



**The Heart  
Knows**

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Irene Toh & Tawnya Smith, Editors

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Fall/Winter 2016/2017

# The Heart Knows

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# The Heart Knows

W elcome to the Fall/Winter 2016/2017 issue.

What does the heart know? Which heart? Yours? Mine? It matters whose heart it is. Or does it?

I believe that since everyone's life experiences differ, the kinds of truths one learns through them are different. For instance someone who's never lived through a war would not have the same constitution as a person who has. The distinctions of race, class, gender, age, geography, income, lifestyle, etc also matter. So while we may empathize with another, unless we've gone through a similar experience, we will not really know what it means to say, live in a remote cold place and having to hunt for seabirds for food. Fortunately there's the human imagination and access to film documentaries to get a sense of what it means. Still it will never be the same as any truths arrived at by a person who becomes experience's living embodiment. Secondary truths carry little weight; primary ones, much.

The multiplicities of experiences make us unique and scintillating in each our own way. The subjects we choose to write about and the way we write about them in our poems ought to reflect this diversity. But of course there're universal truths and these may be the same values learned no matter the experience or lack of experience. They're the reason a piece of writing resonates with us if at heart, we accept the truth being parlayed in a poem. In writing that is intimate, we experience something of the author's soul—his or her truth, his or her way of looking at the world. What Irish memoirist Nuala O'Faolain said is exactly on point: "My despair is my own, their hope is their own. Their spirituality is their own. My way of looking at the world is my own. We each end up differently facing this common fate."

How does one apprehend? Is it through the dazzling precision of mathematics and science, the way to apprehend the laws of the phenomenal world? Poets gravitate toward the noumenal world—what's there that's not really visible or empirical. That is a different kind of knowing. Its wisdom is located in the heart, not the mind. Probably if you have lived and suffered, you're being repaid in wisdom. One of which is that we live in a material world and this materiality is not to be trusted. Decay and death will do us part.

The mystery isn't mind

(what else are we, evidently,  
besides *aware*?)

but materiality, intersection

of solidity and flame,  
where quick and stillness meet—

Materiality the impenetrable thing.

We don't know what it *is*  
other than untrustworthy—

Mark Doty, "Notebook/ To Lucien Freud/ On The Veil"

Given that, what will save us? Do we need saving? The only thing that will save us is love, isn't it? When we're stripped of every last thing, and have only the void, our experiences refill us, leading us back to love. Love of what's lost, but also loving that "there is always something left to love" (Gabriel Garcia Marquez). So that in place of darkness, there's immanent light; in place of emptiness, there's bliss.

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Red Wolf Journal

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Our chests open, arms back,  
the teacher said, “This is a position  
of fierce vulnerability—“

I thought, that’s it, that’s  
exactly a position one could live  
toward, to stand in permeable faith,

and yet such force in that stance,  
upright, heart thrust out  
to the world, unguarded, no hope

without the possibility of a wound.  
“To hold oneself in this pose,” he said,  
“takes incredible strength.”

–Mark Doty, “Notebook/ To Lucien Freud/On The Veil”

## **Featured Poet:**

### **Debi Swim**

In this section we feature the work of Debi Swim who frequently wrote to prompts at Red Wolf Poems (<https://redwolfpoems.wordpress.com/>). She is one of a tribe of poets who write to prompts or who at least started out that way. We present her poems along with the prompts. The prompts are perhaps added illumination (or not) in your reading.

## What The Heart Knows

by Debi Swim

When you can look at the star-splattered sky and watch the phases of the moon... hear thunder growl a warning, then bay a rumbling attack... when lightning zags in fiery tongues of sizzle and illumines streaks of rain... when fireflies on a warm June evening flash their serenade silently... when a smile, a touch, a kiss... when the taste of a strawberry, the scent of a rose... when these things and a hundred others no longer touch your soul with their bewitching magic, their humbling strangeness as miraculous hallowing... Then. Then, the heart knows you are a wraith half dead.

Snow lights on my nose  
the faintest tickle I feel  
life is tender sweet.

*Red Wolf Poems, Prompt 208. The question is, what does your heart know? Whatever it doesn't know, is it meant to learn? What does it learn? Learning's an ongoing affair is it not? I think an important thing to learn is one's life purpose. What is the thing that keeps you breathing? That you give, keep on giving? Do you give? What is your oxygen? Here's one answer. What's yours?*

*"I will have poetry in my life. And adventure. And love. Love above all. No...not the artful postures of love, not playful and poetical games of love for the amusement of an evening, but love that...overthrows life. Unbiddable, ungovernable—like a riot in the heart, and nothing to be done, come ruin or rapture. Love—like there has never been in a play." —from Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard, Shakespeare in Love, Screenplay*

## How Can I Survive This

by Debi Swim

tsunami of pain  
like a refrain  
on continuous play  
it flays  
me raw  
I draw  
a ragged breath  
at the slow death  
of hope  
how will I cope?  
I simply will.  
Still,  
it will leave a mark  
a dark  
bruise.  
Dues  
paid.  
I limp through life.

*Red Wolf Poems, Prompt 204. Given life's vicissitudes how does one cope? The economy's not doing too well. In real life, the middle classes are being sucked into the sink-hole of capitalism. Everyone's trying to make ends meet. How does the heart keep faith in bleak times?*

*I know that  
hope is the hardest  
love we carry.*

*—Jane Hirshfield, "Hope and Love"*

*Perhaps writing a poem is easier.*

## Gender Wars No More

by Debi Swim

What if I'm not what I've been taught  
a bookend to prop-up, balance, support,  
a half that fits perfectly another half,  
Eve, made just for Adam who came first,  
an afterthought, a helpmeet, a second  
fiddle to harmonize? Maybe that's not  
what God had in mind but man deducing  
from man's point of view.

What if I was meant to be a whole, not half,  
a single stand of woolen yarn, full of its  
own strength and color? And what if you  
too were meant to be a whole? Two twin  
buildings standing tall, two thick oaks facing  
the storm, two strands of woolen yarn  
twined, strength doubled, against the fray,  
yet strong alone if that's meant to be.

A warrior woman. A warrior man. Defending  
each other back to back, a sword in one hand  
a shield in the other. And even if one is lost  
a whole remains.

Note: Thoughts after reading "Love Warrior, A Memoir" by Glennon Doyle Melton.

*Red Wolf Poems, Prompt 211. You'd be forgiven for thinking poetry is dense. Its riches are gathered up by only the initiated. The likes of Emily Dickinson "spreading wide my narrow Hands/To gather Paradise." Yet the veil is thin.*

*So see what you can gather up in Ada Limon's "The Frontier of Never Leaving". And try your damnest to join the ranks of the initiated. Heck, write a poem in response.*

*If the wound you cover is made of sheet metal  
and iron gates left over from the junkyard of  
of Forever Worried, and the school of Always Broken,  
here, I have saved you a seat. If you have hidden your  
outlawed books in your mattress and your outlawed  
thoughts in your hands, here, I will give you refuge.  
This is what I heard underneath it all, underneath and in the  
beginning but now let's move to Canada. I hear it's nice and  
they don't kill each other as often. I can even forgive them for speaking  
French. Really, not all of them speak French. But would I miss it?  
If I move to Canada, and there's no war in the Spring  
I won't miss Iowa, that's for certain, but it's the only thing.  
The fields keep growing longer like a veil between us,  
the mountains like sutures on the map, and yet they are  
ours, the way mustard can be ours off the highway  
and windmills in the deserts and roads, even roads. Barbed  
wire between us, fences between us. The roadrunner has  
run into the river and Misters, you do not care. Another puzzle  
piece of my American map has unfolded. I am the only  
thing that fits together here, in this frontier of Never Leaving.  
Today, I am going to play the record of the revolution,  
everybody is going to sing along and the more we turn it up,  
the less the flag will wave over you and the more it will  
become a swallowtail and migrate to our houses, the little ones  
in the back, the ones with the lights in the window. Look!  
You can see them now, opening their doors in the fog.*

## **What I Leave Behind**

by Debi Swim

Maybe it was the mist rolling  
low over the fresh mown field  
obscuring fine details of day,  
pressing a cool hand against the  
brow of an Indian summer.  
Or maybe it was just the faded  
colors and imminent coming of  
winter that awakened the sadness.  
And yet, not really sadness, I think,  
but a kind of surrender, a concession,  
to the pattern of life, beginnings and endings.

