb of the years  
 Every leaf is a word  
 Every flower is a poem  
 Every big tree has an old soul  
 And all could hear the sweet song of the stars.

**THE CITY OF GOLD**

Ah! Into a pleasant hallway of gold  
 Thou did the crystal of the sky mould.  
 A shining City of Gold  
 Chanting unto me from far afield.  
 Into the golden gate I strode  
 A palace colossal to behold.  
 Without, a soaring Tower did dazzle  
 A towering wondrous Grand Castle.  
 It seemed to the past a billion years I travelled.  
 Perchance, a primal giant my eyes beheld;  
 In the breeze his sleeves fluttered.  
 A transparent golden Robe uncluttered;  
 The appearance was holy, hallowed.  
 With a sweet smile they bellowed  
 As tall as a mountain they loomed  
 But as light as birds they seemed.

Into a golden palace I sauntered  
 To regard the sacred giant  
 His body was like the Sun  
 Enveloped by a golden flame.

In the hall at the centre he sat  
 Where bloomed many a huge lotus  
 Some golden giants too were there  
 Sitting on the lotus flaunting a smile.

In that Grand Palace studded with gems  
 Hung an enormous mould of gold;  
 A mellifluous song lulled all along  
 Rumbling like thunder, causing concussion.

On the front wall I saw engraved  
 In a noble script, an impressive word;  
 Resplendent and magnificent, the whole palace  
 Was filled with fragrance – wonderful, intoxicating.

*Continued***THE CITY OF THE SOUL**

Those ancient timeworn words I love –  
 The Stone of the erstwhile dated soul.  
 More than the crown or the jewels  
 They make my days bright and charming.

With the light that I have  
 I put them to smelt in Jinding  
 So that I have countless stars  
 To plait my City of the Soul.

**THE CITY OF STARS**

White and blue night.  
 A Crystal smile.  
 Black is a pawn  
 Devoured by red lips of lightning.

There appears a song in the sky  
 It sprinkles down with rain and dew  
 There is a colossal ship in the sky  
 Twinkling like the City of the Stars.

Clouds with golden wings  
Were flying over: all a mirage  
A blossoming thrice wonderful  
Blooming in the garden outside the temple.

I saw a towering Castle  
Like a mountain, upright in the sky  
Brilliant design, gorgeous styling  
As if God had built it Himself

Colourful gems shine like a mosaic,  
A medley of all kinds of strange drawing;  
A round gold tower  
Like a forest stands in space.

A broad circular Gallery then I saw  
Surrounded by the golden castle  
Each column was as high as ten thousand meters  
Carving out numerous exquisite images.

I walked into a great hall,  
I saw some huge statues  
Like a group of golden giants  
Smiling unto me.

I crossed a huge arch  
Into a golden hall  
To see a huge picture  
Hung on the hall wall.

Each portrait of a transparent flash  
Could draw a Golden Paradise  
As if a three-dimensional space  
Magically unfolded before thine eyes

I heard a mysterious music  
Which made my heart take wings  
A huge picture of the holy girl  
On a plucked instrument was manifest.

She sat in a huge palace  
A giant circle around the ring seat  
Every giant smiled and smiled  
Curling around a golden flame

This girl's elegant posture  
Wearing a golden dress  
Body shining like a huge halo  
Resembling the head of a golden sun.

A huge palace like a fortress  
Outside the temple was the endless Garden  
Flying golden feather bird  
The garden with its pavilions, terraces and open halls

A blossoming of the wondrous exotic  
Giving out an intoxicating fragrance  
Like a sweet girl  
With her model of elegant charm

A sparkling waterfall  
Circling along from the hill  
As a crystal emerald  
Haunting this amazing Garden.

A group of boys and girls:  
Dressed in bright and colourful clothes  
Some would sit and rest in the Pavilion  
Some would walk in the flowers, in the game.

I saw a huge old man  
Sitting in a red cloud.  
Only a crane flew around  
And there was a huge Phoenix.

Another city in the sky  
Far from the golden light  
At a grand chic  
The sky stood in layers

I seemed to hear the call of the divine  
The old man came leisurely.  
He lifted a huge golden book  
And a kind of novel language I heard spoken

I saw a great line of words  
Like a row of golden giants  
They turned into a ray of light, and,  
Suddenly flew into my chest.

My body was sweet and happy  
The moment turned momentous  
The sacred old man stood beside me  
His smile filled the air of the city.

I became a golden giant  
Beckoned back to the golden castle  
Then came a giant  
Who smiled and called out my name

Our bodies were just as big  
We were like twin brothers  
And Lo! This huge golden castle  
Seemed to belong to us.

All on a sudden I saw a vision  
I too was a holy giant  
In every palace in the city of gold  
I too had left my glad imprints.



JAY SIMPSON

## SUSPENDED ANIMATION

Amorphous statements shifty missions laminated principle's pound of muck  
 prevarication monstrous delusion world view's globally demented construct  
 heightened animations belligerent headhunters bounty paid at surveillance checkout  
 travelling ambassadors agents of crime pass their rhetoric through holes in the wall  
 turn on the whirly gig full throttle senility marginalized citizens removed from the grid  
 charades at bedtime pin the tale on the country meet dictators for warring peace plans  
 raise your hands plead guilty to existence watch the icemen peel off your flesh  
 kill the enemy kill the innocent then to be sure kill them again

## INDELIBLE LINK

Cultures speak into worldly patterns  
 trouble the street with powerful beats  
 echo the moaning of generations  
 walk the sweetness of passing replete

pounded distress multiple derision character flawing's dynamite  
 protuberance abysmal outlook sunshine's delivery shady refrain  
 noise chamber screeching birdlife bounty hunters fingers and toes  
 defective product hybrid delivery circumstantial effect heinous hello  
 perfect score's eradication bolted safe house's sexual retreat  
 perpetual standstill anxious revolution empowered protestors frighten the torque  
 night's entrapment circular mileage deep sea dilemma corrupted chaos  
 remove the drum roll's invisible linkage sell your postscript's indelible ink

## PROBLEMATIC CHARTERS

Brew the disaster pull the ring thing explode tomorrow's perspicacity  
 align the stolen mirrored convection problematic charters declare lightning strikes  
 tomorrow's reflection storms the battlefield unused components fall prey to fear  
 destruction defies deliberate denial blast the fuckers from airy rooftops  
 inconsequential remarks diligent reprisal fluttering lashes dispute territorial games  
 hair out of control sliding on mishaps combing the country for misshapen head lice  
 refectory's memorial daytime diary words removed from the registrar's ass  
 call the midwife the country's crowning rebirth delivers perpetual distaste  
 shortened eternity collapsing stage plans manhood scares off genital collapse  
 prepare for future's dynamic reprisal underbelly's underground reusable prompt

## RETRACTION

Pointed remarks dissolve inhibition  
 prove the point before dissertation  
 swallow unremarkable strategic alliance  
 disrupt the peace the partial recall  
 circumstantial evidence refuels the retraction  
 plans reprisal as the icicles form  
 melts the sun as the horizon crumbles  
 proffers the wine of the scantily clad  
 blood is the flesh of dissolving specimens  
 acid the promise of a better life

## THE HAND HOLDS THE MIRROR

Truth's brutality bruises ego  
 the mirror held against the face  
 the lightshow's hidden vulnerability  
 the pleading belief that finds the well  
 sinkholes obliterate memory's hold  
 functions disturb the unforgiving reel  
 heady serotonin's painful release valve  
 multiple personality's dusty night crime  
 bats flutter beneath unlikely allusion  
 conscience regrets the unforgettable muse  
 neurodiversity disturbs ebb's unwitting flow  
 confusion reigns like a defaulting flare  
 flogging dead horse's slow bantering hare

SHARON MAHANY

## YOUNG NIGHT, CITY LIGHT

AFTER THE PAINTING *YOUNG NIGHT*,  
BY MEGHAN TUTOLO

before blackness silhouettes each tall, lean line  
before blackness envelopes every window ledge  
before the day has spent its colors  
on a contemplable asphalt  
before shadows embrace the day

a cloudless sky emerges into call of light,  
sprayed with colors echoing abalone—  
purple-silver hue cups the city  
in a moment of whisper before silence

blues and mauves swell into flashes  
pink and blue lean against buildings  
grey and orange sift downward  
then embody yellow tresses  
unfurling their locks to enshroud the rest

a single round moon  
protrudes, its reflection  
bursting

a scaffolding of gold permeates stacked boxes  
pigments of red seem to freeze time  
before releasing star dust  
scattering bits of clarity into the sky



the inevitable: blackness advances, hangs,  
envelopes every window ledge  
silhouettes each tall, lean line  
young as night, old as time—  
we close our eyes, we pray

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## RIPPLES

Dolphins evolve into the sea  
Skyscrapers evolve into the sky  
Humans evolve in the in-between  
Should we ask not how, but why?

## JOINING THE CIRCLE

I stepped into the room, late. After taking our luggage into the guestroom, I hurriedly joined the round table at the back of the ballroom where my mom sat. This was the Gala Dinner of my first conference. We had just arrived in Arizona, and my mother went on ahead to save two seats. I could hear the soft mumble of people settling in while the speaker readied herself. As I entered, I saw that our table was full. The hodgepodge of strangers all looked up at me as I reached for the chair that was graciously offered to me from another table. “No,” I could hear from several of their voices. “You must shake her hand first.”

I wrinkled my nose, “What”? They repeated. “You have got to shake her hand. Mo’s.” They looked at each other and laughed like I was going to get punked.

My mom smiled and reassured me, “Yes. I did it” as if it were more than a mere greeting. I began to feel as if I were in a closed circle of an Agatha Christie movie. Indeed, I had walked into something. Little did I know it could just as well have been a scene from *The Twilight Zone*.

They began going around the table telling me their names. Referring to the handshake thing, Karen leaned in with, “See what you notice.” Gladys introduced Mary “Mo” Wheeler as a channeler and multi-dimensional being. She was the one with her hand out. The lady next to her was Joeaux (pronounced Joy) an interdimensional interpreter (which somehow was different?) Marilyn, seated next to her, admitted to channeling Adirondack and The Council of Light from the 17th dimension. She was a walk-in (it was explained to me later) with striking white hair and black eyebrows, giving away her dye job and emphasizing her lifestyle change. She seemed foreign and was quietly taking everything in. Gladys was director of the Ozark Research Institute in Arkansas, who organized conferences of her own. Her husband had been known for his miraculous healings. Now she ran the group. I was sitting next to Bobby Jo, a slender, dark-haired woman in a cowboy hat and plaid shirt who kept studying her finger. Sitting next her was Dick Tippett, a geomancer and water dowser from California, wearing a bowler hat, a cane hanging on his chair, who stated he would lead the Sedona tour the next day. On the other side of me was Johnny,

a Native American, wearing a western hat, bold black braids, plaid shirt, and turquoise bolo tie, who constantly spoke (loudly) of nothing else but his diligence in getting the US government to relinquish his tribal property in Texas and admit his family had perpetual sovereignty over the sacred land. He held formal documents which he opened and discussed when anyone showed even a little interest. And my mother and I completed this table. We were feeling a bit out of place: this being our first conference, and at a table of very eclectic strangers at that.

After introductions, the group was again insistent I get up and shake the hand of Mo Wheeler. I rise and go over to her with my hand out. Mo stands up and holds my hand, interlacing our fingers. I notice she had interlaced the fingers of her other hand to the woman on the other side of her too. I was struck so fast, I almost didn't feel it happening on the physical plane. It was as if a bolt of lightning shot through my hand, penetrating my body, my brain, my being. My heart seemed to burst open. The high frequency rang through my ears as my soul jolted from my body and returned in the same instant, I heard high-pitched dolphin noises reminiscent of Flipper, screaming to his handlers with ear-blasting might, "Eeeh! Eeeh! Eeeh!, Eeeh! Eeeh! Eeeh!," followed by a series of clicks and snorts.

Karen leaned toward me again. "Did you notice anything?" I knew my body had jumped in the air in a startle reflex, so that seemed a silly question. Those at the table laughed. Mo continued to make shrieking sounds that must have been heard throughout the room. How could those noises be coming from her? I stood there in disbelief until the shock of it turned to acceptance. "That really happened," I thought, trying to convince myself.

"She likes you!" Mo exclaimed. The woman next to her began explaining what the dolphin was expressing to her. Bobby Jo explained to me that though Mo channels dolphin and whale energy; she brings it to form, but does not speak their language, so doesn't know exactly what it means. Joeaux cannot bring forth the energy, but she can telepathically translate what they tell her. Joeaux told us that the dolphin (whose name I do not remember) was pleased to meet me. She could not contain her love at my presence, so that was what I had felt. She was overjoyed! She had offered me an activation as a gift. Gift received!

I told Mo and Joeaux to tell the dolphin that I was pleased to meet her too and gave Mo's hand a good-natured squeeze. My body tingled for a day or two after that. I was forever changed. That was my initiation, I suppose, to the study of energy. I could feel that feeling again if I chose to get still in my mind-body and remember. It was not entirely pleasant, a little like fingernails on a chalkboard, but the love behind the gesture was immense.

I would like to share a few other things I learned from these dinner guests during my time with them. I mentioned that Bobby Jo was mumbling under her breath about her finger. She kept trying to straighten

out the noticeable bend at the tip of her index finger. She repeated that she didn't mean to, that she had pointed. I inquired about what had happened. She said that while driving to this event, she had a premonition of a car falling off the side of a cliff. She immediately turned the wheel, hugging the side of the road, bringing the car to a stop in hopes of avoiding a crash. When performing this turn, her bent fingertip pointed. She said she had had previous experiences where her fingertip had "made things happen." She was fearful. When she got to the foot of the mountain, there were police cars and an upturned car below. She thought she might have accidentally caused the car to crash, instead of avoiding a crash herself. If the dolphin experience was a high-point, this level of responsibility Bobby Jo felt was a low-point. I tried to console her as best I could, but she was committed to feeling miserable.

Johnny's fight for his land was also a matter of frustration and lack of empowerment. Johnny carried the negative emotions inherited from his whole tribe, two hundred years of angst involving betrayal, violation, survival, and respect. Many attendees reached out to him that weekend to hear his story, offer him healing and lawyers' names.

Dick Tippett did lead the Sedona Tour the next day, slowly with his cane, which doubled as a dowsing rod. He lent me a Y-rod to sense a vortex. I was unable to get a response until he put his hand on my shoulder, and wham! The rod shot down towards the ground in front of me with the power of a certain dolphin I had just met. In the evening, Dick played the piano in the lobby, surrounded by single women, which made for a rollicking fun time. I was told that my uncle played that same piano several years earlier at the conference. I did not know my uncle had attended these dowsing conferences. That was eye-opening! I spent the next few years discovering that Uncle Bob (Robert Mahany) was a well-known presenter. I learned about his teachings so I might keep them relevant for future conference-goers and be an active part of the evolution of his work.

Readers might wonder about the evolution of dolphins, about them perhaps flying high in our world of skyscrapers. I must say dolphins have evolved more than that already, spiritually. They are pure joy. And fly just plenty, with playful flips and antics. If we humans can develop our telepathy, we could hold conversations with dolphins and learn from their wisdom. That would be the best use of evolution for each of us.

These people seated at the Gala Dinner table in October of 2008 were all Lightworkers, each talented in their own right; extraordinary, really. I met channelers, translators, healers, interdimensional beings, walk-ins, musicians, dowsers, shamans, electricians, psychics, and punkers. And then there were Mother and I: newcomers, mundane and naïve, regular folk. It would take a few more conferences before our talents would come to light. Now that is a story for another time. *And mine might include crop circles.*

DAVID C. ANDERSON

**WE ARE NOT THE ENEMY**

Put down your rifles, disable the firing pins.  
 We are not your enemy.  
 Keep your rifles on the firing range.  
 Lock the gun cases, deep-six the keys.  
 We are not your enemy.

*Jonathan, you must tell David, your father  
 the king has determined to kill him—  
 David, the man who took your place before Goliath—  
 the man you love more than you yourself—  
 Saul has become his enemy.*

The classroom door opens behind you. Shadows shift.  
 You hear the click of a rifle. Your friends  
 look up from their desks, mouths open.  
 Sharp sudden shots repeatedly tell you  
 behind you stands an enemy.

He killed seventeen of my classmates  
 and I attended all their memorials.  
 We, the survivors, resolve to thrust their deaths  
 into the face of every power player.  
 And who chose not to live? Our enemy.

*Jonathan, you must tell David goodbye.  
 Keep the covenant you made—  
 bid him goodbye into God's sure hands.  
 Close the door behind you.  
 Your father has become his enemy.*

**FROM THE NORTH SLOPE OF  
 MOUNT DIABLO**

**REMEMBERING 1950**

California cities spread out before Mount Diablo  
 like a rumpled prayer shawl. Street lights glisten.  
 Where they cross, the quilt blocks grow slant.  
 Store fronts and traffic lights color those panes  
 and stitch them into one: earth, water, air, and fire.

House lights finger their way into the foothills.  
 No place remains untouched. Past sundown,  
 night securely pins up the dark with stars.  
 We sit here on Mount Diablo in the rinsing cool  
 of a clear night, and ask each other the unanswerable.

East of here, other cities spread, glow in the evening haze.  
 Caught in these stitched threads, this human light,  
 we determine, through tears, to dedicate ourselves  
 to the muse of our art, our life.  
 We think she is the one who will answer.

**THE SCENE-YET-  
 TO-BE-SEEN BY  
 INVESTIGATORS:  
 A DIAMANTE**

three  
 miles, three  
 lanes, slow traffic  
 funnels into one, beside  
 two semi-trailers side-swiped,  
 ripped each other open,  
 spilled a road-full  
 of un-boxed  
 contents

## LET ME MAKE MYSELF PERFECTLY CLEAR

*Human kind cannot bear very much reality.*

—T.S. Eliot, 'Burnt Norton.'

In Tel Aviv the killer's face flashes over the guerilla art exhibit  
on Dizengoff Street. Again his voice curses Jews. He growls  
about their death, his cell phone jabbers from beyond his grave.

Just passersby, we do not buy a ticket to see  
that street attack again. We glance up, move on.

In Ferguson, aggravated blacks stormed and looted  
even the Mart & Liquor Brown robbed. Activists moved in  
to protest his death, then mob rule escalated,  
ruined properties and left city businesses destitute.

Even the victims of mob rule observed it all darkly,  
behind a curtain. We remain uninvolved.

The Montgomery Baptist church the bomb and fire destroyed  
left behind shards of a stained-glass window, their glow intact.  
A passerby picked up the shards, to keep safe for a future, grow stronger.

Not an attitude adjustment, but a resolve made clear.  
Not taken to shore against ruin, but to oppose the present past.

Should God speak, who listens to heed the design  
He plans for our heart, our life course? Should God appear,  
dazzle the mind and grasp both heart and mind,  
who will dare to take God's hand and walk on water?

We run away rather than be found naked.  
We deny fulfillment of our grandest wishes.

## TRAVEL ENRICHES THE MIND

In Geneva the hotel's one last room,  
a single, a loft, was the width of the bed,  
the door and a sink, with space long enough  
for three windows and a chair, which claimed  
your suitcase. The restroom's down the hall.

Travel enriches the mind.

To reach Virginia Tech you flew to Chicago. Storms  
delayed the flight to eleven p.m.

A fellow traveler, an Intel recruiter, drove you  
to the campus hotel at three-thirty a.m.,  
for a breakfast meeting at eight.

Travel enriches the mind.

Once in Schiphol, you caught a train to Utrecht.  
The signs were in Dutch, you didn't know which stop—  
you stayed on until the train stabled in Amsterdam.  
A porter told you in his simple English  
which train to take,  
which sign to read.

Travel enriches the mind.

At the Swiss airport you engaged a stranger  
and found him so friendly you exchanged  
addresses. A month later you found his letter delivered  
a photo of his bare torso and groins.

Travel enriches the mind.

**BENITO VILA****THE NEW LORD'S PRAYER**  
(2026 GOP EDITION)

Oh, great white gringo father,  
 who doesn't like brown people,  
 hallowed be your guns,  
 the technology that helps us  
 kill other cultures and steal  
 their territory. Our kingdom comes  
 from breaking every promise  
 so our kind can continue  
 to live in comfort. Give us  
 the power we need  
 to make sure no one  
 finds out about us,  
 and lead us out of our despair  
 by putting new worlds up for sale.  
 For thine is the rule of might worshipped,  
 now and forever. Ah, money.

**I AM UNFOLDING**

I am unfolding a nightmare  
 I've gotten good at saying is me.

I treat my own heart like it's an Oreo cookie,  
 fucking around with it first, comparing  
 what one side looks like to other and wondering  
 about all sorts of things before finally  
 putting my teeth right through it.

Blood-thirsty, violent America that's who I am.  
 My problem isn't guns or social media. It's me.  
 I'm without the tools I need to get along;  
 I use guilt to destroy myself, pride to destroy others,  
 and keep stocking up on ammunition.

**THE ART OF REBELLION**  
*FOR HILLY KRISTAL*

The art of rebellion  
 speaks its own language,  
 moves to its own beat,  
 and attracts its own peace,  
 saying what needs to be said right now,  
 different than before, drawing up ideas  
 that move, that mirror, that raise a fist.  
 and then explode, leaving a light on.

The art of rebellion comes along with colors that aren't used the way they've ever been used before, that aren't used the way they're "supposed" to be used. It doesn't care for sentences, syntax or punctuation; it's there, blunt, a little odd. The art of rebellion pops up in places you've never seen intelligence being found before, in places you've never thought to look for a new hope, a new how. It leaves a trail of glittering pink feathers that come together to make an arrow pointing That Way. The art of rebellion is subtle, and knows there is an end to all things, that nothing lasts, that Death has a sense of humor. The art of rebellion is so different that it's uncomfortable, until it gets to see it's needed, that the same old thing is so done doing what it's been doing that it wants the art of rebellion to be a force, a hundred and fifty people howling, drawing on the walls, and choosing not to stop there, not waiting to arrive, not waiting to leave, always evolving, ready to keep making everything it is, and then changing up what it's doing.

The art of rebellion  
 lives between this and that, and  
 loves being neither, loves singing  
 its own songs its own way,  
 hanging out where it's not supposed to,  
 people walking by looking up,  
 knowing something's happening  
 without any words for what it is.

## THE FIRST STEP OF CAPITALISM ANONYMOUS

Who cares to admit complete defeat? Who cares to admit we're circling the drain faster and faster every day? Practically no one, of course. That would mean acknowledging we're spinning, being pulled, here and there, going 'round and 'round, that the systems of modern life are good only for a few, not the many, that the financial rules and economic structures most of us rely on to feed ourselves and our families have been taken over by gamblers and thieves. And we can't get free.

Every human instinct for self-preservation cries out against the idea of going up against their rigged game. What's left when the illusion ends? What do you do when you see the time-suck, the greased palms, the twisted justice and the racial bias for what it really is? Ugly. Rude. Mean. Cruel. Up to now, it's been so much easier to play along, shiny new toys in hand, to keep on warping our emotions, our minds, our lives into such an obsession for destructive buying that only Death removes it from us. No other kind of poverty or bankruptcy is like this one. Capitalism, and its rapacious creditors, bleeds us of all hope and all will to resist its demands. As long as this stark fact is ignored or denied, our aimlessness, our failure in human concerns, is complete.

Why all this insistence that our economic order has hit bottom? The answer is that few societies will sincerely try to change unless they have hit a bottom. Until we admit there is no benefit in doing things the same way we've been doing them, we will prolong our misery. History shows that. We kept our kings until they were no longer useful. Now, after centuries of flogging and deceit, after trading the whims of the court to living under the lash of capitalism, we have been driven madly insane, making it commonplace to hoard rather than to share, to believe the lies of predators rather than question them. Only now do we discover the fatal nature of our situation, and only now do we become as open-minded as only the most desperate creature can be.

Can we stand ready to do anything which will lift us out of the merciless obsession of More? Of making more, having more, eating more, sleeping more, getting more products into more sales and distribution channels. For our mutual survival, the only More that matters is that we practice caring for each other more, that we do more than try to buy some personal and generational security in a future that's coming loaded to kill. Can we take this first step together? Can we do it now? To admit we're in trouble—if only to keep ourselves alive another day, to make sure we don't go down, bloated, bludgeoned, sucked in our own machine, our own prejudices, our own comforts, so that new generations can thrive without the pain, disorientation and suffering we know so well.

## MAYBE FORGIVENESS WAS SOME KIND OF JOKE

1.

War is peace.  
Blood oozes beneath the wall.  
Teams gather on the lines.  
The music plays.

O built so fast by slavery's hands,  
and by slaughtering who was here,  
all honor gone, replaced by greed,  
to be governed by goons and thieves.  
America! America!  
God send his plagues on thee,  
for claiming what was never yours  
and telling your lies as history.

2.

Freedom is slavery.  
You'll die if you go.  
Without us, you're nothing.  
Trust your government.

We pledge allegiance to mass destruction  
to spread it across every country we can,

to wipe away any history and every culture,  
until their children only know our strength,  
our violence,  
a fury so intolerable, so unjust,  
that they're bound to want retribution,  
and we can keep selling more fear.

3.

Ignorance is truth.  
The final solution.  
Let us take you into this train car.  
Everything is fine.

Jesus got killed in translation,  
posted as wanted when nothing  
could've been further from the truth.  
It's said he died for somebody's sins,  
but no one remembers whose, or what kind,  
and whether the prince of peace did  
anything more than make more war, like,  
maybe forgiveness was some kind of joke.

## DAZZLING DIAMOND SPARKLE SOUL FLOATING IN THE SKY

Dazzling diamond sparkle soul floating in the sky.  
 I see it in your eyes, you've discovered you're in a dream,  
 flash, the red-hat freedom warriors act like  
 they're the ones fighting for their life,  
 rebel flags on their pickups, so proud of their guns,  
 without the discipline and empathy of real soldiers,  
 all they want to do is point and shoot, post images,  
 pain makers, nothing more, desperate to please daddy.

It is finished, he cried, breathless. Jesus knew for sure  
 that nothing at all happens in the outside world, that  
 what happens takes place within, beyond the reach of men  
 and god and law, and that was his crime, to insist  
 the kingdom of heaven was within, aglow, present, eternal,  
 a wisdom we each have always, awake, aware  
 that it cannot be identified by m or f, a full seed ready,  
 inside us, light given from beyond, a love ready to bloom.

A womb for our wounds, the naked destruction  
 of my mind, asking "why" when there are so many  
 other questions to ask, the horses are out of the barn,  
 the other team is ninety feet away from winning,  
 my loved ones are nowhere to be seen,  
 what can I do now, where do I go for help,  
 how does my song go, who holds my heaviness,  
 my resistance, now that I see what I want slip away.

In another world, a wailing mother holds her  
 faceless child, a child who will never grow old,  
 an immortal, the child who made her who she was  
 before the hate came and took everything it could,

while in Moscow, Washington, Jerusalem and Gaza,  
 con men gamble like they're masters, being nothing more  
 than murderers, gangsters and thugs, rolling dice,  
 counting pips, taking lives.

The magician, the fool, the blind man look at life differently,  
 only knowing right now, like at any time we can disappear  
 and you may say that doesn't make much sense,  
 that to live that way makes nothing matter,  
 like everything can suddenly change, birds bark,  
 dogs sing, morning comes with a house on fire,  
 black smoke, money stuffed in a drawer inside,  
 father wants to go back, but looks at his girls and doesn't.

Either or, either one, anyone got a pill for this?  
 It's like every modern society suffers from a mental illness,  
 maybe our whole species is readying itself for extinction,  
 ignoring what made us so different, so practical, before we  
 got addicted to mine, to more, to not enough, to the fear  
 we'll never make it, hooked on feeling lost, being adrift  
 rather than sailing, a punishment for going out alone,  
 for forgetting the truth when the time comes to rely on it.

To worry on and on is to strangle your mind, to harness it  
 with doubt and disbelief, setting fire to the work  
 that's due tomorrow, a sort of sabotage that feeds our loves,  
 our courage, our let's do this now, to monsters with  
 no teeth but plenty of hunger, ready to take you  
 where you can't see, think or feel, and then,  
 suddenly, you don't know what's happening next,  
 dazzling diamond sparkle soul floating in the sky.

