

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



Tourane
Poetry Press

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Editor's Note

I have a new philosophy: to do things less, do things smaller, to do things closer to the heart. As with all things in life and love, this also applies to poetry. I want now to dedicate myself to poetry that follows its own *tao*. As a writer and editor, I aim for poetry that does not have to do too much. For this issue of Perfume River Poetry Review, I selected poems that seem “smaller.”

Since size, of course, matters, there are many short poems, ones that speak their truths and not another word longer, but there are also a great number of longer poems and those with lines so gorgeously long and languid that I had to stretch out the margins of the page to fit them. What makes these poems “small” is not so much their length, but their scope. These are poems of person, place and thing; these are poems with language that is spare, plain spoken, and reserved even. This is not to say that they are simplistic or facile or inconsequential, but they are powerfully honest and sincere poems that don't need the cover of poetical pomp and circumstance, like flowery language, clever metaphors, and the like; these poems lay their truths bare.

I want to reveal the simplest joy of poetry, the act of sharing your world with others. What a great joy it is to share and connect with other poets, to find another one of your tribe! I frequently received correspondence from other poets, letters and cards and emails, all of them beautiful and warm, all appreciated and beloved. One contributor (lovely Marianne!) sweetly wrote to me: “You are a precious editor. Do you realize how special you make this for us?”

“As should be,” I responded to her. “As should be! Dreamers like you who craft poems and then send them out

in the hopes of getting published and finding a place in the world are the life of American poetry.” I think, in keeping with my philosophy of doing things smaller, I should have stopped that message at “life” because, for all I know and all I care, poetry is life—the essence of our trials and tribulations, our hopes and joys, the dreams of our dreams.

Thank you poets for sustaining us, inspiring us and enriching our lives with your words.

---Vuong Quoc Vu

Ghosts

On a La Jolla park bench we wait
for that sun-yolk to sink, to break.

An hour left, we think.
A slim shipbuilder next to us
asks where we went today.

Coronado. He says his wife
works at The Del.
What about the ghost, I ask.
has she seen her?

No, but it's an eerie room,
and the doors and windows slam,
he says. Then he tells us his mother
visited him a week after she died.
She was in her wheelchair.
We think it possible, indeed, likely.

No clouds now, simply a sun, set on the horizon,
bleeding the ocean neon, resting on striped fire.
It leaves a last curve, and a ghostly orange halo.

Mona Clark is a poet and editor who previously taught sixth graders and graduate students. Some of her poems have been published in New York, Iowa, Colorado, Hawaii, Washington and Arkansas. She has lived abroad and in seven different states. A woman of eclectic interests, she resides in Salt Lake and Saint George, Utah.

His Ghost Refuses the Offer

"It was believed in some places that by eating a loaf of bread and drinking a bowl of beer over a corpse, and by accepting a six-pence, a man was able to take unto himself the sins of the deceased whose ghost would therefore no longer wander."

---Habenstein and Lamers, *The History of American Funeral Directing*, 1955.

Eat, dear friend, drink deeply
as I once did, loving well
the crust's tough hide, its grainy,
honest miracle simply repeated
every day to bind skin and bone
with sun, salt, the sky's sweet rains.

Fill full a deep bowl and aim it
high heavenward with calm hands
and drink deeply of all my sins.
Eat, drink, and may you have
but half the joy in those sooty
thoughts and deeds this corpse
lying beneath you once knew.

But, hold off- accept no coin
for your loving office performed.
Ghost I am, and desire to remain
where the smell of fresh baked
loaf and the mere sight of a ring

of creamy froth above amber
in a living hand yet hold me here
more tightly than ever flesh
could attach itself to my bones.

John O'Dell's poetry has appeared in *The Potomac Review*, *The Baltimore Review*, *The Birmingham Poetry review*, *The George Mason Review*, *The Atlanta Review*, and others. Work appears in several anthologies including *Free State: A Harvest of Maryland Poets*, and *Hungry As We Are*. He was a 1997 Individual Artist Award recipient from the Maryland State Arts Council. He is the author of two collections of poems, *Painting at Night* (Little Cove Press, 1994) and *At Beauty's Pawnshop* (Xlibris 2013.)

