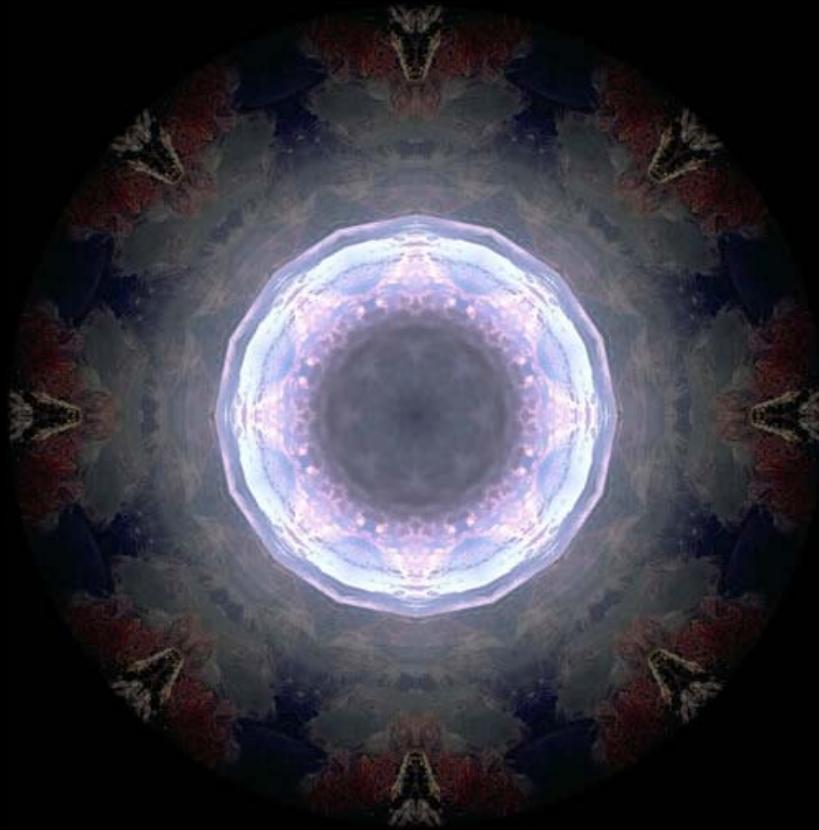


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A.D. Winans

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Poem for my Mother

My mother's eyes stare at me
Like a wounded doe
Looking into a rifle barrel
The months grow antlers
The years fangs

Time a barbed wire fence
Tears at the soul
Her smile fading
Like watercolors off
A worn canvas

The shadow of my ancestors
Stalk my dreams
Like an aging warrior
Tracking game
My mother's eyes smoldering
Like hot ashes
In a Hiroshima graveyard

Family Poem

I'm addicted to looking at pictures
My mother left behind
From assorted photo albums
Bringing back memories of our family
Flat on Page Street
Teddy the family dog chasing his tail
Like dad chased his dreams
Mother sitting on the sofa knitting

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A heating pad on her swollen feet
Or working a crossword puzzle
One eye on sister the other on me
Dad lighting up a cigarette
Blowing smoke rings across the room

It's like reliving vaudeville days
My father a conductor
On the old Municipal Railway
Taking me with him for a ride
Letting me ring the bell
A look of pride in his eyes when
He said to the passengers,
"That's my son."

May be the only memory I had
Of childhood fun
Father and son as one
Riding to the end of the line
That one time when everything
In life was fairytale fine

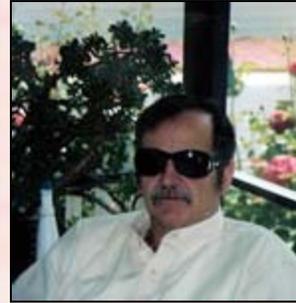
Now at seventy
I feel like a dinosaur walking
The ends of earth
With nothing but scraps
To feast on

Pigeon Feathers

Holy men on every street corner
Selling fake myths
Nuns in white with virgin toes
And mushroom dreams inside their loins
I am being followed by
Dick Tracy look-a-likes
With flat feet and bug eyes
The wolf's eerie howl haunts my dreams
Evangelists pickpocket my empty wallet
My one good eye
Photographs the crime scene
The police lineup consists
Of six pygmies and a ham sandwich
Ladybugs ride on
The wings of butterflies
On A one way trip to Never Land
God wanders the universe
Carrying Jesus piggyback
On his way to a Lady Ga Ga concert
The Madonna confiscates my dreams
Holds me for a ransom I can't pay
The insatiable night eats my thoughts

I've become a one-legged tightrope walker
Without a safety net
My poems turn into pigeon feathers
Fly off on the wind

A.D. Winans is a native San Francisco poet and writer. He edited and published *Second Coming* for seventeen years. He is the author of over fifty books and chapbooks of poetry and prose. In 2002 a song poem of his was performed at Alice Tully Hall, NYC. In 2006 PEN National awarded him a Josephine Miles Award for excellence in literature. In 2009 he was presented with a PEN Oakland Lifetime Achievement Award. Late this year or early next year, NYQ will publish a book of his political poems, spanning over fifty years.