The seasons come and go, come and go,  
each with a story to tell, a work to do.  
And the earth remains, though I will not.  
Maybe this is my abiding work, to tell my story  
in prose and poem and memory.

*Red Wolf Poems, Prompt 210. Poetry is a weird sort of meditation. Red Wolf Journal channels your voice through the medium of poems. Write a poem to find your voice. And because you're paying close attention, in that moment, within your poem, perhaps you'd find your soul.*

## ***The Journey***

*by Mary Oliver*

*One day you finally knew  
what you had to do, and began,  
though the voices around you  
kept shouting  
their bad advice—  
though the whole house*

*began to tremble  
and you felt the old tug  
at your ankles.  
“Mend my life!”  
each voice cried.  
But you didn’t stop.  
You knew what you had to do,  
though the wind pried  
with its stiff fingers  
at the very foundations,  
though their melancholy  
was terrible.  
It was already late  
enough, and a wild night,  
and the road full of fallen  
branches and stones.  
But little by little,  
as you left their voices behind,  
the stars began to burn  
through the sheets of clouds,  
and there was a new voice  
which you slowly  
recognized as your own,  
that kept you company  
as you strode deeper and deeper  
into the world,  
determined to do  
the only thing you could do—  
determined to save  
the only life you could save.*

## How Does It Feel?

by Debi Swim

When death is summoned to do his duty  
is he emotionless and unyielding  
even as he bends over a child's bed  
or a man pleading at his wife's side?  
Are there ever times he drags his feet,  
hunches his shoulders, tries not to weep  
when coming to the scene of a burnt home  
or wretched twisted metal on the highway?  
Does he know some sacred secret that  
eases his conscience, lightens his load?  
Is he a reaper grimly scything the wheat,  
harvesting souls for a fiendish yield  
of banshee screams and sorrow's tears?  
Do wars, nature's wrath, and terrorist  
random pickings just fill his inbox with more to do?  
Maybe he is just content with his job security  
on a planet where life is so little valued.  
But, I hope when he comes for me  
he shows a little compassion.

*Red Wolf Poems, Prompt 217. I got inspired by another Bob Dylan number, "Knockin' On Heaven's Door". To be honest the poem happened before the song. That song just kinda fits. So here it is, and you're to write about it, around it, away from it and then come back to it. Oh right, imagine you're coming to another birthday and mortality's knocking.*

## **A Sense of Balance**

by Debi Swim

All hail to the miseries when  
things look black and bleak  
when I lay myself upon a couch  
and cover my head and feet  
when the phone beeps and dingles  
and I don't even look to see  
who might be calling to talk  
I want to talk to nobody.

All hail to ecstasy when  
my heart is lifted high  
when I'm in love with everything  
under the clear blue sky  
when a glint of sunbeam  
can make me happy cry  
Oh, life is rosy tinted  
when nothing goes awry.

Oh, misery and ecstasy  
I need a little bit of both  
for extremes can be nice  
but to live there I am loath.  
Give me just plain happiness  
with a soupçon of dismay  
a bit of equilibrium  
to balance out the fray.

*Red Wolf Poems, Prompt 202. Life is swell. To be alive, healthy and imbibing the sun. You love life don't you? Every seven years you're reinventing yourself and building a new foundation. Have you heard that one? And of course, Blake said, "Energy is eternal delight." I guess what I'm driving at is that the love of life is at the core of our existence. There is such a thing as existential joy. The opposite is also true: existential despair. The heart knows both to be true. What does yours know?*

*It seemed the kind of life we wanted.  
Wild strawberries and cream in the morning.  
Sunlight in every room.  
The two of us walking by the sea naked.*

*Some evenings, however, we found ourselves  
Unsure of what comes next.  
Like tragic actors in a theater on fire,  
With birds circling over our heads,  
The dark pines strangely still,  
Each rock we stepped on bloodied by the sunset.*

*We were back on our terrace sipping wine.  
Why always this hint of an unhappy ending?  
Clouds of almost human appearance  
Gathering on the horizon, but the rest lovely  
With the air so mild and the sea untroubled.*

*The night suddenly upon us, a starless night.  
You lighting a candle, carrying it naked  
Into our bedroom and blowing it out quickly.  
The dark pines and grasses strangely still.*

*Charles Simic, "Clouds Gathering"*

## Life Quest

by Debi Swim

I'm in that in-between stage  
of middle-aged and Old but not  
as dirt, nor elderly, but definitely  
senior. I've given up on dyeing  
my hair and wearing three inch  
heels or really any heels just a  
wedge but always sensible shoes.  
I'm at that age where there's more  
time behind than in front and more  
of me than there used to be and most  
of it crinkly but on the positive side  
I wonder more, am less cocksure,  
stance more grey than black and white  
It doesn't matter near as much  
what I want to be when I grow up.  
There's aches and pains in all my joints  
and a drunk controlling my gait.  
But, I've lived, overcome, survived,  
thrived, trusted, loved, birthed, laid  
to rest... been human, abided, steady  
to the end and have what I always wanted-  
growing old with someone just like you.

*Red Wolf Poems, Prompt 220. At the end of the day, we're all in a quest for something. Like Alfred Wallace. He's a British naturalist who founded the Wallace Line. It's the line which separates the Indonesian archipelago into two distinct parts: a western portion in which the animals are largely of Asian origin, and an eastern portion where the fauna reflect Australasia. So hopefully your exploratory quest will lead you to create a thing of value, or even things of value. Wallace also came up with the idea of evolution but Darwin kind of robbed him of the glory of his epiphany. Shit happens. So if you're a practicing poet with no financial reward for your work, think of Wallace who was poor and struggling with no regular income for much of his life. The prompt? What's your quest?*

## **Black**

by Debi Swim

I'm writing an ode to black  
misunderstood, abused, lack  
of frivolity, sober, tacked  
onto the back of despair. Unfair.  
Black has depth and richness  
mystery and glamor within us  
making red redder, enhancing,  
entrancing, like the ebony sheen  
of the raven, the placid shade  
between I lay me down and sleep  
counting dark sheep with a tender  
heart all part of twilight and surrender.  
It is a contender for favorite color—  
hats, cats, licorice, espresso, Van Gogh's  
background that pop the poppies  
no melancholy in their enthusiasm.  
All praise to the black dark chocolate  
sweet, confident, sassy, bold. A chasm  
of ebony, sable, inky, pitch, coal.  
When truth is told, before  
creation all was black, now  
everything is stitched at the seams  
with black... is beautiful.

