

HIRAM POETRY REVIEW

Issue #77

Spring 2016



THE HIRAM POETRY REVIEW

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Issue No. 77

Spring 2016

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CONTENTS

Editor's Note	7
Burt Beckmann Willoughby, Ohio	8
John Blair The Faith of Your Father	9
Noah Davis The Lottery	10
Todd Davis Hard Winter	11
Brandi George McDonaldland	13
Ken Haas UFode	14
Lockie Hunter Curious	15
Jackleen H. Hookway Murmur	17
Alan Katz The Hungry Cats	19
John E. Keough Wolves	21

Richard Krohn	23
Opening Night	
Maria LeBeau	24
If I Leave My Mind Before My Body	
Arthur D. Mathews Jr.	25
Flower Love	
Daniel Morris	26
mine cambium	
Gale Newby	29
Memorial	
Kristine Ong Muslim	30
The Burn Unit	
Suzanne O'Connell	31
Two Toads	
Scott Ruescher	32
Oil On Velvet	
T.J. Sandella	34
Let's Go	
Cameron Terhune	35
Against You	
John Sibley Williams	36
Rules of Common Landscape	
REVIEWS	
Willard P. Greenwood II	37
Adult Swim by Heather Hartley\	
Bunch of Animals by Henry Hughes	
Jamey Hecht	41
Hit Play by Daniel Morris	
Charles Parsons	43
A Review of Blue Yodel by Ansel Elkins	
Contributors Notes	47

EDITOR'S NOTE

2016 marks the 50th year of the *Hiram Poetry Review*, which is quite an accomplishment in a difficult and crowded field. Hale Chatfield, the founding editor, began the *HPR* as a cooperative venture with the Black Arts movement in Cleveland in 1966. Originally, we were a biannual publication that often featured supplemental publications. We began in print, went to CD-ROM briefly, and then back into print with a modest website, which has all back issues archived making it an historically significant website in terms of demonstrating the life and evolution of a small magazine. The *HPR* would like to publically and eternally recognize Linda McConnell, who scanned and archived over 60 issues for the website. Our website and the Hiram Library contain two complete runs of our noble journal.

At present, the *HPR* operates in a quasi-hybrid format. We accept e-mail submissions but only from international writers. All other submissions must be in hard copy. While this might seem archaic, venerable journals such as *The Sewanee Review* and *The Paris Review* still maintain a hard copy submission format. I am also proud to say that we do not have any plans to charge reading fees. Despite some changes, the *HPR* remains essentially unchanged in terms of format and mission. We still favor unique images in black and white for our cover, and we seek to discover America's undiscovered poets.

Having been editor since 2001, which is when I started working at Hiram College, I have learned a lot about its history from Carol Donley, Dave Fratus and David Anderson. I am still standing on the shoulders of giants, and the view is promising...

With the help of dedicated and talented students from all majors at Hiram College, the journal has found its niche at Hiram and flourished in the brave new world of poetry. In particular, our English majors and Creative Writing majors, with their sophisticated sense of aesthetic judgement consistently produce remarkable issues each year. I am in their debt for their past, present and future work.

Willard Greenwood
Editor, HPR

Burt Beckmann

Willoughby, Ohio

Hot months hang on the horizon drying.
Old moons in a wastebasket lie like eggs,
Their yolks sucked.

The fence (split phone poles) oozes tar by ten.
By noon the birds are stuck.
Mom keeps the cats in the kitchens for the sake
Of the wrens.

The moving is finished by one.
In the red shed with the rototiller
Are our garden shears. Peanut butter
Is what I like for lunch.

Every day at two the birds get clipped.
You can tell our fence by the legs on it.

John Blair

The Faith of Your Father

Is no small thing, is hewn thunder and the hot *frisson* of for-god-damned-ever. You sit together in the clear dim noon-time intoxication of an ANBC Liquor Lounge in Kissimmee, central-cypress-swamp Florida, orange-pulp rum and dust glowing deep amber like lacquer in your lungs and gut. Then the shock-and-awe when the door opens, sun-core bright, and sighs shut again in stunned relief from the racking naked-judgment glare of god's one good eye that just wants to burn the rank mother fucker down and you hot-damned well with it in righteous ultra-violet *benison*. You move but the bones inside you don't. They soak up inertia like lead from bad tap water. Hell is what gets revealed, what you this scalded noon, digging through salted peanuts like a haruspex sorting kidneys wet in a bowl, find wroth with a thousand drunken sighs and exhalations, small planets of air and fire worried like beads dropped, one for each prayer, withdrawn bad-tooth from what you owe no one except you. You pass them along like an oblation or a curse to your father who sits cool beside you in the dim fire of his discontent and says exactly nothing about his own father, now dead and gone five swift years, whose cheap broken heart he hands you in *memoriam* now, in the form of a thirty-year old dime-store Timex, ticking unstoppable as a confession of everything you've ever failed or left forgotten behind. You hear the door again open, the quick suck of air drawn lung-sigh in before a word's said or a note's sung or flame flashes up into the vacuum of its own conception, eager silk ripped through a pyre of incoherent offerings in the cauterized light of a coming in or a going out. You turn your face to it, an incandescent pulse that burns you ashy clean like the bleached and empty page of light you always thought you'd be, and then close forever against it your purblind eyes.

Noah Davis

The Lottery

The trailer sits on cinder blocks by the river. An air conditioning unit coughs in the bedroom where a little girl naps and dreams of blackberries. The blue truck outside is brown with rust, and where water flows from a pipe at the paper mill, fish swim sideways, tumors on their bellies and zinc coating their gills. The man sitting in the pick-up eats the silver fish from the river, and the dollar bill in his pocket listens to the ball growing in his stomach, white and ridged against red insides. After driving the gravel road to the convenience store, he asks the woman behind the register for a pack of Pall Malls, then turns and pushes the dollar into the lottery machine. Once inside the electric box, it falls next to the other bills: fives, tens, even twenties, crinkled and torn. Some smell of alcohol or perfume while his is stained with the blood of a deer he shot at night in a farmer's field. He remembers the animal green eyes transfixed by the truck's high beams, the brown velvet of its body unable to move as the bolt slid the bullet into the chamber, the flash of gunpowder sparking, orange and yellow and black.

Todd Davis

Hard Winter

In January, the same day we got 20 inches of new snow, Charlie's son Jake died, only 56 but with failing kidneys and a bad liver that had been marinating in booze most of his life. Charlie ended up at the hospital, too, 77 and a heart flickering like lights in a storm. His wife baked snicker doodles for the nurses, worked crossword puzzles and drank coffee with Splenda, while he rested between tests. Before Charlie was released, Family Services took the Miller kids away from their uncle who'd cared for them since their folks died in the accident on Kettle road. One of the divers who found the bodies still buckled in their seats keeps dreaming he's sliding down the mountain, going over the rail and through the ice to the bottom of the reservoir. The uncle beat the boy, touched the girl where he shouldn't. His hearing's in three weeks, and the weather feels like a restraining order. Our cousin Jimmy had four fingers go missing: third-shift drowsiness and a machine as mean as any guard dog, refusing to let go of his left hand until the screams told someone to shut down the line. We got our two deer during rifle season, but turkey will be slow on account of this late March snow and the fact that Jimmy, the best caller in the family, doesn't feel like slogging into the woods anymore. Sitting on a stool at the tavern, Mike, who works for Family Services, told everybody that the Miller boy should've stuck up for his sister because he knew how to use a shotgun. The game commission reports it was cold enough to kill deer ticks, ash borer, and wooly adelgid. My wife thinks we're under attack, the planet spinning back to a time when humans weren't necessary. Her mother suffers from Lyme's disease; the ash tree in our front yard is mostly dead; and the grove of hemlock near the pond is a skeleton deer avoid. Charlie will pull through—his father lived to be 98, his mother 92—and the snow will melt, trout fishing good a little later because the river will stay colder. Most things will recover. Jimmy will learn to use a mouth call instead of a turkey box. Trees will scar over where limbs broke off in an ice storm in February. The rail guard's already been replaced, and the bruises that covered the boy's body have disappeared like ink stains.

