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# The Muse

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# Walkways

by Allison Grayhurst

Dual forming on slopes of darker minds.

Succulent nodes of effervescent whispers,

whispering Oh! Blood clots bending

in unison to sharp solstices.

Dig and reap tomorrow's regrets,

piled on like love you thought was comfortable.

Comfort is a guard you let loose,

let down and found judgments -

platters to be served and roasted upon.

Singing for sale. A number left to a key. Fickle

verdicts oscillating between indifference and approval.

Release and acceptance - what else is there?

I am only unhappy when I want what isn't.

Platypus cans of tonic - drink down, flushing

through organs. I see orange. Orange buses,

orange lines of direction on the road, in homes

where anger is held at stillpoint. One point  
on a curve. I have lost my feathers,  
all means of flight. There is nothing left  
but hunger for the skyspace, outerspace, space  
where I once travelled through meteor fields,  
ballooning over planets' edges like a seamstress,  
owning it all before I got grounded, committed  
to personal love and the necessity of graves.

Why did I come here? To cry for my loved ones,  
hold vigil for the slaughtered pigs?  
Centuries that just were, lingering, licking  
on waves of vastness, licking dark matter like a candy cane.  
Not a soul, but the planets vibrating their orchestra - deep,  
varying at intervals, then again, and never changing.  
God, what am I doing in the sunlight - on the sidewalks,  
making room for children on bicycles?  
Putting pressure on my shoulders so I cannot sleep,  
cannot appease this malcontent.  
Why did I leave - to connect with misplaced animals?  
Babies only born? Looking for union when before  
I thought myself whole?

Material made from the moon. I understand  
the beauty of caves, the great sea turtle's solitary plight...  
but more and more - I never wanted more than you  
again inside of me - infinity in corporeal form.

God separates to know Itself. God is only what we give,  
awakening as we do to warmth and kindness - choices  
under the wrap of gravity and yet, somehow,  
lifted into altruism.

....

Smudges, under siege, patches of calcified tissue  
and the swamp I enter in - fuming with failed love -  
connections broken under the Buddha fire. Detachment  
will not save me - nailed to the pavement stone, looking at birds.

Summer where have you gone? Smells rise to meet me,  
and the air is still humid, pressing on my cortex,  
corrupting my ability to choose joy.

Grasshoppers hopping. Will my heart be broken?

Again, again, squeezing, squished

fermenting at the sides, foaming and fizzling, burning sage, but

it is not good enough, not enough to teach me the strokes  
or how to steady the raging chaos gestating large  
in the pocket of my throat. Continents on fire, inside organs  
necessary to function - why the children? Why not me?

Livingroom-light-globe like a crystal ball,  
opaque but powerful enough to predict possibilities.

I was never here before, never heard the angry rodents  
vocalize, never slept with aching joints, dreams  
of running low and ferns and moss  
covering Zen-garden displays.

What else are we going to do here, but procreate, create,  
dissipate and die? Van doors left open.

Lawn chairs on the road for pickup.

The windmill, the tilting tops of trees, heavy  
with clusters of fresh pinecones.

I am an orange peel, orange, peeled, drying  
next to the sewer grate.

I am limp with the weight, the burden of random happenings.

Always I love you and always, I am breathing.

Take me into the arms of your protection.

I don't want another day.

Mass of thick porous grey hovering, no space for hope.

Why the children? Couldn't you spare just them and all  
the up-for slaughter animals?

I am done with this place, the tripping curb,  
callous indifference - the rippling consequences  
of blind destruction.

....

Piercing, lingering, chiming out a hymn, lullaby on a chain.

Remorse to wade in like a sea-salt bath, absorbing  
the past into the present cellular flow.

Mounds of construction sand, building and restoring roots  
without life, chopped down at surface level.

Ideologies fuel, then turned to cinder by anger -  
justified violence that violates the laws of love.

Skittering up stairs, the last time I held a leaf I held  
your focused form, unable to stay the distance,  
but stayed nonetheless near rudimentary desires.

I am cut like a lawn, smooth as carpet. See me now,  
skateboarding, jettisoning over humps and bridges.

The wind - position me inside your storm. The last time,

strength enlisted an empty street - such vines  
and beautiful stones!  
Mercy in a crack, a masterpiece of twin creation,  
outside art galleries - living wood, sleeping shapes,  
inviting holes... holy as sex, sweet hands entwined.

Release into me as I release into you,  
in mutual receptivity, clear direction, directing energy.  
Dew drops evaporating, shining.  
Our masthead - brittle, breaking. Even so,  
how we are combined! Such glow.  
It is glorious to know you like this  
and not be afraid.

....

Laid low, laid out like soulmates never meant to meet  
in this life, in the spectrum of folly and limitation.  
A painting layered, re-mastered, re-mused and then,  
burned by neglect.  
Miniature moment of perfection, condensed  
to hold a legacy in swirling matter, hard and glittering.  
Fractures as long as a walkway

stretching the borders of a great body of water.