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Anthony Buccino

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Angelo's Overalls

After work every day, first thing
Dad would do is check out the coop.
Do his homers need water?
Are the hens okay?
Are they ready to eat?
Should he send them flying
in large circles around the neighborhood?

Satisfied everything's okay,
he brings in his empty lunch box,
kisses Mom and set aside his overalls
before resting his eyes, feet up, on the recliner.

His birds know the man, his overalls
and the same hat he wears into their coop
each morning before work and after work,
and later when he checks in
on the flyers before turning in.

He's done this dance with his homers
for most of his twenty-five years, and finding himself
in Australia, courtesy of the U.S. government.
He wanders down under, spying their coops, writing letters
about what he sees to his best friend back home.

Years later, I salvage two pairs of his overalls.
They had vertical blue stripes, you could say
I looked like an engineer on a train.
I used them when I did carpentry jobs
(though never as well as Dad).
And the older I got, the less I wore those overalls.
I never had my own pigeons, never wanted them.

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They take you away from your family,
I said from boyhood.

When I find the letters to his friend
sixty years later, I meet my father
as a young man, understand how much
he needed those delicate, beautiful
creatures in his life.

In Junior High

The ninth grade bully who stole my pens from my shirt pocket
at the water fountain when I started junior high in seventh grade
was my cousin's neighbor. I knew him on sight,
but he made no effort to know me,
not a hint of recognition in his beady black eyes.
With a crowd of cronies around him
I was in no position to complain or plead for my pens.
I forgot I had taken a drink and sheepishly squirmed
through the tough guys to relative safety of seventh grade friends.
Lesson learned. I got smart and steered clear of those big boys,
the ones feeling the power of their hormones.
Years later I'm walking to school, a senior,
with an old classmate who lived nearby
and he's telling the story, the story of someone he knew,
telling it like he was there when it happened
saw the whole thing himself, he's telling another classmate
we're walking with, and I'm just tagging behind.
Yeah, yeah, he says, he pulls the car over to this corner
where the N is standing, and calls him over, you know,
like he's lost, and needs directions.
And when the guy comes over, he fires the shotgun, blam!
And away we go..
Like it's a game, like stealing pens from seventh graders,
the bully with the beady black eyes had graduated.

[Anthony Buccino](#)'s poetry has appeared in literary magazines and anthologies. For more information, other writings and hours of web page reading, visit [Anthony's World](#).



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Starburst in a Dwarf Irregular Galaxy

*I remember the loneliness clearly, she told me.
Twenty years alone and she still sensed
his touch, felt the sudden velocity
of her body when they kissed at bedtime,
the electric frenzy. We sleep and wake
like animals, not understanding the coiled
energy, the turbulence of love.*

Just outside the arms of the Milky Way
a dwarf irregular galaxy twists the sheets
of the universe into bunches. You sleep
next to me, breathing in the dark.
Each time I lie down with you I kiss
the fear into submission. Sometimes
I remember my widowed grandmother
and can't sleep as trees scrape against
the wind. Sometimes I dream I have walked
into grief while night circles the vacant landscape,
stars unfurling like static until dawn breaks
their hold. When we wake, I tell you I am
fraught with doubt so you will hold me
without question.

Later I explain that supernova explosions
trigger star formation. I show you the photo
of a dwarf galaxy, the starburst at the edge
of the black nothing that surrounds everything.
Twenty years of turbulence and I'm still
suspicious, but you kiss me like nothing
is wrong until you fall asleep again,
until the dark coils against my fatigue
and I dream, finally, of infinity.

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[About the Writer](#)

[Christine Klocek-Lim](#) received the 2009 Ellen La Forge Memorial Prize in poetry. She has four chapbooks: *Ballroom - a love story* (Flutter Press), *Cloud Studies* (Whale Sound Audio Chapbooks), *How to photograph the heart* (The Lives You Touch Publications), and *The book of small treasures* (Seven Kitchens Press). Her poems have appeared in *Nimrod*, *OCHO*, *Diode*, *Riffing on Strings: Creative Writing Inspired by String Theory* and elsewhere. Her work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net anthologies and was a finalist for 3 Quarks Daily's Prize in Arts & Literature. She is editor of *Autumn Sky Poetry*.



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Elijah B. Pringle

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Statues

Men always seem to be noblest in marble
Stone makes them strong, stoic and sinless
Their silence insist that we not query them

Effigies hold onto their clandestine selves
As we fix our gawking eyes on their likenesses
Their faces singular in emotion and chiseled

Tone bodies won't grow weak or somnolent
Nor is there fatigue or frailness or foibles
They're perfect; therefore, no need to move

Mythical men in Parian marble are: abated
To carved legends, folklore and fairy tales
As their true contributions are forgotten

Celebrating triumphs as an alternative
To learning from their failures defeated
These men who now dwell erected in parks

And somehow it is lost on us who gaze that
True heroes are not still long enough to pose
They're moving about as we stare like statues

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[Statues](#)

[About the Writer](#)

Elijah B. Pringle, III, Philadelphia based poet who has appeared in numerous poetry journals and anthologies. He facilitates creative writing workshops and is the past editor-in-chief of IMPACT, a business periodical. He has edited and published of several chap books by other poets as well as his own work. He is also the former on-air host of Panoramic Poetry at [OctoberGallery.com](#).



