Today’s Poetry Mother

Tis nineteen years today, mother,
Since to our lonely heart,
You came and filled our home’s smiles
To wake our children’s day.

I’ve often thought upon the time,
How full is love, how full fear;
We both were filled with joy at heart
And left your first warm tear.

Worse was a noble task, mother,
And yet a panting one,
To follow in another’s steps,
To do as she had done!

Tis hard for all the doubtful glance,
The slanderer’s venomed dart,
But oh! if they fell so true
Upon a mother’s heart!

Just nineteen years today, mother
Since hopeful, loving, fond,
You came and filled our home’s smiles
To wake our children’s day.

God kindly took our other one—
Our shoulders to bear,
But oh! we cannot praise too much,
The one that filled her place.

Caroline Eliten

Ecclectic Institute Approved

Hiram is Location of School

By special correspondent—The State Board of Education, on March 1, 1898, took action at its meeting in Columbus, Ohio, and by vote approved the application of the Western Reserve College Corporation for the charter of a school to be located in the village of Hiram, in the County of Ashland, State of Ohio.

The application was favorably acted upon by the State Board of Education, and the charter was accordingly granted.

The school is to be called the Western Reserve College.

AMOS S. HAYDEN MAY BE NAMED AS PRINCIPAL

Mr. Isaac Errett is chairman of the committee to select a principal for the Western Reserve Institute. He has sent out letters of recommendation, negotiating with various individuals who are known to have had experience in the field of education, and has obtained the names of many individuals on the subject.

Mr. Hayden has been chosen as the principal for the new school, and a formal notice of the appointment has been issued to him.

HOUSING BIG WORRY IN HIRAM

It is necessary, for Mr. Hayden, who is to become the principal of the Western Reserve Institute, to secure a suitable building. The building committee is now at work, and is making arrangements for the construction of a suitable building.

The building committee is composed of several prominent citizens of Hiram, and is working diligently to secure the necessary funds for the construction of the building.

The financial statements show that the school will be able to meet its expenses for the coming year.

Reports from the buildings committee indicate that the school is progressing well, and is well on its way to becoming a first-class institution.

FINANCES OF INSTITUTE UNCERTAIN

The Western Reserve Institute is in financial difficulties, and the school is in danger of closing down. The school is in need of immediate financial assistance.

A memorandum has been sent to the students and parents of the school, informing them of the financial situation and requesting their assistance.

The school is in need of immediate financial assistance, and the board of trustees is working diligently to secure the necessary funds.

For those interested in supporting the school, please contact the board of trustees at 123 Main Street, Hiram, Ohio, 44234, or visit their website at www.westernreserveinstitute.org.

**Proposed Eclectic Institute**

Expecting Early Ground-Breaking

The proposed Eclectic Institute is scheduled for groundbreaking in the near future. The institute is expected to be ready for use by the fall of 2019.

The institute will provide a unique educational experience, with a focus on individualized instruction and small class sizes.

The institute is located in the heart of Hiram, and is expected to become a focal point for the community.

The institute is expected to have a positive impact on the local economy, with the potential to create new jobs and stimulate economic growth.

For more information, please visit www.proposedeclecticinstitute.org.
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EDITOR’S NOTE

This year’s issue finds me saying goodbye to some outstanding readers. Seiji Bessho, Spencer Goodheart and Kelsie Doran now find themselves out of work as HPR readers and moving into their status as legends of the minor legend that is the HPR itself. Our last issue got a great write up on newpages.com. You should check it out. Such a fine review would not have been possible without their combined expertise that has developed over the past four years. As for this issue, the HPR welcomes some new readers whose influence can be seen in this issue and in one of the reviews. From fly fishing to RC Cola to complicated war stories to poems about nearly dying in a dumpster, this varied, tender and occasionally obscene issue deserves a melancholy spot on your bookshelf.

Willard Greenwood
Editor, HPR
Mick Cochrane

The First Time I Was Electrocuted

Working at McDonalds in West St. Paul, 15 years old, the welfare kid, a pity hire by a guy who knew my dad was a drunk. Bud, the weekend manager, supposedly an ex-Marine, pock-mocked and mean, berated me for spilling shakes, and being slow, and for sweating, then exiled me to “yard and tables,” perpetual garbage duty. Once a night, I “dumped the ugly,” emptied a day’s worth of evil-smelling grill scrapings into a barrel. And jumped the garbage. Alone, in a garage behind the store, a broken light bulb dangling from the ceiling, I threw a plastic bun rack on top of all the bags in the Dumpster, and climbed up and in, and jumped, lowering the trash level, a human compactor, that was my job. I jumped and jumped, trampolined that shit with crazy desperate energy, I may have wailed, I don’t know, King of the Dumpster, Master of The Stinking Universe. And then—suddenly struck, slammed, unplugged from myself, for that instant just a piece of nameless meat, thrown down, drowning in filth and stink. I crawled out, stained with mustard and ketchup and special sauce, smelling of beef tallow and sour milk, a piece of human garbage raised from the dead, grabbed my bun rack and went back inside, and never said anything to anyone about it, ever.
Judith Cody

It’s Said They’re Never the Same

I was never to know
the dad who wrote
his war letters home to
his wife, to his daughters
though he returned
to “the States”
whole in health
to our house
seeming
(they said)
as the same
manifestation
of the man who boarded
the troop ship
sailing to some foxhole
many years before
the symmetry of his
soul had vanished on
the battlefields
was buried in the mud
of a distant continent
beside the bones of “buddies.”
Noel Conneely

How the Salmon Slips

The salmon slips from the hook pink
and in yellow the tourist chucks
his prayer book in the dust;
the last great flashback.
I pick flowers in the rain,
waiting for midnight to slide down
into the arms of the season dying.
There is a murmur on the motorway
and birds ask “did I hear a knock
on evening’s door or was it just
the door of day slamming on the bygone?”
But there is no voice to answer.
The voice went down on another continent
and sometimes you can smell the horses’
fear as they approach the winning post
and the grass quietens as the hooves find
an opening in the silence
that running made a fraction bigger
for the birds to fit through.
The is a contract between boy and bird
and though I walk like a man
my thoughts of you are boy thoughts.
And as I watch the penny bright stars,
all I want is for them to keep shining.
And I look for a woman to touch without venom
coming into my loneliness like bread into hunger,
light into the broken mirror of dawn.
I will share my cell but not my prayer.
You are welcome to my prison even though
you wear perfume like a superstition
and if I bless myself three times when you leave
it is only because I am slipping off the canyon
you left-something I don’t want to be
tutored to mend in the salmon’s torn mouth.
William V. Davis

The Model

I shiver but he
doesn't seem to care.
He says he likes

it cold to keep
my nipples taut.
He has a coat.

After each break,
I place my hips
and arms carefully

on their bruises
to keep and hold
the pose precisely.

No matter how
I hurt, I can't afford
to let him know.