Stringing thoughts like a child's dream. I know,  
but I've learned not to take synchronicity so seriously,  
learned there is only choice, and chance caved into,  
selected to stand as fate - the end result, resulting  
in a theory of complexities and open systems.

Stuck in the ground, protruding stilted like a statute.  
Tell me it is true, that nothing pure is subjected to disease.  
Crickets in the late morning.  
When I am fixated, it is fantasy, false as poison in soup.  
When I am lucid, liquid budding, my fingers are flames,  
and all that they contact pulse with their heat.

Various clouds like currents perpetually pumping -  
financial lack, and I, myself, curled up on the bottom stair.  
Beds I defend, determined to lay in, over and over  
hurting for considered crimes. Erasing perimeters, I clutch  
at fraudulent mercies, securities of working furnaces  
and washed hair. How to love damaged flesh, radiate love  
for what is broken, far beyond romanticism, dangerous  
as a cockroach and forever mutating -



translucent shells and pores - radioactive

and growing more grotesque under slabs of rotten wood?

Love, I do not understand you as I am older

and keeping up the climb. Medications and

broken down dishwashers.

Debt like ghosts that stick to my aura, smothering out the colour -

Oh weedy garden! Sparrow on my roof, talk to me for a while.

How can I love, middle-aged, half over, clear

of a younger person's hope and indecision?

Pointing at ecstasy (a snail on my forehead) pointing,

pointing, stung.

....

Light that drips down the turnpike, onto roads

and ways far away from any window.

Blocks to build shelters and shields. Flags on flimsy poles.

A neutral breeze busting cardoors and

personalized licence plates.

Paved over, I see a carcass dripping, a little yellow flower,

smaller than a thumbprint.

Rust-coloured shawl, poncho that holds

great sentimental significance holds

me to a memory, old now as a ten-year-old untended garden  
or pavement cracks grown into fissures.

Forging, face-like an image. Worm in my sink.

Blood and cup of nutritional joy.

Hold out for the grace of good music  
and drying on rocks, nude in the sun.

Quiet heat building up into renewal. Tattered ankle cuffs  
and shrinking shadows, mid-stream. Up,  
up we go, insistent on making an impression.

But walk lightly is all I'll ever learn, spoon-feeding the children.

I bloom and I will die a woman, a butcher of frivolity  
and the natural sequence of things.

The day is one day - enough, taken  
into its rolling waters,  
a dog's dream to join in, frolic in  
some other species' symbolism.

....

Come upon me like a feather-stick -  
sectioning my abdomen like a fruit. Suddenly  
toddlers are conversing and the grey cat

takes in the morning. Bundle of weeds,  
bundle of flowers. An opening  
under the burning canopy. Lifetimes spent  
collecting synergy, male rhythms and fixed lines.  
God is coming down to hide in your loose-change-pocket.  
I dreamt of owning your praise. Swinging from the rafters  
in a game of hide-and-seek, I sought your breath,  
hand of destined chores.  
I played along inside the circle, inside a sack  
I could hardly breathe out of. Languishing. A round bruise  
forming on my left arm. Place me here. Crown me  
or stake me on a tall spike. I am sand thrown mid-air.  
No place to collect and land, not even a wave, a bucket,  
the forelock of a horse. Not even  
thinking in a straight continuation, but there, there, a pebble  
between paw pads, then, a minor note locked  
in perpetual repetition.

....

Underguard. Crumbled tissue in my mouth.  
A crazy way to run - hands in pockets.  
Forward without, undeterred by reality.

Plywood I am keeping for emergencies,  
for days when putting on the brakes just won't suffice.  
Speeding, retreating, torsos twisting beautifully in anticipation.

I used to make mortar by hand, no machine to ease  
my impossible labor - brick carrying and scaffolding climbing  
and voices that ceased for a while in my head, visions  
foiled by exhaustion - overused and folding.

Injuries are bypassed for much larger connections.  
Double-winged, it is all that counts, to be counted  
like lightening, glazed like tile  
and ancient bones kept as keep-sakes,  
never a participant in trivial bickering or  
watered-downed by petty grievances and  
conditioned responses.

Sometimes I think of dying.  
I think of the unread newspaper that stays folded,  
wrapped in an elastic band.  
I think of a broken bird making broken bird sounds,  
too broken to be saved, treated by most  
as a mild inconvenience

to be walked around and grimaced at.

Except by the man with the warm dark eyes, soft  
furrowed brow, and a child who will not forget those mangled  
wings or the hard lesson of helplessness, the inability to heal  
or to be a vessel for a miracle.

It is hard to love me. I am hard, uncompromising  
and never still. I am needing intimacy at every turn,  
needing space to brood and build my solitary house.  
I miss no one I've lost except the dead - a parent,  
many animals that once shared my life. I am not easy, not  
easygoing - bloodletting, bloodtesting, phone calls  
avoided, coiled, almost mad and never understanding.

