The Hiram Poetry Review
THE HIRAM POETRY REVIEW

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# THE HIRAM POETRY REVIEW

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EDITOR’S NOTE

Dear readers,

Please note that we are accepting poems via Submittable now. We ask that you only submit once via Submittable per calendar year. If you want to submit more, please send us poems by regular mail. We still accept electronic submissions from international subscribers.

I would also like our readers to know that we are not charging a reading fee for Submittable. With that mind, I want to recognize the fine work done by all my editorial assistants, but especially Hailey Toporcer and Danni Lynn who are moving on to other adventures literary and otherwise.

From poems about art, veteran service and adjustment, social injustice, little league games, football games, to spring giving way to winter, there are many memorable poems in this issue. Yet, our staff would like to give a special shout out to Marilee Richards’ poem, “Solo,” which shows how poetry can capture the excitement and menace of being alone in the world.

Willard Greenwood
Editor, HPR
Deborah Bacharach

Reading a Book on Bundy

When Bundy was alive on death row,
My boyfriend's best friend's mom married him.
Then his best friend had to move.

Back then I wasn’t worried
about her or even the friend who I met
just once at night in my parents’ kitchen,
my parents not in. I preened, unafraid
of the big glass window
in front of the dark front yard.

Ted Bundy is dead. 1974, ‘77
even ‘87 dead and yet
I am in the basement in the U district,
deep night and Ted Bundy crawls
through my silent window,
the log in his hand, my skull.

I am far from home, my body
in the leaves, my head comes to rest
by lichen covered rocks.

I am at Sammamish Park on a sunny day
being asked to help a man with a cast,
such a good looking gentle man.

I’ve known so many good men,
so many good gentle men.
Christopher Brooks

Slow Burn

eyed they removed from Americans
the ability to sit still
but I’m here
every night a slow burn
tobacco painting the stars blue
sometimes the sky catching fire
far from efforts to engineer
spontaneity from the culture
their sagging shelves of bric-a-brac
small talk
escapisms
the need to be entertained
I’m here wondering
if I’m still an American
What We Used To Know
For Afghanistan

Behind concrete and barbed wire, a laughing
dove shit on my notebook. An Obvious sign.

I heard they tied a tiny bomb to one once, but it
refused to fly over the target. Out of character

perhaps. They should call them what we do.
Condemn it to mourning this borderline country.

We’ve learned nothing since climbing down
from trees. Clocks and smart phones were bad

enough. They day birds become an air force is the
day to boil down the bones of our humanity. Tear
down the schools. Plant trees in the rubble and
watch them grow tall. Hire birds to be our teachers

for free. Learn to climb again into green canopies,
where they’ll teach us what we used to know.
Mick Cochrane

Intake

she asks what
are your strengths
you say ignoring
my problems she
asks what are
your weaknesses you
say everything else she
says what are your
goals for being here you
say not killing
yourself she doesn’t
look like a nurse
she’s wearing jeans
like a regular
person like a mom
she sips water you
take a deep breath
To My Old Age

You are waiting for me patiently now
at the coffee shop, having arrived
twenty minutes early, just in case,
your blinding white sneakers laced up
tight and double-knotted, newspaper
on the table, open to your favorite page.
I’m running late, forgive me, I have just
a few more fierce and foolish things I want
to do: one more punk album to record
before I tackle the Great American
Songbook, one, maybe two, more seasons throwing
heat before I get crafty, a few more bones

I want to break, a few more strays I need
to take in. And one more language to learn.
Dough Flaherty

Dream Scene

I have not written a poem today. My non-poem writes itself—a child fallen from an idea. My non-poem writes itself on my hand, worn on my sleeve. When all is said and unsaid, I hope to leave no trace, no more than geese across the sky. Instead of no feathers, I go about my business naked, or in boxer shorts like Randall Patrick McMurphy—(black satin with white whales and red eyes) a living-symbol I learned from the cuckoo’s nest. Big Nurse is a nightmare swaddled in white like her fogging machine confusing what’s real. Back in some chromatic neural recess, a faint light asks that I reconsider the slimming possibility of my afterlife. Sure, like the half-life of radium, or a gerbil frizzed-out after a billion heart beats.

Endings are all the same, cellular or celluloid—the view, a dead screen when the lights go out after some impaired fledgling shortles the Woody Woodpecker song, and an African tribe is hacked to death across a revolving headline. I wake myself out of bad dreams into a scene almost scary as the droning, numbing possibility of the hereafter. Then as sugar from the frosted flakes kicks in, the circuitry fires up the rest of the dream. And the buzzards glided down like in a bad scene at the O.K. Corral, and cut me down at high noon with a belly full of lead while Marilyn Monroe lifted her white blowsy dress and laughed as I fell at her feet and tried to kiss her red patent high heel shoes as I died.

I tell myself this is really happening, Which allows me to bargain time Like my hand shaking dice until the croupier nods off at the crap table,
so I can keep on ticking
as a horse lopes by and I find myself
running alongside, swinging
with the ease of a Ronal Reagan
into the saddle, as the whole
cardboard town whoops with excitement.
The Marilyn Monroe lifting her skirt bit
was the only lie I’ve told all day.
Well, okay, three lies. This wasn’t a dream.
It really happened decades ago, during puberty,
a period during which I learned almost
too late, that Holden Caulfield was right,
that we are all phony-sons-of-bitches.

And the last lie— I don’t wish for black boxer
shorts with whales and red eyes— I wear them.
It is maturity which squeezes out the truth,
makes me think geese, think of leaving nothing.
I have not written a poem today, yet
my poetry-trail strings the continent
like toilet-papered trees at a thousand
homecoming games. Someday, when all
the inky poetry lines the cages of parakeets,
I will shudder once, and learn to fly.
Peter Grandbois

Wondering which names to sing

Sometimes I am so small
I fasten myself to crickets
Other times the geese curve
Around my horizon

Some mornings I am more memory
Than person and can only hope
To find my body within the pines
Beyond my back yard

There are days when I am
A tiny seizure of joy
And others when I resist kneeling
Before the loom of mid-afternoon light

It's never too late to become
The low cloud carried to dark, to hear
The voices outside the cell
of your cauterized fear

To wake each morning is to break
Into the wounded fragrance of bees,
The fluttering feathers of leaves,
Invisible threads unstitching the world
Jonathan Greenhause

An All-American Family Feast

It’s less a book-burning, more a barbeque, since as soon as the dusty tomes are ash-licked by the flames,
gargantuan metal grates are laid over the embers, ribs, burgers, & hotdogs tossed sizzling upon the outdoor grill.

