

PERFUME RIVER  
P O E T R Y R E V I E W



Tourane  
Poetry Press

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“You can stand me up at the gates of hell  
But I won’t back down.”  
---Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers



Alan Meyrowitz

## Witchin Hour

The nasty boys'd corner me,  
tease about a Witchin Hour,  
them laughin at my thinkin  
I'd be sleepin through

when Devil's heapin its revenge  
in poison sure to do me,  
come from Mama's dabblin  
in the damnin ways o' demons

Thought Mama'd say the nasty boys  
could bring no light to nothin  
but said instead I's ol' enough  
to hear my famly story

began with findin Granny dead  
—o' chokin in the night—  
it creepin me to hear what all  
was found beneath her bed

Winner of the Perfume River Poetry Award, 2015

William Orem

Witch Canticle

*Aroint.*

Down the lane lives a lady who's old as a clock.  
Her hair's half-scalp. She sleeps

in a dry canning jar  
with a few rotten cores.

Down the lane lives a lady, skin like a shark.  
Her kiss is the corn

come up bad, when the worm  
spoils the husk

and the farmer pulls a face.  
Down the lane lives a lady

who bathes in plum jelly. I believe in her garden  
grow fingernail plants.

She has lemons for lunch,  
stuffed with ants.

We went up there one night—  
just to see, just for spite.

Out back there's an apple press  
doesn't smell right.

The fruit on the floor all have faces  
that bite.

In her hands were two boxes: one contains night

with its starlight all clipped into wedges and screws.

The other's a pool  
down in deep, if you look,

you can see someone drowning.  
It's you, boy. It's you.

Robert S. Pesich

## Teratoma

After 18 hours of surgery, she delivers a 66 pound ovarian cyst.  
Before it can say anything, nurses wheel it away in a wheelbarrow.

Hard bloody bulb. Inside, sebum, patches of lustrous black hair,  
a small ear pressed flat against a wall of cardiac muscle.

Near the center, an eyeball stares into its darkness as it nests  
among several teeth and fingernails.

Long-term follow-up: no recurrence, normal hormonal levels.  
She moves to Maui. Continues mapping the ocean floor for the Navy.  
Readmitted three years later, she gives birth to twins

while the first-born waits downstairs, having spent its days teaching,  
sometimes winking at students who, at the end of the lecture,  
hurry home to check on their beauty.

It spends its nights in a locked closet, nameless and never to be baptized,  
probably whispering sweet-nothings to the jars of formalined  
infant hearts.

Robert S. Pesich

## Skin Care

He scrapes not just his feet  
but his entire body  
for an hour before bed,  
loves the smell of his dust so much  
he collects it in a small snuff box  
while hoping to achieve a perfect form  
especially for his penis, gleaming  
like the rare fish in his aquarium  
reputed to live for 100 years.

It's not the rasping of his scraping  
that bothers his neighbors  
but the grinding pump  
when it starts to fail  
and the roaring silence that follows.

Even the probation officer gets up  
to pound the walls,  
home to a two-headed king snake  
coiled motionless among old pipes  
waiting for all the racket to die down  
before it appears

occasionally leaving behind its skin  
in the warm light of a desk lamp  
mingled among sheets of paper,  
their scribbled lines,  
some addressed to God and the devil  
but mostly to oblivion.

Michael Collins

## Nightmare of the Hawk

But why does he become a hawk, specifically?

*The wind a blanket waving itself out over a bed.*

His daughter was killed; his soul fled.

*Feathers like surfers' eyes time the runs of gusts.*

Or he thought it did... a projection.

*Each feather an eye, each feather a mind.*

She was supposed to light his world forever.

*A body clothed in perception, awareness – instinct.*

He believes the grief he portrays for the kind callers.

*No thought – twilight adrenaline, frenzy of hunger.*

“I am not what I am – No mourner but a fury!”

*Eyes that see the whole world are still only as kind as their stomach.*

He jumps from a cliff; he will finish this tyranny of whim.

*Upon it fast as gods snap tastes fur bloodwet tear to fullness.*

He slept his rage until it awoke as his new body?

*Back swimming on wind, spirit in spirit through spirit.*

Empty man or sated animal – He had to choose, it seemed for all the world.