A Lonely Sestet in Search of

There are no beasts driving me into darkness,
No leopards nor lions nor she-wolves baring fangs,
No, it is the darkness itself that dominates
Stashing the very light away into caves;
And since we know dark will say the final say,
I have come to loathe the close of each day.
Night, unable to offer the elixir of sleep,
Presides over the dashing of restful dreams.
But now, at the turn, with only six lines
To counteract this octet's despotic designs,
We need to walk hand in hand with leniency,
Finding solace not in creeds but in the primacy
Of kindness, kindness which by its grace alone
Provides us modest means to meander home.

Improbability

Through the winter bare December trees,
through the fire pit smoky haze
 rising over the river rush,
through the graying late afternoon sky,
the middle-aged sun casts its perfect warmth
upon our mountain house in this lonely universe.

Are we alone here? Does it really matter?
Fate, chance, have bequeathed consciousness,
and language our doorway into mystery,
our means of offering awe
for this bizarre miracle of perception,
for this improbable gift of life.

Dr. **Paul Cummins** is Founder, President and CEO of Coalition for Engaged Education. In 1971, he co-founded Crossroads School in Santa Monica and built it into one of Los Angeles's most successful educational institutions and a national model for innovative, independent schools. Cummins has since co-founded several other schools, including New Roads School, Camino Nuevo Charter Academy, LAAAE, and New Village Girls Academy and implemented a number of innovative programs to help children at risk, such as P.S. Arts. Cummins has published four books on education, two volumes of original poetry and two children's books and is currently at work on a new book entitled *Engaged Education: Paths to Joyful Success for Students*.

Poeming, Snowing

*But poets, artists, make a slit in the umbrella,
they tear open the firmament itself, to let in a bit
of free and windy chaos...*

---Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy*

In winter a poem belongs to the snow
a seeking there
a lostness
necessary.

How do the words come
when snow fills everything
and speaks nothing.

How does a snowman begin his poem
in the deep white snow
of so many mountains
and no text telling,

the teachings of summer
fallen away as though
never there.

The snowman steps through the snow
leaving small prints that sink
and vanish.

He journeys now toward a poem
somewhere out ahead,
somewhere only the white
unspoken knows.

Doug Bolling's poems have appeared in *Water-Stone Review*, *Xanadu*, *Posit*, *Juked*, *BlazeVOX*, *The Inflectionist Review*, and many others. He has received several Pushcart nominations and a Best of the Net nomination and is working on a collection for 2016 publication. He lives in the greater Chicago area.

The Mad Girl Remembers Afternoons that Seemed so Dark

sleet then snow. It must
have been November.
One minute the sun
was wild, then it was
snowing, covering the
dead thing. Maybe a
squirrel, half formed, or
maybe a rabbit. She was
at the kitchen table
hours before taking the
metro into town. How
much less dark inside
her, how much less
terror, hurrying to find
a way to end a poem
before ballet as the dark
washed over the boulevard
like a flock of crows

Lyn Lifshin's new books include *Knife Edge & Absinthe: the Tango Poems*; *For the Roses, Poems for Joni Mitchell*, *All The Poets Who Touched Me*; *A Girl Goes Into The Woods*; *Malala, Tangled as the Alphabet: The Istanbul Poems*, *Secretariat*, *The Red Freak*, *The Miracle*; and *Femina Eterna: Enbeduanna, Scheherazade and Nefertiti*. Her website is www.lynlifshin.com. Books coming soon include *Degas' Little Dancer*, *The Silk Road*, *Winter Poems* and an update to her Gale Research Series *LIPS, BLUES, BLUE LIPS: ON THE OUTSIDE*.

Windom Place, D.C.

The cherry trees,
mantled in fresh snow,
dwarf the nascent yard below,
the flower beds beneath their leafless limbs
deep asleep for now.
Spring is not that far off, in truth,
but nature doesn't know the human calendar,
ebbing and flowing to a current all its own;
this late-winter precipitation
saying only that it is too early,
tomorrow or the day after being soon enough
for the sap to rise
and start the circle anew.

