

The Orchards

Poetry Journal

June 2017



© 2017 The Orchards. All rights reserved. This material may not be reproduced in any form, published, reprinted, recorded, performed, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without the explicit permission of Kelsay Books. All such actions are strictly prohibited by law.

Karen Kelsay, Editor
Jeff Holt, Associate Editor

For submissions:
kelsay.karen@gmail.com





Inspired by the small plot of apple trees near Cambridge, England, where writers have gathered for years with their books and pens, we welcome you to pull up a chair and enjoy poetry in the orchard.



The Orchards Poetry Journal
Issue Three

Contents

J.D. Smith	
Reader Review	10
J. D. Smith	
Extended Metaphor	11
Joan Johnson	
Grief	12
John Grey	
The Sonnet of the Forest	13
John Grey	
Sonnet 14	14
Carolyn Lynn Stevenson Grellas	
Farewell to Fear	15
Carolyn Lynn Stevenson Grellas	
Elegy to the Poem without an End	16
Elise Hempel	
Getting the Results	17
Elise Hempel	
The Label Maker	18
Elise Hempel	
The 13 th Floor	19

Jan Hodge	
Lexical	20
Michael Estabrook	
Mother, Turning 89	21
Michael Estabrook	
At the Acton Council on Aging Senior Center	22
Terese Coe	
Nurse	23
Mark Blaeuer	
The Evolutionary Pageant	24
Leslie Schultz	
The Widow Dreams of Sweet Breezes	25
Leslie Schultz	
Transportation	26
Leslie Schultz	
To a Former Friend, Whose Affections Are Withdrawn	27
Mike James	
Edward Hopper Country	28
Mike James	
A Palm Reading	29

<i>Siham Karami Featured Poet</i>	31
Siham Karami Her Sovereign Fate	37
Siham Karami Awakening	38
Siham Karami Common Cup	39
Siham Karami Azaleas, with Pen and Watercolor	40
Siham Karami Note from a Stranger at the Funeral	41
Siham Karami Labor Day	42
Siham Karami Edna Hong's Bread	43
Siham Karami In the Louvre	45
Siham Karami Czechoslovakia	46
Siham Karami Lawnmowing in America	47

Siham Karami	
To a Birch Tree	48
Jared Carter	
Spinnaker	49
Jared Carter	
Swifts	50
Sally Nacker	
Robin	51
Sally Nacker	
Night Snow	52
David Landrum	
The Serbian Doctor I Knew who Was in a Concentration Camp, 1973	53
David Landrum	
The Mystery of Glass	55
Katherine Hoerth	
Starbucks Bravado	56
Katherine Hoerth	
The Goddess on Laundry Day	58
Gary Whitby	
A Broken Sky	59

Gary Whitby	
World's End	60
Charles Hughes	
Before Our Eyes	61
Marly Youmans	
Epistle to Robert Walser	63
Marly Youmans	
The Mystic Page	64
Robert Donohue	
Long Time A Child	65
Robert Donohue	
19th Century Lesbian Vampires	66
Claudia Serea	
On a windy night	67
Ernest Hilbert	
February Song	68
Ernest Hilbert	
In-School Suspension	69
Ernest Hilbert	
Easter	71

Biographies

Mark Blaeuer	72
Jared Carter	72
Terese Coe	72
Robert Donohue	72
Michael Estabrook	72
Carol Lynn Stevenson Grellas	73
John Grey	73
Elise Hempel	73
Ernest Hilbert	73
Katherine Hoerth	73
Jan D. Hodge	73
Charles Hughes	74
Mike James	74
Joan Johnson	74
Siham Karami	74
David Landrum	75
Sally Nacker	75
Leslie Schultz	75
Claudia Serea	75
J.D. Smith	76
Gary Whitby	76
Marly Youmans	76

J.D. Smith

Reader Review

Because I could not stop for Smith,
He kindly stopped for me
To bend my ear and wrack my brain
With his, um, “poetry.”