He wants my breasts
in full view, my
stomach pulled in,

legs flexed firm.
He tells me I am
his work of art

and smiles, turning
away. He really
rarely looks at me.

We share nothing
except my naked
body, which he

uses, on and off
the canvas.
He tells me what
I’ve done wrong, 
orders me to move 
this way or that—

do this or that. 
I obey each of his 
commands. He

seems pleased. 
All night I dream 
of seeing myself

framed.
**William V. Davis**

**Tuesday Night**

She is soaking in a claw-footed tub she found in the back room of an old antique store. It was filled with tennis balls and she bought it because she was lonely. The water was warm, but now it has begun to cool. She has one hand on the edge of the tub and the other under the water. She has been humming to herself. Her eyes are still closed.

She wishes she might have worn the other dress that day, maybe he would have noticed. She only asked a very simple question. Even she knew the answer to it. The window above the tub flashes with a brief light and she opens her eyes. The radio in the other room is still on and she hears voices speaking to one another but she cannot distinguish what they are saying. The door to the bathroom has blown open and wind rushes in. She calls to the cat. In the last instant she hears something like a drum beat, loud, only once.

The water around her has suddenly gotten very cold and she can’t seem to wash the red down the drain.
Krikor Der Hohannesian

Highland Jinks

Och! ye growler-addled hooligans
Hell-bent on mindless shenanigans,
Criminy! – give it a rest, ladies
And to hel with the brannigans!

Let’s don our balbriggan cardigans
and well-oiled larrigans
for a hoof to our highland wanigan,
yatagans thrust high, the better
to slay us a ptarmigan or three
perched up in them trees.

Full-bellied, then have us a Finnegan
Washed down with a pint, then a toast—
Up with ol’ Finn McCool
who flung boulders like golf balls,
tore up the Old Sod, with
no need for a mulligan!
Finest pilots you'll ever see, says Joseph One-Hand. His one hand taps his holey jean knee in morse code broken by my ignorance. The day’s hot.

We knew one from a chinaman by his right turn, Joseph then says, cutting through my bitter distraction. The space where his other hand should be distracts me. Behind the tall building dips the sun through red cirrus clouds.

Sometimes you could see his face through the mig’s bubble canopy, speaks One-Hand who now smiles distantly. I wonder at daily activity with only one hand. Somewhere far off thunder burns.

It was one of them who got me, posits Joseph after a moment’s hesitation. His stub isn’t round, but hexagonal. I think I see lightning, but it’s the flash of a radio tower.

He maneuvered me around toward another red, the man with one hand whispers in humidity. His stub twitches, to my discomfort. An anvil cloud above.

Tore off my rudder and I had to ditch in heavy bush, mouths Joseph and I only understand by reading his blistered lips. For one terrified moment I mistake the sweat stain under his stub for blood. Thunder’s cavalcade.

They lobbed off my hand inch by inch in a hut with no roof, thinks Joseph without speaking it aloud. I say to the stub, I have to go. Before us the concrete browns steadily by raindrops.

They took my wedding ring, Joseph knows. They threw it down a well.
Henry Goldkamp

Third Wave Feminism, or Jorts

When you google sexist music video it autocorrects you to sexiest then autoplays a skinny-ass white girl in cut-offs, commonly cat-called daisy dukes, made famous by Catherine Bach, an actor, a sex idol commonly fapped to in America. The Dukes of Hazzard, two white men, fucked her with frequency, despite cousinhood, like the orange needle trembling in their 1969 Dodge Charger speedometer.

We've flipped on auto-slut, cruising into the millennium. Pedal to the metal, space travel, black holes hidden in denim. Swallow her tender brunette pebbles, stonewash your mouth with lava soap, makeup for your money shot's breakdown.

Jessica Simpson resurrected Daisy Duke in 2005. Boys and girls alike masturbated heartily to her legs' health, to Blue Crush, Coyote Ugly, etc. What if we were in a hot tub, soaking with all the classics? Asa Akira, Goldie Hawn, Miley Cyrus, Jennifer Lopez. I'm going to whack it, bikini top on or off. I clear my soapy throat…

Ahem: I’ve invited you here, this living room of my heart, because I love you. I pump for you like Mrs. Nowotony, my fifth grade teacher, not attractive by any of this world’s multitudinous cultural standards of beauty. Ahem, what I mean to say is, if you wrote an inquiry for permission to all those masturbated to, there'd be a shortage of ink and cum, no one would be granted their sexy wishes, or Halle Berry would send out a form response, Clooney might allow a lottery, the Clintons could offer a webcam that nobody could afford. Meanwhile our loins rattle like a fat brick of cartoon TNT.

Perhaps the hentai faps are the most darling, most harmless, though Esme Rainbow looks like she's having some difficulty fitting all those gruesome green tentacles in such limited holes. Is a titty an orifice? I hope so. I mean I’m asking for a baby.

I mean I’m asking a friend of an imaginary friend. Is it okay to take them up into our mental bedrooms? Could we kiss Aimee’s boyfriend with the stench of bone and blood and chlorine bubbling through the jets?
We dip into the cabana bar with no regrets. 
I order Mich-Ultra for everybody when Britney protests—
she wants gin and water, lemon and lime.
Don’t let the bartender squeeze them, it’s gross.
Madonna calls her a post-Madonna prima donna.
Aguilera wants to know where Adam is with the coke.
I’m asking Beyoncé about her future over the loudest Macarena
when she discreetly pulls a crystal ball from her asshole,
smiling at me like we have a secret. She’s scaring me.

Wait. Actually, it’s a bunch of balls, they’re anal beads.
They smell like the Magnolia tree she had growing up
in the desert, where sexual fantasy dries up in heat,
suffocates succulence. She didn’t have a Magnolia tree.
She turns over her palms and offers them to me.
Her love lines are sliced open, sinews throbbing.
Each one represents a different life path, an opportunity.

I tell her the tabloids are going to have a field day.
Ol’ Beyoncé, always getting herself into trouble,
hugging herself, signing contracts for bad movies,
or reading lines that oversexualize her denim-clad vagina,
the chilly zipper making her shiver with delight as the laugh
track rumbles its love, full of live-audience members
sewing and hemming the third wave, but who’s counting?
Hardly such thing as a single wave, as if there was a first wind,
though why not wonder what the firsts looked like?
I want the third wave to catch its second wind, personally.

I daydream it alive, a raised caterpillar eye, a sleeper cell
napping on the couch, bacteria not saying God Bless You
after its life partner sneezes primordial ooze down its bib,
eating dead lobster raw. Let the high heel rot by saltwater,
grow a new shell. Heel again without the hell. Heal
the shell. Heal the hell. Pumps come back, walk the boys’ room
and they’re naming them stripper shoes. Rude boy.
The answer is as clear as Beyoncé’s secret crystals.