As a Corporal of Marines during the Vietnam War, **Brian C. Felder** has real-time memories of the Perfume River coursing past the city of Huế and he is delighted to close that circle with his first-ever appearance in Vuong Quoc Vu's beautiful and evocative magazine bearing that name. Other notable credits include the *Atlanta Review*, *Connecticut River Review*, *Mas Tequila Review*, and *The Humanist*.

slippery when wet

sunsets remind her of autumn
of ragged, windblown curtains that flap too heavy and sit
too still.

august, it seemed, was the worst of months-
december never too heavy or
guarded from snowstorms

windchimes
and the inches promised by weather men and whether
boys are still
hot enough to play come morning.

there was a lamp post outside her room,
oily and slick from roadside salt,
and the light there was magical.

still, life.

the snowflakes come and go like you used to
come and go
until the day when sleep was
Trepidation.

it rained in those months.
it poured and slipped like blood turned
black against headlights so bright she

swore to god she'd been
dreaming

have you ever asked why snow is silent?

Marisa Cardin is a sophomore at Western State Colorado University in Gunnison, Colorado, where she studies Creative Writing and Communication Arts. She has been published twice before, in *FLARE: The Flagler Review*, a literary magazine located at Flagler College in St. Augustine, Florida, and *Pathfinder*, Western's own literary and arts magazine. She also is a current staff writer for Western's newspaper, *Top O' The World*, where she covers the many theater productions at Western.

Erin Redfern works as a writing mentor and poet in the South Bay. Her poetry has been nominated for Best of the Net 2015 by *Crab Fat Literary Magazine* and *Blue Lyra Review*, and she is a 2016 winner of the Poetry Society of America's Robert H. Winner Memorial Award. She co-edited Poetry Center San Jose's 2015 edition, and in 2015-2016 she is serving as poetry judge for the San Francisco Unified School District's Arts Festival. Her website is www.erinredfern.net

Watching for the Perseids

Coastal Alaska, August

A week of nights blanked by clouds.

Then at last, four hours
of unblemished dark,
the moon too new to taint
night's deep transparency.

Now for the plummeting debris,
frozen gravel from the comet's great tail
sucked toward earth by gravity
flaming out in thick atmosphere—
ancient meteoroids,
mythic children of Perseus, the slayer.

I lie on carpet beneath an attic window,
its frame blocking out
the low smog of car lights,
street lights, bridge lights—
the artificial glow of safety.

I scan the sky through glasses
ground for aging sight,
but I discern only the bright
pinpoints of the patterned stars.
No white streaks cross the constellations.

I turn from the disappointment of the window
and, in attic darkness, I reopen

that first night of ignorant wonder,
to replay our midnight drive
across a Texas desert,
the radio singing *Goodnight Saigon*.

And I see once more
through eyes still young
the hundred portent trails,
glorious in their destruction,
falling like victims from Perseus
into every quadrant of blue-black sky.

Sarah Isto is a long-time Alaskan who divides her year between coastal Juneau and the deep interior near Denali. Her poetry has appeared in *Cirque*, *Tidal Echoes*, *The Timberline Review*, *Windfall*, and *Gold Man Review*. She is also the author of two non-fiction books.

Alaska Renamed

The first evening
I walk Shoehorn Island
under big bowl of sky
clouds like white gloves of pastry chef
tantalizing scenery I can chew

a powerful wonder
to name a mountain Phantom Woman
joyous bloom Holly Hock
always wanted to hear
a baroque fugue played backwards
so why not rename Alaska
go back to first sight of this wild chunk of country

I stare a long moment
abundance of wild flowers wait for a name
Lemon Basket berries line the road
Chapel Veils yawn as enthusiastic cars whoosh
Feather Dusters leap from moist ground
play racing games with persistent wind

Far out liquid channels thread
like thoughtful seams among islands
Wild Wig Isle shrieks far from shore
Chiseled Harry and Hungry Bear peaks prop purple sky
Ebony pines bristle on their summersault cliffs

My limbs jig along farther
pink, bleeding purple Cinderella steps sway—
dancers in a French Ballet

Striking Cobras jangle with
Cezanne's brush, Ermine Arias

Lone black scissor raptor lifts my glance
the bonanza space of sky unrolls conductor's score—
wispy violin melody clouds
trees trumpet staccato
vibrate on timpani mounts

Flung silver bow bends in darkening heavens
beckons me home
Acrobat Mountain silhouettes in bruised sky
climbers brag that on this nimble peak
you can see into tomorrow

Marianne Lyon has been a music teacher for 39 years. After teaching in Hong Kong she returned to the Napa Valley and has been published in various literary magazines and reviews such as *Colere* (2015), *Crone* (2015), *Trajectory* (2014), *Earth Daughters* (2015), *Feile-Festa* (2015), and *Whirlwind* (2014-2105). She spends time each year teaching in Nicaragua. She is a member of the California Writers Club, Healdsburg Literary Guild.