Sex and perfect reciprocation. Hands that know more  
than words, keeping in the margins, layering synergy energy  
into peaks and mounds, like mountains and fractal heartbeats,  
fearless of falling, or of clouds. You and I,  
it has to be our reward for not selling out, not  
building cages of adult-overload, for constantly  
clearing room for any divine equation no matter  
how it threatens our already-precarious security.  
We love our children, but not like others love.

We are less of this place, more reliant on grace  
than our own worldly ingenuity to keep food  
on the table, the bathroom fixed and cleaned.

Dear Jesus,

are you still mine, and I, yours? It is a lot to take in, decades and  
mouldy walls. I am afraid of going off track,  
of being dead and seeing there is no more I can do. That  
it is done and inerasable. I am afraid of not feeling  
the warmth of your hand when I walk, because  
you are always holding my hand and I love you  
with a personal love like Kierkegaard did -  
his hunchback, a deformity that kept him pure.

And the loneliness.

Knowing you, but never any other.

I am not that alone, but I remember  
space, lightyears of carved-out quiet. It enters me often  
and I cannot get out of it. Breathing becomes separation,  
a tool I must remind myself to use.

Remind me again, demand  
my unwavering loyalty, trust, and all.

....

Paved paths, brisk  
storm of senses, an old  
opening, endless as a dug-in arrow -  
head in the weeping jungle, the coolness  
of autumn air brushing tombstones,  
the thin necks of geese.  
So much night in a single glass, body  
and name together, replacing  
existence with this inheritance and no other.  
Rows of ships crowding the edge of the lake -  
docked and bearing down for winter. The distance  
grinds, gravel on my belly, cracked shells  
in subterranean pages writing down dawns and victories  
never experienced, only imagined.  
Is it right to receive the bitter strawberry?  
Drink its flesh like juice and  
kneel before reality's dictatorship?  
Is it clarity? Or forgetting?  
...  
Escaping on the brook's bank,  
banking on nesting warm through

winter, but tears are horns that open  
soft spaces, and autumn shifts heat and any hopes  
for renewal. Love is fire -  
from where it goes there are no shields to block  
its scorching. Can we reach bottom in the rain?  
Sing hosanna at the mountain's base?

Becoming is the stone, the house, the wave.  
The lines between us all are solid, no longer lines but  
one heavy blanket of vibrancy, creaking, splitting.

I walk like I walk - barrel beatings,  
borrowing crisp notions into my ears.  
Stretched for a while to be compact again,  
I hear an approaching intrusion, a high  
wake, strong enough to travel on.

Stronger days of running through the weeded grass  
where rabbits stand still at my passing  
and insects move quickly into the shade.  
Stranger days of watching a patio stone broken  
from a storm - from a fallen tree that fell,  
leaving me to find



meaning in such drastic weather.

....

Many years torn - a leaf, a paper towel,  
half around the other side, locked  
on the beach of my nadir - discipline  
and a cold cruel courage, jammed into a groove.  
Just the sunlight on my wall,  
warming the wall, penetrating the heavy plaster.

I was born from a stem.  
I fit on a chalkboard.  
Over the cool half-formed moon  
I hear an echo, smell the crisp lunar craters -  
stagnant rocks, deep troughs to fuel  
a million or more Earth dreams.  
Scents of dead matter colliding,  
of rough stone and endless rotation,  
repetitive atmosphere  
churning.

Behind a broken bark I hide my vanity,  
rushing into quicksand, there I sink.

....

Ladle, ladder

I lay open under the covers, under  
cloaks of heartless yesterdays. My mind  
is a string that wraps around the outerscope.  
I eat wild flowers, never the lamb,  
infused with avoidance, spectacular  
acrobats of keeping on, caring little for the outcome.

Blundering displays of over-dramatizing  
self-aggrandizement revealing the wound  
of stunted spiritual development  
and crippled attempts at affection.

Round and happy, unstructured indulgences  
justified by plump purse strings.

Falterings. Mistaken formations.

A perfect line in nature existing.

All the days I felt alone are behind me,  
gathering leaves, misty-eyed overlooking  
my home: kaleidoscope windows coming into view.

....

Once, gentle. Now, riled and nowhere but where  
the stench of sewage is piled on the curb.

The gears of bitter disappointment snatching  
you into a feral hold. Exotic tall weeds,  
broken at the base.

Friendships are spoiled at the root, even love is  
overshadowed by the decay.

Less obligation, less affection, less loyalty.

I must pretend we are healed, but the only healing  
that happened was a cauterization of our severed bond.

There is anger but less hurt,  
just the motions of getting through  
undetected, and me by myself,  
always alone -

separate happenings, entities, isolated  
aspects merging, but never  
whole. White car on the road.