Finally, I explode from the dream, find myself washed
up on a sandy California shore. The sunlight is ripped
from sight: a tidal wave makes way in this barren, prudent
country. I stick out my hand—dick beaters some call it.
Howdy, nice to meet you, you must be the fourth.
I stand in its gaping shadow, smiling.
The pleasure is all mine.
Arriving midway along the path of totality, I need a moment partial to myself, try not to go to that dark place where crows disquieted flock midmorning, bewildered, looking to roost. Everyone glares at me behind black shades. I was worshipped once as a god, but now I hate my day job, tasked to globalize—to heat this prairie, brown that grassland, crack these mud-flats, parch the stream—what’s left behind—stagnant water surface tensioned with aimless white cottonwood seed, a shrinking shallow pool, hunched over by the black-crowned night heron on a log hunting crayfish.
Richard Jones

Walking the Dog

Blackdog and I, we’ve slowed down. We take our evening walk down the alley leisurely, having learned at last to go easy, to stop and smell roses, or garbage cans, scents of the city. It pains Blackdog to walk, arthritic hips gone awry, and pains me to watch her hobble, so we just go slow, old Labrador leading the way or lagging behind, the two of us looking around and finding ourselves in the last chapter of our life together. It’s always sad to finish a long well-written book, pondering the last paragraphs, the final few sentences, then sighing over the period at the end of the story. The leash now slack in my hand, I admire Blackdog’s eyes, sad and wise. Our alley is beautiful with graffiti, potholes, broken fences, that patch of sky, edged with clouds, and at the alley’s end and we hesitate before turning back toward home. Walking slowly, I tell Blackdog that when I finish a book, I am a better person for having read every word. I thank her for the treasure she has buried like a bone in my heart.
Gary Metras

A Strand of Partridge Feather

“This poem, this flicker, is all I can offer.”
—Tom Sexton

The pleasure of small tasks,
tyling some trout flies,
reading some pages
of a friend’s new book of poems.
I pick up a pencil to mark
a line beautifully formed
and stuck to the knife-sharpened point,
a single strand of partridge feather
clinging to the graphite.
Some forces need be unseen,
the way words can by-pass
the mind and adhere
to the heart. Five flies, five poems.
Just enough.
Gary Metras

Mourning Doves Sipping Snow Melt

Three silent mourning doves plumped
down on the wooden deck rail taking turns
at a clump of snow under a melting sun
on this frigid February morning.
If one lingers too long,
another bumps if off the rail.
They sip and leap or fall to the mound
of snow on the deck, then return
to the back of the line. But I wonder
about the fate of the fourth dove,
the one not here, since they pair for life.
What predator seized its blood?
Or is the third one the child who never
fledged, as so many young
these days are doing, encamped
in their rooms with headphones
and computer games. This could go on
until the parents cease worrying,
concede to societal forces beyond control.
By now the doves have flown
to the neighbor’s, who remembered to fill their bird feeder.
When they return to this yard,
will there be a four-part harmony
filling the empty air? Will the adult child
announce one day soon, he booked
a singles cruise to Jamaica,
and will he return already married
and ask for both to live with them,
so that she becomes the new player
at the Wednesday night’s family
Scrabble game? They will let her win
once, then play the Game of Life ever after.
Gail Newman

Extraction

Inside my mother’s mouth, a gaping hole where she’s removed the bridge, the gums darker at the base, the skin puckered like lips after sucking sour fruit. The bridge, sunken to the floor of a water-filled glass, seems out of place, like a fish plucked from the sea, plunked into a pail. Looking in the mirror, my mother opens wide, pulling coated floss down between those teeth still intact. 

I didn’t know you have a bridge, I say, and she looks at me slant-wise, as if to ask, Who are you?” maybe meaning, or Don’t ask, because the world is a dark throat and some words are best swallowed. She is brushing her teeth, passing across the front, then the back row, each stroke making a round sound like waves lapping against the side of an unmoored boat. My mother sat in a chair, head back, a woman in a white coat arched over her, pliers in her hand, the shining metal inside my mother’s mouth, wrenching left and right, the twisted teeth loosening, my mother’s arms tied down to keep her there. I was in the work camp in Haffstadt. But I was lucky. Because she liked me, she didn’t pull the ones in front, my mother says, white teeth gleaming behind a narrow smile.
Bibhu Padhi

Walking Down the Storm

We had waited through a whole afternoon of an imprisoning storm. We decided to leave, walk down to our homes under the sledging rain, the sight and sound of the storm. I knew, we were not alone. Ever since my friend took your name, I knew we wouldn’t be alone. Even then, we seemed to know very little, much less than what we would see, listen to, under the water through which we wade up the Church Road, now awkwardly reclining against a rain-smashed sky. The sounds were filled with the sea now swelling into the night not too far away. Since my friend uttered your name, we had been walking straight against a wind that ran wild over the roads beginning at the deserted beach, ending at your sacred gate. For now, the tall eucalyptus lay like a dragon across the road until our feet brushed against its slight branches and leaves.

The broken electric wires lay all along the tar like storm-hit snakes too tired to move. The umbrella was too wet and weak to keep us together, dry. Our bodies knew the tremble
of the coastal storm
and August-rain, although
our feet fell steady,
counted their own steps.
You spot me and I offer a nod, a rare sighting, a pale species up from the blackest ocean crevice. Or at dusk, a specter, a soft, translucent man walking my little, yapping dog round my little yard. Shirtless, I know, my belly is a curious, naked incongruity. Look, a scar divides my chest. I’m usually sequestered behind blinds, my moat and ramparts, a siege in overgrown ruin, thistle and nettles too tall, too bold, and plugging the drive an assortment of rusted barricades, once oiled, efficient and noisy, mowed grass, pushed snow. The mailbox, a wilderness expedition, what’s next, the Amazon, Kilimanjaro? I’m now the anchorite. I fled bureaucracy, futility, perpetual absurdity. (You must admit, you’re secretly intrigued and horrified at following my example.) I was ostracized for a single thesis, a modest vision. (It was a splendid notion. Were you there, feeding at my carcass or silent, lucky in the distance?) Dizzy, I fled the spinning of planets, the sun too insistent, its indiscriminate candescence, the sky too vast, the hawk flying much too high, the swallows diving too happily, a wren singing too sweetly. So sweetly, I winced. Your pity baffles me as I am content, shuffling from room to room, the precise count of steps soothing. I anticipate sameness, a predictable breakfast, the evening news. Waiting and waiting. I am convinced, it is all about the waiting.
Claire Scott

Parallel Lines

We collided at Lucky’s yesterday
our metal carts clanking
dissonance on the beverage aisle
she searching for cheap gin
me for sparkling soda
I haven’t seen her in months
mostly we move in parallel lines
side by side, never touching
since I walked away ten years ago
from the person I was becoming
spending more time in jail than out
drinking & dying my hair to avoid
the cop, the pimp, the dealer
yet today in some geometric anomaly
in some spooky gravitational field
our carts collide
I notice the ankle monitor on her leg
she sees me looking
we move quickly apart
like neutrons that can’t occupy
the same space at the same time
or like the total strangers
we are
Natalie L. Tombasco