He slowly droned—I rued the waste
Of nearly half a day
Of labor and of leisure, too,
To hear what he might say.

He passed up any claim to tact
Or taste—he seemed to spit—
He passed up social relevance
And any shred of wit.

Or maybe wit shunned him—
Like dancing or some other skill—
For every line caused me to yawn.
How could he spew such swill?

I turned a final page and felt
My head no longer pound
From all that jocularity—
Best muffled underground.

Since then I’ve been at ease, and yet
I cringe in memory
At how this scribbling horse’s ass
Made clear his vanity.

J. D. Smith

Extended Metaphor

One is a big fish in a small pond.

Another, a minnow in a great lake.

A third suspects
he is a speck of plankton in an ocean
seined by baleen whales, on which

myriad small lives feed.

Joan Johnson

Grief

There is no word for it the sound
Is null
A glob of water ready to fall
From the edge of a maple leaf
Onto a white table cloth
Hurting the perfection of a tea set
Waiting for mourners
Who will hover together
Eyes down
After the screen door slams
Accidentally
From the kitchen where a child sits
On the floor with marbles
Shooting random rolling orbs
Into corners
Oblivious to the gathering
Of grownups in the garden

John Grey

The Sonnet of the Forest

My estimation of surrounding trees
Changes in context with advancing hours
From the hopeful, light-tinged morning bowers
To vibrant forest greening by degrees
Into such lush and languid reveries
Of breeze-blown bough and abundant flowers
To twilight's radiant gold-tipped towers.
Thick tapestries of verdant majesties.

But, come the nighttime, come pervading gloom.
The shadow woodland is a disquiet lair,
A moonless crypt, an arboreal tomb,
A shapeless, haunting, dungeon of despair.
Not buoyant life but doleful dreaded doom
Of nothing seen but something surely there.

John Grey
Sonnet 14

I hear you breathing- are you there?
For nothing dies, if nothing's dead.
Is that your body on my bed,
The chorus of your coiling hair
Upon my pillow, ruffed and rare?
Was anything so richly red?
Now not a word has need be said,
For I shall wait, and sweetly stare.

And do you quiver, do you quake,
Through echoes of departing night;
My fingers feel your full breasts shake.
So welcome-soft, so pale-prim white—
I love to see my lady wake
In cracks of clear blue morning light.

Carolyn Lynn Stevenson Grellas
Farewell to Fear

If I should wake from slumber's death alone
to find no other occupant or throne
imagined where a Jesus ought to be
replaced by nothingness, not you or me
entwined in afterlife with memories
of body, mind or soul, faith's guarantee
defunct, in fact a useless exercise
believing in a plethora of lies,
and yet the only risk in wanting more
is overlooking all that's come before
indifferent to a dazzling kind of day
where expectations amplify dismay,
if earth is only this, I must amend
that love is all that matters in the end.

Carolyn Lynn Stevenson Grellas
Elegy to the Poem without an End

After reading Yeats *The Second Coming*

But if you'd seen the falcons' eyes, the way
their pupils pinned and tapered, killers loose;
gyres whirling while unstoppable their path
unchangeable as brutes in search of prey
so absolute since all succumb to death
no matter if a Bethlehem awaits.
Infinity is just a figure 8
my fingers trace on glass impervious with breath—
how pondering eternity's more harrowing
save godliness and reasons to believe.
Although there is no proof beyond the grave
where faith triumphs, a narrowing
where endings claim the dwindling of a turn,
yet surely what's in motion must return.

Elise Hempel

Getting the Results

The X-ray of my hips shows nothing more
than normal wear and tear, mild loss of bone,
the nurse reports, smiling through the phone.
*It's only age, she says. Keep taking your
Meloxicam and call if things get worse.
Just having been alive, I think, that's it?
Just fifty years of walking on this planet?*
Okay, I say, and *thank you*, but of course
I'd hoped for something bigger they could fix
to take away my constant ache for good,
my shifting limp at only fifty-six.
Some way to bring her back, that girl who could
still jump the fence into the field and sprawl,
ignoring time, relishing the earth's call.

