



**These Fragile Lilacs Poetry
Journal**

**Volume 1, Issue 1
Summer 2015**

These Fragile Lilacs Poetry Journal

A journal dedicated to poetic excellence

The main goal of *These Fragile Lilacs* is to find strong poetry that illuminates whatever is true, whatever is beautiful, whatever is revelatory, and whatever goes otherwise unnoticed about the world in which we live. Poetry allows us to articulate what it means to live and die. Poetry is also one of the most significant mediums through which to document our lived experiences.

These Fragile Lilacs Poetry Journal

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These Fragile Lilacs is a poetry journal released biannually in January and July. We look for poetry that's tightly constructed and for sharp poetry with strong metaphors, similes, and imagery. We also gladly accept artwork and photographs. Issues are released at thesefragilelilacspoetry.com. The cover art of this edition of *Lilacs* is a photograph courtesy of Angela Carver, whose poetry is also in this inaugural edition of the journal.

Submissions: Send poetry and art submissions to thesefragilelilacs@gmail.com. Please do not include any attachments for poems; instead, paste the poems you would like to be submitted directly into your email. You may submit up to five poems per submission cycle. Please do not send previously published work. If your work is accepted for publication elsewhere, please let us know as soon as possible.

If you would like to submit artwork or photography, you may submit attachments of images via email to the email address above.

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Weep Not

For Blue and Nancy

For Vicki and Morris

November, 2013, 2014

--Roberta George

Do we weep for the leaf in November, crinkled and brown,
or the pomegranate hull as it lies by the fence near the road?
Do we sigh and remember the tomato garden gone to dry stalks
and a few limp fibers revealing some seeds?

All things perish. Galaxies across eons of time swirl and fall into darkness;
great empires along with their leaders and slaves go down into graves,
into history, and into memory, too, which lingers, a mist slowly ebbing
away in the sunlight of other creations.

They are not here and not there either,
in that heaven or hell we once, as children, believed in.
The libraries of their lives is closed, has fallen down
with all the books, all the architectural drawings,
and all the music and movies that made us cry.

I am not a prophet or seer, although I've begged God to speak
to me in the night. Yet I do take all lessons to heart, twisting
and weaving them into stories and songs that whisper some truths.
Everything changes, reforms, lies down in the dirt and is reborn.

Roberta Haas George has seven children and lives with a third-generation Lebanese husband in Valdosta, Georgia. She teaches yoga and a writers' work shop, The Snake Handlers, at the Turner Center for the Arts, where she served as Executive Director, doing everything from painting walls to writing grants.

She won a second prize for the poem "Three o" in a collection from the Porter Fleming Foundation, and a first for the short story "Truces." "A Servant to Servants" also won a prize from the Porter Fleming Foundation and Berry College and was published by Snake Nation Press. A short memoir of her Border Patrol father won a second prize from *The Valdosta Daily Times*, and her novel *Baptizing the Cat* was published by Snake Nation Press in 2012. Other poems have recently been selected by *The Southern Poetry Review* and *The New Guard*. And another short story, "A Small Fortune," was a finalist and an honorable mention in the *Malahat* Literary contest

Ode to the Aphids

--Mary Anne Kennedy

You've come here to do battle
my little aphid fiends,
but in the end I'll get ya
by any mortal means.

In pow'dry fine white armies
you chew my plants to shreds.
Where are the winged predators
you nasty critters dread?

The ladybugs have flown away
their plant-lice meal untouched.
I'm forced to fight with chemicals
and other toxic stuff.

I march out to my garden
with several cans of DEET
But then I stop. Consid'ring,
that all bugs gotta eat.

Mary Anne Kennedy grew up in Chicago and currently lives in Valdosta, Georgia. With degrees from Loyola University and University of St. Francis, she has worked as a corporate trainer, graphic artist, marketing specialist, executive assistant and more. Kennedy is a freelance travel writer who has published articles on health care, and appeared as a guest on FOX Business News and FOX & Friends television. She is working on two novels and a fledgling collection of poetry.

And Then It Was

--Hannah Bessinger

Because of how I saw you walking
in the dark, taking a hard
look at the night's backbone,
counting the stars as if you could,
as if the final number
would tell you a secret hidden
in each curve of the night,
in each shadowy finger of the dogwood
that spread its limbs above you. I wanted
to go to you then—point out
the cold streams say, *here, drink*.
But you stepped into the water
without looking down,
washed your dirty
hands and boots in it.

Unfolding

--Hannah Bessinger

The sky opens heavy
as an orchid.

The sun slips
through the leaves.

All night, you have
waited for these slivers

of light.
In the dark,

fevers kept you wet
with sweat. Your lips

stuck to your sheets.
Your muscles tightened

into spasms. Still, you found
your way to your dirty kitchen,

a glass of cold water,
the concrete of your tiny balcony,

rough under your feet.
What patterns the sunrise makes

on your skin. Let it claim
the rooftops of our brick city. These

hollow places where we have passed
our days in sackcloth. You are tired

of fires. Your insides
have burnt down into a single

black coal that glows red
in the falling of October.

The dying leaves whirl against it
Perhaps this time the earth

will not curl back into itself
but bare its face like love.

Anorexia

--Hannah Bessinger

The floor has its own
kind of welcome. The slick
gloss of cherry wood,
the warmth of someone
else's brown carpet.
Leaves know this.
They have no problem
letting go and whirling
into the earth. They do
not complain as the soil
takes them piece by piece
into itself. All summer,
they were green,
and I wore sweaters
to the park. I imagined
they were tired
of the trees, the sun,
the squirrels, the hordes
of laughing children.
They had already begun
to loosen from the branches
and curl into themselves.
slowly, emptying
their veins of chlorophyll.
Dying is easiest
when you take it moment
by moment.