Still-Life with Navel Orange

The fruit bowl cradles bruised bananas & pears, washed-out grapes, handful of figs & an orange—the glam-glowing navel with an intrusive malformation: linea nigra, a vertical line rising on its swollen peel. Darling orange, I shall call you Belladonna for the pretty poison thoughts you’ve given me. I touch the tablecloth, a lump of sugar, the flank of me—animalistic & delicate corset-hands on ribcage, hip bones, my cobwebbed womb. In twilight-sleep, morningwood & twisted bedsheets, I am nectar, mood-swings & big-bang creation, imploding with ideas like a roadside bounty. I could be more than this half-person if I wanted, if I didn’t backtrack for miles & miles to girlhood: when things were perfectly dumb, before I could think of bad things like barefoot & pregnant. I was mother’s little helper, little thumbsucker, everything tasted like nail polish & cigarette butts. I had an oral fixation—felt my tongue as it learned that clinical rhymes with cynical. Before I knew what my body could do, what men could do: unteach the bunny ears on your shoe. I wondered what germinated in the black of the laundry room, thrived off half-truths. If vulnerability is what you crave, I know pressure points. I know a man never wants a woman after he’s watched her give birth, after the dark-twin of herself comes out shitting & screaming. I know how to sing myself to sleep, sound out the bickering. Orange, you seem so purposeful—an alchemist of any mistake. How do you choose between lunchbox love-notes & morning papers? I whisper storybook monsters & moonlit forests into your belly, but never
physics or theorems or spheres. I’d say:
Dearest Seedling, you’d never be the glue
that holds daddy and I together,
like momma spoon-fed me.
For I am this uninhabitable ravine—
the dank-smut from supernova debris,
bramble & honeysuckle vesseled,
cluttered with free beer & fruitful fuck-ups.
A thing covered in nerve-endings, wanting
something apart from me, a part of me.
If I flesh this out: I am uncertain if I would
destroy you, if I’d collect your fingernails & teeth,
if I’d mark your height on the wall, say stuff
like you’re so cute, I could eat you. It is all so
vague: the disease inside me, the bogged-up brains
of bad-moms. Oh orange, in all your splendor,
sweet umbilicus of sin—I want to dissect you,
breach your skin & carry your zest beneath my nails.
I feel your weight in my palm—the thickets
& spider ferns, your lovesome marmalade
of curls & the eventual bitter: I fucking hate you
as you slam the front door. Stupid orange,
I cannot undress & swallow you like a drug—for you
are someone else’s masterpiece, the magnum opus
ripened from a painterly grove. Your sticker birthmark.
Mine is from the puncture of pine needles—to pine:
the hunger to suck the life out of someone; devour her
daydreams to the last drop. Should I pierce a crescent
into your skin, unravel your atmosphere?
May I try you on like a pair of mom-jeans
& be your badbad universe? Can I split you
in two, press you into paint like O’Keeffe flowers—
keep your sexual & wilderness? I break you
right at the soft spot in your skull, bear
your vitamins & minerals & afterglow—only to
unearth after all, your watered-down orange
taste, your membrane between my teeth.
Alleys and Parking Lots

I just happened to be there to witness a small cat chasing drifting feathers in a downtown parking lot, too immersed in living to even know he didn't have a home. Debates of well-intentioned mission or vulgar intrusion aside, I pondered a course to follow…

It reminded me of all the lessons I never learned from my father, who gushed that you only help the weak if you are soft, help the abandoned if you are lost, and only feel pain if you're not inflicting it.

His parish was a growling scimitar of rabid dogs, chasing the brightness away from every living corner. Great black-winged birds flooded his stillborn sky, all set on a canvass of simmering rage, its sullen closed-mouth colors forever on the prowl for care-free joy.

A frigid, wind-swept bay of half-light was a safe nursery for the dogs to roam, but ceaseless winters bred only black full moons that no longer commanded echoes of trenchant howling. And so the many passing years softened the beasts, and finally on a warm spring night, they quietly turned down a dank back alley and disappeared.

Letting go of his mad imaginings and his puerile curses was as close to peace as he'd find, and I, witnessing the last bleeding dust, was as close to understanding as I would ever know…

And if I had not brought home the rain-sparkled kitten from the downtown parking lot, my soul would not be worth the paper it's bleeding on.
James Valvis

A Love Like Mount St. Helens

My mother and father smoking
at the dining room table,
drinking coffee, not talking to anyone
but especially not each other.
Sometimes my father lights a cigarette
and my mother takes it from him.
Then he lights another for himself.
The ashtray becomes so filled with ash
it looks like Mount St. Helens,
a volcano that erupted decades ago,
butts sometimes spilling onto the table,
charred trees caught in a pyroclastic blast,
the forest not yet grown back
and everything cold, dead, spent.
Every morning this, as if they cannot
get enough of it. At noon they finally move.
They speak, talk dinner, weather,
and my father stumbles off to find work.
Years earlier, my mother tried to kill herself
when he left her for another woman.
Once she hurled a pot of boiling water at him.
But now my mother lingers at the table,
smoking, as if he was never there.
Then she dumps the ashtray,
sits again like a stone,
and stares at a wall until dinnertime.
Kimberly White

Billboard Full of Blues

I took my blues out for a drive in the middle of the night when I couldn’t sleep and there was nothing left on the stereo. Silent but for the clatter in my head, we drove, I and my blues, out of town and across the valley on ribbons of two-lane roads and flattened freeways, windshield wipers flapping, tears of rain set a rhythm for my blues. After a while, we switched places and I let my blues take the wheel.

We ended up in a sea cave pounded with ocean spray, our lips intertwined and our hands at each other’s throats. Ever try to outshout your own blues over the sound of a crazed ocean? After killing each other, I and my blues, we were surprised to emerge in the afterlife, throats and strangleholds still intertwined.

I saw my blues on a billboard plastered above the massive commute. Maximum exposure seventy feet up, close to the airport for the viewing pleasure of incoming aircraft and xanax-filled office drones driving their blues home to work and back again, not even knowing why they’re blue, too xanaxed-out to care. But I do care, cuz Baby, I know from the blues and if this means I walk alone in a pill-popped nation, I will not drown in silence, for my guitar heroes and my harmonica gods will comfort me and keep me humming all the days of my life.

I climbed in the bathtub with my blues, after all electrical appliances were unplugged. Turned off the electricity too, just to be sure, cuz you never know with the blues. After the third bubble-bath orgasm, it became achingly clear that I know nothing from the blues, nothing compared to the back-breaking blues already crushing the world.