*Dawns of oneness, sundowns hunger.*

He could have died many times, were it not for Hawking, its continual rebirth.

*The sleep of instinct rests in cycles.*

Does it mean that I too need to be reborn?

*He thinks that his soul was a girl. He cannot hear his soul.*

Rachel A. Girty

## Villanelle at Night

We all keep crawling blindly back toward sleep  
And cut the searing days away from nights—  
I'll choose which memories I dare to keep.

There's something in us, something warm and deep  
That wakens every time we kill the lights—  
So we keep crawling blindly back toward sleep.

The mind has mountains, tall and rough and steep,  
And paths that lead to deltas, caves, and bights  
Which hold the memories I choose to keep.

I close my eyes and will the world to seep  
Away in inky strands of grays and whites—  
Its colors crawling blindly back toward sleep.

My dreams accumulate in one great heap  
More vivid than my wakeful sounds and sights:  
I'll choose which of these memories I'll keep.

At night no memories can wake and creep  
Into the mind. Oblivion invites—  
So we keep crawling blindly back toward sleep.  
I'll choose which memories I dare to keep.

Ian Caton

## Death Is Like a River

I.

Death is like a river, the color of burgundy wine  
flowing down the mountain toward the ocean, vast and wide  
so much potential

Pinewood boxes carry dead soldiers  
convoys of ships going down  
never to be realized, planted  
fruits of their achievements

There's a revival happening right now  
in my living room, daughter singing the blues  
carving pumpkins – O Death, do your worst!

Ghosts of our past haunt our present  
howling rattling chains we ignore  
these ghosts move through our lives unnoticed

O Death, you visit me each morning, embrace me at night  
the dew on the grass soaks through my stockings, mud clings to my knees

Your boney fingers embrace my neck  
tighten around my throat  
this honeymoon of death  
this funeral of eternity  
this sleep

He comes to us when we do not expect him  
this black-cloaked phantasm  
he comes when we aren't ready  
and visits our loved ones

I carve your white skull  
empty it of its contents  
light a candle to shine  
from your eyes

II.

So much potential wasted  
young men and women returning  
in a pinewood boat, sailing  
that burgundy river  
draped with a flag

It's getting colder these nights  
I walked by two people  
on the street holding a sign  
on my way to the theater

You can go deeper into the unknown if you choose  
turning back from what is safe and comfortable into something else

I saw Anthony Bourdain kill a goat on TV last night  
suffocated under watchful eye of the tribal king  
to keep in the blood

Ignore it, pretend it does not exist  
Death comes when it comes  
it does not know fair  
it does not have principles  
or ethics

You don't have to go to Syria or Afghanistan  
you can sit by a parking structure, hold a cardboard sign  
meet Death there too

Death does not discriminate  
that cold chill lurks, returning  
into nothingness

Patricia Behrens

## Night Journey

The boat with twelve rowers  
approaches silently

barely visible through  
darkness on the lake

ringed with fire. With each  
stab into water the oar

blades flash reflected  
fire and, withdrawing, trail

water like blood. Beneath  
the waterline each curved

rib of the boat frame glows  
ember-like outlining

its skeleton. Then the ribs  
become floors

the oars a ladder someone  
is climbing. A figure

falls off a balcony  
fish swim through the ceiling

phosphorescent X-ray  
hands reach toward the

body—ribs uncovered,  
lit and burning—and I

discover as the hands  
touch the body is me.

Ruth Hill

## Who's There?

Is someone living in this house?  
Is there a creek I cannot see?  
Underneath, the singing and the voices,  
air pockets echoing? frog caves or  
beetles crawling so I can hear them?  
I see a shadow out of the glimpse of my eye  
I try to reason: It was nothing.  
Inspection brings me closer  
but without knowledge.  
Spring will bring such cacophony  
I'll not be moved, I hope.  
Yet I know last Spring I sprung  
from my mattress, dressed,  
and went outside,  
to loud and unfamiliar noises.  
Straining, I try to see  
across the lawn in the dark,  
through the park, where waving trees  
move shadows like men walking.  
One sees artillery, hears the guns,  
a horse seems to nuzzle me,  
yet spinning, is not there.  
Is someone living here I hear  
but cannot see?  
They are the past, another person's memories.  
No, no, they are now.  
They are happening far away.  
No, they are here.  
Are these visions of the future?  
It is not mine; it is not me.  
There are things I see and hear  
that are not me.