I worry about the girl, though, what was done to her
and the way people talk, a mix of sympathy and gossip, salt
and cinders thrown out by plow trucks, grass not growing
near the road, some of it torn up and needing to be reseeded.

Brandi George

McDonaldland

Ken Haas

UFode

Blow off that tee time
and head to the Ninth Annual UFO Expo
at the San Jose DoubleTree,
featuring a keynote by the ex-Governor of Utah
who knows what he saw.

Conference veterans, munching hot dogs and sushi
as if shape-shifting were simply bourgeois,
will swear your parents are imposters,
and most of history is not our fault.

You can take in talks about panspermia,
or secret government mining operations on the moon;
a workshop on surgery to remove alien implants
by the professor who wrote the *Star Trek Cookbook*,
and another on Pleiadian procedures
for healing the force field between the sexes
to which it's suggested you bring a large towel;
or a video about the odyssey of one Fred Reagan—
his Cessna was winged by beings
resembling metallic asparagus who,
as redress, shrunk his prostate.

So it all sounds encouraging.
Anyway, your buddies have filled out
the usual foursome with a refreshing stranger
who finds a lost Titleist in the thirteenth fairway,
looks around to make sure no one's watching,
then gives the dimpled orb a moonstruck whack
toward a distant hotel rooftop where
with the zoom on your cell phone camera
you snap it spinning oblong
just above the trees.

Lockie Hunter

Curious

I need to know what you taste like

I once sampled a fire breather
Her smoky tattoos dancing under my tongue
She was warm and weird
Powerful with a smoky aftertaste

I once sampled a trapeze artist
Flexible seams under salty dark skin
She was warm and weird
Liquid, high in antioxidants
Like something potent had been poured into my mouth

I once sampled a farmgirl
She was honey and lavender
I'd lick the sunshine from her dark nipples and
When I entered her
her sweat was black soil.

I once sampled a violinist
Her thighs cayenne and cinnamon
She pushed her talented fingers under my dress
Making me cum in symphony halls and limos
I made her cum in back alleys and taxis
She was well seasoned, melty.

I was hoping you would taste warm and weird
a mountain woman
Of wild highland mushrooms, complex and ruffled
Of dewberry, brambleberry, ramble
Of Maypop, a passion flower
At the very least of muscadine grapes, purple fleshed and juicy

Tonight we sit in my tub
And drink red wine out of the bottle
You soap my left breast
Even a small bite can leave a firm rosy mark

I suggest muddy things, peculiar things
You shrink
Perhaps craving something cold and normal

the welt of vanilla in your nature.

You taste like an accountant, of saltine crackers, sterile
Like a strip mall
Cold and normal

And I am no longer curious

Jackleen H. Hookway

Murmur

It was a nightmare even if you have a strong heart—neighbor who witnessed a mother setting her newborn on fire

I didn't want my baby either.
At first, before it was her, and before
she was the size of a grape, after the fight
over something I don't remember anymore, only
that it felt like the end of everything, and if I
could have only gone back, undone it all, I would have, then.
Last week, a mother set fire to her just-born daughter
in the middle of a road. *Have you thought about harming
yourself or your baby?* my doctor asked
when I told her about the sadness. I said no,
but that was only half-true. In the weeks after,
I thought constantly about how I would do it:
nurse her one last time, lay her in her crib, drive
to the bridge, put out my pain like a match
in the black water. But no, I didn't tell her that, didn't tell
anybody. The young woman doused her child
with lighter fluid, stepped back as she threw
the flame. A neighbor saw the whole thing. No,
I don't have a strong heart. Last night it woke me again, racing
from something I must have seen in my dream.
And my daughter was born with a tiny hole in hers—
faulty hearts run in our family—and although the opening
in mine has never closed, the cardiologist says
hers probably will in a month or so,
hands me a stethoscope, says *listen*. The murmur
is loud, which means the hole is shrinking, but all I hear is gale-force
wind, tornados and destruction. Once, in the middle of the night
when she wouldn't stop wailing, out of exasperation,
I wailed back *What do you want from me?*
And then, realizing the idiocy of the question, I began
to laugh almost as loud as she cried, this red-faced
infant, arms and legs churning, who stopped to look
at me then with wide eyes, who went quiet
for a long moment, and by the time the crying
resumed, I felt it rush in, that love
all the mothers said I would catch. And when I caught,
it was like a blue flame in a gas grill igniting
that last stubborn piece of coal. I don't pray much,

but I did pray for that mother and the baby she returned
so quickly to ashes. In my half-sleep, Emmy's bassinette
but I did pray for that mother and the baby she returned
so quickly to ashes. In my half-sleep, Emmy's bassinette
beside our bed, I listen for her breathing,
the little sighs and grunts from that place she goes
when she settles. Just over a year ago, we didn't know
she was already with us as we ate our Thanksgiving
dinner, clinked wineglasses to a freedom-saturated future.
But now she talks in our sleep every night,
her almost-words threading their way into patchwork dreams
along with the squeals and gurgles, and that murmur,
the little roar only a stethoscope can pick up. It's always there,
a background track playing so softly I don't know
whether it's mine or hers. There was a vigil.
Hundreds of people marched down that scorched street
in silence. A light wind fluttered winter-bare
branches, and every cupped hand sheltered
a tiny flame.

Alan Katz

The Hungry Cats

When you strip off your cashmere sweater
and your black-faced silver watch,
you can see the cloudless skies again,

a summer swimming pool surrounded by grass,
the black gate you jump over when
you've lost the key; you are

the one who wouldn't wear a Speedo,
pushing a lawn mower, erection arousing
calf muscles poking out for the first time,

black high-tops from Big 5
Sporting Goods, and only my flattop
holding me down. Bounce, bounce,

bounce. I can't even recall who I was before I
looked in the mirror to remember
what it felt like to have nothing to do. I remember

driving with my head stuck out of the sunroof
hands on a wheel set to cruise
the stereo blasting: *an albino, a mosquito,*

my libido. I remember a girl named Pricilla
who got me drunk on boxed wine
in the park before I staggered home

and forgot the rest. She doesn't remember me,
and I suppose if what I wanted to happen happened
I wouldn't have forgotten. That's why it's hard to remember

some things never change, green olives in martinis,
ketchup with French fries, the grin of a child greeting morning.
You've got big problems, my friend, no doubt

about that. Especially that jumpforwardness, never
content, always wishing you were someplace else, or that
your someplace was just a few degrees cooler.

When you're looking for something, and your tooth is just
a little too much in control, you're only going to feed on
definitions. Five-dollar croissants don't melt into fortunes,

my friend. I love'em though, the momentary feeling
of joy my girl has seen me taste on a summer day
with sweat dripping down my neck pooling up

on a little perch of belly. I love the feeling of
a naked thigh traced up to its start. There is nothing
like fingers touching desire. Her desire can't be found,

and if it could it couldn't fill in for mine.
And that's why I'm never at home.