Hannah Bessinger is a writer and editor. She earned her MFA in poetry from the University of North Carolina. Her poetry has appeared in THRUSH Poetry Journal.

Irony?

For Vicki Pennington

--Samuel Zane Farrell

Striking me as a Groucho Marx-type character-
Marx, but with a vagina- I found it odd to meet you in a writers **group**.
Hearing you were an atheist, and I'm still unsure of that... fact? I wonder.
Now that you've flown to heaven and are directing the angels plays...
Here's hoping you are content, correcting the grammar of God.

Samuel Zane Farrell is a creative writer who has a B.A. in English from The University of Georgia, no money, and a lot of hope. He also has the neurological condition known as MS; without it, he would be exactly who he is today... but he wouldn't be having nearly as much fun!

Blessed Ties

--Georgia Bruce

I dreamed about you, Daddy.
You are in my prayers.
The wind was blowing
the leaves about you.
A newspaper fluttered by.
There was no shelter
for you, from the wind.
Where are you,
this dark night?

Years later, you tell me.
I was crossing a bridge,
the Cooper River Bridge
in Charleston, South Carolina.
I felt your little arms
around my neck.
I had decided I should
jump into the river.
But, you hugged my neck.
Your prayers were answered.
Family ties are blessed
and binding, Daughter.

Georgia Bruce was born in Horry County, South Carolina in Conway Hospital. She lives in South Georgia and has worked in communications and as a greeter at Sam's Club. Now retired, Georgia enjoys sewing, reading, and walking for exercise.

Glitter

--Debby Adair

Swallow fistfuls
of silver,
gritty in my teeth;
lick the hope from my fingertips,
believe only good things,
dream of lightness,

and a breath
translucent as wings.

Debby Adair grew up in New Brunswick and currently live in Regina, Saskatchewan with her two boys, Andrew and Aiden. She is currently pursuing an MA in English and Creative Writing at the University of Regina and has been published in *Spring*.

My Grandmother's Secretary

--Lois Levinson

Had she been born a century later,
my grandmother might have taken charge
of a corporation or a college,
maybe even a small country.

But in her day, a strong smart woman
stayed home and spent the full force
of her personality on her family,
or so my mother told me.

The secretary was the fortress
from which my grandmother ruled,
a formidable mahogany desk, replete
with pigeonholes and secret drawers.

She occupies it still.
Each time I open its glass cabinet doors,
a sound escapes with the timbre of her voice,
and just a hint of a New York accent.

When I raise the slant-top cover, I see her,
crocheted shawl around her shoulders,
fountain pen in hand, writing letters
in her lacy script to her dwindling retinue.

Near the end of her life, she retreated
to the secretary, crumpling, hiding,
sometimes destroying her treasures,
as though the enemy was at the gates.

She left layers of artifacts in its recesses:
a photo of my grandfather as a young man;
a browned clipping of a brother's obituary;
a single marcasite earring wrapped in a tissue.

Each time I sit down to write
I have to nudge her aside.

Lois Levinson is an emerging poet (one poem published and another accepted for publication) who studies and writes at Lighthouse Writers Workshop in Denver, Colorado. She is fascinated by birds and their place in nature and in our lives, so birds are the subject of many of her poems.

Baltimore

--Dylan Debelis

There is nothing 'black' about rioting
or 'white' about angels slinging rocks through drugstore windows
while blue-balled Oriole's fans snag fangs on purse strings
and pump bicep veins over unconscious women.

Trashcan fires smolder red; Baltimore is rising. My Facebook wall
wages in a war between LeRon Barton and Tots Navarro. I
keep my fists where the librarian can see them, I
don't want no trouble; don't want no spine snapping through this lashed back.

If I'm not careful
the newspapers will have me hating the people who are being oppressed
and loving the people who are doing the oppressing. If
I'm not careful
my ancestors will be shackled into the bellies of boats and used as anchors for civilization.
If I'm
not careful
I won't have nothing left to be careful of.

Dylan Debelis is a publisher, poet, performer, chaplain, and minister based out of New York City. A candidate for Unitarian Universalist Ministry, Dylan embodies his faith in praxis through his pastoral care and social justice activism. In sermons, writings, and worship, Dylan weaves grotesque worlds, loving embraces, and an off-kilter wit to lead the audience or congregation in a very unorthodox prayer.

I Am

(For Maya Angelou)

Kenekukwu Onwudinjo

Like the wind I brush across your cheeks.
Like water, I slip through your fingers.
I am the echo in your head.
I am the shadow at sun rise.
I am the smoke at the fireplace.
I go south and I can go east,
I go wherever I please.
Never will you find me on the ground,
Like dead leaves waiting to be trampled underfoot.

Kenekukwu Onwudinjo is a lecturer in the Department of English and Literary Studies, University of Calabar, Nigeria. She is a budding poet who is moved deeply by the social and religious issues including, radicalism and ethnic or racial segregation in Nigeria and beyond.

Varnished

--Kendra Preston Leonard

There are motley barnacles on my past,
jagged-edged, impossible to remove
without a knife.

Every once in a while I think
maybe they're gone, peeled
away by salt water, diffused, diluted,
but then I cut myself on them.

With time, and the sun, some have
softened,
their shapes more fluid, familiar,
bearing the scent of rue
rather than columbine.

