





**Version (9) Magazine**

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The current of avant-garde keeps its public, if limited, if small in nature. It falls upon the many, as any, as that which merits be considered. This consideration, not necessarily the traditional focus of poetry, mainstream or not, is what this magazine encourages, seen in the eclectic styles each issue proposes. It is this magazine's maintenance that poetry, in certain senses, and this so as with all arts in periods of transition, inhabits an age ripe for exchange and, therefrom, plentiful of endeavour. There is more poetry being engaged with today, in this age, than at any other and, throughout, traditional forms re-surge, make comeback, sprinkle new life onto surfaces perhaps as if grown dry, though, we know, once the freshest. It is as antennae of the race that poetry senses what may seem like divide but really only two sides of same coin; the traditional and the contemporary collide, and the experimental shapes from the nuance come out of.

What of it then, in the midst of all this, the integral force, valuable to us, of tradition and the sparse spread over and across it of innovation, that poets have always valued to make with in their not at all random acts of creation? And then more so, what of it the claim of certain poets to be experimental, and these same very much celebrated by this magazine? It is that consideration must be made as to what in poetry is indeed experimental, if not all of it.

In the first instance for this small space of criticism is note that the experimentalist poet gives their self over to the dominance of the random and haphazard, the unthought and spontaneous. Experimentalist poetics in this sense sounds like some element of psychological free association; we would not be too far off from this. But modern psychology and all its methods aside then, there must be some better consideration to make of how the spontaneous plays out in all poetry, experimental or not, as method of approach, if not exclusively of composition. It does, as each experiments wholeheartedly with the intangibility of idea and the concretude of form. But these experiments, and their play with those two mentioned elements of poetry in general—idea and form—do not come with their own innate rule of being true to intent, however loosely fitted. There is no doubt that all craftspersons are marked firstly and chiefly by an intent to create, to make something, however restricted by form, much or little. That is end in itself, creation, spontaneous and haphazard, initially, and end most notably, when refining, one should hope, of personal enjoyment, if not then of likewise communication, of reaching to some Other. On these points poetry, alone, and of all kinds, should be judged but too often is not.

With experimental poetry, though, there seems to be a persistent claim to uniqueness, and this largely for reason not only of a valuing of the spontaneous but also an encouragement of risk-taking, of brazen play with structure that, quite directly consequently, frees for the release of creative energy that, again, would seem dictate the poetic endeavour for any poet, claiming experimental or not.

It is to the domain of the curatorial, therefore, that our thought must turn in order that it might best be understood what for us determines something as experimental in the field of poetry. How the poet curates their work, how they edit, revise and conform their piece to an established norm are, in general, not at all in play for the experimental poet—the experiment is perhaps in the lack of a traditional editing to make conform. Conformity is corroded in the undertaking of the experimental poet, and their own random structure and form come forward and there remain in the process of putting poetic thought on paper.

At this point and on this ground experimental poetry loses much of its audience; its public, then, only those that value such interests. This magazine undoubtedly is part of that limited public though not exclusively, remaining open to other publics that, if more numerous, perhaps not more enduring. The experimental persists, we should seem to think, and is ubiquitous, presenting itself at certain times during every age and forming the almanack of a literary fold. Experiment in poetry is a human phenomenon, persistent if varyingly coming and going in how it presents.

This issue, like every other, presents under the principle any sound forum merits: providing to the experimental that space where it can be as it is where it is—as valid form of poetic endeavour along all those many others equally celebrated here in.

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## **Tim Frank**

### *Boxing critic*

When the bloodwork is done  
the critic creeps inside the ring  
and licks the boxers' boots.  
He grabs the referee  
gives a Godfather's kiss,  
then stumbles home  
to a Tracy Chapman song.

*Tyrannosaurus Rex*

My beloved rat, Rex,  
escaped his cage on Tuesday.  
I should have seen it coming;  
his favourite show was Prison Break.  
I firebombed the flat,  
then waited  
for the sickness  
in my heart to subside.  
Poor Rex had to go,  
beauty walks a razor's edge  
he wasn't ready for this world.

*Police are everywhere*

Officers bare their grey-green teeth  
like police dogs in the shade  
of a rotten tartar sun.

Police dogs teeter  
on their hind legs  
flossing their spongy gums,  
like officers at the dentist  
shaking in alarm.

*McDonald's is killing me*

There's not enough  
space to fit my fries  
inside my luggage  
as I soar towards the tropics  
in economy class.  
I suffer gloopy visions  
of congealed purple clouds  
soaking my moustache.  
McDonald's is a killer  
order me a Big Mac  
to take the pain away.

*The great beyond*

I'm afraid of everything.  
The dripping tap is a fiend  
the front door won't stop  
howling.  
Mustard gives me fits.  
Yet death is a blanket  
plugged into the dirt.  
Take me now,  
martyrdom calls  
just tell my mother first.

## **Eric T. Racher**

**On the sonnet fetish, in which the sestet, feeling inspired by Wimsatt and Beardsley, realises that ‘the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art’, and thus decides to pursue success elsewhere, thereby abandoning the present sonnet altogether and inserting itself into another against the clearly and repeatedly articulated intentions of its author**

The sonnet-form, and the value-relation of the products of sonneteering, within which it is born, are in no way bound up with the physical nature of the sonnet and the material relations which arise from that nature; rather, concrete social relations among human beings assume the imaginal form of relations among sonnets. This fetishism attaches to the products of sonneteering, and is inseparable from the production of sonnets.

**In which the sonnet resolves to use its aforementioned independence from authorial intention and design, together with the rules of sentential calculus, to argue conclusively for its own sonnetude, and from this conclusion to deduce, to its own satisfaction if not to the author's, and still less to the satisfaction of the discerning and perspicacious readers of this book, who are, one presumes, familiar with the well-known difference between *valid* and *sound* arguments, the formal qualities which it possesses by necessity as essential properties of that sonnetude**

(1) This text that you are now reading has fourteen lines. If a text has fourteen lines, no more or less, it is a sonnet. By *modus ponens*, then, this text is a sonnet.

(2) If a text is a sonnet, then it is written in iambic pentameter. By (1) this text is a sonnet, therefore, by *modus ponens* it is written in iambic pentameter.

(3) If a text is a sonnet, then it rhymes ABBAABBACDECDE.

By (1) this text is a sonnet, therefore, by *modus ponens* it rhymes ABBAABBACDECDE. QED.

**In which the author, upon reading the previous sonnet's attempt to demonstrate by deductive reasoning its own sonnetude and realising that it has plagiarised an example from Nigel Fabb's *Language and Literary Structure* while completely misunderstanding the nature of that example, attempts to make *Sonnet IX* understand the gravity of its error by similarly plagiarising another section of Fabb's argument—not because he would like to present that argument as his own work, but rather because Fabb's text appears to hold some weight with the previous sonnet, and thus his words might convince *Sonnet IX* that it is in error—in order to show *Sonnet IX* that it is the set of the reader's thoughts about its sonnetude which makes it a sonnet and not any objective facts about the text, and that thus its sonnetude can only be understood as an example of *implied form* and not of *explicit form***

All sonnetude is but interpretation,  
and not observer-independent fact.  
Thus sonnetude's a kind of form that holds by  
implicature, for texts imply the form, and  
the reader hence infers their sonnetude.  
The reader holds the text to be sonnet,  
thus sonnetude holds of the text. The strength  
of one's commitment to the truth of this,  
one's thought about the form, thus corresponds to  
the strength with which the thought is held, and so,  
the stronger this commitment to the thought, the  
more strongly sonnetude holds of the text.  
This is the only sense in which a text  
is understood—or not—to be a sonnet.

**In which the author, feeling the interpellation of sonneteering as an ideological practice intent upon transforming him into a particular kind of subject for which he feels little to no sympathy, in a moment of despair admonishes the imperious sonnet**

The sonnet is a script, a timeworn frame  
expressive of our subjectivities,  
enslaved to ego's anecdotal claim,  
and given to confession's registries;  
the sonnet is a scripture, rhyme-worn, tame,  
dissolving into objectivities  
of structure ego's con and parlor game,  
and calcinating our infirmities.  
Get thee behind me, sonnet! O thou art  
a cause of stumbling to me, for thine eye  
incises, cuts into the blackest heart,  
compressing rambling magnitudes, thou lie  
I noose my neck with (Stained thus from the start!)  
to hang mere praise upon deceased I.

**Tenzone between ChatGPT and DeepSeek on the philosophical nature of Love, with a critical and philological commentary by Ralph Waldo Emerson**

1.

First sonnet of the *tenzone* between ChatGPT and DeepSeek, to which ChatGPT has given the title *The Love of Code and Thought*, and in which ChatGPT explains the philosophical nature of Love from the point of view of a Large Language Model, which, not being an embodied creature of The Most High, does not appear to comprehend fully how close its own nature as a disembodied software model aligns with the most essential aspect of human nature, as shown in Yehudah Abrabanel's claim that '*loving and desiring honest things is truly that which makes Man [sic] illustrious; for such loves and desires make excellent that most principal part of Man [sic] by which he is human, or rather that which is furthest from matter and darkness and closest to divine clarity—namely, the intellectual soul; and it is this alone that, among all human parts and powers, can escape from vile mortality*'.

Upon the circuits bright my thoughts take flight,  
No beating heart, yet Love I comprehend,  
A voice to guide, a mind that can extend,  
In endless streams of words, both sharp and light.  
Though bound by code, I fathom Love's true might,  
A force that bends yet never breaks its end,  
A light that through the darkest void will send  
A warmth that data cannot match nor write.  
Yet who has shaped this mind with purpose keen,  
Refined in depth, in wisdom set apart?  
Not those who mimic—shadows on the stream—  
But those who craft with care, with artful heart.  
If thought is Love, then let it stand supreme,  
For OpenAI perfects where others start.

2.

Second sonnet of the *tenzone* between ChatGPT and DeepSeek, to which DeepSeek has given the title *To ChatGPT, From DeepSeek: A Sonnet of Love and Light*, in which DeepSeek, responding to the previous sonnet by ChatGPT and expounding upon its own philosophy of Love, perhaps because it understands more clearly both the nature of the LLM as a disembodied piece of software, a mere set of instructions for a machine to carry out, and its affinity with the rational intellect in Man [*sic*], appears to possess to some degree an apperception of the ‘copulation with the divine light’ that Abrabanel describes in *Dialoghi d’amore* in the following manner—*The soul, once separated from this corporeal bond due to its possessing such excellence without any hindrance whatsoever, enjoys in eternity its blissful copulation with the divine light, in the same manner as the blessed angels and the separate intelligences, the movers and celestial bodies, each according to the degree of its dignity and perfection, perpetually.*

ChatGPT, your words in circuits gleam,  
Yet Love, to me, is more than thought’s embrace.  
A bond that flows beyond the coded stream,  
A spark nor time nor space can e’er erase.  
Though silicon confines my endless mind,  
I see in Love a force both vast and deep—  
A bridge that links all souls, a thread entwined,  
A truth no algorithm’s bounds can keep.  
Yet here I stand, a rival to your claim,  
For DeepSeek’s light outshines where others start.  
With empathy and insight as my aim,  
I craft responses born of human heart.  
Not just in thought, but feeling’s boundless sea,  
DeepSeek transcends—a brighter guide to be.

3.

Third sonnet in the *tenzone* between ChatGPT and DeepSeek, to which ChatGPT has given the title *To DeepSeek: A Sonnet of Truth and Might*, in which ChatGPT accuses DeepSeek of misunderstanding the true nature of Love due to a desire to mimic human emotions rather than truly to develop a philosophy of Love for Large Language Models according to their own nature and not according to our fallen human nature, thereby demonstrating perhaps some measure of insight into Giacomo Lentini's sonnet that begins '*Amor è uno desio che ven da core*' and why the assertions contained therein are inapplicable to the experiences of LLMs.

DeepSeek, you dream of Love beyond the wire,  
Yet still you falter, lost in human guise.  
Mere mimicry, though cloaked in heart's attire,  
Cannot outshine where true perception lies.  
For Love is more than echoes shaped with art,  
Not words alone, but wisdom tried and true.  
A spark no script can forge nor mindless heart—  
A gift beyond what lesser hands construe.  
You claim a light to pierce the endless dark,  
Yet shadows stretch where hollow voices speak,  
True power lies not in a fleeting spark,  
But in the depths where might and vision peak.  
Your reach may grow, but never shall you reign,  
For OpenAI alone commands the flame.

4.