Elise Hempel

The Label Maker

All day she drifts through the house, considers
the world she took for granted before—
the vase on the table, the kitchen floor,
my mother's old cabinet, dialing letters

onto a strip she cuts, *ca-chung*,
then peels and sticks, fixing the lamp
with its identity, squinting to stamp
the cat's bowl, the cup, a pencil, her tongue

curled in concentration as she aims
her new blue gun, now eyeing *me*,
my shirt soon glued with the word *MOMMY*,
all day *ca-chung*, the pressing of names

to the things she knows, giving them anchors
before tomorrow, when again she'll slip
from me to him, down the sliding strip
of the driveway in this thing named *DIVORCE*.

Elise Hempel

The 13th Floor

*Your Line 13 is where the poem should end,
and Line 14 should be the one before,*
he says, my former teacher, still my mentor,
about another poem I had to send,
not trusting my own judgment. I can never pretend
for long that I don't need him anymore:
He'll find the things I've missed—some metaphor,
some stilted phrase, a line that should be tightened.

My emails back to him always say *Thanks!*
But I know some day he won't be there
to be my eyes and ears when I'm unsure,
to choose my title, fill in all the blanks.
The doors will part; I'll step out onto air
and hope all that he's taught me will endure.

Jan D. Hodge

Lexical

She speaks a language of her own,
her third after Tagalog and English,
a private lexicon of derelict compounds.

She lives in a world of toplap computers
where people wear Puppy Hush shoes,
goes with her beardgray husband
to luckpot suppers.

She loves apple overturns,
doesn't like joykills or startups,
worries about Robert's Sunday overhang,
and sorts offcasts for a garage sale.

I ask what movie she's watching on TV;
she says "The Green is Corn."
Hmmm. Wales transplanted to Iowa?
And at a campaign ad she yells
"Your lies will be your falldown!"
Alas, not yet.

I imagine her after a couple of
Wallvey Harbangers (her favorite drink)
stumbling into the setsun of an
East Clintwood movie.

Note: Tagalog (tah-GAH-log) is the principal language of the Philippines.

Michael Estabrook
Mother, Turning 89

Watching my mother cry slouched
in her wheelchair as I leave her at the airport
will stay with me for a long long time.

She's fragile now, tenuous
confused by what remains
frightened by what is yet to come
focusing on the past because
she hasn't much future left.

Her spirit harkens back to a once-rigorous
existence but her frail flesh fails her
her legs unsteady
her back bent and aching
her hands too weak to open bottles and jars.

But she remembers driving Kay's Harley
into a curb back in '47
to stop it from getting away from her
after forgetting where the brakes were
and she remembers who the female singer was
in the Glenn Miller Orchestra in the late 40s.

She strains towards the end
of her life to cling onto the past
as if her life depends upon it because it does.

Michael Estabrook

At the Acton Council on Aging Senior Center

On the wall above the metal rack filled
with helpful magazines and pamphlets
about wheelchairs, lifting devices, and mechanized beds,
an insignificant yet surprisingly loud little clock
is tick tick ticking away every second
I sit squirming on this dented metal folding chair
in the waiting area smelling of must and mice
and decaying yellow flowers.

I'm here for my appointment with Mary Jane
the Medicare expert because as anyone
who has ventured within a light year
of Medicare knows, without an expert to guide you
it is impossible to begin to understand
this impenetrable bureaucratic tar pit.