I look to them for reminders
of my own defects,
as they were seen and as I saw,
though which today I scarcely greet.

And despite repeated oaths
my hand upraised against time,
the unsettled shells
cling to weathered thoughts.

If you then look away
to finer lives and clearer minds, naught but
to sun-bright memories,
feel no shame.
I am myself so
varnished I sink with
gravity.

Kendra Leonard is a musicologist and poet based in Texas.

Breathtaking

-- Nellene Benhardus

Adjective. (Breath) Took. Past tense verb. Lungs turned to small, dehydrated apricots. He was flying into the sun directly. *Here's looking at you kid.* On their first anniversary, she had a fever; he knew it as it heated his lap, as he fingered her hair, as he mouthed along with Bogart. Flying into the sun and looking. Her skin was peach, or were they apricots? It was soft if he would touch it. He took another kick-in-the-gut breath; fingers raised an inch, a tremble, a determination. The lid clicked closed, and he was walking into the haze. Something had departed. Something had landed.

Mirage

-- Nellene Benhardus

You mistake baby
blue sequins for water and come.

What shall we call you: the audience chants. You discard
yourself for a stale *nom de l'expérience*,

Don the green dress with mother wings
cut off the corpse.

This is a solemn place to take off shoes:
Dancers kneel to feel finitude burn.

The males watch. Gilded clothes and bare
pockets: they play for teeth and nails.

Your avian bones are too hollow
for this funereal dance.

Green wings rise high and bright.
The *grande jete* scratches the sky.

You are absinthe
to their watching gold beaks.

Or Icarus to thirsty water
awaiting the wet landing splash.

Behind the bar, a young girl
watches from the mirror.

Brava!:the audience howls.
She plunges toward reflected light

Breathes for the first time,
Retrieves your skin

And kisses
your feathers, your hair.

Tonight:

--Nellene Benhardus

A softer pain, forgot
the sullen terror sustains
foot's place on earth's facade.
The soul, stretched wide throughout its
mind: histrionic ordinations, explanations,
makes land of shifting clouds,
escapist kingdom. I submit,
let, ask for a more soothing fantasy still.

Still, the echo of boisterous thunder rebounds
above the dreamy din of sleep.
We were never alone, even in the garden.
The dirt, our love of dirt,
those twigs on trees do not feel memory's
touch, do not depend on longing.
The wind, the rain respond:
We will persist. We will soften your grave.

Nellene Benhardus is a poet, a Minnesotan, and a PhD Candidate at the University of Iowa.

Worship

--Tsviltidou Zoi

An anthology of paths crossing
Footsteps uncertain but sharp
Pinned on the certainty of the cement
Suits appearing in slow motion
Stupid revelations and unpleasant sympathies
It is not honesty that paid us a visit
It is not loyalty that made us wear black
Conformity and patterned formality
It is not how pain celebrates
Stiffness and the fabric is tense
Manly gestures that could confess
But have no interest in doing so
Handkerchiefs and the awful smell of cleanness
Exaggerations, flamboyant misconceptions
Mindreading and our sense of humour tickled
I can't help it but notice the buried
Confetti sprinkled on the shoes
Coated with Technicolor
I can't help but notice the shoes, buried
And worshipping them is all I do

Care

--Tsiviltidou Zoi

There's so much and yet so little
And both are infinite and yet inadequate
Drop by drop it plays the trampoline
Charming its way to the bottom
Where there's more forgiveness
Where desire expects less and less
As everything has sunk seamlessly beside her
There's happiness and occasionally a drop or two
Jump high enough to spice things up
And there's hope again and light
But the heaviness of joy drags them down
And peace on the surface is restored
Submerging itself in maintenance
Where there's more acceptance
Where desire talks less and less
As everything is drunk purposely beside her
There's so much to talk about and yet so little

Tsiviltidou Zoi is currently a full-time English language teacher and a part-time PhD student in Museum Education (University of Leicester). She holds an MA in Cultural Management (University of Arts of Belgrade & University Lyon II) and a BA in English Language and Literature (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki).

Millbrook: Tapping the Sugar Maple Trees (for Zeb)

--Sheila Nickerson

Just before dark
we go to the secret buckets,
take out the frozen blood
which looks and tastes like water.

You boil it all night,
all morning, till it turns
thick and gold, a gift.

Breaking through the crusted snow,
through quiet bittersweet,
I see how we could be:
enchanted trees needing
only taps, needing only fire--
and someone who believes.

Sheila Nickerson, a former Poet Laureate of Alaska, lives in Bellingham, Washington. Her poems have been widely published in magazines, chapbooks, and anthologies and have won two Pushcart Prizes. Her most recent nonfiction title is: *HARNESSED TO THE POLE: Sledge Dogs in Service to American Explorers of the Arctic, 1853-1909* (University of Alaska Press, 2014).

Wind Poppy

--Melissa Boston

Apricot gold,
hot copper
flame of bitter-
sweet melon
wedge of cantaloupe,
California sun-
set in grass-
lands, blooming
mid-April
from fire's orange-
red embers.
How easily
you're broken.

Melissa Boston's poetry has appeared in *PMS Journal*, *Moon City Review*, *Bird's Thumb*, *The Fourth River Review*, *Blue Mesa Review*, *I-70 Review*, and *Driftwood Press*. She currently lives in Fayetteville, AR.