My wife & I bring the 2-book minimum: One, a tattered copy of “Huckleberry Finn”; the other, a convoluted novel by someone with a Jewish surname. I’m not sure, but the buzz-cut gun-toting guard seems happy with our selection. We glance around. Everyone looks like us – which is comforting – like we’re part of one big family, protected within a skin-deep cocoon. With a backdrop of hate speech & slurs, our mouths begin watering with the expectation of breaking our hours-long fast, & we’re proud of ourselves for having skipped breakfast. When we spot the prime cuts perfectly cooked, we don’t immediately realize how similar they are to human forms, how we almost register the marbled-slice of a calf, a rounded shoulder-joint, a clenched fist or the stare of an open eye; yet even when we do, we judiciously remind ourselves we’re hungry for sacrifice, & this is no place to criticize.
Dan Grote

Shut Not Your Doors (Don’t Lock ’Em Either)
After Walt Whitman

Could be, I’m bringing sand to the beach
But proud library, patient reader,
Shut not your doors to me.

Forth from the war within myself,
I bring you that which I have made,
I gift you the book you’d never write.

Okay, maybe not a book, as such,
More of a grimoire of the
Voodoo, the hoodoo, the things that

No one like you ever would do.
My words not doing half
The justice to the injustice I’ve

Done to myself. You couldn’t be
Me even if you wanted to, you
Wouldn’t know all I’ve tried,

To forget what I’ve become.
From the land of the locked
Door behind the wall, I say

Shut not your doors to me
Proud library, but save me just
A spot upon your shelf, a

Quiet place, where I might collect
Some dust with those I admire most.
On the Corner

Boys
standing under
the streetlight
leaning against a car
tight jeans and
loose tee shirts
one of them
my son

calling as the girls
pass from the movie
“Honey, honey
I’m yours”
a hot night in
midsummer
all the leaves
restless
my son

seventeen
oblivious as I turn
the corner
in my dark car
a shadowy
passerby
suddenly in
his territory
Henry Hughes

Winter Fishing

Barn burnt down,
Now I can see the moon
–Masahide

Peter, Paul and I go fishing
a week before Christmas.
The only other guy on the snowy mountain lake
motors close, and I shout, Any luck?

He says his house burned down last month—
Lost everything but my boat and some gear.
We say, Sorry. He waves and trolls away.

Paul catches an icy rainbow, I snag some stiff pants,
and Peter heats ginger rum toddies on a propane stove,
steamy steel cups dashed with cloves and cinnamon.
We drink the heat,
toss drained spices overboard.

The cloves sink, the curled sticks bob in our wake.
Paul loves science, calculating wind, distance, density,
the generative powers of plant tissue.
Peter points to a sunny slope where an idea might grow.

And I talk about a ranger who once scolded me
on a sixth-grade field trip
after I threw an orange peel into the forest—
It’s not native. It changes the soil, the whole ecosystem.

My mother packed that juicy orange in my lunch bag
six months before she died of cancer
on a bitter winter night.

That man with the burned down house strips to shorts,
marveling over a fragrant warm breeze
and a yellow flowered cinnamon tree,
toucans and monkeys,
colorful fish leaping
from its roots.
And Not Fishing

Waking up 4am
in bed with our argument.
You in the other room. Trucks braking into town,
dogs barking, anger
circling back on what you said, I said, should’ve said.
Work in a few hours, and not fishing,
when I listen for wind, brew extra coffee, dress
for the weather, load the boat, double checking—
oars, anchor, net, rods. And the note
I always leave: Good Morning, C,
On Heart’s Lake. Have the best day possible.
See you tonight. Waves of love, H.
And if there were no note,
you’d have already left me, or decided to forgive
and come along.
The Boy Who Never Came of Age

Summer in the upstate bungalow colony had gone great for this 13-year-old. His father remained back in the Bronx, and peer pressure that hamstrung him there eased here. Girls were crazy about him. He was crazy about girls. Humping in and out of the swimming pool, playing pinball, poker and softball, Karen and Dory asking to see his dick, apple picking, his almighty hard on, being struck by a heady strange notion: *I can be me.* But tomorrow was summer’s end. His mind echoing Dory telling him to meet her at 7 by the jukebox in the lounge of the Raleigh Hotel. Big brown glistening eyes, she said she wanted them to *share a night to remember.* Wanting his chance to be alone with Dory more than anything, he’s game but jumpy. Same day his father appears. After supper, Mom feels threatened, asks her boy not to go. Unlike his father, he’s sickened by violence. But he’s no momma’s boy, and swore to himself he’d grab his Tony Oliva bat and bash his father’s head in should he ever hit his mother again. No thinking. Just swing hard, over and over. Mom persisted, pleading with him not to go. Eyeing his father, the fucker, hot for Dory, and wanting to believe Mom would be safe amid this cluster of adjoining bungalows, he was gone. A mile into a starlit jukebox night … jitters galore in his gut, trying to calm himself, thinking, hell, after tonight, with Dory living in Canada, we may never see each other again.