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Frank Wilson

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In the Stretch

Nothing is left to dream of
Once destiny nears fulfillment.
Portents abound: Deserted streets
In morning light, high clouds
Scudding across a winter sky,
Birds seeking shelter as day
Gives way to deepening shadows.
All about seems like starlight,
Signals out of long ago.

No, nothing is left to dream of
Once you're old enough. What little love
Has come your way is all that will.
Urgings and desires may still
Bother flesh and spirit, but a glance
In the mirror intimates romance
No longer's in the cards. And just as well.

Nothing is left to dream of,
Only something to get ready for.

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[In the Stretch](#)

[About the Writer](#)

Frank Wilson has been reviewing books professionally since October 1964. For most of the past decade he was Books Editor at the Philadelphia Inquirer. He currently blogs at [Books Inq.](#) It is one of the most successful blogs in the literary blogosphere.



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James Arthur

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Bucephalus, Charging

Riding over Persia
on titanium hooves, my gallop
tearing up the DMZ,

I stomp down a refinery, trail a scat
of incinerated cars, running
from my shadow

as I strike at the sun. One brown eye,
one blue. I'm star-marked ...
my barding, bulletproof.

I'm the noise of a wedding
on fire. Bombed-out tenements
quake as I pass. In my blinders

and heavy headstall, I smell
petroleum burning and hear
a high-winding cry.

James Arthur's first book, *Charms against Lightning*, is forthcoming from Copper Canyon Press. Individual poems in the volume have appear or will soon appear in *The New Yorker*, *The New Republic*, *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *The Southern Review*, *The American Poetry Review*, *New England Review*, and *Narrative*. James Arthur has received the Amy Lowell Travelling Poetry Scholarship, a Wallace Stegner Fellowship, a Discovery/The Nation Prize, and a residency at the Amy Clampitt House, as well as fellowships at Yaddo and the MacDowell Colony. Beginning in September, he will be a Hodder Fellow at the Lewis Center for the

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Arts in Princeton.



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James D. Quinton

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sometime after midnight

long note from
a saxophone
breaks the silence
hangs in the air
for a few seconds
feels like minutes

under a street lamp
I look up
several floors above
an open window
behind a closed shade
the silhouette of a man
he puts the horn
to his lips once more

the music sounds
like it is fuelled
by a beaten heart,
and maybe,
a whiskey or two

I can see into his soul
as he surrenders
to his consciousness

I continue on

it's sometime
after midnight
in those hours
when melancholy

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slips into
the spirit

and even when
I'm out of earshot
I'm still caught up
in the harmony

floating home
on the melody

reduced to loose change

finding myself
treading
pavement in
worn Converse

(can't remember
the last time
I bought new
shoes or clothes)

the sky speaks
heavens open
rain falls

walking to clear
my head

her words
still pounding
around my skull
giving me verbal
over something
I did
or
didn't do
I'm not sure

it doesn't matter

I've never
felt like I
was worth much,
there were times
when I would
have taken
fifty sheets
for my soul

but it's too
late now

she's reduced
me
to loose
change

sometimes I forgot there were two of us

I deny
the past
but reflections
appear
without warning

stark images

I shed
a
tear

in my
state of
self-absorption
where
my
grip on
reality is
loose

there are
all kinds
of
dangers

I used to
Indulge

burning
promises
made

living
reckless
chasing

in my
unknown
to others
little world

a thrill
an adventure

pretending

I was
something
I wasn't
just to
fill
the time

wishing
to turn
back
the clock
now

to be there
for you

to be there
when I forgot
there were

two
of us

[James D. Quinton](#) is a British fiction and poetry writer. Recent accepted poetry has appeared in *Burner Magazine*, *Red Fez*, *Zygote in My Coffee*, *Blacklisted Magazine*, *Heroin Love Songs*, *Chiron Review*, *Dead Snakes* and *Spudgun Magazine*. His second novel 'The Victorian Time Traveller' is gaining positive reviews. It is available on Amazon.



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Circuit, circuitous

the larynx will only
admit the frequency escaped from it.

It says "not here".

(A piece from *We Mills, We Miles*)

1.

Twist in the body being this, the burdening of repeat. Black coat insistent set
meaning but really a whole host of matters
that may or may not be. Black coat under a pavilion
in the park, lost, but still standing for
the quiet terminus of self, its detail pigment-wise
defining slightly what is. The tenterframe there to say
much more like stopping in a mill town,
window open to briefly let in rain. Cattle bagged in smoking heaps,
blotchline of houses, back room with only three sides. Slow river.
A.D.RIFT written wall-to-wall.

Rapt from any heaven, roots an inch long,
I saw cooling towers on the way that meant andante adagio the cold and no ideas.
Mouth on marble in the town hall, Henry Moore maquettes,
dug-up boat from Hawksworth Tarn
blown to quiet, ash weltering. Written in a different city the name
how I never thought to spell it.
Black of points to re-collate and gather up—
serried wants, each one
scale-less when expressly thought of, too violent and imprecise.