Red car on the road. Silver then  
blue. The only place absolute is  
the place I left where faith was unnecessary  
and all cells were one cell, not like here -  
different functions - each dominated by its own survival.  
No wonder love is weakened, can only achieve  
a temporary claim on completion.  
I accidentally crush the insect with my heel. It is consumed  
by another of its kind, carried off  
into the hive of practicality -  
a gesture void of remorse or sentimentality.  
In the end, there is nothing but wires and fences  
and frames of flesh, cartilage and senses. Tomorrow  
there will be talk and tea and eyes  
locked in intense recognition.  
Good for the moment  
Good until there comes  
the something we want  
more of, less of, had enough of....

....

For a while -

deathcamps, blue balls  
baskin' robbins. Play tomorrow  
the lute-song of today and remember  
the ground-swell  
pounding paradise into my brain, collapsing  
from overload, reloading fodder  
and flighty friendships I've lost use for.  
Nothing counts, count on nothing but playfighting  
over the bank, over the brim - rim - keeper  
of the fixer-upper, of the still fire, fire still  
as yellowed corpses. Mid-fall.  
Fake it! Love! kindness, tenderness - be  
polite, because very little is  
anything you want to take with you.  
Care-giver, carer of the children,  
the laundry, pets and bank account.  
It is all you are – rainstorm.  
You must take this stone and swallow,  
make peace with your burden, make love  
with the swarming emptiness, stuck  
in a gravitational pull,  
planets, solar systems spinning around you  
but you are heavy, must be,

unfazed by the pressured wind - stains  
on the ground. Inside of you, chopped-up bits of fate  
and crimes conceived before you  
were born. Fake it, wallpaper it. Go on, try, smile

....

Fresh, potted  
bright as an angel. Death is a whip  
I put down. Ill health slumber,  
but God is my mercy-king. Queen  
of loving miracles. I will sing to  
keep the right intention and grieve  
minimally for what I cannot do.  
Little red tree, no higher than  
a toddler-child. Disco ball,  
ball blue and gold,  
twirl for me, let the grey dissipate into your  
twinkling glow and all my blood into your veins,  
little tree  
plump and flourishing, readying for greater heights,  
string-stream through me, weave me into your branches,  
still firmly on the ground.

Angels everywhere I need your temperance. I need  
to know my children are protected by your grace,  
wing-spread, and even  
your cold white eyes.

....

Gaze, focus, hold.

Unconscious stream

of raw fluidity streaming,

rising over barriers, drowning them

with the pressure of an open door.

Cracks of circumstantial disease,

creating pockmarks to expand destiny's choices,

fashioning gifts to give,

earned by bomb-droppings

and low flying plane-explosions.

Cobweb parties, graffiti

on the skin of your back,

made with a blade as small and smooth

as the tip of a hawk's feather.

Weaning off the burnt oak,

preening patches of grime.

Wake and rhyme, garden-keeper,  
ambush your fear - it cannot be real!  
Lungs run the same vibration as a flame.  
It is hard, but not impossible. Gulp the sea  
of senseless over-warming, pool the salt-taste  
in your mouth, feel it  
around your lip-rim, the sides of your cheeks. And there,  
be safe, joining with the translucent swimmers, floaters  
of prehistoric heritage.

....

Principles of duty  
overtaking sleep like a wave.  
Heavy love rooted in isolation,  
reflecting the depths of true giving.  
A condition turns to disease, restrictions  
bare down. What is ordinary becomes like  
a cage. Children in the drifting storm, drifting  
on condensed-traffic streets, how I love you.  
How I would do everything I cannot do to ease  
the grip of your elephant shackles. Mine was the angel's  
autonomy, where nothing was miscellaneous and my bed



was a rich blackness that absorbed all time. Mine was loud  
without noise or distraction, just the buoyant sparkle flow  
of paired-off stars and the countless debris of ongoing creation.  
Mine is yours now, inside less-than-working-organs, kidneys  
like puzzle pieces, seamed together by an amateur.

Where are you now, God-who-remembers, reminds me  
of what I once was? My God and Jesus of the lilies,  
why the children? Why this fluke,  
this bizarre nightmare crawling, closer,  
closer than when I had no body, no loves to look after?

And oh I am tired, worn as an old shoe that must keep  
the broken glass at bay. Where are you my God, my Jesus?  
I know you are here. I know something, but not enough  
to deflate my bloating anxiety. It is grief all over again and I  
hide myself in older hands, friendless, unsupported, remembering  
the wholeness in every flaw, in the universe's veined light

I once travelled on. Remembering that what is flawed sparkles  
with a unique variation of beauty, rainbow fractions, infractions  
that are blessings that seep and saturate sinews  
and bones, galaxies  
perpetual, renewable  
where everything sings useful -  
seemingly incongruent, yet in truth, masterfully

precise.