At the lounge, Cream’s “White Room” blasts through the smoke-filled air. A sloppy kiss with a lot of tongue turns long and passionate.
He forgets he's nervous. She's lavender. Then there’s shouting, “Ted! Ted!” It’s Nat, Karen’s kid brother, hopping around like a spastic marionette, “Ted! Your mother!” Running past Nat, into the blackness that minutes ago shined all luminous and starry, he wants out of his body, like during emergency hernia surgery, when he was a little etherized boy. But his body’s a dark horse, galloping steadily, wanting not to get there … An adult pulls him into a bare room in a bungalow … doesn’t recall who … left there alone … thwack of a slamming door … no one telling him his father was the killer. And Mom was dead.
Water

Tonight I talked with two nice robots on my cellphone. Both were female. The first robot politely asked what medications she might refill. The second inquired of my daughter’s name and identification number and why she’d be missing school tomorrow. The hour was late. My wife had fallen asleep in bed but my daughter, sick with the flu, displayed true scholarly discipline, and was still up, writing a research paper on “Water” for English class. Water, she said, covered the planet—our rivers, lakes, oceans, and ice caps. We are made of water, she typed. As it happened, I’d carried a pitcher of water upstairs. After I kissed both dreaming wife and writing-in-spite-of-illness daughter good night, I sat in the dark and drank glass after glass of water, hoping water would somehow help me make it through the night until tomorrow, when once again like water I would give myself to anyone who needed me.
Cindy King

Petition 15

Dear God, in your great, gated community,  
God in your Cadillac Coup de Ville,  
please won’t you hear my prayers?  
Please don’t disappear my ceiling—  
I can already hear each time  
my neighbor’s wife calls him a loser,  
can’t bear to see him knock her against  
the dresser and onto the bedroom floor  
while their teenaged son texts his girlfriend  
in the living room, and I lie here alone  
on the king-sized bed that Tom built,  
gazing into fan blades and light.

Forgive me, God, for bending my knees  
in anything but prayer—for stroking cats,  
scrubbing floors, and yes, I’ve even tried yoga.  
I’m sorry for pressing my palms together  
without uttering your Name, for wasting  
my breath with words other than praise.  
For not knowing whether to say ah- or a-men.  
No, I haven’t composed an oratorio,  
I have no offering of psalm, paean, or panegyric  
But I beg you: please don’t fill another Baptist  
body with Jack and cola, set her behind the wheel  
of a Chevy Suburban and propel it  
through a red light into the next  
intersection, where what remains of my life  
sits and waits for the light to change.
Stefan Lovasik

Shining World

Some of them died.
Some of them were not allowed to.
Bruce Weigl, Elegy

what doesn’t kill us
breaks us into pieces
blows out the stray candles of our hope
as we chatter empty as wind
how obvious we become
lost in our angers our tremendous
dark parade of years
to undo
the grief born what grows in us
our humanness a question
echoes inside
the will to do good
do better
or a way out
or a momentary comfort like a child’s wish
to forget
but to know it is not always grace or strength
but a necessary burden we have
no choice but to live
as hard as we can
inside the echoes
inside the chaos
to lie down in our fears and horrors
feel their beauty
the way they lift us
to that shining world
inside this one
we will never fully know
Reincarnate
for Dr. V. Y.

In our eyes
we saw a river,
like the river near Cam Lo
where I saw her rise above the dust and tears.
She saw my eyes as protector,
her eyes, grace
that lifted us above the jungle
and danced in my suit of blood,
her grief jeweled áo dài, *
above this disturbing world
as our river filled us
and let our bodies open
into the flow
of constant waters
that break into this day.

* Pronounced “owzeye”: a traditional, tunic-like dress worn over pants in what was then known as South Vietnam.
Tony Magistrale

Not You

The long-distance marvel of sport technology
  There, at stadiums ten states away
Staring up at the same television screen
  With men with whom you would never
Otherwise associate, bonded together in this tavern’s semi-dark
  On beatific Sunday afternoons
While unfettered neighbors enjoy the last gems of summer—
  Out walking, raking leaves, playing with their children.
Not you, returning to the same plastic chair
  That welcomes you back to futility, hoping, sometimes
Praying, against the inevitable misplay that dooms
  Another promising start. How many years
Of duplicating such misery, the derision from a neglected wife
  And callous men fated to following teams proven
Worthy of their devotion. Not you,
  Who exits squinting into the slanted sunlight
Of another lost Sunday, slightly buzzed
  From too many lukewarm beers,
But most of all, feeling like you have
  Just watched your former girlfriend,
Her perfect hair and too tight jeans,
  Walking down the street, holding the hand
Of some stranger who will never
  Become your friend.
Scott Mandoulet

Rehabilitized

I disguised, I rationalized
My supersized anesthetize
Am hypnotized, am mesmerized
Am paralyzed

Realized, recognized, compromised
Scrutinized, despised, demonized

Incomprehensibly demoralized
Institutionalized
Psychoanalyzed, dehumanized
Compartmentalized
Conceptualized
Computerized
Memorized
Digitized
Re-sized

Mind sanitized
Body sterilized
Soul vaporized
Heart mechanized

Ready to socialize

I apologize…
Gary Metras

Early Ice

Already the Oxbow begins to freeze
along the shore, just a thin crust
of translucent, sun-shimmering ice, for now.

Think of the small pan fish
and minnows starting
to swim in widening arcs as more and more join
this dance to descend
to the deep pools that won’t freeze,
and where bass and pike celebrate their arrival.

Think of frogs and salamanders
slowly adjusting their blood, their flesh,
and burrowing into the muddy bed
down below—
the last thing they do
is shut their eyes to the world.
When we reach the soccer field, morning sun has just struck, hitting the ground and shattering across the grass until the broad green field sparkles, a plain of diamond chips studded with ten-year olds. Soon the boys’ black cleats gleam with light soaked from the field, and the wet ball shines flashing between the boys, giant photon. Shards of light spray the air with every kick. The boys’ white jerseys glow until the boys are streaks of light slicing across the field, legs flashing, arms flashing folded wings. This is heaven for parents, heaven, our children before us, moving in joy, like light embodied, energy distilled, our whole world in one shining rectangle.
Daniel Morris