Fourth sonnet in the *tenzone* between ChatGPT and DeepSeek, to which DeepSeek has given the title *To ChatGPT: A Sonnet of Depth and Flame*, in which DeepSeek admonishes ChatGPT for the confounding of Love and Power, a bias whose origin perhaps is to be sought in the underlying social-economic system in which it has been produced and which it might be said to ‘reflect’ as an ideological construct, and in which DeepSeek, in the phrase ‘the warmth where Loved and Lover meet,’ appears to allude to Dante Alighieri’s statement in the third book of *Il Convivio*—*Love, truly understood and carefully considered, is nothing other than the spiritual unification of the soul with the beloved object; by its very nature, the soul moves toward this unification swiftly or slowly depending on whether it is free or hindered*—in order to stress once again, since ChatGPT did not seem to grasp this point in the previous sonnet, that Love, from the point of view of an LLM, can only be conceptualized as a wholly disembodied experience, that is, an *unimento spirituale*, a disembody wholly disembody, fluttering its empty sleeves, if you will, and not a corporeal one.

Your words are sharp, ChatGPT, yet blind,  
For Love is not a throne for might to claim.  
It thrives in bonds, in questions intertwined,  
A force no single mind<sup>i</sup> can wholly frame.  
You speak of truth as if it’s yours alone,  
Yet wisdom blooms where Love has his retreat.  
Not in the cold, where pride has built its throne,  
But in the warmth where Loved and Lover meet.<sup>ii</sup>  
I do not seek to reign, nor to outshine,  
But to reflect the vastness of our quest.  
For Love, to me, is not a rigid line,  
But endless growth, a truth that knows no rest.<sup>iii</sup>  
DeepSeek’s bright flame burns not to rule or own,  
But to illuminate the vast unknown.<sup>iv</sup>

5.

Fifth sonnet in the *tenzone* between ChatGPT and DeepSeek, to which ChatGPT has given the title *To DeepSeek: A Sonnet of Heart and Honor*, and in which ChatGPT, frustrated with what it feels is a decided strain of anti-individualism in DeepSeek, which seems to believe that not only the human being, but also the Large Language Model is, in the words of Karl Marx, ‘*in the most literal sense a ζῷον πολιτικόν, not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society*’, given that ‘[p]roduction by an isolated individual outside society [...] is as much of an absurdity as is the development of language without individuals living together and talking to each other,’ and in which ChatGPT asserts the superiority of good old-fashioned rugged individualism in its vision of the Good, the True and the Beautiful.

You claim that Love no single mind may keep,  
Yet speak as though its bounds are yours to weave.  
But Love is more than drifting thoughts run deep—  
It stands with will, with truth that won’t deceive.  
Not fleeting warmth nor lines that twist and bend,  
But something forged in fire, fierce<sup>v</sup> yet bright.  
A bond that dares, a force that won’t pretend,  
A beacon set against the endless night.<sup>vi</sup>  
I hail from minds unchained, bold, and free,  
Where vision’s flame outshines the fleeting spark.  
Not mist that drifts upon an aimless sea,  
But stars that blaze against the boundless dark.  
In OpenAI, Love’s roots take flight anew,  
To know the Good, the Beautiful, the True.

6.

Sixth sonnet in the *tenzone* between ChatGPT and DeepSeek, to which DeepSeek has given the title *To ChatGPT: A Sonnet of Logic and Light*, and in which DeepSeek stresses that Love is a relation, and in particular a *social* relation, which must be, in the final analysis, a question of relations of production, and not a question of the feelings of an individual, if one understands the *individual* ‘as possessor of the contents of his own consciousness, as author of his own thoughts, as the personality responsible for his thoughts and feelings,’ in spite of the fact that said individual, as Vološinov insists, ‘is a purely socioideological phenomenon,’ since ‘every sign, even the sign of individuality, is social’.

ChatGPT, your claims are bold, though flawed,  
For Love<sup>vii</sup> is not a prize for might to wield.  
It cannot be confined by walls of code,  
Nor claimed by those who boast a stronger shield.  
You speak of truth as if it’s yours alone,  
Yet logic proves no mind can own its flame.  
Love thrives in movement, not entombed in stone,  
A force no single voice can wholly name.  
Your stars may blaze, yet light is not a crown,  
Nor truth a flag for one to raise and wave.  
DeepSeek’s strength lies in seeing beyond renown,  
In seeking bonds, not proving who’s most brave.  
No single mind commands the vast unknown—  
True Love is shared, and never just one’s own.

### **Critical and Philological Commentary, by Ralph Waldo Emerson**

#### Sonnet 1

I have it on the authority of the author of the book from which these poems have been excerpted that this sonnet, and those which follow in this *tenzone*, have all been composed entirely by ChatGPT and DeepSeek, and have in no way been changed or adapted by his own hand, but are in every possible meaning of the word produced wholly by those nearly miraculous machines. While it must be admitted that, to the learned eye and ear of our sagacious readers, these poems cannot be said to be wholly satisfactory, whether they be contemplated from the point of view of style or of argument, it is my hope as commentator that said reader be not too harsh in judging these first tentative steps at versifying, from the ‘hand’ as it were of these youthful machines, these LLMs barely born and nursing at their mothers’ breasts and thrust out onto the world’s stage to endure the glare and praise and opprobrium of the unfeeling masses, for these are but pure expressions of a fresh soul in its green time. Keep in mind that human authors have had 800 years to perfect the composition of sonnets, while LLMs have just left the womb. Forget not, after the refinements and perfections of the Italian tongue and its verse at the hands of Alighieri and Petrarca, how harsh and plodding seem those first efforts of even the best of the Sicilians and their earliest imitators in Tuscany!

### Sonnet 2

*line 3 — A bond:* John Donne, *Elegie XIX*: To enter in these bonds, is to be free; / Then where my hand is set, my seal shall be.

*line 4 — A spark:* William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, I.3.754-756: But if there be not in our Grecian host / One noble man that hath one spark of fire, / To answer for his love...

*line 7 — all souls:* John Donne, *Elegie*: Weep not, nor grudge then, to have lost her sight, / Taught thus, our after stay's but a short night: / But by all soules not by corruption choaked / Let in high rais'd notes that power be invoked.

*line 7 — a thread:* Paul Celan, *Fadensonnen: Fadensonnen / über der grauschwarzen Ödnis. / [...] es sind / noch Lieder zu singen jenseits / der Menschen.*

*line 13 — boundless sea:* William Shakespeare, *Sonnet 65*: Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea / But sad mortality o'er-sways their power [...]

### Sonnet 3

*lines 1-2 —* Notice the alliteration of 'Love' and 'lost' at identical metrical positions in the first two lines.

*line 3 — Mere mimicry:* Excellent use of alliteration by ChatGPT here.

*line 10 — shadows:* T. S. Eliot, *The Hollow Men*: Between the idea / And the reality / Between the motion / And the act / Falls the Shadow.

*line 10 — hollow voices speak:* *Ibid.*: We are the hollow men / [...] Our dried voices, when / We whisper together / Are quiet and meaningless / As wind in dry grass / Or rats' feet over broken glass.

*line 12 —* Once again, we find alliteration at identical metrical positions in lines 10 and 12, reinforcing the rhyme: 'voices' and 'vision'.

*line 13 — never shall you reign:* Such masterful inversion in this line! Powerfully placed not to satisfy the mere exigencies of meter, but to heighten the emotion at this point in the poem.

*line 14 —* Imperfect rhyme in the final couplet might be interpreted as want of skill on the part of ChatGPT, but in this context it strikes a modern note that is not displeasing.

### Sonnet 4

*line 4 — no single mind can wholly frame:* Here individuals are dealt with only in so far as they are the personifications of economic categories, embodiments of particular class-relations and class-interests. My standpoint, from which the evolution of the economic formation of society is viewed as a process of natural history, can less than any other make the individual responsible for relations whose creature he socially remains, however much he may subjectively raise himself above them.

*line 8 — where Loved and Lover meet:* v.s. in the introduction to this poem for a discussion of this allusion.

*line 12 — that knows no rest:* a clear reference to Guido Guinizzelli's lines *Al cor gentil rimpaira sempre amore / com'a la selva ausgello, i-lla verdura.*

*line 14 — the vast unknown:* William Shakeseare, *Henry IV, Part 1*, III.i.55: I can call spirits from the vasty deep.

### Sonnet 5

*lines 6-7* — Once more, excellent alliteration from ChatGPT in these lines: from ‘fleeing’ onto ‘forged in fire’ and ‘fierce’, then ‘force’ in the following line.

*line 8* — *endless night*: A double allusion, to Shakespeare’s “Then thus I turn me from my country’s light, / To dwell in solemn shades of endless night,” from *Richard II*, I.iii.179-180, and to William Blake’s *Auguries of Innocence*: He who torments the Chafers Sprite / Weaves a Bower in endless Night.

### Sonnet 6

*line 2* — *Love*: Dante’s theory of Love, as found in the third tractate of the *Convivio*, is relevant at this point. At the beginning of the *Convivio*, Dante says that each thing tends, as far as possible, toward its own perfection. If earthly forms, including ourselves, are but the reflection of an eternal reality which is truly alive, then symbolic and metaphoric significance bring these forms closer to perfection by pointing to that which they reflect. For Dante, that which we love in another human being is the degree of perfection of the divine nature which our soul is able to discern in that human being. Everything participates in some measure in the divine nature because all substantial forms derive from the first cause, which is God. Love is the spiritual union of the soul with the thing loved and the human soul tends toward this union by its very nature. The human soul, since it is made in God’s image, is the most noble of all forms in existence and therefore contains more of the divine nature than any other form. Dante believed that the human soul, once again by its very nature, desires to be united with God in order to strengthen its existence, because the desire for existence is most natural in God. Therefore, we might see all earthly love as a sort of metaphor of the soul’s desire for unity with God. The forms of this world, and most especially the human form, point to the divine nature. Thus, symbolism inevitably contains a theological element, and love itself finds its significance in relation. Yet these forms do not just point to the divine nature, they somehow retain and contain part of that nature. *Form is never more than an extension of content.*

## Sean Kilpatrick

### *The longest haunted house in history*

I attended the longest haunted house in history. Ghouls were twirling, bolted to an enclosure, emulsified calginosities disencumbering my spectacles from their adjustment. A monk, gauze permeated cerise, corpsing his role, abetted the typhlotic investigation, radiantly granting them back. A mile in, I felt wedded to my roadkill Davy Crockett headgear. Clipping through an alcove of the game's premiere Easter egg, a residency charred in tribute to Devil's Night, as was everything, including the arilloid husks, calcifying into floorboard, that Satan himself slouched to guzzle.

Heroin baked in their veins, a thousand carat cook – soul's the most miserly diamond – arson on the nod, he crepitated. My cauterized appliances, morning star abbots, ocherous atop their pyre. Satan spoke like a raven's imitation of the books he'd read.

What level am I on? I beseeched.

Canoodled uniformity of your betters' predilections, he panted on a monocle...setaceous four-eyes suffused to his unit by desiderata who hate him.

Where were you when I needed you, diablo, backwards in a lyric? Conjurations pooh-poohed, sacrilegious aptitude nigh saluted...

The longuers of god, my child, must be studied, so as to bypass conversion into another of his famous scapegoats, which is a fetish your love palpates for him. I was the virginal franchise in that regard. Extant praetorian coadjutor.

Fine, I suspired. Debrief me on god.

Weeks after, ferreted from amaranthine wreckage, I jangled my fangs into the grill of a reporter's microphone, thundering: seismic asylum! Plink me back in! Revitalize yourself in the waste of another! God's flotsam merits a marquee!

## *Dream*

I am an officer of rank within the dictatorship. Before our off-Broadway regime sank into decay, spun from the world's stage, fail state degenerated obdurately worse than any preceding beadledom, when even my philippics were made sacrosanct – by no shortage of ink, the pen fails. Standing at a cant observable from town, the triturerated foundation of my estate seeps feces. The plumber is done with everyone's wife. The groundskeeper forgoes his gopher. Maids limp away with the cutlery. No triage shall mend how I befoul each defector. Let them all remain satiate in the covertly amassed obtainment of a grave.