River Watch

Another country, here where he tends
his river. Years that he walks
the stream-side path, or drifts
low beneath hanging shadows—
always to study the flux
of migration and hatch.

Each season he must enter the pull
of its changing current,
examine the growthy edge
neither bank nor water, draw again
to him all the acquired stillness
of nesting water birds.

June Frankland Baker, originally from the Mohawk River Valley of upstate New York, now lives a few blocks from the Columbia River in Eastern Washington. A former teacher, she has published poetry in anthologies and literary journals for many years, including *Notre Dame Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Slant: A Journal of Poetry*, and numerous others.

The Willingness of Seeds

I drove a spine of road through wheat fields home.
An old love going dumb, I looked for words
In fields that lay on either hand. It's hard, I thought,
To let a language go that holds a world in place.
It was the pain of loss that made me stop
Beside the road and watch a storm ease
Brooding from the south, the fields open to the rain.
Miles away, the rain fell whispering to the ground
While love lay speechless in this hull of flesh.
I considered language and the message of that far
And whispered rain, the distance I had traveled
To be stopped by pain between old language and a
Vision which made that language obsolete: so much,
I decided, depends on rain and the willingness of seeds.

George Thomas is a 78 year-old retired machinist who long ago earned an MFA. His two poetry books, *Gray House By Cold Mountain* and *Tenderfoot*, may be purchased at Amazon. A sci-fi novel, *Ghoul World*, is agent hunting.

what the ibis knows

how to bend light
how to swill the currents
how to render one's esteem

that the swamp is a worthy map
that silence soothes like buoyancy
that omens are open to all senses
that pirating is a gypsy curse
that the storm is an interrupted beginning

where the river goes to die
where a mudlark's soul is hidden

what floats and what glides
what is shrouded by thin reeds
what rituals harvest survival
what remains behind when the sun is at your back

when to sound the angry shriek
when the moment opens memory
and the sky is free to devour what's left of time

Dan Sicoli lives just south of the Canadian border. He is the author of two poetry chapbooks from Pudding House Publications (Columbus, Ohio), *Pagan Supper* and *the allegories*. Currently, he can be found in local dives, saloons and barrelhouses banging on an old Gibson with an area rock'n'roll band. In late summers, he oven-dries home-grown plum tomatoes.

Unearthly

with a phrase from Wallace Stevens

Let me now obscure the muse. Mask him in mist, cloak him
in river fog.
My Erato now goes incognito on the slow Caloosahatchee. I now
summon tidal flow
to bathe our footsteps, now pray to commune amid white ibis
roosting so no one
will ever see how we made November's Taurid fireballs explode
in the east.

A nine-time Pushcart-Prize nominee and National Park Artist-in-Residence, **Karla Linn Merrifield** has twelve books to her credit; the newest is *Bunchberries, More Poems of Canada* (FootHills Publishing). Visit her blog at <http://karlalinn.blogspot.com>.

The Blues

Mom said she cried and cried the day her baby brother died
The day he died she felt cold as stone
The day he died the stove in their railroad flat didn't light

In Hell's Kitchen gangs called her Guinea Girl
Mom didn't yell Mick, couldn't say that
Mom said she'd go to hell if she didn't pray
She said Nonna wore garlic to keep the devil away

Mom said Nonna made her stir and stir the thin soup
She said the gangs on 48th screamed go to hell!
Mom threw hot potatoes at their heads
She heard them yell Dago Girl, you smell

Mom said she wore the same smock every day
She washed under her arms at the kitchen sink
She rubbed her skin raw with old lemon skins

Mom kissed Nonni to death when he gave her fresh rolls
She felt warm beside Nonni delivering ice
She danced and clapped the day he gave her a china doll

She said the doll cracked to pieces when she dropped it on the tiles
She moved the china scraps around to play pretend
Mom forgot the cold, she didn't cry, she saw white daisies on a
hillside

Mare Leonard has published chapbooks at 2River, Pudding House, Antrim House Press and RedOchreLit. Her poetry has appeared in *The Naugatuck Review*, *Hubbub*, *Cloudbank*, *The Chronogram*, *Blotterature* and most recently in *Red River*, *Ilya's Honey* and *A Rat's Ass*. She lives in an old school house overlooking the Rondout Creek in Kingston, NY. Away from her own personal blackboard, she teaches writing workshops for all ages through the Institute for Writing and Thinking at Bard College.