*Red Wolf Poems, Prompt 219. Post Thanksgiving. Black Friday. Sometimes I wonder if prompting helped, seeing it as a black hole. You know what happens when you get sucked into a black hole? You get stretched like a strand of spaghetti. Hmmm, from Black Friday to Black Holes...so what about the prompt? Precisely that...Black Friday, black holes, black anything.*

## Hound's Tooth Sharp

by Debi Swim

Remember that jacket you wore?  
Black and white hound's tooth,  
wool blend paired with a straight  
skirt, hem just at the knee – sleek,  
sophisticated. It said I am somebody  
look at me, look at me.  
I admired you. You were the prettiest  
Mom of anyone outside of TV I knew.  
But, you always pushed me aside in  
your affections. I was the oldest, gawky,  
plain – I think I reminded you too  
much of a rocky marriage. I was a pawn,  
tug of war, with his parents. Unfortunate  
for me, even after Daddy died.

The pattern of our relationship  
is hound's tooth sharp.  
Seems there is always a bite  
behind the smile. I wait for the nip.  
It's made me gun shy, careful,  
getting just so close, but no closer.  
The irony is that now you want  
to love me and me to love you. You want  
that relationship my daughters  
and I have. I'm sorry we can't be closer,  
but I can't break through this pattern.  
Black and white checks hound me.  
I do love you but not wholly.  
I love you carefully, reservedly. I stay  
safely in the margins of the pattern.

*Red Wolf Poems, Prompt 221. This world is made up of relationships so ask yourself, who do you hang out with? That probably defines your world. And yes, it's plural, worlds, as it really refers to different circles of friends doesn't it? And do you realize that the people you hang out with change,*

*and that these changes would mean that you're changed if for some reason, a person drops off from your circle, whatever precipitates that. If you believe in God then you'd believe that God brings new people into your life and removes others, so in that way the people you used to hang out with becomes a phase, know what I mean? Imagine saying, oh she's just a passing phase. Sometimes this passing brings with it hard lessons in relationships. One of these lessons could be, for instance, that a person you thought of as a friend is actually an attention-seeker, that she was nice to you as long as you behaved as her squad, that she actually has no intention of appreciating you on your own terms, so your epiphany causes you to move away from her. That's how it changes you. Get it? I know that people go through these all the time, and that keeps things in check. So we'd all grow up, know what I mean? So for the prompt, write a relationship poem.*

## Reign Over Me

by Debi Swim

I've a thirst and a hunger,  
that scratches my throat  
in sandy abrasions and a claw  
in my stomach tearing and  
whumping at its emptiness.  
I want to be filled, sated,  
gorged, glutted, quenched,  
nourished like a calf at the teat,  
like tree roots by the river,  
like sails billowing with wind.  
Life is just not enough, to live  
and to die and to never touch  
the supernal, to become nil.  
Laugh if you will, sneer at my  
simplicity; pity my pining  
for God, for the true mythology  
of the Holiness.

I've a yearning and if you're alive  
you've a yearning, too, the soul  
within craving to connect with the  
soul of the Otherness, the Mysterious.  
That's why we are drawn to the sea,  
drawn to the stars, drawn  
to things vaster than we.

*Red Wolf Poems, Prompt 223. Bob Dylan didn't show up to receive his Nobel Prize but he wrote a speech. A humbling one. And Patti Smith sang her heart out, nervous and calm all at once. All the more moving it was that she had stumbled midway, don't you think? So what's literature? Something that speaks to the complexities of the wounded human heart I think. It shows the fair and foul in humanity. Its truths never easy. Usually cryptic. That which is untranslatable. That's kind of like poetry. So yea, try to attempt to say something like that in your poem.*

## **An Answer to Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood"**

by Debi Swim

Birth is not a continuation, not  
a pre-existence of pure light and love.  
We did not dance with the angels. Heaven  
wasn't our first abode, but a woman's womb.  
The elements of man and woman met  
and mixed and grew in that primeval stage  
where the soul and matter become new  
then in time pushed into the world without.  
And what's seen are but shadows on a wall  
intimating a greater glory, story,  
and that is the miracle of our birth –  
the acknowledgement there is more beyond  
this poorly lighted cave and a hand that  
shapes the shadows confirming something more.  
And birth begets our immortality.

Process notes: If you believe in God you have a concept, whether accurate or not, of who and what God is and what your relationship to God is. As a child I picked up the thought that babies came directly from heaven. I no longer believe that we have always existed but that each child is a new and unique being. And if the theology I have been taught is right then birth begets immortality. I do believe, as Wordsworth says, there are "clouds of glory" to be seen in nature, and though they obscure the whole picture, they do reveal a portion of what's beyond.

*Red Wolf Poems, Prompt 231. "Magic is everywhere if only we'd knew where to look." I read this quote/ thought in the morning. It's one of those gentle reminders. It's also the reason why we're poets. We look and we look, don't we? So here's a relevant quote from Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood", which I'd first come across in my lit geek uni days:*

*“Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
The Soul that rises with us, our life’s Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar:  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home:  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!  
Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
Upon the growing Boy,  
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
He sees it in his joy;  
The Youth, who daily farther from the east  
Must travel, still is Nature’s Priest,  
And by the vision splendid  
Is on his way attended;  
At length the Man perceives it die away,  
And fade into the light of common day.”*

*Ponder upon it and come up with some magic, will you?*

**Debi Swim** writes primarily to prompts. She is a wife, mother, grandmother and happy WV poet. She blogs at <https://georgeplaceblog.wordpress.com/> and <https://debispoems.wordpress.com/>

## **The Wolf**

by Julia Cirignano

We've traveling down a snowy road together  
You are eating me alive  
Like the wild, majestic wolves  
But I just smile  
I gaze into their eyes  
I pull you in  
And remove your clothes

You've ripped out vital organs  
I'm bleeding out  
As we laugh and wrestle  
And eat cereal together

I'm pale  
All the blood has drained from my body  
I feel sleepy, so I close my eyes  
And rest my head on your chest

I wake up alone  
Like a bad dream that followed me  
Into reality  
I see my open wounds gushing  
I realize your eyes are yellow not brown

There are claw marks all over my body  
Teeth marks  
But I was the only one who didn't notice

**Julia Cirignano** is a writer from Boston Ma. She goes to Endicott College where she is a senior. Julia is a creative writing major, and music minor. She have several articles published by *That Music Magazine* and *Limelight Magazine*, and poetry published by *The New York Literally Magazine* and *The Somerville Review*.

## **The Children At The Wedding #15**

by Darren C. Demaree

I don't know  
if there are roots  
in this vanishing  
world,  
but I'm looking  
at the bloom  
of it  
right now.

**Darren C. Demaree's** poems have appeared, or are scheduled to appear in numerous magazines/journals, including the *South Dakota Review*, *Meridian*, *New Letters*, *Diagram*, and the *Colorado Review*. He is the author of six poetry collections, most recently *Many Full Hands Applauding Inelegantly* (2016, 8th House Publishing). He is the Managing Editor of the Best of the Net Anthology and Ovenbird Poetry. He is currently living in Columbus, Ohio.

## **Illusions**

by Arika Elizenberry

She's your sweetie,  
the confident beauty  
in the hip huggers and  
tank top whose eyes  
sparkle. She's not like the  
others, you think, because  
she doesn't wear red  
lipstick or have Daddy  
stamped on her sleeve  
She's classy. Since you  
believe a woman's worth  
lies in false bravados  
and the clothes she wears,  
you must be a class act.  
You probably don't  
remember the first time  
you made love to her. She  
never want you, or it, but  
to make you happy. When  
your breath bruised her  
neck and hardness carved  
its signature between her  
pink flesh, her pulse raced  
to Venus. You weren't her  
lover, or man, but her father  
and the Johns from Craigs  
list. If she'd told you no,  
or why she shuddered  
holding your gaze, you  
wouldn't love her anymore.  
'Cause women like  
her won't boil over when the  
heat is turned too high. They  
know how to tighten the lid  
and let the flames erode their  
bones without making

a sound. They won't  
come with warning  
labels like: *incest victim*  
or instructions that say:  
*handle delicately*. Rather,  
they'll carry a crown of  
thorns and Wonder  
Woman's cape and lure  
you in by their illusions.