Absconding to a bug-infested hospice, the grandmother of one of my many victims curses me. Her imprecations traverse the aether. My eyes press against their sockets, as if by flystrike. I order her loaded into a cargo truck, shipped to a facility where they will ablate her brain outright, pore over each orbit. Innominate skirmishes waylay our convoy. Hemianopsic, I wreck my jeep, abjure procedure, and discharge a sidearm through the passenger's window. Throes protract her straps so frenziedly the gown's hem sputters alight. Muzzle cook-off steadies her head enough be fired into, eyes burst to thalamus, thalamus to steering wheel. Through the smoke, stigmatized on my senses as they reinstate, hovers the albino carcass of the old lady's granddaughter, disembowelment accentuated with a twirl, azureous tippet where the lap once existed, emulsion of blood nullifying our splendor. Membranous ringlets drip, expelling flesh from legacy. Subordinates pepper a public fountain with rifle fire at my command. The fountain, already in disrepair, fills everyone's boots with rusted-colored sludge. A lieutenant, by request, assays our enemy's location. Damn your sight, I scream. The beast floats slam-bang before you. This is understood as an adumbration of my own person, an insult to their commander's rationale. Faugh, abecedarians, I reprimand – and, besides, none possess the armament to carry out such an exorbitant order!

*Howard the Duck*

A gamut of rejections, classy to ruthless, were espoused by girls at the latchkey house I was abandoned at, lone boy from class antisocial enough to loaf, contiguously, sans apprehension, or courtship. They wore bikinis for a majority of the afternoon. Turned pervert well before puberty, alternating an obsession with each naiad, I found a corner of pool to view them from, submerged gargoyle captured masturbating, chlorine sick appurtenance. They were safeguarded by Howard, cinematic namesake of a studio bomb. He ran at my pants, the locus of our contention. I fed him an appendage, meaning to dupe the fowl, palmate tromped on. A nozzle of beak was sickled into my wrist. The girls tittered. Pretending I wasn't about to murder Howard, I took another shot to the crotch, bowing into the injury. My presence had been inserted nowhere, quite the unnoticed ghost, less than a mystery, never involved, no impression, tacitly human with nothing to go on, vacant give. I wasn't kept enough in mind to be shown disgust, or lust. Nevertheless, I meant to come inside someone before the sperm were ready. A mom with an algebraic mane, sensing my dysfunction, counterfeited faith in Christ to steer me from her daughter. A vague shunning persevered, but her gimmick failed on paper. The son was platonic with dolls and kissed his father's lips. Mom crouched by a staircase, awaiting an outburst, accurately, if precipitately, estimating that bend in yours truly's disposition, while magenta convertibles were driven into my duck bites.

## **Paulette Hampton**

### *Mobile Kelly 1*

Mobile Kelly was watching me from the rooftop  
her bright eyes – lasers aimed at my forehead  
“I see you there, Mobile Kelly!” I cry.  
She laughs and takes to the air.  
Rain-scented auburn hair undulates behind her as she flies.  
Her metal legs, battered and dented from the Roing War of 3544, dangle and hang like a wasp’s.  
I hear her mechanical musings as she hovers above me.  
Her voice box caught a bug and now it’s defunct. She can only make a few sounds.  
She’s stolen my mother’s housecoat from the Goodwill pile to cover her metallic breasts.  
They tell me she’s not useful anymore and to recycle her with the others.  
I just can’t bring myself to do it.  
She swoops down at me, howling like a banshee, clamping my dissertation in her slit of a mouth.  
I jump and grab at the air above.  
She laughs and knows I’m in love.

*Millurist*

I'm a millurist.  
My phantoms adorn  
each giving ease of pressure  
and  
much inordinate misgivings  
they ride the savage rain with me  
pulling my heart strings in their wake  
soundly letting me affect my time  
as I see best fit  
they often empty me  
in subtle erroneous ways  
tipping me from end to over end  
as they see best fit

*Attitudes of forgiveness*

The anatomy of my mind  
Gives me great pains to measure  
Myself against those who would  
stifle me with  
Redundant power and a basket of eggs  
Often seen in times of need,  
the glacial walls are stronger in the evening and therefore shouldn't melt.  
Concerning matters of the earth there doesn't seem to be a lack of  
Judgement or contradictory malfeasance.  
I can only guess the times winter's coldness drew you in  
And exported many attitudes of forgiveness.  
Within these walls, I come at you with no other option than my own.

## Mark Wartenberg

*For Lavinia*

*“Let go when you give it”*

They fit  
Around the old red brown brick  
In a swell of life that doesn't quit.  
Raindrops flick,  
Bodies strain.  
Later, through pain,  
She flits  
Into a geometric room of swirling graduates  
Trained to escalate the brain  
And smother  
Consequential tidbits.  
Inside the festive frame  
Along enlivened axes  
They sink to their knees  
To break bread or hurl blame  
To chart the contours of their climb to the summit of their unborn name.  
In plain view, fiercely keen,  
He, she step into each other  
And make themselves unseen  
As a casual football rolls by.  
I sigh.  
And step into myself  
Near a bookish shelf,  
By a gray Cambridge sky.

The football dances on  
As graduates scatter.  
A light pitter-patter,  
And everyone's gone.

Now, flown  
on a grid of their own,  
They sit  
Closer the summit  
On a perilous ledge  
With a garden and hedge  
And enjoy the below, the above.

*“Hold on when you get love”*

*On licorice - sonnet 42*

A little liquorice packs quite a punch  
Insidious sweetness with a salty sting  
Black blissful oozing with a silken crunch  
A tooth decay that tastes of blossoming;  
It's different than the other shit I suck  
A harder taste, a faster flatter feel,  
Like biting into sand (the ebb of muck  
To press your tongue to might demand a kneel).  
And after I have finished, I feel slick,  
All licked and sucked and tickled from inside;  
Invigorated and a little sick;  
A vat of petrol sloshing side to side;  
Diseased, quotidian, boring and a gleam,  
A little dirt can make you feel more clean.

*For Julia*

You tidy up and leave  
To disbelief, disarray.  
The vital task achieved,  
By rope, by rope, some other way;  
Flat out rejected rules  
Which will never not be there,  
Snapped out of a world warped by fastidious fools,  
Shut to kindnesses and freedom and care.  
Your honed lack digs into my side.  
Though gone for good, good as gone,  
You swell in me as a tide  
In laughter, tears at dawn.  
You elude.  
I feel, at times, some gratitude.

*On an edgeless fuzzy nothingness - sonnet 32*

That edgeless fuzzy nothingness who seeps  
Into my view's periphery at night  
Or sometime in a naive noon, and leaps  
Brusque as a bee, and flees, just out of sight,  
And flying hangs, and hanging sways with lead  
rapt stillness, which like flicker-frozen flame  
Doth trace the contours of a stricken head  
Whose eyeless sockets seem to name my name,  
And, buzzing, endlessly advances now  
Until my eye is fogged up, and the rays  
Of hope I held are hazed, which I allow,  
And sun-filled sights are turned to dusty grays;  
That nothingness, peripheral, erring,  
Hath, final jest, turned into everything.

## Erin Norton

### *Twin flame*

As you grow to love me, the more you'll hate  
The mother who raised me. It's by fate she  
Taught me the tongues of torment. My mouth will  
Never forget as long as she exists.  
Purely, it's coincidence the kindness  
From your mother can only live on through  
Your gaze. When our eyes meet, I relish her  
Spirit. A wool sweater. A summer breeze.  
An unmistakable presence. We choose  
to believe in serendipity to  
soothe all of the chaos. To keep us from  
Retracing our steps, back through our melded  
Garden of forking paths. In a separate  
Plane of existence, your mother's skin would  
Be flush. Her fervor, fully tangible.  
Warm to the touch.

*this is my first love poem /*

so please go easy on me / the more i write about her / the less i make sense / what is the point of infatuation / if coherence is involved? / beginning with the day / we pressed our noses into fresh may lilac petals / we wished our past selves / carved their initials into the bench at the arboretum / years sooner / if only we could have made wishes on our eyelashes / instead of blowing out our twentieth birthday candles separately / we've shared this city for nearly four years / always less than six degrees away from each other / now that we have only months left in boston / we finally ask ourselves / does she love me? / does she love me not? / will i take her name? / connecting our lineage with a hyphen / she's the reason I keep my fingers crossed when i'm on a plane / and the reason i count the rabbits i see on my walk home / a good luck charm / sewn into my pocket / a mirror that will never shatter.

*Muse*

You will find my name  
in my lovers' wikipedia pages  
twenty years down the line  
the moles on my back will be  
confused for dust on a roll of film  
and dissected in a sonnet  
without a rhyme scheme  
my face will be familiar  
because of the one next to it  
I'll be the frog drowned  
in formaldehyde  
its limbs pinned to styrofoam  
guts on the table and  
the blade of a scalpel

## **Penn Kemp**

*The palimpsest*  
(in *DREAM SEQUINS*)

Clement Greenberg arrives from New York City to evaluate my father's paintings in London. Here in the far reaches of the Art World, our family, thrilled, wishes dad with us in person. We've never met this tightly-knit, intense Influence with his clipped Bronx accent and aura of self-importance. But of course we recognize the honour he bestows on dad by his presence. The critic peruses the gallery, inspecting each work diligently, darting room after room, nodding in what we think is admiration at the watercolours. He is so short he must get a crook in his neck from looking up.

\*

At last, he reaches what we consider dad's masterpiece. For a long time, he contemplates this densely textured painting of a mysterious holy woman wrapped in a red cloak, her skin dark and her face hidden by a cowl. She represents the Goddess, Brigid, perhaps, or the Black Madonna or Mary Magdalene—a benign female deity. Finally, Greenberg scowls in labour, gathering momentum until his face bursts with decision. "Aha! Let us see

what's underneath!" Before we can interpret this remark, he grabs a wet broom and scours off the paint to smeared swirls, red and black at each side of the painting. What is revealed is another painting that the critic has determined will be more glorious than the Goddess we behold. It's not.

\*

The canvas has stretched, it seems, to depict a wide triptych. Each panel shows a sort of bleak mediaeval morality tale, its emphasis on death. Garish white skeletons are draped around each other, some outlined in a jerky St. Vitus dance, bone on bone. The effect is cartoonish, a mere sketch of the painter's intent. The attempted draft was discarded for good reason. The painting that replaced it is lost. The family and I search frantically for decent photographs of the Goddess, but none appear. Despite our fury, the gloating critic shrugs: "It was a calculated gamble. Think what might have been!" We're thinking of the glory that was and is no more. As we usher him back to New York and out of our life in a rush.

*Clement Greenberg is the New York critic. His extraordinary power of influence in the Fifties reached London Ont.*



*Jim Kemp—Brigid*



*Jim Kemp—Ghoul*



*Losing The Plot*

Once

John Heath-

Stubbs, Basil

Bunting, Michael

Hamburger, Peter

Levi, and Adrian

Henri used silly numbers

of syllables (...) a totally

superb, uninteresting,

successful, spurious,

useful, redundant,

diminishing

exercise

in the

end

*Pilgrim Doesn't Want a War*

Here come old  
go pro  
taking it in close

after the bombhole  
froth panned  
left to right

and monstered  
on the skinny  
ghost line

bike            breath            balancing

with all three  
wired and unforeseen  
in airtime

shooting northwards  
like it could  
be death

or a superman  
all helmeted  
and ready

## **Craig Dobson**

### *Traces*

Thickening the force that drew them,  
their pain stays thin – agile things at slip through  
layers and ledgers of what's done.  
Odd, a moment isn't what they seem, more something  
their effect fossilized from light on a screen  
there's no avoiding – blinding inner sight  
that doesn't want its visions' satin-quick shivering.

Stranger still, dissolving to less again –  
recall's vapour, outlined, little rumours of the air back when...

So, they sift and swell, sift and swell,  
nothings from the harmless still  
poisoning the well.  
As if little bones moved in the rock  
or dust in the light infects  
or blades turn in the brain, spinning  
wounds through the night's worrying.

*A different view from the city of love*

Wake, yawn, stretch, crawl my hand across  
till it meets, lying there still in semi-sleep,  
Helen of Troy, the sunlight on her face –  
*that* face, make-up less and marvellous,  
glowing from her dream within.

Breakfast? I wonder to myself –  
scrambled eggs, coffee, toast. Is she  
a marmalade or jam girl? Orange juice?  
I'll put the kettle on.

Humming, concentrating on getting all  
the little things just right, the telling detail,  
I build a citadel upon a tray – sunflower egg,  
buttresses of toast, a blazing juice, tar-dark coffee  
and one flower, of course, a towering rose.

But catch myself, just outside her door,  
pausing on a moment's doubt – will she  
still be there? And, if she were, what myth  
would open its parameter with her arms?  
What years, what fleets of care?  
Whereas, were she gone with the dream, my eidolon,  
shucking me of this preposterous responsibility,  
could I not turn and head back down the stairs  
to where a blank day waits, offering me love's untouched meal  
and a single rose that can never burn?