Materialism

Tomorrow, after she's been wheeled from
the OR, they'll know more about the tumors
growing like pearls in her ovaries.
Today she walks, pausing to greet
each neighbor, even cats. She stretches
her Irish cardigan over her body's bloating.
Eyeliner contests the circles under her eyes.
Topaz beads swing from her earlobes
and she wears all ten of her rings, even
the diamond-encircled onyx that complicates dusting.

Excessive. Like Liberace. Like
Ezekiel's image of Adam, his nakedness studded
with the nine most precious stones set in gold,
concentrations of the source of all light.
Imagine him, profaned by pride, driven
from the garden yet still beautiful
as rays heaved from heaven strike
his retreating, glowing flesh.

Against the deepening March chill she draws
her sweater still tighter, turns homeward.
Raising her hand to wave at a driver,
she catches his headlights on her rings.
A small constellation appears in the dusk.

Carol Steinhagen is retired from an English professorship at Marietta College but she can't resist the lure of the classroom. In a learning and retirement program, she has taught and taken courses in fields other than that of her PhD. Perhaps you can teach an old dog new tricks. Meanwhile she continues to write. Examples of recently published and forthcoming poems can be found in *The Comstock Review*, *Third Wednesday*, and *Slant*.

The Woman Who Lost Her Heart

At first she didn't realize it was missing, her heart, and then she panicked, searched the usual places—windowsill, magazines, the top of the dresser with her rings. Maybe she had wrapped it up with the linen when she changed the bed or maybe it had fallen out of her chest when she had opened the door to grab the mail.

She began again methodically, retracing her steps through her rooms—the closet where she tossed her shoes and the bathtub where she found her hair. Where was it? She didn't know anyone who could steal her heart away.

Her friends told her not to worry, go on with life, they said. A cousin mentioned that her spleen had been gone for a year before her daughter found it in the library lost-and-found. An old schoolmate discovered her spine in the glove compartment after her husband had that terrible crash on Route 95. Don't worry, said her therapist, hearts have a way of coming back. But the woman's chest felt empty as it had when her diamond had come loose in the dish water and drifted down the drain. One night she woke suddenly, like a woman electro-shocked back to life. For a moment her heart seemed to have returned, to be trembling inside her, but when she felt her pulse, nothing . . . nothing there.

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Lois Marie Harrod's most recent collection is a chapbook *And She Took the Heart* (Casa de Cinco Hermanas Press, 2016). Her 13th and 14th poetry collections, *Fragments from the Biography of Nemesis* (Cherry Grove Press) and the chapbook *How Marlene Mae Longs for Truth* (Dancing Girl Press) appeared in 2013. *The Only Is* won the 2012 Tennessee Chapbook Contest (Poems & Plays), and *Brief Term*, a collection of poems about teachers and teaching was published by Black Buzzard Press, 2011. She is widely published in literary journals and online ezines from *American Poetry Review* to *Zone 3*. Links to her online work can be found at www.loismarieharrod.org.

Grief Code

for JBS

They rattle as I ease the lowest dressing table drawer open. Lost seeds. How summer sounds, dying. I bend down to examine six medicine bottles dated more than thirty years ago. Labels peeling, the few pills desiccated, flaking into impotent powder. Prescribed for a woman I have never met with your familiar surname. Neighbors told me that there had been a daughter. Joan

whose profile dusts unadorned walls. It's all grief code, the pauses, syllables choked back. I had been searching for your bandages, the ones for legs swollen and weeping. Wounds erupting again and the next month, forced by a faulty heart. I must have heard wrong; thought you directed me to search in this vanity, where, instead of gauze, I unmask a small coffin.

On vital days, when health seems permanent as silver-maned seas, when knees fold easily, do you genuflect, searching for jewels, the ones you gave on birthdays year after year all bleached shell white? Or do you save this journey

for worst midnights planning, in your madness, to ingest what's left, your penance of poisons? Gently, I push the drawer

closed, hear feverish chatter,
one finger typing
the small print of her name.