## **Bombingham**

by Arika Elizenberry

10:22 a.m.

...and less than a minute later  
15 sticks of dynamite blew  
out the church's basement,  
propelling four black bodies –  
like heavy sheets over a  
clothesline, among shards  
of brick and rock. Black smoke  
evaporated into the sky, screams  
shook the blocks. But, a stained  
glass window of Jesus leading a  
group of young children, remained  
*undamaged.*

## **Grievers Holiday**

by Arika Elizenberry

To my fellow grievers who cringe during Valentine's Day, fake smile at Thanksgiving, and cry in the bathroom during Christmas—who grind their teeth at birthday cards and call in sick on anniversaries, let it out and grieve for yourself! Give yourself permission to bleed red and blue and gray all over the incomplete canvas to soak up your neglected portrait. Leave work early, the night before your husband's birthday, and slip away for the weekend in the cabin he loved. Turn on your vinyl records, dim the lights, and cry to your wife's once favorite love songs. Laugh at the cheesy jokes your uncle always told, if, for no other reason than to remember him. Journey to the center of your body, between your chest and stomach, and pop all the pent up confusion and misery. Be angry at the universe, God, or your loved ones themselves. And be as loud as the day you were born. Let the tears cleanse your soul and shine like the stars your mother enjoyed gazing at. Whether your grief straddles age or decades, travels oceans and continents, or leaps from Spring to Fall, when you need to retreat venture to grievers holiday.

**Arika Elizenberry** is from Las Vegas, Nevada and is a poet and short story writer. She holds an A.A. in Creative Writing and is currently working on her B.A. in English.

## Hope

by Edilson Afonso Ferreira

Who will write my life?  
Who will weigh my sins  
and all good perhaps have I had?  
Who will pardon me for having existed  
for so long, having changed for so little?  
Will my witnesses honor me and tell  
all the love I have spread by the way?  
May I take till my last home all joy  
I have been bathed by birth,  
that life's disillusion have never dried.  
I know there has been an angel,  
who has guided me, mainly  
by those dark and strange nights.

## **Marks and Echoes**

by Edilson Afonso Ferreira

There are still marks on the ground  
where I have kneeled and cried in despair.  
The tears I have poured in it had been exhaled  
and were lost forever.

My screams startled the birds which took,  
around the skies, news of dread and fear.

However, the laughter once I launched,  
also recorded by the birds,

had not been lost and echoes till today.

There were also some triumph's yells  
and some love's whispers, which, along

with all the rest are faithful witnesses  
that, in despite of merciless a destiny,

made at least one life worthwhile.

## **Lost On Earth**

by Edilson Afonso Ferreira

Nothing is sadder to a soaring eagle,  
used to flying above the highest ridges  
and to defying the top of the volcanoes,  
than to be obliged to walk on earth,  
like men and those other animals  
that live on the ground floor.

Crooked by the suns, rains and snows  
of countless days, nights and seasons,  
it is unable to raise that ultimate flight  
to the last sleep on the rocky caves,  
around its native country the skies.

## **Earth's Settlers**

by Edilson Afonso Ferreira

Half divine and half human,  
sons of God and cousins to the angels, those  
of the pure lineage as well of the fallen ones.  
Always wavering from earth to the heavens,  
we must give way to the ground sustaining  
and sheltering strange while lovely dreams,  
some nocturnal ones, some by the sunlight.  
Although pure blue of heavenly landscapes,  
we prefer the brown ochre of our native earth,  
smelling to dear sinful brothers and sisters,  
faithful companions of suffered a race.  
Race that, since the dawn of our era has colonized,  
on God's command and by hard a toil, all the lands  
of so rough otherwise sometimes exquisite a world.

## **My Creed And My Tears**

by Edilson Afonso Ferreira

Today I opened my mourning's season.  
I cried for the lack of solidarity and brotherhood,  
for the existence, till today, of countries' borders,  
increasing inequalities and suffering among people;  
for the estrangement among whites and blacks,  
yellows and browns, Christians and Muslims;  
for the rich that reach water from golden faucets  
and the poor by carrying it in the buckets;  
for the wine and salmon's tables of the mansions  
and the yesterday's bread passing from hand to hand;  
for the security of the politicians for the coming years  
and the fear of common people for tomorrow;  
for the dreams of the righteous that have not come true  
and the audacity of the insolent who are not intimidated;  
for my lack of faith that everything is on our Lord's hands  
and in His extreme love for us.  
My tears have washed my body and eased my soul.  
When I die, no need to cry more.  
I have already cried for what matters, at least for me.

**Mr. Ferreira**, 73, is a Brazilian poet who writes in English rather than Portuguese, having been published in venues like *Right Hand Pointing*, *The Lake*, *The Stare's Nest*, *The Provo Canyon*, *Red Wolf Journal*, *Whispers*, *Every Day Poems*, *Indiana Voice Journal*, *The Mocking Heart* and some others. He lives in a small town (Formiga (MG) with wife, three sons and a granddaughter and is trying to publish his first Poetry Book, with about 70 poems.

## **Beneath the South Taurids**

by Jared M. Gadsby

Thinking of you again,  
I realize that I have always been unfair  
to those who love me.  
I struggle to hold back parts of myself  
like oak leaves in late autumn.  
Too late I loosen and give  
what is asked of me,  
though my promises are dry by then  
and made brittle by frost.  
Naked and alone, I close myself  
and wait for spring. That,  
that is what is so unfair: in my greedy  
restraint, I always anticipate  
another spring.

**Jared M. Gadsby** lives in Lima, Peru and teaches writing and literature courses at a local university for one of Broward College's international centers. He holds an MA from SUNY Oswego and finds time to write the occasional poem between teaching responsibilities and travel opportunities.

## Monarch

by Peter D. Goodwin

I'm sitting on my deck, the summer to drift by  
when she sees a bright red orange sparkle fluttering  
in the garden, touching on the buddleia, flying  
high into the sky, behind a tree, drifting down again,  
touching, tasting the purple flowers, drifting up and  
down again to another tempting flower.

Joyfully she follows it, stimulated, greedy, ecstatic,  
its gaudy colors shimmering in the afternoon light, its  
wings opening closing, teasing—a monarch butterfly.  
I realize with a shock that it had been years.

The butterfly flutters from flower to flower, until it drifts  
beyond our small patch, reminding me that it—along with  
so many creatures—are drifting, flying, fluttering, running,  
sniffing, burrowing, crawling, prancing towards extinction.

Once a rootless wanderer, **Peter D. Goodwin** now resides in Maryland, close to the Chesapeake Bay, writes poetry while unwillingly providing succulent treats for deer, rodents, birds and insects.

## **The Red Cadillac**

by Jessica Goody

Every time I see a red Cadillac,  
I think of him, the car matching  
every stop sign and traffic light.

A magical, metallic red, a candy  
apple color with a summer-heat  
shimmer like quartz. I am the co-pilot

belted beside him as the car consumes  
the striped asphalt passing beneath us.  
The red Cadillac idles at the red light.

My eye is drawn to the tinted window,  
waiting for him to lean out and wave.  
It will not be him in the driver's seat.

He no longer plays fighter pilot at the  
steering wheel, wearing his leather  
aviator jacket, his pale eyes shielded

from the glare. The music changes with  
every passing year; I grow taller, leaving  
a higher imprint in the headrest, a ghost

of a bygone childhood. The car no longer  
shines with enthusiasm at our imagined  
adventures of fighter jets and car chases.