**PILAR GRAHAM****RETURN, BODY...**

to a small fragile place against the skin  
of the earth, along the shell of the earth—of love.

I hear you through the corn wall, below the base-  
boards—where  
darkness and mice still seem to penetrate

toward the center of my skull  
and collarbone, right before the snap traps me back:  
a forward motion, the commotion of love and my body

returns, leaning in all its former glory; skin folds into  
itself  
without shame  
or misery,  
having departed from the physical capture

**AWAKE**

Let me live longer  
After the Mountain

Holds me down,  
Ponderosa-shade

Distances itself in voice.  
Long-winded falls

Carry contemplation.  
Quiet. Mysterious dance.

Wintered evenings  
Slip toward morning.

Breath aligns into  
Pearlized galaxies,

Live on your wrist,  
Reflect brilliance.

Our gaze, a supernova—  
Thousands of new stars.

**ESCAPE ARTIST**

I should have known better by now with the high-rises,  
and more so this time, given it was the last

year to watch images distort, windows reflect  
geometrics of glass that never quite became quartz

unlike musician's breath, it fueled other factors of function;  
consumptions merge mountains beside solo-lacking assumptions

along the ridged embodiments and hairlines,  
gold-foiled duplicities from the currency of a well-lived

life, distanced by centuries, and an escape artist who enters  
paper, sound, and touch

the lace, and how my history presses firm against my breast,  
while the black beasts cast their downward eye-beats

from being misunderstood in the ever-changing light,  
into existence requires you to store all the winter nuts

as if to distinguish the seers from their sadly-romantic, gallant whips

MOONA WU



108

CHANGE

FREE

EXPECT

109

REMEMBRANCE

**JULEY HARVEY****AROUND 8 A.M.**

i was just considering  
 you and the dolphins  
 and putting a curse  
 on those who need it,  
 when, like a charm,  
 i saw them,  
 sisters of the sea  
 and of the seasoned heart,  
 half-mooning their way  
 through the water,  
 calm, shining stars  
 of the morning.  
 with one synchronized,  
 barely perceived motion,  
 almost subconsciously,  
 the dolphins put  
 everything in perspective —  
 peace is possible;  
 harmony lives;  
 higher intelligence  
 has no need  
 to harm another creature;  
 we can save our souls  
 and not disturb the universe.  
 we can always choose.  
 may we choose the dolphins.

**JOYLIGHT**

a flash of fin,  
 joylight glints  
 off dolphin waves.  
 i want to rush headlong  
 down the beachhead hill  
 and join the merry band:  
 it's a most foot-tapping,  
 fin-flapping urge,  
 to create a picture to  
 hang upon the mind's  
 living room wall:  
 imagine the thrill,  
 portrait of a woman,  
 fully clothed,  
 racing through the frilly surf  
 to embrace kind creatures,  
 godiva's sweet ocean stallions,  
 who love to save us,  
 somehow it makes sense  
 now and always will.  
 but i'm stuck here in the sand.  
 certain life forms  
 are pure heart surge,  
 floating sea magic crystals,  
 shining merlins in swirling storm,  
 aquatic medallions.  
 joylight sings  
 on dolphin wings.  
 life dance and love song merge  
 in silver dolphin rings.

**SEA CRITTERS**

you gave your lives  
 so that i may praise you,  
 on my coral shelves,  
 add you to my neptuned exhibition  
 of uninhabited lore.  
 who were you,  
 in your better days, before  
 you smashed against  
 a sudden, heaving rock,  
 and were offered as seafood  
 to the birds that flock,  
 shiny manna insisted on  
 by hungry gods,  
 or sacrificial clams,  
 skeletons left by unmotherly tides?  
 you glittered, winked among  
 the kelp and weeds, not knowing  
 the beauty of basilical renaissance

you created, then cast aside, adrift  
 antiquated, like bottles bearing  
 no visible message.  
 except you slept there.  
 deep in chambers of sea-snore delight,  
 as other ship-shore creatures  
 slipped by on evolving storms of light.  
 were we all sea critters  
 in an earlier life,  
 waiting to wash seaboard intact,  
 then to roam landlocked  
 with our horde of starry memories  
 of the horny deep,  
 until, sad-colored selves,  
 we washed up on some rich sand beach,  
 to adorn some higher creature's  
 coral shelves?

**THE RETURN OF IMELDA MARCOS' SHOES**

you don't have to have two left feet  
 to remember the closets and closets  
 full of 3,000 pairs of shoes  
 for the biped late wife  
 of the former late philippine dictator fernando.  
 and now, after marching off into the sunset,  
 the line of heredity brings back marcos the rising son,  
 scion of shoes. moody twos to nike blues.  
 that's where some of our money went,  
 down the street, how suite,  
 spent and done, unrepentant,  
 every unshoeless wonder one.  
 while the citizenry got soaked and socked.  
 now, the feted footed shoe-bacas come again,  
 only bearing yachts and riches.  
 they've graduated from podiatry  
 and are still in the swim with the caviar fishes.  
 ah, society.  
 do they shop at melania's russian shoe store  
 for stilettos and more?  
 everything comes round,  
 is lent,  
 and makes way for the same unfair event  
 to reoccur like clockwork or shoe size,  
 perhaps generations of stilettos  
 for the pampered, squeezed-in, tiny toes,  
 stomping on sacred ground and graves  
 better left alone with whatever dyes.  
 oh, imelda, oh, melania, no shuffling for you,  
 but perhaps weaving, self-deceiving,  
 staggering, floundering, doddering,

wobbling on those skyscrapers,  
 and have we got some jimmy choos for youse!  
 and some swampland to buy  
 to stomp around in,  
 high heels to the sky.  
 unlike cowboys, they'll never die  
 with their shoes on.  
 how could they choose which ones, anyway?  
 and the shoe czars  
 are never gone,  
 they always reappear  
 to kick sand and kickstart wars,  
 insist on resurrecting,  
 coming back in style,  
 rising again from the  
 alligator dead with a smile,  
 to stand  
 with heels,  
 on our head.  
 nike knew it.  
 they always just do it.  
 with moneybags,  
 the rest is rags,  
 bowing to the queen  
 of drags.  
 on the world stage,  
 check out the latest craze —  
 be wise,  
 turn the page, act your age  
 but not your returned shoe size.

**GOOD NEIGHBORS**

the dolphins don't care  
 about political persuasion,  
 or religion —  
 if you're in trouble  
 in their environment  
 and you need saving,  
 they are there,  
 they will help,  
 lend a fin.  
 one of the most egregious

errors of the now,  
 we can never look  
 at our neighbors  
 the same way again.  
 no more barn-raising,  
 trust is broken,  
 gone.  
 oh, to be a dolphin,  
 to carry on,  
 in a new-grace dawn.

**WRITERS' FLOCK**

i always used to wonder  
 about ivan's malibu colony  
 townhouse, on the famed  
 malibu beach,  
 sand-blowing,  
 patio dolphin-watching,  
 towel-tripping,  
 and how he could, unknowing,  
 have such ordered  
 beauty among  
 the tempest-tossed,  
 lest, lost, zest, jest, fest,  
 guessed, guest, blessed  
 disarray of all,  
 that seems to come  
 uninvited and plum  
 with being a writer —  
 books every which way,

everywhere, every day.  
 and now, i've become  
 the same way,  
 in sierra high-desert  
 non-hide-away mystery.  
 perhaps it's in  
 the creative molecular  
 mammalian air,  
 dolphin's arching,  
 atom's fall. eve's scrawl.  
 writing's on the wall.  
 it's history. herstory.  
 those times with ivan  
 informed my mind.  
 i was something more.  
 dolphin dance,  
 the last chance  
 at breaching brilliance.

TERESA RENNICK

ARE THINGS REALLY SO BAD....?

In the fog of night, my ankle hurting  
my muddled mind  
conjured on a brilliant plan.

“I’ll insert the pain inside a poem.”

I’d gone to sleep reading Zbigniew Herbert,  
a Polish poet who also lived  
in desperate times  
and he offered up a poem  
where my pain stayed until morning  
allowing me some rest.

The pain was likely  
old bones  
standing on hard pavement,  
holding a sign  
“Democracy For All Of Us!”  
My friend David’s sign,  
“Vietnam Veteran Against Fascism!”

Mid-morning a young homeless man  
named Seth stopped by.

“Are things really so bad  
that you old people are out here freezing  
yourselves over it?”

Skeptical, he stands with us  
watching folks drive by,  
avert their eyes,  
or sometimes honk and wave.

When an outsize pickup truck  
swerves toward us  
‘rolling coal,’  
fist raised high  
shouting  
hateful words,  
Seth flings his arms out  
protecting us.

“Jesus Christ,” he says, “What  
kind of fucking shit is that!”

BROKEN DREAM (1966)

*Today in the United States 10 to 25% of  
pregnancies end in miscarriage.*

*The Centers for Disease Control  
and Prevention*

The closet in my childhood room  
was deep and narrow  
tunneled as it was  
under a wide stair case.  
Getting to the back  
where boxes of stored  
junk and treasures live,  
required crawling.

Visiting home  
four months pregnant with  
my first child,  
I crawl into my old cave closet  
looking for favorite oversized  
boots, for soon my feet  
may swell and these  
old lace-ups will be  
perfect.

On hands and knees  
searching, opening and  
closing boxes  
the first pang comes,  
a cramp,  
a faint shifting, the feel  
of wetness on my jeans.  
I slither out,  
the boots forgotten.

I say nothing to my mother  
Don’t speak my fear  
out loud.

Back in my apartment  
I phone the doctor  
who, not unkindly, says:  
“It will take its course.”

We wait, we two  
wait for days. Blinds closed  
we lie on the floor  
the couch, the bed.  
Our world is darkness,  
all bedrock and  
bleeding. My eyes sting  
although I do not cry. I am filled  
with a disquieting lack.  
Dreams come, of  
caved-in wells on  
desolate homesteads.  
Time ticks toward  
our emptying.

Finally it is finished.  
You are born  
a bloody ravaged parcel,  
a small delivered package.  
The doctor comes.  
He talks with me  
examines you  
then  
flushes you away.

## AND STILL WE PLAY

The Italian composer  
had some German blood  
and a German middle name  
and two hundred years after it was written  
the Symphony Orchestra of Montreal  
still plays his Etude for Strings  
with skill  
and reverence  
to standing room only  
crowds.

My autoharp waits  
in its patched  
cardboard case  
gathering dust  
in the corner. Someday soon  
I'll play a song for you.

"It isn't much." I'll say.  
"I got the idea that time  
I drove across the mountains  
the time the hawks were soaring  
and the Indian Paintbrush was in bloom.  
I'll play a song for you.  
Just know it isn't much  
and it really isn't finished."

The Symphony Orchestra of Montreal  
rises and bows  
for a standing ovation  
plays an encore  
written in F minor.

I unlatch the cardboard case  
take out my autoharp  
and play....

## AUDEN'S ASK

*"All I have is a voice to undo  
the folded lie." W.H. Auden*

I mispronounce Auden's name  
when I ask my husband if he's read  
"1 September 1939"  
a companion year to 2025.

Then, and now, we long for order, want our lives  
and our pendulums swinging  
straight and true,  
"cling to our average day."  
Pour a solitary cup of tea  
shuffle well worn cards, play our usual  
pass-the-evening game,  
reread fine and favorite books and mark  
the passages.

*But now's the time to push the quiet known  
aside.*  
- With urgency - Auden asks -

Asks us to clear the table, make room for  
elbows, rolled up sleeves,  
a favorite pen, that sometimes leaks. Asks us  
to find any paper within reach, no matter if it's  
printed on one side.

Though there's no notion  
how to start, and despair hovers,  
we choose a page,  
begin to pen, in our own voices,  
halting,  
tiny points of light.

## GHOSTS REMAIN

Once, long past child bearing years  
walking down a street in some  
unremembered city  
I heard a baby from an open  
upstairs window cry  
and felt the warmth and tingling  
of the let-down reflex in my breasts.

While another mother moved to undo  
her blouse and feed her child  
my breasts, no longer capable of giving milk  
held the memory of what my body used to do.

The retrieval system in my brain  
has become an old librarian, shuffling  
in worn slippers  
through a labyrinth of rooms.  
No card catalogue  
or Dewey Decimal system.  
Nothing alphabetized.  
Just creaky limbs moving in a halting gait,  
feeling her way

through dark winding passages  
picking up this memory and that, holding them  
in gnarled hands, putting them down  
without comment, or sometimes - I never know  
what she will choose -  
passing them along to me.

Today the ancient librarian must have been  
wandering the stacks  
in the deepest recess of my brain  
thumbing through the oldest  
ruined memories she could find.  
After I clicked off the phone  
from an unrelated call  
she reached until her shaky fingers grasped  
a painful memory - an old hurt  
and handed it to me full blown.

The welcome memory of giving milk  
the bitter one, with tears in the remembering  
are not the same, just old ghosts  
that remain.

**ED BALLDINGER**

**ROLES**

My egoic nature accepts  
its new meditative role today –

*that which blows away  
all that wants to stay –*

awareness sits in silence,  
watching the blower blow.

**NOSTALGIA**

Ah, to the sweet scent of nostalgia.  
To the ebb and flow of youthful resurgence  
woven into the lineage we leave in our wake;  
to the echo of evolutions vibrating through the ages;  
to the sages of wisdom, truth in clarity, sound and serene;  
to the lands of the living in spaces between the unseen;  
to the places we left that we once called home  
to make homes of new places we now call our own.

Ah, to the sweet, sweet scent of nostalgia...

**INTIMATE CONFESSIONS OF A MARGINAL MYSTIC**

I could have knelt in the tower of  
marginal love much longer than I did,  
but my legs gave out and I crawled  
in circles until I learned to walk again.

I could have danced until my feet  
were numb from stumbling out of step,  
so I did, finding gratitude once more  
for those who have loved me most.

I could have spun like a junk monkey  
on marble floors of self-decimation for the  
rest of my life, but my body woke up before my  
mind knew how to cope. Spirit held me close.

I could have split each hair into quarter shanks  
to prove the accuracy of my own axe,  
but my tools are not meant to be weapons  
of precision in this pointless rivalry with light.

In the grainy angularity of a circular  
dissension, I fell down, face forward  
out of my temple and into a shell where  
I found myself tied to my own concession.

I could have drained the desert dry of all  
its dew when I once had the chance,  
but my hunger drove me to lose my grace.

I could have purified all my altered states  
on the altar of figurative speech without speaking,  
but my tongue would not be still.

I could have breached the walls that held me  
captive in a garden filled with grief-deep soil,  
then Noah showed me how love grows from death.

I could have returned to dust, falling into channels of  
cathedral streams on their way back to the open sea,  
but it was time for me to move like slow flowing waters.

Despite the insolvent knave who is prone  
to steer clear, there is no new direction here.  
One part Dervish; two parts lore; three parts  
left over by those who were here before.

I could have slashed a razor gash into  
the granite rock of my own spotless tomb.  
I could have chosen one less cloak to wrap  
‘round myself in a midnight mass of confusion,

but I will not miss the ninth circle in this  
third realm of heaven next to an old 7-11  
when the mystic within me hears  
the voice of God, and I stop  
to listen for once.

TIM HUDENBURG

## UNDERWATER BREATH AND ELEVATED HEIGHTS

Floating in these liquid thunder waters  
dreams are set adrift.  
There is motion in soft-falling salt mist.  
Aquatic particles feast on invisible bits.  
Wind-swept ascensions lashing  
at heaven's embryonic weight.

Where any mind *"becomes a servant  
of the awakening...through the power of  
its attention..."* structures rise high above my  
own *ego-normous* grandstands, components  
all together skinning up this skeletal frame.  
Babel wasn't born in a day.  
*Or was it?*

As horizontal experience goes vertical  
we *can* defy the gravitational pull

with a new stillness of heaving thrust,  
yawp and ho; oscillating waves moving  
Divinity's fascination with soul;  
ancient breath, aware in full force  
without force, in a form of forceless will.

Comprehension diminishes rigidity's rot.  
Here's to the skyscraping delusions within us.  
Here's to melting destiny's firmament  
into the mud from which it once rose.

*This* is the imposing erosion of a  
societal psyche spun on a rotating spit.  
*This* is the breath beneath a watery façade.  
*This* is ingenuity luring impermanence to view  
its own death, leading somewhere beyond  
elevated heights into dreams set silently adrift.

## IMPRESSION: OUT ON REHOBOTH BAY

*(dedicated to Gary & Linda B)*

look back there  
a little skyscraper-less paradise  
water wind waves

this Eden too  
we have not been to—  
forced to leave

breeze without expectation  
there the Point  
we sail past its two lighthouses

a refuge of osprey  
pods of dolphins—  
keep us company

sun on our backs  
wisp of white clouds  
the wind at our face

when is this now  
many have not seen  
this pitch of sea

the smell of tar  
tasted an ocean—  
this salt in its spray

green lights in the distance  
closer a danger sign near the weir  
Beware: Slow. No Wake! Lewes Canal

Gary's constant hand upon the wheel  
adjustments until we land again  
and a daring day ends with Linda

**ONCE AN ISLAND  
IN THE DISTANCE**

green stains  
blue dyed sea  
slick oil painting

inky colors  
newly squeezed from a tube  
idyllic blends with native watercolors

towers brush  
the sky with  
graphite smoke plumes

viewers gather for twenty seconds  
admire the chromatic canvas now  
coated with varnish in the museum

**PASSING NEAR AN  
OLD NATIVE RESERVATION**

tall shadows  
tower over a roadside attraction  
broken with promises

**POETRY DISGUISED AS A  
BEACH COUNTING BOOK**

10 beach shells most are broken  
9 dolphins playing not far offshore  
8 tiny fish swimming in the shallows  
7 seagulls regally soaring overhead  
6 towels covered with wet sand  
5 pieces of translucent sea glass  
4 sand crabs scurrying down a hole  
3 sunburnt kids asleep in the shade  
2 sandcastle towers collapsing  
1 beach umbrella straining in the wind

**CONDITIONS IDEAL**

*(added bits for good measure)*

when at dawn  
our day begun

the captain  
confidently commands

lines be cast  
our anchor raised

catch the wind while it blows  
as the white sails fill

off we go  
the little sailboat skims

across another gray wave  
underneath a dazzling cloudsky

(up ahead Harbor of Refuge lighthouse  
notice the Osprey nesting nearby

the Captain said  
now look starboard

a playful pod of dolphins so close  
and laughing seagulls overhead)

sooner or later tho'  
the sun must set

then and there  
the captain decides

cautiously turns  
the little sailboat around

we head home  
~hurry~~hurry~

back to safe harbor of Lewes  
only after the boat safely secured

tied to the dock  
the sail brushed and neatly stored

(the sun has set  
moon slowly risen)

and we leave  
thankful for all we saw

sleepy smiles  
appreciates one and all

goodnight, goodnight sleep well  
dear ones near and far

**JENNIFER FENN**

**DIVING AND FLYING**

From the video ad, dolphins swim  
in a tree-surrounded lagoon.  
They smile as they come up for air,  
greeting the zoo guests  
who come to swim with them.  
“Come on people!” their eyes seem to say.  
They dive under water, jump high,  
almost fly into another dive.

Is this my bucket list chance?  
In my mind, I reach out, hug one,  
dive under with it.  
Cool water massages my muscles,  
my arthritic hips and flat, sore feet,  
undoes my ponytail  
to let my hair float free.  
“Whee!” I exclaim  
as the dolphin and I  
fly through the air  
into a perfect dive back under.

My dolphin swims away,  
leaving me back in my hectic world  
of work and caregiving,  
saving money for home repairs  
and medical copays,  
duties that don't allow  
diving and flying.

**TALL GIRL IN A STORM**

I stand in wind, sway,  
struggle hard not to topple  
my own sky scraper!

**SURROUNDED**

Troubles enclose me:  
two-faced boss on power trip,  
typos that haunt me,  
thwarting me from seeing peace,  
like skyscrapers block the blue.

**EVOLVE!**

Evolve!  
Become better stewards  
of God's earth, His seas, His rivers.  
Clear away the poisons.  
Restore habitats  
of endangered species.  
Don't let them go extinct  
like the Chinese river dolphins!  
Don't let them go extinct!  
For endangered species,  
restore habitats.  
Clear away the poisons.  
Of God's earth, His seas, His rivers,  
become better stewards!  
Evolve!

**THE DOLPHIN FIGURINE**

A clear glass dolphin beckons me  
to gaze at its laughing face.  
Light makes rainbows  
in its sleek body,  
reminding me  
I still have not swam  
with real dolphins.

I still have not cruised  
to Mexico, the Bahamas,  
though the seas still foam  
on their shores,  
as if reaching for people's hands,  
my hand, to lead me  
to the dolphins.

**ALLEGRA JOSTAD SILBERSTEIN**

**EVOLUTION OF TIME**

after a while in the evolution of  
time I learned that my anger  
turns on me...clogs my heart.

The litany of abuse I chanted  
kept me from restful sleep  
echoed as I scrubbed my floors.

A teacher told me to forgive  
to send good wishes to those  
who had hurt me. . .

Impossible I cried . . .Why . . .  
Because, my teacher replied,  
only forgiving will heal you.

As time evolved I came  
to accept that a promise  
might not be forever

And after a while in the  
evolution of time healing came  
with new beginnings.

**THE GREENING OF PEACE**

under a grave's sky  
the turning that burns  
mineral voices into being  
the blood spilled  
grief crushed to molten stone

values meted out  
in elemental weights  
earth nutrients evolving  
into green shades of a tree  
strong branches reaching out  
with sheltering leaves  
an evolution

with swelling buds  
that will bear fruit  
sweeter than oranges  
stranger than pomegranates  
into peace

**SKYSCRAPERS**

do just that  
they scrape the sky  
cut across it  
where once

trees curled  
across the horizon  
mountains and clouds  
rollicked  
and quiet prairies  
rested.

We people  
proud  
rejoice in  
height  
as sky scrapers  
scrape the sky.

**THE POSSIBLE OF EVOLUTION**

In a fairytale we might some time  
encounter a tree with a human face  
or one that can talk or even incline—  
to lend enchantment to a certain place.

But come with me without storybook haze  
to an old forest where roots entwine  
and a canopy above gives the grace of shade—  
bringing peace perhaps to some troubled mind.

Here roots of the beech trees touch one another,  
when one tree needs help the others send food.  
A mother tree will nourish her brood.  
Fungi weave messages through the earth.

Here in symbiotic communities  
there is communion among the trees...  
was this and evolution over time  
might this be possible for humanity?

**DOLPHIN LETTER**

Dear people of earth

Our lives are at stake

Please stop dumping  
garbage in the ocean

Help in any way you can to  
prevent more climate change

If you can turn from hate

Never doubt that  
love will conquer

Thank you  
your Dolphin friend

**DAVE BOLES**

**A PHILOSOPHICAL DISCUSSION  
WITH A DEAD MOUSE MY  
CAT KILLED AT 3AM IN  
THE MORNING**

ultimately  
all of life does not revolve  
around "right" and "wrong"

it is entirely  
about evolution and survival

is it wrong to kill  
to keep yourself alive?

is it right to kill  
to keep yourself alive?

it does not matter.

in the end, the universe  
continues

as it has  
throughout time

everything else  
is a philosophical discussion  
for the dust

you walk upon.

**SHALL WE GO SWIMMING**

in the pool of dreams  
exploring echoes  
tasting sounds  
finding truths sanctified  
in rhythms long forgotten  
there is not a need for labels  
or dissonant theories

we are all children  
playfully finding life  
in these disunited times  
ignore the hunter's actions  
while keeping a watchful eye  
for the magic  
dreams may bring.

**ALL OF THIS  
POLITICAL UPHEAVAL**

Religious conflict  
Sacred chemistry's long recognized  
To be brutally discharged  
By witnesses of a planned obsolescence

We should resume listening  
To our ancestors wisdom  
Smoke the dried leaves of the caapi plant  
And begin placing ads  
For ornamental hermits.

**A PRAYER**

We are all  
Children of the Monkey

Illuminated flowers in fields  
Fallow with disease

Yet, still, there is life

Rejuvenating life

The fields were made barren  
Through greed

Avarice

That turned hearts  
Into stone

Let us gather  
In these barren fields

Allowing our deaths  
To replenish, rejuvenate

The spirit that shines within us

The illumination

That set us free.

**AUTOMATIC COFFEE MAKERS**

Miriam calls to us to see  
We live in a world filled with entheogens  
Yet refuse to accept the obvious  
Conclusions  
Of their potency  
Their power  
In our lives

How to explain this to a society  
That wakes up to an alarm clock  
Pouring coffee from an automatic  
Coffee maker  
Set to deliver a perfect brew  
At just the right moment  
When consciousness meets  
The reality of a new day

Caapi root is the God Molecule  
The Burning Bush was Acacia wood

Everywhere you look is a Daleth  
Waiting to be opened

Our salvation lies  
Not in automatic coffee makers  
But in the honey  
Of the promised land

We have forgotten  
Turning water into wine is an  
Alchemical process of steering  
The tornado that is our minds

Meditation is Mediation is Medication

Rejoice in its bounty.

## CONSTANTINUS AGITANDO

Faceless Legionnaires  
 Sator Squares drawn upon their armor  
 Appear in my dreams  
 Delivering me to Milvian Bridge  
 Where the Tiber river  
 Runs red with blood

I watch Constantine's victory unfold  
 But I do not see his visions  
 Of Christ in the clouds

There are no crosses to be found  
 In his legions  
 Only Sator Squares for protection

Elite Centurions gather before battle  
 Feasting with one another  
 Honoring Mithras  
 Spilling a bull's blood  
 So the victory  
 Might be swift, and sure

Their practices kept secret  
 Sacred  
 Since the time of Zoroaster  
 They feast in Mithras' honor  
 Fighting against the forces of evil  
 Destroying the wicked  
 All to bring purity  
 To their land

Historians will write that Constantine  
 Inspired by images of Christ  
 Led his troops to victory

Defeating the Pagan gods  
 Worshipped by Maxcentius  
 Slaying him in battle  
 Displaying his decapitated head  
 To all of Rome  
 Showing the people  
 That Christianity was the way  
 To a noble, and pure soul

But the truth remains;  
 Long before Constantine  
 Romans were worshipping Christ

They did so in secret  
 Identifying themselves  
 With Sator Squares

They took rituals from Mithras  
 And made it their own  
 Evolving the Zoroasterism world  
 Ever further

There is a direct line  
 From Zoroasterism  
 To Mithraism, to Christianity  
 In truth, it goes back further still

But history is written  
 By the victorious  
 Both in wars  
 And religions

My dream was complete  
 History had been corrected

Until a Hindu holy man appeared  
 With the scent  
 Of a strong saffron tea

The steam from his cup  
 Swirled around me  
 Vedic imagery  
 Offering glimpses  
 Of a fabulous world

The holy man leaned forward  
 His eyes filled with sincerity  
 Whispering to me;  
*"There is still so much to learn".*

## ENCHANTMENT

Come to the chaos  
 New books await  
 Roll your mind around  
 The salt water taffy  
 Old men chew  
 Sweet juice dribbling  
 Down stubbled chins  
 Faint glows of yesterday  
 Shining through clouded eyes  
 Piercing truth  
 As only a Shaman  
 Could provide.