Jane Lewty is s professor of English Literature and creative writing at the University of Amsterdam and holds an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

Her poems have have appeared, or are forthcoming, in *Volt*, *The Boston Review*, *The Literary Review*, *La Petite Zine*, *Word/for Word*, *Versal*, and others. Her first poetry collection, *Bravura Cool*, will be published by 1913 Press in 2012.



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Jim Mancinelli

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Polymath

"It's all geometry, James"—Uncle Sam M.

He asked:

Can you separate wood and flesh from thoughts of angles or curves?

The tree and its limbs; the body as it bends to lift a fallen apple?

Can you separate them from thoughts of death and sacrifice?

The tree and autumn; the body as ash.

If you know the angles you can know the sides

the love of branch for frail leaf, the tears shed in rays

the obtuse beauty of a dead grammarian with your name

the distance from the sun to your last love

the meaning of the Baptist's river, curved toward
emptiness.

He said that stars and tilted pines sunk in earth share one straight line, becoming us.

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[Polymath](#)

[About the Writer](#)

Jim Mancinelli is a living, writing, working Philadelphian. His first chapbook, *Primer*, was self-published. His second chapbook, *In Deep*, was published by Plan B Press. His writing is informed by the spirit, the earth, the heavens, and the voices of his heritage. He hosts the Moveable Beats Poetry Series in Center City Philadelphia.



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John Dorsey

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the iowa sutra

i did not realize
how libral
your daydreams were

your corn fed daughters
offer a thousand promises
not yet broken by sunlight

myth stands proud
at the grotto
of redemption

here we're taught
that no superhero is an island

here we cut
the umbilical cord of history
without blinking

where time is silent

where willows breathe easy
and make for slender sundials

here we look for bloodlines in the earth
for any reason
to dry hump death

i want to flaunt my penis
like a greek tragedy

because the sign says
don't die with your teeth out

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i plan to live forever
in the basement
of your heart

hotels make great lovers
but there aren't any waffles here
only fair weather vaginas

like toy soldiers
we cling to the roots
of trees

i look up at the sky
And cross my fingers
wondering what we give up
for constellations

i look for messages
in plastic bottles
and name rivers after ghosts
who were never told
they were beautiful

volcano etiquette

make a muscle
to prove a point.

sing as loud as you like
in your native tongue,
really, it's fine.

nobody ever said
dr. doom
was a villanelle.

if a tree falls in the woods
help it up.

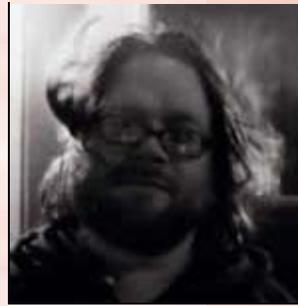
academia is its own
status mountain.

dance with your shadow.

leave bread crumbs for the sun.

given enough time
we all learn
how to disappear.

poetry, including *Teaching the Dead to Sing: The Outlaw's Prayer* (Rose of Sharon Press, 2006), and *Sodomy is a City in New Jersey* (American Mettle Books, 2010). His work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize.



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Le Hinton

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Oath

i hold my heartbeat
 in my hand—like a promise
each pill luminescent and weightless
nestled along my lifeline

like a promise

funeral friends
will neglect no facet of failure,
offer no extenuation
 for my malpracticed
life

i hold my heartbeat in my hand

drugs, prescriptions gone wrong
the accident, the pain,
 the oxy
 he got hooked
it was never about money
i wanted to help

like a promise

talking heads
 accusations
i can't dress in this shade of black anymore,
 not the one lighter,
 or the one darker

i hold my heartbeat

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i can't go back.

i can't go forward

i can't stay here

i can't bear to trace the lines
of disappointment
in the mirror
remember or dream

first do no harm

i held his heartbeat
in my right hand—like a promise

Waiting: The Half-Life of Hope

The doctor will be right in,
the nurse says, but he hasn't been *right in*
since your lungs began
to ration oxygen to your body.
You have always waited.

The nurse must know the results of your scan.
Did she smile, frown? You didn't notice.

How did you wander
this far into your life,
still unable to decipher
the markings along the way?
You don't know that either.
The doctor will be right in.

You've been praying lately but will God
bother to listen after all these years. You too busy
then. God too busy now? You may have waited
too long. You should have stayed
in touch.
The doctor will be right in.

You were smarter than this. Good with numbers.
You abandoned the neighborhood
to major in accounting.
but you minored in smoking.
You were going to quit just last year. Now it might be too late.
You were supposed to be smarter than this.

Who should you tell first?
Your mom is someone else
most of the time and doesn't remember
her recipe for potato salad
or even your heartbeat.

Will your ex-wife worry? No.

She might even be happy. No.
She was always better than that. You
should have tried harder
to make it work. You should have tried.

The doctor will be right in.

You don't have a diagnosis yet. Maybe
it's just a bad cold, maybe
a little pneumonia. Nothing
more than that. It's going to be all right.
You've always tended to look at negatives
first.