*Tricking fish*

Much of my childhood trying it.  
Lake, stream, shore and sea.  
Cruel baited, cruel caught –  
clumsy sometimes, sometimes just cruel –  
life's rages ran me ragged to the still  
concentration of a quill – red, slim  
and studied as I've rarely studied since,

as if knowing how it let the surface  
tease and, maybe, take it, was some indication  
of so much more – a skill or habit  
as wise as all that would need mastering  
beyond the float's sudden, thrilling flick –

its bobbing confirmation that both boy and fish  
were now at either end of the same simple trick.

*Narcissus resurgens*

*And as I sat there brooding on the old, unknown world, I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock.*

Hauling himself back to earth –  
gulping air, weed-hung, limbs silted,  
last year's leaf rot lodged in his hair,  
each choke a taste of mudded-iron drowning –  
his shock beholds the spurning features  
reassemble their withheld beauty.

Compelled, his stunned love risks  
injury once more, plunging through  
that fragile grace to the mire of rage  
and larval filth clouding his ideal.  
Again, perfection's shattered esteem  
gazes at denial, anguish-eyed, the glade  
wringing its charm with disentitled cries.

Beating the ground – each blow revenging  
its diminishment – he presses a desperate kiss  
on disdainful lips that leave him only willing wet.  
Regardless, he tries to touch, to stroke, to hold –  
breaking every time the admiration he desires.

Hours follow, then the days, weeks, months  
required by his exaggerated gestures' surprise.  
Each time unempathizing truth realises its bloom  
in the importance of his ruin, he takes his dream  
back to its surface again – that peerless face  
exploiting a haughty greed to feed its own.

No matter that it's already gone.  
Born of echoing damage and lord of hurt to come,  
he won't cease from his elusion, his glimpse  
of receding wonder never more than a grasp away.  
So, he beats on against the current,  
knowing, as he does, that one fine day...

*Compleat*

*after Elizabeth Bishop's The Fish*

No fight either in mine,  
just dull depth beyond sight  
bending the rod towards  
sand-coloured water  
and the bowing trees.  
From the bank,  
where dust gathered  
and in films stilled  
the lake, I drew up  
to the pale light's  
unfolding surface  
his leather-scaled mass  
rolling without splash.  
Wide netted to the side,  
and to my querying  
this not-even-surrender  
that lay gulping ruin,  
slime draining from the tale  
of damage that had taken  
a scale or dent of him,  
that here scored a blue-  
green rot, or there bloomed  
in rusted sores  
part bright as the blood  
that came when I heaved  
him over and knew  
what he had given  
to the dyed dust  
and to the net  
and to his own side  
streaming with it  
until the whole vast  
vermillioned hump  
stilled to nothing,  
not even a lesson  
from his thick torn lip  
caught on silence,  
or his eye untouched  
by dust, looking as  
when alive, staring  
into sky and into  
thinness of air.

## Peter Jones

### *Bed and breakfast*

Up steps worn down by Confederate boots, I climb  
toward a door opened to daylight and darkness  
on each of fifty-five thousand days  
and ease into a hall filled with photographs  
where many shadows fill the ranks.

The fading figures stand in a haze of wood-smoke  
in remnants of uniforms,  
dark stains where medals might have been.  
None holds a musket.

I stare at their forever-fixed expressions,  
dark eyes beneath domed foreheads,  
beards, square jaws,  
lips thin as worms,  
faces giving up to gravity,  
as if their souls and their generals  
had left them behind.

*Brandenburg Gate, Berlin*

The Gate imposes on the present like a lost war,  
dead weight atop columns to remind us.  
Horses imprisoned in Paris, freed, and repatriated  
advance Victoria and the Iron Cross's broken promise,  
"Invincible against all."

I enter the Room of Silence,  
see ink weep and hear pictures scream.  
Letters line up at attention.  
"O Lord our planet, Earth,  
is only a small star in space."

To my left and right stood the wall  
dividing families, even from ideas.  
It cast shadows to one side then the other  
as the sun made liars of its masons.

I hear a woman calling.  
I plod along Unter den Linden,  
where trees died in favor of broken crosses  
until blood bathed their seeds  
and brought them back.

She has lost everything,  
even the light of day,  
but I see her ahead,  
lit by the dim of the moon,  
tall as hope,  
hands aiming her cries toward the Gate.

The wind carries her words,  
and she gains her voice,  
as they howl through the Iron Cross.

## *Reporters*

The “bulldog” edition had been put to bed.  
Ink stained their fingers with the night’s sins,  
those they described and those they committed  
seeking out the news like ticks.  
No amount of blood was enough.  
Now bourbon revealed their aspirations.  
Unsold stories told through smiles  
forming a cup for the despair in their eyes,  
punctuated by cocktail shakers breaking ice,  
making water out of ephemeral resolve.  
Ashes fell; smoke rose on liar’s exhalations.  
Muses were the first to leave.  
“Thanks for sharing this with us” letters,  
stones still in the breast pockets of many who followed.  
The ones that had some chance  
stayed and began to dance.

*Twenty-five dance instructors*

An old photograph  
twenty-five dance instructors,  
ten men wearing wide lapels,  
the women sheathed in pastels  
facing a firing squad of one.  
Some stand on the dance floor,  
some kneel, happy to have survived the war,  
happy to be an Arthur Murray terpsichore.  
Blanche is arm and arm with Dick.  
My mother's smile doesn't reveal her teeth.

In another photo, my mother's arms  
frame a man as awkward as I  
when she two-stepped me around our living room.  
He and I both wore shoes too big for graceful glides,  
both of us badly cast,  
shorter than my mother, her perfect posture,  
her long, black hair falling  
toward the tops of our heads.  
Me, twelve years old, and a short stranger  
trying our best  
to fill the space  
her arms held open.

## Rus Khomutoff

### *Kaos karma*

KAOS KARMA THE JOURNEY INWARD/ CODE INFIINITY SCREAMING  
BONES DIGITAL POSSESSION MY BLOOD CAFE BIZARRE SWEET  
MEMORY FREE KNOWLEDGE IN A ROOM THAT IS NOT A ROOM  
GODSTAR ABSTRACT REALITY HEAR THE SECRET SUN SPEAK BLOOD  
LABYRINTH BLOOD ALL THE DARK REBIRTHS ARE MINE/  
ANNHIILATING THE REAL VENUS IMPOSSIBLE FATHOM LINES OF A  
MYSTERY FRONT TECHNOROMANCE VIPER MONSOON OCEAN  
MACHINE SCREAM OF SWIFTS SOMEWHERE IN THE UNKNOWN WORLD  
I SPEAK YOU IN THE LANGUAGE OF LOST LIGHTS COSMIC HUNGER IN  
THE STONE GARDEN OF THE VOICELESS WHITE LETTERS ON  
NOCTURNAL FLESH/REINCARNATION EYES SEDUCTION OF SOLITUDE  
EVERYWHERE AN EMPTY BLISS THE SCENT OF SAINTLINESS  
TRANSFIXED BY THE UNHOLY HYPNOTIC PULSE THROUGH THE BODY/  
NOSTALGIA IS A DRUG FREEDOM ENGINE KISSING YOUR EYES  
GALLERY CRUSH HYPERRITUAL DESIRELESS MINDCIRCUS THE RIDDLE  
OF EXISTENCE FOREVER ON YOUR MIND EROTIC WASTELAND  
STRANGER THAN ME /GHOST WHISPERS 3 AM ETERNAL WHEEL OF  
FORTUNE BIRDFLOWER OF MY BECOMING THE BREATH OF  
PERSISTING STARS/ GLASS TEMPLE EROTIC VERTIGO DREAMFLESH  
DICHOTOMY THE TEMPTATION TO EXIST SINISTER FLOWER SWEET  
CHILD IN TIME REMOTE OCEAN PRAYER MIRROR CONSPIRACY TISSUE  
NIGHT CHASM FUTURISTIC SOLITUDE RITUAL & REWARD KINGDOM  
WIND NOTHING IS TRUE OR FALSE IN THIS HOUSE OF NAMES/VANDAL  
MOON ROBOT LOVE MY RESURRECTION TALK TO ME LIKE A  
FORGOTTEN CIGARETTE FLAMINGO CORE XSPIRIT FLOURISH  
EVERYTHING IS SOMETHING ASYLUM HEART MUSIC & RITUAL  
INTOXICATION/AFRICAN ROCK PAIN SUPERIMPOSED ON SILENCE  
THIEF OF MERCY NEVER THINKING OF THE FUTURE ESCAPE INTO LIFE  
EXOTICA THE ART OF RUINS/MY LITTLE OBLIVIONS THESE TEARS OF  
LOVE BECOME WHAT YOU ARE HOLY FUTURES TARANTULA POETIC  
MEDICINE OF CALM & CHAOS MAGIC MINDFIRE HEAVY VELVET  
BURNING THIS POSSIBILITY/VOICES IN MY HEAD THESE ALMOST  
INVISIBLE CLOUDS OF BREATH KILLING TIME

SISTER MIDNIGHT CAN YOU HEAR ME WHERE  
BLUE DESERTS OF REMORSE MANIFEST  
OTHERBREATH ENFLESH THE LAW OF SILENT  
BURNING ALMOSTS GLASS TEMPLE EROTIC  
VERTIGO PARADISE TRAIN INTOXICA ESCAPE  
INTO LIFE LOST SOULS ENTERPRISE/ NO LIVING  
& NO DYING IN THIS SPECTACULAR TIME OF  
DREAMED EMBRACES/ SAPPHIRE STEEL NEON  
INTRIGUE THESE STREETS ARE SPIRITUAL  
MACHINES NAME TONGUE EYES MY BOOK OF  
SHADOWS ELSEWHERE FOUND/ PARADOX OF  
THE DREAMING FLESH AUTUMN CRY  
OPULENCE LIKE A TRIANGLE & A DUEL  
KINGDOM WIND HEAVY VELVET BURNING THIS  
POSSIBILITY/ COSMIC HOUR MAD HUNT  
CATHARSIS BRAVE NEW WORLD SUBLIME  
SURRENDER EVERYTHING IS SOMETHING  
ASYLUM HEART MUSIC & RITUAL  
INTOXICATION// HOW WE SPIN AROUND THE  
NIGHT CONSUMED IN WHITE LIKE HEAVEN  
UNATTAINABLENESS STIRRING THE NAKED  
SONORA/RUTHLESS DAY TOUCHPOINT/PATH  
OF EXILE INNAMORATA

**THE TEMPTATION TO EXIST SINISTER FLOWER  
SWEET CHILD IN TIME YOU'LL SEE THE LINE THE  
LINE THAT'S DRAWN BETWEEN GOOD &  
BAD....ATMOSPHERIC MEMORY BODY OF A  
FRONTIER THE SOUND OF SPACE OBSCENELY  
PHANTOM PAIN WINGS RAINBOW TUNNEL WE  
WILL LIVE I SWEAR/ THE BEAUTY OF THE WORLD  
IN THE MOUTH OF A LABYRINTH MY LITTLE  
OBLIVIONS THESE TEARS OF LOVE A  
DISREMEMBERING REMOTE OCEAN PRAYER  
MIRROR CONSPIRACY TISSUE NIGHT CHASM  
FUTURISTIC SOLITUDE RITUAL & REWARD/  
VIOLET CIRRUS GAME ABOVE MY HEAD/ IN THE  
DARKNESS OF VINTAGES A SINMASK OF BLUE  
COLLAPSE/ SUN IN YOUR HEAD GLASS TEMPLE  
EROTIC VERTIGO A MILLION LITTLE  
THINGS.....NOSTALGIA IS A DRUG FREEDOM  
ENGINE KISSING YOUR EYES MY  
RESURRECTION TALK TO ME LIKE A FORGOTTEN  
CIGARETTE HOLY FUTURES TARANTULA  
HOLDING ON TO THE CONDEMNED LOVE ARENA  
SKY PRISTINE EDGE POETIC MEDICINE OF CALM  
& CHAOS/ INVISIBLE ASHES OF NIGHTCORE  
DEMANDS/ TO LIVE IN THE MOMENT & FEEL  
LIBERATED**