We reached some kind of compromise, I and my blues, drying each other off after our bath. By this time, the sun had come up and I was late for the massive commute. I blew a kiss to the billboard on my way by, then took a wrong turn to the beach, shooting out the signs along the way. By the time I was stopped by the law, all compromise had been dispelled. It’s okay, I was out of gas anyway and needed an uncomplicated ride, with my blues handcuffed beside me down a worndown track and through the crossroads with hellhounds at the wheel.

always easy to catch a ride like that.
Calling to Mind

Movie titles tend to go first along with the names of the actors who are now much younger than you are. That knowledge is not important although it limits conversation with art film buffs who seem encyclopedic in their retention of facts or data as the current digital world would have it. Book titles and authors become anonymous while you did not notice them slip away into the dark of moonless nights although you read them just a few years ago when they appeared on the New York Times best seller list in hardback but continue to remember the ones assigned in college classes in your youth and some of the immortal lines of Shakespeare required by teachers of the distant past. But the love poem presented to that one long lasting lover is not forgotten since it is rewritten each day.
Guinotte Wise

A Cold RC (arruh see)

Royal Crown Cola, desert pyramids on the bottle. It's Diet Rite now but it tastes exactly like an RC. Childhood taste buds do not lie. They never forget. In the south it was an arruh see cola, and back in Kansas City it was just RC, and still is, you see. I'm having one now, in a thick glass. It comes in cans, but if it came in bottles I would drink from the bottle--it needs glass around it, to see the bubble-ation, the rising of them, coffee colored with the sun giving it a cherry block on one side. The glass has a frosting on it from the cold RC and my fingerprints. As I near the bottom of it I see more sun in the liquid. As my thirst disappears so does the RC. A belch rumbles inside, escapes with a taste of lithiation. The glass is empty. And I have flown well more than half a century back to a porcelain kitchen table in a yellow stuccoed house, or a dusty set of steps leading up to a country store with a pair of RAINBO BREAD screen doors that squeak and slam behind me as I sit and watch a car pass that ruffles chickens. They curse the driver. Then they say where am I? and peck the road again. I return my bottle to the counter and spend the nickel on a PAYDAY bar. Life is good when the glass is empty, don't tell me it's not.
Theodore Worozbyt

My Father’s Punishment

He sat in the chair and didn't move.  
There had been a war. His father was a Master  
Sergeant in it for years and then it was over. 
He thought about his father killing only men. 
It was the war to end all wars, like the other war, 
only bigger. The chair sat against the dining  
room wall beneath the grandfather  
clock with a picture of a bluebird in the glass. 
The bells of the clock chimed the quarter 
hour, twice on the half. He listened. In the kitchen 
his father cracked an egg into a frozen mug, poured beer on it, 
swallowed, lit a Tampa Nugget, opened the backdoor 
and went out into the backyard where the coop was 
and the pecan tree and the garden. 
Then started the Buick and backed out, forgetting. 
He saw everything about the chair, 
the mahogany sap clasped beneath the stiff gloss 
of grain and cell, each embroidered stitch 
in the flat green silky bottom. His sister and mother 
and grandpa and grandma gathered into the kitchen 
and the women began to make the steamy 
hot-soft, olive-oily sounds of cooking, an oak spoon 
stirring onions, the knife-grunt through bread, the cold  
sigh of jars, sweet gherkins thumping onto the relish plate. 
Come eat, his mother said. He's scared, his sister said. 
You eat now or you don't eat, his grandmother said. So 
you don't want to eat, more for me. 
His grandfather said, Shaddup, and they started eating. 
The green dial on the radio deepened then faded. 
His mother was the last to go to bed. 
The house got quiet in the dark 
where he was waiting, and he listened to the planks cool 
and the planes go over, like voices from far away.
Theodore Worozbyt

Hunger

January 17th: I cannot dream
him alive now, with first one, then fifteen years gone, now
twenty-nine in redivision, cannot bring to focus
our hands gripped on the rake in the sleep-dark November air.
Something churns beneath the stubbled grandfatherly skin
of his face, straining to release, releasing
churns of black tissue, him leering like
the dummy becoming the ventriloquist becoming the dummy
on the talent show stage
in Columbus, Georgia, where the two of us sat in the audience
with my grandmother and watched the red, white and blue of sequins
spatter light as my cousin tap-danced her way
out of my petty, famished heart.
He must have smelled my shame.
Sometimes now he speaks through
a metallic whirl of flies
constellating the dung he composted for the garden.
He offers dripping-cold
cans of Budweiser from the Fort Benning Post, and—unrecallable—
a new way to plant staked garden rows
of better boys, beefsteak, Roma plum tomatoes,
the first two for slicing, the last for simmered gravies.
~

Raised on two continents, he left
New York at nine, when his father was forced
to quit the rope factory. His father died three months later,
hemp fibers twisting through the blood-filled sponges
of his lungs. At eighteen, he started getting letters
from his older brother, Harry. Come home, come back
to America before you get conscripted
into the Polish Army.
You will marry, the Czech woman
prophesied at the carnival, a small, dark and pretty girl. You will be rich.
His mother died of cancer, so he had to go back
to a country he couldn’t recall.
He odd-jobbed on a farm outside Albany, lucky
in those days just to be scrawny; the doctor
prescribed food, the bland precious slime of raw eggs, one
each day in a frozen mug, topped by an inch of beer.
Can hunger, like consumption, be disease? Forty years,
ten in active service, twenty making cabinets and furniture
on the Post, the last dime a retirement
into the details of chewing
the holes into his heart, swallowing his heart,
pepperoni stick by cheese wedge, into the ground.
~
He volunteered for two hours KP each morning before reveille,
peeling potatoes while the mess sergeant
plated him up with over-easy eyeballs and sugar-thick joe
(once, he said, a baker’s dozen scrambled in officer’s butter,
smothered in catsup and sausages).
Her father liked how John, just a kid soldier, went to mass,
so Sundays meant he had a little vodka afterward
with Papa Longobardi, and he’d sit with his bride
on the brownstone steps,
talking Poland and how, he couldn’t believe it, the waste,
when the excess meat turned green and stank
the company had burial detail.
It was 1940 and it wasn’t long
before he shipped out. Viola stood on the dock,
gripping a cigar-box in her white-gloved hands,
my father sound asleep in the carriage.
~
The First Infantry Division took him
to Africa, France, Germany, Sicily; he was
Master Sergeant John Benny W., that’s
how the telegrams read, and the addresses on the stack
of letters he received at the front, stuffed
into his breast pocket and never read
because they took a chunk of shrapnel instead of him,
down to the bottom page.
(This is love, he said to me when I was ten,
unwillingly, untying a ribbon from the yellowed bundle
and showing me the cool, jagged point.)
~
January 17th: I am drinking Stolichnaya
from the bottle I keep in the freezer
and listening to his voice crackle back
from the recording he made inside the greenhouse.
He was transplanting Fireballs and Rutgers.
A small plane droned over on a March day:
I don’t know why, but every time
I get on this gol-durned thing
it makes me want to cry.
I drink and stare at the softened back page
of newsprint, no need now to read how he carried
his wounded commanding officer
through heavy shrapnel and enemy fire: Torina, 1943,
the accounts of his stars, three silver,
two bronze, the four purple hearts,
the allied national honors. By all accounts
his platoon was the first to hit Omaha Beach—
fifteen of twenty-nine survived—so I continue to search
for the grainy image of his face
in documentary footage of June 6, 1944.
I study the dunes on TV.