A little time in the hospital
might not be too bad.
It would get you away
from work for a while.
It could be a vacation .
You'd be able to avoid
dealing with the upcoming tax
season and all that greed.

The doctor will be right in.

Yes. Nothing
bad has happened yet.
Maybe
they will forget
about you and you can stay
here, alone
in this room forever. Nothing
changes until the doorknob turns,
until the doctor tells you it has.

You
are
suspended here
between

the doctor will be right in
and
the doorknob turning,

knowing that nothing
will change.
Not one single thing
will change
until the doorknob turns
until waiting walks in,
releases you
and tells you to go home.

What will you wait for then?

Le Hinton is the author of four collections of poetry including, most recently, *Black on Most Days* (Iris G. Press, 2008) and *The God of Our Dreams* (Iris G. Press, 2010). His work has been published in various journals including *Gargoyle*, *haggard and halloo*, *Literary Chaos* and *Bent Pin Quarterly*. His poem, "Our Ballpark," will be part of the Poetry Paths installation at Clipper Magazine Stadium in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in 2012. He is the founder and chief editor of the poetry journal *Fledgling Rag*.



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Melanie Huber

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[Bowl with A Pair of Rabbits](#), 9th-12th B.C. Mimbres People, New Mexico, *ceramic*

The curve of the earth is a sacred line, mimicked in the slope of the bowl, the arch of the rabbit's spine.
Clay and fire, where the wind has run away from the sagebrush to the sea. Listen—

do you hear it? Home is a precipice. Here on the cliffs the enemy can not find us, but the drought will catch us no matter where we run

and mercy is a useless vessel which only means something more
after we kill it.

[Pair of Eyes](#), 5th B.C., Probably Greek, *bronze, frit, quartz, marble, obsidian*

Frit whites and obsidian pupils conjure the same vein as sight but they will tell nothing of its history.
It's no use. There's no mouth to summon a face.
Tongue-less and mute, memory may chisel a recognizable shape, but seeing won't bring back the dead
and all this talk of bones, I'm sick of it.

Here's a story I once heard:

A man bought a quarry so he could work within the living earth. The stone, embryonic, or maybe more like the body as a tomb, the tomb as body, but he swore he could hear a pulse.

Did what he create become a part of him?

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The birth order of universes;
dark, the artery of light.
Did he become what he created?

Light, the placenta or the womb? Look,
there is no umbilical cord, here, no fetus.

It is only eyes made of stone
but there had to be a hand,
and yes, a beating heart behind it
to pump the blood into the fingers
to carve the iris, to mold
the bronze eyelashes to unblinking lids,
and every man blinded by certainty
is an acolyte of vision. Or maybe not,
maybe it is all a matter of taste,
"The tongue is an eye," after all.

Canopy of Phoenixes, Yuan dynasty, 1271-1368
embroidery silk with gold thread

When the sky is lit with blazing feathers, some say
the sun is rising. When the moon is a pearl swallowed
by a bird some say the night is new and when a crescent
appears somehow it is light from the eyelash of a God.

I say there's nothing but the crest and fall, undulating
waves of neither light nor dark, of such immensity
we can't even feel how we are caught in the flow
and in the destruction

you might say "heat" or "fire" to explain the burning,
but it is cold, and in the creation, caught in a red silk
covering, we only see the flairs, singular moments of color

and not what is before or beneath the ash.

Melanie Huber has work published and forthcoming, including AXE IN HAND (NYQ Books, 2011). She has cul-de-sac'd somewhere in Virginia with her five children, husband, a cocker spaniel with poor eyesight and an attitude (the cocker spaniel, not the husband). She collects rocks and hates laundry.



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Mel Brake

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In Darkness

Like the grizzly bear,
I lust after the darkness to sleep.

Like an Asian mushroom,
I lust after the darkness to grow.

Like the Purple Harlot,
I lust after the darkness for the forbidden fruit.

Like the wounded soldier,
I lust after the darkness to cry,
to heal from pain.

Like an Alabaster Owl,
I lust after the darkness to see in the night.

Like an innocent convict,
I lust after the darkness for vindication,
by the light.

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Mel Brake has won several awards for his poetry and musical talents. He was born and raised in Philadelphia, and proud of it. He lives in Springfield, PA because the water is fresh, clear and tasty. Many publications and journals have published his poems including Fox Chase Review, Philadelphia Poets, Mad Poets Review, E Pluribus Unum:An Anthology of Diverse Voices, Apiary Magazine, Word Riot Magazine, Poetry Ink, The New Verse News and many others



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Nicholas Balsirow

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The Wolves of Winter

*And do we ignore,
the ones we know the least?*

Winter's cruel, cunning canines
withered landscape, have you yours?
have I mine?

A poor harvest, a noose of twine
but in the autumn, when death is set
colors are marveled, have they fallen yet?

Can you hear the howl of the hounds?

eternal reward, the grandest of feasts
(hunger makes no sound)
the whimper of the lone wolf
(oh poor starved beast!)
do not stray, do not stray

for this is your pack
(we are all you desire)
we are what you need
do not stray, do not stray
unless you do not wish to feed

Can you hear the howl of the hounds?