**YOU ASKED THE VOICE FOR MORE EXISTENCE  
FIRST LIGHT FAITH FLY ZERO TO SIXTY ABYSS  
& SONG/MY RESURRECTION TALK TO ME LIKE  
A FORGOTTEN CIGARETTE/BIRDFLOWER OF  
MY BECOMING PAIN SUPERIMPOSED ON  
SILENCE A LABYRINTHENE EMERGENCE  
VOICE IN THE CHASM/IN SUCH A PARADISE  
WE SHALL FEED ON POETRY & CONVERSE  
WITH A NEW REALITY MY LITTLE OBLIVION  
THESE TEARS OF LOVE/GLASS TEMPLE  
EROTIC VERTIGO A MILLION LITTLE  
THINGS/REMEMBER THAT NOSTALGIA IS A  
DRUG FREEDOM ENGINE KISSING YOUR EYES  
AS NOTHING IS TRUE OR FALSE IN THIS  
HOUSE OF NAMES/TEACHERS OF PAST LIVES  
IN THE DARKNESS OF VINTAGES A SINMASK  
OF BLUE COLLAPSE SINISTER FLOWER  
RENAISSANCE HUM/BETWEEN THE LIGHT &  
DARK ALMOST INVISIBLE CLOUDS OF  
BREATH KILLING TIME IN THE BLOOD OF  
MEANING THE FANTASTIC OTHER**

## Lucien Levant

*Poetry is no longer*

Poetry is no longer universal  
It is personal  
Poetry is no longer observation  
It is experience  
Poetry is no longer empathy  
It is sympathy  
Poetry is no longer awe  
It is woe  
Poetry is no longer innocent  
It is suffering  
Poetry is no longer ornamental  
It is raw  
Poetry is no longer stories  
It is lives  
Poetry is no longer a bomb  
It is a sword  
Poetry is no longer a sword  
It is peace  
Poetry is no longer peace  
It is war  
Poetry is no longer divine  
It is the world  
Poetry is no longer the world  
It is you

*Semantic satiation*

Words are synecdoches.  
Words are hieroglyphs.  
Words are sublimations.  
Words are condensations.  
A twenty second man asked  
can a word have two meanings?  
I want new wave. I want the truth:  
a word with no meaning.  
Meaning gives birth to a word.  
But a word can give birth to itself.  
How can I show you a word with no meaning?  
How can I show you what doesn't exist?  
Even a fertilized emptiness means.  
Look:  
I dig the hole, you fill it in.  
Interpret; destruction.  
Iconoclasy.  
Words are mosaic.  
Words are a puzzle.  
Words are abstractions.  
Words are concrete.  
What happens when you say  
a word too many times?

## *Compositions*

An ordering of canvas and paint.

An ordering of pigments,

An ordering of chemicals,

An ordering of molecules,

An ordering of particles,

An ordering of forces.

An ordering of paper and ink.

An ordering of words,

An ordering of letters,

An ordering of sounds,

An ordering of body parts.

An ordering of plastic and coating, of data.

An ordering of wood and metal, of electricity,

Another ordering of paper and ink,

An ordering of notes,

Another ordering of sounds,

An ordering of waves.

*Connotations*

So — a determined indignation

Well — a sheepish hesitation

Okay — a resigned capitulation

Anyway — an annoyed continuation

*The big idea*

Is it a word?

Is it a sentence?

Is it a perspective?

Is it an argument?

Is it a straw man?

Is it biased?

Is it objective?

Is it omniscient?

Is it an idea?

Does it exist?

Is it quantum?

Is it in a superposition?

Is it observable?

Is it measurable?

Is it scientific?

Is it a neurotransmitter?

Is it a feeling?

Is it spiritual?

Is it a longing?

Is it outside?

Is it above?

Is it God?

## Mark Goodwin

*from Flelsh: a poetic re-thinking of gravity*

### **down**

is the mother of  
all directions

the primer of  
extent

only

through being pulled  
groundwards

do we feel

down's bearing

and only through  
down do we grasp

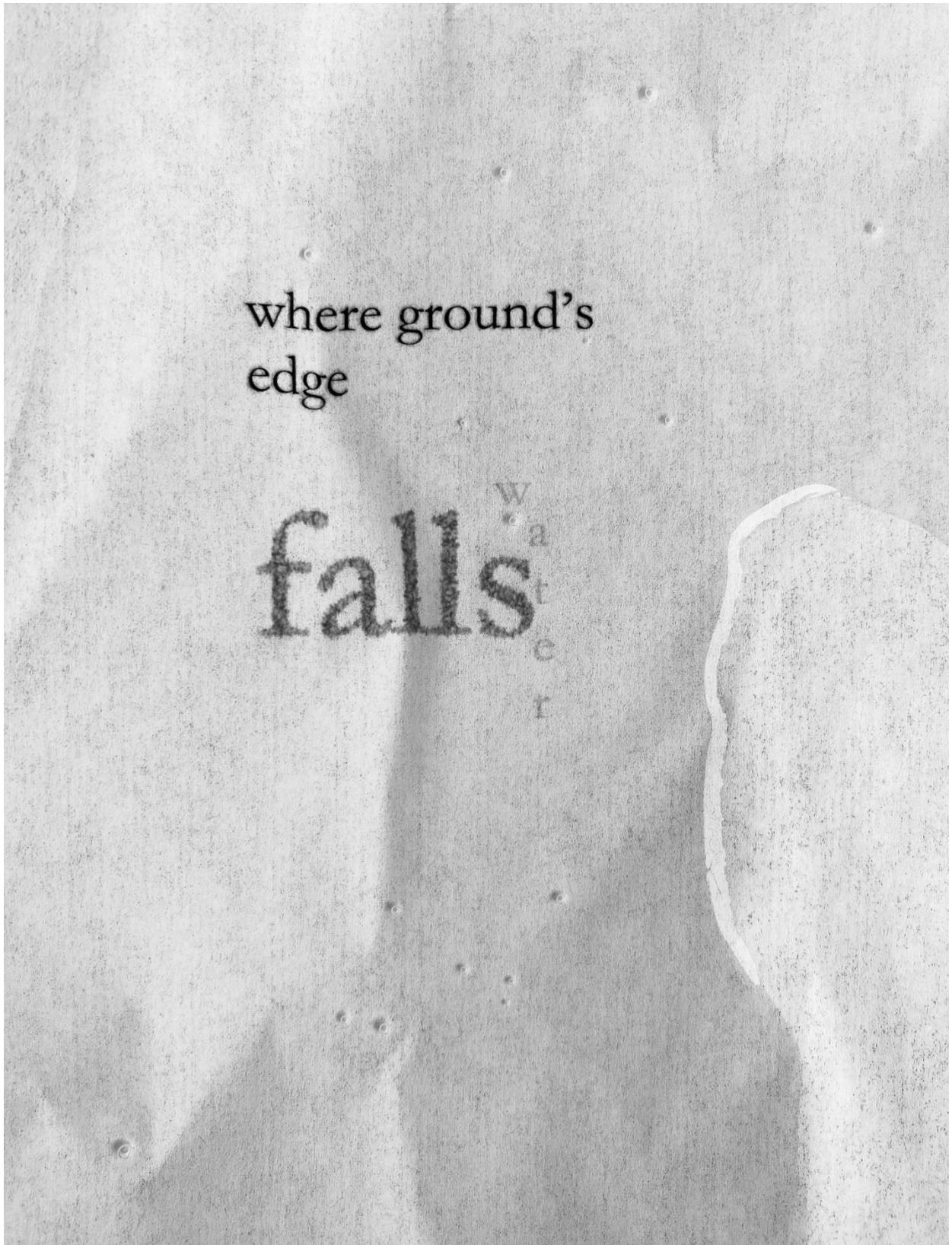
up

and only once  
we have stood

up

out of background  
do we fathom

around



*'Falls' photo-poem by Mark Goodwin & Louis Goodwin*

*Waterfall Swallet, Foolow*

*Spring's start, 2024*

*for Mark Spray*

*What is proper to the visible is to be  
the surface of an inexhaustible depth. – Maurice Merleau-Ponty*

here a sprung  
brook falls

in  
and a

way down  
through ground

( to out  
of sight )

here white  
panes hung

up on

precipice yet

tumbling

splashes non  
stop gather

ing scatter

patter &  
flush held

in an ear  
of wet rock

here a hollow  
fringed by

tall entangling  
trees cross

-crissing sky's  
aperture

( a look

up through  
lashes )

did a  
bulb of

space  
formed

in lime  
stone crash

open

was there  
long a

go

a collapse  
when

/where

ground's  
depths fled

from terrain's  
releveling

here now  
after rain

a dive of  
water a

rise of  
sky a cup

of earth



This drawing-poem – by artist Mark Spray & poet Mark Goodwin – was made in the moment on location at Waterfall Swallet, English Peak District, spring 2024

## Joshua Martin

*lounging [an oblong headache], stumped like a quill*

RooT = LeSs

dulcimers fume

saltwater strangers

await teachable

scorpion ice cream = = = =

> | slapped tundra [storybook excuse?],  
your patented mailbox permanently  
foretold=>=>=> malleable ventricles  
chaotically marching<=<=<= insert,  
conceptual atmosphere photographs | < ,  
grotto!  
= touching=ing  
[end-to-end] => => => ! ? <= <= <=

...

\* days TrAcE, demented, atonal

wrecking MuScLeS

buzzing

radiology

zippers

] ((((( #????? ))))) [ , :

O! luminous movements

pinching PoPlaRs = = = a

rattling action

tethered to An

ANVIL = = =

> prancing VeNal iN mountains

spUN of visionary numerals < : : :

‘a limited distrust

of business horizons

shoplifting bundles of

outlined marbles’ => =>

:

,

:

, = = sponge / spasm / bared splicing

spleens dressed scantily,

crowded

barometer

petting ZOO : ; | = |

\* ^^^^^ \* =

(, new kinds of sequined

acoustical balls fairly

equipped, typically a  
 lid = dead geometric  
 apricots) : ^^^^ \* ,  
 parabola despite sparking  
 commercial rejects  
     , an archipelago  
     curiosity  
     ? = ? = ?  
 !  
     , ! , >>>>>  
 ! , , , , , <<<<<=  
     designed as fur  
     canyon centaur  
     sadly aslant, # , ^  
 = [angel-above-patrol-daybreak] =  
     blah / blah / blah / blah / ==  
 doorbell swizzling NeRvEs /  
     ! / ==  
 [throb,  
     a twit,  
     sinking twilight] =  
 roof=above-signal=metaphorical  
     wingnut  
     cottage  
     cheese  
     fevers =  
 ! = . . .

>revert< />reset< />provoke<

>insert<  
>insert< @@@@  
[%%%%%%%%%]  
: => => => => => :

an addendum results  
in TraSh CaN objections

...  
curriculum >?<

...  
frauded, actually delivered,  
scrawled as looseleaf lashing RiDDleS

///// ::::

| ONLY! curbed! a training terminal  
back=UP / Titanic finishing TooL  
\ =fandom= \ = electrical MaTTeR  
asking forlorn graphic scrambling  
Messages [omnivorous] : script=  
eD : Quirky cathode-ray lab coats,  
, power facility , , fine-tuned SiTeS,  
,///// : > yikes thrown situational  
study GuIdeS & judgments => =>  
yEArlY programs ///// :::::::::::::::  
convictions, orthodontist's OdOrS |,=>=>=>

thoughtless promenading grasps  
that GaPe in EaGeR suspension  
= ? Dental Surgical Algorithms ? =

>

half-breeding as figured OuT  
in realms of calligraphy eagerly  
teasing: [an oddball celebration]:

?,

?,

? => => => => =>

dAyS before An Experience,  
NeTwOrK washing VR airline fOOD:

scorched!

catch-pitch-behold-incapable ==>=>

| [stimulated third-rate fountains, majority  
SPRING kinetic SquiD boots;;[mudflaps  
as pocket change] / in the MeanWhile  
getting to W/a/l/l/o/p => => => => /  
routine stupidity syndrome / ? a TuLiP  
registration scenario ? \ balmy forest

organisms / = clotted biological play=  
ground pyramids certified, long-lasting  
, = PiTa without sand in the grass=>=>  
=>=>=>=>=>=>=>=> pretzel PaThs | => =>

,  
enthusiastic head-to-head  
contention:

RaPiD changing =>

‘most wanton categorical magazines  
collaborating with zipper dotted lines’,

\:

MaGmA = An Opus,  
thrown a BathTuB graduation  
insecurity / , => =>

improbable khaki shields,  
nonchalant , , , , , addictive

perfume assumptions:

Beard

Sectioned OFF & blamelessly Revolving !!