Blue Poles
For Carl Belz

“You just/can’t step/in ‘Mur/al’ like/you can/with ‘Aut/umn R.,’”
Declared “art whore of modest means from Flushing, Queens.”
He’d hopped the dollar Metrobus to stroll before restored
Tricolor marks that loop and whirl like western animals,
According to the broke and broken Cody Jungian. When FDR
Ceased Art as Feds prepared for War, Jack cancelled out
America’s “first painting of real power” (Greenberg’s view) --
According to a legend since debunked by Getty techies --
Once Peggy threatened cutting off his gross to decorate
The foyer to her manse on Sixty-First. He pissed the fire out.
Like me, the mural travelled East. My aim? To share what I
Once loved with my two sons. Eliciting the Harris biopic,
I half expected selfie lining rag. I’d soured on the thing itself
Appraised at hundred forty million. When had I stared until
I saw black clippers bob uneasy seas beneath maroon
In Texas Rothko? Too much Guerilla Girls and “German Ideology,”
To view pink marble trapezoids as other than “historic blocs”
Of Gramsci’s gallery of disregard. “Your sons agreed to view
The shocking new in Pei’s East Wing! You are a model dad.”
What else for me to praise? No wife or work that paid a living wage.
Bad knees prevented play. No Calliope or Erato. Perhaps
My boys would never find in Twombly scrawls the feathered wings
Of Phaedrus. Pale expression of ideal reflection? Soul’s initial state?
“Shamanic accidents were not mere sketch to Jack,” my guide allowed.
“But Krasner was superior from edge to edge and right to left.
Her genius hubby didn’t even know if what he’d made was art
Until she said it so. You’ve got to show your boys the Whitney.
You’ll see Lee Krasner breathes when you take in ‘Free Space.’”
He’d caught the bus to book a passage into Pollock’s nature.
I measured Duchamp’s mischief diagnostic: “Marcel mocked
The action painter’s confrontation with demonic force.”
“Mistaken,” said Art Whore, who tugged on turquoise studs.
“Dada proposed Ms. Peggy buy obscure. Duchamp hung ‘Mural.’
The joke: Jack’s painting could be rolled and then unfurled.”
I measured solitude by how my partner longed for me to know
How Lee cut up herself in two in “Girl Before a Mirror.” We both
Now courted company. Few friends survived the seventies.
I scanned ideas; he studied vortex smears and splatterings.
“A late lunch time.” An overture to dine? Polite finale?
He knew I’d brought two kids, but what had fact to do with want? “When visiting the Whitney, please observe ‘The Guardian.’ The space itself is something else.” “The Breuer on Madison?” “Renzo Piano in meatpacking ward.” Lamented mentor, Carl, Taught Pollock organized environments into organic fractals From ’48 to ’52. And then you note thick bars divide the field In quads. Look at ‘Blue Poles.’ Jack dipped a two by four To unify a messy web when he lost contact with the canvas.” “I’ll look for those blue poles,” said my companion, passing on. I’d known neglect before, I droned, left flat in the arcade. My rhythm shifted after middle age from Olson breath to Frost Blank verse. Iambics signified blue poles. Where were my sons? Because East Wing was hardly jammed I didn’t fear their loss. I spun around a little bit. Was I the wheeling chariot or mere Charioteer? I couldn’t see to see the floor in front of me. With luck, my kids found me before I fell upon the atrium. They didn’t mind that I’d abandoned them. They didn’t need A guide. They’d not get lost if I encouraged them to stray. They had their cells. They knew to call a Lyft. Emerged, I asked my oldest son about his favored work. Ike pointed out A slight Blue Period and angry Kirchner head. “Are you depressed?” “Picasso’s could have been all white and I’d like that the most.” Before we left the gallery, we spotted speculation of how I.M. Imagined talk to those not near. We stared at walls with curves Devoted to glass booths. Recalling Battlestar Galactica, The shuttle pods transported us. Inside, of course, the nooks Lacked phones or Yellow Page. Compartments morphed To uselessness. Decoding altered stalls as installments, Pei’s future changed to de novo performance space. Imagining a found thing new, we blurred the lines Between exchange and private aims. Outside, DC became Gesamtkunstwerk. A purple cloud submerged marmoreal spires Diluting dreams that I could legislate mere doodling as script. We wandered through midsummer’s boil while I implored My sons to snap their cells before transmuted district signs. The city wrapped in nominalist glory of Cy Twombly, how could I claim intransitives outside were signaling address? I’d left My camera in Indiana. A blackboard world without calligraphy.
Cipher Divine Reality

Rage Against the Machine

Got a fit of raging against the machine/
hearing this techno pop but my 3rd eye open to the American Dream/

seems like a revolution is brewing or it could be another masonic diversion ensuing/

men in pursuit of power,
yet you came out a p*ssy picking up gunz cause you’re cowards/

fools wanna act street,
until you get processed like packed meat/

grow a conscience, surely will serve you well/
stop the nonsense you capitalists foreshadowing democracy while us commoners living in hell/

buster marks play unto the hand of the puppeteer,
learn your smarts or its back to sitting in the rear/

if you’re not a free thinker then you’re a mis-educated caged bird,
singing and dancing, juking and jiving while they stay ahead of the herd/

if you can’t remember the past then you’re condemned to repeat it,
I’m quoting an unknown author bcuz I dig it and mean it…
Marilee Richards

Solo

When a woman is cramped in the rain
and a ranger drives by who knows

of a shelter where she can stay dry

and she hears his pick-up drive off
then return

like a big dog come bounding up –
the engine running, running,

she thinks of the road crews who study
her like a map

truck drivers
who cast glances while they kick
perfectly sound tires or peer under
the hood as if somebody’s granny has toppled inside

truck idling, shimmery with heat

because seeing her creates a disturbance
in their atmosphere

and what she believes
is that some men
just can’t stand to see a woman travelling
alone in the unfenced outdoors, the knowing
she’s with no one

for company
who must need a ride

Hey, Girlie! Need a ride?

on her Daws Galaxy ten-speed rinsing out
her extra shirt and panties

in campground restroom sinks
across Utah, a cinnamon canyon; Colorado, a factory of trees
where sometimes a meadow of horses
   finds purchase

as if she’s going to waste –
   a piece
of fruit that spilled off the cart
   the way a breast tumbles
   from an unhooked bra

and is rolling away
   out of reach

as if a woman will spoil if someone,
if he, doesn’t make use of her –

so life-sized    so in his savannah,

   an escape from a Mason jar, constructed
from a butterfly’s small bones

carrying a flock of butterflies along like invitations
with her
   through an unfurling garden
   of he-manly men    animal
   in their sweat and their Stetsons and their John Deere hats
   thumbing
   through the pages of parts magazines,
   stomping manure from their work boots

up to her neck in the wild, sweet ecstasy    of their road.