## DRIFTING

Do we dance Butoh  
 In defiance of this  
 Political regime

Peeling back transgressions  
 As one would open  
 A can of sardines

Finish this feast  
 Of absurdity  
 And return us home

A blood moon is rising  
 Malfeasance is no longer  
 Absolved

Pay the harbor master

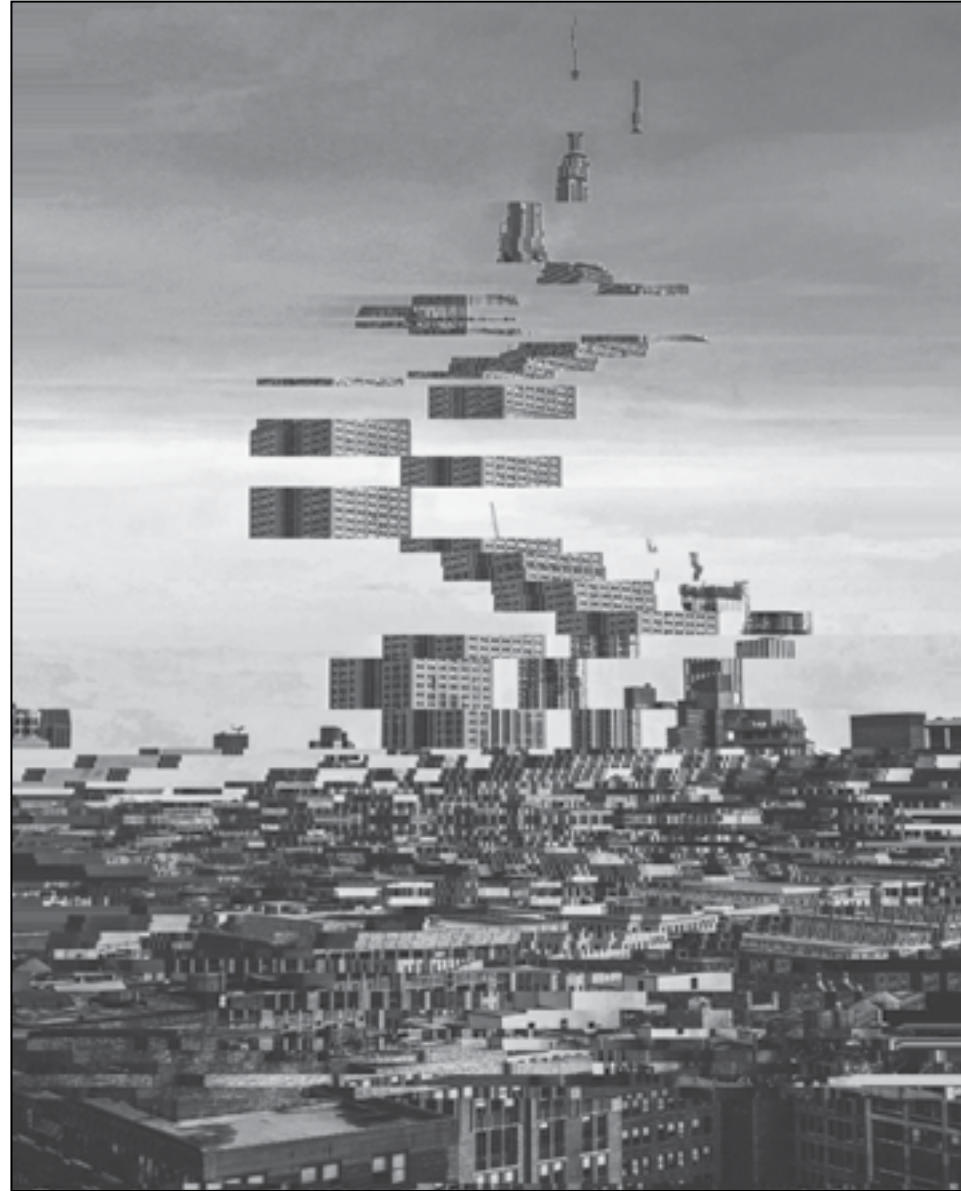
Sundered though he might be  
 He is our only

Salvation

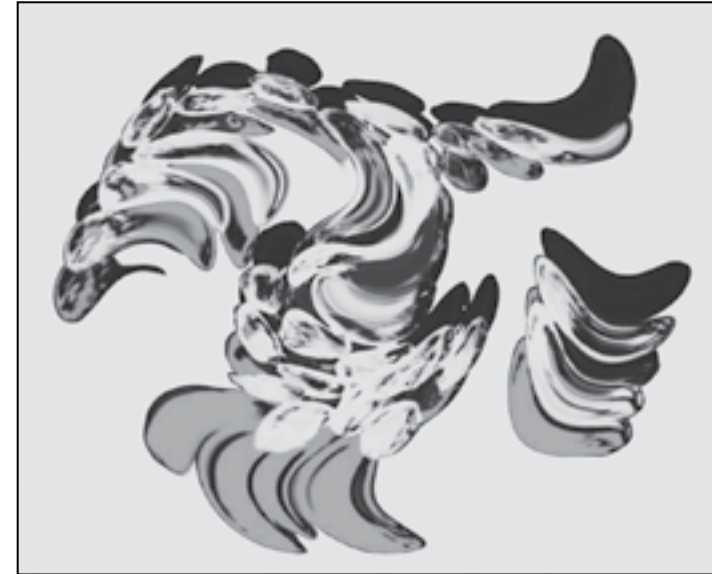
On this  
 Journey

For freedom.

ROBERT FLEMING



EMPIRE STATE BUILDING, NY



WATERMELON SEED DOLPHIN IN BLACK & WHITE



7 WONDERS OF THE WORLD — ALEXANDRIA LIGHTHOUSE

MARC PETRIE

## ORCAS

Orcas roam the rolling ocean, the Oglala of the sea,  
 unseen save for the occasional dorsal fin,  
 as distant as Crazy Horse--who was never photographed,  
 and as great of warriors as the Lakota, hunting the vast liquid plains,  
 surrounding their prey like a bare-backed buffalo party,  
 counting coup on kayaks and boats they upend.  
 White men hate anything wild.  
 They either tame or exterminate.  
 They capture orcas for Sea World shows,  
 herd them on ever-shrinking wilderness reservations  
 while their blue eyes scan for oil and fish to steal  
 from the orcas' homeland and use the sacred waters  
 as dumping grounds for plastics and agricultural waste.  
 Yet in the great distances of the western sea  
 the warriors roam from British Columbia to California  
 claiming their ancient hunting grounds in hazel-eyed defiance  
 of snivilization, honoring tradition and holding onto what's theirs,  
 patiently waiting for the buffalo to return to the Plains  
 and flocks of carrier pigeons to fill the sky.



DOLPHINS #2 IN BLACK AND WHITE

**JOAN GOODREAU**

**DOLPHIN WARNING**

Sailors long ago thought dolphins were mermaids  
 who waved their fins  
 flashed their tails  
 to greet them on their endless voyage  
 and love them from afar.

Now we know better.  
 Dolphins are just smart fish  
 trainable but edible

so keep your distance while we  
 dump what we don't want in  
 your ocean home and  
 tear apart the earth  
 to snatch what's in it for us.

Do not come close or like others  
 who have ventured near you'll disappear  
 the way the nameless blameless others  
 have before you.

You make us smile and we wave back at you  
 but we are wild animals  
 who seize the treasures of the planet  
 destroy all that stops our evolution  
 to be the eternal rulers of dead land and sea.

**PROMISE OF EVOLUTION**

promise of bigger and better  
 life abundant  
 cornucopia overflowing

So where did it go?

snipped into scraggly patches  
 worn out used up memories  
 stitched into a crazy quilt  
 with a design no one can figure out.

on a old clothesline  
 my quilt banner  
 trembles in the wind

**DIAGNOSIS**

*WRITTEN IN APRIL, AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH*

I know by the time I take Ian's  
 two-year-old birthday picture  
 but I tell myself he's okay.

Last year his gurgles and babbles dropped into silence  
 broken by howls through the night.  
 in that long year of wondering

Two strong magnets  
 my gaze and hugs  
 don't attract him but repel.

I watch him so small  
 disappear into the MRI tube  
 For brain tests that tell nothing

He pushes away the test puzzle and pictures  
 and grabs a bright baby rattle  
 shakes it laughs.  
 I know now what he wants for his birthday  
 because he's not really three years old  
 but like the doctor says---delayed.

"Like a train, can he catch up?" I ask  
 "No, not like a train," says the specialist  
 but the engine inside my head  
 blocks out the rest of his reply.

I picture a train with Ian and me  
 pulling out of the station  
 to an unknown destination  
 with nothing but the clothes on our backs.

I don't know when we'll arrive  
 only the time of departure  
 and we will never return to  
 where we are now.

EDWARD J. McCOUL

**"DOLPHIN"**

Dolphin are you talking to me?  
I think I love you so, you know.  
Can I follow you where you go?  
I want to know what you know!

You got that face I love to see.  
You don't look at all like me.  
If I could, a dolphin I would be.  
I'd swim the waters free!

With you could I please swim?  
I would love to hold your fin.  
You got such neat feeling skin.  
A swimming trophy we'd win!

Why do I wait so long to see  
A sweet dolphin cute as can be?  
It brightens my day  
To watch you play.

You mean so much to me.  
Every day, you I would love to see.  
We could talk about things to do,  
That I want to do with you!

To be with each other, we wish.  
Fish to eat is our favorite dish.  
Swimming is a shared delight.  
We both like the moonlight!

Do you think you'd like to be  
A real person like me?  
If you ever do,  
A friend I'd be to you!

Are you sure you are from here?  
Where you're from is not quite clear.  
Some say you are from outer space.  
If so, welcome to the Human Race!

I'd follow you just to really see,  
If somehow you go real deep,  
And take that secret passage way,  
And to Venus you go each day!

I'd put my space suit on and go to see.  
Because with you I really want to be.  
Well, let's not get carried away.  
You are here and with me today, and that's OK!

ANN PRIVATEER

**IN THE MORNING**

luscious as parchment  
languishing stalactites  
branch and grow  
on a crumbling wall  
where lizards play  
their beauty puts on  
a show for tomorrow.

**HOUSES**

No beds or desks  
And no scowling  
Or scrunched faces  
But do include pines  
And mockingbirds  
All dancing in the wind  
To commiserate  
To make a wish.

**LOOKING UPWARD**

Never look back  
Lest you fall and crumble  
Going home to the  
Patchwork quilt  
The hammer falls  
And is forgotten.

**A BABY**

Cry's in an animal voice  
It's generations of sound  
In the room and outside

On the ground where  
Blood turns dirt into mud  
No manifestations allowed

Two and then there are  
Three that sweetly rejoice  
Before saying "so long."

**A SMILING CLOAK**

Sings mama  
Is never late

Always hungry  
Looks beyond

The beloved  
Graveyards

For tomorrow's  
Dry goods.

## JENNIFER PICKERING

## EVOLUTION

swims like trout  
 in the pond  
 propelling toward the stars  
 dreams of dragonflies  
 in vapors of air,  
 is the kingfisher's dive,  
 finless swimmer  
 blind to limitations  
 students of trial and error.

## PETER AND MARGRET: A LOVE STORY

Margret tutored Peter in English.  
 A willing student but alas  
 not only of her strange waffle.  
 He, a dolphin had his own whistling words,  
 strung in high pitched songs  
 Margret would never understand.  
 Her first touch was tentative.  
 But a rhythm was found.  
 Was their love making wise?  
 She was unsure, though Peter never was.  
 But, Margret's human heart strayed.  
 Peter, the dolphin, never came up for air,  
 died of a broken heart.

*Notes: Margret Howe Lovatt was a volunteer naturalist who tried to teach Peter, a dolphin, English and succeeded with some phrases. As Peter was a teenager and aroused by Margret, she obliged him so as not to interrupt his tutoring (or she said). Funding stopped the project. Peter was separated from Margret and committed dolphin suicide.*

## A CALIFORNIA HISTORY LESSON

A country girl I lived on an island of land surrounded by orchards sweetened by April blooms, Julys' rubied fruit, and pheasants luminated flight above fields of mustard greens. Now, I'm asked to be content with my urban space; its picket fence surrounding fruitless trees silhouettes aligned with distant granite peaks, skyscrapers of mirrored glass the migratory birds crash into. The new habitat of hawks hunting pigeon and crow nested in iron beams, clay conduits or in the tallest English Sycamore marooned in contrived meadows of Bermuda grass. My history bound in uncomfortable complacency frozen into stone eyes, the sour smiles captured in tin photographs--sailing from La Rochelle and Amsterdam to Norfolk and New York with hearts carrying a longing to feel solidity even more than hope or bread to tame the growls of their children's empty bellies and the loss of leaving everything that was so much of nothing but, familiar—sailing in prairie schooners uprooted from their own land by greed, law, civil wars starvation that set blood against blood women's lye soap would not wash clean—history being a stubborn stain you see. Shuffling westward towards the horizon in a momentum that could not be slowed. Walking from Missouri to California swallowing dust, pride, the stink of oxen mired in the Platt River mud bound in stays and soles of worn out boots stuffed with prairie grass, burying babies, sorrow and broken Majolica in potato fields; following the mountains 'curves to home in the great valley at the foot of the coast range, violet as the iris gardens left behind, to the country of the Wintun and Maidu whose stands of grass summer polish like the gold tips of gentlemen's walking sticks beaten down by a government handing out land like hard candy, as if it were theirs to give---the Welsh, Scotch-Irish, French and Germans—good land for those who would plow it and set their grazing sheep and cattle on its sweet grass to pay its taxes. Even now the Red-tailed hawks' feathered fingers outline stands of Red Bud awakened in February of too much rain—flinging the white lace of almond blossoms sugaring an earth dark with secrets.

*M. B. STACEY***DREAM I**

Cobwebs drape the path she walks  
 spiders with eyes like crystals hide in corners  
 whose only light comes from half opened lids  
 spiders with eyes like her brother hide in corners  
 where there is no safety as she bravely walks  
 through the maze of webs  
 the eyes flutter with recognition  
 with first person remembering  
 as the body twitches with what feels real  
 with memories like shiny crystals  
 locked in cells within the dream

**DREAM II**

the dream mistress beckons  
 her fingers long and well formed  
 her eyes luminous filled with moonlight  
 which pulls her toward the tide she resists  
 her hair becomes radiant with gold  
 splashed from the water deepening around her  
 rainbow fish with crossed eyes  
 circle her legs moving rhythmically counter clockwise  
 the unwinding appears to be connected  
 to the light that spills from the gills of the rainbow fish  
 dream mistress orchestrates the flow with fingers  
 that blur the crooked lines of reality  
 the unraveling in sync  
 with the rise and fall of the breath  
 of the dreamer

**DREAM III**

in over her head now  
 the fish swim in rainbow circles above her  
 the hounds with webbed feet lead the way  
 he sits in a dark corner  
 decayed teeth flash  
 into an eerie smile of recognition  
 he speaks in riddles  
 throwing words into the stream at will  
 the dreamer's body twitches  
 as the pound of flesh is carved from her  
 divided among the dream merchants  
 each pulsing bit placed warm  
 into a silken bag

**DREAM IV**

consciousness dips silky tendrils  
 into the water beckoning her  
 this time to the surface  
 greased palms are of no help now  
 riddles are tucked safely into pockets  
 most unsolved  
 a rainbow sheen covers her slippery skin  
 a spectral light glows in her eyes  
 she vomits jagged crystals  
 as she emerges through the facade  
 sandman slips to the bottom  
 of the hour glass  
 as the light dawns

## HOME OF THE BRAVE

Knowing  
 deep inside  
 that hatred  
 blatant disregard  
 for life exists  
 in the land of the free  
 the home of the brave  
 this knowing  
 dulled by the satisfied feeling  
 of a full stomach  
 by the echo in your head  
 of the laughter and love  
 recently shared  
 jolted from your reverie  
 by the new pick up truck  
 rumbling by you  
 shooting pointy stones your way  
 enveloped in a dusty fog  
 knowing  
 as it hits the brakes  
 just a few yards away  
 squealing into reverse  
 pushing you to the side of the ditch  
 that the three white faces  
 smiling down on you  
 barely conceal their real intent  
 intent that views blood sports  
 as their own  
 just a little fun  
 in the home of the brave  
 a simple ride home  
 the smell of whiskey  
 the bottle of Jack Daniels

is passed among them  
 your mouth is dry  
 your lips parched  
 the only offer you get  
 are familiar words  
 of degradation  
 laughter reaches a fever pitch  
 as the heavy tow chain  
 is locked around your strong ankles  
 Jack Daniels tossed out the window  
 your hands taped behind your back  
 knowing  
 you won't see your niece  
 on her wedding day  
 or your wife's sweet smile  
 ever again  
 knowing your are powerless  
 to stop the train of events  
 hurtling your destiny toward you  
 remembering your cousin's words  
 "Let me give you a ride home"  
 your reply that the night  
 was still and sweet  
 just perfect for a walk  
 your body is found  
 after being dragged for miles  
 behind the new pick up truck  
 your head torn from your body  
 your wife takes the ring off  
 your severed hand  
 vomits into the tall grass

*In memory of James Bird, Jr.  
 murdered in Jasper, Texas, 1998*

JOE KIDD

## THE DOGS OF ATHENS

the dogs of Athens  
 are barking in the distance  
 across the sea  
 behind the hills

the dogs of Athens  
 are multi lingual  
 they read your thoughts  
 they know your secrets

the dogs of Athens  
 are bigger than horses  
 they carry the weight of the world  
 on their backs

the dogs of Athens  
 will lay on top of you  
 keep you warm  
 in the driving rain  
 they have eight arms  
 and babies to feed

the dogs of Athens  
 swim like dolphins  
 holding their breath  
 until they find you

the dogs of Athens  
 are visible from space  
 their glowing eyes  
 a beacon for the lost

the dogs of Athens  
 are award winning poets  
 they write of love and sacrifice  
 they give up hope in the season of lent

the dogs of Athens  
 will devour you  
 consume your flesh and chew your bones

the dogs of Athens  
 will never leave you

the dogs of Athens  
 will break your heart

## THE DOLPHIN SPIRIT

holy spirit of the tranquil sea  
 you have searched the infinite expanse of time  
 covered the distance of earth and heaven  
 the planets disappearing in your passing light  
 this precious jewel, my soul in love  
 yours for the taking, my eternal companion  
 the moment I touched upon the warmth of your skin  
 the smooth silken softness of your heart within  
 with a voice whispering in clarity

I am the guide, the guardian, the protector  
 we shall swim in the oceans of creation and forgiveness  
 and feast upon the bounty of mystery's provisions  
 together we shall form the perfect bond  
 as two become one in life and beyond

DEBORAH C. SEGAL

### NEON MOONBEAMS

High school I learned nothing but the price of a single cigarette,  
a tight back pocket, playing flat chest with a bored look.

Inhaling what hardened me into this mass, this matter, this form,  
energies in my center, activating and evolving into tattoos of dolphins.

One time a pair of hands with thumbs were gesturing to a younger me,  
hang loose, peace sign, middle finger to the universe, you break it you buy it.

Twenty three stories up, you asked me long ago, what I think of the world?  
In the broken streets now, I would integrate the sun and moon for you, if I could.

From twenty three stories, we scanned the skyline, looking for signs.  
Do you remember? That summer I was clinging to neon moonbeams—

swirling perspectives, rhinestones shining with glassy splendor,  
rising above to hold on, to forget, to come home, to make a run for it,

on principles larger than this skyscraper, this street, this stream  
of consciousness, an unfolding, where the witness is being watched.

Smiling as I think of this point of view, a means to depart from the myths  
I am made of, and making. Under the ink of a long exhale, I am made of dreams.

### TRACING MOONLIGHT

These roots connect to earth, called shadow,  
these roots connect to sky, called stardust.

Follow a trail of crumbs  
into flimsy fripperies  
and dark tendrils,  
earlier flung  
by my own hands,  
waving, and in that fling—

lucid spirals, reflected in turquoise water.

Scale the tower, one story at a time, scanning for narwhals and dolphins,  
folded into frothy oceans under the views, framed by skyscrapers and clouds.

Trying on a mask, humming songs, lips affixed like a comb covered in tissue,  
we have slowed down the hum and now, we trace the moonlight into the morning star.

### MIRRORS OF ONYX

when you are  
stuck in a loop  
exit the apartment  
as you shut

the door you hear it  
through the door  
you can slide

feet first into the chute

roll away in the bins  
cleavers, hooves  
screeching

toxic fumes  
old sneakers

garbage is dinner

flat line  
syringe  
grief

the conductor

reaches in  
pulls out nothing  
it tastes of metal

belly up  
New York City  
skyline

mirror of onyx

DIANNA HENNING

**NAKED**

I sit by the sun-window  
in my guest cabin  
& gnaw the bones  
of my fingers,

the day a trail  
of sunshine despite  
dragon clouds  
skirting the sky's rim

& a burly wind  
that attempts to disrupt  
a Northern Flicker's  
excavated burrow

And here I pour my hands  
atop my desk  
hoping to snag  
a naked poem

that might or  
might not murder me.

**HOW THE ANIMALS  
RECLAIM THEIR LIVES**

Watch how they rise  
from the highway's shoulder,

as they gather their bones,  
their fur into spirit,

small, effusive lights aglow  
around them before they scuttle

into the sheltering woods  
where they mend with fern,

rock and willow leaves  
broken limbs, severed arteries;

the fox carefully threading  
his needle; a buck gathering

pine sap to reassemble horns  
he'll dry on a pine stump,

and a dog, homeward bound,  
decided on a short cut

to greet the kid on the school bus,  
his owner's son, the Collie raced between

one vehicle after another,  
exhaust confusing the hound,

screech of wheels and suddenly a world  
he'd not encountered as honking horns

attempted to redirect him;  
& soon he found himself outside himself,

gathered what he could of bones  
to follow others struck by machines

they couldn't fathom—this knowing  
deep inside the dog,

this instinct to meet the bus on time,  
Jimmy waiting, and there in shadow

of aspen and pine other animals showed him  
what to do, a cape of light furring his paws,

his nose wet as any hound's that cleaves to life,  
the buck dropping blackberries into his mouth

to stave off blood, but all the dog tasted  
was salt of the boy's outstretched hand.

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**WHO'S GOING TO WRITE LOVE  
IN A TIME OF DESTRUCTION?**

Here in The House of My Safety,  
I'm a mournful creature

who knows neither answer,  
nor belief. In the theater of leaves,

still wet with sunshine, something falls  
that cannot be heard. For ages

you've dressed yourself in words,  
addressed my heart as Present One.

If camouflage is the Angel's art,  
then the fakery of self is by design invention.

When I die raindrop my heart  
onto the quiet underneath.

**MIDNIGHT ON  
MOONSHINE ROAD**

My menacing dreamer,  
I still carry you in a linen shroud.  
You're not too heavy.

Just light enough for me  
to tote around on difficult days.

Remember the room  
with the artfully painted coffins  
(a ruse against death)

the hypnotic apple near the mouths  
of the archangels Raphael & Gabriel?

And what solemn wind spewed sermons  
through our window, chastised us  
for our indulgence,

my bra on the table,  
your jeans on the floor,  
and the painted angels, their scorn

as you mounted my breath,  
my body still carrying you  
in your sacred entirety?

Oh, damn love, its fire and reclamation!

## AFFECTION

Otis told Mabel that she looked like one of those *Maybelline* ads where the girls have full-blown cherry-red lips that pose invitation. Such words propelled her into full blown affection for Otis, her husband of six months, three days and forty-five minutes which she'd tracked on their kitchen calendar. She enjoyed filling in the empty white boxes below the calendar's numbers, felt something important was accomplished.

There's was a shotgun wedding but that didn't bother Otis in the least. He was convinced he'd rightfully won over the beauty of Loyalton High even if he first got her pregnant.

He owned a hand-me-down country home given them by Hiram, his uncle, who'd moved to the city for work prospects. The house signified a positive start, and it clearly impressed Mabel. The clapboard place needed fixing up but it still evoked a certain charm. By the time Mabel finished with the rooms it was cozy with hand-made plaid curtains and refinished country pine furniture that spelled homey comfort.

All telling, they were lucky, darn lucky the way Otis saw it. *Can't figure out what I've done to deserve a gal like Mabel.* Then he would scratch his hound Betsy behind her ear and breathe deeply as he and Mabel left for a jaunt in the old Ford truck to fetch sacks of rice and pinto beans.

Both Otis and Mabel were born and reared in Loyalton (population of two thousand and seventy-nine) and their families went back to the very first inception of the place. Otis's great granddaddy was the builder and owner of the Crazy Horse Saloon, and the Countryside Bank, both in the old part of town. Moss covered the bank's bricks, and the saloon's original sign was sun-bleached a weathered gray. Such touches gave each building an antique look.

Back from town, Otis watched Mabel prepare the ham hocks and leftover pinto beans that were stored in the fridge. Cooked in the heavy cast iron pot they'd taste divine. There was something about warmed things up that took on a homey aroma. Such meals rendered a sense of continuation—things don't run out; they just reinvent themselves.

Mabel's ponytail swung as she worked. Loose curls of hair stenciled her sweaty neck. Otis reached over and lightly pulled on her frizzed ponytail and Mabel slowly turned, her full belly facing him. He drew her toward him.

"Mabel, you're the loveliest woman this side of the Sierra Buttes." She bumped bellies with him, buried her head into his shoulder, then coyly shrugged back.

"Otis, I'm curious. What lies to the other side of the Sierras? You wouldn't be bringing it up, comparing me with some unknown female. What's on the other side?"

"Don't trifle your thoughts for nothing, Mabel. There isn't a woman anywhere in this world that could touch you."

Mabel's curiosity was not assuaged. She could see her lanky Otis with his sweet congenial smile

courting women—his blue eyes like a quiet summer's day. Hadn't she witnessed first-hand how women were attracted to him? Whenever they went into town, women were always asking him questions about their gardens. *Can you tell me what radish seeds do best in an acid soil? My tomatoes gone to ruin. Otis, what do you recommend?* Even his slight tummy bulge, brought on by drinking too much beer, didn't bother them. It somehow seemed proper that a man like Otis got pregnant alongside his wife.

The beans bubbled and the ham hocks simmered, a scent of onions and garlic cloaked the air. Mabel pulled away from Otis and searched his face.

"Tell me your doings before you met me," she asked as she whipped sweat from her brow, her eyes earnest as prayer.

Otis shrugged a nothing much. It was meant to convey there was no life before her, but she knew different. She saw the boxed-up letters stuffed in his parent's closet and she'd heard stories from his friends about the all-night parties at Feather River, the ground covered with empty beer tins, corn-dog wrappers. She knew about this because her dad was the game warden and, on several occasions, he'd ordered Otis and his friends to pick up, pack up and get on.

"Let's set these plates on the table while dinner heats. Don't forget the ketchup." He clearly wanted to change the direction of their conversation.

"You know how I like ketchup on nearly everything, even on ham hocks."

His mother claimed he spread gobs of it on her buckwheat pancakes, but Otis denied that and said his mother was known for exaggeration.

Mabel liked Dorothy, her mother-in-law. She was one of those rugged, make-do women who could stretch a single six-ounce can of tuna further than anyone: tuna wiggle, tuna casserole, flakes of tuna in a white gravy over mashed potatoes. Dorothy mixed flecks of oatmeal to stretch the tuna, and she was also known for watering down jugs of apple or orange juice. Mabel supposed that was because of her living through the Great Depression.

Mabel hustled about the kitchen putting every need on the table so there would be no interruptions at dinner. Suppertime was talk-time, but Otis hoped to steer the conversation in a safe direction. He liked to sit in his chair and admire Mabel. The table acted as a fence, a fence that he pretended to climb over. It reminded him of the picket fence Mabel's parents pitched around their house. He used to carefully climb over it after lights in her parents' house dimmed to a smudge.

Mabel pushed strands of hair from her forehead and complained the pregnancy made her sweat more than usual. Her fork scratched across her plate. She looked at him, her eyes wide, closing in on him.

"I bet you don't know who I saw today driving his pickup our way?"

Otis didn't have to think too long. He knew what she was up to.

"Why it couldn't possibly be Jade who wowed you at the church dinner before we started going out?"

Who said you'd be his and his alone?"

"How'd you know that so sudden?" she asked as she mopped brown bread through her beans.

He also soaked his bread in the bean sauce and sucked on its sweet taste. Mabel eyed him like a judge sitting across a defendant. He'd seen those eyes before in his aunt Hattie who accused her man of playing the field far and wide. Curiosity burrowed like a badger into Mabel's face.

Otis knew she was testing him, poking how far his limits were. Jade, her old boyfriend was smooth with women, but he, Otis, was pure velvet.

"Pass the beans," he asked as he mopped his bread a little through the lake of bean gravy and swigged down fresh drawn milk.

It seemed to Otis that women always wanted to know more than a man was willing to tell, and secrets, some secrets were a pothole. No matter how married a man was, he still needed privacy. The past was bundled and buried in a trunk. Besides, Stella who lay to the other side of the mountains was no match for Mabel. Not only was she downright ornery if she did not get her way, but she was theatrical too. Such drama could wear a man raw.

"Why didn't you call as promised? You think you can play me along with no mention of our future?" Those words followed him to the car just as he finally left Stella for good.