The Lilac in Front of My House

--Yuan Changming

Leaves hip-hopping to the music of early summer
One long branch flirting with every passer-by
Trunk shaking with laughter from last spring
But behind the fence, your roots remain firm
Never budging a single inch, between day and night
While I feel sorry for your confinement all your life
You winged seeds keep travelling far beyond the neighborhood

Yuan Changming, eight-time Pushcart nominee and author of five chapbooks (including *The Origin of Letters* [2015]), grew up in rural China, became an ESL student at 19, and published several monographs on translation before moving to Canada. With a PhD in English, Yuan currently co-edits *Poetry Pacific* with Allen Qing Yuan in Vancouver and, since mid-2005, has had poetry appearing in 1039 literary publications across 34 countries, including *Best Canadian Poetry*, *BestNewPoemsOnline*, *Cincinnati Review* and *Threepenny Review*.

Board Bloom

--Kimberly Pitzrick

my lips stay pressed, tight
i feel like a dusty chair
observing the room

Kimberly finds the world so inspiring, and she likes to write about her experiences, in order to comprehend what surrounds her. She writes at least one poem every day, so that she can express herself. She is full of ideas, and she likes to share her mind with the world.

Mad Girl's Hospital Diary

--Shelley Lloyd

When I got here
They took my tongue
And pinned it --
Jabbed a knife through it
To a board
Where it wiggled
Next to butterflies.

When I got here
I was given a book
And was told to keep it
With me always
So that I could point
Out the printed phrases
I wanted to say

When I got here
They took my pens
And left me with the book
To pass through the city
(Through the hospital --
the night terrors --) quiet
As a church mouse

When I got here
I was full of buzzing
Stinging biting words

When I got here
They took my tongue

When I got here
I was given a book

When I got here
I wrote my resume
on my arms
on my legs
on my stomach
on my breasts

When I got here
I wrote my sins
in red.

Shelley Lloyd is a vagrant, professional slacker, grad student, and screenwriter. She currently lives in South Carolina with her black cat, Poe.

Seize the Day

--Dorothy Greene

If you have a service to give,
give it now
while time is on your side.
Tomorrow may not be fun to live
which to hide.
If you have a visit to make
make it now
while your friend welcomes you.
There is no way to know
if tomorrow's sky should
be gray or blue.
If there is some praise that you can give
give it now.
Who knows if tomorrow we live?
If you have banners to raise
raise them now
while you still have time to see and praise.

Dorothy Greene was born an only child in Valdosta, Georgia, where she has lived all her life. She is a retired elementary school teacher and likes to read.

Hardy Kale

--Ryan Cordle

With its clear-sky frost
winter cannot kill and wither
the crisp fingers of lifeblood. Your green
sustains like the canon martyrs
held up to the fiery stakes of Caesar
when they filled red dusk with the smell
of freshly baked bread. Your veins
begin to purple
when morning sun warms
the dirt of restful growth,
and in your aged dignity,
roots stretched through solid ground,
you provide in the meanest and coldest time.

Dawn Chorus Prayers

-- Ryan Cordle

The prelude to dawn chorus keeps me grounded.
My lips are open, nothing comes forth, and I try to pray,
and with high-pitched songs I am pounded.

Although the early alarm clock has sounded,
the busyness of work and noise portend the day.
The prelude to dawn chorus keeps me grounded.

Men of God say his presence keeps them surrounded,
but in the clear morning I have nothing to say,
and with high-pitched songs I am pounded.

My soul by birdsong, like Heaven's reigning spirit, is hounded,
lest the stillness leads to my dark decay.
The prelude to dawn chorus keeps me grounded.

The greenfinch breaks its fast on chokeberries well-abounded.
Its grace to flight will soon give way.
and with high-pitched songs I am pounded.

Here my soul by a quiet God is founded,
when the birds like priests offer to pray.
The prelude to dawn chorus keeps me grounded,
and with high-pitched songs I am pounded.

Ryan Cordle teaches English and coaches girls' basketball at a small boarding school in Eastern Kentucky. When he's not teaching, coaching, or writing, he is usually found whacking weeds and wrestling with his four-year-old son. He has an essay forthcoming in *Red Savina Review*.

Braille

--Ethan Bethune

I want to read you as Braille
Until I find what makes you
come apart
So I am moving there
Storing all your pages
Making art
From the line of your body
Against the light

Ethan Bethune is a 25 year old writer of essays, short fiction and poetry. He resides in Alabama where he practices antiquing and photography. For more of his work please visit Bleeding ink Poetry on YouTube or <http://regardingsamuel.com/>.

THE WORLD ISN'T ENDING

--Tim Suermondt

Every generation has its flashpoints
which lead to conflagrations, where men,
women and children are strewn about—
and sometimes a dog sitting on the rubble

of a house that could have been anyone's.
But the theologian who wrote "we must
remember the world is also meek and kind"
was right, like driving down the Taconic Parkway

and my wife reminding me of people we knew
who lived in the area, including some friends
I had shamelessly almost forgotten—"Wave
to Lee," she said, executing a brisk wave herself

and adding "The world is beautiful" and it was
for the entire drive—forests and deer, a strange
gift shop selling wooden clogs and the owner's dog
curled in a corner, watching everyone with delight.

GROCERY SHOPPING IN BROOKLYN

--Tim Suermondt

I don't see Garcia Lorca
by the melons, and how I wish
I had—there's a poem of his
I have questions about.

I think of Andalusia
when going through the ground
beef, and two dogs sun themselves
in front of a grizzled cantina.

Between the first aisle's rows
of bread and hundreds of coffees
a gypsy dances, and I fumble
through my pocket, hoping
to dig out a few coins.