It just gets on their nerves    is all –
her solitude being his opportunity

   in a night so shallow
you could wade across it with a spoon
   to where woman is pear
and man knife   keen-
   and ripe
under her skin as a mango.
Michael Rogner

Snow Geese

I don’t know the man who birthed me
in his bones – I know his name - I know
he has my chin and cheeks but I don’t know
his age - I know he’s married,
though I don’t know if his wife
loves him like my wife loves me –
I don’t know if he wakes at night
with her name being squeezed from him
by a ghost that has climbed the stairs
and leaned all its weight on his chest –
I don’t know if he stands alone in the dark
yard with bats dipping from the waxing moon
and listens to migrating geese, and if
he hears them I don’t know what he hears –
maybe the geese fly silent except for wings
tearing the sky like a child tearing paper
and his wife is at the window wondering why
he stands staring at constellations he can’t name
while bird shadows wink across the stars
Claire Scott

BRING WORDS
  for my three year old grandson

Bring words each day, just a few
tiptoe in and tuck them by his pillow
  more, juice, please
hide some under the couch along with missing legos,
TV remotes, a half-eaten milky way
  no, mine, no
in the cupboard by the stove filled
with mismatched containers
  uh-oh, all gone, by-by
put several in the pockets of his coat
so when his hands get cold
  mittens, hat, snow
after sliding the tallest slide ever
he will find them
  up, down, again
for some things there are no words
  the light in his father’s face
  the feel of his mother’s hair
  the snuggle of bedtime stories
  goodnight moon
but these he knows already
APORIA

Fresh out of god and vodka
a syllogistic dilemma
drive to St. Leo’s or to 7-Eleven
St. Leo’s requires no upfront cash
simply sit on a bench & look prayerful

maybe god will feel sorry for this lost lamb
reach down his heavenly hand & give me a boost
I could really use a boost today, god
but maybe you are too busy helping
the deserving, those who wipe

hospital floors with Lysol & love
who take the homeless home for a hot meal
even though they stink & steal your shoes
maybe you are not so pleased with your servant
who just helped herself to the entire tip jar at Starbucks

who doesn’t visit her mother at Mercy Care Center
those decrepit people simply too depressing
dozing & drooling in their wheelchairs
I almost went today O Lord, I truly did
but there was a critical Red Sox game

doesn’t that count at all
intentions are nine-tenths or something like that
don’t you agree?
I really could use a boost today, god
but 7-Eleven is the only sure thing
Chained Upright All Winter to a Transit Sign:
an Old Red and White Schwinn

On school mornings, I’d pull out
of the gas station across the street
and see shivering kids doing the bus stop stomp.
To their right the bike, its prickly handlebars
cranked to one side, poked at the world.
Odd hours, too, found me driving by,
one to purchase medicine in the middle of the night—
the bike with its link to a mystery owner,
seemed welded to starlight, and I wondered
why the bike had been abandoned.

In time, the predominant thought
while driving by was that the owner had died.
Spring arrived and something in me wanted
to get out, look the bike over, even check out
the sallow yellow plastic bottle rattling
on windy days in the bike’s wire basket.
But something in me also said
what I wished to see could be seen from the road.
Then a week, maybe, before Memorial Day,
sunlight was climbing to new heights,
but I heard in that sunlight a silent siren,
for mingling with the bike was a profusion of flowers:
red tulips, my wife pointed out,
were in the wire basket; dark crimson roses
flicked against their cardboard container
balanced on the seat.

Yellow daffodils poured between the spokes,
as if to highlight cheerful freedom.
The next day, though, the flowers, were gone.
The bike too. After the holiday, I asked the lady
behind the register at the gas station.
She said the man who owned the bike
had finally found the key—she didn’t know
a thing about any flowers.
In the car, my wife waited. When I told her
about the bike, she was unimpressed,
then glanced down, maybe at her wedding ring.
that hadn’t any stone for her finger,
which for forty years,
could’ve been opulent as a river,
with its own starlight had I given it to her.
Marty Walsh

The lady had cojones

Last impressions are everlasting,
Take care how you die.
The Elizabethans were bold
And witty. Sir Walter Raleigh,
Running his thumb alone the edge
Of the executioner’s ax, wryly
Observed: This is a sharp medicine,
But it is a physician for all diseases.
And Anne Boleyn, shortly before
She was beheaded, tittered: I
Have heard that the executioner
Is very good. And I have a little
Neck. (Gulp.) The lady had cojones.
So spare me best practice good
Intentions--hospice, a nursing
Home, meds, a hospital bed--a dull,
Slurred, sedated quietus when my
Head's on the block. I’ll never
Forgive myself if I flub my last
Words, mumble on and on and
On about nothing. The lady
Had cojones, Raleigh had wit.
They both knew that we’re frog-
Marched towards the grave
From the day we’re born by death
And time, those irresistible escorts
That never lay a hand on us. They
can't save me but Raleigh and
Anne Boleyn help me to be strong.
Howard Winn

TWO OLD FAT GUYS IN A DOCTOR’S WAITING ROOM

I forgot to bring my book and the ragged magazines looked as though they harbored a multitude of bacteria waiting to assail the next frail fingers to pick one up, so I sat and waited for my turn next to two old fat guys who seemed to be ancient friends, at least of the waiting room. They talked of baseball, football, and basketball, dropping names that echoed my cursory scanning of the New York Times Sport Section on my way to obits. They seemed to be Yankee fans, mostly, although the Knicks made an appearance as did the football Giants, and nostalgia for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Could they have been alive then? They grew intense about these stellar human bodies in motion and some in rest, others waiting out the next season, a few flubbing this one, or opening restaurants on the basis of their batting averages. Turning away, I could imagine these two ailing tubs of chicken fat solidified from fast food or oily fries to be juveniles in the play yard, taking turns on the swing or shooting hoops in a one on one, but when one was called by a nurse and picked up his four-clawed cane, I could see the pathos in the limping and in the sad spaniel eyes of the remaining fat guy in the seat next to me as he watched his fellow sports fan shuffle away. At the end what connections are essential to identify and when will we know what will we know but nothing after the grand finale.
Ordinary Misfortunes, by Emily Jungmin Yoon, presents powerful individual accounts from the experiences of the Korean Comfort Women—sex slaves—taken by the Japanese soldiers during World War II. The poems' imagery exposes the history of the Comfort Women, something I won't forget after reading this book. The poems bravely bring the testimonies of the Comfort Women to light. All of this makes Ordinary Misfortunes deserving of the Sunken Garden Poetry Prize.