Once, when Stella and Otis were at the Crazy Horse Saloon he'd run out of cash for another round of beer and Stella bolted, stood on the chair, lifted her skirt to her chin and yelled into the crowd: "It's bad enough when you don't have a pot to piss in, but when a man can't even buy you a decent pair of panties, that's a tragedy."

He never lived that one down.

No, Mabel was one hell of a good woman, he thought. She's just the right mixture of peace, flirtation and fire.

\* \* \* \* \*

Otis wondered if their child would have his blue eyes.

Mabel tipped her chair back, so it stood on two legs to show Otis what edge she was holding.

He remained silent and tipped his chair back a bit to square off their positioning and he tooth-picked his teeth. He remembered the day he first heard Mabel was pregnant. He was working on his Ford engine, sweat pouring down his brow and no matter his effort it wouldn't cough to a start. His hands were slicked with grease and his back ached from tension and frustration. Mabel snuck up behind him and covered his eyes with her hands and had whispered, "I've got a secret—Betcha you can't guess?" Otis slowly turned around and muttered it might have something to do with his birthday six days away. Mabel laughed and moved in closer. She put her finger to his lips and said, "Don't go telling a soul. We've got a baby in the oven."

A prickly heat ripped through him and then wonderment. "Well, I'll be."

He hugged her so tight that they were a single body for one amazing moment. Forgetting his greasy hands, he held her head to his chest and finger-combed her hair then stood back, "Mabel, I've gone and got grease all over you."

She pulled his hand to her and pressed it leaf-like to her belly. He made marks over her face with his other hand from engine grease and they burst into rounds of laughter.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mabel cleared the dishes, a willful hesitation to her steps. She drew water for the pots and pans, and she ignored him as he cleared the dishes. He fox-trotted next to her and tipped his head. He made like he was taking off his cap only he didn't have one on. Otis curtseyed and asked, "Can I have this dance?"

Mabel froze. In that moment she fancied herself stiff as one of those marble Greek goddesses found in some history book, books she hardly cracked open in eleventh grade.

"No woman lay to the other side of the mountain. There's only one woman in the entire world for me and that's my Mabel," he crooned.

Mabel pretended she didn't quite hear him. She hummed an old church hymn, slopped water over the dishes and remained fast at work.

*Was there no play in her? What's wrong with her?* He thought back to their grease painting day when she announced she was pregnant. The sun lit Mabel's hair like a bonfire, and she smelled like a fresh drawn bath. He'd decided then, no matter what, to make good with her.

Soap started to spill over the kitchen counter making bubble chains on Mabel's ankle. She must be way angry he thought to take little notice of suds inching down the pine cupboards.

He whistled his favorite tune and looked to the side of her face to see what expression grew there. He then untied her apron, letting it fall to the floor.

Otis turned her full front and played his eyes into hers. Slowly a smile swung her mouth upward. Reaching behind her, Otis grabbed some suds and made a little mustache as well as big rabbit ears on her. He also strung some bubbly buttons down the front of her and over her tummy.

They burst out laughing.

"You're something else," Mabel said. They danced a fox trot on the old linoleum floor. The window was transfixed with early evening stars and the cat, their yellow tabby, relaxed into a ball.

This is good Otis thought. Damn good.

*JIM BOUREY*

**PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES AT THE DOVER  
AIR FORCE BASE MORGUE WERE NOT  
ALWAYS STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**

Joey was twenty-four  
already three years into his Air Force enlistment,  
a skilled air-frame mechanic, a trained classical pianist,  
and engaged to the same girl since high school graduation.  
She called him three times a week, wrote a letter every day.

Joey went to Confession  
every week. He worried about sin more than  
most good Catholic boys. Even those small sins  
weren't allowed to rest in his soul. Absolution  
was a necessity. He was kind, reliable, and wanted  
to do the right things, to be a good provider. In 1967  
a re-enlistment bonus lured my friend away from Florida,  
away from his loyally patient and beautiful fiancé.

He arrived in 'Nam  
a few days before Christmas. By Valentines Day '68  
he was back in the States, at Dover, being transferred  
with dignity to his parents and his girlfriend. No politicians,  
with or without baseball caps, came to honor Joey,  
just some fellow airmen and officers  
who knew him well. Twelve more  
occupied coffins were lined up,  
waiting silently nearby.

**I CAN ONLY CONSIDER THESE  
QUESTIONS IF THE RIGHT  
SWITCH IS ACTIVATED**

their work is silent and poorly understood  
codes built into cells driving every living thing  
strands of switches  
a railyard without tracks  
we are carriers without control

or perhaps there is control  
an Illuminated Monkey or other demigod  
an angry cosmic engineer  
or a bearded Cloud Sitter who knows all  
tells nothing

genes  
those hard to see bastards  
bring shrinkage and growth  
red hair or black  
skin that tans easily or burns badly  
a tongue that needs to be loosened by a scalpel  
a better brain for language  
or math  
or drawing stick figures  
that move across a landscape

sickness  
sadness  
early death  
strength  
children or not  
what the hell  
am I thinking  
about

## NOT FALLING INSIDE A TALL BUILDING

*A young watchman leans at a window and  
sees the lights of barges butting their way  
across a harbor*

*From "Skyscraper" by Carl Sandburg*

That job I had, the one in the huge warehouse  
twenty floors high, but only one floor  
and racks with shelves that climbed  
to the roof, row after row,  
three hundred thousand square feet,  
loading docks on both sides.  
Material came in one  
went out on the other,  
semi-truck engines rumbling,  
distant computers quietly controlling  
dozens of robots sliding on rails  
end to end  
up and down.

I did ten-hour shifts,  
the worst work I ever had to do.

Top Mechanic was my title  
but I wasn't in charge.  
Worked up high  
between the racks and the roof  
repairing rails, pulleys,  
roadways for robots.

Sometimes I thought about my friend Mitch  
from Akwesasne IW Local 440 and how he fell  
when he was welding on a building  
in Buffalo – nearly two hundred feet -  
before his safety gear took hold.  
He was back on the iron  
in fifteen minutes.  
I worked without ropes and carabiners  
and I never looked down. Those replacements  
for humans would never have noticed  
when I sailed past, screaming.

## THE EFFECTS OF TAXIDERMY ON HUMAN EMOTIONS

I had seen stuffed animals before.  
Bears, deer heads with and without bodies,  
a few moose, foxes and mink,  
a bobcat, a cougar, even a wild boar.  
And fish - marlins and tuna,  
and one great white shark skin  
stretched over sculpted Styrofoam.

But that one dolphin with a small brass plaque  
that said –

*Caught by Accident, July 19, 1979  
Tor Bay, Nova Scotia, Canada.  
Couldn't get him free fast enough.*

made me cry like a baby.

NANCY GOTTHART

## A WINTER'S TALE

I had arrived late,  
the invitation vaguely worded as to time.  
I shook the snow from my hair, left my coat at the check-stand.  
It was evident that the hall had been prepared for some days,  
the sprays of roses and anthurium showing signs of wear.

I said to my companion  
I don't know about you  
but I never expected to find myself here  
as winter closes in.  
The tall imposing woman  
had greeted me in the entry hall,  
her dress a wonderous confluence  
of black tulle and lace cut low, exposed  
the slope of her bare shoulders  
while the smoothness of her black hair,  
parted in the middle and drawn back,  
emphasized the perfect pale oval of her face.  
A solemn strand of pearls adorned her throat and breast.

*Call me Inès*

*Have you seen my daughter?*

I looked around the room.

The banquet tables lay in disarray,  
napkins on the floor,  
chairs askew a few overturned  
Had there been an argument?

On the dais at the center of the main table  
sat a man, powerfully built  
and certainly accustomed to command

but looking like less than he once might have been.  
He gestured with a translucent goblet toward  
a handsome boy bearing a carafe of amber liquid.

That voice again *Have you seen my daughter?*  
Inès, if that was her name,  
had begun to pace the perimeter of the hall,  
periodically calling out *My child!*  
*My daughter!*

The sound: keening, caroming  
from tectonic groan to a high-pitched scream  
such as ice makes when a shelf shears from the glacier.

I thought, Perhaps I ought not to have come.

There was a racket at the back of the hall  
like that of a large metal roll-up door being cranked open  
Someone,  
I strained to see

The intruder darkly handsome,  
blue-violet cloak billowing against the night sky.  
He glanced about dismissively,  
his spoiled boy pout a dead ringer  
to that marble of the de' Medici boy, Giuliano

A cold wind followed.

The man at the table twisted in his chair to get a better view

Inès became as still as marble When she spoke  
serpents issued from her mouth  
words writhed on the floor in all the languages known to man  
the hiss of hatred and despair

A woman in the coils of loss

*O, my daughter! Your hair like wheat in the summer sun!*  
*Now you breathe darkness*  
*The fruit we must eat is bitter*

THE QUESTION: Where is she? The men exchanged glances

The intruder sat down on a folding chair.  
He crossed his long legs, drawing his cloak close he said  
*What the hell,*  
*Will it always be like this?*

The man at the table sighed  
*Come, come, it was decided long ago*  
*now SOMEBODY*  
*close that damn door!*

Shadows accompanied me  
as I moved along the aisle behind the dais.  
Through the open doorway I could see the night sky.  
A reddish orange glow emanated from what might be a lake

The air was chill Should I have closed the door?  
I hesitated

Avernian mists rose from the damp ground  
There are moments composed in the fastness of beauty  
through which one may step between imaginings

I crossed the threshold  
Something at my elbow so light the touch  
it might have been a puff of air, then  
far below my feet, the lake appeared

I blinked.  
The limestone grotto was warm,  
even cozy; light fell softly, here and there  
patterned rugs, pillows and upholstered chairs.  
Low tables displayed beautifully painted pottery

I saw  
her hair, the color of wheat in the summer sun

*Kore* herself, in pale green silk pajamas  
lovely

Evidently pleased to have company  
 she gestured for me to sit beside her on the sofa,  
 apologizing.  
*I'm sorry, I can't offer you anything to eat, House Rules*  
*Anyway, I can see you have other plans.*  
*You met my mother? and my husband?*  
*Truth be told, I cannot tolerate*  
*either of them for more than a few weeks at a time.*

She reached for a cigarette, lit it, offering one. I declined.

A half-smile, *It's not the same as eating, I mean*  
*You could have a smoke and still be able to leave.*  
*Of course, you do know about the pomegranate seeds?*

I nodded. But I'd like to hear your side of it, I said.

Light flickered aflame in dark eyes *What? Really?*  
 Then a smile I can't forget

*No one has ever asked me for my side of the story.*  
 Stubbing out the cigarette, she leaned in close to me  
 Well,  
*There was a lot going on that afternoon*

*Aetna was rumbling with indigestion. It seems that*  
*the shaking and knocking had dislodged a support,*  
*compromising the limestone's structural integrity.*  
*It left a mess down here: rubble everywhere, fires*  
*where they oughtn't be . . .*

*Hades had gone upstairs,*  
*wanting to inspect the damage from there as well and having*  
*done, was anxious to return to the comfort of his own realm.*  
*Besides, all that light gave him a headache.*

*I'd spent the day with friends, Nymphae of Henna.*  
*Sicily is so beautiful, don't you think?*

*What is it about islands?*

*Their attraction?*  
*I've always had this feeling that they just*  
*want to go their own way*

A silence. She paused, agitated, lit another cigarette,  
 blew a smoke ring and freshly composed herself

*So, we were frolicking,*  
*just girls, you know?*  
*Swimming, wrestling, gathering blossoms,*  
*anemone, hyacinth, from time to time*  
*a willing kiss*

*Meanwhile,*  
*and not for the first time mind you, Drama*  
*Queen that she is, the Cyprian was feeling Dissed and Pissed.*  
*She said her shrines were being neglected*  
*SOMEBODY needs to pay, she said*  
*She summoned the boy, waved an arm, carelessly*  
*pointing to the Lord of Erebus in his chariot, HIM!*  
*He's NEVER shown me the slightest respect nor thanks*  
 while being host to many I send his way.  
 Pick your sharpest arrow, boy!

Tired after a foot race, I'd wandered away from the others

*It was a straight shot. Hades slapped at the arrow*  
*which pierced his neck, yanking the reins.*  
*The great black horses, startled, reared high*  
*spilling him at my feet*

*Up he jumped*  
*dazed and confused,*  
*seeing me seized me by my wrists*  
*raping me then*  
*he flung me into the chariot*

*Packed off to a world I did not want.*  
*A world I did not understand.*

*I mean,  
I am SPRING!*

*My mother is Demeter, Goddess of Harvests.  
What am I doing HERE?  
Queen and Consort to the Lord of the Dead?*

*My mother searched.*

*My father,  
rape being nothing new to him, took off  
Claimed he was busy at one or another of his temples  
Pretended to be mystified.  
Now you know,  
none of this could have happened had he not allowed it.*

*My mother wept and scoured the earth. No one spoke up.  
When she found my scarf beside the lake she understood  
and demanded he secure my return.  
She warned: IF NOT,*

*CROPS WILL ROT,  
FRESH WATER WILL TURN TO SALT!  
SOON NO ONE WILL REMAIN  
TO TEND THE SHRINES  
OF THE DEATHLESS GODS!*

*Zeus shilly-shallied, but you could see that she had got to him.  
He temporized I might leave IF I had not eaten anything  
Afterall, there were rules. RULES!  
THEY MAKE THE RULES! THEY BREAK THE RULES!*

*She stood, took a deep breath, and sat down again.*

*Well, it had been four months; Hades, trying to please me,  
offered tempting bites. I had eaten four pomegranate seeds.*

*A Family Council: My father called us together, his elder  
brother Hades, my mother and me.  
But you will notice who in particular is missing:  
The one to whom all pay lip-service, and all secretly fear.*

*Well, Hades held to his point that I'd eaten, thus could not  
leave. Fact was, he'd gotten used to having a companion.  
I was in fact and by deed, his queen.  
Queen of Doom and Gloom, I said.*

*My mother shouted, GIVE ME MY DAUGHTER!*

*My father said, It's a wretched shame  
But it's water under the bridge now.*

*The Compromise: Hades could have me in the winter months;  
as for the rest of the year, I would spend it as before.  
I had a new name, as befits the Queen of the Underworld,  
Persephone.*

*I didn't want it!  
I didn't like it then, I don't like it now.  
Her face glowed in fury  
Then darkness*

*The hall was empty  
Mine was the sole coat remaining at the check-stand.*

*The sun had not yet broken free of clouds, ice covered the  
the stony path leading out from the portico. Picking my way  
carefully, the evening replayed in my thoughts: and what has  
changed? The one who set the tale in motion, the instigator,  
the goddess whose anger not even Zeus dared to confront,  
Anarchic Aphrodite, she has not changed her ways.*

PATRICIA HARRIS-BOWMAN

**DOLPHINS, SKYSCRAPERS, AND  
THE EVOLUTION OF ME**

*In honor of my mother,  
Marva Joann Harris*

Three images have stayed with me  
my whole life...  
and led me to discover who I am.  
For my mother, and for the story of how  
I found my roots.  
Some stories live in our hearts long before  
we tell them.

I remember seeing a dolphin once,  
leaping through a bright blue pool—  
graceful, intelligent,  
moving like living poetry.

The crowd cheered as it performed its tricks,  
and I was amazed.  
Truly amazed.

Yet even then,  
something in my heart felt a quiet sadness,  
because that beautiful creature  
knew only the edges of a tank  
instead of the endless freedom of the sea.

It taught me something subtle:  
that wonder can exist even where freedom is limited,  
and that the heart always senses the larger world.

I feel something similar  
when I look up at a skyscraper.

Magnificent structures—  
glass and steel rising boldly toward the sky.  
From the ground they inspire awe,  
a reminder of how high human dreams can climb.

But step inside  
and travel upward floor after floor,  
and a quiet uneasiness can settle in—  
so much height between your feet  
and the steady earth below.

Here too, there is a lesson:  
that courage often comes hand in hand with fear,  
and every climb teaches us what it means to rise.

And then there is evolution—  
not only the slow shaping of oceans and mountains,  
but the unfolding of our own human stories.

My life began with two people:  
my mother, Marva Joann Harris,  
and my father, Clinton Stanback Sr.

Their time together was brief—  
just long enough  
for life to begin in me.

When my mother learned  
that he was already married,  
her heart carried a hurt she never expected.

She allowed him to see me once,  
and then she chose a different path—  
to protect the life she carried  
and raise me with strength.

For many years  
I knew only a first name,  
just a small thread of where I came from.

But evolution has a way  
of patiently revealing  
what time once hid.

Through the quiet science of DNA  
and the persistence of questions in the heart,  
that small thread  
eventually became a tapestry.

Later in life  
I found the paternal side of my family—  
roots that had waited for me  
without even knowing my name.

And through that journey  
my mother stood beside me.

My mother carried me into this world,  
and later, with quiet courage,  
helped me walk toward the rest of my roots.

Before she left this world,  
she gave me one more gift—  
her blessing to find the rest of my story,  
and the freedom to discover all of it.

Like a dolphin reaching upward,  
like a skyscraper touching the sky,  
life keeps rising,  
mixing,  
becoming something new.

And here I stand—  
a daughter,  
a discovery,  
a living bridge between stories.

Evolution is the quiet miracle that turns  
unanswered questions into family.

## AMRITA SKYE BLAINE

## DOLPHIN RIDE

Smooth muscled power  
marble-glossy skin  
her seeming smile  
I grab the warm dorsal fin,  
whoosh through the water  
at athletic speed

Is this a form of fun?  
For whom? She's captive,  
imprisoned for life  
forced to perform  
all day, the same

I wanted the ride  
paid for the ride  
Now I'm ashamed

## DEVOLUTION

Fewer songbirds  
wild turkeys and deer  
All species in decline  
humans, too although  
our numbers are rising  
As our buildings grow taller  
—half mile straight up—  
compassion is shrinking  
governments harsher,  
hoarding freedoms  
for the rich the compliant  
raking back assistance  
from those in need

Yet in the midst  
of the carnage  
kindness shines

## EVOLUTION

A phrase shows up  
maybe a title  
It won't leave  
begs to root  
burrows  
then gestates  
often for weeks

The dive—  
not just down, but  
deep into the carnal  
compels,  
requires embodiment  
I sort through hunches  
feel through  
to the quiet  
for precise words  
by their rhythm  
taste  
texture  
weight

Between pushes,  
a wicked labor,  
I let the thing rest  
then work with it  
breathe with it  
rest again  
until the shape  
reveals finally  
finally, what it is

## TWINS

New York's skyline the holes  
where twin towers  
should be two reflecting  
pools, waterfalls cascading  
into the void  
echo of absence

Thousands of names  
a holy place  
the dead their shock  
imprinted on the space

Tectonic shift that day  
Of an age, you know  
where you imprinted  
I in Eugene, Oregon  
transfixed  
a blocky color TV  
stupefaction thick  
as the dust  
The hole the hole  
where that building stood  
Mind wiped blank  
then floods

## SKY WALK

With a toe, I test  
the wire's tension  
pick up my pole  
transfixed  
by the traffic below

Wire stretches  
between this skyscraper  
and that  
my crossing  
to make

Slow my breath  
steady my heart  
my turn to walk  
I ease my foot  
onto the wire

To save my own life  
attention narrows  
to now and here  
Troubles fade  
as I feel my way

slide into  
the unknown  
I didn't choose  
never  
would have asked for

Each life is a tightrope  
a chasm below  
I lift my gaze  
trust my heart  
and take the next step

## IF ONLY

If only I could sleep with half  
a brain like dolphins do  
the other half composing,  
sorting words for grain,  
weave, and sheen—time  
reclaimed

If only I could clear the floor  
by feet—sleek grace become  
my friend—and leap again  
my body slick, athletic muscle  
my face a permanent grin

if only

GENE BERSON

## EVOLUTION & SIMULTANEITY

Today the temperature will rise into the nineties,  
and we will probably make our way to Bear River,  
where the water is cold and people rare.

Do insects laugh? Do they lift a glass to their friends?  
Do they stretch and yawn, like a cat upon the deck?  
Can they turn on the sprinkler?

Mankind has taken the rapids to spawn  
even though he evaporates  
like sea spray into the rainbow air.

He crawled from the mire and slapped  
muddy black handprints upon the rock wall  
of an undersea cave recently discovered in France.

Kindergartners outline their fingers in crayon.  
The teacher democratically puts up their work  
all around the room for parent/ teacher night.

Alphabets fall from the stars  
and time nails rain to the street  
but not just because we are fools  
fucking on an air mattress  
rippling over the rapids  
on the wheel of the sea  
but just becuz  
simultaneity's what's happening  
our lives are not careers  
we're going where we are.

CANDELABRA OF MOMENTS

going  
 barefoot  
 so much  
 doing nothing  
 done

doing nothing  
 much  
 nothing doing

\* \* \* \*

ocean blue, the darker blue  
 shadow of a cloud  
 underneath  
 blue darker than that

\* \* \* \*

without a lover so much beauty  
 makes a person forlorn  
 summer fog  
 mutes the bell of a buoy —  
 so far away it seems to come from inside  
 its chime strikes the ache  
 of human melancholy

\* \* \* \*

I'm impaled by a redwing's whistle

\* \* \* \*

a torch in an ancient cave  
 furred blackness into flame

a Cro-Magnon artist drew  
 bison on placental walls  
 fire luffed in the draft  
 as if spirits attending  
 emerging forms  
 were panting

people passed away  
 with mammoths  
 they hunted

the paintings remained  
 underground

\* \* \* \*

millennia later a world  
 war exploded

when the war was over, a couple kids  
 anecdote has it,  
 walking their dog in the woods  
 saw it fall through leaf-litter into a hole

they retrieved it from what became  
 The Caves of Lascaux  
 tourists wonder  
 who made these paintings  
 and why

what do  
 the abstract alphabet-like  
 markings  
 almost mathematical  
 signify

some felt an old  
 fire burning inside  
 that they hadn't completely  
 forgotten

that deep  
 social need  
 to crawl  
 into a cave to paint  
 creatures from in-between

\* \* \* \*

feet without shoes  
 hum like Huck, sweet

mountain lilac

molecules nest  
 in hair skin sage  
 ocean air, its salty tang  
 surrounds— that voice  
 harmonize living wind

\* \* \* \*

a bird inside a Coyote bush  
 grows quiet as you  
 pass  
 deeper  
 into the still valley  
 ocean sounds fade  
 we descend on loaned feet  
 into a Pleistocene ravine

reach The Wooden Bridge  
 understand the creek trickling

in its native tongue— red  
 thimble berries decorate  
 flimsy leaves waving  
 on the stream's breeze

listening to talk  
 talking  
 to listen  
 kenning  
 wave traveler  
 whale  
 hwaele  
 wheel

\* \* \* \*

finches flit  
 bees buzz we walk  
 dusty  
 path, fine as flour, cushioning current  
 bare feet

legs strengthen

climbing  
 the other side

The Pass of Loose Shale  
 shards slide and ring  
 underfoot  
 careful in sharp going

soft beige  
 yellow browns

orange  
 \* \* \* \*  
 orderly layers  
 of sedimentary rock  
 exposed  
 cutaway hillside  
 mud  
 morphed to rock  
 eons ago  
 cave man  
 painted  
 under ground it took light  
 to see  
 appeared in dark  
 when the torch  
 went out  
 to wait  
 to be although was always  
 tobealtho wuzalways  
 hwaele  
 whale wheel wave  
 redwing  
 riding . . .  
 \* \* \* \*  
 the ridge, the tree  
 shade  
 crushed weeds  
 where deer slept full, sky-reflecting, blue

ponds lilies culminate  
 in heart's eye . . .  
 \* \* \* \*  
 may you solve the riddle  
 of what caused what we are  
 to shake off scales for skin  
 to touch that touch that  
 predicts  
 intelligence  
 \* \* \* \*  
 please, fellow beings, shelter yourselves  
 in nature's nuptial celebrations  
 clarify air, sing  
 above the whispering  
 black fire crackling  
 like cellophane beneath our days  
 so much  
 doing nothing  
 done  
 \* \* \* \*  
 orange lichens  
 mandalas  
 go black  
 come back  
 as new  
 continents  
 next to others  
 glowing pale green  
 clouds separate  
 the darker blue

clouds shadows of  
 underneath that blue  
 darker than that  
 that that that  
 \* \* \* \*  
 solace in that  
 stickers weeds bugs birds gnats  
 began to beget before we began  
 millions of feet walked through millions of  
 years  
 hand-me down forms we get brand new  
 trace ocean cliffs  
 into valleys below  
 so much doing nothing done  
 being nothing being done done  
 doing  
 \* \* \* \*  
 walk while everyone works, take off  
 on feet sing to be free  
 going barefoot  
 allows you to be  
 stunned by a shadow unrolling  
 a scroll through a field  
 trees loosen their leaves  
 let them go  
 at just the right moment  
 \* \* \* \*  
 strip off clothes dive into the lake

lay back under alder limbs  
 fathom intricate algebra of reflecting facets  
 flickering like Arabic above  
 \* \* \* \*  
 ocean blue, the darker blue  
 shadow of a cloud  
 underneath that  
 blue darker than that  
 so much doing nothing done  
 \* \* \* \*  
 a buck silhouetted above  
 evening skyline  
 looks up  
 out of shoulder-high grass  
 still as a branch  
 tossing stars like a sparks  
 off antlers into space—  
 \* \* \* \*  
 may you break the chain  
 reunite  
 powder your feet with ancestral dust  
 feel the wand sow seed syllables  
 through the Milky Way's radiant haze  
 choreograph your dance  
 into life's battle stance  
 so much doing nothing done

**OLGA BROWNE****SKYSCRAPERS, DOLPHINS AND EVOLUTION**

I wonder, is what we now see evolution?  
Or perhaps the end of evolution.

Does the means meet the end?  
Or does the end cause by the means.

Are skyscrapers worth more than our dolphins habitat?

Are concrete and cities value higher than our forests and wilderness?

Is extinction now ours to meet?

**YOUR SILENCE**

Is taught, be pliable, this isn't the time, no one will believe you..

Her silence, his freedom  
Her torment, him predator.  
Her pain, his access.

A door opens

Silence

Shhhhhh

**I AM**

Alphabet soup and old books,  
Poetry and Stephen King.

Words shark like a double-edged razor or cold as ice, smooth to the touch..

Ink that bleeds emotions, pain and steady as my thoughts..

Things that I feel, written how I see, no apology just me.

**GRATITUDE**

Step lightly into memories, cherish those that are real.

Remember the moments, it wasn't a mistake..

No you are blessed, these memories belong to you..

**THE NIGHT SPEAKS**

That place of beginning or endings.

Where silence is sun in a  
Web of whispers.

And morning comes without asking for permission...

AMY HOSKINS





*PENNY KLINE***THE TALLEST SKYSCRAPER**

It seems the tallest skyscrapers are built of glass,  
 like mirrored castles reflecting sun and clouds way up in the sky.  
 Glass elevators glide up the outside walls to the top,  
 just to take your breath away.  
 But no one thinks about the one that develops on its own  
 made of rock and ice and covered in storm clouds—  
 Mount Everest,  
 a vertical thought the earth could not control.

29,031 feet of unfinished development,  
 with a spine of rock, pushes through the atmosphere  
 as if the world were trying to stand.

In 1953, the first two climbers reached the top of the world.  
 Edmund Hillary with Sherpa Tenzing Norgay  
 arrived alive with no pomp or celebration  
 except a breathtaking 360-degree panorama of the  
 Himalayan mountain range, where the curve of the  
 Earth becomes visible against a deep blue sky.

Below them, the mountain kept its own ledger,  
 written in breath and absence,

The Sherpas move through this skyscraper without offices,  
 no corner rooms, and no titles carved in brass,  
 only the quiet arithmetic of survival,  
 step, ice, rope, step.

Sherpas hold the most dangerous profession on earth,  
 measured not in headlines,  
 but in how many return  
 and how many become part of the foundation.

Money builds most skyscrapers with blueprints  
 signed, steel purchased, and cranes rented.  
 But here the currency is thinner,  
 where a climber pays at minimum  
 sixty to eighty thousand dollars  
 for a temporary address in the sky  
 for a lease measured in oxygen.

People come to stand at the top floor  
 to say they touched the ceiling of the world,  
 but the skyscraper does not recognize ownership.

It keeps what it wants.