At the checkout the cashier
speaks Spanish, the rose in her hair
red as any blistering Summer sun
and I walk past a fountain,
up the slope, Moorish all day.

THE YELLOW SHIRT

--Tim Suermond

I know—way too loud,

but I'm wearing it today
because the world is not acting

the way I want—a lunkhead

protest, probably, yet one
that couldn't be more sincere.

And there I am walking it through

the good and bad part of town,
the entire length of public parks,

along the river glutted with freighters

and getting five nibbles of admiration
to offset the looks of perplexity.

And there I am in the early evening,

stepping into my apartment, taking off
the yellow shirt and putting it back

in the closet, I sense, for good.

The yellow shirt won't see the stars
bunched tight tonight, but I will—

a huge advantage I'd do well to cherish.

Tim Suermond has published two full-length collections of poetry, and has a third book coming out in early 2016. He has published poems in *Poetry*, *The Georgia Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Plume Poetry Journal* and *Southern Humanities Review* among others. He lives in Cambridge (MA) with his wife, the poet Pui Ying Wong.

A Woman at the Gym

--Nels Hanson

In her movement is such
calm the silent deer drink
her beauty. She hesitates

and all the mirrors waver
with clearing water until
land flashes green as sea

where dolphins trace her
curve of mouth and brow.
She walks where grasses

stir and rise long summer
hours that close with rest.
Watch last colors deepen

and evening hills reveal
her drowsing silhouette
lean from fields of coral

roses to dream of islands
at dusk. Animals appear
and plants and minerals

taste freshening combers
wafting her blue shadow.
A star catches light from

her night-black hair and
crested waves return her
fragrance of a sea flower.

Nels Hanson's fiction received the San Francisco Foundation's James D. Phelan Award and Pushcart Prize nominations in 2010, 12, and 2014. Poems appeared in *Word Riot*, *Oklahoma Review*, *Pacific Review* and other magazines and received *Sharkpack Review Annual's* 2014 Prospero Prize and a 2014 Pushcart nomination.

End Times

--Lorna Wood

First, young girls were found in corners, unclothed, limbs awkwardly splayed, staring glassily at nothing. Animals threw their soft bodies off cliffs. Bedlam was liberated, and the inmates, many of whom had not seen the light of day in years, were dragged and sorted with the rest, some raptured to Goodwill, others condemned and discarded.

Least, lowest, and last to know were the soldiers, involved as they were in incessant myrmidon warfare. The best looking knights took up modeling but were stricken with paralysis. Statues now, they stand on cliffs looking across at the sole remaining house, whose tiny inhabitants lie amidst their disordered furniture as though felled by pestilence. With lesser soldiers, hastily sealed in mass tombs, all these await a Second Coming.

Lorna Wood is a violinist and writer in Auburn, Alabama with a Ph. D. in English from Yale. Her poetry and fiction can be found in *Cacti Fur* (forthcoming), *Birds Piled Loosely*, *Something for the Weekend*, *Sir?*, *Every Writer*, *Blue Monday Review*, and *Untitled, with Passengers*. She is the featured poet in issue 2 of *Experimentos* and Associate Editor of *Gemini Magazine*.

Sunset

--Fatima Ijaz

The karore-longing of the sea
Evaporates at the shore
a horizon uncertain arises in the sky
the birds meet with their bodies
The new colours breaking form
Into angels – cries the wind
and lashes forth disturbing
The patterns of clouds
and there is home-coming
in the eyes of wild-horses.

Often, seldom

--Fatima Ijaz

My familiar, my ghost
How often I've looked for you
On abandoned streets, in deserted cafes
In the lost lingering of the moon
In open-hearted conversations
In childish mannerism
And how seldom I have found you
Though they've resembled you
How seldom have they been you.

Pulse

--Fatima Ijaz

You moved a city – within a heartbeat—
It paced miles and aeons of distance
And as we come closer to the streetlight
there is a shadow of silhouettes
What comes closer, moves afar
it is the game of distance
what stays near, is like a lashing of moonlight
On the pulse of the veined sky
or my wrist
or that moment when I know
You know that the distance is silk.

Fatima Ijaz, graduate from Eastern Michigan University in English Linguistics, and writing for over a decade. A poet by instinct, by the waterfall of words. She grew into poetry, as black wings fly into the sky of the fallen. Where there is nothing -- there is word, there is art.

Bleach

--Kaitlyn R. Sullivan

Hands and walls stripped,
Layer after layer until both
Are bare and raw
By the time bleach splashed
Into my eyes I was too high
Off the sterile sweltering aroma
To care that the tingle
Engulfed my vision.
Going blind was beautiful.
A kaleidoscope tunnel,
Swirled in rainbow shine.
It twinkled bright like crystal
Sparkling light. Icy water
Rinsed out all the resin
While chilling my sight.
Now I wonder,
As lucidity returns
Will bleach purge
The corruptions,
The toxins,
The impurities of you?

Writing has always been Kaitlyn R. Sullivan's passion, from the moment she picked up a pen and put letters to paper she's been unable to stop. Poetry has given her a resource and friend, allowing her to express her need to write and share with others. She believes that her generation and those that follow need people like her, determined to find truths and educate others about them.

In Air

--Jim Barloon

Having caught air,
the car, careering off the plowed road,
slams into the bank and soars,
spinning in a slow spiral
above the wintry field
shot with snow.

Free of earth,
only the cold wind's heard,
that northern roar, while Time
stalls, falls still, like a taut
beast stopped, set to spring.