I'm wanting. I'm wanting, and I'm starved.

* A nod to Terrance Hayes' "The Blue Terrace"

John E. Keough

Wolves

Shattered evening off-howls
Linking casually righteous angry
Talking, standard soapbox
Techniques of often-old timers,
Cancellations determine seating,
Sit by the back, we'll bring
You up. This waitress is bored,
Gum twirling popping annoying,
Sheesh! The wolves are at the
Threshold looking for you.
Buying times, block one-
Block two/parting with
Rookie cards, yup that's the
Weight her, her things
Burn easily enough, and
Her brother hoped I was gay.
So do fellow-prisoners, loping
Along, falling out/in/out/in, again
Let commence the fireworks,
Deny, deny, dent, casually.
Rights? Boy, you get no rights,
This here is real authority,
Mark down the regulations by
Which a star has been placed,
Burning black-hot in the skies
Of other planets in other systems,
Who is to say that God cannot stride
On the green grasses or
Sands or temple steps,
This allows me to be un-literal
For a moment. Past-event,
Currently happening event, event
With future consequences/results.
Only in one place in recorded
Time, and who looks for the logs
Of unrecorded time? Dirty-
Fingernailed beauties, father-less,
Husband-less, exuding thoughts
(frightening to pencil-boys) and
They allow no one to hold the door.
The wolves circle relentlessly, cutting

In for the tendons behind the knees,
Knees, my knees, your knees,
These jeans have held me in
Mostly for long, long years,
Mostly for long, long years,
I am not wholly consumed by
These mistakes. Once, often,
I murdered the wolves, skinned
Them, used all results to
Tinker with the polls, the
Aromas attracted the refugees
Of the lost-land and I'm sorry.
These are new-timers talking
About the future, above threshold
Mahogany stained amber/reddish
Out/in/out/in is over, is blackened
By soot, accept please these
Humble pleas, for the resurrection
Of but bitterless hope. A star
Having fallen even once, has burned
All of its inert gaseous materials,
Meaning the cancellations WERE
NEVER WRITTEN DOWN!

Literally never written down.

Richard Krohn

Opening Night

Wasn't it magnificent,
you, the beloved star,
hoisted from your floor,
ambulance like a limousine
belting out an unabashed duet?

Weren't you simply amazed
the way the red world parted
for your ticker-tape fame,
marquee looming as they hailed
your name through double doors?

And wasn't it some comfort,
how they primped and fussed
before ushering you out,
the house dimming silent,
you alone on the floodlit stage?

Maria LeBeau

If I Leave My Mind Before My Body

Pretend my unconnected words are avant-garde dialogue from a West Village play, the patois of someone else's youth. Remind our sons how I washed their oatmeal out of my hair and took them wristlet shopping at prom time.

Didn't it ever occur to us to cover our bodies with your photographs? The African deserts, the brownstones, the births, then throw off the quilt and dance. If you miss me, watch commercials I wrote in the '90s, place my viola under my chin so I might finger the wood.

When I list old boyfriends or stare into space, rub your hands together like I taught you. Press them to the crown of my head. Let my eyes close and wash the energy through my cells. Allow me to chuck whatever I please into the fire.

Do not entertain the thought of a Western physician. Take me to the U'wa, so that they might needle the pain right out of me. Consider a witch doctor from the Bayou who will lay me on a bed of honeysuckle and pour tonic deep into my throat.

In Coney Island, don't forget to pay the carney to stop the Ferris wheel when we reach the hand-holding-moon-soaked top. Let me walk the streets of the Docklands and slip into Cockney for a moment. So be it, if I want to bleach my hair at a London barber like at 19.

Tell me this red velvet cake is dinner and describe the perfect wedding under a tent in New Hampshire. Laugh when I whisper the maintenance man is my secret lover. Ask if you may cut in as we dance.

Arthur D. Mathews

Flower Love

You are the flower I do so see
The one flower which
Continuously grows on me
I water you daily
Because, truly speaking you are
Just that special to me
And you still have growth in you
As I do too
Flower as it be
Belonging solely to only me
And me alone
So when I call you up on the phone
Be my flower for hours
Without end...
I need my flower my friend
My flower does it for me
Time and again
Flower, flower by the hours
You, stay as you, always are
My Flower

Just my kind of flower
Hours passing by hour
I find myself needing my
Precious flower.

Daniel Morris

mine cambium

4 bellies feeling unfathomably full
hearts beating upon Joy's worn (from her perspective
underappreciated) in law Persian loom in what we still
call THE tv den (six sets sit in other rooms)
near-sighted strain to make out second half of our uncanny
story set transpiring as if on semi-fast forward
Parks and Recreation season 3 discovering Rob Lowe's
pink razor and pink shower cap in hideaway
Indy apartment: (spoiler alert: honoring
Breast Cancer Awareness Month; not affair)
(though Hannah, daughter, 11, separately spied *P&R* while bros
performed pep band at West Side home b-ball game versus McCutch-
eon I supported Ethel's Documentaria, to her credit Hannah didn't
divulge secrets not to her dad anyway; unlike me she keeps
confidences) staring not at flat screen hanging beautifully ugly black
tentacle cords revealed like slow but moving Bill Viola installation off
once white wall beside portrait
Joy's great great East Hartford Helen Wills Moodyish grass court flapper
auntie
what recently turned into two centuries ago from whom we also scored
fruitful if fashionably shabby rug, but on Toshiba we couldn't get Net-
flix, even granted 30-day free trial, to function on wide screen wifi just
plain blocked technical genius firstborn Isaac, son, 15 now already he is
that old, can't figure,
such a bummer I'd "made" a mess of Ore-Ida X-tra crispy frozen crinkle
cuts anticipating crispness that is how they're advertised isn't it and
more to the point what Hannah expects of me, which is why I bought
family sized value fun bag although microwavable deciding to go long
term with conventional oven because am I not still here for their con-
tentment and is not my pleasure their acceptance even if what I buy my
kids may not be healthiest (nor going to kill them regardless of what Joy
says these fake fries relatively low in saturated fat lacking
trans which is what really clogs arteries as I a mere layman interpret
current research) but even left baking for like 45 minutes at 375 even if
package recommends 30 at 325 long after tombstone double cheese pie
had gone carbon
but still potentially edible I claim to save the day with magic bit of knife
edge scraping still frozen fries by contrast a different story remain invul-
nerable soggy perogi-esque
who'd want translucent larvae looking things on their paper plate
who would ever want them