It has been driven away, sold or scrapped.  
Someone else sits in it now, watching the  
rain beading the windshield and arguing

in the backseat. The scent and sounds  
of our weekend excursions, our secret  
missions, have evaporated, replaced by

pine-forest air fresheners and bleached upholstery. No longer are we two spies tailing double agents in the sedan ahead.

The taillights flash red in the darkness like curious nocturnal eyes, a distance measured in memories instead of miles.

## **Changeling**

by Jessica Goody

I loved your searchlight eyes, your storybook golden hair,  
the scent of lavender wafting from the harem of your bed.  
I remember the candles burning like your eyes, and the  
sound of laughter over sea-tart oysters. The rich river mud

was slow and warm, like your voice. Now the candles burn  
low with impatience, and the telephone sits expectantly, white  
and forgotten, where you no longer call. I wait to the hold-music  
of foghorn dial tones and remembered conversations, without

your shadow, your scent, the curve of your smile to guide me.  
My eyes could not see the truth even as they sought you.  
I knew it in the cold North Sea of my subconscious, where the  
wave of marrow-deep truth burst onto shore. You remain

countries and waters away from where I sit, The shock is not  
the residual pain of you, my phantom limb, being torn from me.  
With your tongue tasting like fruits with long, romantic names  
and native garb wafting about your sand-golden feet, I leave you.

## **The Selkie**

by Jessica Goody

The air is heavy with salt and smelt,  
the ripe odor of green kelp and something sharp,  
bitter and medicinal, like chlorine.

In the infirmary, the biology interns stomp

in basins of disinfectant to sterilize their shoes.

Large glass aquariums quarantine each patient.

A yellowcoat pup with peach-fuzz fur  
forlornly scratches the air, itchy and miserable.

Seal pox is a scourge among marine mammals  
as virulent as chicken pox on an grammar-school playground.

The pup is spotted with a rash, and sneezes weakly.  
opening his eyes just long enough to blink and notice me,

He delicately waved, clawing at empty space.

It is a benediction.

He knows who I am.

The marine biologists and the veterinarians

are too pragmatic to admit it. It is a coincidence,  
that's all. But I know the truth in the veil of  
synchronicity that has followed me since birth.

The seal recognizes me as one of his own.

He remembers my scent, the selkie among the humans.

He arrived thin and battered,  
his fur patchy, his stomach empty.

He is fed through a feeding tube, a slurry

of seafood, fish oil, and milk protein.

He sucks and gulps, emaciated and hungry.

Exhausted and feeble, he is lulled  
into sleep by a stomach finally full.

Weeks pass as he regains strength.  
His fur grows back, sleekened and glossy,  
his sores fade as the serum nullifies the virus.  
Now plump and energetic, he is deemed rehabilitated,

ready to be released back into the wild.  
He nudges the plastic walls of the cat-carrier  
with curiosity, exploring its scent and texture.  
The transport crate has been upholstered

with sodden towels to keep him cool en route.  
Ice cubes shift and clatter against the sides.  
He nuzzles the door, his plea unspoken and obvious,  
His nose poking charmingly through the grate.

Freed, he worms his way out of the box,  
emerging and blinking at the flash of the sun.  
He feels the sand under his flippers,  
gritty and familiar.

Like a shipwrecked sailor  
giddy at feeling land beneath his feet,  
he races toward the ocean,  
his watery pilgrimage almost complete.

A single image throbs in his mind: Home.  
He runs into the arms of Yoruba,  
splashing joyfully, water droplets beading  
the tips of ears and whiskers.

I watch him go, knowing I cannot follow.  
For this lifetime, at least, I am earthbound,  
barred from the watery terrain, my true home.  
The seal's head is a brown spot, almost invisible now,

receding with the horizon. I will see him again someday,  
when I am released from this physical form, this limping body.  
I turn to go, my human footsteps pressed into the sand,  
the only evidence of my existence, liminal and transitory.

## Ode to Maiya

by Jessica Goody

You sit at the top of the stairs, willing us home.  
When the door bursts open you spin in delight.  
It is worth leaving just to receive your ecstatic

homecoming: you meet us at the door, dancing  
around our feet, unwilling to wait for us to take  
off our coats or set down the groceries before

you anoint us with kisses. The sunlight stripes  
the rug where you lay surrounded by humans,  
emitting a shuddering sigh of pure contentment.

Your shiny dark eyes are limpid as you beg for  
table tidbits. You eat like no other dog, vegetarian  
from birth, preferring rice, fruit slices, seaweed,

a noodle plucked from a plate of pasta and slurped  
so that the sauce flies and stains your fuzzy chin.  
Curling up in the dry tub like a rodent in its burrow,

you wait for someone with opposable thumbs to man  
the taps. Once soaked, you squirm from fluffy towels,  
preferring to dry yourself on a freshly-made bed.

You are a loafer, a loungeur, a lapdog, apathetic to  
any and all sporting activities, unable to fathom  
why other dogs chase these round missiles with

such delight. Your cheerful skip is that of a lamb  
gamboling in a carpeted field, your fur sometimes  
blonde, sometimes white. You adore riding in the

car; in your mind you are Amelia Earhart taking  
flight, a daring aviatrix. Your tongue lolls from  
your grin, ears blown back from the open window.

**Jessica Goody** was born and raised on Long Island. She currently lives in South Carolina, where she writes for *SunSations* Magazine. Her work has appeared in numerous publications, including *Reader's Digest*, *The Seventh Wave*, *Event Horizon*, *Really System*, *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, and *The Maine Review*. Her poem "Stockings" was awarded second place in the 2015 Reader's Digest Poetry Competition. Her poetry collection, *Defense Mechanisms*, was released by Phosphene Publishing in January 2017.

## **Before The Moon Sets**

by Christopher Hileman

Oh Sweet Christ, my love,  
I am scattered by your eyes  
and by the long spell  
they cast upon me,  
upon my salt shore before  
I dive deep, otter  
shaped, for shells you need,  
and live fish for food and scales  
to adorn your masks.

My joy is scattered  
like seed and it sprouts, then fruits  
before the moon sets.

## **Wood Burning**

by Christopher Hileman

“I couldn’t even  
burn the wood”, you said to me,  
looking that way for  
the thousandth damn time,  
as if it was my fault again  
that the wood was bad  
or just whatever  
was so wrong with me this time

and I get heavy  
with it all, heavy  
under your relentless press  
on my aging heart.

## **The Edge Of The World**

by Christopher Hileman

I cannot show you  
this shore, these breakers thrashing  
the sandy chaos,  
roiling far more than  
buried life can bear for long,  
the rocks upthrust, sharp,  
with small damp caverns  
and craters where wild things grow.  
The edge of the world  
is damp and salty,  
like dilute new blood, pale light  
like early morning.

## **Graceful**

by Christopher Hileman

I am normally  
too clumsy but when it comes  
to you, my love, grace  
happens and I can  
undo the ribbing around  
your heart as though it  
was not welded tight  
by your own tensioned device,  
by how the years fell.

**Christopher Hileman** moved to Oregon in 1973. He has retired to live on the volcanic bluff overlooking Willamette Falls in Oregon City, Oregon. He ascends the stairs from his basement digs to improvise on his Yamaha keyboard or the house Playel grand when the calico cat releases him from below. The part-Irish Wolfhound here likes him.

## Just The Flu

by Andrew Hubbard

It sounded like the doctor  
Was talking from far away, underwater.  
He said, “little kids spike a high fever  
He’s strong, just give him lots of fluids  
He’ll be right as rain tomorrow.”