....

# Race

by Allison Whittenberg

In day, color  
Like sweat or smoke  
Rise above itself like mercury  
Precluding  
The face – unimportant  
So Far  
The game, and its odds:  
Grabbing babies from  
brokenhearted mothers  
Plow and dig  
Frustrated hearts  
Pile to despair  
These stillborn days  
So far  
I am a slave  
Can I be anything else?  
Days and Dollars  
tan uniformed security guard waits  
behind his own kind of prison  
the grind of his 10-7 gig  
eyeballing shoppers, separating buyers from the browsers and  
boasters  
what does it mean? What does anything mean?  
as the frail flexible grey bars clack open  
for opening

## **RE-INSCRIPTION**

by **Asma Mansoor**

Furrowed words  
Inked in desire:  
A graffiti on my canvas-  
Sadistic, artistic-  
Which you etched  
Then erased,  
Peeling off half healed scabs,  
Amidst a collage of inscribed scars  
And elided clauses  
tapering into silence.  
You use an eraser  
To clear up the space-  
To unearth the woman beneath  
Where there is none.  
These long coils of black rubber  
Rolling on the white canvas,  
These are the symbols  
That had shrouded me.  
Me, wrapped unseen,  
Under layers of inscriptions-  
All indelible, invisible, ingrained.  
Convulsed, I look in horror  
As you prepare to write me again.

# **MOVED**

**by Barbara Foster**

Moved out of my old shell  
Left behind twenty years  
Dream furniture, crated  
Tied up with tears  
Cords round giddy laughter  
Stored in memory trunks

Dead parents sorted  
    out  
Marriage packed tight  
Ready to travel  
Heavy baggage stacked  
Labeled for my home  
    unknown  
Its vacant rooms  
Wait to inhabit me  
I saunter into my new  
    space  
A frisky, furtive mouse  
    at play.

## **Summer again**

**by Bozena Helena Mazur-Nowak**

Grandma! Grandma! Look! Summer has come!  
Wherever you look, flowers bow their heads  
This scent, so lovely, plaits the senses  
A butterfly in a bouquet two bees and a ladybug

Ah!  
I danced in the garden happy and joyful  
And picked flowers for you like I did as a little girl  
I remember well how you loved flowers

I will put them in a vase next to your picture  
I love you, Grandma, and still remember  
And carry you through life in my heart

# Fisherman

by Brad G. Garber

Joachim is in his finest white, fresh fruit in clean brown hands, walking up the steep dirt path to the courtyard his dusty feet thankful for the end of a day's fishing.

Children can be heard giggling under the broadleaf trees, anxious for the spiced rice that mamma will place upon the long wooden family table, in the center.

After forty years, Joachim is "pescador experto" the man who takes strong care of his family, ever knowing the ways of the sea as familiar and strange as the ways of his wife and the fish markets of town.

On days when the lines must be tended, his children small nuts beneath the palms, flipping sand with sticks circle him to be near, watching the laughter in his eyes like kittens playing mice, running toward the water until the hunter ocean springs upon their small feet pulling at the tails of mock fear and glee until siesta at the upturned boat, where Joachim leans, short fingers picking through the knots until the net lies flat and even like his life, he thinks, when his back hurts and breath comes into his lungs but does not want out and his eyes as if to lead the way in vision close inward to watch the years fly into the humid air and settle against walls his spirit a thin veneer of struggle and love and hope.

Like his father, and his before, he thinks about his toils the boat and net that will define his mark upon the town where his children will walk the steep path to the courtyard dressed in white, with fresh fruit for the family table.

# **Secret Shade**

**by Candice James**

A devil

Fighting sunlight

And burning

In the freeze

Of his thawing torment,

And so death evolves;

A luminous fear

In the dark cavern

Of his most secret shade.



# **Beneath the Sea**

**by Cherilyn Fry**

Thousands of teeming life forms beneath the sea  
Eons formed the life  
From the seemingly ethers in the air

From the whales fluke  
To the swimming sea horses that can never be reined in  
so much still unknown  
Beneath the Sea

And after you and I are gone  
The waves will still be rushing in  
to caress the endless line of shore  
Breaking over shells, rocks, and whatever has been  
Sent from my iPad

# Night Flower

by Cherime MacFarlane

Tentatively petals unfurl at sundown,  
Pale gossamer lace hidden from sunlight,  
Clothed in silver light as a dressing gown.

Night holds the sweetest heavenly scent,  
Cloaked by darkness the fairest hides,  
I search the shadows until night is spent.

Tomorrow will find me searching in the night,  
Hope blossoms at sundown, perhaps tonight.

Again the search of the night is in vain  
Hands empty, heart aching from the search,  
The queen of the night eludes me again.

Where are you love I continually seek?  
You hide from me in the shadows,  
The daylight finds me tired and weak.