except me (no surprise)
I always want everything unworried
what Dylan's "Nothing was Delivered" named nothing better nothing
best
for expansive belly contracting arteries of later medias res
oddly fulfilled stuffing anything near my big mouth towards cambium
frame
but never quite full I am sorry I do worry
so stuff x-tra large fry handful on paper plate w
artsy Philip Guston wedding cake frosting squiggle locally sourced Red
Gold
ketchup and I think these work for me
they really do
not in and of the themselves of course
but as fine purveyors of Sweetums style corn syrupy vinegary cold salt
oceanic tang
like life in brief and our afterlife staining paper
plate like moist Helen Frankenthaler halo fading except this is no color
field I must accept laying there on dated rug my 3 month pregnant size
belly beside
the only living
the only 3 beautiful living
3 startlingly beautiful living children of North Central Indiana already
born
(I realize this is up mood and angle and late
winter end of weekend version of Danny talk)
-- deciding not to go to my mandatory meeting--
children observing Rob Lowe pink bathroom mysteries
Pawnee (rumored to have been partially based on) our Lafayette experi-
ence I say (unsure out of fear of truth of level of eudaemonia) "it can't
get better than this, can it?" this this being delightfully inorganic to-
mato puree these these being reasonably safe corn syrup saturated kids,
and slowly one child
(I think it's Aaron's hand yes I recognize it)
tentatively unselfconsciously reaching over into communal
plate of piled akratic activity screening desire for everything always
to be just like this version of this without looking up from screen and
middle son now sampling one limp pale fry as if curious about apparent
source of over excitement off my plate with ketchup then testing
without ketchup to figure out what hedonic adaptation he was missing
until skeptical Hannah herself takes one measly fry but then
tosses it back on my plate like skimpy fish stick (none of us goes for
those) asking for ONE FRY at least
a LITTLE crisp in comparison to limp others but sadly none snapped,
but it didn't matter as much as I thought it would that I'd failed her --

she eventually -- proudly silent rewatching sitcom
she'd already seen but not divulged -- grabbed marginally
acceptable fry and then all of a sudden it all was gone
the not so hot and yet addictive fries I mean
vindication (wondering about difficulty of mystery of self-
control) proceeded to oven where I'd left leftovers
futile hopes of crisping and if not at least more warmth if
possible given feelings going around and put remains on two
plates and before we knew it formerly frozen fries however
inadequate to our original hopes vanished (the fries like children danc-
ing barefoot) until I'm down to my index finger performing living fry
dipping digit into ketchup licking off my finger until
Aaron says it is too disgusting to watch my desperation and Joy (wife)
tears
crinkled edge of sauce stained plate away angry with anxiety protesting
she had 3 children not 4 and not planning on any more

Gale Newby

Memorial

If you have been diligent,
Visited the sick,
Cussed with the boys,
Or sang in the choir.

They will pass by,
Comfort your kin,
Say a few words,
To honor your death.

Then, they will file out,
Get in their cars,
Drive to McDonald's
To toast your good-bye.

Kristine Ong Muslim

The Burn Unit

You have names for those who can no longer heal,
those whose newly grafted skin itches where sutures
once existed, those whose eyes can never close
because the eyelids have been melted off.

The disfigured, the defaced, the nine lives
in the aftermath of the fire—you check their numbers,
deliver painlessness in a bottle. They sometimes don't
remain lucid enough to tell you what they really want,

so they ask you to draw the window blinds to fend off
what they describe as encroaching light, the light
that makes visible what they keep away from sight.

Suzanne O'Connell

Two Toads

The rifles that lined his wall
didn't make me leave.
When he called me his gutter ball I didn't leave.
When he cut my bangs as I slept,
when he brought home food for himself
but not for me.
when I fell down the stairs and he laughed,
I didn't leave.

But when I saw the two toads
nailed above the front door, I left.
I ran across the pavement like almost road kill,
got in my car, turned on my music.
“Someone I Used To Know” came on
and I turned it up real loud.

I drove down that tobacco road
saying my goodbye to the wooden shacks.
I passed the water tower that said Hicksonville.
I drove past the church where he said
he would marry me.
I drove past Dora's Café and past the Grange Hall.
I drove past the Laundromat with
the machines that swallowed my coins.

I drove down that hot tar road
under the blue preaching tent of a sky.
I drove past the corn doing what corn does.
As I drove down that godforsaken road,
I rolled up the white lane strip behind me,
like rolling a white ribbon from a gift.
I didn't know where I was going,
but I figured without that strip he'd never find me.

Scott Ruescher

Oil On Velvet

I had imagined gaudy interiors, customized toilets,
A ubiquitous presence of shag-rugs and mirrors,
Gold brocade of upholstery, sumptuous velour drapery,
A kitsch charm of purple leather sofas and glass coffee tables,
Spreads of fried banana and peanut butter sandwiches,
Oreo cookies, and shots of rum or snorts of coke for guests
When I went by express bus from downtown Memphis
To Elvis's Graceland, which would unfortunately happen
To be closed on that particular Monday, as on all the rest—

Then the jungle room in the basement notorious for a rug
Of lime-green shag that carpeted even the ceiling,
For its pseudo-Polynesian Witco chairs and couches,
And for the fully stocked *tiki* bar where he and the band
Would rest between takes in their recording sessions—

That, and the bedroom where Elvis hosted his groupies, asking
That they not undress completely, but remain in lingerie
They'd bought for the occasion in downtown Memphis
For the titillating duration, sometimes two or three at a time,
The better for him, an artist after all, to put to use
His imagination on the beauty of those bodies
He'd chosen from the line of star-struck girls at the gate—

Plus the shameless collection of awards and trophies
From pop music guilds and entertainment agencies
And the pictures of him posing with politicians and movie stars,
Sports heroes, media moguls, and other famous musicians,
With Loretta Lynn, Ray Charles, Sammy Davis, and Johnny Cash
In Nashville, New York, Atlantic City, and Vegas,
In a den I imagined to be decked out in a mixture
Of back-woods hunting shack and downtown corporate office,
Rough-hewn hickory table and mahogany desk,
Mounted antlers of a six-point buck and red leather chair—

All of it no doubt as "tacky, garish, and tasteless"
As someone in a blog on a website has described it,
Worthy at once of collection by the Smithsonian
And of those velvet depictions of Elvis that they sell
In crafts-fair booths and vacant lots on the side of the road—

“The most God-awful crap I’ve seen in my life,” according
To my old friend Gary, who had to hold back his laughter
At the unintentional camp of it all, for fear he’d offend
The most ardent devotees at the museum when he visited
And inadvertently cause some volatile guy in chains
And black leather biker jacket that goes with his girlfriend’s,
Some back-country cross between hippie and red-neck
Here on the pilgrimage he’s been planning for 20 years,
To detect the effeminate streak in the trained tenor voice
He used to put to good effect in lounges, bars, and clubs
In soft ballads sung to his own keyboard accompaniment,
And in that layered orange hair of his, those jangly bracelets
On his not-so-limp wrist, and those rich brown eyes that twinkled
Like kaleidoscopic *mandalas* set with gold and amber sequins
Whenever we dropped acid, turned up the volume
On Hendrix or Procol Harum, and floated into the skies
On the psychedelic stuff that had taken Elvis by surprise.

T.J. Sandella

Let's Go

Andiamo, she says, because suddenly
my belt buckle resembles a Rubik's Cube,
and the faster I try to solve it, the more the colors mix.

She's already topless, speaking
in tongues, smiling sex—and I'm already fumbling
with metaphors that may or may not land in this poem.

It's right around the time I compare her breasts
to something blasphemous (some simile implying the holiness
of their proportion, their perfection—a gift from god, surely,

if there ever was one) when she reaches over
and unfastens the belt, the button, the zipper, then tugs off
my jeans and tosses them against the wall where they float momentarily

before crumpling to the floor.
Don't get the wrong idea. I take pride in my work.
Which is why, when I'm thrusting and smacking, I stall

by thinking about baseball—
those nine innings, twenty-seven outs, the emphasis
on each pitch. The time it takes to do something well.

And if all that imagery—wooden bats, balls disappearing
into mitts—gets too phallic, too yonic, there's always Sister Suzanne,
the leather faced nun from elementary school who could slow a stallion.