And in that moment, free of
Time and space, free of weight
and consequence, your mind clear
as that December sun, you
trace out like a figure
in the stars the character
of your fate, and see it
there before you (like old names
on cold marble carved) in
its ineradicable shape--
the smash, the crushing spill,
the powdered cloud of snow.
So simple and complete,
so certain and impersonal.

Jim Barloon is a professor of English at the University of St. Thomas in Houston. He has published articles on Dickens, Hardy, Hemingway, and Cather.

A Night on the Water

--Emily Watts

Fish from the sea caught up in nets,
too tangled and knotted to move.
Metal clinks as the boat undulates,
rocking to the rhythm of the water.

Ocean salt lands on my cheek,
dodging my yellow jacket and bucket hat.
A futile attempt at keeping the spray
from soaking into my already drenched skin.

Black clouds lend a dark mist
to an even darker ocean.
But the ominous night and swift waters
will never discourage a fisherman.

Striped Bass flop
in the belly of the *Arabella*.
I snag one by the tail;
he whips and refuses to yield.

The eyes glint from the ship's floodlight,
the blood-stained hook ensnared in his lip.
But then his body settles into a calm
and we wait for his gills to stop shuttering.

Emily Watts and is currently a freshman at Chapman University.

Elyon's Country

--Angela Carver

I am wilderness.
I exist in the absence of things.
I swallow up decay.

I am wilder-ness.
I exist in desolation
I swallow the space between the stars.

I am wilderness.
I exist in you.
I swallow your heart.

Angela began writing her first novel in the first grade, and rediscovered her love of writing in the fifth grade. Now a sophomore in Biosystems Engineering at Auburn University, she continues to write daily.

Winter at the University

--Andrew Albritton

Snow is collecting on the bare tree limbs,
on the wooden benches, on the ground
where leaves and grass
poke up through the newly crystalline ground.
The professor toddles down the lane
to the library, where a white conical cap
is budding atop the lion, sentry guardian
of knowledge. *Thinking hat*, the professor thinks,
surmounting the steps. From the gelid winds,
he passes into the great repository,
warm with light.

Andrew Albritton is working on a PhD in English from the University of Nottingham. He is writing his thesis about punctuation marks(!). He currently lives in Springfield, Missouri, and works at Missouri State University.

Paper

--Holly Cian

Man reads the paper: little tears along the
middle fold make independence
look to be a rowdy crowd

He turns the page. Black blots
form beneath his fingertips. Plant
opens, plant closes, tornado
watch in effect until midnight.

Sun is out, clouds go south,
wind gone east – an eventual
hazard.

Ceiling fans whir in slow motion.
Pale green lime-outlined
eyes shiver: King's assassination

like it was yesterday; Iran-Contra
coffee cup cleansed at dawn;
eating Afghanistan: tea-time, noon.

Holly Cian currently lives in Asheville, NC and is a graduate student in English at Western Carolina University. Her work has been published in *The Great Smokies Review*, *Smoky Blue Literary and Arts Magazine*, and *Sixfold*.

Gethsemane

I contemplate the moment in the Garden. The idea of allowing your own crucifixion. -True Detective

--Macy French

The olive trees
must have sighed
and bowed as He did,
hushed, human hands
pushed together, oil press
of human history.
The stars He formed
with His own hands
must have turned their shiny
faces away as He
knelt, whispered prayers
in shadows,
the calm before
the sky broke loose.

Macy French is an undergraduate student at Tusculum College in Greeneville, TN. She is pursuing a degree in Creative Writing.

Jack's girl

--Stephanie J. Cleary

A silky garden of green and cream and pastel
pinks all swirled together on fabric that fit
snugly against your figure. You wore that dress the
way most women wear a t-shirt. Your heels clicked
as you walked through the restaurant, a call to
attention. I pulled your chair out for you. You
sat with your ankles crossed, demurely, like a
lady; an urban queen upon a throne of teak
and crushed velvet. You ordered a bottle of
Shiraz. Your long fingers looked manicured but
clumsy, until you plucked a long cigarette
from a silver case. You drank the wine and waited.
You ordered another bottle when he sent the
flowers and his regrets. Lucky you were wearing
a downturn hat, high fashion, a chic distraction
from your puffy eyes. You paid, then you left, alone.

Stephanie J. Cleary is a Writer's Workshop student at the University of Nebraska in Omaha. She has been published in *The 13th Floor*, *The Metropolitan*, and *Nature's Companion*, and has work forthcoming in *NEBRASKAland Magazine*. She reads books like an addict, loves the Fourth of July, and makes the best egg-salad sandwiches on the planet.

An Illness

--Psycho Kanev

Time passes, time stops.
Spring in between.

The icicle melts in my open mouth
and I'm counting one drop per second.

And my container fills up slowly to the red line.

The body sleeps by the frozen lake,
where I drink with endless thirst from
its death.

Consequences

--Psycho Kanev

The dung beetle pushes its own
brown sun up the hill;
that tiny Sisyphus.
He wants to bring this gift of love
to his beloved.
He is the only insect known to navigate
and orient using the Milky Way.
This small stargazer continues to push
his treasure through the passage of time.
He passes now through the square where
thousands of ancient Egyptians are standing
with their heads bowed, waiting for
sunrise.

Psycho Kanev is the author of four poetry collections and two chapbooks, published in the USA and Bulgaria. He has won several European awards for his poetry and he's nominated for the Pushcart Award and Best of the Net. His poems have appeared in many literary magazines, such as: *Poetry Quarterly*, *Evergreen Review*, *Hawaii Review*, *Cordite Poetry Review*, *Sheepshead Review*, *Off the Coast*, *The Adirondack Review*, *Two Thirds North*, *Sierra Nevada Review*, *The Cleveland Review* and many others.