Joanne M. Clarkson's fourth poetry collection, *Believing the Body*, was published in 2014 by Gribble Press. Her poems have appeared recently in *Rhino*, *The Baltimore Review*, *Arcana: The Tarot Poetry Anthology*, *The Healing Muse* and *Fjords Review*. She was awarded first place in Northern Colorado Writers Annual Competition in 2015. Joanne has a Master's Degrees in English and Library Science. She has taught and worked as a professional librarian. After caring for her mother through a long illness, she re-careered as a Registered Nurse specializing in Home Health and Hospice care. See more at <http://JoanneClarkson.com>.

At the ICU

White on white—no lace on satin, just
white cotton sheets in layers, like phyllo

on a hospital bed raised at one end.
Plump pillows cushion my mother's head

as she watches her soaps, where bold, beautiful
stars sashay across the screen, bask in the days

of their lives, prep or pretty themselves.
Disoriented and frail, my mother sits up,

her hair once raven—long tresses
like tassels on her shawl—now graying,

disheveled, and static from lying down.
Vagrant anamnesis flood the hour.

Awake, white-eyed and sleep-bereft,
she carries on a monologue, punctuated

by my earnest shushes, afraid the person
asleep in the next bed behind the partition,

will be disturbed. Hoovers hum, crisscross
the carpet—grey with rust and black dashes

that appear like magnified corpuscles.
Silent bodies cocooned in the still of night,

under cotton white blankets that shield the blue-
smocked patients, oblivious to their bated breath.

Pushpa MacFarlane reads poetry at open mics, creates and maintains blogs for poet friends, and videotapes local poetry readings. She participates in group poetry (Ekphrasis, Allure of Forms, and *Beowulf*) and poetry podcasts, and reads poems on air at KKUP. She arranged and presented Poetry Café at the Trianon Theatre in San José, and the “World Poetry” segment at the 2015 San José Poetry Festival. She has edited and arranged, as well as, designed the layout and book cover for *Remembering: An Anthology of Poems Read at Willow Glen Books*, published by Jacaranda Press (2011). In 2015, she arranged and edited *Third Thursdays*, Volume Three of the Willow Glen Poetry Project Series. She considers these two anthologies, “her best portfolio.” Other anthologies that include her poems are *Shared Light*, *No Ordinary Language*, *Song of Los Gatos*, *Vibrant Words*, and *Caesura: Fusion*. Her batik artwork has been published in the *Catamaran Literary Reader*, Issue 7 (Summer 2014).

An Old Vietnamese Woman

It was like any other day. I walked to the window to look out and pull the drapes some. The large overgrown trees in this old neighborhood afforded much shaded relief from the warm noonday sun. Older houses with spacious old yards spread out before me. I was looking into a quiet old neighborhood on a quiet old time day.

Approaching beneath me on the sidewalk below I saw two women. I stepped forward to see them better. They were Vietnamese. They were very small and moving very slowly. One woman was younger in her fifties. The other woman was even older than I am. Probably in her 80's or 90's she was bent at the waist and the shoulders, using a large cane almost as thick as she was and almost as high and no doubt intended to be used by a much larger person. She was walking painfully slowly.

It took her a couple of minutes to cover the short distance between my house and her apartment to the south. I watched her walk with her diminutive steps until she disappeared into her building. Her companion stayed by her side prepared to assist her. This day it was not necessary. I was filled with a deep sadness for the passing of youth and full health at the sight of this old Vietnamese woman who may have once climbed mountains. I can remember being younger in the sense of who I was with at the time and where I was living, but I cannot remember what it felt like. Rather today I can only feel the reality of my neighborhood...the shadows, the old houses, the intermittent sunlight, the huge old trees and the two small, slowly moving women.

Phil Cicchi is a sometimes grumpy old man who refuses to let go of life's reins in spite of everything that has gone so very wrong. He may be the most stubborn poet on the planet and perhaps one of the funnier ones. His most recent volume of poems is entitled *The Shadow of The Wind*. His poetry continues to improve with age and time.

Flight

Dad planted native species *koa*, *mamane*, *loulou*, and *kanila* as invitation to native birds to visit his *hale* near the summit of Kilauea volcano. He loved native birds most: the Hawaiian

honeycreepers *‘apapane*, *‘i‘imi*, and *‘elepaio*, watched for them from his kitchen window, exulted when honeycreepers began drawing nectar from introduced fuchsia blossoms.