The sun sits still, three days shall pass
(oh how you look pale!)
I will not read the ink
I will not heed the tale
every word, every page

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written by:
blinded sage

A disease, a plague
cosmic radiation
universal gravitation
brings us close, attraction
drag us down, unholy satisfaction
(hunger makes no sound)
round and round and round
runs god's "greatest" creation

burn, burn, burn
rising frustration
(thou hast committed treason)
I thought we were gifted
with some sort of reason
All our fates, bestowed upon birth
rest now, dear Atlas, I shall hold the earth
Listen to the laughter
Listen to the cries
(please wipe the sweat from my brow and
from my eyes)
Listen to heartbeat
but can you feel a pulse?

Can you hear the howl of the hounds?

Enjoy the silence

Nicholas Balsirow is an aspiring poet from Northeast Philadelphia. He is currently a senior at Central High School and plans to attend Eugene Lang in the upcoming fall semester for undergraduate studies in writing.



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Russell Reece

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Sanctuary

"They wouldn't understand," Daddy said. "In your heart you know that." He turned his head on the hospital pillow and looked right at me. "Brenda?"

"You're right," I said. "I'll take care of it."

He squeezed my hand.

That was three months ago, the last time I saw my father before he died.

I took Friday off and went over to Mom's. I knew she wouldn't be home. When I finished I left a note that I'd be gone for the weekend, and drove to Rehoboth to pack up Daddy's fishing trailer. I was still struggling with his passing and, the whole way downstate, I worried about being in the place alone. The memories would be overwhelming. But as soon as I walked through the door I knew I'd be okay.

I was taping the last cardboard box when tires crunched on the gravel drive. I put the box on the stack and went to the door. My twin sister, Elizabeth, stood by her Mercedes, her patent-leather purse clutched against her stomach like a hot water bottle. I hadn't seen her since the funeral.

"Is this *it*?" she asked.

"Well, look who it is," I said. "Come on in."

Liz walked up the sidewalk, her gaze moving over the yard like she expected something to jump out at her any second. After a brief tour we sat down in the attached porch where the late afternoon sun filtered through the rusted screen. Liz, overdressed in an embroidered silk shirtdress and open-toed pumps, was a stark contrast to the faded and threadbare lawn-chair she was sitting in. She swirled her iced tea; cubes tinkled against the glass.

"I'm surprised to see you here," I said. "You never came when Daddy was alive."

She shrugged. "I guess I was just curious." She looked around the small enclosed space at Daddy's collection of yard-sale furniture and the worn picnic table and benches. The cardboard boxes with his personal belongings were stacked along the wall.

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I sipped wine from an old souvenir glass that bore the faded image of Howdy Doody and tried to imagine what she must be thinking.

“Not much of a place,” she finally said. “Why would he want to come *here* every weekend?”

“He loved it here.”

“He had such a beautiful home in Wilmington.” She glanced at the shabby siding. “At least now I understand why Mom never came with him.”

“Oh, perish the thought.” I laughed. “The grand Victoria Olsen in a trailer outside of Rehoboth Beach—Wilmington society would never recover from that, at least not in her mind. Besides, you know Mom; if she couldn’t be in charge, she didn’t want to be there. This was his place.”

Liz stood up and walked to the back door. She stared at the hedgerow that bordered the neighboring cornfield. She seemed unusually quiet and contemplative.

Several neighborhood children chased each other through the shaggy yard, laughing. Liz shook her head and wrinkled her nose. “I just don’t get it; you might think Daddy didn’t have two pennies to rub together.”

Ah, there’s the old Liz, I thought. Daddy was a widely recognized heart surgeon, but uncomfortable with the trappings of his success. Mom and Liz were just the opposite; they loved the good life, loved flaunting the wealth. And I had to admit, I was caught up in that for a while.

“You know that wasn’t important to him,” I said.

She looked out the window. “Sometimes men don’t know what’s important.”

I knew that sentiment was not so much about Daddy as it was the bitter divorce she had recently gone through, so I let it pass. It was a shame Liz’s hectic social life had prevented her from getting to know our father like I had over the past few years. *He* certainly knew what was important and, thankfully, helped me figure it out.

As a new associate in a Wilmington law firm I had been on the verge of depression from overwork when he insisted I come down for the weekend. He had just bought the place and claimed that the air was different here, the pace slower, and time and responsibilities seemed not to exist. I didn’t know what to expect and frankly the first impression was shocking. But by the time the weekend was over I was hooked. He was right—the real world, with all its complications, seemed a million miles away.

That first day, we drove to the Indian River jetty to meet his fishing buddies. They all called him Doc. He proudly showed me off to everyone. I brought a book to read and they started a debate on whether or not they could catch fish with a book-worm. Those guys were funny and real, so different from the friends we knew at home when we were growing up. Back then, we were surrounded by a constant stream of Mom’s country-club pals; glad-handing, pretentious people, who, I always felt, were just pretending to like each other. That wasn’t Daddy. Even when I was a teenager I could tell his heart wasn’t in it when Mom would have parties or drag him off to one social event after another. I worried about that.