Rick Kempa

## Whoever It Was Out There on the Path

(Mexican Hat, Utah)

Whoever it was out there on the path above the cliffs  
under the moon within its white ring throwing  
white light upon the river's back two hundred feet  
below—the only light in that naked world—throwing  
solid blocks of blackness from higher cliffs across  
the path, casting its sheen upon the narrow shelf  
and the talus slope that veered down and away...

whoever it was out there in that empty world  
shattered the moon-dream within which I moved  
by bursting into motion—a clumsy, two-footed,  
gravel-crushing explosion beyond the fringe of sight.  
My pulse spiked. Blood gorged my brain. My eyes,  
dilated, saw a shadow up ahead, indistinct. I listened hard  
to hear if he or she or it were moving closer or away.

I thought of calling out, *It's just me*, thought twice about  
that, turned and walked (not ran) back the way I came,  
peering time and again over my shoulder or up at the rocks  
from which the shadow might leap and squat before me,  
grinning, on that narrow shelf above the river's back.  
I stopped once to pluck from the ghostly ground a rock  
like an anvil that I clutched in my left hand—an object

to focus my forces around all the long way down to  
the blacktop, the bridge beneath which the white-backed  
river moved, to my four-walled motel room where, if not  
for that red rock still in hand in the morning, I might have  
shook my head, said, *oh, it was just some old burro*, or  
*that was a hell of a dream*—and suppressed once again  
truths known only to those who walk the world at night.

Shahe Makerian

## Kismet

Vrej killed a coyote midway  
through the moonless desert.

He pulled over and scraped  
the fur from the bumper

with a broken belt buckle.  
The snatched rooster

from the curandero's chicken  
coop still cooed in the trunk.

This was his curse. He claimed  
the coyote resembled his sister's

baby boy bundled in cashmere.  
I reminded him we simply ran

over a roadkill. On the verge  
of tears, Vrej covered the carcass

with his leather jacket and tied  
it over the sunroof. At midnight,

we reached Palm Springs  
for the last time in a stolen Impala.

Katharyn Howd Machan

## Dreaming Rats

1.

I grab one behind its ears  
where it's somehow gotten into my bed  
and it turns on me of course  
it turns on me with open mouth  
a squeaking growl I have heard before  
as its forepaw claws impossibly strong  
gouge my wrist and leave a festering  
wound exactly three inches long

2.

Too many to count.  
Too bulbous to measure.  
Red eyes the same red eyes  
face to face to face.  
Only the tails make them recognizable.  
Sarah.  
George.  
Frank.

3.

The three he kept in a cage  
next to his acoustic guitar.  
All he could salvage  
from his third-floor apartment  
the day the building burned.

4.

Just before summer settled  
the poison worked.  
She was so pale, almost silver  
on the sidewalk near our lilies  
almost ready to bloom.

5.

My mother feared them  
the way foxes fear hunters.  
Sometimes at midnight

after too much whiskey  
she'd think one was hiding  
behind her dresser mirror.

6.

Believing cats as dangerous as witches  
people killed them during The Plague.  
Rats smiled, multiplied, moved in.  
Only the Pied Piper truly understood.  
He smiled, too, stealing children.

7.

the belly of the one that's scratched me  
is softer than the fat fur coat  
a friend lent me when I was 15  
to walk to the library by myself  
one cold black autumn night when wind  
blew my hair to wild

in my turquoise sheets  
I do not let go  
as the rat disappears in my hand

Ellaraine Lockie

## 2:00 A.M. When Time Stopped

Between sheets a whisper of touch  
A feather-slither up one arm, down the other  
The kind of duck bumps and stomach flutters  
an eight-year-old girl won't know again for years  
Yet she knows she likes it  
Keeps her eyes closed in case it's a dream  
that doesn't realize she's awake  
Roundabout routes on her belly  
Roads of nerve endings trailing down one leg  
over each foot and toe  
switchbacking up the other leg  
She thinks of a dancing butterfly  
Keeps her eyes closed so it doesn't scare