~

The Rembrandt coffee service, Danish blue with portraits
and trimmed in solid gold; the Hummel figures rosy and cheerful
as plumped parcels of propaganda; the frail
Dresden ballerinas skirted with sugar-stiffened lace;
champagne shells stemmed with the breasts
of Liberation chorus girls, all
stood silent in the dining room’s case of locked glass doors
through the nights he came home fattened
on boilermakers, Old Grand Dad and Bud, shell-deaf,
crazy and methodical as a wartime cartoon,
smashing lamps, phosphorescent clocks, chairs.
On the top shelf of the hand-rubbed bookcase,
the figured row of German steins, the tall one on the end
that plays The Third Man Theme, Viola’s favorite song.

~

The last April I went to see her, I went out back
into the cold morning air, behind the garage
where the furrows of the garden
dipped and rose like static waves or the blip
of his false pulse on a screen. My bare feet sank
into piedmont loam the rain hadn’t managed to flatten.
A second growth of Bermuda grass
stubbled the rows under heavy dew.
For once, beyond the hedge of red-tips and trumpet vine,
the neighbor’s Rottweilers were quiet
and I thought of the braided ropes of garlic
warding off nothing and no one
in the cement-floor darkness
of the washroom in the garage.
I climbed the ladder into the attic,
empty now; she cleaned it out herself,
leaving only ornaments
and captured Nazi rifles, the bluing gone
from their barrels, the stocks dry-rotted gray.
Now the acid burstings of Better Boys
and the peat-caked potatoes
uprooted for tureens of pirogies smothered
in sour cream and onion schquatki
come from my own troubled backyard, and god knows
the point, these decades later, continues to elude me.
The bread we ate then was black——
You dirty bum, he'd yell, Peaches the Warbling Parakeet
perched on his shoulder, pecking at his horn-rimmed glasses——
and I dipped it in the cup
of his morning coffee.
Not So Quiet Desperation: A Review of Patient Zero by Tomás Q. Morín

The artwork on the front cover of Tomas Q. Morín’s second book of poetry is oracular and chill. It’s by Jeremy Miranda (who sells his prints on Etsy, if you’re interested) and is titled Searching. It depicts cliff walls, a breaking tide, and below, in a womb-like space, amidst fibrous seaweed, a diver complete with a 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea-style helmet—faceless, untethered, perhaps unleashed. Patient Zero is written next to Morín’s name, in stark, yellow type. A provoking label, first carrier of a viral malady, a harbinger of outbreak. Could this book be the end of poetry as we know it? A fine arts pandemic? Or could it be a work that will spread its influence to the unexpecting masses? Will it be a thought-provoking contagion or merely a strain on readerly sensibilities?

It compels one to get out the ol’ Hazmat, round up some coffee, and commence a one-sitting investigation. Make sure you’re up-to-date on all your shots.

If for some reason apocalyptic hyperbole doesn’t push your atomic buttons, Patient Zero is also an interesting study as the follow up to Morín’s APR/Honickman First Book Prize winner, A Larger Country (2012). Much like the hit-maker’s first record, there are the conventional apprehensions of a sophomore slump. Expectations are high.

There are no indications, however, of Morín being a momentary success. From Texas, he is building upon the foundation of studies at John Hopkins University and awards to Bread Loaf, New York State Summer Writers Institute, and other conferences and centers of writerly prestige (a slightly different kind of training ground from a suburban garage, to continue the rockstar analogy). Today, he teaches and translates, and if you think that five years is a substantial duration for a follow-up, his translation of The Heights of Macchu Picchu by Pablo Neruda appeared in 2014, released by his current publisher Copper Canyon Press. During this time, Morín also coedited an anthology of essays about Philip Levine. He’s a genuine up-and-comer, one with a quick wit and intelligence, and Patient Zero develops as a rhythmic anxiousness of expression concerning what is to be found, lost, and perhaps, found again over the course of a life.

The first two poems of this new work serve as a microcosm and are packed with decodable material—clues of the fallout, indications of what plagues us. “Nature Boy,” which first appeared in Poetry magazine, alludes to a retired professional wrestler and provokes us to consider that ar-
tificial, ostentatious world where grown men (actually, drug-manufactured enormously grown men) play-act personas and perform feats of gymnastics that appear to inflict pain on each other but really don’t (or, rather, don’t to the extent to which they purport). The speaker of the poem talks about the ritualistic nature of human behavior, about forming collections that echo time and creatures prior. At the end of the poem, these hero-worshipers break out of the system, act out the acting, and spring “toward each other like animals” both “in love and at war.” This is a reminder that, really, when it comes down to it, both are acts of passion, defying agendas no matter how calculated. Our rituals, created and followed to provide order amid the chaos, take a sharp turn from the straight and narrow when outbreaks of it occur.

Throughout Patient Zero, readers must take on the challenge to apply meaning to both the adherence and dissent of complex characters. In the second poem, “Saudades,” the speaker says, “how glorious it is to make the past present…” And how can she do that? Through language? We look to Morín to provide more clues. In this poem, he invokes his interest in translation, the ongoing exploration to make sense of other languages, rewording the stories of others. Saudades, we find, is a Portuguese word with no direct translation, coming close to “miss you” or “regard.” It is a clue that even in its discovery eludes being a clue. When the speaker of the poem states that Andrade “was in the air,” it puts the reader off-balance again and back to Google. One finds that this is a name, a surname of Galician origin, the family name of knights and lords. Further decoding develops from there, that there is a Jewish branch with this family name that originates in Portugal.

Okay, so, maybe we’re getting somewhere.

Another hint seems to be the mention of the samba, which is Brazilian (where people speak Portuguese, of course), having its roots in the West African slave trade and African religion.

The religious or near-religious permeates here. Both poems speak of birds. There are references to feathers, and one thinks of the symbolism, the immortality of the peacock, the descending of the dove. The speaker in “Nature Boy” says he’s a Christian of the Old Testament. He preaches of a wrestler with immaculate hair, if not conception. Swine are spoken of, and so is ritualistic animal sacrifice. There’s a synthesis of conscientious devotion in which doctrines, like boys, collide.

We must all be devoted to something—entertainment, nature, divinity, literature—and so the ebb and flow of discipleship becomes a topic in the dissertation.