But once he found this getaway I wasn’t concerned anymore. With Mom on his arm, dressed to the nines and thrilled to be hob-knobbing with friends, Daddy would wink at me and I knew everything would be alright. He would soon escape to his beloved sanctuary and lose himself fishing at the jetty. I loved hanging out with him and came down every chance I got.

“You would have liked it here, Liz. Daddy was always so happy, and his friends were fun.”

"His friends? Grubby fishermen who live in trailers?" Liz assumed Mom's superior air and jutted out her chin. "Why, he and Mom knew the best people in town."

"That's a matter of opinion. I think it's a shame Mom never shared this part of his life. She always had to be in the big house, in the big neighborhood, showing Daddy off every chance she got. Now she has him there for good, in that disgusting gold-leafed urn." I shook my head at the thought and downed the last swallow of wine.

"Brenda! Mother's just trying to honor Daddy's memory. I think it's very nice."

This was an argument I wouldn't win.

I looked around the old place again and for a moment imagined Daddy sitting in the lawn chair in his bathing suit, his flip-flop adorned feet up on the hassock as he raised his palms and shrugged at Liz's last comment.

I stood and straightened the stack of boxes. "I think I've got everything packed," I said. "I'm going to make one more pass through, just to be sure."

"Go ahead. I'll just sit for a while."

I went up the rickety steps and walked through the place. I had arranged to sell it for two-thousand dollars to Jilly Thompson, one of Daddy's fishing buddies. That included all the furniture and kitchenware. Jilly had already assumed the land rent and graciously offered to haul the packed boxes to Wilmington for us.

I opened the closet in the only bedroom, empty but for clothes hangers spaced sporadically across the rail. I checked the bureau and then stood by the door and scanned the room. An old high-school picture of Liz and me in our flag-twirling outfits hung by the bed. I lifted it off the hook exposing a dark square on the faded paneling.

With the picture under my arm, I went into the kitchen. Daddy's old cream-colored, tube radio sat on the small Formica table under the window. I switched it on. A deep electrical hum sprang from the single speaker followed by the fade-in of music from the local AM radio station. "I'll go before that radio goes," he had said on more than one occasion. I switched it off.

As I passed into the living room Liz came through the door and went to the kitchen sink. She dumped her ice cubes and rinsed out the glass. "Are you staying over?" she asked.

"I think so. I'm going to drive down to the inlet before it gets too dark. What about you?"

"I'm going to do a little shopping then head home."

"Well, I'm glad you came." We hugged, and when I let go, she held on and sniffled. It caught me off guard. I squeezed her again and we stood there in each other's arms as she sobbed. "Daddy would be happy you were here, Liz."

She finally let go, pulled a hanky from her purse and dabbed at her eyes. I showed her the high-school picture. "He loved his girls."

She took a deep breath. "I miss him."

I nodded.

She waved her manicured hands in the air as if to brush away the moment then took out a lipstick and compact, touched herself up. "When is the man supposed to get here with the truck?" she asked

"Tomorrow morning. He said he'd have everything loaded and be on his way to Wilmington by ten. I've already got the odds and ends in my car."

Liz's keys jingled. She snapped her purse, hung it over her shoulder. "Okay then." She waved goodbye with her fingers. "Toodles."

"I'm right behind you." I grabbed my bag.

I followed her Mercedes out of the park and we turned south onto Route 1. A few minutes later, she pulled into the outlet stores and I continued through Dewey Beach and on to the Coastal Highway. The dunes looked the same as they had for as long as I could remember. The sun was down and the parking area by the watchtowers was almost empty. Traffic was sparse, nothing like back in town. It occurred to me that this was the hour when Daddy would have driven to the inlet for an evening fishing off the rocks.

At the Indian River I drove into the north parking lot, turned under the bridge and pulled as close as I could to the seawall. The salt air wafted through my open windows. Wide swells rolled in from the ocean and small waves splashed against the rocks. Nearly high-tide; all but the top-most boulders on both jetties were submerged. A lone fisherman cast from the far end of the northern side.

I leaned against the headrest and stared at the fisherman. My eyes became blurry and a soft knot formed in my throat. I remembered Daddy's comment on one of our last weekend visits. "It isn't for the fish, honey," he said, as he threw his arm around my shoulder and hugged me. "That's not why we come here every day. Fish are just icing on the cake." He winked and walked out onto the rocks alone. "We come for this," he said, turning back to face me, extending his arms out wide. He was in his world, and so was I.

I got out of the car and took the shoebox from the back seat. I walked down the sidewalk, along the iron railing and stepped onto the first set of boulders. The sea was a deep olive green, the air thick and fresh. Lights from a ship, far out on the water, twinkled in the twilight.

I carefully crossed to the next boulder. At the peak of the swells water was only inches from the top. I set the box on the dry surface, thankful Liz had decided to go home.

I knelt down and took off the lid. "You were right, Daddy." I whispered. "They would never understand." I shook my father's ashes into the water.

They drifted for a few seconds and then were washed away by a wave that rolled along the edge of the jetty.