Then a sudden shift to discomfort  
when it reaches the soft moist destination  
Rubbing harder than a butterfly ever could  
Escalating to dry to burn to pain  
To shock that escapes through her mouth  
in a screech like a baby bird  
when a crow's beak closes on it  
Except this crow frightens and flies away  
The girl opens her eyes in the void  
that stretches its wings over the night

She knows little of crows  
But her science book says spiders come alive at night  
How they can bite and their venom swells  
The book didn't say how that swelling extends  
beyond bedroom walls into a house of silence  
How it grows like cancer into closets of fear  
Demanding bottles of Raid in her backpack  
Abstinence from the outdoors  
Eagle eyes that pop open in night vigil  
Wait-watching for the sun's salvation

The book didn't say that spider venom  
would prescribe Ativan, Ambien, Lunesta, Sonata  
Restoral and Xanax as antidotes  
Yet wouldn't free her to sleep alone  
Or that it took years of therapy  
to untangle the web of subterfuge  
To unwind the clock that sounded  
in her fifty-year ears every 2:00 A. M.



a quivering  
a slowly opening wound  
obligation

*what do people do?*

tragic skin crawling warm

desperately redundant  
redwood trees  
storm clouds  
wetness sliding on glass fingers  
candles  
flames crossing  
stumbling down the hall

moonlight starvation water

*was that really you* she asked  
falling into the fabric of inebriated night

Fran Markover

## Memorial for My Name

Great-grandmother  
shadows over me,  
last dream,  
crying out our name—  
*Feigle, Feigle.*

Her spirit covers me  
like a prayer shawl  
in the night's chill.

Great-grandmother  
yearns for her family,  
last dream, whispering  
*my story, my name.*

Among the incense  
of pogrom ashes  
she pleads, *who'd*  
*harm an old woman?*

Great-grandmother  
hovers over me,  
light as a firebird,  
last dream.

Orange flames  
that consumed her  
at Buchenwald,  
consume me,  
shivering in my bed,  
burning.

\*\**Feigle* means “little bird” in Yiddish

Christine Richardson

## After the Museum

Once I watched a wood fill up with snow.  
A feathered dance I'd never seen.  
If a bird sang, how would I have known?  
I stood behind the inn's thick windowpane.

A feathered dance I'd never seen.  
A gravel path lost in columned trees.  
I stood behind the inn's thick windowpane.  
Was it something about the limbs still holding gold?

A gravel path lost in columned trees.  
I was a traveler in a country with an anguished past.  
Was it something about the limbs still holding gold?  
The innkeeper sighed, too soon for snow.

A traveler in a country with an anguished past.  
Somehow his family reclaimed their land.  
The innkeeper sighed, too soon for snow.  
Falling all afternoon, a million inimitable white worlds.

Somehow his family reclaimed their land.  
Nearby, reminders in rows of glass cases.  
Falling all afternoon, a million inimitable white worlds.  
Wordless we filed passed shoes, hair, wire-rimmed glasses.

Nearby, reminders in rows of glass cases.  
Now I regret I chose comfort over cold.  
Wordless we filed passed shoes, hair, wire-rimmed glasses.  
He lit a fire in the hearth, served dinner at six.

Now I regret I chose comfort over cold.  
If a bird sang, how would I have known?  
He lit a fire in the hearth, served dinner at six.  
I only watched a wood fill up with snow.

Diane Lee Moomey

## Wing

— a pantoum

An Angel met me on the stairs,  
and brushed me with one wing — one day  
I'll fall to meet my shadow.  
So much remains unwritten.

She brushed me with one wing.  
*I thought you were another.*  
So much remains unwritten, and  
my poet soon will leave me.

She thought I was another.  
*Yes - once I was a changeling.*  
My poet soon will leave me, and  
I feel the change of season.

I may have been a changeling.  
My poet left these pages, now  
I feel the change of season.  
In this I'm not mistaken.

My poet left these pages. Since  
they could all be lost, (and  
I feel I'm not mistaken),  
won't you take them with you?

All pages will be lost, when  
I fall to meet my shadow.  
Won't you take them with you? For  
an Angel's met me on the stairs.