At points in the text, it appears that the author is a priest, other times a sincere bard, and occasionally a pop-culture philosopher. One can’t help but notice that the name Tomas Q. Morín resembles that of a monk. And if he is not of a Christian religious order, as it appears he is not, he has invented the contemplation of some other devotion. And what is this meditation?
When the speaker of “Saudades” says she is a disciple of “rough grief,” she indicates the tone of what’s to come. Suffering is the condition that surpasses understanding, but it is articulated by every generation, and often attempts are made to find a solution for it. Despair, the virus that arrives in character, as executor. Sadness like a wave. As one continues to read *Patient Zero*, it isn’t poetry that reveals itself to be the spreading virus, but heartache.

The search for meaning and the effort to find alternatives for survival is clearly not unprecedented in American letters. If anything, Morín’s writing is an extension of the “Theory of Being” that flourished during the early Nineteenth Century when Emerson, Thoreau, and others took part in a movement to establish what the human condition was all about once and for all.

The title “Nature Boy” provokes one to think of Thoreau. In 2017, many celebrated the man who was born in Concord, MA 200 years ago, and who, over time, has grown to be America’s mythical litterateur, speaker of nature and protest. Over the summer, much was published concerning his sojourn to Walden Pond, his venture into Maine, and as Douglas Brinkley of *The New York Times* put it, the “Thoreauvian inspiration” that has impacted us all.

While the connection between *Patient Zero* and the philosopher of Concord may not be apparent, Morín is joining America’s poetic tradition as an explorer of estrangement and belief.

In his poem “Calle A Calle,” the speaker remarks, “So I am tired of being a man” who lives in “a sea of creation and ash.” Here is the same sort of self-pity and misery that drove Thoreau out of town. And what is at its root? The speaker here opines that he doesn’t even want to continue as a root! This anguish is an illustration of the lingering urge, the ongoing feeling that we want to be shaken by our everyday experiences. Not lulled painlessly to the grave. Here the speaker continues:

I’m done with beauty…
…with perfuming the wounds of the world
and so I retreat to the ugly heart,
that unpopulated, suspended
acre of island, where, at the right time of year,
one can walk unmolested the miles
and miles of beach and hear nothing.

Like an Adam or an Eve expelled, this patient enters the fallen world, finds himself an alien, and then retreats into himself, already infected.

How do we balance the social? By isolation? Can we find something in our own rhythm, ugly though it may be, that bridges the gulf between hope and despair, giving and selfishness, love and disagreement? Thoreau again to the center.

Part of the heartache in these poems seem to be drawn by way of our greatly populated earth and the limited amount of unique, original
experiences available: to fail to be the first to see, the first to truly love. We find that everything we do has been done before, written about before. But life keeps going on anyway, so we keep searching. Maybe we will discover a better way.

But we don’t.

Morín writes that “Monday burns like oil,” and so we devolve into a routine, the work week, with apathy and boredom. Through the cinema and television, we seek diversion by way of mystery, murder, apocalypse. We obsess. We are haunted. The kind of haunting that comes of daily concerns. From time to time, we question how the immaterial plays a role. We walk the trail and endure the trial of the contemporary life. We are glad sometimes. We suffer.

There is little reprieve for the characters and speakers in Patient Zero, much like Thoreau, who after all didn’t find what he was really looking for at Walden Pond (if he had, he would have never left). In this book, even the stones and the gardens are contaminated—there are no flowers without weeds, no fires that do not burn down to ash. At its best, it articulates the feeling that there is something out there, something alien, casting a shadow over the world and compelling a desire for something strictly pure.

To these speculations, Morín brings his A-game. It’s for the reader to judge which poems come from the gut and which skirt what seem to be his real convictions. There’s a certain tension between what appears to be autobiographical material and the asides that unpack themes that rift out of secondary experience and education.

But Morín is undeniably a true wordsmith, and Patient Zero is a quest by way of evocative language and acute observation. Readers descend through verse and rise along the slopes of situation and into dreamscape. Just when the mind or form of a speaker grows too abstract, these poems return to the present moment, to the physical world, abruptly and convincingly.

And there is more here than narrative and style. It is also occupied with sound. With acoustics. With echoes. The way the mouth shapes itself to speak. The way the world sometimes ends in a “splat and squish.” One doesn’t read it at times as much as listens to it, feeling the resonance of a sturdy, quality voice. The reader, too, joins the knight’s errand, carrying the sounds, as in the last poem of the book, like one whale greeting another.

The back-cover synopsis claims that Morín has depicted “love gone sideways.” But I contend that it more aptly demonstrates how life, art, and faith twist and turn, peak, refrain, stain, release, and then throttle us again. In that way, he explicates the notion that every person encounters life on planet earth as a kind of paradoxical first inhabitant—like Thoreau exploring Maine which he worried was already spoiled, but to us would seem primitive and nearly untouched—searching for meaning, looking for clues. In Patient Zero, old words and new, in whatever language found, refract, break open, merge only to diverge, and become stories told and stories forgotten. So, spread the word before it’s too late.
Review: Marvels of the Invisible by Jenny Molberg

Jenny Molberg’s debut book of poetry, *Marvels of the Invisible*, winner of Tupelo Press’s Berkshire Award, features poems that are accessible to new and experienced readers of poetry. This collection touches on and ties together themes of life, death and loss and is split into three different sections with an infinity symbol dividing each. Part one focuses on the fragility of life. Part two is mostly concerned with mortality, and part three expands the collection’s focus to earth and space.

The poem “Echolocation” precedes the three parts of the book and introduces the ideas of life, death and moving on from loss in startlingly specific ways. Her use of figurative language is dynamic and lyrical.

You were the bird inside my vein’s blue trees.
That night, I woke: I remembered you—
A small heartbeat inside me gone still.
I try to convince myself of an afterlife:
When a whale dies, it lives a second time.
It must drop to great depths, then an ecosystem
Is born of its body… (6)

The experience of a miscarriage in “Echolocation” conveys a personal grief, while the line “I lose what I love and stay alive” conveys an awareness of life passing. This haunting poem introduces readers to her eclectic aesthetic that blends art, science and music.

Part one highlights tiny but surprising connections between the natural and human worlds. For example, her mother’s breast cancer and the pain from a tiny bee-sting. Another one of these surprises is the dissection of the caterpillar and the revealing of “two wing-buds, tucked/ tight inside the skin” (Molberg 17). The fragility of life in illness and death waiting quietly nearby is shown in “The Dream, the Sleeping Gypsy” where a lion is sleeping beside

My mother the gypsy.
I, the pinpricked sky.
The lion her cancer” (Molberg 23).

The tiny danger, the cancer is at first unseen in her breast before it metastasizes. “Superficial” is unforgiving in its description of the fragility of life through a child born with its heart outside its chest. “It pulses in a membrane sac like a frog’s translucent throat” (Molberg 21). Exposed and vulnerable, the delicate items of life also animate the memorable poem,
“Nocturne for the Elephant.”

Nearly all the fifteen poems in part two explore mortality and consequently grief. This second section evolves with pregnancies, the innocence of a child’s point of view. Sickness, cases of stillborn and murders have powerful representations. This section concludes with “Invocation” and these poignant lines: “Praise my bronchial pathways, breathing their thousand branches, / the bluebonnet, and Baby Blue, the old Ford pickup. Praise this land,” (Molberg 47). These varied images show the resilience of life and lead us into three.