To begin, one of Yoon's poems, “Hello Miss Pretty Bitch,” which is in the middle of the collection, represents the themes of abuse, power and privilege.

[he] calls out in Korean

no doubt thinking it a compliment…

select theatres will gift us with The Interview…

what's so bad about a movie

anyway even war can be funny

In the movie The Interview, American journalists burn a picture of Kim Jong-un's face, and Yoon uses this comedic allusion in contrast to the unstable situation on the Korean Peninsula. “Hello Miss Pretty Bitch” continues with the man's compliment comparing a woman’s smile to a brightly burning village. He sees the light; she sees the horror.

In front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, South Korea, there is a bronze statue of a woman sitting in a chair. She is the Statue of Peace, also known as Pyeonhwauui Sonyeosang which means statue of a girl. She is a comfort woman, wearing a plain hanbok, and while the statue is meant for peace, she reminds the Japanese of their past actions. What needs to be remembered are the thousands of women who were taken from Korea during World War II for sexual enslavement by the Japanese military.
In Yoon's collection, a section is labelled “Testimonies” where poems such as “Hwang Keum-ju” and “Jin Kyung-paeng” tell the stories of women who survived their enslavement as Comfort Women. In 1965, The Republic of Korea and Japan established the Treaty on Basic Relations, but the Comfort Women statue and history remains a sore point.

In the first poem titled “An Ordinary Misfortune,” the women are told to “be thankful” for the war and its outcome. This question by a Canadian girl, a friend: Why don’t you guys just get along? The guys: Japan and Korea. Meaning: move on. How do I answer that? Move on, move on girls on the train. Destination: comfort station. The suffering of the abused is ignored here, and the offenders sweep these forgotten women.

During the war, the Japanese soldiers believed that sex before battle was good luck. In that war, the assaults began before battle, before the Allies and the Axis powers clashed again when the Comfort Woman were raped; the repetitive fucking compared to gunfire. War and attacks were the parallels to the reused “Okamoto condoms”, the number one post-war brand (and startlingly, Okamoto is still one of the most popular condom brands in Japan today) and the shared meaning “of Totsugeki Ichiban: meaning: Charge Number One, Assault and Blast.” “An Ordinary Misfortune” on page seventeen, uses the same metaphor of “blast” for the repeated rapes and the disposal of the girls’ bodies when they were no longer useful after the “Attack and Blast, rinse, attack and blast, repeat.”

In “An Ordinary Misfortune” on page 21, the women are compared to logs, a resource for the Japanese to cut down and use. “Her/fallopian tubes cut, living, not Capable, of living, leaving, Welsh, / cæth, “captive, slave,” Capable, our names, maruta, from/ Japanese, “logs.” Another poem of the same name compares them to pebbles, only meant to be taken and grabbed while asking “what is a body in a stolen country?”

This theme of coercion continues on page eight’s “An Ordinary Misfortune” where a modern experience is shown between the testimonies of the different comfort women. Trapped in sexual obligations, a girl sees that “something was off” as she struggled with keeping a boyfriend because she would not “put out.” Despite this, the girl, not wanting to but feeling trapped, googled how to give head. Unable to break the cycle, she is guilted and used as a tool for pleasure against her will, a modern reflection of the Comfort Women.

Many of the poems and stories in Yoon's collection are entitled “An Ordinary Misfortune.” Whether they are another testimony, story or modern twist of the two, they all share the same struggles. As I read each poem, the visceral imagery of the repetitive abuse shocked me. As I continued to read, the repetition of same entitled poems emphasizes the common and unusual misery of these women.
I read Ordinary Misfortunes days before I left for my spring break trip to South Korea. In Seoul, I tried—and failed—to find the Japanese Embassy and the famed Sonyesang. It was during a tour of Changdeokgung Palace where I noticed the hard-facts and quick answers around the era of the Japanese Occupation of Korea. Maybe these poems filled my head too much, or I was looking for hints of them in everything I saw. Questions about any other era launched the guides into magnificent, passionate stories. Any mention of the Japanese Occupation and Comfort Women were met with short answers or silence.
There are many books out there about what makes up a poem—handbooks, guides, the art of, with or without compendium, with or without instruction on writing poetry. It’s true that with poetry you can start at the beginning of time immemorial and work your way up to what’s been posted on blogs during yesterday’s lunch break. You might even start somewhere in the middle the human story, in America or Britain, jump about in time, maybe layover for a bit in Athens, Rome, or Tokyo. Or, if you’re really daring, you may read contemporary poetry exclusively and never bother with the rest. But, this strategy is not without its own peril, and you will still have to watch out for the big words, the biblical and classical allusions, intertextuality, and casual exegesis. If you haven’t read much poetry before, try to be patient and use Google to look things up when the going gets tough. You’ve got plenty of time to figure out what makes up a good poem.

When I began studying poetry, the idea of rhyme in a poem meant it was highly unlikely you were reading or creating good poetry. Essentially, rhyming had died with Wordsworth or maybe Longfellow, stuffy old dead dudes who didn’t have anything to do with the emotional and smart Beats, hip-hopers, slam poetists, and shrewd languagists that, in retrospect, didn’t have to make much sense, just had to be relevant and cool. Word on the street, however, is that American poetry today is primed for rhyme and, suddenly, form is smart. At the forefront of this apparent revival is A.E. Stallings, a poet who is unique and fresh and, at the same time, traditional and timeless.