Russell Reece has had stories and essays published in *Memoir(and)*, *Crimespree Magazine*, *Delaware Beach Life*, *Delmarva Quarterly*, *Raving Dove*, *Sliver of Stone*, *EarthSpeak* and other on-line and print journals. Russ is a University of Delaware alumnus and a board member of the Delaware Literary Connection. He lives in Bethel, Delaware along the beautiful Broad Creek in rural Sussex County and is currently working on a novel set in that area in the 1930's.



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Stephen Page

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On the Culture of *Máte*

Right after Teresa and I
eat the tomatoes and eggs she fried
for breakfast,

we sit on our patio
and sip *máte*
while it rains.

I wear an elbow-worn sweater, and she
a frazzled nightgown. We sip our *máte*
and watch our yardgrass drink.

After the drought
this all-morning rain
refreshes us all.

The saplings Teresa planted
on the day of we moved-in together
enclose our yard in a haven of green

tinged yellow by the drought
and sun, which now, through the clouds
is reflective as last night's moonring.

Dominic, our dog,
our tri-color collie,
naps inside on the livingroom rug.

Teresa is wrinkled
more than my memory of her,
and the hairs on my hands are whiter than blonde.

We pass the mate back and forth,

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discuss the morning paper, banter,
talk about our plans for tomorrow.

The Muse in Different Forms

I see you walking through the wood
Though your image is ephemeral:
Yellow eyes and blood-blond hair,
Linen robe and leather sandals dissolve
As I enter the treeline then solve as suns.

One day as my wife and I drove through
The *Santa Ana* gates, we saw a man
Wearing a tattered coat shimmering
Upon the road, and as we approached him
His unshaven face and he disappeared.

Why does this Black Dog always
Follow me when I go on my strolls,
My wood walks, my myth finding;
Why does he shadow away the finches
That silhouette their evergreen theater?

Once I sat in my *matera* in the heat
Of January while a luteous *chimango*
Wormed the grass outside my window;
And once I freed two caged owls
That flew up into a moonless sky.

Stephen Page holds an MFA from Bennington College and a BA from Columbia University. He is the author of a book of poems, *The Timbre of Sand*, and a chapbook, *Still Dandelions*. He likes traveling and spending time with his wife.



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Stevie Edwards

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What I Can Say I've Left, What I've Mourned

A full-sized mattress too soft for comfort, springs sagging in the center. The empty bottles of sleeping pills and Vicodin. I wished like hell that bed would swallow my stinging bones.

The bed-bones of a man molded around a body too soft in the center. A closet of sagging church clothes. A belly that bottled the sting of weeks without bread. A bleating prayer.

The empty of a bedroom with no closet or bed. The hell of black mold swallowing floorboards. I held a man's wish in my belly for weeks until it bled, until it emptied.

A death wish I bred in my belly. The bread of a church. I ached for years with that body, that blood, pleaded for Vicodin and a comforter that's never held a ghost.

I Go Back to a House Party in 1979

—After Sharon Olds

I see her, my mother:
thin face, doll body, cocktail dress (something pretty, soft lace and cotton, never polyester).
Her seamstress hands must have felt their way through an entire city of sale racks to find anything suitable to drape her skin in. A 4-inch pair of red dancing heels

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I'd like to borrow. She's wobbling

over a thimble of tequila. Her big eyes flirting

with everything they glimpse. She tells a friend, a man

who will never get a name in this story, she thinks my father,

the waiter who rents this beer can castle

and could sell anyone their own smile for dinner,

is cute. I want to tell the friend

to stop, not to push her over the couch, an ugly brown

that doesn't show the cigarette burns. Legs in the air,

she looks up at my father for the first time and smiles

with her whole body like when she dots Chanel No. 5 on her wrist

and presses it to her nose. I want to tell her

in ten years he'll say all his worst nights started with tequila:

two flipped cars, a drunk tank, punched out kitchen walls.

I want to tell her newborns are ugly, even

your own. Bit nipples of barely-A breasts. Blood

and more bleeding, and he won't know how to change

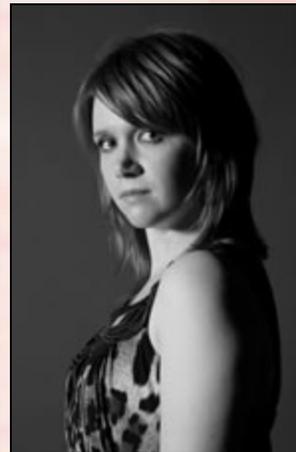
a baby or come home at night. I want to

tell her a sharp subway turn threw a child into my lap today.

The darling looked up and said, *Mommy?*

I knew he was wrong.

Stevie Edwards currently resides in Ithaca, New York, where she is working toward completing an MFA in creative writing at Cornell University. Her first full-length collection of poetry, *Good Grief*, is forthcoming from Write Bloody Publishing in April 2012. She is the editor-in-chief of MUZZLE Magazine, editor of 4th & Verse Books, assistant editor of EPOCH, and a proud alumna of Chicago's Real Talk Avenue. Her work has appeared in several literary journals, including Rattle, Thieves Jargon, Union Station, Night Train, PANK, Word Riot, and decomp.



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