And if even she somehow fails to weaken my resolve, I'll dig
into the dregs of childhood trauma: six years old, up early to watch
Saturday morning cartoons—finding my parents in all their carnal,
middle-aged glory.

Andiamo, she whispers, and this time I know she means she's ready,
means for me to stop being the man thinking of everything
but this.

Cameron Terhune

Against You

The earth is not a device
made just for your personal comfort
a great big glowing ball of magma
covered in a thin layer of mud and garbage
the people there all sit in traffic jams
grumbling just like the jilted corpses
as they bake in the sun all, all day long
going home is hardly a pleasure
when each day is worse than the last one

And the kitty cat's strung out on heroin
he can't afford, the high price of catnip
cockroaches crawl over spaghetti like acrobats
spreading relief through mortal disease
the renters passed out from fumes of monoxide
eyes glazed from an overdose of commercials
as the television demands their submission
1-800-fill-that-black-black-void-in-your-soul!
The Cuisinart can show you how
to puree your angst away

but only if you call in the next six seconds
and the second one is always, always half off
fingers gone blue from poor circulation
numbly paw at Nokia in bland desperation
breathing now more like addiction than instinct
The universe refusing to pay attention
higher powers all revealed to be phony
and the eternal reward is not paradise
it's the late onset Type 2 Diabetes
put a sugar free cherry on top
and just, just say GOODNIGHT!

John Sibley Williams

Rules of Common Landscape

There are nights we burn
couches in the old highway's
center lane until one
in a stream of long-haul trucks
lifts our little holocaust skyward
and brilliant like a Catherine wheel
of scorched cloth.

There are nights the crushed
beer cans in the dried out
riverbed make for good
enough pillows.

And when we love
these nights with flesh
and fingernails deep within
deciduous shadow it is only
to foretaste grief.

The theory goes
we've been told the moon
is composed of so many
impossible things
we're left to pray to
whatever we can make
spark. Dammit, we can
make the world spark
for a night. I believe all
our little massacres
are held together
by Scotch tape
steadily and sadly
unsticking. Like us

flies are building homes
from the eyes of dead things,
and if I had it all
to do over again
I would only ask
not to be asked to apologize.

REVIEWS

Willard P. Greenwood II

Adult Swim

Heather Hartley

Carnegie Mellon Classic Contemporary Series, Carnegie
Mellon University Press, 2016

The suggestive title does not disappoint in terms of comedy and sophistication. In fact, its conceit is developed fully throughout the collection. This development of an “adults only” world is prominently evident in the first poems of each of the five sections. The collection’s opening poem, which is one of the strongest poems in the book, ends with an invitation, a kind of calling to the reader to jump in the deep end. We do. That invitational and conversational tone is cool and laid back but not indifferent. Furthermore, what we find is a rather luxurious treatment of language, which corresponds to a rich and full expatriate existence. Yet, refreshingly, there is a kind of bold American treatment of life coupled with a sophistication that is, fortunately, not world weary. Life is to be enjoyed—the poems tell us.

This mix of humor and enjoyment appears in the opening poem, “Sleepless Nights of Marine Life” when the speaker is having a conversation whose topics range from Hecate to Sea Monkeys. The poet’s ease at mixing mythology with insomnia sets expectations for pleasant surprises. Yet, there is a seriousness here in terms of voice and craft. The restlessness of the speaker in this opening poem propels us forward.

The first poem of section II, “Pool Rules,” is as good a poem as one can find these days. I say this because reading poems is, sometimes, for lack of a better term, work. I found myself re-reading and even sharing this poem. It begins with the idea of hosting a pool party. This rhetorical device while imaginative and fun comes across clearly because of Hartley’s attention to narrative detail, which is also a strength that characterizes the rest of the volume. The poem satirizes celebrity but with a light touch to show that we all would like to be famous and not internet famous but glamorous famous.

I am glossing over lots of the nuances in Hartley’s book. Specifically, the places of Pittsburgh and Rome figure prominently in her poems, and this sense of being connected to the virtues of place lets us share in the speaker’s appreciation and fondness for the real physical world in front of us.

The collection partially concludes with eight poems that take their titles from Gaspara Stampa’s sonnets. These poems are not sonnets, but they do, broadly speaking, address the sonnet’s classical subject,

love. These poems also connect to the places that are important to the poet, Pittsburgh, Rome, Naples and Charleston, West Virginia. I found the cosmopolitan outlook on the classic theme of love to be innovative and fresh.

It should be noted that this is Hartley's second book, the first, *Knock*, *Knock* was published six years ago. In this second book, we get the sense of a poet working patiently and deliberately but with a combination of inspiration and expertise. Raymond Carver said you have to be in love to write poetry. While that's not necessarily a workable formula for most poets, it works for Heather Hartley in this volume.

Bunch of Animals
Henry Hughes
Cloudbank Books, 2016

A cursory look at the career of Henry Hughes reveals a tremendous set of experiences. He is a writer, fisherman, thinker, poet, traveler, eater of raw fish and professor. He's been around. Indiana, Japan, China, Long Island and Oregon. I mention his varied background because that literal sense of physical movement marks the energy of this collection. There are also those moments when the world slows down for the speaker, like when he says that he's tired and can't get out of bed or worse. We wonder what's wrong but then, as is the case with some Japanese narratives, there is an abrupt turning away from resolution. In this collection that turning is towards animals, and quite often animals supply the tension and not the poet. While animals are certainly the main attraction here, let me draw your attention to other aspects of Hughes' newest book.

In addition to the experiential richness in Hughes' poems, we see a real sensitivity to craft. In particular, Hughes takes great care with the stanza, which means little room in Italian. Hughes takes this aspect of poetry seriously and we are entertained by his attention to detail. Hughes has a strong voice, but the strength comes from a quiet confidence in the craft of poetry, which lets the poems, stanzas, images speak for themselves. In poems like "A Little Closer," metaphor and narrative collapse into one another until we are uncertain, which one is primary and which is more important. At the end of the poem this narrative uncertainty does not bother us because we have a sense of strong feeling that, necessarily, can't be resolved.

Hughes' poetic ability draws on his own expertise as a writer and an editor. We can see this clarity on a consistent and exquisite basis throughout the collection. There is not a word out of place in these poems. As a result, there is a kind of organic quality to Hughes' narratives and metaphors. For example, in "The Last Tool You'll Need," Hughes brings the screwdriver (the drink and the tool together) in such a way that we see the tool as the luxury and the drink as the necessity. This nuanced and comedic irony distinguishes many of the poems. In "Fishing Hungover," we get one of several drinking episodes, but I would describe Hughes' representation of drinking with the classical epithet—In Vino Veritas. The truth that emerges in this poem is that fishing is a great cure for hangovers and a cure that makes the speaker not worry about being bruised and sore from who knows what? Perhaps preaching from his chair in a bar or falling asleep awkwardly after a night of love. The poem and/or this reviewer barely makes such insinuations after reading. However, this evocativeness typifies many of the poems in this collection, which of course do get their inspiration from

animals, yet animals function as a point of departure into the human world of suffering relieved by moments of quiet happiness.

What impresses and rewards in Hughes' work is his sensitivity to audience. Certainly, there is the welcoming voice of the lyric poet here, but these well-crafted poems say—Listen. What we hear in "Chorus Stegosaurus" is a cosmic sadness expressed in the form of parental generosity. The poem moves from the whims of young child to a voice of from the parental world, which says we can do whatever you want today. Of course the parents know better but don't share that with the child. These poems share a lot of with their directness, simplicity, complexity and power.