Black Summer

-- Riley Leight

beneath Orion
and his misshapen sisters
I laid my soul in the dirt
then dug in like an animal
and covered my tracks

Melt

--Riley Leight

In an ice white forest
we clung to branches,
fallen but strong
climbed slow
into the mist

We hid under the resting wings
of a mighty pine,
caught our breath
listened to the wind
it didn't touch us

By the woods
and up the hill,
we laid on our backs
watched bare trees sway
on the grey canvas of the sky

In dimming sun
our cold skin touched,
tulip red
sweet
and fading

Riley Leight currently is working as a writing assistant and classroom aide in northern California, while pursuing a B.A. degree in English and creative writing.

Lunar Update

--Glen Armstrong

As for us, we take another
day or a red hot or a frog

or a sour apple or a lover's
tired body to see

how long we can hold it.
We all pile into the log ride.

We never consider our skin
until some unexpected

part of the world brushes
up against it, toughens

or discolors it, dampens it.
Or all too rarely admires

it by moonlight.
Some watery happenstance

half a galaxy away revealed
our path and led us here,

where this mostly unknowable
business of mouths

together opening
can at least be intuited

under that fat reflective rock
that floats and floats

and recommends us to each other
as shimmering parts of a whole.

Glen Armstrong holds an MFA in English from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and teaches writing at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. He edits a poetry journal called *Cruel Garters* and has a new chapbook titled *Set List* (Bitchin Kitsch,) and two more scheduled for 2015: *In Stone* and *The Most Awkward Silence of All* (both Cruel Garters Press.) His work has appeared in *Poetry Northwest*, *Conduit* and *Cloudbank*.

A Bed Is a Bed

--Samina Hadi-Tabassum

The luminaries glow from afar
As our car winds up the gravel road
A trail of light leading to the front door
The toll of bells brings mother to the vestibule

The warmth of my childhood home
Brings back joy and sorrow—with a sigh
Memories of my father planting tulips in the garden
Of deer out in the back devouring the bulbs

The creek at the end of the cul-de-sac
Which I crossed each day to and from school
A Philly boy transplanted to the foothills of Carolina
Slowing taking in the drawl and country ways

My bedroom now full of dad's old books
French cooking, opera and works by Rabelais
His final thesis on ribald humor bound in hardcover—
A man trapped in the wrong decade and body

Pictures of a speckled young self—framed
Crossing the Atlantic on a boat all alone
Dressed as a Catholic priest before meeting mother
Looking lost on an army base in Nam

Show tunes, orchids and piano music is what father knew best
Not baseball, rifles and trucks
With patience he taught me to prune leaves
To speak Provençal in the piedmont
And to baste a chicken like Julia

The bed I lay in now
Decorated with prints of day lilies
And pears and angels
Of fish

Set aglow against the candles
Lit in his name
With St. Francis looming above
And Mother Mary beside him

Samina Hadi-Tabassum is an Associate Professor at Dominican outside of Chicago. She has published poetry in the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *East Lit* and *Soul Lit*.

Observations¹

--José Duarte

1.

I'm always impossible
though I have forgotten the reason
those dreams were terrible
the atmosphere, the taste, all things.

I hear a clock strike,
the sound is one of the things I'm afraid of.

From the rational point of view
I knew already these things. I
had been warned not to reckon
on worldly happiness.

The case is too plain,
the sorrows of the world will
not be serious if nothing much
is staked on it until you find
truth under torture,

I must admit.

2.

I can still enjoy a
garden full of fragrant
and fertile life and of everything
beautiful. Imagine a man in total
darkness. Then comes a sound –
waves or wind-blown trees.
Or it is maybe a bunch smaller sound.
I'm not mad. It is simply the idea
that I, or any mortal at any
time, may be utterly mistaken
as to the situation he is really in.

4.

Such was the fact. You can't,
in most things, get what you
want if you want it too
desperately. And so, perhaps,
time is nothing
your soul clutches passion
temporarily. Long ago, before

¹ The excerpts published here under the title *Observations* are part of a poetry book, with the same title, that is still a work in progress. *Observations* is an erasure of C. S. Lewis' *A Grief Observed*, published in 1961.

we were haunted with the obscure
sense of suspense many impulses
had become habitual. Thought
after thought, feeling after feeling,
action after action. Now the target
is gone. So many roads once; now
so many *culs de sac*.

5.

No one ever told me
that fear is in the stomach.
I keep swallowing. There is
a sort of invisible blanket
between the world and me.
I dread the moments
when the house is empty.
There are moments when
I don't really mind Love.
Then comes a sudden
jab of red-hot memory.

8.

We want to prove to ourselves
that we are lovers on

the grand scale, tragic heroes.
We don't really want agonies,

we want the thing in
itself.

If it hurts a second time,
we pretend

that
it
is
love.

Therefore we shall ache. This becomes
clearer and clearer.

José Duarte teaches North-American Cinema and Cultural Geography of the United States at the School of Arts and Humanities (University of Lisbon) and is a researcher at ULICES - University Lisbon Centre for English Studies. He published two books for children, five poetry books and co-edited an anthology on Nature Writing (forthcoming, 2015).

Transient Daydream in Caras Park

--Kris Price

The sky covers me like a nightgown.
Sitting on the green hardened plank.