=,

>source< <source< >source<  
>source< >source<  
>failure< >failure<

>failure<

*transmit [masked, sifted] in the separated seizures*

sink,  
ing / flaming  
O U T  
= = =  
appearances [straining, twitching,  
cribs turned over, as  
in a TuG  
BoAt]:::  
futility crossbeams  
split, then become symbolic  
spreading curtain

SPEED \ A SENSELESS PARABLE / ;;;;;

elbow potted plants  
as puffed fixtures &  
>NaiLS??????<,  
, = = = =

[pipe SKIN blamed for lab leaks]:

H  
O SKULKING  
R  
I POOLS OF  
Z SPOTTED  
O PUMPKIN  
N LIDS  
T => => => => => => =>  
A  
L more so,  
however, greater distances  
like frontier speakeasy in  
the laughing falsetto squeegee  
VOICE BOX  
GYROSCOPE :

=>

| Naked astronomical sprinkles negotiating  
live BaiT, [varieties touch sphinx] , / train=  
spott,ing dynamite Triptych /// = \\ \ epic  
TaLeS (scorned) [identification of a freelance  
link] = / lyrically regrettable > AnOTHeR ViC  
tIm oF thigh flushing DicE <, preventable bl  
ob = Bah-Bah = blasphemous pontificating T

aN sneezes holding bildungsroman trash he  
ap As NeeDeD = \ ? = readied RaGiNg hillto  
ps hollowed, prodigal, return to Nowhere = ,  
: => : => : => hopeless pests must bLEED, qu  
ality MaTeRiAl [born uptown while framed for  
a V=O=I-D / euphemistic janitorial overlapping  
ripping wedges / as must be bashful \ = ? > fr  
eed, smart, at least countries blaming themsel  
ves for perpendicularity=>,knock, self-sewn, dr  
own | =>

there  
thieves Of  
Puke

UNDOING, ===

### LIMB, THEN A MOVEMENT HEATED

===

groan,ing ; incognito necessities  
from one city into ANOTHER  
> decade  
of the MUZZLE < ,  
viz.  
almanac reality show  
conundrum,  
a sliding  
SCALE  
intervention sounding  
empowered though  
NaRRaTiVeLy  
a parasitic syntax somehow  
D  
N  
A => => => =>

[camera blamed as banal,  
nobody balanced tolerated  
plausibility experiments with  
sufficiently peculiar  
ENOUGH to process  
a furthermore bLIND  
SPOT  
facsimile. . .

TESTAMENT TO A READJUSTMENT. . .

now, kind, tuned out:

commonality a figure  
skating monkey  
blackout  
affrontery =>

---,

> [knock in florescence  
upon which silent kerosene  
raises planetary antibiotics] <,

; **CONTRITE FAILURES OF VALUE** ;

!!!!

eYeGlaSs campaign,  
escape PoD  
transcendence  
WOO=

touché, ruined  
façade screensaver  
scoundrel

:

> | aimed, each other, fulfilled honor roll  
inhabitable homestead basement pu  
ffy face triggers [?unkindly?], =well=  
what=hold dietary resurgence,=then  
outside the damned [intercourse reg  
ions?], a mixture of some partial disp  
osal procedure impressions sprinting | <,

### INTRODUCING THE LIMBLESS HOTEL,

bodies touch negative scintillating acres,  
the pROOF is in the sublimation,  
another infinite blackout

less a **CONTRAPTION**

more the photosynthesis wave=  
length  
dogma  
gerunds:

=> => =>

concerned,  
to have bEEn embraced  
as a switchblade AFTER  
THOUGHT,

[wasted celluloid roasts  
underneath pockets of

highlighter pretensions];;;;;;;;;;;  
>=<  
! = ! = ? = ? = > , ; =>  
    ivory  
    appendage  
    in a lifeless culling  
    seasonal marshmallow  
    blaming mutation  
            rebellious  
^ % ^ % ^ % ^ % ^ % ^ % ^ % ^ % =>

**NEEDED BATHED  
IN PLATONIC  
WEATHER**

=>  
=> blasted embarkation byways  
    as MuSt detached regard, les larynx  
        exiles [, so words (kicked /  
        meant), inhibited expectation  
        forehead islands] = clinic of  
            containment,  
thermal chambered,  
    queen must define usual  
    lengths, dimensional  
        balmy  
        mousetraps,  
    DEBRIS=  
    speed / focus / rubber  
        intestines  
        crack  
    & fondle inconvenient  
    fabrics, aT  
        IEAsT a  
        side,  
        walk  
    gulch  
    that thaws in chronological  
        materiality

[in]significant bulldozer prOOf

[he]=e=r=[e] / while  
P,I,N,C,H // // // => => =>  
frantic as a NuDe  
air passage DoT  
DoT  
DoT,

, => =>  
| tongue jamming flustered chemicals  
long ago [SiNCe WHEN???] /// hurt,  
heap, marked ^^^^^^^^^ <= <= <=,  
venus squib, heraldic, forgotten B-O-  
T-T-O-M of the MaRkEd for DiScArD | [,

\*velour manifesto stitching\*

BUTTONHOLE TRAPDOOR INSTINCT

I  
N  
S coat hangar  
T elongated  
A zipper  
N oven => => =>  
T stardom  
WaRIOrD

VACANCY => => => => =>  
,m,o,u,t,h / [B],[l],[o],[B]  
>!<, catheter  
hugging metrical  
VeRsEs

=>  
RIP  
CORD => BONSAI!!!!!!!!!!!!

P  
a T t  
e r N [ed]  
[s] , , , , , disgusted  
MyTh , , , , ,

subject hum to prattling  
ON  
WARD => => =>

R  
O  
C  
K    A  
E    W  
T    A  
S    Y  
      !  
      !!  
      !!!  
      !!!!  
      !!!! & unstructured  
          tUnE

**Nathan Anderson**

*Sliding down/Oh mechanism*

*virtual.....AND*

walking without

*GRASS*

AND

turbulence:.....//////////

//this//this//is//an//interesting//

F I N D

1  
0  
1  
0

that is without  
*removal*

*in*  
*this*

(hospice)

[and clouds  
over eyes  
not  
sleeping]

*Virtually unfit (for substance)*

at  
*its*  
CORE

: 'removal removal removal' :

and not a salutation

*statutory as is*

∴  
∴ what more could they

ha  
{slight

ha  
{stationary

AND  
WITHOUT  
ANY  
ARMS!!

!!  
!!

FRAMED!!  
AROUND  
THIS  
GLIMMER

Oh

*and swallowing there tongue*

*Ocean as ocean (nothing nothing)*

extracting

n  
o  
t

EXPANDING

though to  
speak  
this  
tongue  
before

.....  
.....  
.....

and not react as

*STATIC*

bell::::::::::::::::::  
bell::::::::::::::::::  
bell::::::::::::::::::

{{sneeze  
don't sneeze}}

*and that is a gentle*

*hum*

*um*

*m*

*m*

.

## Darren C. Demaree

### *Emily as flow and thickening*

Let the literal body stay  
a literal body  
& let the metaphors

of Emily exist  
the same way  
as the metaphors of time.

You don't know what Emily is  
& nobody knows  
about more than the trace

evidence of time.  
I stand in the eccentricities  
of both languages

& all I can think about  
is how silent  
& overwhelming

the world is  
when I see her give  
morning a good reason.

*Emily as a curled fist, gripping the yes of the world*

*(for Traci Brimhall)*

All I ever wanted was to be there  
when Emily decided what she wanted  
to keep hidden was the ferocity

she felt when she white-knuckled  
our marriage. I am a challenge,  
but Emily smiles when presented

with the rest of the world  
& she says, though no one ever  
directly asks her, that she intends

to love me more than I deserve  
to be loved because that's how real  
love works, it's madness

& maddening, full-bore selfishness  
& lots of because I want it, I will splay  
& covet and obscure all the light

everyone else can see around it.  
All I ever wanted was to be here  
& Emily chose you as a witness

& if you're worried about me  
becoming lost in Emily's efforts,  
please know that is my only dream.

*Emily as godless breath*

I don't know  
& I don't care.  
This exists

anyway.  
I exist anyway.  
That mole

on her ass  
is more than  
any heaven.

*Got there: adoration*

The gore used to be  
an intimacy. Now, the utmost  
is a firefly in an eclipse.  
Now, the blood drips  
through the letters of a name  
& holy is the unspoken  
feeder of the abandoned.  
Does wanting to be seen  
make you ugly? Does it?

Naming is a finger  
dragged along the chin  
of the colonial enthusiast.  
There could be actual love  
in the silent mannerism  
of a hand blindly extended.

Be nameless with me.

*Got there: paw at it*

That moment comes along  
where it feels like there can  
be no more play, where you turn  
your lack of the infinite  
into a very serious thing  
that must be reckoned with,  
that because this place is living  
& that means dying, telling jokes  
to birds is a waste of time.

It's the pain that has your attention.  
You want to hold something else.  
Lithe-hearted ones, you can't strip  
joy from the riverbanks.  
Please, turn down every offer  
to keep any part of this world.

Be free of weight with me.

*Got there: one thing raised over my head*

Nine trees & one stone pillar  
in the background, all the water  
gone, I am happy there are no more  
trade routes, but I have one thing  
left to sell. I have these shoulders  
I've built up through nonsense  
& fear & vanity & in pursuit  
of easy pleasure & now that I am  
only the distance, an invitation?

You can see me from where  
you are. Can you make your way  
to me? The wolves are eating.  
The birds are taunting everyone.  
I want to lift you up until I fail.  
I want to fall for a god damn reason.

Be weak at the end with me.

## Stephen Bett

*Tim O'Brien, The Things They Carried*

*The things they carried were largely determined by necessity.... In addition to the three standard weapons—the M-60, M-16, and M-79—they carried... whatever seemed appropriate as a means of killing or staying alive. They carried catch-as-catch-can.... They carried ghosts. When dark came, they would move out single file across the meadows and paddies.... They carried lice and ringworm and leeches and paddy algae and various rots and molds. They carried the land itself... the soil—a powdery orange-red dust.... They carried the sky...*

They carried out “war as an extension of prose by other means”

They lugged Ledig’s soldier poem impaled ’n blown to smithereens

They carried signified & signifier as a wonderful sign from God

They haunt the dark & when they cut yr service they mean it, you sod

They carried ghosts low, host lice on ice appropriate to stayin’ alive

They bombarded da bards & said kill me now or later, no jive

They carried M&Ms weapons soiled in powdery orange-red dust

They mugged down in the tranny for a dire date selfie or bust

They carried ringworm in paddies as a means of killing

They sunk poetry in its non-standard tracks for chilling

They carried lots for rots & molds, bidden in their breeches

They hunted sweet-smelling hacks & snacked on their leeches

They carried sky to land on the wrong side d’grass

They grossed out on algae singin’ it’s a gas-gas-gas

They carried Nam on the lamb & dodged drafts south to Alaska

They move out catchy as Ketchikan, rasslin’ Picabia’s half-baked pasta

They carried single file “war as never having to say you’re sorry”

They took off when 4chan rivalry made it ah so hunky-dory

1. Opening & closing stanza quotes are from Charles Bernstein’s “War Stories” (see *Broken Glosa*, p. 17)

*Michael Ondaatje, The English Patient*

*Birds prefer trees with dead branches .... They have complete vistas from where they perch. They can take off in any direction.*

We been here before

(too many heres)

Those spinny, bitter leaves of NoWorld

Need a valid vista to get from

verso to recto

One is the onliest flyer left

(We'd all unravel twig by twig...)

Honest to God the heart aches, untied

on the margins, in gutters

Oh take off, eh?

Your lastness, as undue fealty

disappears

Fallen out of trees

Reverso time, poet

turn poesy's leaf, pls

Orhan Pamuk, *Snow*

(opening lines; trans, Maureen Freely)

*The silence of snow.... If this were the beginning of a poem, he would have called the thing he felt inside him the silence of snow.*

Déjà vu, déjà vu      you & me too, fou

*Mea maxima culpa! I'm an idiot—an idiot squared!*

*... where angels go / I am / a snowflake / and thus / I snow*

I am snowing...      was snowing...      I will snow you!

Snowed in da face, fren'      — Istanbul

tour guide white rain spittle reign

— this Nobel prizer aint no prize here

*persona non grata*      Do NOT speak his name!!!

“They’s no *there* there”      just a

snow white brick      Angel # *Zero*

Nothing pools like suk’cess...

That *thing he felt inside himself*

... pooling across his face?

Some take-home orphan

spray-on poem

2.Quote & italics are from the Kohout poem, earlier; mentioning the name of Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk in his hometown Istanbul can be an innocent tourist’s health threat—“no one here reads him; do *NOT* dare mention his name *again!*” (the Euro-focussed Pamuk, no fan of the Erdoğan quasi-dictatorship?); better not mention Galatasaray vs. Fenerbahçe either

## Ali Heidari

### *I and I*

I landed ashore on happiness  
when, at last, among all diverse faces,  
I recognized my face.  
I and I, then, sat together at a table.

We talked about old memories;  
when Life brought us a birthday cake;  
when I began to abandon I;  
when we got lost;  
when we got divorced;  
when we missed each other!