Diane Lee Moomey

## Barrow

Snow above, corn above,

small sounds of water seeping through stone,  
smell of bedrock; cave crickets with their lightless eyes,  
their chittering; the echoes of small sound  
though not of my breathing, not my breathing,  
not now —

day above, night above—

not my breathing, now that the mourners  
have gone back to their children, their rooms,  
my children, my rooms, our looms,  
their suppers, having first  
left me a supper just in case,  
because one never knows.

Corn above, snow above—

having washed me, dressed me  
in my best, my gold and silver;  
having brushed my hair, they left me  
face to the wall, left me  
a cold supper, just in case,  
just in case I should ever

(it could happen, it has happened)

roll my own stone away.

Ken Weisner

## Country Lane

What if the road is a country road, one lane,  
green grass of a California winter, strip  
down the middle, not divided for two cars,  
but for two wheel ruts, same car.

What if the gate is ramshackle,  
but keeps in the chickens and keeps out  
the fox? What if I am the fox  
or the snake sliding under your fence...

and you want me gone? You won't have me,  
want someone else fixing the old Ford,  
want someone else down to the  
water pump, the well.

And if I'm merely a ghost in a dream—  
then who are you to remember me,  
to weep softly at the kitchen window,  
hands in soapy water, twilight filling the flowers.

Ken Weisner

## What Can't Be Said

I.

What I Can't Ask

is what will save us, you first—  
blackened hills from the Rim Fire.  
Ruined is rescued, rescued is empty—  
dark & eroded—rills of mud—  
the fields of charred timber  
is to be sentimental, is to call it  
anything else but destroyed or begun—  
is not to point... is anything that  
points. For I am nothing & must

be nothing, not a mouth, not a finger,  
not pointing or asking, not saying  
what must not be said—is everything

in your honor, your dishonor, I am mute,  
I am dying, I am starting to weep  
as if you will never stop burning, never grow back.

II.

What Can't Be Said

something about the shoulders being tight—  
languorous, like palm fronds,  
a hula, the whole body  
in a comfortable place,  
you speak in Hawaiian  
(a language you do not know, a music  
your mother never sang).  
We love her the way we love  
when we say goodbye,  
holding the whole thing  
in our bodies. Without her,

what can't be said  
is what the new thing is.

III.

What Can't Be Hoped

the mockingbird's laughter, dawns,  
the whisper of things—a forest, an ocean,  
we've been apart a long time  
and you lie down with me smiling,  
free, next to you; you free,  
next to me—  
what can't be hoped:  
the green a year can bring.

Joanne M. Clarkson

## Ouija After Midnight

Four just this side of thirteen, vowing  
wakefulness, wishing futures  
and gossamer of ghosts. They gather  
around the moveable board. Try light fingers  
on planchette. How gracefully it drifts

from letter to number, arcing between  
yes and no. Their fear  
is wonderful. They giggle and glance  
at each other asking first  
about this or that  
boy, who likes who, and what about

the math quiz. But after midnight  
the mood gutters like a black candle. Shadows  
add their hands and the world  
widens. Questions

grow an afterlife of girls  
gone missing. Forest of misstep. Man  
with a sack of kittens. How they could save  
only one. They know then

that the future is more than crushes. That something  
stalks dark gardens, drags slender  
wrists to the verge of a bottomless  
pond where all reflections sleep, masked  
in young faces. Winter is longer

than summer could ever be. And in the morning  
when the board is just a game, they still  
tip-toe and whisper, seeing in every corner  
their own indelible ghosts.

Mark Heinlein

## This Wednesday Is Cello Music

Darling, why must I be the one to say  
we're going to die? The moonlight  
that drenches the sepia-colored hallway  
this Wednesday is cello music, a diurnal tune,  
a canticle that goes like this: I couldn't live  
within the walls of this temple alone... Home  
from work, I want to make love, to hold  
the back of your arms as you wash the dishes.  
As I unpack the laundry basket and fold, I think:  
your clothes mix with my clothes, your mail arrives  
with my mail, yet our deathbeds wait  
for each of us alone.

Mark Heinlein

## The Sorrow the Moon Knows

Nowhere is there a manual on how to work the gears of this machine.  
I've been at it so long, getting things done on time, no one questions me  
anymore. With everyone watching, how can I get away pulling punches?

Still, I tug people's hearts with my poetry whether they know it or not.  
They come to the ocean side to watch the sunset, and that's when I move  
on them. My song sprays, cascades on them, crashes. They run squealing.