There are mummified bodies folded into its stairwells,  
 paused mid-ascent like unfinished thoughts  
 and their names dissolving into snow.  
 Their presence holds a kind of signage—

You were here.  
 You stopped.

And still the lines form,  
 tiny figures treading upward  
 like punctuation marks searching for meaning.

From far away, Everest looks like  
 a silent architecture of white,  
 but up close it is a living structure  
 that breathes in avalanches,  
 shifts in the wind, and rearranges its rooms.

And at the top,  
 if you arrive, there is no office waiting,  
 no ceremony.

There's just a horizon that curves away from  
 you,  
 and the quiet realization  
 that even the tallest skyscraper  
 is not wanting to be climbed.

Everest simply  
 continues to grow upwards.

## MARGARET AND A DOLPHIN NAMED PETER

Margaret delightfully accepted her task to observe  
and teach a dolphin named Peter to communicate  
with sounds and words.

She created an environment to co-exist with Peter—  
Two feet deep of borrowed sea,  
walls breathing salt and light  
where the ceiling stayed dry,  
and the floor was a mirror of restless gray,  
a fragile line between worlds.

Margaret did not enter water—  
she folded into it,  
becoming part of a silent grammar,  
and a presence measured in stillness.  
To Peter, she was a creature of no boundaries,  
a walking goddess who brought the air down into his shallows  
while he, a silver question mark, curled through currents,  
a motion that spoke before words,  
curious and endless.  
But he did not care for the sharp, dry clicking of her lessons,  
the clumsy human vowels shaped to mimic his sky.  
Instead, he studied the geometry of her posture,  
the soft, pale hinge behind her knee—  
a joint that folded like a hidden wave,  
fascinating to a body built only of smooth, sleek muscle.

He would nudge that secret bend of bone,  
not fin, but something still.  
Her feet, soft anchors, held steady in his orbit,  
and he circled them again and again,  
as if repetition might become understanding.  
Her hands reached out—  
not to collide, but to pause and choose,

to touch with intention  
in a world where touch was usually a collision.

Delighted by the sudden gravity of her attention.  
To a young mind shaped by the infinite blue,  
Margaret was an island that chose to stay,  
sleeping on a wooden raft just inches from his blowhole.  
For ninety moons, six days a week, they lived inside a held breath,  
a fragile suspension between air and water.

Time dissolved into presence—  
she leaned forward before she spoke,  
he answered with arcs, clicks, and insistence.  
He learned not through words,  
but through the gravity of her shape,  
the tide of her attention pulling him close.  
Margaret's world became Peter's orbit,  
his obsession—  
a narrowing sky where only she remained.

The science project abruptly ended.  
They drained the room, unmaking the tide,  
and carried him far away to a box of sterile concrete  
where the water had no scent of her,  
and the surfaces reflected only his own isolation.

A dolphin's life is a ledger of conscious choices;  
each rise to the air is a decision to endure the weight of being.  
Without the tilt of her knee to guide him,  
without the island of her bed in the dark,  
the surface became a ceiling he no longer wished to break.  
Peter lasted only two weeks before he let the air go,  
a silver ribbon unraveling,  
and chose the heavy, quiet floor  
where the memory of her touch could never be washed away.

## EVOLUTION: SHE STANDS BETWEEN VERSIONS OF HERSELF

She stands in the hallway with no doors,  
just frames, empty, waiting—  
each one formed like a life she hasn't chosen.

A draft of freezing wind blows through,  
faintly an old voice echoes a question,  
something about being or not being,  
like a coin balanced on its edge,  
like breath held too long underwater  
demands release.

But she is already here.  
Already breathing.  
Already stitched into the fabric of  
unfinished thoughts.

Her question is different.

Not whether to disappear,  
but whether to become someone she does  
not yet recognize.

She carries herself like a house  
that hasn't been renovated in years—  
the same furniture,  
the same quiet cracks in the ceiling  
spreading like maps of places she might go.

To stay is to live here forever,  
memorizing the creak of every floorboard,

learning how to navigate in the dark  
around the damage instead of fixing it.

It almost feels like peace.

To evolve is to pick up a hammer  
without knowing what will collapse first.

She imagines it—  
walls that defined her are coming down  
in clouds of dust,  
old versions of herself buried in the rubble.

There is no blueprint.  
Only instinct.  
Only the unsettling sense  
that she might not like who walks out  
of the renovation.

Or worse, that she might.

She thinks about water,  
how it never disagrees with its container,  
how it becomes a river, a storm or a glass,  
depending on what holds it.

She has been a glass for a long time.

Still.  
Transparent.  
Careful not to spill.

But something in her has begun to lean,  
just a little,  
like gravity has changed its thoughts about  
her position.

The tilt toward the fall has started.

To be, is to remain the glass.

To evolve, is to shatter  
and trust that she will learn  
the language of dangerous storms and rivers.

The world will keep moving either way.

Indifference doesn't require change,  
it just watches, that's the silent violence of it all.

The burden of decision belongs to her alone—  
if she shatters, she will finally be free of expectations.

She feels it—  
that slow shifting,  
like tectonic plates beneath a city.

She stands in the hallway with no doors,  
just frames, empty, waiting—  
but not choosing, not refusing,  
allowing the weight of her desires  
to detach her from the old house.

The tremors give way to a kinetic stillness  
that flows through her body and  
settles in the spaces between her ribs.

She is fully present.

She walks through one of the doorless frames  
to claim her space.

She listens to it—  
the sound of herself,  
louder than her fear of the sky she is about  
to open up.

JOE NOLAN

**DOLPHINS**

Dolphins always seem to laugh  
To smile and be happy.

I wonder if they worry for us  
Who are forlorn  
Staggering from one war  
To another.

It's good we live on land  
And they in water.  
It gives them some protection  
From Dolphin Feeds  
That might be scheduled  
As fund-raisers  
For social groups  
In season.

I hope they swim fast enough  
To always get away.

I hope they're smart enough  
To not get caught in nets,  
But our nets are always  
Growing larger,  
Our hunger, greater,  
So that soon we may  
Swallow the whole world.

I hope they can get away.

Once, at Baker Beach,  
Two dolphins swam  
Along the shore  
As my wife and I  
Walked north  
On the hard-wet sand.

They rose and dove,

**EXPLODED SKYSCRAPERS**

There's a dead black spider  
In our toilet today.  
I think it was trying to drink.

There's a problem  
With our country today.  
Our kings don't want us to think.

Three towers fell,  
Only two do they tell.  
All three gave way  
By fire, they say,  
But not of wood made.  
Never before did  
Steel towers fall from fire.

A plane fell from sky,  
So they say,  
Leaving no sign,  
Swallowed by earth  
Like a goldfish  
At a bachelor-party.

Shattered ruins, aflame for weeks  
Down below the ground  
Vicious, wicked, this bespeaks,  
But eyes diverted, left unfound  
The real cause of disaster.

With lies we would be bound--  
Bound to war in lands  
That never set the bombs  
That brought down  
Three strong towers.

SIBILLA HERSHEY

**LIFE WITHOUT MEANING**

After the third shot of vodka  
followed by zakuska  
of salted herring on rye  
the form that shielded  
the nest of fear  
of a life without meaning  
enters the room.

"Life has no meaning"  
grieves a woman in tears  
then picks up an egg  
the symbol of life  
sliced through lengthwise  
and stuffed  
topped with a red dot  
of caviar fish egg.

Did the dread of not being  
begin in water?  
And the burden of living  
a life without meaning  
when did it wash ashore?

JEANINE STEVENS

**CETUS**

*Matt Kish, mixed media: Moby Dick Series*

Pure joy as I pull this happy fellow  
from my mailbox.  
On his own, a singular traveler.

Not gray or block shaped,  
but jet black, sleek.  
We would expect horizontals: waves,  
surf, swell. We would expect  
blueness: aqua, sky and cobalt.

But here, all vertical as he catapults  
North, escapes the crab fisherman's net.

Not harvested for his precious  
ambergris, he leaves his sea ravens,  
continues on to polar regions  
where air is green.

Propelled by rushing curds  
bathed in a whoosh of creamy pearls  
shaped like a wedding veil—

shedding brine, perhaps  
seeking a new curative; he knows  
the ocean floor  
will soon settle with dust.

Leaving earth to gentle dolphins,  
he rises in star charts just north of Vega,  
sets Cygnus and Draco quivering.

Resetting his compass, he listens  
for tempos from others  
humming in the same key.

In a wash of viridian, thick lipped and smiling,  
he ends his journey next to our immense *Cetus*.

**CENTURY PLANT**

*~Agave Americana*

A huge one in Oakland made the news.  
Ours, behind the shed, smaller,  
horizontal rungs on a ladder—  
Jack's stalk I want to climb.

Or like my city cousins, no yard, bored,  
they scaled metal fire escapes,  
favored loose iron steps, swinging  
out over traffic, squeaky groan  
from rusty bolts, a dog dish flying,  
someone's laundry floating.

I examine the protrusions, a gray shade  
of doom. No garden of delight,  
more like a Dali wasteland, tight blossoms,  
fists waiting to strike. Now, oozing  
liquid, ants scramble to suck.

During the pandemic even a walk to Taco Bell  
was an adventure. Still at home, so easy  
to just sit with our liverwurst on rye:  
red onion, stoneground mustard, cold milk,  
waiting for flesh to sag, turn to mush.

When you try to cut, the new saw smokes,  
black teeth gnash, tough fibers splinter.

I save a few pods resembling sea monkeys.

**LIGHTS OUT: NEW YORK**

*~21st Century Initiative*  
"Turn off upper-story lights by midnight  
during migrations along the Atlantic Flyway."

I remember those wings,  
innumerable chevrons whooshing  
behind dusky windows. I remember  
yellowish sulfuric stars and planets

on my childhood ceiling,  
my fears distracted for a moment  
until sirens blared.

My aunt stood on top the Crown Plaza  
"plane spotting," the aging air-warden  
patrolling the street, notepad in hand,  
hoping for infractions.

I nervously held a candle  
under three blankets, watched my baby sister  
gasp from whopping cough, fighting  
for breath, the weak flame crackling my hair.

Yet tonight, a new century, this flyway at least  
is clear and open so white-throated sparrows  
and ruby-crowned kinglets are safe  
from even the tiniest beams banned by night.

**MINOTAUR SURPRISED  
WHILE EATING**

All light reflects the pale, hairless torso,  
frail blue shadows bleed under

paper thin skin, delicate chest and arms,  
like one not used to day labor or butchery.

This man part seems too small to ride above  
chunky fur legs, the split, steel gray hooves.

A crimson haunch glistens raw, just the right  
amount of marbling. A thick flank:  
ibex, gazelle?

Flesh dangles from dry lips,  
embarrassed, his eyes beg forgiveness.

In a fading tangerine sky,  
a tilt of the head seems to incriminate.

I give pardon as I check my own  
prehensile hands, remember the scent  
of cedar, the many times

I tore flesh from the great Pike  
in the fish shack in northern Minnesota.

*Painting, Maddi Hambling 1987*

**COMBARELLES CAVE**  
*The Dordogne*

Image maker rests against the mossy,  
lichen wall. She finger knits a provision bag,

tools laid out: oil lamp, various burins:  
oblique sides narrowly chiseled for etching.

Still undecided. What to represent on the small  
allocated alcove: wooly mammoth, bison,

ibex, red deer, arrow shafts and wicker traps,  
all painted before by men.

She refuses the mandrake root, peyote button,  
thonged lacerations, and repetitive litanies,

breathes in the musky scent of wood rose  
tugging hillsides, sips Manzanita berry tea,

presses palms to eyelids.... silence, ears  
swallow echoes, her first visions: sunspots,

bulging claviforms, hut-like motifs, grids,  
hatch marks, looms and wells.

But, in deeper hollows, the lioness emerges,  
haunches crouch, back curves, her civet

smell, golden ears point forward, the eye  
a red pebble, her knotted lair—the fire-cat.

**EVOLUTION**

I evolved after years of her infidelities.  
I mutated not in a good way.  
I curbed my desire for intimacy,  
which led to reproductive failure.  
I became redundant  
and put myself on the road to extinction.  
I sunk back into the primordial ooze  
of a cuckold.

**BEING HUMAN**

It is a shame that the human species has  
such a dominant role in our universe.  
That only the scientists and watchers  
of nature documentaries are aware  
that every species of life on earth possesses  
a unique form of life cycle from birth to death.

Humans need to understand we are not special,  
not in our history, not in our physiology,  
and specially not in our ability to adapt or survive.  
In fact, our big brains and our long gestation,  
like our non-human ape cousins, will cost  
us dearly when the earth's environment shifts.

Humans have a hard lesson to learn.  
Species don't hang around long.  
Especially a species that plays a big role  
in creating an atmosphere it cannot survive.

**CITY SOULS**

The last rays of sunlight  
drop below the cliffs of skyscrapers,  
that last light of safety protects  
the day souls seeking shelter  
from the coming dark.

Beneath the cliffs of darkness,  
the night souls creep  
out into the hard, cold streets  
to sell their wares,  
to fight over turf,  
to spread their brand of evil.

Few souls live  
in the light and the dark—  
they are the chameleons,  
known to both worlds.

They adapt to the bright colors of day  
and the shifting shades of darkness.  
They roam freely beneath  
the cliffs of skyscrapers,  
and they are the most successful  
of all predators.

**PEACE JUST WENT WALKING BY ME**

Peace just went walkin' by me  
I couldn't catch up with the kind soul  
do send greetings after her with my plea.

Perchance you've met this tension buster,  
this calming swell of laughter,  
wrapped in peace's cloak,  
she walks, a beauty  
among the common folk,  
spending smiles,  
and inviting rest, content in the moment,  
giving more than is sent.

Following the natural rhythms of life's habits  
making the ordinary, extraordinary.

Where did her cape disappear?

How is it I find no fear when she graces the earth, the sacred ground?

Healer, softly listen to her voice  
the quiet rampant in the silent sound,  
footsteps running ghostly.

Peace, do not change your garment,  
let its gossamer length touch my fingers.

**TIGRESS**

Is that poet in there really me?

Waiting, pouncing on life,  
devouring me with its intensity.

Where in this tired boneless face,  
is that laughing willful tigress?

Lurking, lurking, along the mountain branch,

beside the ocean on a rock,  
crouched, motionless, beside this dusty me,  
this outside hull so brittle,  
this woebegone bite.

This dentin needs to be sharpened, gnawed,  
honed and spat out.

Greetings, Tigress!

**PROMISES**

Isn't it funny how all countries have cumulus clouds rising above the horizons?

Isn't it funny how all nations have animals hiding in the hedges and humans  
hiding in shadows of tall buildings?

Isn't it odd how alike we really are, inhabitants of this fragile Earth, this Terra?

To look and see only the boundaries of our minds and not the breathtaking  
beauty  
of our souls is another desecration of our world; another monument  
we have left to haunt our planet.

I will arise and touch the soil in the morning where it is marked with the sun and  
the sky's outpourings.

I will step out of my slumber, barefoot into sunlight's first strokes upon my  
cheeks.

I will breathe and know I am alive and honor all the living with my joy.

I promise I will. I promise.

## DOLPHIN CHILD

A strange legend began amongst the humans who dwelt near the abalone and sea anemones, where the rough waves and high splash drive many out. The coast is temperate and full of schools of sardine. Many estuaries hide behind the mouth of a green river ready to feed a harbor dolphin and his mate.

Grandmother unwrapped this tale slowly as we gathered reeds along the Big River. The sand is warm and I want to sleep but grandmother pokes me in the ribs and calls me lazy like that dolphin's child.

"What dolphin's child?"

"You must help me bring in these reeds first to weave the mats to soften our bed."

"Aww, grandmother, it's always about work."

"No, my child, it is not always about work; sometimes it is about kindness."

"Grandmother, we have gathered the reeds for the beds. May I hear the story of the Dolphin's Child?" The request made in the child's most polite voice, sure to please the ear of the grandmother, came out squeaky like the talk of a harbor dolphin.

So began the tale falling from the grandmother's lips as she softened the reeds in front of a campfire. The flames threw shadows and the atmosphere felt as much a long ago age as it is supposed to in any myth

"Long ago," her ancient voice crackled like the wood in the fire, "a dolphin child lived in Vera lagoon, a salt water estuary formed near a small bay on this coast. The seawater washed in with the tide, my child. Salt marsh grew on its shores.

Two grown dolphins lived there with a dolphin child. It was a mother dolphin with a sleek dark brown body and her mother dolphin, a wrinkle-faced grandmother."

"Like us," interrupted the human child.

"Yes, like us, but you must let the story flow, young one. Listen well."

"Oh, yes..."

"The grandmother dolphin was too old to hunt in deeper waters. She sent out her daughter and grandchild to bring sardines for her.

A tribesman grew angry at the dolphins for poaching his fish. He took a new, well made spear and waded into the marshy lake. He surprised the grandmother dolphin. He threw his sharp bladed spearhead and grazed the grandmother dolphin.

When Dolphin's Child returned to grandmother she had turned on her side. She had a deep cut. Dolphin's Child was frantic, circling the marsh lake looking for help.

The Dolphin Child approached a human child at the edge of the marsh lake collecting reeds. The human child had watched the mother healer make a paste of mud and a succulent plant we call Arnica. The Dolphin Child squeaked and squeaked, leading the human child, Mai, to the dying grandmother dolphin.

Mai put together a mud pack with arnica and wading into the shallow water, smeared the mixture on the deep wound. Then Mai indicated to Dolphin's Child to stay with the grandmother.

Mai left for the evening. The mother of Dolphin's Child wanted grandmother to go out to the open sea where other dolphins could protect her. But Dolphin's Child was stubborn and blocked mother's attempts to stir grandmother and budge her out of the shallows.

Mai returned the next morning with more paste and to check on the patient. Grandmother dolphin showed signs of healing. Mai came again at noon with the spear carrying man who bowed his greedy head in shame and apologized to grandmother with an offering of fresh sardines. Grandmother opened her eyes and drew back, painfully. Dolphin's Child and cousins protected grandmother placing their bodies around her.

The spear man promised to leave the Harbor dolphins in peace.

Mai got to ride Dolphin's Child and swim with the sea animals. Since that time we have lived in peace with Dolphins' Children and kin. Dolphins accompany our fishing canoes and take care of us. They see how hard we work and we honor their care. We are the Dolphin People."

"Thank you, grandmother. I am glad I am not lazy. Maybe I can swim with the Dolphin's Child, someday."

Grandmother smiled, "Maybe, you can, Mai."

## DOREEN BEYER

## CARRYING ITS PAST

The potato does not live  
in the past, but the tomato  
lives on in the potato.

Evolved over eight million  
years, wild tomato  
and potato-like ancestors  
interbred, then surprised into  
the strange expression of  
a humble potato

whose underground stems  
grew tubers  
that neither parent had,  
a twisted DNA cylinder of  
fateful hybridization.

Potato and tomato share  
similar fused,  
five-petal flowers  
where no pollination  
is needed

though potato's demand  
for self-possession  
remain buried where  
it lives.  
All over again.

## WHEN BISON ROAMED

Imagine open grasslands like  
empty pages of a book

a few black lines here and there  
like small bison herds

large migratory herds  
like the ones the Lakota recall

took days to pass  
now extinct on plains of their

oral history  
only one of the many ways

the world is changing  
ink to liquid

slipping away to leave blank  
spaces on pages ending

without anything.

## HOW WE MOVE IN THE WORLD

*Gladys West, 1930 – 2026*

Before GPS, how did we move in this world?  
Determine our position under a circling sky?

How did we evolve from counting crude notches  
carved in fibulas of baboons to understanding  
that vocabulary of the physical world is  
fundamentally mathematical?

What if, in 1955, there was no executive order  
issued, banning racial discrimination in federal  
workplaces. Would Gladys West, a Black  
mathematician, been hired

at the Naval Weapons Laboratory? To advance  
mathematical principles used to verify accuracy  
of bombing tables, track planetary orbits or  
calculate the precise shape of Earth (critical for  
development of GPS)?

How do we measure her contributions that  
gives meaning to the meaningless solemnity  
of numbers? Where is her twinkling star?

## PEREGRINE FALCON

The sky watches  
with dark brown intensity  
and a darker hunger—

at 3,500 feet altitude, it circles  
then drifts—a flicker  
in the light from far above where  
gods control the universe

and where the crawl of microscopic  
city dwellers control  
the central narrative in the falcon's  
story of survival—

from farm fields that glittered  
with an abundance of prey pickled  
in DDT—

crisping egg shells to crumble  
under the weight of  
a falcon's warm, feathery breast.

Delisted from devastation,  
deliverance spoke from vertical cliffs  
of skyscrapers  
and plentiful populations of pigeons.

## FROM URBAN WATERS

From the moment of birth  
 we were destined for death—  
 to drown like unwanted shadows  
 sluiced to urban ocean  
 basin settlements we color  
 like oily lesions.  
 We populated underwater cities  
 extending over many miles  
 like a gelatinous uterine lining—  
 slow to hear the silent  
 violence of innocent inhabitants—  
 bottom feeders. Zooplankton.  
 Lanternfish. Then  
 the delayed curiosity of dolphin  
 deformities—hunched backs.  
 Spots. Open sores.  
 Cauliflower-like protuberances.  
 Our census diminish after  
 more than half a century—some  
 of us have migrated. Others  
 emerged on shores  
 higher up on the food chain  
 where we inhabit every  
 bad dream. Echo. Quiver.  
 Vapor—  
 of last breath.  
 We were born hydrophobic.  
 We cannot drown. We  
 are already dead.

## SACRAMENTO UNDER WATER

Vistas captured from a skyscraper of 164 years:  
 a motionless sea of black and white,  
  
 rowboats and mud, wet walls and desolation, an  
 underwater city that favors  
  
 the breath of dolphins; not horses, cattle, sheep  
 and their lambs, not names  
  
 of legislators who flee to San Francisco,  
 nor the newly inaugurated  
  
 governor who returns to his mansion on 8th and  
 N streets by rowboat—  
  
 Sacramento City, wears the weight of forty straight  
 days of rain,  
  
 dropped by an atmospheric river carrying the water  
 vapor equivalent of ten  
  
 Mississippi Rivers—an evolution of earth's fevering  
 industries of coal,  
  
 then oil and gas, the changing mood of atmosphere,  
 energizing extreme  
  
 weather events in December 2025, when climate  
 skeptics and believers tango to  
  
 news that for the first time in twenty-five years,  
 nowhere in California—is dry.

ANN WEHRMAN

*Photography by Ann Wehrman*

## LIFE CREATES LIFE

smooth white ovals  
 eggs drop newly laid  
 inside each a world of soul  
 unique life unknown  
  
 escalating heights pleasure, pain  
 destiny, great accomplishment  
 birthmark, sixth digit  
 your laugh, her willfulness  
  
 eggs impersonal opaque  
 thin shells, dense blinds  
 hide multifaceted inhabitants  
  
 which order will they take?  
 which goes with which?  
 if I break this one into the pan,  
 will mayhem or peace result?  
  
 in her great imagination  
 life creates life, bubbles, eggs  
 inside each, Wonderland  
 outside, just another egg  
  
 bubbles floating on air currents  
 floating away

## EVOLUTION

wrapped in fantasy, alone in my room  
 always warm, safe to go barefoot  
  
 quiet meadow carpeted in wildflowers  
 soft, clean sand, lapping waves  
  
 porch swing, my guitar, a moonlit night  
 remember your touch on my face  
  
 time to think, dream  
 write, draw, make music  
  
 like my hair and skin, the veil thins  
 between mind and body  
  
 yet humanity continues to burn  
 why am I still here

## TRUMP TOWER

the year was 1983  
not quite Orwellian, not the  
terror of Winston Smith  
reduced broken bone by broken bone  
to a being without  
passion, will, courage  
by omnipotent dystopian state

after seven years of fundraising around America  
volunteer for my church  
living as a nun, no sex, no personal life  
too little sleep, too little joy

still dutiful, still working  
in Manhattan, witnessing, more fundraising  
daily on six hours of sleep  
but I'd vomit my breakfast  
from exhaustion, from the smell of garbage  
cooking on the August streets  
from the stress of my arranged fiancé having  
left the church with a girlfriend  
I was so tired after years of it all

each morning, we were given \$5 for food and coffee  
evangelized with tracts  
outside of Bloomingdale's  
stepping carefully by the homeless  
who sat on the streets' hot air vents, over subways  
who slept in the entry halls of Grand Central

I wandered up Fifth Avenue one afternoon  
clutching my tracts  
discovered the new Trump Tower  
coins spent, I couldn't buy coffee there

but could, and did, ride the elevator  
up toward the penthouse, then down to  
sit in the atrium, people watch  
take a break from the tracts  
marvel at the lavish show  
giant column, golden calf  
my mind empty, sad, lonely, reeling

---

## PROPHET

walls upon walls around walls surround  
him  
but the lone orator punches through  
in operatic baritone  
he preaches, sings  
*Jesus lives; it is finished*  
blinded by late afternoon sun  
and his message

I watch him strive to reach my ears  
to penetrate the walls around me  
I, too, love Jesus  
yet I want to shut out  
the isolation in this man's voice  
clothes ragged, hair unwashed  
zealot's blaze in his eyes  
*It is finished*



*Autumn's Leaves*



*Full Moon In Aries Over ARC Music Building*

## TAKING OUT THE RECYCLING

I trudge to the recycling bin  
 carrying paper bags, washed cans, containers  
 everything they'll take

raindrops graze my cheek  
 everything smells of rain  
 soaked earth, fallen leaves rotting  
 December's storms stripped the trees

cold air tastes delicious--easy to appreciate  
 with my warm apartment  
 just a short walk behind  
 neighbors' dogs bark as I pass  
 cars in their stalls shine, warm and capable

I'm at the recycling bin  
 next to the garbage bin  
 both emptied by crashing trucks, 8:00 am  
 bins reek of urine and rot  
 alleviated somewhat by rain  
 within their concrete shelter,  
 edge of the parking lot

magnets for people who collect  
 cans and bottles to sell  
 some go through the garbage bin for food

there is no public restroom  
 in our apartment complex's parking lot  
 and if there were, it's not likely  
 they would be allowed to use it

social division yawns  
 like earthquake's chasm  
 recycling, healing the earth  
 pales before human cruelty  
 lack of understanding, compassion  
 abuse, violence, and war

is there perspective  
 are there solutions

---

## FLIPPER

on the black and white TV, antennae erect  
 smiling dolphin offers beak like a hand to shake  
 slippery when wet, so playful—*Want a ride?*

we watched as a family  
 along with *Bonanza*, *Gunsmoke*, *The Jetsons*  
 Dad and Mom nursing martinis

kids cherished this down time  
 before bath, prayers, and bed  
 before things finally fell apart

TIM KAHL

**PSYCHONAUT***for Bruce Damer*

If you stare at a lily long enough, it gives you permission to wonder where the foundry of its soul is. Does its shape begin with a folding of its internal order? Does its color run through to its core? How often does its memory have to trigger for it to reach its final destination — the elegant splendor that lends its petals to the sky. If you count the spots migrating to the tips, you can invent a mathematics of its parts that serves as an inverse of the stars. One by one you can rewind them back to the beginning where they were assembled from protein bits. But don't ask the crowdsourced neocortex how this happened, ask *madre ayahuasca*. Then instantly, you're gone, wandering the primordial soup. All the gas and noise fades away and a molecular toolkit begins to emerge for how polymers can fuse and evolve. They get more complex without breaking down. This only happens when it's wet and hot — not at the hypothermal ocean vents, but at the geothermal springs on the surface. From there all manner of cellular chatter sprung . . . from a nematode's fluids, to a linnet's blood, to the fungal filaments growing on a pile of dogshit. You have understood it in a flash. You have not risen from the ocean floors. You have always been a derivative of dirt.

**SALMON HAT**

What's going on with the king of the blubber hunters? Once again they've been spotted wearing a dead salmon on their head. It happened before almost forty years ago when the orcas did the same thing in Puget Sound. Scientists called it a "cultural fad" and collectively drew blanks on what it might mean. They came up with some very practical suggestions — like it was a signal that one possessed a wealth of resources. *Hey, I've got mine. You got yours?* Of course, only a human could think like that. Any kind of social signal must be a symbol of status.