Overlooking Pele’s *hale* at Halema‘uma‘u—as I admired crater birds rising on thermals above Kilauea caldera—Dad chanted a greeting in Hawaiian to the volcano goddess; his words gathered

force and took flight. Back home, he railed against the neighbor who raised chickens, who may have set out poison for predators including the rare *‘io*, Hawaiian hawk. One day Dad spotted

an *‘io* circling tightly over the intersection nearest our *hale*, and pointing, yelled, Look Andy, a hawk! We were thrilled, and our spirits took flight that day. At Kilauea Military Camp,

called the Voices of the Birds in ancient times, he told Hawaiian legends to visitors. One explained how the Menehune were thwarted from removing the hilltop Akahipu‘u by a supernatural *moa*, rooster.

Another told how the birdcatcher Kaholo became so swift a runner he could catch *kōlea*, the golden plover, before it left the ground, and how Kaholo’s wife *‘Alalā* was turned into a crow by the gods.

Dad praised Hawaiian featherwork, and the craft of the birdcatchers. He explained that birdcatchers used snares and *kepalakepanu*, birdlime, to catch birds, were allowed to keep a portion of their catch for food,

could catch uncommon birds, pluck two feathers and release them to recover. Even as I fled Hawai'i, no longer caught up in his plans for me, released to whatever I might make of myself and my life,

after I abandoned him in headlong flight into exile, Dad never abandoned me. Even after I criticized him once for how he made a living, I was never *make*, dead, to him. Even as aspects of my life

echoed his or didn't, he remained deeply interested in my well-being, and in what I was doing. Dad always welcomed me home.

Andrew Shattuck McBride is a Bellingham, Washington-based writer with recent work in *Acorn*, *Mud Season Review*, *A Hundred Gourds*, *Connecticut River Review*, *bottle rockets*, and *Clover*, *A Literary Rag*. He edits historical novels, memoirs, poetry collections and chapbooks. When he isn't writing or editing, Andrew herds his (inside only) cats. He blogs at www.andrewsmcbride.wordpress.com

Homage to my Father in the Summer of 2008

This was the summer, the summer of a thousand wildfires.
This was the summer of my nephew playing Stairway to Heaven.
The summer of the hell hounds of pain bounding up ladders
into our houses. This was the summer of my father's struggle
and then passing into another world, into arms
of his long absent mother. This was the last summer of my father.
He of immense, irrefutable strength, a bear of a bull
of a dark-skinned man, abandoned by his father,
a coward retreating back to Mexico, leaving my Dad
a father-less child, unprotected from the evils of the world,
staining his innocent, young heart, metamorphosing
into a palpable, unwavering rage of self-abuse, of family abuse
spilling out his body like sweat out of pores,
but he was my father and he did give a rat's ass.
In the end he did not abandon me, my brothers, my sisters,
my mother. He was a man with a scowl etched permanent,
a furious man, working like a dog to put a roof over our many
heads, protecting us from rain, if not tears. His Teamster hands,
big as a catcher's mitt, voice powerful as the Pacific booming,
his unshakable, unsinkable faith he finding a way, Goddamn it,
to shelter us with the umbrella of his hardened heart,
leading us up the wooden stairs of warmth, food, comfort
Here is the long and short of it:
He was forged by the fires of humiliation, abuse and violence
yet in the end, here he was a good man lying in a hospital bed
five stairway landings up, as close to the sky as he ever got,
surrounded by grandchildren, adoring him like a kind king.
I remember him crawling up our front yard stairs, past the rocks
he inserted in cement with my grandfather's help, past the roses
he planted to honor my mother, up the two-story, crawling,
stumbling in a drunken fog to me and putting his arms around me
and saying, "I wish I could say I love you, but I can't."
But he did, so I let those ribbons that were tied to the stone

of grief, loose ribbons of memory, the childhood creeks he took us to, the cactus tuna fruit peeling as easy as he parked an 18-wheeler, the Eucalyptus, the BBQ's, the pancakes, the menudo aromas, the chili grinding under his strong hands, sure hands, nostalgic scents I will breathe in and think of as homage to my father as I let them loose into the blue, blue sky of my Father's California.

Al Preciado, an art instructor at Bellarmine College Preparatory, is an artist and a poet. He has shared his poems at the Willow Glen readings and the open mic at Works and was a featured reader at Thursday Gig and Well Red at Works. He has shown his paintings and sculptures at Blue House Gallery in Frankfurt, Puffin Room in New York, Trans Hudson in New Jersey, Laguna Museum in Southern California and various art venues in San Jose and San Francisco.