They are enamored of light, and, those poor fools, watch what they think  
is the sun dropping into the ocean. Only when they see me, bright as headlights,  
bright as the corner liquor store at night, do they come to me and confess their  
secrets, pour their souls out in the shadows. In the shadows, I hear their whispers.

Ellen Huang

## Entangled: Surgery to the Soul

If spirit with organs intertwined, we could make a practiced art  
Of unburying soiled souls, and examining our fragmented hearts.

Unravel my mask first,  
    around and around  
        goes the tapestry of skin.  
            Peel away the years and layers  
                to witness  
                    the wires within.  
                See here,  
            where my blood  
                oozes  
                    in  
                    rivers  
                    and  
                streams.

See there,  
live parasites I host,  
nightmares  
    and  
dreams.

Feast eyes on my veins  
    intertwined  
        with  
        blackest  
        envy.  
    Twisted thorns  
        choking circulation,  
destructured many.

And developing within the core:  
Death-in-life,  
still taking form,  
Wrung into a clawing beast,  
fed through cords sickly warm.  
Scratching from its membrane,  
with black-hole eyes out it peeks  
It throttles my heart,  
sews 'cross my mouth,  
and murderously  
speaks.

That and many creatures leech in this catacomb underworld  
If soul were too entangled to escape when corpse unfurled.  
Life must be delicate, mercy, because death sure wouldn't be—  
I confess I am afraid of seeing what worms inside of me.

Ellen Huang

## It Could Happen

Ghosts in the air are not of what have been  
For history remains grounded in buried parts  
Even when consumed by crawling maggots  
And dealt out into the earth in new particles—  
The truth remains.

No, ghosts are what *could be*  
And they wrestle, omniscient, in unseen immortality  
Fighting over their chances to become real  
To puppeteer us, their potential hosts  
To be birthed forth into reality.

If only my glaring eyes had the power of fire  
Then this burning behind them would be cast out.

It could happen. The murderer's ghost, the possibility  
Comes a little closer. So does the vision.

Horrorstruck eyes, a gasping last breath  
Under my hands, scarred with the desperate last fight  
The weight of a dead man  
The stop of his heartbeat  
And in exchange, the quickening of mine  
And, worst of all, a smile on my lips. . .

The monster that has long been fed in me  
Finally ready to break through my skin  
Scratch away the skin of an innocent  
Peel away the layers of empathy  
Crumble away my human guise with your long-hidden claws  
Break from this normal human bond  
Do something of power, beyond it. . .

Before the weight of what I've made come to life, to truth  
Is sealed, part of the ongoing world. . .

The murderer's ghost nearly blends with my hand.  
My hand moves of its own accord. I wake.

But then it subsides, like other times.  
Lingers, or finds another puppet, none can say, but I am safe.

The ghosts wait forever.

Don Russ

## Gibes and Gambols

*Hamlet: Where be your gibes now? your gambols?  
your songs?*

Hamlet to Yorrick

Spooky shadows, Daddy's flashlight  
under your chin – it's fun. It's late  
at night somewhere where the walls  
rise dismal red, and at the front door

something from the graveyard giggles.  
No, it's inside. "I'm on the first step,"  
it says. "I'm on the second step."  
Oh, the worms crawl in, the worms

crawl out, and in your older cousin's  
comic book someone's skull explodes  
and ray-gunned brains slide molten  
down his cheek. It's Halloween now

and always: smell the ketchup smell  
of fear. It's the bloody carnival side-  
show of life, and you're it. *You are.*  
The hooded one has come and gone.

You're dead.

Victoria M. Johnson

## Bones on the Clock

Emma found a spider  
in her clock,  
sitting on the three.  
She put the spider  
in her pocket.  
The spider  
had a dollhouse  
in his pocket,  
and in the dollhouse  
sat a cradle.  
In the cradle  
lay a doll.  
The doll had a clock  
in her pocket.  
And on the clock  
were the bones  
of a ghost.  
The ghost  
had a three in her pocket.  
The bones belonged to  
Emma who died  
from the bite  
of a spider.

Wade Martin

## Trinita Macabre

In sudden madness Harvey took his life  
the butter knife cut 'round the chin, beginning to end.  
He did not feel the pain. The blood was warm, and dear.