So I shook and baked and sweat  
And slept and dreamed  
I was in a field of tall brown waving grass  
And low, lush blueberry bushes  
Bent with heavy loads of bursting fruit.

I had the scrubbed-out lard can  
Mommy gave me for berries  
And I was on my knees picking  
And dropping berries into the can  
And as they fell each one turned into a pearl  
Pure white and gleaming.

The pearls all whispered  
And their voices blended  
Saying, “you won’t be poor any more,  
You’ll never be poor any more.”

“Food—all you want  
And a puppy, and the clothes  
Mommy’s ashamed to ask for  
And medicine for sister.”

I ran home with the lard can  
Hugged to my chest and the pearls  
Clicking together like marbles.

I gave them all to Mommy  
And she held me and cried  
And cried. Her tears dropped  
On my face, and I began to know

I was not there, I'd left  
Without even knowing  
For the place  
Pearls come from.

**Andrew Hubbard** was born and raised in a coastal Maine fishing village. He earned degrees in English and Creative Writing from Dartmouth College and Columbia University, respectively. He has had four prose books published, and his fifth and sixth books, collections of poetry, were published in 2014 and 2016 by Interactive Press. <http://ipoz.biz/portfolio-single/the-divining-rod/>

## **Bent Trails**

by John Huey

As the summer progressed we wandered past  
the lower hills and found a path at the peak.  
Broken walls and stony farms, land reclaimed  
and lost, drawn down, the silence here, the ridge  
dwellers thinking of the frost to come.

Undemanding, these times challenged the atheist,  
as if the purely material could not be infused with  
beauty in the turbulence of the end of the decade  
where belief in all its shadings was modified by the  
shelter of contradiction as there we stood, with  
absolute certainty, locked in affirmation, one hand  
in another, the scent of freshly bathed skin and a  
turning in the summer bed at twilight and in the dawn  
the shift of limbs and the discovery that the fantasy of  
what had passed no longer shadowed you as some sort  
of requirement for belief.

So, the atheist said, struggle is struggle, the morning  
light that strikes up the day being sufficient, flowers  
in the field just so, a color burst on the retina and all  
energy is equal as it crosses over to the brain for the  
thinker and the dreamer alike.

And the hippies up there with bell and incense, fake  
Indians, suburban shamans, bogus vision, picked up their  
foggy tools and ascribed this real day to something or  
someone else with evasive fictions to go with their  
holographic nonsense to create something from vacant air.  
The truth being that light is light only and is heat from the  
sun expressed as breath, impulse and illumination,  
this from within that is as actual as chemistry,  
one cell in communication with another across an electric grid,  
without external mediation, complete, present in the conviction  
that what is seen is what is real.

And so, with these struggles, we still made it to the top of Putney mountain and saw the valley and the green tops of the native hills and felt the roar of the glaciers from tens of thousands of years and saw the sun on the ice long before the arrival of men in these parts and took in the breath of science, a pure air on the top with the assurance that one human thought communicated with grace was enough for all the days and means and times and that their distorted cosmologies missed the fine mornings on the mountainside and failed to regard the sight of the spheres above at night, as later, toward morning, we saw the breath of the owl blown as mist from the crest of the first winter tree, moving all these distortions aside and making the facts sing.

**John Huey's** student work of the 60's-70's was influenced by teachers in Vermont such as John Irving at Windham College and William Meredith at Bread Loaf. After many years he returned to writing poetry in 2011. Recently he has had poems presented in two issues of *Poetry Quarterly* and in the *Temptation* anthology published in London by Lost Tower Publications. Work has also appeared in *Leannan Magazine*, *Sein und Werden*, at *In Between Hangovers* and in *The Lost River Review*. His first full length book, *The Moscow Poetry File*, has been accepted for publication by Finishing Line Press and it will be out in October 2017.

## **Simple Is Best**

by Patricia McGoldrick

On a cold winter morning  
He makes a quick trip to the market  
Returning with a brown paper bag  
Filled with red fruit and veggies  
And shiny red-wrapped chocolates  
Buttery croissants with  
A creamy slab of local white cheese  
Topped with a crimson ribbon.

Note: It seems to me that the heart really does know. Originally, I wrote this for a love theme poetry prompt at Poetic Asides blog site. Later, I shared under my name on February 16th, 2010 at 7:25 am on Poetry Ireland Guest Blog.

**Patricia McGoldrick** is a Kitchener, Ontario, Canada poet and writer, inspired by the everyday. Patricia is a member of The Ontario Poetry Society and the League of Canadian Poets. Visit her blog at [patriciamcgoldrickdotcom](http://patriciamcgoldrickdotcom) or on Twitter @pmsgoldrick27. Recent publications include the poems “Limerick on Laundry” and “haiku on home” in *Verse Afire* print issues; online titles are posted at [commuterlit.com](http://commuterlit.com) and in *Red Wolf Journal* you’ll find her poem “Urban Upcycling”.

## Apollo

by Jean Voneman Mikhail

He wound his watch  
its numbers omitted  
numbers he knew  
already anyways, enough  
to imagine the face of time. By heart,  
strumming songs on tenor banjo,  
he would play *Happy Days  
Are Here Again* from the film  
*Chasing Rainbows*. Dancing in,  
we'd say *Daddy, go faster*  
but you know the strain of not  
being able, not knowing enough—  
the anger oh anger.  
On steel strings,  
the one bad middle finger  
he butchered, leaving  
a cleft that refused to close.  
One small faraway heart  
corresponds with the other  
beating inside the hand  
holding onto its life long pain  
the day he stapled his finger  
onto a paper about Morse Code  
leaving a trail of blood.  
My father was told  
by his father *Be a man, Honey*  
all fists and knots, a buckle  
in the waiting room floor  
a hand waving over the face  
telling you *come to your senses*  
you can wake up now  
emptied of pain. It's just a little  
fold in the finger  
under stitches pulled  
like marionette strings  
dragging their red Howdy Doody.

Cries from your mouth  
do not seem your own.  
There is a falseness never heard before.  
Music pulled from under the skin  
with its top hat of severed flesh  
you dance to Moon Over Bourdon Street.  
Disconnected, with the now dead flesh  
it falls off into the sink  
white with antiseptic fizz.  
There were the songs  
he'd have to leave behind.  
But he proved them wrong  
when he played again  
ignoring the spot where  
the metal string stuck  
inside the groove.

The day he turned on  
the TV, black and white  
in those days, he said it's possible  
everything could go wrong but it didn't  
when Apollo 11 landed June 20, 1969,  
and the pastor read Genesis,  
slipping communion under  
one astronaut's tongue, he read  
*When I Consider thy Heavens*  
*the works of thy fingers.*  
Blank bubble of a face,  
Do you really believe the stories he tells?  
The ones so far fetched?  
My sister didn't care about the landing.  
She sang Beatles' tunes like *Get Back*  
as Apollo landed  
on the moon's basalt  
in The Sea of Tranquility.  
He points up to something  
still missing. I believe  
he was crying  
when they touched down.

## Daughter/Dragonfly

by Jean Voneman Mikhail

You bring your daughter to campus  
on your shoulders or in a backpack.  
She longs for travel, her eyes  
the color of amber from the Baltics  
or from the Oak's dead rustle of browns  
that come alive at sunset, almost scarlet.  
You haven't decided if she can come yet.  
She makes you a little angry.  
She wants both up and down—riding,  
belching the wind as she goes  
scuttling over the sidewalk, nearly  
tipping you with her tantrums  
the hard apple of her hand  
turning to mush on your neck.  
The soft reflective bubble of her mouth, pouting.  
She scurries over your shoulder  
like a dragonfly, her iridescence—  
when she turns this way  
her eyes are green,  
swooping green darners  
seaming up a snake,  
cottonmouth in the grass  
that warm November  
with the yellow jackets sipping  
hard cider under the trees  
where you were  
with the love of your life.  
You love your wife but don't love her. You know what I mean.  
Your daughter pleads with you  
to take her to water  
to the Lake or the Bay.  
It doesn't matter.  
The light this way makes her blue, the sapphire  
in candlelight we sometimes see.  
You say, get down, your weight crushes my soul.  
Can you believe you used those words?