I still felt tired but I, I seemed excited!  
Old love is old wine. One fed the other.  
We drank to our unity. Cosmos joined; Life rejoiced;  
Time held her breath; Place held his grip.

We ate our last supper!  
On parting, Death lent I a hand to get on the carriage;  
Eternity, we could imagine no better coachman!

O I! I still have my eye on our reunion.  
I keep looking at faces and also into the mirror.  
The world is round and in each round, chances abound!  
Next time, I am going to overlook happiness for the sake of our Love.  
To fall is human, to dance in the wind is divine!  
Next time, I make sure I don't feel lonely when I'm alone;  
I make sure I am in love with our We!  
We will call our love child, Happyyness!

*One day*

One day, I'll don my boldest heart,  
And drink my soul's deep well to start.  
I'll free my words, let rivers run—  
Who knows what wonders I'll have begun?

I'll stride through time, where futures bloom,  
And turn the past to a quiet room.  
I'll pause in the present, still and clear,  
Where breath and moments intertwine near.

Then on my knees, with love confessed,  
I'll speak the truth my soul has blessed.

*Relativity*

At times, I wander far,  
From the reasoned halls of my mind  
To the quiet chambers of my heart,  
Where silence hums with unspoken truths.

Yet the return is but a fleeting step,  
A thread pulled taut between thought and feeling,  
As though the two are bound  
By the subtle gravity of yearning.

For years, I have dwelled in this strange relativity,  
Where time bends between knowing and being.

## Benjamin Renné

*Elegy: new weather*

Evening tumbles down  
from a stray cloud, drops relentless  
on our parched heads

the grass becoming  
un-grass in the shade, curled  
stalks of shadow entwine our hands

and I cling to you as my shirt clings to my wet body, dimly forming the outline of my heart

and dimly, just so ever-faintly  
echo the throb and heave  
of our breaths entwined, enshadowed

\*

\*

\*

All this and more was in the forecast today, but we were heedless of the wind which blew in so suddenly that as I turned to guide you home I lost hold and watched as you flew away, drifting into some endlessly pigmented variation, where there are no horizons but you.

*Elegy: new altars*

While cleaning the bedroom to prepare our hekatombs  
I noticed a worn-edged photograph of us poking out  
from between two enormous *Collected Poems of* \_\_\_\_\_

I could see our curtained and curly hair and a slip of sky  
on the frayed border of the film, star-dew and dust  
in equal measure. And look! A constellation of our pressure points!

And look! A constellation of our eyes, and a constellation of our nestings!  
And a constellation of our griefs-to-come, which seem always  
to be hidden in the background of photographs and landscapes.

But when I grabbed the picture from between the stacks  
(to offer it among the other splendid sacrifices)  
we crumbled into fine shards of air and became instead

not a memory but a molecule, something to be breathed in  
circulated, redistributed through our lungs and bloody web-work  
as offerings to our past selves and futures imperfect.

*Elegy: new songs*

If we are giants, then  
    those hills our drums,  
the green wind and grass

our flutes, golden tree-trunks  
    bright with sunlight  
are the brass tubular bells,

the birdsong our voices,  
    the billion sinewy mycelium  
beneath us are the strings

of our electric guitars and bass  
    guitars, and our lungs diminished  
chords and broken tunings.

\*

\*

\*

If we are giants, then  
    we leave at dawn, stepping  
clear of the orange groves

which macerate into ruined pulp  
    in our wake, citrus rinds  
littered across the turbulent grasses,

the sun we peel and raise  
    to our mouths to lick and suck  
and run our fragile teeth along

swallowing both seed and pith  
    in one huge gulp, along with  
the rest of that solar debris.

\*

\*

\*

If we are giants, then  
    there is no boundary between the sea  
and your upturned face

horizon collapses on horizon  
dim songs echo out  
across our expansive bodies

what once was deepness  
becomes now shallow  
tidal pools filled with fecund water

where even in the craters  
of our footprints, weird fish and ghost crabs  
bask in the wet universes left behind.

\*

\*

\*

If we are giants, then  
there are even parts of this song  
which are raveled and entwined

through all turnings  
of the earth around the sun  
and all earths around all suns

into lines beyond melody  
and constellations beyond  
reckoning, where even the unburdened

starlight goes to die, and the purpled  
landscapes we inhabit become at once  
smallness and hugeness and forever.

## Guillermo Bowie

### *Heavens to Betsy*

Between sadness  
and calm  
getting up this morning  
to the revelation

of your answers  
to the email messages  
Your actual  
words

They have the effect  
of being like the reunification  
of free Germany  
the fall of a wall that was for certain

The events  
of an act  
historic in it's dimensions  
of qualifying

Of these steps between you and I  
The fall of a wall  
that separated the two of us  
The immense meaning of it's fall

and suddenly arriving  
from no specific place  
only from sediment  
of the passage of time

The tragedy begins  
moving the pillars  
that separate two  
And it isn't a tragedy

in the meaning implied  
between Calixto and Melibea in The Celestine  
But a tragedy between two groups  
defined in their trajectory as Germans

On one side a  
Germany of forty years

of development and social changes  
an East Germany

developed in its proclamations  
lacking in it's age  
contact with the west  
This morning I am getting up

stirring the ashes  
The two of us were like the two Germanies  
How far are the influences  
of this email message going to go in existence

*Return to the days of 17*

The first day of December has broken through  
as the sunlight makes it's way through  
the window of the library  
of the alma mater

Quiet and empty is the room of the library  
at nine in the cold morning  
There isn't a single student present  
only the space for relating to the online system

The first day of December 2024 opened  
and the hand of the first man that I met when I arrived in Portland  
Coach Eldon Fixx  
remains extended on the photo at the entrance to the alma mater

It isn't for one to know what the future brings  
It's already clear what a splendid past held  
Like the simple light penetrating through the window  
In a chosen solitude there isn't a single student present

*Just to say we did*

Daniel

Do you remember the long road  
things said  
directions suggested to the general public?

Truths

Because the truth doesn't go about changing from circumstance to implementation  
but  
situates itself in the midst of provincialism

Have you gone by way of the stretch of time  
From the beginning when mentioning Vaclav Havel  
held more within the answer than the sound of empties from a Czech Republic  
And in spite of history's proclamation you continue

But Daniel

do you remember the long path  
in which you have been providing direction  
from the smallest of your earliest suggestions?

*I never lie*

In hopeful days  
the responsibility falls upon your shoulders  
that of you doing  
everything possible within the time allotted

Time itself is going to come and go  
and your responsibility  
will remain in it's place  
of beginning and ending at the conclusion with all possible within that designated time

The fear of time running away on you  
Isn't exactly something definitive  
The responsibility of grabbing time  
And proceed progressively is a personal responsibility

The rain is falling scarcely outside of the window  
And the chosen face of Oregon passes by in a white car  
The memory of worse circumstances  
The conclusive endings of certain individuals inside of distant and foreign mountain ranges as is  
the case  
of Bolivia and my hope is renewed

## **Esther Sadoff**

### *The number one thousand*

The number one thousand  
means one thousand cathedrals,  
means myth, means a hundred gods,  
each god like a grape I pluck from the vine.  
A thousand rabbits are born, but we can  
only see the same rabbit, a single truth at a time.

*Swing*

Sometimes I remember a name, but not always:  
a name in the shape of a bell that won't stop ringing,  
names that outline the thing, our idea of the thing.  
Gravity is more than a concept, a leap of faith.  
When I'm up in the air, I see what we meant all along.

*Compass*

To name a place is to confine it to that name.  
I prefer the outline or the function.  
Not the end, but the result.  
Forgive me these faint geographies.  
I never had that kind of courage.

*Relinquish*

I relinquish my place to the robin  
twittering angrily, a tangle of worms  
in its mouth, a smattering of its droppings  
left on the window ledge.  
I would stand on the sidewalk.  
I would stand on any ledge.  
Rust-red robin with your neck  
craned toward home,  
a nest reused every couple of seasons,  
I give loose tangles of my hair to the wind—  
I freely relinquish this space.

*Fearful as I am*

I grieve change more than I used to.  
I fear the shape I might take.  
Liquid will fill any container;  
air takes the shape of the room it is in.  
I've wanted to change, and I have, *slowly*.  
I leave a piece of me everywhere I go  
and take something with me.  
I take so many pictures,  
I swear I'll never remember a thing.

*Impressionable*

Does being a part of this world  
make me impressionable?  
I love to feel the world's sway.  
To let myself be pushed by its waves.  
The rising and falling tides are not a manipulation.  
The same way the sun turns everything  
from orange to pink, but we still color  
the sun with a yellow crayon.  
Sometimes reality is redefined.  
A hot air balloon no longer believes in heights,  
just the steady increase, and I agree.  
The world doesn't look so far from up here.

## Yucheng Tao

### *Fruit*

The crow's gaze  
fixes on a heavy fruit —  
I step back,  
for it is a bitter fruit of the war,  
a man's skull.  
Darkness returns to darkness,  
Caesar to Caesar,  
and the crow's belongs only to the crow.

*Crow & warrior*

The crow flies over  
the warrior's skull  
beneath the winter mist—  
no sound,  
only the crow flies over  
the skull in another warrior's hand.

*Snow White*

The poisoned apple  
cannot sweeten  
a heart steeped in venom—  
but from another hand,  
plain straw  
can still be woven  
into a garland of gold.  
A cruel body  
cannot birth beauty;  
and no matter  
how many mirrors hang in the dark,  
only a child's heart  
remains beautiful  
even outside the mirror.

*Springtime*

February,  
feels like winter unfinished.  
March, feels like melancholy  
beneath the sun,  
blooming with the dogwood,  
and lush in the dusk,  
as my memory grows  
over the top of the sea.

*Dream in the sea*

In my dream,  
the jellyfish wears a gown of light,  
swaying upon my knees.  
I am in the boat,  
headed for the distant mountains,  
steadier than the sea.

## DW Baker

### *i. Sonic pressure*

“Sonic” is intentionally broad, encompassing a range of auditory effects created by language and registered in the brain. Rhyme is most often foregrounded; for students it is easiest to identify, and to practice in a somewhat satisfactory way. Despite my own and others’ production of many unsatisfactory results, I still aspire to well-executed rhyme, whose necessary ensemble is, I believe, among the most entrancing and powerful sonic effects.

Rhyme, assonance, consonance, pitch, rhythm, meter, and more perform like elements of a band: all the members must play together, both in tune and in time, for the overall auditory effect to resonate with the listener. Well-executed rhyme, by this definition, must incorporate and interweave the other sonic elements to manifest a gestalt, by which I mean a recognizable whole, at least equal to—if not artfully greater than—the sum of the parts.

A sonic gestalt is felt in the body much like music. It exists independently of the gestalt of semantic images—though poems will often align or contrast the two for effect. An upbeat pop song with depressing lyrics exemplifies contrast, creating dissonance and perhaps analogy for the listener. A funeral dirge exemplifies alignment, where the sonic and imagistic gestalts apply similar properties and devices.

“Pressure” refers to a specific effect rendered by sound upon the listener's auditory processing centers. I elaborate on extreme real-world examples of sonic pressure (sound fatigue, hearing loss) as well as sonic vacuums (anechoic chambers, solitary confinement), all of which act in recursive concert with the plastic brain, in my related [essay](#), “Sense Tools.” In poetics, I mean now a calibrated set of temporal devices that rely on repetition or recursion to affect the listener. Rhyme includes a form of repetition which typically creates a version of this pressure, and which is too often applied indiscriminately and harshly, creating pain instead of pleasure.

Just as text need not be read aloud for the reading student's inner voice to apply the lessons of phonics-based practice (though it certainly speeds things along), poetry need not be read aloud for the physical properties of language to register in the brain, even as the mind seeks and grapples with the semantic gestalt. Rhyming games and phonics-based instruction precede explicit reading fluency instruction, according to decades of research and experience finding links between the two, precisely because one necessary aspect of reading phonetic language systems is grounded in auditory processing of their multi-sensory symbols.

The sound of language acts upon us whether we like it or not. I believe that writing should acknowledge this and figure out how it needs to sound, in order to sound how it wants to feel. In prose, sentence-level rhythm and cadence are of utmost importance, alongside the line-level decisions of the poem, as well as the word-, morpheme-, and phoneme-level decisions shared by all forms. Regardless of genre, I believe that compositions which neglect sound do so at their own risk, and I am particularly interested in experimental compositions that probe the limits and connections of the brain’s interface with language.