God shepherded his synapses like deer  
until one day the devil'd had enough of life  
and entered Harvey, speaking like a friend,

“The time has come. You’ve reached your journey’s end.  
You’ve lived by him who brought the sword, not peace. Dear  
me, look at the time! God rings the bell; this chime, your life.

Harvey dear, use the sharp end. I’ll see you on the other side of life.”



## CONTRIBUTORS

**William Orem** is the author of two story collections, *Zombi, You My Love* and *Across the River*, and the novel *Killer of Crying Deer*. Poems and stories of his have appeared in over 100 literary journals. Currently he is a Writer-in-Residence at Emerson College. Scary details at [williamorem.com](http://williamorem.com).

**Robert Pesich** spent years grinding human flesh and bone in an effort to better characterize normal human gene expression. He now constructs matchbox reliquaries for a variety of silences. He is president of Poetry Center San Jose and editor/publisher of Swan Scythe Press. Visit [www.robertpesich.com](http://www.robertpesich.com) for more information.

**Michael Collins'** poems have appeared in more than 40 journals and magazines, including *Grist*, *Kenning Journal*, *Pank*, *SOFTBLOW*, and *Smartish Pace*. His first chapbook, *How to Sing when People Cut off your Head and Leave it Floating in the Water*, won the Exact Change Press Chapbook Contest in 2014. A full length collection, *Psalmadala*, was published later that year.

**Rachel A. Girty** is a student at Northwestern University studying vocal performance and creative writing. Her poetry has appeared in *Sixfold* and *Prompt* magazines. Originally from Southfield, Michigan, Rachel spends most of her time singing opera, writing poems, and dreaming with varying degrees of terror and lucidity.

**Ian Frederick Caton** lives with his wife and two children in SW Washington. He spends late hours of the night watching Ingmar Bergman films and writing haiku, while hiding from the full moon. Mr. Caton sings in his church choir, and often haunts the open-mics in the Portland and Vancouver areas.

**Patricia Behrens** lives and writes in New York City. Her poetry previously has appeared in *The Main Street Rag*, *The Same*, *Mom Egg Review* and elsewhere.

**Ruth Hill** was raised in upstate New York, and traveled North America extensively. She is a Certified Design Engineer, dedicated tutor, and enjoys spoken word. She has won 1<sup>st</sup> prizes in *Gulf Coast Ethnic & Jazz Poetry*, *Heart Poetry*, *Lucidity*, *Poets for Human Rights*, and *Writers Rising Up!* environmental poetry.

Poet and essayist **Rick Kempa** lives in Rock Springs, Wyoming, where he teaches writing and philosophy at Western Wyoming College. For more info, visit [www.rickkempa.com](http://www.rickkempa.com).

**Shahé Mankerian's** manuscript, *History of Forgetfulness*, has been a finalist at four prestigious competitions: the 2013 Crab Orchard Series in Poetry Open Competition, the 2013 Bibby First Book Competition, the Quercus Review Press, Fall Poetry Book Award, 2013, and the 2014 White Pine Press Poetry Prize.

**Katharyn Howd Machan** often belly-dances as a shape-shifting Fox when she is not adding more poems to her work-in-progress *Dark Matters* (a fairy-tale/SF full-length collection with sections called "Blood," "Beasts," and "Branches") or teaching creative-writing students at Ithaca College. Her work has appeared in 31 chapbooks since 1970.

**Ellaraine Lockie's** eleventh collection, *Where the Meadowlark Sings*, won the 2014 Encircle Publication's Chapbook Contest and has recently been released. Ellaraine teaches poetry workshops and serves as Poetry Editor for the lifestyles magazine, *Lilipob*. She is currently judging the Tom Howard/Margaret Reid Poetry Contests for Winning Writers.

Besides writing poetry, **Joanne M. Clarkson** also reads palms and Tarot cards, trained by her psychic grandmother. Hospice work has been a major part of her calling as a Registered Nurse. Her most recent book of poems is *Believing the Body*. She lives next to the forest in Olympia, Washington.

**Theodore Shank** lives in Santa Cruz, CA. His poetry has recently felt haunted by Charles Brockden Brown and Sarah Orne Jewett.. His poem "Ghost Walk" was composed after a dream that revealed the fear in Eliot's "handful of dust." He teaches English at Cabrillo College and San Jose State University.