Jamey Hecht

Hit Play

Daniel Morris

Marsh Hawk Press, 2015

Daniel Morris' *Hit Play* opens with a poem called "Mr. Bennett and Mr. Duchamp: An Introduction." Tony Bennett is the first of many musicians to whom Morris turns his attention, including Donna Summer, Johnny Cash, John and Yoko, Miles Davis, and others, with several powerful poems about Chet Baker near the end of the book. Duchamp's presence, like the later mention of Captain Beefheart, tells us that what follows will be (or include, as it turns out) a certain amount of Dada, and the poem delivers it: "Their scalar planes and homesick soup would hit the wall like native playgrounds." I've never heard of a playground hitting a wall, so I'm momentarily lost. At its best, Dada can be liberating and suggestive of the mind at play; when less felicitously executed (as in, say, Flarf, which this is not) it's a rubric under which incoherence can be labeled art and placed above criticism. Morris' Dada is squarely of the first sort; what it strives to liberate us from includes a tragic paradigm of life as hubris and nemesis (Chet Baker), its suburban comic opposite (Wally Cleaver), and plenty of anxiety.

Having alluded to Amy Winehouse, Morris writes: "...in lyric / defense of other epistemes / As when Tony told Amy, 'slow down, Tyger.'" That Blakean letter "y" is deliberate, a sign of a vanished episteme held in empathic respect. Morris has done this kind of typographical sleight of hand before, in a poem about another musician, Brian Wilson: "Brian Wilson, Brian Wilsno..." [sic] where what appears to be a typo is in fact a tiny glyph encoding a world of mental illness and struggle. Thus we hear of trumpet player Chet Baker's musical "tootlessness" in one poem (horns toot, but the word is also missing an *H*), and only later learn that Baker's teeth were knocked out over a bad heroin debt. Missing *H*, indeed.

"Found: Chet Notes on *The Aeneid*" implies that its speaker is Baker, yet it's really Morris, of course, and that strategy of pseudo-quotation serves the poet well throughout this volume. Morris talks about himself by talking about others; he speaks his vexed and vexing truth by ventriloquizing celebrities, usually with words they never said. This suggests that each of us is, at least in part, a tissue of other identities woven by allusion and influence: "I sometimes think we should just remain other people." In "Are you My Mother?", for example, Morris puts us in close touch with our shared postmodern ignorance about who is who: "Mother was not *like* Chet Baker, but *was*, how now it all made / perfect psychic sense, / the years' romantic obsession with Very Late Chet... how cool to witness a nearly finished being / push stale air with lipless

chops into muted / ‘Beatrice’...”

The aesthetic of the book shifts in Part Two: This Journey, where the poems are more linear and lyrical than before. We witness a personal journey from Morris' innocent youth to a disappointed but wiser maturity, where the grandiose cultural promise of “My advisor, Allen Grossman” has disappeared. For the most part, we learn, being a professor of English is not a kind of inspired sorcery but a glorified babysitting of arrogant little cynics who get it all wrong, including your name. “As painful as it was, I'd / Need to shift my aesthetic from the romance to the real.” The real threatens the self with being merely “respectable,” average, disenchanted, and so the final prose poem in *Hit Play* is about the 1950's sit-com “Leave It To Beaver,” now re-titled “Leave it to *Verfremdungseffekt*.” That's the Brechtian business of making-strange the characters in a play so that identifying with them becomes more difficult and more interesting than in traditional drama. Time has conferred this effect on a TV show whose original purpose was to foster identification with dimensionless figures of homogenized Americana; Wally and his family were Everyman, which Morris could have risked becoming if he hadn't written this book. The poem is a defense against the implications of the TV show, by and for a poet who has moved to rural Indiana to teach literature to hayseeds. The innocence of the Beaver, like that of the poet's youth, has vanished, and what remains in the final words of *Hit Play* is its ironized image, mutely pointing back at our invisible suffering:

A lightness not of a finished TV set alone, Wally remains kneeling in that radiance well after the rest of the cast, director, and crew have long ago returned to the Levittowns of their own narrow-lawn imaginations. Going gray prematurely, Wally wonders why the set designer placed a jar in the Cleaver kitchen and why he did not consider the problem of syndication or why, 40 years later, the set itself could tell a story and laughter could weep and weeping as they laugh us off to the wrong side of the track where, as Bobbie Ann Mason has said of The King: ‘the destruction of innocence is an unbearable sight’.

Through all the environing Midwestern bathos, the diminishing returns of literary postmodernism, and the worlds of personal loss he and his literary subjects know too well, Daniel Morris lands on his feet. He does it with a poetic strategy that seems to leak the secret of his survival: turn on the irony until the pain turns it off, and the fragmentary meaning of life will light up amid the necessary chaos.

Charles Parsons

Blue Yodel

Ansel Elkins

Yale Series of Younger Poets, Yale University Press, 2015

The yodel, that fluctuated form of singing, draws attention to itself, breaks through the monotony, and requires a passionate, if though sometimes play-bashful, performer. A good yodel sets a listener on his or her heals. The sort of singing that Ansel Elkins summons in her first book, *Blue Yodel*, resonates with the poetic feeling of the early twentieth-century delta blues. It is likewise acoustic and mysteriously moving. Originating somewhere far down the dirt-track road, the book is crammed with speakers, characters, and settings shrouded, if not in misery, in variations on despondency and distress. Circumstances have provoked these speakers to daring defiance, poetical and otherwise.

Just as the blues are played across the twelve bar scale, so are these poems, upon keys of significance and desire. The author's voice flourishes in tones that readers of poetry are keen to hear. The book most likely will strike a chord with readers who relish the mythical world as well as all things strange and surreal. Here in these pages are girls born with antlers or double-heads, frightening asylums, Earth and Paradise, the Old Testament God playing in time to the strumming of the vivid, participatory Devil. These characters "share the same spine" in a country where the sun has vanished. They are from an almost carnival atmosphere where:

Lettered men haven't printed the word
for this braided pleasure
two women corseted together
whet the spectator's appetite

By way of shouting, crying, or coldly reporting, *Blue Yodel* gives the sad spectacle its voice; these are settings and situations to which the greater part of the so-called educated approach unversed.

Since these poems contain the curiosities of a world inaccessible to many and the emotional tenor of a musical performance, it should be no surprise that many have been captivated by Elkins's verse. As a whole, the book won the famed and fabled Yale Younger Poets prize for 2014, but before that, the publishing credits for these poems range across many of the major venues. Though readers may lack a direct point of reference to the lives of the speakers and characters in the book, the sounds of the songs feel familiar and pleasing. It is a collection mindful of the way in which violence bears with it something fundamental and sacred, just as the "blue yodel" in the first poem of the work could belong to one of Flannery O'Connor's peacocks.

But these poems don't stand out merely as a debt to literature

or folklore. The greater part of the writing appears instinctual. These pages convey the reader not on a casual stroll down the old dirt lane, but rather upon the beat of the proverbial *wild side* as in “The Call of the Wild”:

I tried to be good, I tried to be civilized;
but the body's unbridled
appetite
lured me like a hunter into the animal night.