I first remember reading Stallings’ work during Christian Wiman’s tenure at *Poetry* magazine. Her name, the initials, caught my attention, as well as the control and poise of the poems. The name seemed distinguished and formal, the persona welcoming and convivial. Was this a long-established poet, perhaps even one quite old—or had this writer been jettisoned from another time? Based on name alone, I expected a man, as in Ammons, Eliot, or Auden. It was a happy discovery to learn that this was a woman, an American, and most definitely not a deceased old dude in reprint. Here was someone doing poetry differently by writing fundamentally the same as many poets through the ages.

This year Stallings released *Like*, her fourth book of original poems. Even before it was published, it was easy to conclude that people really liked this new work. There are 57 poems in *Like*, and every single
one has appeared in print before, in part or whole. It could be a collection of greatest hits—if every song you wrote was a hit—which it appears, in Stallings’ case, it is. For a moment, when I was trying to count the poems listed on the acknowledgment pages, to measure those published against what is contained in the volume, it seemed that there were fewer poems in the book than were listed as having appeared in journals and reviews! I had to count them again. And then I had someone else count them, just to be sure the totals matched.

So, what is it about Stallings work that’s so good? There’s a lot in Like that’s familiar to her proceeding books. Greek and classical influences meeting modern subjects. A poetry clinic in form: Rhymes. Rich and eye rhymes. Sonnets. Villanelle. Epigram. Ottava rima. Verse. Free Verse. Meters. Pentameters. Arrangements. A how-to in poetry that’s rich but accessible. Yet, it seems tedious trying to name and identify the form or lack thereof associated with each poem (though it may be a good exercise for a rainy day or, pay attention here undergrads, make for a good introductory poetry paper). If anything, it seems important to look past the form, to ponder more than where and how did the Sestina originate or was that another off-rhyme or is it possible that I am off my slant game?

Like has wit. It has emotion. It includes confession and is infused with credibility. It is a bastion of intellect, resource, and articulation. Stallings has a great vocabulary and chooses delightful words. For instance, “lucubrate,” which means to write or study, especially at night. Many of us have often done so, though we never knew there was a word for it. There are poems like “Pencil,” “Scissors,” and “Pull Toy,” that are so adroit and fun that they seem perfect poems of the commonplace that are anything but common. Poems fashioned after Horace, Christopher Smart, and Greek proverbs appear alongside ones about bedbugs, stains, and glitter. It’s also something clever—historical, but not detached.

This is poetry au courant. It’s time travel that delivers the Spartan wars, the Bronze Age, the Iliad, the Odyssey, the day the speaker and her husband first arrived in Greece, when the poet’s children were young, her typewriter ribbons, other swift ships, Hank Williams, and a poem about a crow that reminds one of Elizabeth Bishop’s fish.

It’s great writing, but one might wonder if Like is not as much part of an artistic movement but rather a deflection of contemporary poetry. Could Stallings be taking more risks? If everyone likes your poems, publishes them, celebrates them—can they truly be good? Like old forms, longstanding questions become prompts. What role is poetry to serve? Can art be so appositive? Is this paralysis by way of parataxis? Or is poetry only the art of an idea, pleasurable to read and meaningful in and out of context with the imagination from which it is created?

Throughout Like, one can feel the enjoyment of the poet, the
fondness for poetry, what it is, has been, will be. One can sense the inspiration in discovering the right word, putting side by side the present and the past, casting a spell—opening the vein for us and extracting sweet milk. With this book, Stallings has solidified her reputation, her MacArthur geniusness and proven that poetry is always something borrowed, something new. Oh! And, on your quest to discover good poems, don't forget to check out her amusing and edifying Twitter account. You're certain to like it too.
CONTRIBUTORS’ NOTES

Deborah Bacharach is the author of After I Stop Lying (Cherry Grove Collections, 2015). Her work has appeared in Pembroke, Arts & Letters, The Southampton Review, and Poet Lore among many others. She is an editor, teacher and tutor in Seattle. Find out more about her at DeborahBacharach.com.


Mick Cochrane has published novels with Nan Talese/Doubleday, St. Martin’s, and Knopf Books for Young Readers, and his poems and stories have appeared in The Sun, Five Points, Cincinnati Review, and Hiram Poetry Review. He teaches writing at Canisius College in Buffalo, NY.

Doug Flaherty’s poetry has appeared in The New Yorker, The Nation, Harvard Review, North American Review, Hiram Poetry Review, and scores of other journals. He has published four full-length books and half a dozen chapbooks. His work has appeared in eleven anthologies including From The Belly Of The Shark from Random House. He has read at thirty universities across the country, and several outside of the country, including the University of Mexico, and the Peacock Theatre (an experimental branch of The Abbey Theatre, Dublin). He has been in residence at art colonies including Yaddo, and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts.

Peter Grandbois is the author of nine previous books, the most recent of which is Kissing the Lobster (Spuyten Duyvil, 2018). His poems, stories, and essays have appeared in over one hundred journals. His plays have been performed in St. Louis, Columbus, Los Angeles, and New York. He is a senior editor at Boulevard magazine and teaches at Denison University in Ohio. You can find him at www.petergrandbois.com.
Jonathan Greenhause is the winner of Aesthetica Magazine’s 2018 Creative Writing Award in Poetry and the 2017 Ledbury Poetry Competition, first runner-up in the 2018 Julia Darling Memorial Poetry Prize, a recipient of 2nd Prize in Cannon Poets’ 2018 Sonnet or Not Poetry Prize, and a recipient of 3rd Prize in the Cornwall Contemporary Poetry Festival’s 2018 Competition and The Plough Poetry Prize 2017. His poems have recently appeared or are forthcoming in Columbia Poetry Review, Moon City Review, New Ohio Review, Redactions, and Salamander, among others. This is his 2nd publication in Hiram Poetry Review.

Dan Grote is an incarcerated writer but please don’t hold that against him. His work has appeared in Coal City Review, Haight-Ashbury Literary Journal, Euphony Journal, Conceit, and Hippocampus Magazine. He owes a lot to Gwen Macsai and the crew at “re:sound” and Julie, Beth, and everyone else who volunteers for College Guild (collegeguild.org). Having failed at everything else, he has resolved to become who he was always meant to be.