**Fran Markover:** When I write, my great-grandmother, through her portrait, is witness. As poet, I try to be witness for what I find everyday, for what has been lost. I write what keeps me up at night and what prayers send me to sleep. I wrote "Memorial for My Name" so nightmare could become song.

For thirty-five years, **Christine Richardson** furrowed a path to an elementary school helping children to love themselves enough to make the world a better place. Twelve years ago she waved good-bye and set out for the open road. When she is home she is known to unlock the cellar door, climb down the rickety stairs to rummage among the root bins. Sometimes she carries a candle; other times she sits in the dark.

When she went to bed, **Diane Lee Moomey** truly believed she had wandered around the US and Canada and now dips her gardener's hands in California dirt. Awakened at three a.m. by a silent noise beside her right ear, she begins to doubt that she is a regular reader at Willow Glen and other Bay Area venues and that she has published prose and poetry at all, much less in *Glass: a Journal of Poetry*, *Red Wheelbarrow*, *Sand Hill Review* and the *FaultZone* anthologies. As for the nomination for the Pushcart prize, the Thing under the bed tells her there's never been any such at all. Ever.

**Ken Weisner** is author of two volumes of poetry from Hummingbird Press, *The Sacred Geometry of Pedestrians* (2002) and *Anything on Earth* (2010). Ken's work has appeared on Sam Hamill's "Poets Against the War" website, in *The Music Lovers Poetry Anthology* (Persea, 2007), on "The Writer's Almanac" (August 6, 2010), and most recently in issues of *Phren-Z*, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, and *Porter Gulch Review*. Ken also teaches writing and edits *Red Wheelbarrow* through De Anza College.

**Mark Heinlein** in 2009 was awarded the American Academy of Poets/Virginia de Arujo Award and the Bonita M. Cox Award for creative nonfiction. His poem "Gravity" was selected for the 2012 "Poetry On The Move" campaign and travelled throughout Santa Clara County on VTA to celebrate National Poetry Month. In 2013, Mark delivered his talk, "Family, Culture, and How A Poet Makes His Bread," at TEDx San Jose State University. His first book, *Everything We Call Ordinary*, was published in 2014 by Tourane Poetry Press. Check out his work at [markheinleinpoetry.wordpress.com](http://markheinleinpoetry.wordpress.com). Born in Beech Grove, Indiana, he is a fishmonger and lives in San Jose, California.

**Ellen Huang's** mortal identity is a Writing major at Point Loma Nazarene University with a nocturnal mind and heart of a child (not that she collects them). Her changeling identity is a spirit that sees light in strange places. She does not actually murder. She does the madder thing: writes.

**Don Russ** publishes regularly and widely in literary magazines and is the author of *Dream Driving* (Kennesaw State University Press, 2007) and the chapbooks *Adam's Nap* (Billy Goat Press, 2005) and *World's One Heart* (forthcoming from *The Next Review*, 2015). His poem "Girl with Gerbil" was chosen from inclusion in *The Best American Poetry 2012*.

**Victoria M. Johnson** is a Latina writer currently living in Los Gatos, CA. In addition to writing poetry, she also writes and directs short films and micro documentaries. Her poetry appears in *Em Dash Literary Magazine*, *When Women Waken*, The California Writers Club *Literary Review*, *Silver Birch Press*, and three print anthologies. Victoria regularly participates in poetry readings and has read her work at numerous events in northern California. Visit Victoria's website at [VictoriaMJohnson.com](http://VictoriaMJohnson.com).

**Alan Meyrowitz** retired in 2005 after a career in computer research. His dark-theme poetry has appeared in *Shroud*, *Hello Horror*, and *The Literary Hatchet*, and other poems in *California Quarterly*, *Diverse Voices Quarterly*, *Eclectica*, *Existere*, *Front Range Review*, *Shark Reef*, *The Storyteller*, *Tower Journal*, *Vine Leaves Literary Journal*, and elsewhere.

**Wade Martin** is co-editor of the Texas Poetry Calendar, a 2014 Pushcart nominee, and he's underneath your floorboards, softly scratching satanic sonnets into the cedar with a scalpel, biding his time until silence descends...tonight.