Part three addresses the cycle of life as the poems consider the power of realizing what it is to die. Life and passing lives are described as a “momentary shadow” (Molberg 67). There is now a growing awareness of death and what may be afterwards in “After Twenty Junes”:

When the phone rings, it’s the boy
Who’s now gone. He wants to play army.
He is the expanse of my blackening sky.
I do not know yet that I will feel
His phantom hand when I’m drunk at the funeral
(Molberg 65).

The idea of ghosts and haunting memories, for me, made “After Twenty Junes” one of my favorite pieces in the entire collection. Revisiting her childhood, she thinks of and is haunted by parts of her past. The idea of the ghost at the funeral inspired an intense reaction of being creeped out on my first reading and then sadness after re-reading it. The single line, “His phantom hand when I’m drunk at the funeral” (Molberg 65) is one of many powerful lines that characterize this collection.

Part three ends with “Storm Coming” where the narrator looks for herself in her father:

He’ll laugh a laugh
That knows its own ending. And the drops fall,
just like he promised. The storm is birth and death
in only minutes. So we laugh, knowing
we don’t have the time to love it.

These memorable lines speak for themselves--Jenny Molberg’s book, Marvels of the Invisible with its rich and melancholy narratives reveals the marvels of the invisible world for us.
CONTRIBUTORS’ NOTES

Mick Cochrane is the author of four novels and has published stories and poems in a number of journals, including The Sun, Five Points, Cincinnati Review, and Southern Poetry Review. He teaches writing and literature at Canisius College in Buffalo, NY.

Judith Cody is a poet, composer and photographer who has won national awards in poetry, music and photography and is published in over 120 national and international journals. A poem is in the Smithsonian’s Institute’s permanent collection, in Spanish and English. Poems were quarter-finalists for the Pablo Neruda Prize and won honorable mentions from the National League of American Pen Women. Cody wrote the internationally noted biography of the American composer, “Vivian Fine: A Bio-Bibliography,” “Eight Frames Eight,” and “Woman Magic.” She edited a PEN Oakland anthology, and the first “Resource Guide on Women in Music”. One of her poems was chosen from a world selection by the Norton Center for the Arts and featured in a gallery exhibit. Her WWII B-17 photography ranks #1 in the world on Google.

Noel Connely has had poems in “Chelsea”, “Main Street Rag”, “Coe Review”, “Lalitamba” “Yellow Medicine Review”, “Willow Review” and many other publications in Ireland and the US. He has taught Irish for many years in Dunlavin. He is currently seeking a publisher for a first collection.


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Henry Goldkamp has lived in major cities along the Mississippi River his entire life—a fancy way of saying Saint Louis and New Orleans. Recent work appears in *Wild Violet, Third Wednesday, BULL, Blood Orange Review, b(OINK), Sierra Nevada Review, Pretty Owl, Permafrost*, and others. His work has been twice nominated for 2017’s Best of the Net. His public art projects have been covered by *Time* and NPR.


Richard Jones Richard Jones is the author of seven books from Copper Canyon Press, including *The Correct Spelling & Exact Meaning* and *The Blessing*. Editor of Poetry East and its many anthologies—such as *Paris, The Last Believer in Words*, and *Bliss*—he also edits the free worldwide poetry app, “The Poet’s Almanac.” A new book, *Stranger on Earth*, is forthcoming from Copper Canyon in June 2018.

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**Charles Parsons** writes in the township of Black Horse, Ohio. He recently had poems in the Lake Effect and Palaver, and a story he wrote appeared not long ago in the Chicago Quarterly Review.

**David Sapp** is a writer, artist and professor living along the southern shore of Lake Erie in North America. He is a 2018 Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award grant recipient for poetry. His poems have appeared widely in a number of venues across the United States, in Canada and the United Kingdom. His publications also include articles in the *Journal of Creative Behavior*; chapbooks *Close to Home* and *Two Buddha*; and his novel, *Flying Over Erie*.

**Claire Scott** is an award winning poet who has been nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize. Her work has been accepted by the Atlanta Review, Bellevue Literary Review, Enizagam and Healing Muse among others. Claire is the author of *Waiting to be Called* and the co-author of *Unfolding in Light: A Sisters’ Journey in Photography and Poetry*.

**Natalie L. Tombasco** is a poetry candidate in the MFA program at Butler University, where she is a reader for *Booth: A Journal*. Her poems have appeared in *The Poydras Review* and *The Minnesota Review*. She lives in Staten Island, NY.

**Brian K. Turner** is a disabled veteran, having spent four years in the Army as a 19K20 (tank gunner). He then spent a number of years attending university, ultimately earning an MS degree in environmental science that he’s never put to any practical use. He currently operates a small animal rescue sanctuary. He spends a lot more time with animals than people. Both animals and people seem happy with this arrangement. **James Valvis** has placed poems or stories in Ploughshares, River Styx, Hubub, Southern Indiana Review, Rattle, The Sun, and Best American Poetry 2017. His fiction was chosen for Sundress Best of the Net and won 2nd Place in Folio’s Editor’s Prize. His work has also come in 2nd for the Asimov’s Readers’ Award. A former US Army soldier, he lives near Seattle.
Kimberly White’s poetry has appeared in The Massachusetts Review, Cream City Review, Big Muddy, Dark Matter, and other journals and anthologies. She is the author of four chapbooks, Penelope, A Reachable Tibet, The Daily Diaries of Death, and Letters To A Dead Man; two novels: Bandy’s Restola, and Hotel Tarantula. Find poetry and collage art on her website, www.purplecouchworks.com, as well as on Facebook, and various refrigerator doors.

Howard Winn’s writing has appeared in such journals as Southern Humanities Review, Dalhousie Review, Long Story, Galway Review, Antigonish Review, and Blueline. His B. A. is from Vassar College, M. A. from Stanford, and doctoral work at N. Y. U. He is Professor of English at SUNY.

Guinotte Wise writes and welds steel sculpture on a farm in Resume Speed, Kansas. His short story collection (Night Train, Cold Beer) won publication by a university press and enough money to fix the soffits. Four more books since. A Pushcart nominee, his fiction and poetry have been published in numerous literary journals including Atticus, The MacGuffin, Santa Fe Writers Project, Shotgun Honey and The American Journal of Poetry. His wife has an honest job in the city and drives 100 miles a day to keep it. Some work is at http://www.wisesculpture.com.

Theodore Worozbyt is the recipient of grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Alabama and Georgia Arts Councils. His books are The Dauber Wings (Dream Horse Press, 2006) and Letters of Transit, winner of the Juniper Prize (The University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), and Smaller Than Death (Knut House Press, 2015). The City of Leaving and Forgetting, his most recent chapbook, appears in Country Music.