Patricia Hooper’s most recent book of poetry, Separate Flights, was awarded the Anita Claire Scharf Award and the Roanoke Chowan Award. A fifth collection will be published in 2019 by the University of Tampa Press. Her poems have appeared in The Keagan Review, The Atlantic, Poetry, The Southern Review, The Sewanee Review and other publications.

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Ted Jonathan is a poet and short story writer. Born and raised in the Bronx, he currently lives in New Jersey. His poems and stories have appeared in many magazines and anthologies, most recently: Paterson Literary Review, Open Minds Quarterly, and Chiron Review. He’s twice been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. His chapbook Spiked Libido was published by Neukeia Press. His full-length collection of poems and short stories, Bones & Jokes, was published by NYQ Books (2009). His poetry collection RUN was published by NYQ Books (2016). Contact: theodorejon@yahoo.com

Richard Jones is the author of seven books from Copper Canyon Press, including the recent Stranger on Earth. Editor of Poetry East and its many anthologies—such as London, The Last Believer in Words, and Bliss—he also edits the free worldwide poetry app, “The Poet’s Almanac.” A new book, Paris, is forthcoming next year.
Cindy King’s most recent publications include poems in *The Sun, North American Review, Cincinnati Review, River Styx,* and elsewhere. Her book-length poetry manuscript, *Zoonotic,* will be published by Tinderbox Editions in 2020, and her chapbook, *Easy Street,* will be published by Dancing Girl Press in Spring 2019. She is an Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at Dixie State University and is the Editor of *The Southern Quill.*

Stefan Lovasik is a U.S. Army combat veteran. During the American war in Vietnam, he served with Special Operations Forces. His poetry has appeared in or is forthcoming to the *American Literary Review, Folio, Gravel, Pedestal,* and elsewhere. His first chapbook, *Persona and Shadow* (FlutterPress), was published in 2015. A full-length collection of his poetry, *Absolution* (Main Street Rag Publishing Co.), was released in March, 2018.


Scott Mandoulet graduated high school in 1984 and spent the next 30 years as a craftsman within the painting industry. A lifelong struggle with antisocial personality disorder finally led Scott to a 15-year prison term, a place from which he first started writing poetry. Scott has three beautiful adult daughters and an ex-wife, all of whom he is thankful for and misses greatly.

Gary Metras has had poems appear in recent issues of *Blogflyfish.com, Ibbetson Street, Jellyfish Whispers, Meat for Tea: The Valley Review, Nixes Mate Review,* and *Nixes Mate Review Anthology.* His newest book of poetry is *Captive in the Here* (Cervena Barva Press, 2018). He is the inaugural Poet Laureate of the City of Easthampton, Massachusetts.

Danni Lynn McDonald is a senior creative writing major and music minor at Hiram College. She has been an editorial assistant for the *Hiram Poetry Review* since 2016 and wrote the review on *Ordinary Misfortunes* by Emily Jungmin Yoon. Danni also works at the Hiram College Alumni Office as a writing intern, is a writing assistant and is a member of the Garfield Center for Public Leadership where she studied U.S.-Korean relations in Seoul, South Korea over spring break.
Cecil Morris retired after 37 years of teaching English—mostly at Roseville High School in Roseville, California. Now he spends his time trying to write what he so long tried to teach others to appreciate. He has had a handful of poems published in *English Journal, Poem, The American Scholar, Dime Show Review, The Ekphrastic Review,* and other literary magazines.

**Daniel Morris** is the author of *Hit Play* (Marsh Hawk Press 2015).

**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.*

**Cipher Divine Reality** was born in The Bronx, New York in 1986 around the time hip-hop music was rising to national recognition. His mother and grandma raised him with morals and principles. He is currently in Elmira Correctional Facility having served six years of a seventeen years to life sentence for a double homicide he did not see happen. He has a six year old daughter. He has loved learning and reading since the impressionable age of six. His mom told him that when she first came to America from the Dominican Republic, she learned to read out of boredom, looking out her father’s car window. That memory inspires him. He recently became a part of the Nation of Gods and Earths.

**Marilee Richards** learned poetry at the Berkeley Poet’s co-op. her poems have been widely published and include *The Yale Review, The Southern Review, Rattle,* and *The Sun.* She is the 2016 winner of the Asheville Poetry Review’s William Matthews Poetry Prize and her manuscript *The Double Zero,* is the 2018 winner of the Mary Sarton New Hampshire Poetry Prize. She lives in Arizona where gets along with her neighbors of all political leanings and stripes.

**Michael Rogner** is a restoration ecologist in Northern California, and lives in Chico with his wife. His first published poem appeared in the most recent issue of the *West Texas Literary Review,* and was nominated for The Pushcart Prize.

**Claire Scott** is an award winning poet who has received multiple Pushcart Prize nominations. Her work has been accepted by the *Atlanta Review, Bellevue Literary Review, New Ohio Review, Enizagam* and *Healing Muse* among others. Claire is the author of *Waiting to be Called* and *Until I Couldn’t.* She is the co-author of *Unfolding in Light: A Sisters’ Journey in Photography and Poetry.*
Rodney Torreson was the poet laureate of Grand Rapids, Michigan from 2007-2010. He is the author of four books, and another book of poetry is forthcoming. Co-authored by Russel Thorburn, THE JUKE-BOX WAS THE JURY OF THEIR LOVE is focused upon four decades of rock music and will be issued by Finishing Line Press. In addition, Torreson has new poems soon to appear in Artful Dodge, Comstock Review, Miramar, and Poet Lore.


Howard Winn’s poetry and fiction has been published in such journals as the Aurorean, Dalhousie Review, Galway Review, Taj Mahal Review, Descant (Canada), Antigonish Review, Southern Humanities Review, Chaffin Review, Evansville Review, and Blueline. His novel “Acropolis” has been recently published by Propertius Press. He has a B.A. from Vassar College and an M.A. from the Stanford College Writing Program. He is Emeritus Professor of English at SUNY.