She is carried to you on a swarm  
through the door like Cinderella.  
Now, she is suddenly queen of the seafoam.  
Her voice becomes thick with spirits  
on the lips of the waves she says between sips  
*Unclasp the necklace*  
*you made me, the charm of arms*  
*around your neck.*

**Jean Voneman Mikhail** lives in Athens, Ohio and is a graduate of OU with a MA in Creative writing. Her work has appeared in *Westminster Review*, *Riverwind* and *Canary Journal*. She takes part in public readings such as “Women On the Line” and “Women of Appalachia.” She tries to write every day.

**lub dup (for the good of my heart)**

by Frank Prem

1

when I was in nursing school  
they described the sound

*lub-dup*

really it meant more than sound  
it conjured an image of blood  
washing through valves and chambers  
pushed and pulsed on a bright red journey

*lub-dup*

*lub-dup*

*lub-dup*

and that's the heart-beat sound  
it's what I hear  
when I press my ear against your chest

or when something you do  
makes my breath stumble and hold  
makes me tighten  
hyper-aware of myself

2

I'd like to run from the top of the hill  
on our old volcano  
down the crater-side like a child  
then maybe halfway  
when I'm moving fast  
loose footing might force a dive  
and I could roll

laughing like a carefree fool  
to the bottom  
that's the way I'd like to feel my heart

*lub-dup*

*lub-dup*

*lub-dup*

*la-la-la*

3

the doctor says  
I have to take my walking more seriously  
that if I don't get up off my arse  
I'll need pills

*lifestyle*  
is his cry  
and life change  
is what I have to do  
or I'm going to die

because  
he says  
a *lub-dup* doesn't last forever  
it's only for the rest of my life

4

I'm looking forward to walking with you again  
from the base of the hill  
deep inside the crater  
up until we're right at the top  
on the rim

probably I'll need an excuse to stop  
about halfway  
because I'll be feeling for my wind by then  
and the sound in my chest  
will drive like a double-beaten drum

*lub-dup-lub-dup-lub-dup-lub-dup*

and when I feel it that way I'll know  
I'm alive  
lifestyle changing  
for the good of my heart

*lub-dup*  
*lub-dup*

and you

the good of my heart

Process notes: This a 'falling in love' poem, from my heart to hers. It is situated at the point in time when suddenly there is everything to live for.

## **The Reviewer**

by Frank Prem

why relief  
he asked himself

it wasn't better  
sometimes worse  
always  
always  
less

so why the feeling of relief

like a third person  
a reviewer  
hovering above  
he looked back and down  
at himself

at how good it had been

he found it hard to say aloud  
what was in his head  
feeling himself to be in battle  
with an irrational conviction  
that the sound of the words  
would either turn everything  
into overblown reality  
or prove the lie

every good thing magnified  
to an impossible goodness

every negative grown enlarged  
until it loomed  
insurmountable

he reflected on the way the unspoken  
could be ignored

changed if need be  
or hugged in a warmth  
that hadn't been aspired to  
and could never be uttered aloud  
for fear

he considered her

her need to hear him  
his thoughts  
his feelings  
his reassurances

how he had tried  
sometimes  
to give her what she wanted

the way it made him sweat  
shake in discomfort  
like a confrontation  
with the unformed part of himself

so much angst  
for what was  
really  
so very little  
yet far beyond  
what he could reach

he looked again  
at the incomplete  
mental tally

the good things  
the deficiencies  
his capacity to change  
the poor likelihood now  
of ever needing to

this relief  
thin and watery

is an unsatisfying form  
but review is his only way forward  
it remains an internal process  
ongoing

Process notes: Poem is placed just after a relationship break up. An attempt at critical examination of the protagonists' deficiencies as reason for the break up.

**Frank Prem** has been writing poetry as a serious pursuit for in excess of 20 years, and has been published in magazines, zines and anthologies, both in Australia and in a number of countries overseas, occasionally for money or prizes. He has self-published three collections of his work, *The Book of Evenings* (written as Frank Faust), *Memoir of a Dog*, and *Small Town Kid*. Frank lives with his talented singer/songwriter wife Leanne Murphy in the hills above Beechworth in the North-East of Victoria, where they nestle as close to nature as they can. Blog Name: Frank Prem – Poetry  
<https://frankprem.wordpress.com/>

## **I Am Your Slave**

by Diana Raab

I am pulled into your energy  
I am yanked into your heart.

I borrow your breaths  
as I search for my last one

wondering what I was thinking  
when you reached for me

and I said okay before pulling back  
into my cocoon which wrapped  
protective strings around me.

So many days later, you came back,  
pulled those fine strings to unravel

my world watching me spin in circles  
to release myself from your grasp.

I am your slave and there's no other way  
of looking at this predicament I am in.

## Lipstick

by Diana Raab

dedicated to Billy Collins

I spin my red convertible sports car  
on the dead end street  
and go back to my house to get my red lipstick,  
because without it, I feel naked  
and while rummaging  
through my vanity drawer  
I glance out the window  
to see another me in your heart,  
who already appeared in town without her lipstick  
and this pattern continues  
for the rest of my life—  
imagining a person  
who always gets somewhere before me  
and waits patiently  
for what might have been forgotten  
while remaining invisible  
except in my own mind  
as if there were a copy cat  
or a stalker to myself,  
but a glance in the vanity's mirror  
shows my duplicate, and her eyes  
are not as green, nor her hair as thick,  
and I stand up with the lipstick in my right hand  
and get into the driver's seat to see that she is already gone.

**Diana Raab**, PhD, is a poet, memoirist and thought-provoker. She's the author of 8 books and editor of two anthologies. Her book, *Writing for Bliss*, is forthcoming in September 2017. [Diana's website](#)

## **Cocktail Hour**

by Sanjeev Sethi

Your ingress

generates

Zen-like stillness.

Is this because you aren't expected?

Have my hankerings been met?

This evening an aperitif will do.

Your entry

has quenched me.

Though I can spot

other longings swell.

## **Woozy Whistle**

by Sanjeev Sethi

When I am drenched in drink  
dysanagnosia strikes me.  
I begin to see old meanings  
in new words  
like foibles of my former lovers.  
Of the present one  
I never spot anything.  
This is the unique thing about love.  
When in the loop  
one is as on a happy day  
all smiles and silly stuff.  
In a sense heart is ho-hum.

## **Refluence**

by Sanjeev Sethi

Whelk in your eyes more expressive  
than betrayal ever could be. I'm used  
to grief. It's my alter ego, my emollient.  
I understand its guidelines, crisscross  
between said and unsaid. But to steer  
the sighs of one's other heart? To regulate  
its remorse? Love is okay, logjam begins  
when one is in love.

**Sanjeev Sethi** is the author of three well-received books of poetry. His most recent collection is *This Summer and That Summer* (Bloomsbury, 2015). His poems are in venues around the world: *Off the Coast*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *The Beatnik Cowboy*, *Right Hand Pointing*, *The Blue Mountain Review*, *Squawk Back*, *The Five-Two*, *W.I.S.H. Press*, *Easy Street*, *Mad Swirl*, *Your One Phone Call*, *Scarlet Leaf Review*, *The Ofi Press Magazine*, *Expound Magazine*, *Postcolonial Text*, and elsewhere. He lives in Mumbai, India.