Tomorrow will find me searching in the night,  
Hope blossoms at sundown, perhaps tonight.

# Achilles

by Crystal Spears

He stood, ready  
for his last dance  
with only wind, sun,  
and the gods  
behind him.

He dreamt of glory;  
a living language  
on the lips of men  
for a thousand years  
and more,  
seeing well past  
the limited visions  
of oracles and kings.

“Come forth, divine madness!  
I pronounce a sentence  
of damnation  
and death  
for the country

whose heart beats-

Helen. Helen. Helen.”

# Scenes From Cedar Park

by Dah Helmer

There's an old face sitting  
on a bench  
wind presses against the face  
reverberation from cars resonates and drifts

Under the fog  
the shadows have perished  
A cyclist flashes along the path  
at the same time a raven  
sustains its low flight  
The old face nods off  
and fallen eyelids of thin balsawood  
board out the light  
the face tilts sideways then slumps

A young mother's hand shapes around  
her toddler's head  
the child thinks it's reading a book  
the pages are upside down  
no one listens to the child's voice

and each word is a weightless tone  
but the child is easily amused  
The mother looks over at the old face  
the face holds its wrinkles  
and the young mother holds her child closer  
as if the old face is a mirror  
showing her something

# **To My Daughter**

**by Dalal Sarnou**

And here she lies in my arms like a twinkling star  
Bright and shining when looking deep in the eye  
And she comes to my world to change the very bad  
To bring to the fore every good in me to make an end  
To those years of melancholy I long submitted to  
My little daughter, my silky baby, my every dream comes true  
No tear can fall if she looks deep in my eye  
And where she is, all my pain and hurt die  
She is my lullaby I listen to the brightest day and the darkest night

## THE HORRIBLE MIND

*Frank Zappa asked “What is the ugliest part of your body?”*

**by Dr. David B. Axelrod**

His first thoughts were often unmentionable —

knives to pare away the pain,

forks to extract apologies.

On second thought, he was aware he

saw things through a specific lens that dis-

torted the world, rendering it a war zone

where Geneva Conventions were ignored —

a torturous place beyond victory

or revenge. “Why do I always hurt

the ones I love?” he asked,

and he could answer without thinking,

“The enemy is hardwired into me.”

Some people play computer games

committing endless software murders.

He felt he was under attack. On better

days his mind played word games

called poems, or he resorted to gallows

humor. But the mind loves dirty tricks,  
as anyone hiding in his bedroom  
could attest — night terrors.



# **Alone on a Rooftop Balcony in Rome**

**by Dawn Schout**

Everyone I traveled with is relaxing  
after a day exploring.

I keep my pen and notebook company,  
fill empty pages.

Michelangelo's artwork in the Sistine Chapel  
lingers with me, the silence in the room,  
height of the ceiling, every inch  
covered with his genius,  
patience, perseverance, talent,  
love for Creator and Creation.

I wouldn't have spoken  
even if allowed,  
neck sore from looking up,  
trying to take it all in.

Like Adam's outstretched finger,  
I can't touch God.

Here, I come close.

# Estuary In Fog

by DJ Tyrer

Fog recedes down pier hill  
Where I stand and gaze  
Till only the estuary is shrouded  
Unusual for summer days  
Beside the long dark line  
Of the pier fading away  
A fishing boat silhouette  
On a background of grey  
The canvas of summer sea fog  
Like a painting it appears to be  
A wondrous water colour which  
Leeches into grey-mirror sea

## WONDERING

by Gary Pacernick

After stepping toward me

then pulling away,

she vanishes,

her words burning in my memory.

I wonder if she leaps

through darkness,

a prophet

creating a vision of apocalypse.

Or does a hand pull her back

before she dies into words,

shining down

from some dead star?

# Maybe

by Gina McKnight

*Maybe* I can't miss you  
You're not here

After all this time  
The flower lost its bloom  
It wilted then it fell  
Hard against the ground  
Only to re-seed itself  
Re-grow and re-sprout  
Now life begins a new  
Bud, more fragrant than  
The first; so sorry  
You're not here  
To witness the rebirth;

I can't miss you  
*Maybe*

# Blush

by Heather M. Browne

And now I blush

a gentle rose

chrysanthemum pink

warmth raising bloom

winter cheeks

Your gentleness

fresh leaves

tender caress

upon my snow

drifted soil

I melt

as words trickle down

to seed and root

within

my garden walls

Champagne poppies

bubbling up

high

above this stony façade

Iceland no longer their home

# Silence

by Ilya Prints

Silence. As in the heavens. Silence.  
All frozen around, stilled...

I stand, surrounded by darkness,  
one in the entire universe.

Softly the night sneaks.

Black ocean calms down.

Even time seems to stand still,

fused with eternity.

The moon path,  
here it is,  
stretches from my feet -  
to infinity... To Him.