Questions without Answers

Is it good to have moonlight on snow?
It is my love, great love,
 that kisses my grandmother's thin white hair.

Is it sweet to have foam on the sea?
It is love, great love,
 that whispers you to me.

How shall I tell you a story?
Once I sang you lullabies
 and you don't remember.
Any story I might say is not real to you;
you are in your own story now, not sleeping.

Is it not a tinkling xylophone?
Many prophets have slept by a brook,
 but a slowly moving river has its own song,
 deep and dark,
 keen the knell of undercurrent.

Mind if I move in with you?
Under your blanket, under the bridge?
It is sparse, when your only home is the homeless.

Following the lost is easier
 than losing those
 who used to follow you.

Ruth Hill was born and educated in upstate New York and traveled North America extensively. She is a Certified Design Engineer, lifelong tutor, and enjoys spoken word. She has won first prizes in Gulf Coast Ethnic & Jazz Poetry, Heart Poetry, Lucidity, Poets for Human Rights, and Writers Rising Up. Over 250 of her poems have won awards or publication in the US, Canada, UK, and Israel. She welcomes email at ruthhill@joiedevivregardens.ca.

Someday the World Will Shudder like This

in the field of strangeness
there are acres of black leaves
making soft noises as frost

in the scattering
small animals return at dusk
before they can be frozen to death

even now they sense this
approaching like huge thumbs
prying them open

it begins with the speckled leaves
it begins with the years of parting
never ending

daylight already knows too much about dust
someone drags out nets of suspicious water
a quiet is possible but not practical

a distance of birds is not seen
in the absence there is a noise unlike other noises
the sky is a layer of thin skin shaking

it ends with ducks darkening the center of the sky
impetuous singing like static electricity
it ends with someone cursing down a red moon

Martin Willitts Jr is a retired Librarian. His poems have appeared in *Blue Fifth Review*, *Kentucky Review*, *Comstock Review*, *Nine Mile Magazine*, and others. He won the 2013 Bill Holm Witness Poetry Contest; 2014 Broad-sided Award, 2014 Dylan Thomas International Poetry Contest; and Rattle Ekphrastic Challenge (June 2015, Editor's Choice). He has over 20 chapbooks, plus 11 full-length collections including *How to Be Silent* (FutureCycle Press, 2016).

Korah, Son of Izhar

He was dreaming of a dog romping in a field.
It did not resemble a dog he had ever owned,
yet in the dream the dog was definitely his.
He had thrown a ball into the field and the dog
was searching among the weeds. He whistled
and the dog's ears perked. He heard a low rumble
coming from beyond the dark barrier of the treeline.
He awoke of a sudden as his bed lurched and leapt.
The roar was not an approaching train,
though it may as well have been. The earth
beneath his bedroom gave way, revealing
a cavernous hole into which his bed dropped.
He thought he should scream. Perhaps he did
scream. If so, it would not have been heard
above the growl of the earth as she opened her throat.
Was she howling? Far away, someone whistled
and called his name. There was a ball hidden
somewhere. His task was to fetch it and return
before the darkness swallowed him whole.

New Philosophy

The best way to learn Paris, she said, is to get lost. Hop on the Metro and observe commuters, tourists, schoolchildren, immigrants. Emerge from the tunnels expecting nothing. Stroll through an unfamiliar district. Browse its shops. Buy some small item you don't need. Eat something. If it rains, duck beneath an awning and drink whatever they set before you. If someone asks you a question, strike up a conversation. Forget whatever you've learned. You're truly lost now, and no amount of pre-acquired knowledge can help. Repeat this routine, day by day, until you have a map in your head. About the time you begin to feel the city is yours, leave it. Lose it. Find a new city, a city no one has ever visited. Get lost. Live this way until you find yourself no longer alive. Let them look for you, if they like, in the corners of doorways, in alleys, beneath every bridge ever erected over every river that ever flowed through your aching heart.

David Denny is the author of the short story collection, *The Gill Man in Purgatory*, as well as three poetry collections: *Man Overboard*, *Fool in the Attic*, and *Plebeian on the Front Porch*. Recent poems have appeared in *Chiron Review*, *Spillway*, *San Pedro River Review*, and *The Carolina Quarterly*, among others. He has a fancy new web site at www.daviddenny.net