## **Cain's Sister Speaks**

by Pegi Deitz Shea

You didn't think  
that a suckling  
could comprehend  
your violence,  
but I was not far  
from my own shouldering  
into cold air,  
from Mother's shucking  
and I was not foreign  
to the shaking by a father  
awakened from his sleep  
by my cries of hunger,  
and I have become  
too familiar  
with how wrestling,  
tussling, tickling among  
young siblings  
can lead to fondling.

But now I know  
that you can be fruitful  
and multiply  
by simply  
slaying me  
over and over.

You killed Abel only once.

**Salut, Madame Cezanne  
for Hortense Fiquet**

by Pegi Deitz Shea

At the Met, I bristle  
through an exhibit  
and call across the year  
you've been dead:  
Uncle Pierre,  
as a young sculptor  
in Ecole des Beaux Arts,  
what did you make of  
the Madame Cezannes?

In 29 portraits Hortense  
fully buttoned-up  
never smiles,  
never smirks,  
never seeks  
a light with her eyes.  
Did she have bad teeth?  
Did her back ache  
from sitting  
still as an apple  
for her husband  
150 times per portrait?  
Is she choleric  
having been *caché*  
for 17 years—  
Paul too ashamed  
of her low status,  
afraid to lose  
Papa's allowance.

Pierre, in your hands,  
she could not have  
contained her mirth  
nor you your mischief.  
You would have

unbuttoned her,  
untied her, undermined  
the lines of her closed lips.  
Clothed in clay,  
your fingers would have  
poured across the funnel  
of her clavicles  
trickled down her cleavage  
waded into orchards  
of neglected fruit.

Hortense, Pierre,  
my muses, *salut!*  
Now, here  
in the Grand Hall  
of the Met,  
a jazz quartet  
models the music  
you dare to make  
dimensions beyond  
a brush stroke's dream!

## Back To Back

by Pegi Deitz Shea

Seventh grade son and I order  
at *Friendly's*, then he  
stands to go wash his hands.  
A girl in the booth behind us  
whispers to her mother,  
“It’s *him!*”  
As he returns, he nods  
small-like, and she giggles.

They sit back to back—impenetrable  
five inches of wood and vinyl—  
between them. Her currant hair,  
his skater boy cap can’t meet  
beneath the high banquette.

I fetch a fallen napkin to see  
that the mother mirrors  
my crinkled eyes.  
We’ve been there,  
though neither wants to  
return to that excruciating age,  
yet now we revel in

how our children’s eyes wrap  
around the side of the booth,  
how they scoot to the edge  
of their seats so that elbows  
can kiss, how, pink-faced,  
they dip chins to shoulders,  
as they suck through straws  
the milk shakes that fail  
to cool their heat  
of the moment  
that will never  
taste so sweet  
again.

**Pegi Deitz Shea** teaches in the Creative Writing Programs at the University of Connecticut, the Mark Twain House in Hartford and the Institute of Children's Literature. Her poetry for adult readers has appeared in *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Earth's Daughters* and *Connecticut River Review*. Many of her award-winning books for young readers focus on human rights and social justice issues. [Pegi's website](#)

## Argon

by Larry D. Thacker

I was reminded recently how the element  
Argon in the air we breathe circulated  
forever ago,  
    through the lungs and bodies  
of the famous and infamous, of human  
and animal alike, dinosaur and giant monster  
foul, the large creeping thing, the earliest gods.

That last time we spoke, when you hugged  
me with your soon to fail arms, I inhaled  
your tiny spoken,  
    I love you, with all my heart,

surely keeping some of it held in, whispering  
back, I love you, too, but not so much so that  
last week, in hurricane wind threatened tears,  
I imagined pulling up some of that same air  
of that last hug from my body that we shared

and added it to the hard winds that tossed  
and swept your ashes from the jar, through  
the sea oats, added to the sand you always  
loved along that North Carolina shore way.

**Larry D. Thacker's** poetry can be found in more than eighty publications including *The Still Journal*, *Poetry South*, *Mad River Review*, *The Southern Poetry Anthology*, *Mojave River Review*, *Mannequin Haus*, *Ghost City Press*, *Jazz Cigarette*, and *Appalachian Heritage*. His books include *Mountain Mysteries: The Mystic Traditions of Appalachia* and the poetry books, *Voice Hunting* and *Memory Train*, as well as the forthcoming, *Drifting in Awe*. He's presently working on his MFA in both poetry and fiction. Visit his website at: <http://www.larrydthacker.com>

## **Nimble**

by Maja S. Todorovic

Here you are.

In between my thoughts,  
juggling like an acrobat,  
on a thin wire.

In between my thoughts,  
hiding like a bat in the dark  
corners of my mind.

In between my thoughts,  
white dove  
knocking on my window  
carrying a message of love.

In between my thoughts,  
I try not to think of you,  
but you've become nimble.

**Maja S. Todorovic** is an educator and writer from Belgrade, currently living in the sunny Hague. After finishing her PhD in Organizational Sciences and years of academic work, she switched her scientific pen for more creative expressions. “Business in Rhyme” is her creative corner where she blogs about beautiful uses of poetry and poetic techniques for improving writing, personal growth and creativity.

## Photograph

by Marg Walker

You stand before the mirror holding me  
to your cheek, my blanket bunched  
against your flowered dress. My eyes  
are bright, adoring, as daughters all begin.

This is a time before memory, when being held  
was enough, a time before I knew of words  
and needed them. But here it is in grainy black and white:  
you loved me too, and just as helplessly.

If only you had not been so afraid  
to lose yourself in us, I think you would have found  
— oh beloved field general —  
our terms of surrender dear.

Turning toward me in the end, you asked me  
to guard your unprotected flank, take care  
of death's details, then find my own way home.  
It must be here, in these old photographs

for even as I gave you what you asked  
you would not speak of love, a thing  
too holy to be reduced to words (was it?)  
too intimate and strange for comfort (yes).

## **The Heart**

by Marg Walker

A helium balloon the first time  
slipping upward into impossible blue.

Next time  
a kite.

Fistfuls of perennial he-loves-me-  
he-loves-me-not; pitiful, really.

The currency  
of a spend thrift God.

Work boots and, every now and then,  
dancing shoes.

Fingertips and also, of course,  
fingerprints.

What I dreamed you, repulsed,  
held dripping from your hand.

Pepper spray  
sometimes.

A cello  
solo.

String theory, which is a candidate for the theory  
of everything, which nobody understands.

**Marg Walker** is a life long writer and student of poetry who is especially drawn to lyrical work with a strong story to tell. Her poems have appeared in *Wilderness House Literary Review*, *Page and Spine*, *ArtWord Quarterly*, *The Minnesota Monthly*, and *Cairns Art Journal*.

\*

## **A Song Of Seagulls**

By Irene Toh

What does a lyric poem do? I read yours and thought of  
a plumage of white and gray. Unidealized, even derisive but  
not quite dead as sea-birds she had carried ashore.  
So is that our duty then to poeticize? Is life our fodder?  
An inner monologue to soothe as lozenges? An opiate?

To wade out, row out a boat bringing back those birds.  
Weight of wings drooping wet. A living art—that's what's said.  
Sand, sea and sky in one's net. Waves in gold as the girl  
turned her back hoisting stick. If one isn't apathetic then  
to sing rapturous and wild as sea-gulls flew overhead.

\*

And I?  
Unfolded question by question,  
Like an elephant trained to paint what is in her heart.

—Jane Hirshfield, “It Is Night. It Is Very Dark.”