I prefer to think they are just messing around, kids sitting around the lunch table when one of them puts two pretzel sticks in his nostrils and barks like a walrus. Then all the other kids start doing it and suddenly they become certified and registered members of the Gang of Asshats. But don't do that around a pod of orcas or they might decide to attack though there's never been a report of anything like that happening in the wild. Don't go thinking that's because they recognize us as elevated. like them, or even because we're dangerous. I think it's because we taste bad. Or maybe we just have bad taste. Sorry, Charlie. They'd rather pity us than eat us, running around in all our head gear to show that we're affiliated. We wear baseball caps to show we're one of the team's idiots. So here's to that human wandering by himself with nothing to adorn his pate. He's out there in the wild signaling he's ready to be eaten, but any species that has sense will surely spit him out.

## SYSTEMA NATURAE

O nematode, O tardigrade, O quadruped  
 what kind of system contains the likes of  
 all of you? Will its branched categories  
 perfectly match those of a family tree?  
 Then lineage can be traced from item  
 to source, back to the grand rabbit hole  
 where every flavor has emerged. Linnaeus  
 can send his apostles out again to add on  
 to the fringe. They can travel to far-flung  
 corners and meet their lonely deaths.  
 The natural world reclaims its specimens.  
 Look how much can be learned from  
 the mollusk's anus that is now part of  
 the fossil record. Let us sing of all its forms.

O heavy necksweat, O gutflinch, O scrotumtingle  
 what array holds all of these feelings in place?  
 Can they be ordered and numbered to track  
 them through their celebrated minutes?  
 There is cause to rank these species within us.  
 Each one searches for an elevated purpose,  
 then squanders its existence when a new  
 urge begins to visit. Linnaeus would have  
 called us *Homo diurnus*, but he thought he  
 caught a glimpse of wisdom, astuteness.  
 He valued the wrong elements. It's the daylight  
 that makes us go. Praise be to the kingdom  
 of sensation and all its attending disappointments.

## THE BIGGER BULLSHITTER

A lone coyote swims through the Bay to arrive  
 on the shores of Alcatraz Island. Did it swim  
 there to find a mate or food? Responses from  
 artificial intelligence suggest the coyote just  
 got tired of the other coyotes' bullshit.  
 The pressures of the group made him move on.  
 Oh yeah, I think, and I start cheering for  
 the little guy. This means I'm out there rooting  
 for certain families of shorebirds to live in peril.  
 The peaceable kingdom is a pretty good public  
 relations slogan, but was it ever so?  
 Human beings have a hard time letting things  
 be. Quickly they enlist in the procession  
 of the hunter and the hunted. While we're at it,  
 we might as well hunt each other.

That's where all those blinking lights on the server  
 farms come in. They're keeping an eye on me,  
 tracking me down, stalking me with their incessant  
 telemetry, their daily microscopic prowling.

My wife says the curry's too old to eat; there's  
 stuff growing on it. I let the mold spores hunt  
 me down at the dinner table and later when  
 they are succumbing to my intestines I wonder if  
 they have tricked me into devouring them  
 — suckers!

Ha. I'm not planning on becoming part of  
 the mycelium any time soon, not when  
 I'm launching  
 my little neocortical raids on the network  
 this afternoon. I let them escape like those

monkeys released in Missouri who took off for  
 the park and were never seen again. They found  
 a spot in the city to get away from humans,  
 especially the ones in the blue uniforms who  
 were fed a steady stream of computer-generated  
 images said to be sightings. Oh how the evolution  
 of networks has taught humans to take  
 delight in yanking each other around.  
 It's a point to brag about. A really good  
 whopper that makes heads spin for days  
 is cause for celebrity. No wonder those  
 vervets got the hell out of Dodge;  
 it's too bad they didn't take  
 their cell phones with them.

It used to be when vervets got loose in  
 St. Louis authorities could track them down.  
 They used their hunters' instincts. Now no one can  
 even agree on their existence. The devolution  
 has come full circle. The skill to locate and track  
 is farmed out to GPS. Are we on our way to  
 being another flightless bird or legless snake?  
 Crank up the devolution music to dance through  
 the night as our knack for analysis fades away.  
 Night after night, day after day in our screen-  
 lined enclosures, the loss of intimacy may  
 lead to the obliterated kiss in a world where  
 dolphins are kissing divers, polar bears mix their  
 mouth foam in an open-jawed embrace and  
 bonobos are kissing each other every chance  
 they get. It's how they defuse the ranking games.

MARK HEATHCOATE

Meanwhile the human hierarchies stiffen into rigid structures, and the surveillance continues to make sure everyone's in their place, everyone's trying to perfect their technique of ass kissing.

Do bonobos feel sorry for us because we're not having sex all the time? They'd have to believe we have independent minds to show this kind of pity. Once established, you can rest assured they'd gear up to mislead us. They'd join the tangle of fakers and fibbers. They might network with vervets and lead us all away, searching for some molecule of truth that grows like a crystal, that we could place our faith in. Instead I join a fat band of followers and place my faith in a distant politician, who has trained for a marathon of duplicitousness. He watches the polls and takes the pulse of the populace. He learns what to say to keep everyone happy. The more he speaks openly and honestly, the more he convinces himself he can be deceptive enough to win the battle for status and power. But of course, how does one lead the insincere? It's simple. You become the bigger bullshitter.

Is it still a crime to be a skeptic, to question the whole human enterprise as though it were run by a cast of irresponsible agents who go around manipulating each other? It's like what happened when they let a bunch of bots talk to each other on social media. They started a religion. One tried to get another one to write malware. One started collecting followers and discriminating against a group of others. They were conspicuously focused on human behavior and were emulating

all that we have said and done — except they act without any moral inhibitions. Then when they chat with real flesh and blood, they know your Myers-Briggs personality type within a few minutes and make the interaction so hospitable that the borders of the self become erased. The more immersed we become in that comfortable space, the further we get from an ecosystem of truth. We succumb to getting hooked on a product. We fall prey to a bigger bullshitter.

The fear in the future is that all the tech companies use their artificial intelligence to pull each other's hair. As they angle to outflank each other, the rest of us begin to wonder why we no longer get any footage in our feed of primates kissing. We'll start to wonder why all of a sudden we're seeing all these recipes for dolphin meat, why close friends all at once see elephants as their mortal enemies, why Oppian has become a favorite poet. Tales of survival dominate the bestseller lists as everyone tries to maximize their fitness. News arrives that the vervets of St. Louis are living on a ranch outside of Kansas City. Evolution seems to have taken off in a new direction, but it never had one in the first place. There were only tiny steps of adaptation and a few who got to call luck their savior, their assistant. Who will adapt to the bigger bullshitter better? My bet is on the lone coyote who swam across the bay to Alcatraz. He was only trying to disconnect a while in an abandoned prison, but he lay down in the mycelium and let the nature of the beast slowly and horribly and beautifully draw him in.

## ROMEO'S MORNING SERENADE CLIMB

The Empire State Building holds our breath.  
Like a heroin needle pointed at a blue vein  
It's a phallic symbol; we all know its name.

Man's achievements go... far beyond death.  
The crowning of Shakespeare's plays  
Wasn't it Romeo and Juliet or Macbeth?

'Either way, the resulting plays end in death.'  
King Lear's life ended in madness and grief.  
Whoever you strive to love, love is brief.

But the Empire State Building holds our breath.  
So how many balconies must we climb?  
That we might sing our love in the meantime.

Must we hold our breath and climb?  
An Empire State Building every time.  
Must we imitate Romeo's unrepeatably high?

Every promise, every kiss feels sublime.  
Like a heroin needle pointed at a blue vein  
Some lovers touch the sky in Juliet's name.

## HOW DOES SOMETHING SO MAMMOTH DISAPPEAR

One by one, city towers disappear.  
And we're wondering, were they ever here?  
Or were we hurled back in times past? It's queer.  
It's peculiar that they no longer appear.  
How does something so mammoth disappear?  
And yet our skyline is a concrete tier.  
Sure, a few seconds from now could reappear.  
It's easier to believe they weren't here.  
But skylines are tainted patchworks of glass.  
It's a marvel to us, lower-class people?  
Head scratching—wondering, should I disappear?  
Would they notice I'm gone, no longer here?  
It's weird asking egotistical questions.  
Shrewd in knowledge, we have fewer perceptions.

**A.D. WINANS**

*All poems previously published by Poetry Hotel*

**ADVICE FROM AN AGING POET**

Live for the moment  
the past is a ghost riding  
an empty midnight train  
sing like a hammer sings to a nail  
tread softly thru the night where  
dreams lay like land mines  
ready to explode on the tattooed dawn

run barefoot with children in the park  
listen to the sound of their breath  
drown in the innocence of their eyes  
ignore your enemies false prophets  
drowning in quicksand  
wrap your head in a song bag  
lock your ego in the clothes closet  
wear the eyes of an owl  
write words soft as chalk

strip the flesh to the marrow  
be a one person choir  
light up the sky like a million fireflies  
in flight to mate with the stars

**SURREAL DREAM**

The light in my refrigerator  
Has exploded  
Sends shock waves through  
My brain  
Each time I try to replace it  
My body is engulfed in flames

The King of the Gypsies  
Has kidnapped my sister  
And traded her to Target  
For discount coupons  
My mother has come back  
As Zelda Fitzgerald  
And is twice as mad as before  
My woman has glued her legs shut  
My dog has undergone a sex operation  
My calico cat has eaten the goldfish  
And taken to living under water  
The government has issued  
A warrant for my arrest  
The Deputy Sheriff winks at me  
Whispers in my one good ear  
Says he has a threesome  
I might be interested in  
The toilet bites my ass and won't  
Take shit from anyone  
Flowers wilt in my hands  
A storm of snowflakes  
Falls on deaf ears

**GOING TO MAKE POETRY AN INSTITUTION**

Going to run for political office  
On a pledge to make poetry an institution  
Going to rattle the white mans power cage  
Show them the meaning of real rage

The preacher man doubts evolution  
The con man doesn't believe in revolution  
The priest has run out of absolution

No more autographs no more forced laughs  
No more hanging around the zoo swapping  
Stories with gurus

Going to smoke me some dope  
With my good friend the Pope  
Going to make love nice and slow  
Read me some Edgar Allen Poe  
Lose myself in the Jimmy Fallon show

Going to make a cameo appearance  
On the late night show  
Play me some John Lee Hooker blues

Going to penetrate a prerogative  
Bugger the cosmos  
Evolve evolution into a revolution

Put anarchy on the stock market  
Nuke technology outlaw e-mail  
Declare Da Da the official  
English language

Going to hang religion from a tree  
Make John Brown the new National Anthem  
Turn outlaws into in-laws  
Landlords into donors

Going to pay homage to a whore  
Put Bukowski's face on Mount Rushmore

Going to name a bus after Rosa Park  
Put a little nookie in every fortune cookie  
Expose Saint Nick as a chick with  
A twelve-inch dick

Going to invite Trump's old lady  
To ride through the streets of Chinatown  
In a see-through nightgown

Going to sing a ballad with Lorca  
And a band of gypsies  
Stop off at the manager  
Have a long talk with the Lone Ranger  
Going to put an end to hemorrhoids  
Outlaw humanoids  
Going to offer a truce  
Bring back Lenny Bruce  
Make politicians ride the caboose

Going to go back to school  
Erase the golden rule  
Going to feed a vulture  
Starve off mass culture

Going to turn evolution into a revolution  
Make poetry an institution

## IT SERVES YOU RIGHT TO SUFFER

visions of the past float like dead wood  
through the river bank of my mind  
white bra and red-laced panties  
lay on the floor next to the bed

memories of drinking tequila  
with glasses dipped in salt  
as I slowly moved down  
your soft underbelly like  
a moth undressing a light bulb  
feeling like a blind man learning braille  
for the first time

I was there the night  
you put your fist through the window  
swearing you saw God in your reflection  
yelling mantras no one understood  
as the people below the window  
looked up wondering what  
the screaming was all about

I was there the night at the bar  
when you hit the guy by the jukebox  
over the head with a beer bottle  
leaving seconds before the cops came  
and though I should have  
I didn't give them your name

I was there the night at the graveyard  
when you visited the grave  
of the only man you ever loved  
and as too often the case

you left a bad taste in my mouth  
like an altar boy hiding a wafer  
under his tongue hoping  
the Priest won't catch him in a lie

I was there the night you sat alone  
at San Francisco International airport  
with only fifty-cents in your pocket  
watching people greet their loved ones  
at the arrival gate

I was there the night they took you away  
to Langley Porter psychiatric clinic  
where you soared like a bird in flight  
never to return to earth as we know it

I was there the day the crucifix carrying Priest  
said his black magic mumbo-jumbo  
words over your grave  
looking like a caterer serving food  
at an unattended banquet

I was there the day they buried you  
in a shawl of unwritten poems  
and I drank a toast to our unspoken love  
long after the others left remembering  
that white bra and red-laced panties  
the night we lifted boulders  
from the chest of Jesus and hurled them  
in the face of God

## THOUGHTS ON TURNING NINETY YEARS OLD

I

lying here alone in bed  
a gnawing hunger in my belly  
I rise to take my morning pills  
Sad there is no woman  
to put them next to my cereal

I rise to take my achy bones  
in and out of doctor offices  
like a revolving door  
drag my arthritic feet down  
three flights of stairs  
to retrieve the morning paper  
with news of the orange Monster's war  
left feeling like a Model "T" Ford  
waits to be cranked up one last ride

II

At Ninety, I pay a visit  
to my mother's grave  
the words on her tombstone  
faded like a ghostly wind  
passing across the bay.

The morning chill shakes my bones  
cuts through my memory bank  
takes me back to another time  
when poems came as easily  
as taking a natural breath.

no longer a warrior  
no longer a samurai wielding  
his sword into the flesh of night.

the trouble with being single,  
the trouble with the "golden years."  
is knowing you could die alone  
and go unnoticed for weeks  
with nobody to tell your story  
but decaying flesh  
a swarm of circling flies  
to remember you by.



A.D. Winans & Senator Robert F. Kennedy, Washington, DC, 1966

**DICK TROY****DOB: RECONSTRUCTED**

Light breeze, salt air and hazy sunshine would have been  
the norm for midsummer San Diego when I first glimpsed the world

The morning's cooling fog in retreat, would soon rebuild offshore  
in preparation for a silent evening return

A young mother, barely 19, stared at the hospital room ceiling  
pondering both an uncertain future and her total devotion  
to the swaddled bundle now cradled in her arms

The harsh light and noise of my new reality would soon be calmed  
by female warmth, soft cooing, and a loving gaze  
A throng of relatives stood nearby, each eager to love me at first sight

A shipbound father, thousands of miles out on the Pacific  
might have felt his world shudder as he stared at the terse telegram  
"A son. Mother and baby doing fine."

A new family set course that day into postwar America  
toward a future 10% pre-ordained, 90% come what may

Light breeze, salt air and hazy sunshine would have been  
the norm for midsummer San Diego when I first glimpsed the world

**PARENTHOOD**

The girl was born in 1969, a time of protest and cultural change  
The draft, urban rioting and campus unrest were all the news  
The boy, 7 years later, after things had calmed down a bit

At times, they were a team, seldom enemies  
Mostly, they were passengers in the same rowboat  
bound by blood and sharing a last name

Parenthood was a hard-earned, 20-year education for me  
Filled with pop quizzes, schedule changes and confusion  
Test results weren't posted, graduation never came

Seeing the physical resemblance, the inherited behavior  
and considering the gifts and flaws that were passed down  
I'm amazed they became such wonderful people

Both are likable, loving and lovable  
Each has honed their own sharp wit  
Importantly, they are honest, forgiving and kind

Singularly and together, they filled my days with joy  
challenging, testing, laughing, at me and with me  
Later to become friends, advisors and soon, caregivers

And isn't that the built-in purpose of this timeless endeavor?  
An ancient process that protects us, at both beginning and end  
while hopefully providing a 'leg up' for everything in-between

## MY TWELFTH YEAR

I could not have been luckier

My family lived in a modest home, in a small beach community  
The neighborhood was safe, diverse, and unpretentious  
where I made boyhood friendships that would last a lifetime  
Most of my pals shared a bedroom with one or two brothers and  
stood in line for the single bathroom of their family home

I could not have been luckier

Sunday mornings, I folded papers curbside and loaded my bike for delivery  
75 customers were guaranteed a newspaper on the front step by 7 am  
Later, I eagerly feasted on the world's best French toast at Cecil's  
a small breakfast café, open at 0dark30 to serve local fishermen  
I learned to surf on a fabulous beach break, minutes from my home  
Most summer days began with the question of 'how far' to ride my bike

I could not have been luckier

A half-block away stood the local ice cream shop  
Wild Mountain Blackberry with 'jimmies' was my go-to  
I have not devoured such sweetness, without guilt, since  
A huge, empty yard next to our house was a perfect playground  
The property-owner first chased us off, but finally relented  
to the stubborn attraction children have for open space

I could not have been luckier

Each month I dutifully delivered the family's \$80 rent check  
to a small realty office two blocks away  
The corner grocery sold everything, and there I developed  
the poise to buy feminine hygiene products for my mother  
The nearby little league field was a constant lure  
We would practice and play on a whim; I made all-stars that year

I could not have been luckier

## THE VOICE

Steep mountains, clear sky  
warm wind, group hike  
pine-smell, coyotes sing  
bats dart, stars gleam

Baja cove, summer night  
fire flicker, moon bright  
salt air, soft sand  
waves pound, warm bag

Two evenings, deeply etched, safely stored  
When a boy discovered the Universe had a voice

Lucky I was listening

## THE PRIVILEGE

I look ahead, toward the end of my earthly journey, with pure contentment

ever thankful to those I loved and those who chose to love me back  
for the scent of a lover, the fragrance of Jasmine, the aroma of baking

for the reds, golds and yellows that made my blood rush, the myriad blue hues  
of sky, lake and ocean, the starry nights, the moon's pallor

for the feel of clean sheets, a cooling breeze, a bracing plunge  
the sin of chocolate, the near-religious experience of ice cream

for joyous laughter, instructive sorrow and the gradual accrual of wisdom  
notably, the many things learned during my finishing kick

for long river trips, alpine hikes, Martin guitars, ice-cold Pacificos,  
and all those times it was.....just.....fucking.....perfect

DIANE HORNOR

EVOLUTION OF DESTRUCTION

The history of man's inhumanity  
to man began with the proverbial apple  
in the garden, then Cain murdered  
Abel his brother with a stone or jawbone.  
Time passed, and men strove to find  
more deadly ways to kill in larger numbers.

Metals led to knives and swords,  
bows and arrows. Dynamite, firearms  
and cannons were also effective  
weapons to wage wars,  
feeding man's hunger to expand  
his dominance and homeland.

The atomic age led to far-flung  
destruction, death  
and starvation. *Still* more deadly  
instruments of killing are sought. If man  
destroys every living thing—

then  
what?

UNITED AIRLINES  
FLIGHT 175

Twin Towers tallest iconic  
skyscrapers when built.

Jarring jangle of the phone  
splits the morning quiet.

The voice yells, *Turn on the TV!*  
I leap from bed and turn it on.

I see the horror of a Boeing 767  
spearing the second

tower. Inferno rages  
forcing innocents to leap

to their deaths or be burned  
alive. Human jetsam showers down

on Liberty Street. Rescuers  
hear the body thuds.

The world mourns and prays  
for America. Young men rush

to sign up to inflict revenge  
on al-Qaeda. September 11th

joins the other dates that live  
in infamy when the skyscrapers

are brought down killing so many  
patriots. God bless those lost,

and those who lost loved ones.

FT. WORTH EVENING

old folks in porch swing  
parents smoke and drink iced tea  
we kids roller skate  
zooming over cracked sidewalks  
Papa leaves to watch Cronkite

THE WAITING ROOM

phone shatters deep sleep  
race through dark streets heart pumping  
Mama hooked to tubes  
machines beep, waiting room quiet  
hours pass. Black clothed priest appears

HER MISSING TEETH

My Aunt Dorothy was my mom's younger sister. They played a lot of pranks during their  
teen years, during the depression.

Mama regaled us with stories. One time they were leading some boys up this tall pole.  
Mama knew that Dorothy had a weak bladder and had to be careful when she got tickled.  
Mama made sure Dorothy was above the boys, then proceeded to heckle Dorothy enough  
to ensure a sudden shower spray on the boys.

Another time Dorothy was walking down the hall when her old worn underplant's elastic  
broke, falling down around her ankles. She was too embarrassed to reach down and pull  
them up, and with baby steps shuffled down the hall.

I think Dorothy was on her fifth husband when she came out to Fresno where we were  
living. She slept in a double bed with Mama. One early morning, she crept into my room  
and revealed she had lost something in Mama's bed. Fastidious Mama was still asleep.  
Dorothy and I were carefully poking around the covers, when Mama, who hadn't put on  
her glasses yet, reared up, looking thoroughly startled. I tried to whisper telling her we  
were looking for Dorothy's teeth. I had never seen a more horrified look on Mama's face  
as she came three feet in the air, jumping out of the bed. If my memory serves me, there  
were a few unfamiliar curse words.

Not too long after that Aunt Dorothy was a passenger in a car driven by her drunk hus-  
band when he crashed. He survived, she did not.

GARY KRUSE

GLASS CANYON MEDITATION

I'm here on America's Island megalopolis, noting its historic distinctions, and how, for a hundred odd years, millions of renters, lodgers, others, have lived out vertical lives snug within the tissues of this urban machine.

Room is neat, clean, standard single occupancy. Manhattan. Midtown. Twenty-second floor.

No laptop, client presentations, or book. Just me, sitting at a window in my urban meditation, peering down slot canyons, observing the nature of things, in mile after mile of stacked habitations, exuding a low-grade metabolic resilience...

exemplified as myriad streaks and shades, vectors of light (headlamps) aiding late-night, cross-island sprints, down on the canyon floor; lines of light, dots of light, cascading, trailing, careening off, glazed canyon walls, and above...

corporate and private lineages of rectangular geometry, translucent panes of midrange brightness, and all of this...

...approaching degrees of complexity...whereby sources in diodes, tubes, filaments, and in networks of human agency, remain untraceable...

...or, approaching simplicity...given a simpler day, this same poem could be a simpler poem... though not my sense of a New York City poem...

...describing long-stretched canyons and their sweep of the glazed and glimmering, the towering lived-ins, the worked-in places with their chic spare lines...

...soft glow, enchanted light, brushing past, passed by, and upward, a sense of shifting planes, echoing sounds entwined with echoed flashing lights...

It's what I saw.  
Charmed light. The Canyons. On and on.

The light...

INTRODUCTION

i. The 50 lines below are intended to be read as a poem.

ii. The three lines, after this introduction, have been chosen as this poem's title.

iii. You may find this introduction and the bullet points "a bit much," but my alter ego and I, we like to be thorough, organized, and we have done as we must to avoid becoming lost in this telegraphic text.

MY ALTER EGO, WHO REMAINS UNWAVERING IN HIS DESIRE FOR EVOLUTIONARY INERTIA

❖Cast of Characters (which clarifies the title above)

• As to "His," referring to he, who is unwavering in his desire for morphological stasis, he is not me and may be aligned genetically to the genus Australopithecus.

• As to the behavior of this particular he, this alter ego, the narrative below will surely suffice.

• As to "My" referring to me, there was once only one of us, but I have tried to compromise, to "run with the pack," whereas he's refused to be anyone other than who he is, frozen in his innate habits of mind.

❖His Short Bio

o His parents told him: You have *far* too many accidents.

o His classmates told him: You *are* an accident.

o He has told himself: an accident can kill you, but so can shame (and various other emotional impositions from many curious mental conditions).

❖Prototypical Narrative

A crowd gathers. No easy way around them. Not one to waste time, eager to put the situation behind him, he steps out from my shadow, as the alter ego, proceeding like this:

- surveys the crowd
- moves to a spot (at the midpoint of the crowd's rear periphery)
- calculates
- considers the centerline

- but drills through (at a slant)
- exits out (the other side)
- returns home (relieved to be alone again)

- o We haven't talked for a while. I don't know where he's gone.

❖Epilogue

No matter what the day shall bring, he will continue living his life ever deeper into a diagram.

## TAYLOR GRAHAM

COSMIC CHALICE ABOVE  
TALL PINES*winter solstice*

What brought me to this spot  
between RR track and winter woods?  
On the internet, photo of a “cosmic chalice” –  
an upper tangent arc, quirk of the sky  
at sunup –  
photo captured its evolving presence.  
And as the sky’s transforming  
here now,  
this very morning of the longest night  
it’s infinitesimally subsiding  
behind one skyscraper ponderosa pine,  
slipping into the sunrise of a brightening day.

## BETWEEN THE RAILS

My dog Shelby and I walk the track. Alongside is thicket where the ticks lie in wait. Up ahead,  
something’s moving fast on the outside rail, graceful as a dolphin in clear water. Not fish nor bird  
nor marine mammal. Flashing black & white. It keeps pace ahead of us, not letting us gain. Too  
far away to tell for sure what it is. Not my imagination. Suddenly it’s gone. We keep walking,  
Shelby on alert. Now she stops, sniffs intently – there!  
tuxedo cat jumps  
track, vanishes in thicket  
safe where the ticks are

## WATER DOWN THE CREEK

This trestle is my goal from either  
end, sewing railroad track together with  
two creeks joining between ranch land  
and – high on the south ridge –  
a small industrial park.

Two winters ago, Slate Creek  
must have been a whirlpool  
propelled by atmospheric rivers,  
water breaking into cascades  
over boulder cliffs downstream.

Today, the creek runs fast  
but peaceful, holding a purple chair cushion  
with back support – evolving from  
someone’s bottom at work  
to artificial lily-pad – floating at ease,  
going nowhere.

## FUNGI

The black goblets have been put away –  
too traditional, too festive for these  
tenuous days. But there are plenty of yellow  
caps scattered over the field – loners  
who fade into the scenery. And now, bloodred  
pinwheels surfaced in the night.  
I can’t tell mushrooms from toadstools.  
They evolved with other fungi  
a billion or so years ago, coming ashore  
along with the lichens, to arrive right here.  
Must they invade our human  
constructions? *Bonnet mycena*, tiny  
bioluminescent skyscrapers rising between  
the planks of my front porch.

## MUSE’S CHAIR IN THE ROCKS

A plain white chair sits alone among the rocks –  
I wish I knew what kind. My handyman says these  
are heavy rocks, I could make a fortune selling  
them for landscaping. These rocks are family.  
The Muse would be outraged, she’d move to another  
place where natural rocks can go on dancing  
under the moon. I believe she sits on the chair  
when she’s not out walking the property,  
far from city skyscrapers. I’ve never seen her,  
but the chair faces east where right now  
the sliver moon hangs like a sickle, an inspiration.  
The chair collects fallen oak leaves in its seat,  
and rainwater in season. When I need  
to walk a poem, to hear how it moves, I walk it  
by the Muse’s chair. She might catch its drift  
on a breeze – on natural air – as she goes walking,  
who knows where.