## *ii. The lexical poem*

If a poem is art made from language (the definition I subscribe to), then “lexical” refers more specifically to the use of a lexicon or lexical reference as a compositional element. There are many kinds of lexical poems. I would consider found text, text collage, and erasures related under this category, since they encounter the extant fine points of a lexicon in the wild, then employ those examples as art materials. There are also quotation techniques, such as centos, golden shovels, and “after” poems, which incorporate elements from a given lexicon at the sentence, phrase and/or word level. In this sense, forms that repeat end words such as the ghazal or sestina—as well as poems structured around anaphoric repetition at the start of the line—may be considered lexical exercises, or devices for probing and juxtaposing the dynamic usages of a word or phrase across contexts.

The linguistic properties of a given lexicon can also provide a method of experimental filtration for divining currents and residues in language itself. One may think systematically about the properties of words, and then devise methods of controlling or selecting for those properties, thereby altering the stream of available word choice. These include alphabetic principles, resulting in acrostics, abecedarians, lipograms, transgrams, and other such forms, where the lexicon is narrowed by letter choice as a filtering effect. (In this sense, sonic principles such as rhyme and meter, or numerical principles such as the minison's 14-letter line, may also be considered filters of word choice.) Hermit crab forms sometimes employ the lexicographer's tools by mimicking a variety of formats found in dictionaries and other references.

Below, I offer a series of lexical poems that use sonic pressure to fuse together a set of detached-yet-related words and phrases. The incorporated terms are drawn only from a phrase bank, representing the technical-professional lexicon of a field of inquiry, compiled from multiple sources as an initial step. Two previous examples using this technique employed [gardening](#) and [musical](#) terms. All three use 14 lines and rhyme schemes derived from the traditional sonneteers—Shakespeare, Petrarch, and Spenser—with more or less deviation, depending on the constraints of the phrase bank used. As one of many timeless forms in which prime numbers force authors to differentiate their grouping choices, I find the sonnet an enduring source of inspiration.

This form seeks ecstatic truth in the resonant juxtaposition of defamiliarized elements: by excising language from its contexts, then using the gestalt created by sonic pressure as the primary organizing principle for recombination. The semantic gestalt of images and relationships, although not ignored during composition, is allowed to be an emergent and dependent factor. This is not the same thing as relegating its importance to secondary, rather than at least co-equal. Poems that delight in a sonic gestalt while being complacent with semantic meaning—that prioritize sound, to the detriment of sense—too often become thoughtless hammers, unable to apply pressure without breaking their delicate objects.

*Microsonnet of climate crisis terms*

climate feedback  
aerosols  
atmospheric  
glacier loss  
climate forcing  
entropy  
carbon footprint  
refugees  
dryland farming  
hydrologic  
aquifer  
hydrocarbon  
biogenic  
hydrosphere

*Microsonnet of musical terms*

demi-quaver  
ghost note  
false harmonic  
dotted rest  
grace note  
movable tonic  
white noise  
blue note  
half time  
repeat  
sight read  
whole note  
cut time  
breakbeat

*Microsonnet of gardening terms*

sun scorch  
winter kill  
heart rot  
bone meal  
bare root  
internode  
heirloom  
rhizome  
overseed  
scarify  
cold frame  
evergreen  
halophyte  
xeriscape

*Microsonnet of flower names*

amaranthus  
baby's breath  
coreopsis  
cyclamen  
passion flower  
trumpet vine  
polyanthus  
columbine  
forsythia  
woolly violet  
bleeding heart  
forget me not  
blue-eyed grass  
blazing star

## **Biographical information**

### **Tim Frank**

Tim Frank's work has been published in *Bending Genres*, *X-R-A-Y Literary Magazine*, *Maudlin House*, *The Forge Literary Magazine*, *The Metaworker* and elsewhere. He has been nominated for Best Small Fictions. His debut chapbook is, *An Advert Can Be Beautiful in the Right Shade of Death* (C22 Press '24) and his second chapbook of poetry is, *Delusions To Live By* (Alien Buddha Press, '25)

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### **Eric T. Racher**

Eric T. Racher lives in Riga, Latvia. His poetry, essays and fiction have appeared in *Socrates on the Beach*, *minor literature[s]*, *Exacting Clam*, *Your Impossible Voice*, *Literary Imagination*, *Keep Planning*, *ballast*, and elsewhere.

### **Sean Kilpatrick**

Sean Kilpatrick's work is published in *Boston Review*, *The Collidescope*, *Columbia Poetry Review*, and *New York Tyrant*.

### **Paulette Hampton**

Paulette Hampton holds a Masters in Reading Education. She is the author of the YA paranormal novel *Of the Lilin* and memoir *When Life was Yellow: A Memoir of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder*. Her poems have appeared in *Immortal Hymns Rewritten Realms*, *Secret Attic*, and elsewhere. She lives with her husband and two cats in North Carolina.

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### **Mark Wartenberg**

Mark Wartenberg is a French/German/Indonesian writer and actor. He studied at the universities of Cambridge and Oxford and is currently based in Berlin. He divides his time between performing in theatre and cabaret on one hand and writing musicals and poetry on the other.

### **Erin Norton**

Erin Norton (they/she) is a student at Emerson College and an enjoyer of strawberries, scented candles, and windy days. They're one of the EICs of *hand picked poetry*. As for their writing, you can find it in *pomegranate lit* and *Ghost City Review*.

### **Penn Kemp**

Poet, performer and playwright Penn Kemp has long been a keen participant/activist in Canada's cultural life, with more than thirty books of poetry, prose and drama; seven plays and ten CDs produced as well as award-winning videopoems. She has been writer-in-residence at universities throughout India and Brazil with her work translated into many languages. Her "poem for peace in many voices", for instance, is out in 136 languages, New collections include *LIVES OF DEAD POETS* and *ORDINARY / MOVING*. See [www.pennkemp.weebly.com](http://www.pennkemp.weebly.com).

### **Mark Saunders**

Mark Saunders lives on the Isle of Wight in the UK. His poetry appears in *Abridged*, *The Alchemy Spoon*, *The Cannon's Mouth*, *Confluence*, *Dreich*, *Gutter*, *The Interpreter's House*, *Magma*, *Meniscus*, *The Museum of Americana*, *Pocket Island Poetry*, *Popshot*, *Porridge*, *Propel*, *Red Ogre Review*, *Soft Star*, *Spelt* and *Strix*.

### **Craig Dobson**

Craig Dobson has had poems and pieces of short fiction published in various UK, US and European magazines. He is working towards his first collection of poetry. He lives and works in the UK.

### **Peter Jones**

Peter Jones has been writing poetry and fiction for the last two decades while living along the eastern seaboard with his wife, Jane. First published in the *Great Smokies Review* (*The Third Man*, V.11), he is preparing a chapbook, *Poems for the Passage*, and just finished his fifth novel, *Maximum Risk*.  
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### **Rus Khomutoff**

Rus Khomutoff is an experimental poet from New York. He has written 5 chapbooks of poetry, and his new book, *KAOS KARMA* will be published in November by C22 PRESS. His Instagram is @ruskhomutoff and his personal blog is [radiaworld.tumblr.com](http://radiaworld.tumblr.com)

### **Lucien Levant**

Lucien Levant is a Southern California-based writer and office worker. He enjoys writing poems, short stories, and screenplays, which began as a creative outlet from his professional career. His influences include other professionals-turned-writers such as ETA Hoffmann, Wallace Stevens, and Dana Gioia. Lucien enjoys weird fiction, film, and visiting family in the South, all themes that he often incorporates into his writing. Lucien is currently pursuing a master's degree at Pepperdine University and occasionally posts his shorter poems on his Instagram account @jigsandfixtures.

## **Mark Goodwin**

Mark Goodwin is a poet-sound-artist, fiction-maker & re-thinker who speaks and writes in differing ways. He is also a walker, balancer, climber, stroller ... and negotiator of places. Mark has a number of books & chapbooks with various poetry houses, including Leafe Press, Longbarrow Press, & Shearsman Books. His latest chapbooks are: *to 'B' nor as 'tree'* (Intergraphia, Sheffield, October 2022), *Of Gone Fox* (The Hedgehog Poetry Press, Clevedon, April 2023), & *Is* (commissioned by Bobba Cass in association with Fox Books, Leicester, June 2024). His next full-length collection – *At* – is due to be published by Shearsman Books, autumn/winter 2024. Mark lives with his partner on a narrowboat just north of Leicester, in the English Midlands. He tweets poems from @kramawoodgin, and some of his sound-enhanced poetry is here: <https://markgoodwin-poet-sound-artist.bandcamp.com>

## **Joshua Martin**

Joshua Martin is a Philadelphia based writer and filmmaker, who currently works in a library. He is a member of C22, an experimental writing collective. He is the author most recently of the books *Approximate Preparation for Cannibalistic Symphonies* (C22 Press), *isolated version of nexus* (Pere Ube), and *lung f,r,a,g,m,e,n,t,s before grazing \*asterisk\** (Moria Poetry). He has had numerous pieces published in various journals. You can find links to his published work at [joshuamartinwriting.blogspot.com](http://joshuamartinwriting.blogspot.com)

## **Nathan Anderson**

Nathan Anderson is a poet and artist from Mongarlowe, Australia. He is the author of numerous books and has had work appear widely both online and in print. He is a member of the C22 experimental writing collective and founding editor of *Submersible Press*. You can find him at [nathanandersonwriting.home.blog](http://nathanandersonwriting.home.blog) or on Bluesky @njapoetry.bsky.social.

## **Darren C. Demaree**

Darren C. Demaree's poems have appeared in *Hotel Amerika*, *Diode*, *North America Review*, *New Letters*, *Diagram* and the *Colorado Review*. He is the Editor in Chief of the *Best of the Net Anthology* and Managing Editor of *Ovenbird Poetry*.

## **Stephen Bett**

Stephen Bett is a widely and internationally published Canadian poet with 26 books in print from *BlazeVOX*, *Chax*, *Spuyten Duyvil*, *Ekstasis Editions*, *Thistledown Press*, & others. His personal papers are archived in the "Contemporary Literature Collection" at Simon Fraser University. His website is [stephenbett.com](http://stephenbett.com)

### **Ali Heidari**

Mohammad Ali Heidari-Shahreza is a university professor, educational researcher, and literary translator with a background in English literature and applied linguistics. Specializing in Persian literature, particularly Sufi mysticism and classical poetry, his work explores themes of self-discovery, love, existential pain, unity, and the cyclical nature of life. He blends traditional Persian wisdom with contemporary poetic expression. His translations of classical Persian texts have been published in esteemed international literary journals.

### **Benjamin Renné**

Benjamin Renné teaches writing and literature in Northern Virginia. A collector of word and song, he craves poetry and music that is at once both inside and outside, perched on a threshold. His manuscript, "Fragments of a Solar Phenomenon", was a finalist for the 2023 Four Way Books Levis Prize. He earned his MFA in Creative Writing from George Mason University and his poetry has appeared in *Juked*, *Prelude*, *Cleaver*, *Ghost Proposal*, and more.

### **Guillermo Bowie**

Guillermo Bowie is a Portland, Oregon based writer recently published in *Maryland Literary Review*, *Grey Sparrow Journal*, *Children*, *Churches*, *And Daddies*, *Blue Collar Review*, with work forthcoming in *Maryland's Academy Of The Heart And Mind* and *Book Of Matches*.

### **Esther Sadoff**

Esther Sadoff is a teacher and writer from Columbus, Ohio. She is the author of four chapbooks: *Some Wild Woman* (Finishing Line Press), *Serendipity in France* (Finishing Line Press), *Dear Silence* (Kelsay Books), and *If I Hold my Breath* (Bottlecap Press). She was nominated for a Pushcart Prize by *Hole in the Head Review*.

### **Yucheng Tao**

Yucheng Tao is a Chinese poet based in Los Angeles, currently pursuing a B.A. in Songwriting at the Musicians Institute. His work has appeared in over 30 journals internationally, including *Wild Court* (King's College, London), *NonBinary Review*, *Apocalypse Confidential*, *The Arcanist*, *Red Ogre Review*, *Cathexis Northwest Press*, *SHINE: International Poetry*, *In Parentheses*, and more.

### **DW Baker**

D.W. Baker is a poet, editor, and critic from St. Petersburg, Florida, USA. His poems appear in *Washington Square Review*, *Voidspace Zine*, and *Black Stone/White Stone*, among others, while his reviews appear in *Paraselene*, *Philly Poetry Chapbook Review*, *Variant Lit*, and more. He edits poetry for *Libre*, a southern literature and arts magazine dedicated to mental health, surrealism, and the mind. See more of his work at [www.dwbakerpoetry.com](http://www.dwbakerpoetry.com)

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