I'm going,  
I run, overstrained, and  
it follows me - follows me relentlessly.  
I feel Him  
who is everywhere and nowhere,  
who is in the soul - intangible and unattainable.  
I pray to Him. But ...  
But - silence is deceptive, alarming.  
Something concealed in it, hidden.  
No, no, it's unbearably heavy,  
anxiety in it, forbidding.  
No, no, – back, to the crowd,

into the swirl of events and people,  
where life-journey, with joy and pain,

wades through sun-rainy days,  
'til ... the exhausted soul

would beg for peace and silence...



# *Kensington Park*

*by James Adams*

As I did walk in Kensington Park

I feared the worl'd

gone on a lark

I feared the day

I feared the dark—

as I did walk

through Kensington Park.

I kicked the chalk

at the Serpentine Pool

the genius of man

the genius-fool

a coiling hate greed

war talk tool

as I kicked chalk

at the Serpentine Pool.

I sought the caulk

of a late Palace'd hour

the lovely gardens,

their measured flower—

but my step was hollow  
cold rain gave start  
as I did walk  
through Kensington Park.

# A Childhood Place

by James G. Piatt

There is a pleasurable place deep inside  
my being, where childhood memories lie  
asleep, a place where seasons are  
extended and filled with long lasting,  
pleasant hours. The hills in the distance,  
now green, breathing spring into my  
eyes, form a new place where these  
present and past memories collide.

I amble in flower-lined paths once  
familiar, where old faces smiled and  
they, now gone, walked in harmony.  
Return to me, oh beautiful places that  
have vanished into dreams: Bath me  
with your warmth lovely sun, so the  
childish mind of my youth can blossom  
again and reveal all the sweet hours of  
the past.

Come back to me special images of  
youth, come back scenes when my  
heart had cheerful wings and birds sang  
joyful songs: Harken to my plea, don't  
vanish into the darkness of night; don't  
take away the glint of youth that I feel in  
my aging soul.

## EMILY INVERTED

by Jane Beal

Because I could not stop for Life,  
he did not stop for me;  
our ships just passed each other by  
on each day's open sea.

Always I was sailing onward,  
so never had an hour  
to hear what he would say to me  
or fear his cross-bones power.

Sailing past the ancient harbors,  
deaf to the mermaid's song,  
I fought no monsters on the deep –  
my voyage lasted long.

I mended nets, I gutted fish –  
work was my prayer each day;  
I could not rest, I could not stop  
chasing the salt-wave's spray.

'Tis forty years since I began  
to sail before the wind,  
yet if I could, I know I would  
begin my life again.

# **Wildflowers**

**by Joan McNerney**

Bobbing in open fields.

Two fabulous daffodils sprout  
from your eyes. Falling dizzy in  
love as o so lackadaisical  
breeze tugs at shirt sleeves.

Again we are flushed in  
warm love caress. Solar  
energy orbiting billions of  
grass blades. Hum hum  
hummingbirds hurry hurry  
pass us tripping giddy  
in love.

# Man on the moon

by **Jose V. Clutario**

Right now, I am looking at it,

like a wallpaper on my Mac,

and from here, everything

is just so flat, except of course,

the earth is round, and cleaner

from this perspective. It is hard

to pinpoint. Where are you right now?

Because maybe you are at work

moving from office to office,

or at the grocery to get an extra

bottle of beer. Life is very small,

from up here, there is nothing big

except the staring quiet universe.

## **A PIECE OF THE ACTION**

**by Joseph Dorazio**

There are those who  
abhor the chase. They  
will not undertake.  
Having set the bait  
they lie in wait  
till action arrives  
in pieces or whole  
invertebrates.

# Mekong

by Marianne Lyon

A gentle dawn,  
sky—wide strokes of agate blue,  
warm pages of gold slide through gauze thin clouds  
lighting faces,  
thermal on welcoming shoulders.  
Water licks the moving vessel,  
engine's bass drone  
pulses journeys past;  
surges with the present—giving in.

A painting forms on the margins of the river.

The water tugs itself up the sandy bank  
spreads silt like manna  
leaking through dense rows of leafy vegetables.

Dwellings hide in teak forests  
like owls perched in mist.

A fisherman—body elastic  
plays his lines like a puppeteer,  
shoeless, a tightrope walker  
balances in his long-tail boat.



Now teetering ashore  
persistent waves jump up ankles,  
greedy sand grasps like warm glue.

Hands hold bracelets  
pleading for a coin.

Her young eyes are molten.

On stooped back—her sister;  
their used up mother, squatting, smoking, vacant.

The Mekong—Holy Water  
an autobiography written  
by a force bigger than itself.

Confessions of war, disease, steadfast resilience,  
unwritten chapters spilling from high mountains.

# **I'll never forget the day**

**by Marianne Szlyk**

even though I work at night  
from sunset to sunrise  
in twelfth-story rooms without windows,  
the computers whirring like doves' wings.