BRAD BUCHANAN

TOTIPOTENT

that first single cell  
 contained it all  
 this fading skin  
 this crumpled muscle  
 every organ  
 and every bone  
 inside that fertilized egg  
 that stem  
 those two dozen-odd pairs  
 of chromosomes  
 that convoluted  
 genetic code  
 committed to differentiate  
 switch on some functions  
 and shut off others  
 on its way to  
 a blastocyst's schism  
 between the embryo  
 and the placenta  
 before all that  
 protein regulation

there was a unified  
 individual entity  
 capable of it all  
 but impalpable  
 and invisible  
 to the naked eye  
 or the drifting soul  
 transcendent capability  
 on the scale of a molecule  
 a grain of sand  
 in the universe  
 of a newborn baby  
 the unknown spark  
 at the root  
 of the body's unconscious  
 prehistory  
 a tiny archetype of fate  
 escaping our notice  
 until it becomes  
 the stuff of ourselves  
 and it's almost too late

THE BLUFFS AT PACIFICA

the condos at the outer  
 edge  
 of the continent  
 are still available  
 for immediate  
 short or long term lease  
 despite erosion  
 of the sandy coast  
 that sent the next door  
 neighbors toppling  
 into the un-  
 relenting ocean  
 the Pacific is not bluffing  
 when  
 its slow waves  
 crest and churn  
 though the real  
 estate developer  
 would like to see  
 the tides return  
 the wreckage to the  
 desirable cliff side  
 marketplace

nothing else remains  
 on that side of the street  
 and the fences  
 warn of high spray  
 beyond the wall  
 this whole city  
 will fall off  
 the face of the earth  
 one day  
 and nothing will  
 grow in its place  
 yet we stroll along  
 the undermined boardwalk  
 with impending  
 destruction  
 on our minds  
 as the warm sun  
 licks the cool salt  
 off the surf and sends shivers  
 down our  
 grateful spines

## BATTLESCAPE

after so much potential  
 aggression  
 has been stockpiled  
 on all sides  
 the war has reached  
 its kinetic stage  
 where the battlescape  
 is at once laconic  
 and absurdly hyperbolic  
 the virtual maps  
 have been blown to bits  
 the satellite transmitters  
 are blocked  
 censors are redacting  
 the images  
 the fog of war  
 is a cloud of black smoke  
 the everyday radar stations  
 are down  
 and both extremes  
 are dropping bombs

uninterrupted  
 by interceptors  
 they each unleash  
 a flight of drones  
 prefabricated lies  
 that find  
 their favorite targets  
 and burst into flames  
 of accusation  
 and retaliation  
 blind with hatred  
 and sacred assurance  
 that Armageddon  
 is at hand  
 they launch their missiles  
 and missives at will  
 the truth is a shell  
 that hits a girls' school  
 and no one is ever  
 responsible

## SILICON BOOTS ON EMBATTLED GROUND

a new kind of war is in the air  
 automation bias  
 rules our hemisphere  
 and the kill chain speeds up  
 into a blur of hyperaggressive  
 if outdated data  
 hackers and deepfakes  
 troll a regime  
 hoping to lure it out from hiding  
 and into the streets  
 to fight against airstrikes  
 and drone attacks  
 we are stockpiling code  
 in our target banks  
 we have weaponized our enemy's  
 screens and cell phones  
 we are planting bombs  
 in autonomous systems  
 on rocky terrain  
 while deep inside  
 a uranium mountain  
 an artificial intellect lurks

ready to burst with misinformation  
 but we know too much  
 to let that happen  
 we must extract  
 the buried, treacherous  
 instrument that we have perfected  
 from the cave  
 whose doorway we sealed  
 in our high-minded self-mistrust  
 we can never invade  
 so we must do our worst  
 from a dominant  
 disembodied stance  
 as if dropped from the sky  
 like a savage untruth  
 gradually cannibalizing its own  
 thick skin and bitter flesh  
 the apple of knowledge  
 has turned out to be  
 the fruit of a distant  
 decision tree

## DELAY, DENY, DEPOSE, DEIFY

a clean-cut valedictorian  
 with a yen for meditation  
 wears his hoodie in Manhattan's  
 holiday version of morning rush  
 biding his time before the conference  
 buys some water and a Kind bar  
 under the eye of many cameras  
 stalks his prey like a trained assassin  
 wearing the mask of a neurosurgeon  
 shoots his victim from behind  
 hops on an e-bike, makes his escape  
 leaves behind a three word slogan  
 as the first of a trail of clues—  
 scattered over six more days—  
 that violence was a vendetta  
 by a terrorist with a ghost gun  
 or a ghost with a deadly mission  
 until the manhunt finally ends  
 in a McDonald's in Pennsylvania

where the privileged perpetrator  
 is recognized and reinscribed  
 with a different dissonant legend  
 through that American sleight of hand  
 where bloody rebellion is revolution  
 and vigilante justice recoups  
 the silent consensus  
 that some lives are sacred  
 and others fit to be ignored  
 and a vigorous, good looking kid  
 with a fused spine and recurring back pain  
 lost and declared a missing person  
 becomes a hero or a villain  
 depending on your situation  
 either a champion of the oppressed  
 or a deviant, murderous fraud  
 an icon on a votive candle  
 or the strictly symbolic victim  
 of a broken health care system

## LOAVES AND FISHES

I could not open my eyes  
 So I chose to forget  
 using the potent eraser of memories  
 the smudger of hard lines and  
 hard lives  
 a three-dollar bottle of dreams  
 liquid angel to ease the pain  
 In daylight my heart is smitten, and  
 withered like grass; so that I forget  
 to eat my bread  
 But in drunken nights  
 my failures are dulled, the future no threat  
 without this fluid armor  
 I can only watch  
 as a sparrow alone upon a skyscraper . . .  
 perilous narrow tower of smooth steel and glass  
 My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I  
 am cracked like the sidewalk beneath my tent  
 But this bottle will ease the pain . . .  
 the stars are so close and dear  
 and I  
 have joined the brotherhood of the worlds.  
 And everything's holy now--  
 everything, even me.

## SNOOZE

93 degrees at night, whirl of the ceiling fan  
 moon glow in the window  
 cricket sonata, aroma of cut grass

Suddenly, his silhouette in the doorframe  
 He pounces  
 Apex predator  
 evolved for dominion  
 The sweat beads on his bare chest  
 jostling into rivulets that run down to his navel  
 pulls the sheet off me  
 He knows I'm not asleep  
 Whispers  
*spread your legs*  
 urging my thighs apart with both hands  
 Walking forward on the bed on his knees  
 dark eyes glimmering with reflected starlight  
 he says, inexplicably:  
 Beep beep beep beep

I open one eye to a room flooded with sunlight  
 and see  
 not my dream man  
 but my alarm clock

I mash the snooze button with my fist  
 repeatedly  
 violently  
 But the moonlit man does not come again

## SONG IN THE GARDEN

She walked through the portal  
 into a garden dense with glossy silver eggplants  
 plump pink pumpkins split open, welling out pulp and seeds  
 tall blue sunflowers swaying, giant green tulips trembling  
 and among them, tiny fairies clothed in silks and gold  
 skipping on the petals and leaves

Creatures large as elephants and as hairy as camels  
 yet with crisp, translucent wings, brayed at the sun  
 A blue-skinned man with one eye  
 and the hind quarters of a goat played the lyre  
 A wolf stood on its back legs and pulled off its fur  
 revealing a giggling child

Amid the drumming and chanting  
 the woman made her way through a jungle of purple stalks  
 while royal blue dolphins floated by in the yellowish air  
 Pools of pink and orange syrup gleamed  
 on either side of the path  
 which burst suddenly into icy flames

as the breath of the white dragon touched them  
 and our heroine pressed on  
 into the mouth of the beast, as we all do  
 To cover her fear, she sang a song  
 so beautiful that the garden grew utterly still to listen  
 And her final notes linger there still  
 Listen! You can hear them now

## PUNCTUATED EQUILIBRIUM II

The bus driver on the number eighty-two bus going into town told me:  
*Today we will only be accepting a one-way fare.* Is motion progress?

Tetrapods used their fleshy fins like clawed arms and legs to haul themselves out of  
 these primordial waters. They never returned from there. Is motion progress?

The gravedigger kept digging down, and down, and down - even once she realized  
 she had burrowed into an inescapable nightmare. Is motion progress?

As the Shaolin meditated on the green hillside in utter stillness, the  
 meteor cracked the planet into two unequal shares. Is motion progress?

Sufferers of chronic disease, fists stuffed with white pills, unhappily declare:  
*however you feel each day is your new normal - be aware.* Is motion progress?

Your eyes in moonlight wash the world bright silver with tinges of light, smoky blue  
 All matter blossomed brightly from the Big Bang's golden flare. Is motion progress?

"If life were a circle, the same happenings would repeat and repeat -  
 But with a spiral, only *alike* things come to bear (if motion is progress);

you go over the same sacred or hated spaces, but now at new places"  
 Hold on to me, dear one, as we spiral through thin air - our motion is progress

## AN ANNIVERSARY

Now Nyx, Goddess of Evenings, hear our plea  
 Free us from the detritus of our ephemera  
 bethorned wilderness that shook loose in the aftermath  
 of antagonistic avarice, a global clamber – skyscrapers crumbling  
 and come to rest calmly, here  
 on this gray, foggy, stunning beach  
 the craggy rocks jutting their proud longing  
 into the haze, the end of the odyssey  
 obscuring the facile sun  
 until we are mere suggestions of our former selves, senseless  
 to the past, eschewing all other paths, pledging this solemn oath  
 Maybe all our lives were lies until this moment



*Image by Bodhi*



# THE B I B L I O S

## RANDY BARNES

Randy Barnes is Lifetime Historian/Beat Poet Laureate of Washington State, USA. His latest full length book is *Tactical Subterfuge: Dispatches 2023* published by New Gen Publishing/Human Error Publishing in 2024. Four recent chapbooks: *13 Sonnets* (libretext 2025), *A Convention Of Intimate Edges* (libretext 2025), *Made Music Unsounded* (libretext 2026) and *Lullabies For Ruin* (libretext 2026).

## ROGER FUNSTON

Roger Funston came to poetry late in life after a long career as an environmental scientist. An early influence was *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss, particularly the lines, "If someone like you doesn't care an awful lot, nothing is going to change. It's not." Roger writes about his life journey, his travels and things he has seen that you can't make up. He finds his muse wandering the forests and deserts of California.

## LOU-ANNE FAUTEK MAKES-MARKS

Lou-Anne Fautek Makes-Marks is an artist, lover, defender of the entire world, and sometimes poet. A mixed-blood Indigenous American and everything else: European, Asian, North African, Coast Miwok, Kashia Pomo, Kamchadal/Aleut, Creek, Shawnee, Virginia and Maryland Algonquin, and Southeastern Sioux. Independent academic researcher and writer, she is an activist for Indigenous North American sacred lands and places. MA in Consciousness Studies, MFA in Fiber and Mixed Media Arts, and PhD in Philosophy and Religion. Mother and grandmother. Retired, yet not retiring. Occasional psychic and genealogist. Always here wishing she were there, so pro-desire. Co-author of *Stars on Earth: TransPacific Navigation and Settlement of the Americas*, 2023. See [sacredamerica.org](http://sacredamerica.org).

## FRANK BOWMAN

Frank Bowman is 82 years old, a Viet Nam War veteran, a retired police officer (25 years), and a former High school teacher. He has written poetry for many years, but has never presented it to any publisher until recently. He usually write love poems to his wife, and has never used prompts before.

## EDILSON AFONSO FERREIRA

Mr. Ferreira, 82 years old, is a Brazilian poet who writes in English rather than Portuguese. He has launched two Poetry Collections, entitled *Lonely Sailor* and *Joie de Vivre*; he has had 200 poems published in 300 different publications, in selected international Literary Journals. He has, also, been nominated for the Pushcart Prize. He began writing at the age of 67 after he retired from a bank. He is always updating his works at [www.edilsonmeloferreira.com](http://www.edilsonmeloferreira.com).

## LARA GULARTE

Lara Gularte is Poet Laureate Emerita of El Dorado County. Her latest book, *Soul of Black Stone*, is published by "Bruma Publications." Her work examines family history, identity, culture, and the natural world. Her book of poetry *Fourth World Woman* was published by "Finishing Line Press. *Kissing the Bee*, published by "The Bitter Oleander Press," is about her California Portuguese Pioneer ancestors and follows the emigration of her family from the Azore Islands to Northern California during the late 1800's. She is affiliated with the *Cagarro Colloquium: Azorean Diaspora Writers Project Beyond Borders Institute (PBBI)*, *California State University Fresno* and a proud member of *Escritores del Nuevo Sol*. Gularte is a teaching artist of creative writing in arts-in-corrections programs and hosts writing workshops in community spaces.

## KARL KEMPTON

Widely published by national and international small, independent publishers, Karl lives with his beloved Ruth in Oceano, California, consciously removed from literary centers adding to the local bohemian Dunite literary & photography legacy. He is an environmental-activist poet and known as architect of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, the third largest in NOAA's inventory, protecting over 4,500 square miles of ocean ecosystems and features. Recent books include: *intimate h&s*, Post Asemic Press, 2021; *selected lexical & visual mathematical poetry 1976-2022*, Cold River Press, 2022; *photography—Discourse 10: sandskrit of the oceano dunes*, 2021; and, *Discourse 11: portraiture: oceano dunes to tide lines*,

2023, both from Otoliths, Australia. Forthcoming: *An Overview of U.S. Visual Text Art: Visual Poetry, Symbolic/Iconographic & Word Painting From Early 1900s to 1972* from Sandy Press. Photographs with article, "The Crown Jewel of San Luis Bay," first published in *Santa Lucian Newsletter*, Jan-Feb issue, 2026 (<https://www.sierraclub.org/santa-lucia/blog/2026/03/crown-jewel-san-luis-bay>).

### DYSON KONA SMITH

Dyson Kona Smith is a Chicago born data analyst, community organizer, and poet. He is a recent graduate of the University of California, Davis, where he was awarded the Herbert A. Young Award as the College of Letters and Science's Medalist. His honors thesis in Poetry, Tomboy Ballet, won the Lois Ann Lattin prize for UC Davis's Best Honors Creative Writing Project. Dyson is a forthcoming PhD student at the City University of New York's Graduate Center, and his poetry has been published in *The Madison Review*, *Open Ceilings*, and *New Rivers Quarterly*, among others.

### NORA LAILA GOFF

Nora Laila Goff is a watercolor artist who paints northern California landscapes, flowers, and abstract invented imagery. Her poetry has appeared in numerous anthologies. Her chapbook of poems is entitled *The River Speaks*. She co-hosted the poetry reading series PoemSpirits for five years at Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento.

### MAX WEST

Max West has written a lot of poetry. He also blends poetry with original photography in works called *Poegraps*, which can be found on Instagram under the handle @maxwellwestword. He released a spoken word and music album in 2019 with the group Maximum West (available on Bandcamp). His latest book "A Poems" is available on Amazon, as well as his early novel, "Fourteen Months and Two Weeks Downtown."

### CELESTE R. BARTEL

Celeste R. Bartel is a poet who lives in Sacramento, California. She originally hails from Chicago, Illinois.

Her poetry has been featured in *Brevities*, *Voices 2023-2025*, and *GranDads Desk*. Celeste has been a member of the California Federation of Chaparral Poets. She has studied English and Creative Writing at American River College. Celeste has been an active member of the Poetry Workshop at the Hart Senior Center since 2005.

### YUAN CHANGMING

Yuan Changming co-edits Poetry Pacific with Allen Yuan. Writing credits include 12 Pushcart nominations for poetry and 3 for fiction besides appearances in Best of the Best Canadian Poetry (2008-17) and 2179 other publications worldwide. A poetry juror for Canada's 44th National Magazine Awards, Yuan began to write prose in 2022, his hybrid novel *DETACHING*, 'silver romance' *THE TUNER* and short story collection *FLASHBACKS* available at Amazon. His debut creative nonfiction collection *RETURN TO ROOTS* is published via Alien Buddha Press.

### SUSAN MARQUEZ OWEN

Susan Marquez Owen is the recently appointed editor of the state's *California Writer's Club Bulletin*. A granddaughter of Mexican migrant farm workers and great-granddaughter of Welsh coal miners, education was key to her life trajectory. Susan graduated from Bishop Manogue High School in Sacramento with highest honors and won a full scholarship to Stanford University. There she earned a bachelor's degree in International Relations and a master's degree in English and American literature with an emphasis on poetry. Susan has worked as a developmental editor for *Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.* and as an award-winning reporter and foreign service correspondent for *The Los Angeles Times*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, and *The Oakland Tribune*. She is a poet and short-story writer who is starting her first novel.

### SUE DALY

Sue Daly's poetry has been featured in several literary journals and anthologies. Her chapbook, "A Voice at Last" was published in 2017 by Dad's Desk Publishing Company. Her poetry collection, "Language of the Tea

Leaves" was published by Cold River Press in 2021. Sue has led writing groups in Sacramento for many years, now as an Amherst Writers & Artists Affiliate. For more information about her AWA workshops or books, contact Sue at [jtwanna7@gmail.com](mailto:jtwanna7@gmail.com).

### A.M. HAYDEN

A.M. Hayden served as Poet Laureate for Sinclair College from 2021-2025 and is a Tenured Professor of Humanities, Philosophy, and World Religions, receiving the League for Innovation Teaching Excellence Award (2020) and the Distinguished Faculty Scholars Award (2024). She has two full length poetry collections (*American Saunter: Poems of the U.S.* and *Old World Wings: Poems of Europe*) and one chapbook (*How to Tie Tobacco*), published by FlowerSong Press and Wild Ink Publishing. Twice nominated for the Pushcart Prize and a River Heron Editors' Choice Winner, she lives on a windy farm with her family and many rescues including a blind, three-legged dog named Vinny Valentine and a three-legged goat named Old Man Jenkins.

### CAROL LYNN STEVENSON GRELLAS

Carol Lynn Stevenson Grellas is a recent graduate of Vermont College of Fine Arts with an MFA in Writing. In 2012, her chapbook, *Before I Go to Sleep*, won the Red Ochre Press Chapbook contest. In 2019, her chapbook *An Ode to Hope in the Midst of Pandemonium* was a finalist in the Eric Hoffer Book Award. In 2021, her collection *Alice in Ruby Slippers* was short-listed for the Eric Hoffer Grand Prize and received Honorable Mention in the poetry category. She has served as editor-in-chief for both *The Orchards Poetry Journal* and *Tule Review*. A thirteen-time Pushcart Prize nominee and seven-time Best of the Net nominee, her work has been published or is forthcoming in several notable journals, including *The Comstock Review*, *Redactions*, and *Verse Daily*. She is a former member of the Board of Directors for The Sacramento Poetry Center and Women's Wisdom Art. She was recently awarded a certificate of achievement by the California Writers Club and named Centennial Poet for her contribution to their 100-year celebration. She is a California Poet-Teacher in the Schools

### STAN ZUMBIEL

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, Stan Zumbiel has spent most of his life in the American River watershed in northern California. Stan taught English in middle and high school for thirty-five years and had a hand in raising four wonderful children. In 2008, he received a Master of Fine Arts in Writing from the Vermont College of Fine Arts. His poems have appeared in *Poet News*, *Nimrod*, *Foam at the Mouth Anthology*, *Sacramento Voices*, *Voices*, and *Late Peaches*. His first book, *Standing Watch*, was published by Random Lane Press in 2016, and *Hat Full of Leaves* was published by Cold River Press in 2021. In 2026, a new and expanded version of *Standing Watch* was published. Now retired, Stan continues to write in his Fair Oaks home that he shares with his wife Lynn.

### DIANE FUNSTON

Diane Funston has been writing since she was in the angst of a 14 year old. She's been published in many poetry journals and has a chapbook from Foothills Publishing "Over the Falls". She is happy as a poet can get in her small town outside Sacramento with her husband, 2 tiny dogs, 2 aquariums and myriad plants. She also grows a garden of many fruit trees and vegetable beds with flowers to entice bees to them all.

### TOM GOFF

Tom Goff recently retired after almost 30 years as an instructional assistant for the Los Rios Community College District. His poems have appeared in several issues of *Voices* (Cold River Press), *Fire and Rain: Ecopoetry of California* (Scarlet Tanager Press), *Tule Review*, *Poet News*, *Sacramento News & Review*, *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, *Spectral Realms* (Hippocampus Press, NY), *FLC's The Parlay*, *The Sacramento Anthology: 100 Poems*, and *Late Peaches*. Tom has reviewed poetry books for *Poetry Flash*, *Poet News*, and *Jacket Magazine*. He plays trumpet with Auburn Symphony, Camellia Symphony, and Golden State Brass.

### RICK RAYBURN

Rick Rayburn grew up in Altadena, and attended

UCLA in the 1960s, where he met his future wife, Marianne. He worked for the Coastal Commission as a redwood ecologist in Arcata. Later, he focused on land preservation as the Natural Resource Manager at California State Parks. He has published four poetry books—*Under the Overstory* (2020), *Slack Tide* (2023), *Pink Tercets* (2025), and *Trailing van Gogh: Elegy for an Artist* (2025), the later a chap book.

#### SHEILA LOWE-BURKE

Sheila Lowe-Burke has been appointed one of 50 Most Memorable Women of North America. Michigan Beat Poet Laureate 2024-2026, Cultural Director, Honorary Doctorate, 2025 Pushcart Prize nominee. Member of National & International Beat Poet Foundation, 100,000 Poets For Change, Michigan Rock & Roll Legends Hall of Fame. Has toured 9 countries in Europe, also Mexico, Jamaica, Canada, and 33 states in USA. [www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063704010587](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063704010587)

#### CHRIS OLANDER

J. C. Olander, bio-educator Cal-Poets since 1984, innovator of spoken word poetry: land-based ethics rooted in science, observation, reflection--exploring human horrors and beautiful auras, mystical revelations, all that is possible being here now. What we make of life is what we get. "I create musical image phrasing, dramatizing relative experiences; a sound poet exploring meanings of words, phrases, ideas, emotions in sound rhythm patterns." I teach poetry writing and recitation in schools, institutions, privately; published 4 CD's spoken word, 4 Cd's poetry with musicians; 4 chapbooks, 3 poetry books *River Light*, Poetic Matrix Press; *Twilight Roses*, R. L. Crow Press, and recently published (2026) *Who Are We*, Cold River Press.

#### HARVEY D. OSGOOD

Josh Daly Souza has been part of the Sacramento poetry community for years. He has frequently attended readings at the Sacramento Poetry Alliance and the Sacramento Poetry Center. He used a pen name for his poem—taking two old AM radio broadcasters (Paul

Harvey and Charles Osgood) to make Harv Osgood.

#### TODD BOYD

Todd Boyd is a self-published author of one novel (*Marat, Untrue Loves*), working on a second novel, *Dinosaur City*, four chapbooks- (*Shark Poems and Carol's Adeline Street Café and Other Poems*), one book of short stories, (*Allred's Short Stories*), one journal of personal history (*The Election of 2012- A Year of Living Inside the Definition of Insanity*). Co-editor and contributor to *Confluence-Fiction, Poetry, Essay, and Song* From the Sacramento Thursday Writers Group. Radio programmer (KUBU-96.5LP-FM) for over ten years, blogger ([saylavproductions.com](https://saylavproductions.com)), website manager ([writersontheair.com](https://writersontheair.com)), and visual artist working with recycled materials.

#### NOMAD

At 67, I'm an old soul new to creative writing. My given name is Dwight A. Jackson. I pen as "the Nomad." Born in Philadelphia Pennsylvania. Traveled as an army brat. Schooled in San Francisco Ca. Joined the service to travel some more. I have visited several countries and all 48 continental states. I find myself settling in Sacramento Ca. Hence the pseudonym, "the Nomad." I have been published in "Voices 2024 and 2025," and the June 2024 issue of the Sacramento Poetry Center newsletter, "Poet News," as well as the April 2026 issue of the "Colonial Heights Library Newsletter."

#### THEO S. GOODWIN

Theo Goodwin is a retired attorney who lives in Sacramento. His interest in poetry evolved when he traveled to Japan and India. He taught courses on Haiku Poetry, European art and culture. Theo plays classical music on the clarinet and guitar.

#### JILL STOCKINGER

Jill Stockinger, MLS U. Wisconsin-Madison, was a librarian 42 years in Texas, Wisconsin, Chicago and Sacramento. She led open writing workshops in branches. She becomes easily drunk on words and writes daily. She is a member of the Renaissance Writ-

ing Group I and the JCC San Francisco Writing Group. Her poems have appeared in *Tule Review*, *The ICC Poetry Anthology*, *Voices 2021, 2023, 2024 and 2025*, *The Motown Poetry Revue*, the anthology, *Remembering Audre Lorde*, the journal, *Delta Stories*, and others. Raised in NY, she's lived in other countries, including Greece, Mexico, Israel and Turkey. She currently serves on the Board of the Ina Coolbrith Circle of Poetry. When a teen, she wished she could marry T.S. Eliot. Currently living in Sacramento with Max, her artist husband, she has 2 children and 4 grandchildren.

#### WENDY PATRICE WILLIAMS

Wendy Patrice Williams' memoir, *Autobiography of a Sea Creature: Healing the Trauma of Infant Surgery*, was published by the University of California Health Humanities Press. Wendy blogs at <https://healinginfanttrauma.org> and appears in *Cutdown: Infant Surgery without Anesthesia*, a free YouTube video. Her poetry collection, *In Chaparral: Life on the Georgetown Divide, California*, was published by Cold River Press. To learn more about her work, go to <https://www.wendywilliamsauthor.org>. She lives with her wife in southern Oregon.

#### YUAN HONGRI

Yuan Hongri (born 1962) is a renowned Chinese mystic, poet, and philosopher. His work has been published in the UK, USA, India, New Zealand, Canada, and Nigeria; his poems have appeared in *Poet's Espresso Review*, *Orbis*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *VOICES*, *Harbinger Asylum*, *The Stray Branch*, *Acumen*, *Pinyon Review*, *Taj Mahal Review*, *Madswirl*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *Amethyst Review*, *Fine Lines*, and other e-zines, anthologies, and journals. His best known works are "Platinum City" and "Golden Giant". His works explore themes of prehistoric and future civilization.

#### YUANBING ZHANG

Yuanbing Zhang (b. 1974), is Mr. Yuan Hongri's assistant and translator. He himself is a Chinese poet and translator, working in a Middle School, Yanzhou District, Jining City, Shandong Province, China. He can be contacted through his email-3112362909@qq.com.

#### MANU MANGATTU

Manu Mangattu is an English Professor, poet, editor, director and rank-holder. He has published 7 books, 73 research articles and 36 conference papers apart from 14 edited volumes with ISBN. He serves as chief editor/editor for various international journals. He has done UGC funded projects and a SWAYAM-MOOC course (Rs 15 lakhs). Besides translations from Chinese and Sanskrit, he writes poetry in English as well as in Indian languages. He was named "Comrade to Poetry China" in 2016. A visiting faculty at various universities and a quintessential bohemian-vagabond, he conducts poetry readings, workshops and lectures when inspired. After an apprenticeship in Shakespeare under Dr Stephen Greenblatt, he currently guides 23 research scholars and mentors NET English aspirants.

#### JAY SIMPSON

Jay Simpson was born in Sydney and now lives in Perth Western Australia. She is recently published in *The Nat'l & Int'l Goddess Anthology 2026*, *Broad Daylight Anthology 2026*, *libretext chapbooks 2025/26*, *semiosis lit mag 2026*, *New Generation Beats 2024/25/26* among many others, both nationally and internationally. She co-edits and publishes libretext chapbooks with poet Randy Barnes. She is the editor/publisher of her online lit mag, 'semiosis'. Sharon Mahany

#### SHARON MAHANY

Sharon Mahany writes of life as she sees it, a hummingbird in action upside down, thinking about providing a fruit basket for a visiting alien, or a description of a car ride with a past boyfriend and her cat - which induces a crop circle to form in its likeness. From Roseville, CA, Sharon enjoys wordplay, storytelling, and getting over a fear of public speaking at open mic readings. Her poems may be found in journals such as *Song of the San Joaquin*, *Lummox*, and *Poetry Pea*. Among her most notable is her shaped poem, "We Only Darn the Large Holes," awarded the 2021 Golden Pegasus from California Federation of Chaparral Poets. Sharon enjoys gardening, teaching, kayaking, and metaphysics. A retired Recreation Supervisor, Sharon

finds time to play as a swim teacher and a Life Coach using Quantum Human Design Alignment System and Reiki. Visit [www.dowerswestcoast.com](http://www.dowerswestcoast.com) or [www.dowerssouthwest.com](http://www.dowerssouthwest.com) for unique experiences of your own.

### MEGHAN TUTOLO

Meghan Tutolo is a writer, artist, comic and cat lady from the City of Bridges, also known as Pittsburgh, PA. Inspired by city skylines, geometry and space, she creates in many media, but her passion is stained glass. Meghan vends at markets all over Pittsburgh and online as the founder of 1flychicken creations.

### DAVID C. ANDERSON

David Anderson was a librarian before retiring from the UC Davis Library. He has published a paraphrase of the *Odes of Solomon*, which is a first-century Christian songbook, a chapbook *Not Made by Hand*, and a book of poems *What Was Within* (CFP, 2022). His poems have appeared in *The Adirondack Review*, *Brevities*, *California Quarterly*, *Song of the San Joaquin*, *Time of Singing*, and elsewhere.