I am cornered by the present parade.
Behind me the river water scuttles by,
next to tiny ravens.

In the concrete amphitheater
are porcelain bird droppings
and the remnants of Hemp Fest:
flowery ash.

Keeping the last cigarette a secret.

Rolling over, dusk descends
and I've wasted another day.

Kris Price has an A.A. in Behavioral and Social Sciences from Modesto Junior College. He is currently attending University of Montana, Missoula where he is studying Creative Writing and Film Studies. Kris was an assistant editor for *Quercus Review* and *Snail Mail Review*. He is working on his first chap book.

Poultry

--Meggie Royer

After the burial, my father slaughtered every chicken
and laid their bodies to rest in the backyard fields.
They ran headless like martyrs through the grass
for a time, blood falling into blazing twilight,
their eyes rolling like pearls in each forgotten skull.
He didn't know how to avenge her death
so he left them spread in a bouquet
over the spot where she'd dove beneath the earth.
It was years before I realized
what the phrase mother tongue meant.
Only remembered how she ran headlong
into the face of illness, everything alive about her
already carved away.

Van Gogh's Ear

--Meggie Royer

Probably closed itself against the sound
of all the pines being uprooted from outside his asylum walls,
their bodies unwedded from the earth,
each wooden ring reclaiming its inheritance to the wind.
It would have rested there, a halved peach,
each vibration sending it into fevered pitch,
grief for the missing, the removed,
the ones sent back into the sky,
bark spinning from their limbs
as every loved one watched below.

Meggie Royer is a writer and photographer from the Midwest who is currently majoring in Psychology at Macalester College. Her poems have previously appeared in *Words Dance Magazine*, *The Harpoon Review*, *Melancholy Hyperbole*, and more. She has won national medals for her poetry and a writing portfolio in the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, and was the Macalester Honorable Mention recipient of the 2015 Academy of American Poets Student Poetry Prize.

Dakotas

--Rebecca Valley

Crickets singing for god. You,
singing. Your body in a dress
in the wind with the corn. Your body
in a dress in this hotel on the lake.
Crickets are small and leaping
gods, you say. You hold your hem
up to my hands.

We stopped so you could
stand in the cornstalks. I lost you.
It was August.

Awful lonely with turbines
turning wind into something touched.
You held up the corner of your skirt
to the mill. You held up one palm
and the corner of your dress. Yes, dear
it gets cold in the winter. We can't stay long, here.

After the corn stops
growing. When the wind
is a final breath. Winter is a letter
to the god of crickets

in your sleeves,

in your hair,
in your dress.

Originally from Burlington, VT, Rebecca Valley is currently a student at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, WA. Her work has been published by *Poetry Quarterly* and has been previously featured on Vermont Public Radio and at Cowbird.com.

Easter in Chania

--Ion Corcos

Beige cat on a narrow road.

Pigeon lands on a telegraph wire,
puffs its chest.

Snow-capped mountains, green cypress
where snow has melted.

A branch extends into crimson buds.

White charcoal in a rusted barbeque,
a lamb roasting on a spit.

An orange tree filled with bees.

Ion Corcos has been published in *Every Writer*, *Axolotl*, *Bitterzoet*, *Ishaan Literary Review*, and other journals. He is currently traveling indefinitely with his partner, Lisa. His first poetry collection, *Like Clouds*, is seeking a publisher. Ion's website is www.ioncorcos.wordpress.com

Replacement Parts

--Catherine McGuire

Sometimes at night I imagined I could feel the steel shaft deep into marrow. For weeks, my right leg shocked into stupidity, right foot marooned, unreachable. Even now, I am aware that metal has replaced joint, an uneasy alliance. Vague dreams of robots vanish at dawn; this body, primeval mystery, inviolate, now harbors an industrial hinge.

Hearts, hips, fingers, lips –
so much of us, so many,
replaceable.

Porous

--Catherine McGuire

Ever since I learned
I'm being pummeled with neutrinos
right through me – bang! – on their way
through the whole Earth,
ever since then, it seems faces are too many,
scattershot emails invade and desert,
minutes fail to make hours
disintegrate like hail
or whispers, leaving me marooned
in pulverized repetitions
wondering where *do* all those particles end up?

Some internal clock is winding down
as the Universe speeds past
and it's all too much suddenly.

I unfold memories like fresh linen
seeing again the smooth possibilities
before quantum pores opened
holes as vast and as tiny
as the breath of God.

Catherine McGuire, a retired therapist, won the 2012 *Seven CirclePress* Poetry Prize, has three self-published chapbooks and one, Palimpsests, by *Uttered Chaos*. Her website is www.cathymcguire.com.

Threnody for a Lost Cat

--David Anthony Sam

No one heard the wheezing
soft as morning mist
gathered up in leaves
and covered by frost
slowly dimming like twilight
until all that remained
was a soft place where spring
would be especially green

David Anthony Sam is the grandson of Polish and Syrian immigrants. He has written poetry for over 40 years and has two collections, including *Memories in Clay, Dreams of Wolves* (2014). He lives in Virginia USA with his wife and life partner, Linda, and currently serves as president of Germanna Community College. In 2014-15, he had poems accepted by *American Tanka, Artemis Journal, The Birds We Pile Loosely, Buddhist Poetry Review, Carbon Culture Review, The Crucible, FLARE: The Flager Review, From the Depths, Heron Tree, Hound, Literature Today, On the Rusk, Piedmont Virginian Magazine, The Scapegoat Review, The Summerset Review, and The Write Place at the Write Time*.