It appears that these poems have not merely been crafted: they have been hunted down. The reader bears witness to these acts, such as the one in “Aiming a Shotgun at the Sky.” Here is a speaker who speaks to us as she speaks to nature: “Blackbird, I said, I will sing to you / so you won’t feel so alone.” Singing is often a soothing mechanism and almost appears to be so here until you realize the melody is accompanied by death. These are words that do away with our old understanding and provide vitality for rebirth, offering a new life beside backwater companions.

The most significant poem in the collection appears to be “Reverse: A Lynching,” which was first published in *The Boston Review* as a winner of the 2011 “Discovery” Poetry Contest. It begins:

Return the tree, the moon, the naked man
Hanging from the indifferent branch
Return blood to his brain, breath to his heart
Reunite the neck with the bridge of his body
Untie the knot, undo the noose

These words are vivid and aggressive, poignant and important. The poem best captures, in the author’s words, “the blue flame within the body” of the book as a whole. As has been illustrated time and time again, the inhumanity of the old south is not so old. The poem is a lesson on the difficulties of reconstruction; these actions are too inhuman to be academically or politically rectified, and too harrowing to be dismissed or ignored.

If poetry is a way to understand each other, who we are in time and space, an anthropologist with a discerning ear might be drawn to *Blue Yodel* to discover the way men and women interact in this eerie, often monstrous land. The book acts somewhat like a map, providing signposts to places (highways, rivers, farms) as well as a guide to the manners and customs of locals, as in the poem “War Mask”:

Men

hunt in straight lines, arrow-like
women set neat, deceitful lines laced by hook and eye
It's a foxhunt in full cry,
a pack of hounds with galloping horses
and their scarlet-coated riders in pursuit.
Courtship is a blood sport.

If courtship, that time-honored performance, is a blood sport, the women know the playbook better than the men. They are particularly cognizant of the codes of conduct in the life in which they are immured. It appears to be knowledge hard-earned for they are depicted as vulnerable even though they are wise to married men, the devil, the preacher, and the term “monogamy.” For them, sex, it seems, cannot be permitted as mere entertainment, and womanhood is a spirited designation not to be secured under any terms. Such prohibitions and worries might weary these figures and turn them cynical, yet they continue to sing sweetly for mama and to see Eve’s act as a leap toward freedom.

Sadness and fear are reoccurring themes in the book, refrains that while beautiful and lingering, seem to elude concrete explanation. At its best, the poems are searing and ardent. At worst, moments border on caricature, as an homage to the wretched. The greater significance of wolves, hunts, and animals in distress is incomplete. The book is always dealing in extremes. The weather, for instance, seems always to be so hot or so cold. Pronouncements and conditions are consistently elevated to a fever pitch, keeping the speaker and reader awake and in fear at two a.m. as in the fittingly titled poem, “Hour of the Wolf.” Often, characters are preoccupied with horses that are starving or otherwise suffering. These are colts with murderous eyes and beasts of burden named Violence. These function excellently to capture the sense of fable and hyperbolic horror, so perhaps they prove their purpose in setting the mood and that is purpose enough.

Over the course of this collection, Elkins verifies that while, to a great degree, we control what we watch for entertainment or distraction, that while we have a choice concerning the stories we read and the stories we tell, it is much more difficult to control what we dream and by what we are haunted. In the poem, “Devil’s Rope,” the speaker does “battle” with the Devil. As author, Elkins appears less involved in a personal spiritual war as she is in a complicated supernatural connection or visitation by the chimeric genre that is Southern literature. This produces a phantom of influence that informs the text, present in the shadows, greatly off-stage. Appropriately, Elkins writes:

What is *ghost*
But the echo of a man
As he roams his native hills and roads and home?

He wears the mist
In his hair,
His voice: the hounds of wind.

This veil
Between the living and the dead
Is smoke-thin . . .

It is to be expected that any writer dealing with this material ought to find inspiration and stimulation from writers whose work has had a similar cadence.

Likewise, readers of Southern literature know and expect certain embellishments. Nevertheless, *Blue Yodel* glimmers in the champagne candlelight of the gothic.

There are several nods to southerners of significance, including the singers of old ballads. Interestingly enough, reporting on the book for *The Boston Review* in 2015, Olivia Schwob connects the title of the work to the thirteen-song cycle of Jimmie Rodgers, a country music pioneer. Elkins also gives recognition to the complex and complimentary visions of southern life in the work of Tennessee Williams and Grace Paley. And who sang the blues more acutely than Hart Crane, a “singing voice blown out to sea” off the coast of Florida? Elkins alludes to him by referring to Chaplinesque: Chaplin himself a performer whose range is unparalleled.

In the poem “Tornado,” the speaker looks out the window and sees “a pink bicycle lodged in an oak tree / bright spoke beads in the shape of stars / on a wheel still spinning.” Fortunately, contemporary poetry has been hit by the spinning talent of Elkins. The tension of the world she depicts remains near the surface, if not wholly present, and so the “Mississippi Pastoral” of 1955, the cotton blooms, the feral laughs of goat men, the heat-dazed sheriffs, and the river, with its power to make free from sin and to end life, remain. Blue is still *blue*, and Elkins seems most apt to yodel. She has found these stories, delivered these words, carried them from “solitude’s blue woods,” and she is deserving of all the attention she gets.

CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTES

Burt Beckmann writes poetry, plays electric bass and is currently involved with a desultory rock formation called Los Huevos. In 1985, after receiving a Master's degree ibn literature from Arizona State University, he took up residence in Spain. By birth, he is an Ohioan, from Wil-loughby. He does not have a computer and has never held a steady job.

John Blair have published five books, including two poetry collections, *the Occasions of Paradise* (U. Tampa Press, 2012) and *The Green Girls*, (Pleiades Press, 2003). He also has published poems with various magazines, including *Poetry*, *The Sewanee Review*, *The Georgia Review*, and *New Letters*. \

Noah Davis has poems published in *Poet Lore*, *Natural Bridge*, *Chiron Review*, and *Blue Line*. He is studying English at Seton Hill University in Greensburg, PA where he plays on the men's basketball team. When not confined to his dorm room, he spends his time on the mountains and the streams of his central Pennsylvania home.

Todd Davis is the author of five full-length collections of poetry—*Winterkill*, *In the Kingdom of the Ditch*, *The Least of These*, *Some Heaven*, and *Ripe*—as well as of a limited edition chapbook, *Household of Water, Moon, and Snow: The Thoreau Poems*. He edited the nonfiction collection, *Fast Break to Line Break: Poets on the Art of Basketball*, and co-edited *Making Poems: Forty Poems with Commentary by the Poets*. His poetry has been featured on the radio by Garrison Keillor on *The Writer's Almanac* and by Ted Kooser in his syndicated newspaper column *American Life in Poetry*. He is the winner of the Gwendolyn Brooks Poetry Prize and the Chautauqua Editors Prize. He is a fellow of the Black Earth Institute and teaches creative writing, American literature, and environmental studies at Pennsylvania State University's Altoona College.

Brandi George grew up in rural Michigan. Poems from her first collection of poetry, *Gog* (Black Lawrence Press, 2015) appeared in *Gulf Coast*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Ninth Letter*, *Columbia Poetry Review*, and *The Iowa Review*. She has been awarded residencies at Hambidge Center for the Arts and the Hill House Institute for Sustainable Living, Art & Natural Design, and she attended the Sewanee Writer's Conference as a Tennessee Williams Scholar. She currently resides in Tallahassee, where she is a Ph.D. candidate at Florida State University.