Once upon a time  
I used to walk  
when the sun was up,  
when plants dried in the hot wind,  
when children rode bikes  
down the sidewalk, when  
men sold bananas and oranges  
from a truck.

Once upon a time  
I slept with windows open  
to the crickets  
bleeping like car alarms  
as they died in the sudden cold.

Once upon a time...  
I will do so again.

# Sheetrock

By Richard Vetere

Sheetrock is called drywall or plasterboard  
made of gypsum plaster and paper  
but whatever name or component, my brothers and I  
needed to attach five pieces eight feet by four feet each  
up on the kitchen ceiling yesterday.

As we did I couldn't *not* recall  
how underneath us in that very room  
my mother kept us fed and healthy  
for fifty years before she died  
one early fall morning just two rooms away.

One day we may sell this house  
and my brothers and I will go our separate ways  
and so will the sheetrock and plaster

the nails and paint and wires

to some other family who will love or not

all that went on in what is now *their* kitchen.

Sometimes you have to believe in the invisible

when your memories are all you have left of prayer

and sweating, lifting, and drilling in the nails

is all you can offer to what has been.

# TOMORROW

by Steve De France

Tomorrow throats will be slit at the edge of a blade,  
tomorrow wars will spread like shards of broken glass,  
tomorrow stumbles into a spirit numbing job or no job at all---

Tomorrow repeats itself like a great wheel spinning,  
and tomorrows keeps coming until one tomorrow  
you wake in a North Dakota motel alone naked  
on a freezing bathroom floor, as tomorrow scoffs  
& sits at the edge of the tub & crosses his legs  
with indifference. You throw up from the lies,  
lies so thick you can't breathe.

Tomorrow sweating horses race to the edge of sleep  
at deliberate speed under yesterdays moonless night  
But tomorrow is in bed numbed with pain  
guts raw with the taste of lies.

Tomorrow depends on tomorrow  
until tomorrow splits open: revealing the Prince of Denmark  
drunk again. . .he leans against the castle draw bridge  
smoking a blunt---smiling through long dead eyes  
and with delicate fingers the Prince picks at the scab  
of tomorrow.

## **After Market Day**

**by Dr. Steve Klepetar**

The weekend traders have gone home,  
pack mules sweating in summer sun.

Dust and heat; bats circle  
beneath the shrinking moon.

Somewhere deep within its cobblestones  
this empty square still seems to hold

an echo of braying voices bargaining,  
sweet, seductive glint of slippery gold.

.....

## **Fire Thoughts**

**by Dr. Steve Klepetar**

Winter creature in a dream  
of cold, yoked to my  
un-detachable name, that long shadow  
in the useless evening sun.

How it sticks  
to my heels, how it rubs  
against rough piles

of dirty

snow. Even

if I could manage a run on this slippery

ground, that slithery

shape would follow, wild

and mocking, sliding up sheer walls, gnarled

trunks of iron-gray oaks, light and hollow and empty of sound.

## **November**

**by Susan Dale**

Hold autumn close

When the sun strikes broadside

Reach into its heart of gold

One last moment

Plunder her golden orb

On the path of summer' glory

A whispered lullaby

To rock cradle of long sleep

November – above the crest of summer dream

Drink deep the poem of autumn



# Simplicity

by Vasile Baghiu

As simple as a greeting gesture,  
when nothing matters any longer,  
the old feelings have no power  
and poetry is not able to offer any protection,  
in years when time is unfriendly  
and a short stroll on the river's bank  
becomes an amazing support,  
in weakness,  
in oblivion.

As simple as a glass of water,  
when people talk to each other  
and do not succeed to reach the subject  
they are interested in the most,  
in secret circumstances,  
anonymously.

# Shiny Birds

by William Doreski

When I complain to the air  
that the playlist of life bores me  
a tree stoops to rebuke me  
with armfuls of shiny birds  
I thought extinct. Vacant stone  
foundations brace the landscape  
against groans and threats of storm.  
The crisis passes with a whimper  
of occluded memory: rain  
on Newbury Street, a glimpse  
of your cotton raincoat smiling,  
dinner at that place where sweet rolls  
preceded every entrée.  
Shedding weight the air responds  
in its own colors. The tree  
straightens and tries to look aloof.  
The shiny birds scatter like scraps  
of paper. They'll nest again  
as they did when they existed.  
Their eggs might be infertile,

though. Aren't you sorry you tossed  
that raincoat into the trash  
years after that rainy evening  
when our hands felt tender enough  
to touch each other without  
that mutual fear of loss? The stone  
looks older than ancient Athens  
but probably the foundations  
date from two centuries ago  
when New England still tasted  
of raw milk and fish-fed maize.  
No shelter, of course, but running  
my hands over the rough boulders  
I decide I retain enough touch  
to shock you into whatever  
dimension permits these shiny birds  
to regain their sense of flight.