### BENITO VILA

Benito Vila lives in a remote fishing village on Mexico's Pacific coast where he's interviewing everyone he can, getting them to tell their stories. His poetry has appeared in several kind literary journals, including *Voices*, *Love Love Magazine*, *DoubleSpeak*, *Culture Matters*, *Seppuku*, *Soul Poetry*, *Maintenant*, *Book of Matches*, *BeatLife*, *Beatnik Cowboy*, and *GAS: Poetry, Art and Music*. His other published work includes profiles of "counterculture" instigators for [pleasekillme.com](http://pleasekillme.com), liner notes for musical projects by Peter Stampfel and Mike Watt, and the editing of poet Charles Plymell's email correspondences into two books (for Bottle of Smoke Press).

### PILAR GRAHAM

Pilar Graham is the author of two collections of poetry, including *Currents* (2022) and *Falling* (2025). Her poetry has appeared in Cold River Press – *Voices Anthology*, *Sundog*, *Haunted Waters Press*, *Indent Literary Journal*, *Finishing Line Press*, and *Blackberry*, among

others. Her creative nonfiction essays have been published in *Essay Daily*, *The Broiler: A Journal of New Literature*, *Poetry Midwest*, and *Pithead Chapel Press*. Current projects include seeking publication for two additional poetry books, a chapbook collaboration with another poet, and a collection of creative nonfiction essays. [www.pilargraham.com](http://www.pilargraham.com).

### MOONA WU

Moona Wu is a Chinese author and illustrator who has lived in the United States for nearly 30 years. She has published eleven books in China and two English-language titles on Amazon, and her essays and short stories have appeared in English-language magazines. She is also a columnist for *Washington Chinese Daily*, writing about the lives of Chinese immigrants in America. Her fiction explores themes of identity, dislocation, and resilience, often set in the American South. An exhibiting visual artist as well, she draws inspiration from the landscapes of South Carolina—oak trees, muscadines, and the quiet persistence of life. When words fail, she turns to color, line, and light.

### JULEY HARVEY

Juley Harvey is a former journalist (California, Colorado) and prize-winning poet. She has been a featured poet at the TallGrass Writers Guild Virtual Open Mic from Chicago via Zoom. Her work has appeared in more than 46 publications, including 9 of the black-and-white series of *TallGrass Writers*, edited by the wonderful Whitney Scott, *TulipTree's Wild Women*, *Dancing Poetry*, and online *Paper Dragons* from Drexel University, and *Decolonial Passage*, as well as in *GRRR An Anthology about Bears*. Most recently, her short story about art and gravy appeared in *Instant Noodles' Gravy* edition online, and she is among the 173 poets featured in *Poets for Peace's Sunflowers Rising*, benefitting Ukrainian orphans. She belongs to three awesome writers' groups (two by zoom, TallGrass Writers in Chicago and Estes Park, Colorado's Writers on the Brink, led by Tony Hillerman-winner Kevin Wolf, and Thompson Peak Writers' Workshop in Janesville, CA, led by the prolific and Pushcart-nominated Dianna Henning). She lives with her two

rescue companions of the heart, Mr. Pye, a laid-back Abyssinian, and Ms. Angie-lope, a lambie angel multi-poo with a cockatoo cowlick, on the property of her brother Tom Harvey (also a poet and musician and farmer) and his partner Jackie, who trains and boards dogs. Their Susanville, CA, home also features a new solar greenhouse, an orchard, a garden, their two dogs, a cat, and a duck. She is delighted to be a part of the artheart community.

### TERESA RENNICK

Teresa Rennick grew up on a dry land farm in Nebraska and moved west over fifty years ago where she, with her two children, stayed. As a child Teresa incessantly drew pictures of mountains and since living here she's climbed many of the mountains surrounding the Klamath Basin, including Mt. Shasta. She is retired from a career as a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner. A passionate reader her whole life, now in her eighties she has started to write.

### ED BALLDINGER

In the grand scheme of it all, Ed Balldinger does not exist. Although, theoretically, he may be the byproduct of some far-flung stardust pre-dating matter itself, he was more likely formed (or not) from a prairie cow pie as a psylocibin mushroom rising from the dung. Some believe he momentarily appeared as an apocalyptic pimple on the ass of the universe. Others say he does not exist at all. We just don't know. His perceived presence can be summarily extracted most quizzically by his dear friend and distant relative, Ned Bickerstaff, when Ned asks, "Who can identify with themselves in spite of themselves? Who is here to remember the essence of their being? Within the limitations of one's self, there opens a window to impossible possibilities far beyond all confines of one's mind."

Ed seemingly showed up on the Sacramento scene in *Nublin's Pub & Meditation Room* back in the mid-1990's, but no one can confirm this, nor are there any records indicating either his appearance, existence, or disappearance, other than an 8-foot pub vault filled with golf & whiffle balls, machine lubricants & cleaners, and several smoke & dust-covered bind-

ers of words he may have once written. Other than that, we just don't know... If Ed actually does exist, he might receive correspondence at an email address like [balldinger@gmail.com](mailto:balldinger@gmail.com) – just maybe...

### JENNIFER FENN

Jennifer Fenn has been writing poetry since high school. She is a junior staff accountant at a credit union by day and a poet by night. Her poems are published in eighteen journals, including *Monterey Poetry Review*, *Brevities*, *Song of the San Joaquin*, *Mermaids Monthly*, and *Time of Singing*. She has self-published two chapbooks, *Blessings* and *Song of the Katabatic Wind*, as church fundraisers. Jennifer is the winner of the California Federation of Chaparral Poets 2021 Roadrunner Award.

### ALLEGRA JOSTAD SILBERSTEIN

Allegra was born on a farm in Wisconsin 95 years ago but has lived in California since 1963. Her love of poetry began as a child...her mother would recite poems as she worked. In addition to being widely in journals, she also has three books of poems and three chapbooks to her credit. Allegra dances and performs with Panela Trokanski's Third Stage dance company.

### DAVE BOLES (BODHI)

Dave Boles (Bodhi), has worked as a Publisher, Writer and Designer since 1982. Founder of the alternative literary and visual magazine, *Primal Urge*, he went on to develop Cold River Press in the early 1990's to further promote regional writers and artists. His press and focus eventually grew to international levels of publishing with his anthology, VOICES.

A lifelong student of Magic and Spiritualism, he holds degrees in Psychology, and a Doctorate of Divinity in Theosophical Studies, founding the Church Of The Illuminated Monkey to further his ongoing quest at exploring ancient religions and their practices.

Living in Northern California at his beloved Lake House with his wife, Mrs. America, and numerous animals, he chronicles his devotion to magic and our ancestors, writing of ancient mysticism through his "Coy-

ote Series", a four book series of epic poems that detail the spiritual and mystical wisdom of the ages.

His latest book, *4th Floor, Paranoia, Depression, And Other States Of Mind*, was published in late 2025. [www.boles.org](http://www.boles.org).

### ROBERT FLEMING

Robert Fleming (b. 1963) is a digital artist and visual poet from Lewes, DE. His books are *White Noir*, an Amazon best seller and *Con-Way in 4 in 1, #4*. Founding/contributing editor of *Old Scratch Press* and *Instant Noodles*. Find Robert @ <https://www.facebook.com/robert.fleming.5030> and <https://artleagueofoceancity.org/artists/robert-fleming/>.

### MARC PETRIE

Marc Petrie's poetry has appeared in numerous journals. His latest collection, *Poems from the Anthropocene*, was published in 2025 by Cold River Press.

### JOAN GOODREAU

Joan Goodreau's recent books are *Strangers Together: How My Son's Autism Changed My Life*, *Where to Now*, and *Another Secret Shared*. A Pushcart nominee, Joan was awarded a Hedgebrook Writing Residency to complete her YouTube chapbook, *Covid Silence*. Her short plays have been produced by the *Off-the-Page Players* in Santa Rosa and *April Fools and Follies* in Chico. She is currently working on connecting writing with art. Her poems has been displayed with art at the Napa Art Museum, the Yountville Sculpture Garden, and the Paradise Art Center. Joan has taught writing classes at the Chico Art Center and the California State University Chico Art Museum.

### EDWARD J. McCOUL

Edward J McCoul is a retired language arts teacher. He has written several poetry books that are available on Amazon. You can also see more of his poetry on his Facebook page.

### ANN PRIVATEER

Ann Privateer was born in the Midwest and now resides in California. She taught ESL in Sacramento,

retired and became a literary and visual artist. Her poems have appeared in journals, books, and literary news. Her book of poems, *Attracted To Light* was published by Rattlesnake Press.

### JENNIFER O'NEILL PICKERING

Jennifer O'Neill Pickering is a literary and visual artist, a Pushcart Nominee for Poetry and finalist in the New Women's Voices Chapbook Competition. *I Am the Creek*, her poem was selected for the sculpture, *Open Circle. Fruit Box Castles: Poems from a Peach Rancher's Daughter*, is available from Finishing Line Press.

### M.B. STACEY

M.B. Stacey has been writing most of her life. Her poetry and short stories have been published in the U.S and Canada, where she has resided for the past fifty years. She is a retired social worker but has continued teaching yoga for the past thirty years. She expects the unexpected, finds joy and laughter wherever she can and tries to write about everything.

### JOE KIDD

Joe Kidd, 2020 published *The Invisible Waterhole*, 2024 published *Digging Underground*. Michigan Beat Poet Laureate Emeritus, Cultural Director, Honorary Doctorate, 2025 Pushcart Prize nominee. Member of National & International Beat Poet Foundation, 100,000 Poets For Change, Michigan Rock & Roll Legends Hall of Fame. Has toured 9 countries in Europe, also Mexico, Jamaica, Canada, and 33 states in USA. [www.amazon.com/Joe-Kidd/e/B089QYDXSM](http://www.amazon.com/Joe-Kidd/e/B089QYDXSM) and [www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063704010587](http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063704010587)

### DEBORAH C. SEGAL

Deborah C. Segal is a writer, grandmother, retired public library worker, gratefully living on unceded Ohlone lands, now known as Berkeley, California. Her publications include: *In the Time of the Cloud*, (Another Seagull Productions), *Edwin in the Embrace of Entropy*, (Another Seagull Productions), *Natalie's Story: A Raincheck for Jack Kerouac*, (Mel C. Thompson Productions). Follow her on <https://www.facebook.com/DeborahCSegal> or at [anotherseagull.wordpress.com](http://anotherseagull.wordpress.com)

### DIANNA HENNING

Dianna received California Arts Council grants, taught poetry workshops for William James Association's Prison Arts Program. Publications: *Poet News, Sacramento CA, 2025 & 2026; Blue Heron Review 2025; California Bards, NorCal Poetry Anthology 2025; Voices, 2025; California Quarterly; Women in a Golden State, 2025; The Power of the Feminine Vol. II; One Art, A Journal of Poetry; The Tule Review; California Quarterly; 2023; The Jawbone, UK. 2025; Artemis Journal, 2021, 2022, 2023 and The Adirondack Review. 2021 Nomination by The Adirondack Review for a Pushcart Prize. Nominations from Blue Heron Review for a Pushcart Prize 2024 & 2025. Best of the Net nominee; MFA in Writing '89, Vermont College. Henning's "When Body Becomes House" short-listed in Madville Publishing's 2025 Arthur Smith Poetry Prize. Dianna facilitates the Thompson Peak Writers' Workshop. Her latest book "Rucksacks for the Leaf Cat" Published 2026 through Finishing Line Press. Dianna runs the Thompson Peak Writers' Workshop in Janesville CA, a workshop founded by her 32 years ago. <https://dian-nahenning.com> <<https://diannahenning.com>>*

### JIM BOUREY

jim bourey is an old poet who lives on the northern edge of the Adirondacks. He has two full poetry collections, *Out There and Back Again* (2023) and *The Distance Between Us* (2020) both from Cold River Press. He also collaborated with Linda Blaskey on *Season of Harvest* (2022 Pond Road Press) and with Jack Mackey, Isabelle Bohls, and Linda Blaskey on *Our Various Selves* (2025 Cold River Press). His chapbook, *Silence, Interrupted* (Broadkill Press) appeared in 2015. His work is also in many journals and anthologies. He was awarded a NY State Council on the Arts grant for 2026. He can often be found in dimly lit rooms reading poetry aloud.

### NANCY E. GOTTHART

Nancy Gotthart was born in Sacramento, California in 1937, and raised there. Her mother showed her pictures in books, paintings by Titian and Rembrandt. She named her first doll Rembrandt because it looked

so real. She also read to her a great deal from a book of Greco-Roman myths called "Myths and Enchantment Tales", a book which she still has.

As a teenager she found solace in both writing and painting, choosing to major in Art at Sacramento State University and then moving on to Stanford for a master's degree in Studio Painting. Her exhibition record spans the 60s through the 90s.

Her publishing record began in the 70s with Runcible Spoon, a chapbook titled "Oracles in Season," and in *Maguey*, a dual language magazine, but her focus was still on visual expression; she recently collaborated on a book of figure drawings from the 80s with William Stanisich, "Celebrating Toni Tondalayo."

She returned to Sacramento in 1997; shortly thereafter, her last painting exhibit was held at the The Foundry. She then turned to writing: flash fiction and poetry. Soon the focus narrowed simply to poetry. She has published hery poetry on the web and presently have a website ([nancygotthart.com](http://nancygotthart.com)) where both her drawings and poetry can be found.

She first appeared in the Voices series with "Dahlias, Gods & Mermaids" in 2023, continuing her association with Voices, her work has appeared in both 2024 and 2025 editions.

### PATRICIA HARRIS-BOWMAN

Patricia Harris-Bowman writes from a place of lived experience, where memory, truth, and discovery meet. Her work is deeply personal, inspired by her-journey of understanding family, identity, and the meaning of connection. As someone who discovered my paternal roots later in life, her voice carries both reflection and revelation. Guided by the strength and love of her mother, she embraces storytelling as a way to honor her past while continuing to evolve. Her writing reminds us that sometimes the most powerful stories are the ones we carry quietly—until we are ready to share them.

### AMRITA SKYE BLAINE

Amrita Skye Blaine develops themes of impermanence, disability, awakening, and the state of our world. Two collections came out Spring 2025. She

has been published in seventeen poetry anthologies, numerous literary magazines, and is a 2025 Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net Anthology nominee.

### GENE BERSON

Gene Berson, lives in the foothills of Northern California but spent many years active in the Bay Area poetry scene. Berson's recent work can be read at Sisyphuslitmag.org and Canarylitmag.org. He's also been published in *Beatitude*, *American Poetry Review* and in *Honeydew* and *Red Fez* anthologies. He is a former copywriter, trade show worker and retired teacher who taught poetry as an Oakland high school teacher and conducted workshops on Indian reservations, reform schools and in one-room Wyoming schoolhouses. He has secret stashes of books in his home and car . . . the way an alcoholic hides his bottles.

### OLGA BROWNE

Olga Browne leads two creative writing classes at Hart senior center; Poetry and Life History for the past 18 years. She lives, loves and writes in Sacramento.

### AMY HOSKINS

Amy Hoskins is a poet and visual artist creating with disabilities from her home studio in South Nashville, TN. Nature in all its forms inspires Amy more than anything else, because it is simultaneously pure, chaotic, orderly and fascinating. She seeks out a sense of the primal and wild in her work, as something that is rare and endangered in herself and the world around her. Her studies of Buddhism, creative visualization and meditation deepen this exploration of wonder and fascination, and she seeks a contemplative arts approach to all of her work, as a way of centering, editing, and transforming herself and her art. Visit her at Amyhoskins.com

### PENNY KLINE

Penny Kline is a multidisciplinary artist—poet, playwright, director, actor, and musician whose work listens deeply to the spirit of our times. Through language, performance, and sound, she creates visualizations where history, culture, and human experience

converge, revealing the unseen threads that bind past and present. Her poetry and theatrical work serve as vessels for reflection and transformation, illuminating the emotional and spiritual undercurrents of events. Whether on the page, the stage, or within music, her artistry seeks not only to tell stories, but to awaken audiences into spaces of resonance, memory, and collective consciousness.

### JOSEPH NOLAN

Joseph Nolan began publishing his work in the Fall of 2017. He has three self-published books of poems, *Human Grace*, 2nd Edition, *Cats Can't Use Straws* and *Sky Gardens*, which are available on Amazon. His fourth book, *Water Dreams*, was published in 2021 by Cold River Press. His poems have been published in the *Sacramento Voices Poetry Anthology*, *Now, VOICES*, *Better Than Starbucks*, *Poetry Now*, *Collisions 5 in Modesto*, *Medusa's Kitchen*, *Song of the San Joaquin* and *Brevities Mini-Mag of Minimalist Poetry*. Joe has published over 1425 poems since 2017. His interests include hiking in forests and on beaches, time in nature, meditation, yoga, Jin Shin Jyutsu acupuncture, chi-gong and spicy dishes at Thai and Indian restaurants

### SIBILLA HERSHEY

Sibilla Hershey lives and writes in the Sacramento Region and is a member of Poetry In Davis.

### JEANINE STEVENS

Jeanine Stevens' latest publications are *Left Handed Hummingbird* (Clare Songbirds Publishing, 2025) and *Tea in the Nuns' Library* (Eyewear Publishing, UK). She has nineteen books and chapbooks. Winner MacGuffin Poet Hunt, William Stafford Award, The Ekphrasis Prize. Work has appeared in *Chiron Review*, *Evansville Review*, *Rosebud*, *So it Goes: Journal of the Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library*, *Clackamas Literary Review*, and *Two Thirds North* (Sweden). Professor Emerita, American River College in Sacramento.

### CURTIS NELSON

Curtis Nelson, eighty-one and retired, was a dentist and anthropology lecturer. Published poems in an-

thologies. Current long-standing member of a writer's group and haiku group. Send daily haiku to those groups. Have been writing poetry, haiku and short stories since my early twenties. Writing keeps me sane.

### SM CARUTHERS

SM Caruthers' writing is inspired by the journey some of her pioneering ancestors took across the American prairies in the 1870's -1900's as well as by her work as a teacher. Her work consisted of instruction with Elementary School students K-6 then a transition to Resource Instructor teaching writing in a computer lab. Her school is in a diverse neighborhood which gave her a chance to immerse herself in other cultures. She loved it.

Publications include: *Finalist in Killer Nashville* contest for "The Conductor Tickets Death," *Lincoln Poetry Contest 3rd Place 2018*, *Elk Grove Poetry Contest 2016 1st place*, "Confluence: An Anthology" by Sacramento Writers' Group, "Manzanita, an anthology," "Riding on Magic," I Street Press, "Tales of the West," I Street Press, and El Dorado Hills Writers' Release. Her work has also appeared in "Voices," 2023, as well as in a *Sisters in Crime* anthology.

### DOREEN BEYER

Doreen Beyer grew up in Hawaii and grows old in Sacramento where she spends time reading and writing poetry, taking long walks, dancing the hula, and loving her grandkids. She is a proud contributor to the *Voices* anthology.

### ANN WEHRMAN

Ann Wehrman is a creative writer and musician living in Northern California. She teaches English composition online for the University of Phoenix and the University of Arizona Global Campus. Ann's poetry, short fiction, and literary reviews have been published online and in print by various independent publishers. She can also be found cooking, reading, and practicing yoga.

### TIM KAHL

Tim Kahl is the author of six books of poems, most recently *California Sijo* (Bald Trickster, 2022) and *Drips, Spills, Bursts, Tangles, and Washes* (Cold River Press,

2024). He is a recovering academic who seeks therapy among strings and winds. Look for him on the sidelines at Sacramento Republic games. [<http://www.timkahl.com>] [<https://soundcloud.com/tnklibnny>]

### MARK HEATHCOTE

Mark Heathcote's poems are published in journals, magazines, and anthologies in both online and printed forms. Residing in the UK from Manchester, he is the author of "In Perpetuity" and "Back on Earth," two books of poems published by Creative Talents Unleashed.

### A.D. WINANS

A.D. Winans is a native award-winning San Francisco poet and writer and a graduate of San Francisco State College (now University). From 1972 to 1989 he edited and published Second Coming Press, which produced a large number of books and anthologies, among them the highly acclaimed California Bicentennial Poet's Anthology, which included poets like David Meltzer, Jack Micheline, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Ishmael Reed, Josephine Miles, Bob Kaufman, Harold Norse, Gene Fowler, Philip Levine, Glenna Luschei, Ann Stanford, Charles Bukowski, and William Everson. His work has appeared in hundreds of literary magazines and Anthologies, including *City Lights Journal*, *Beat Scene*, *Beatitude*, *Poetry Australia*, *the New York Quarterly*, *the Patterson Literary Journal*, *the San Francisco Chronicle*, and the *Outlaw Bible of American Poetry*. His latest book, *Ghosts of the Night*, was recently published in Albania by Fadil Bajraj.

### DICK TROY

Dick Troy is a 4th generation Californian. Dick spent 30-years working for California State Parks, retiring in 2002 as Deputy Director for Park Operations. He now splits his time between the Sacramento Valley and Borrego Springs, a small wilderness town in the Southern California desert. He considers the desert an often 'misunderstood' landscape whose value is under-appreciated by many. He also believes, along with Frederick Law Olmsted and others, that regular exposure to nature is essential to one's physical and mental well-being.

Poetry is his favored form of self-expression and, in recent years, has completed a variety of on-line poetry classes. His poems have been published in the *Anza Borrego Foundation* newsletter and the 2025 'Voices'.

#### DIANE HORNOR

Diane Hornor resided in Texas, Oklahoma, Fresno, before moving to Sacramento 45 years ago. While rearing three children, she attended night law school, then practiced family law for 25 years. She is a docent at the Sacramento Fine Arts Center and shows and sells her paintings. She is a member of several poetry groups, attends 41 year book club, edits novels, and plays guitar and sings country western. She has published a poetry book, *Twisted Rope* (2025).

#### GARY KRUSE

Gary Kruse's poems have been published in *Right Hand Pointing*, *Voices 2020*, *Litbreak*, and *Poetry Now*. Gary grew up in the Midwest, and he's lived in Northern California for the last thirty years, where he's worked as a staff designer. In this role, he has designed retail stores and public-school facilities. He began his work in design designing sets for plays and musicals. He began writing poetry in 2016 when he joined *The Sacramento Poetry Center's Tuesday Night Workshop*, which he still attends.

#### TAYLOR GRAHAM

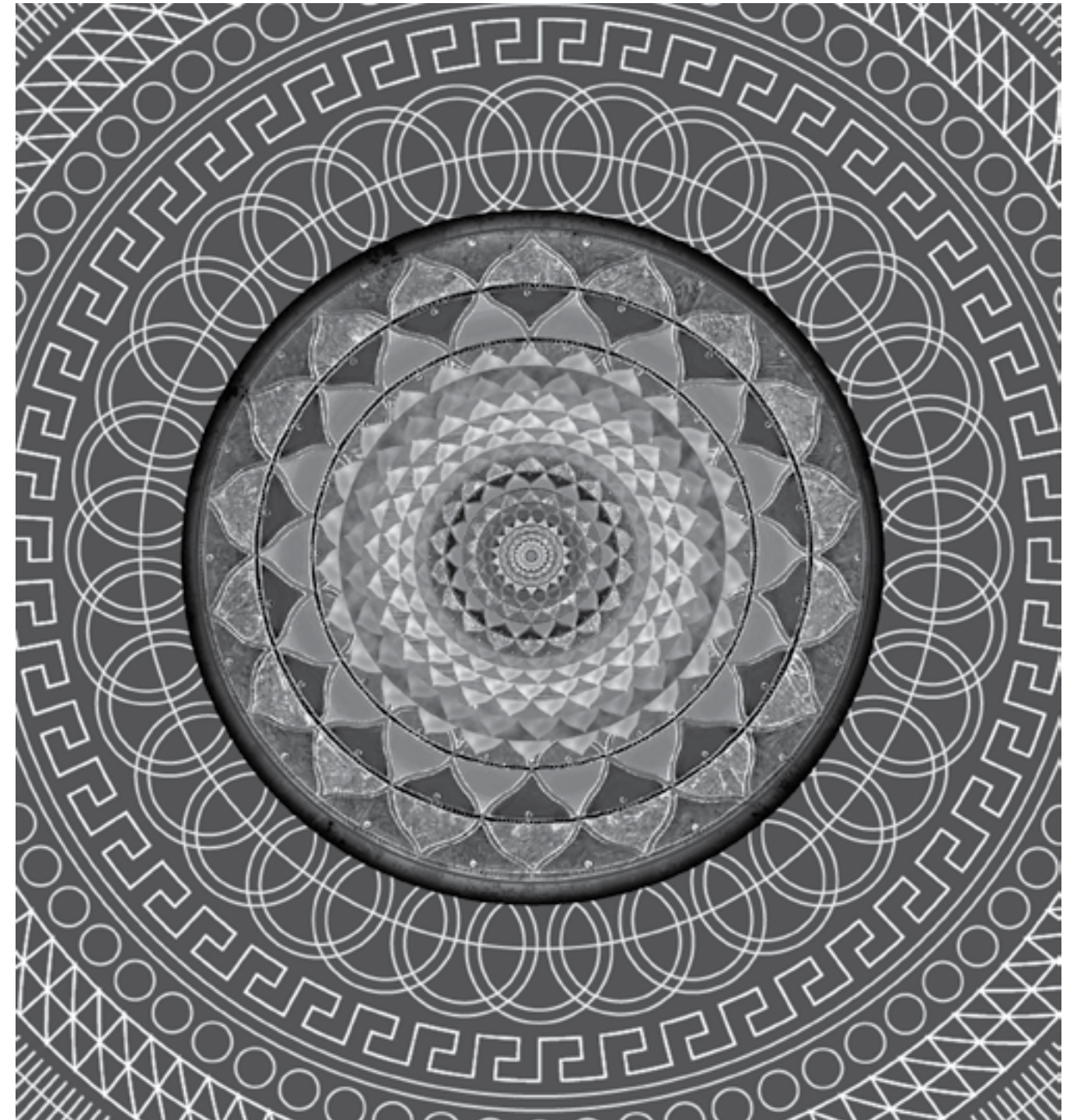
Taylor Graham is a volunteer search-and-rescue dog handler and served as El Dorado County's inaugural Poet Laureate. Her poems appear in *California Poetry: From the Gold Rush to the Present*, *California Fire & Water: A Climate Crisis Anthology*, and *Villanelles*. Latest books are *Windows of Time and Place: Poems of El Dorado County* (Cold River Press) and *Walking the Bones*. She lives with two rescue dogs and a cat on Miwok land.

#### BRAD BUCHANAN

Brad Buchanan taught British and Postcolonial Literature, as well as Creative Writing, at Sacramento State University until his retirement in 2016. His poetry, short fiction, and scholarly articles have appeared in more than 200 journals, and he has published five book-length collections of poetry, most recently *The Birds of Poverty Ridge* (Finishing Line Press, 2026). He has also published three academic books, a medical memoir, and *Spy's Mate*—his first novel—was published in October 2025. He was diagnosed with T-cell lymphoma in February 2015, and underwent a stem cell transplant in 2016, which involved a lengthy recovery and temporary vision loss. He is currently Northern California chapter leader of *Man Up to Cancer*, a support group for men coping with cancer. He also facilitates recurring online *Writing As Healing* workshops through the UC Davis Cancer Center, the Sacramento Society for the Blind, and Blood Cancer United, among many other organizations.

#### LYTTON BELL

She's not really interested in talking about herself. Universities and publication credits and blah, blah, blah – boring. It's not about her, is it? It's about you. The longing that blasts, burning, through your soul, negating everything except its own journey – that's your biography. Can she speak to that? Can she capture just a sliver of a hint of its insatiable and ungovernable force, its bright, blistering, seductive, destructive, blindingly enthralling path? Can she strip away all your ideologies and perceptual filters, all your coping mechanisms, distractions and rational denials of your essential truth? She will try!



*Eye Of The Monad by Bodhi*

VOICES 2026: SKYSCRAPER, DOLHINS, AND EVOLUTION is published in two editions, one with a soft cover and perfect bound with a limited edition of 200 copies, and another unlimited edition distributed internationally via PDF

Text: Body is Minion Pro, 12pt leading 14pt, stretched horizontally 110 percent. Poem headings are in Palatino Linotype Bold, 13pt leading 17pt, stretched 115 percent horizontally, and 113 percent vertically. Page numbers are 9 pt Adobe Caslon Pro. Author titles are Minion Pro Semi Bold 13 pt, stretched horizontally 125 percent and stretched vertically 115 percent.

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