Willard P. Greenwood II has been editor-in-chief of *The Hiram Poetry Review* since 2001. He teaches English and Writing at Hiram College.

Ken Haas lives in San Francisco where he works in healthcare and sponsors a poetry writing program at the UCSF Children's Hospital. His poems have appeared in numerous journals, including *Alabama Literary Review*, *The Cape Rock*, *Cottonwood*, *Forge*, *Freshwater*, *The Healing Muse*, *Helix*, *Lullwater Review*, *Moon City Review*, *Natural Bridge*, *Nimrod*, *Pennsylvania English*, *Quiddity*, *Sanskrit*, *Schuylkill Valley Journal*, *Soundings East*, and *Wild Violet*. You can visit him online at kenhaas.org.

Jamey Hecht runs the website jameyhecht.com.

Lockie Hunter is a recent recipient of a 2013/2014 Regional Arts Project Grant for poetry. She holds an MFA in fiction from Emerson College in Boston and has taught creative writing at Warren Wilson College. Her words have appeared in publications including *Slipstream*, *Brevity*, *Nerve*, *Gulf Stream Literary Magazine*, *The Baltimore Review*, *Main Street Rag*, *New Plains Review* and *Arts & Opinion*. She serves as curator of the Juniper Bends Reading Series and the West End Reading Series and cohost of the Queer Girls reading, and as associate producer and host of the poetry radio program Wordplay on 103.3 FM in Asheville.

Jackleen H. Hookway's poems have been published in the anthologies *The Giant Book of Poetry*, and *Steve Kowit This Unspeakably Marvelous Life*, and have appeared or are forthcoming in *Atlanta Review*, *Bayou*, *Kestrel*, *Natural Bridge*, *North American Review*, *Rattle*, and *Sanskrit*. In 2014, her poem "Goldfish" won *Bellingham Review*'s 49th Parallel Poetry Award.

Alan Katz grew up in Northern California but has, for a long time, made his home in New York. He currently lives in Brooklyn, with his wife, and two children. Alan runs his own consulting practice coaching executives and leadership teams of high growth organizations. His poetry has recently appeared in or is forthcoming in *Burningword*, *Diverse Voices Quarterly* and *Sanskrit Literary Arts*.

John E. Keough is a poet and writer from of all places New England! He has appeared in *The Hiram Poetry Review*, *America Magazine*, and the *Worcester Review*. Several of his poems and essays are under consideration for year-end anthologies and even a few awards. Of all the cool accolades his favorite is being the Poet Laureate of the Fellowship of The Spine, an organization dedicated to reading the classics and making them accessible for people in dire circumstances.

Richard Krohn has spent most of his life in the Mid-Atlantic, but with substantial periods of time in the Midwest and in Central America. He

presently lives in Bethlehem, PA. His earlier work appeared in journals like *The Bitter Oleander* and *Chautauqua Literary Review*, with more recent work appearing or forthcoming in *Poet Lore*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, and *Rattle*, among others.

Maria LeBeau has been published or has work forthcoming in *Handsome Journal*, *Poemeleon*, *Crack the Spine Magazine*, *Inertia Magazine*, *Burningword Literary Journal*, *Moon City Review* and others. Her poems have also appeared in Oprah's *O Magazine* and have been read on the radio. She holds an MFA in poetry from the Vermont College of Fine Arts' creative writing program. She lives in South Orange, New Jersey with her husband and two young sons.

Arthur D. Mathews Jr. was born on September 30th 1965, to parents Mr. Arthur D. Mathews Sr. and Mrs. Ruth Mathews. He was born at Lansley Air Force base in Hampton, Virginia. He graduated in Hartford, Connecticut in 1985. He took the G.E.D. and received a perfect score in Science, missed one or two in English, one or two in History, and just made it in Math. His father and mother used to write not for profit. His father used to sing while taping his voice in shower. He wrote his very first poem at the age of thirteen. He started writing seriously at the age of fifteen. Due to a bad incident in Ohio, his grandmother pushed him to read early, and read him Bible stories. He was published in black local newspapers, both in Ohio and in Sarasota, Florida. He went to Manatee Community College, located between Bradenton and Sarasota, Florida. He says, "When I write I put myself in another's position to try to feel what another would feel."

Daniel Morris is the author of *Hit Play* (Marsh Hawk Press 2015).

Suzanne O'Connell's recently published work can be found in *Forge*, *Atlanta Review*, *Crack The Spine*, *The Louisville Review*, *Found Poetry Review*, *Chiron Review*, *The Hollins Critic*, and *Burningword Literary Journal* among others. She lives in Los Angeles. O'Connell was nominated for The Pushcart Prize and for a Best Of The Net Award in 2015.

Gale Newby has been published in *Grit Magazine*, among others. She received her B.S. in education from Blue Mountain College and attended the University of Mississippi. She has worked as a teacher, social worker and a librarian. She currently lives in Utah.

Kristine Ong Muslim has authored several books, most recently *We Bury the Landscape* (Queen's Ferry Press, 2012) and *Grim Series* (Popcorn Press, 2012). A poetry collection, *Lifeboat*, is forthcoming from the University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, a university press

based in the Philippines. His stories and poems were published in the likes of *Boston Review*, *Confrontation Magazine*, *New Welsh Review*, and *Sou'wester*. I serve as poetry editor for *LONTAR: The Journal of Southeast Asian Speculative Fiction*, a literary journal published by Epigram Books in Singapore.

Charles Parsons writes in the township of Black Horse, Ohio. He has a short story in the current issue of *Chicago Quarterly Review* and a poem forthcoming in *Lake Effect*.

Scott Ruescher has been writing poems related to the legacy of Elvis Presley ever since being turned away from the gate of Graceland on a day when the house-museum was closed. Some of these poems have appeared in recent issues of *Agni Online*, *Dalhousie Review*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Tower Journal*, and *Boston Hassle*. His chapbook *Perfect Memory*, which includes two of the Graceland poems, was published by Finishing Line Press in the 2015

T.J. Sandella is the recipient of an Elinor Benedict Prize for Poetry, a William Matthews Poetry Prize, two Academy of American Poets Prizes, and a Pushcart Prize nomination. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Best New Poets*, *Poet Lore*, the *South Carolina Review*, the *Chattahoochee Review*, the *Raleigh Review* and *Hotel Amerika*, among others. He lives with his puppy, Rufio, in Cleveland, Ohio, where he's a soapbox spokesman for the Rust Belt's revitalization.

Cameron Terhune is a 31 year old writer and artist with multiple life sentences for murder. Despite that, he still tries his best to create things and meet new people. Anyone who wishes may write to him at: Cameron Terhune, AD-0786, MCSP Box 409040, Ione CA 95640. He goes by Ronnie. Thanks for reading! Mom, I love you!

John Sibley Williams is the editor of two Northwest poetry anthologies and the author of nine collections, including *Controlled Hallucinations* (2013) and *Disinheritance* (forthcoming 2016). A five-time Pushcart nominee and winner of the Philip Booth Award, American Literary Review Poetry Contest, and Vallum Award for Poetry, John serves as editor of *The Inflectionist Review* and works as a literary agent. Previous publishing credits include: *The Midwest Quarterly*, *December*, *Third Coast*, *Baltimore Review*, *Nimrod International Journal*, *Hotel Amerika*, *Rio Grande Review*, *Inkwell*, *Cider Press Review*, *Bryant Literary Review*, *RHINO*, and various anthologies. He lives in Portland, Oregon.

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