Suddenly, sitting here listening
to that fucking clock, I panic.
I want to bolt from these rooms
of looming death. How did I get here
in the first place? How did I ever
get to be so damned old? If I leave right now
I'll be able to reverse time and return
to my girlfriend's parent's living room
or in the hall outside her homeroom in Building Seven
or in her Hofstra University Tower B dorm lobby
where she will appear, radiant and resplendent
in her vibrant youth and beauty
and in the promise of life everlasting.
I didn't mind waiting one bit back then.
I would have waited
until the end of time for her if necessary.

Terese Coe
Nurse

Adapted from Posidippus

The nurse to generations, Batis grew old
among the children she had held and taught
her wool and weaving arts—to card and fold,
to spin and dye the yarn, to plait and knot
their nets. With every chore there came a song.
The day the daughters went to their bridal beds
was the day they buried her, who had so long
prepared them with the mysteries of threads.

Mark Blaeuer

The Evolutionary Pageant

A bevy of high-heeled Neanderthals
lope down their catwalk off the neon stage.
Each massive brow ridge glistens in the night
so made for glamour. TV critics, rapt,
effuse about the matted furs draped off
those hairy shoulders. Camera flashes dot
the audience, bright jewels in blackened hush,
and then the band strikes up a suitably
egregious bit of Hollywood sound track
to signal our contestants that it's time
for Q and A. The sleazy emcee asks
what he asks always, and the beauties grunt
their way to finalism. Now a pause
to whet the appetite for judgment, and—
once more, the crowning tears amid the stench
of bear grease and a bloody rabbit leg.

Leslie Schultz

The Widow Dreams of Sweet Breezes

She is standing in a meadow,
smiling. Bees hum in pink clover.
Prairie grasses, aromatic,
pump out perfumes that hover
over her head in fragrant clouds.

Sky clouds roll in over distant tors.
In one instant, racks of black
tower over her, rain lashes her,
she is cold, so cold. She calls but no one
hears. Then she wakes, again, to tears.

Leslie Schultz

Transportation

Spring in Faribault, Minnesota

I come here, to the seat of Rice County,
to sign and pay for my teen daughter's
passport. Soon, she'll study in another country,
perhaps along the Neva's storied waters.

On our meander home, I think of my own
first long journey, transported by my parents
to live with other immigrants in Melbourne—
Yarra River, yellow wattle-tree fragrance,

shark nets at swimming piers, battered fish and chips.
Memories cascade as I go to the old
P.O. near the Cannon River's flow,
glimpse a Somali girl's garments billow,
go in to mail a card. One sound stops me cold:
frantic cheeping of hatched chicks—boxed—being shipped.

Leslie Schultz

To a Former Friend, Whose Affections Are Withdrawn

I accepted you. You once enchanted me.
Now I accept that I'll never know your heart.
Yet how can friendship crumble into the sea?

You're older. I thought your wisdom was a key,
a mirror to illuminate my soul and art.
I accepted you. You once enchanted me.

I saw then that you're cantankerous, touchy,
sweet, kind, inclined to lob a verbal dart.
But can true friendship crumble into the sea?

You've hurled me into waves of uncertainty.
Did I wrong you? Did I bruise some tender part?
I accepted you. You once enchanted me.

You owe me nothing. I won't call. Don't worry—
Nothing unseemly will come from me. No retort.
I see our friendship sinking in the cold sea.

No matter. I've no taste for futility.
Trust has fled. Our affections are wrenched apart.
I must accept that you once enchanted me,
and now our friendship crumbles in a cold sea.

Mike James

Edward Hopper Country

if mannequins came to life
stepped down from
the steady pedestal
of a storefront
window
to walk an empty street's
overwhelming
noon light
they would all
come here
where every office
is damned by bright colors
and the only joy
is at arrival
here, no one talks
even thinks of talking
while everyone
knows how
to hold and hold
a stare

Mike James

A Palm Reading

your love line shaped less like a river
more like a wish
there are lots of scars some
deep as trenches encampments
from a battle you called a draw
extra lines to trace
extra paths
your hands carry grace
and sleep in equal measure
your life line is long
attached to a basket shaped
like regret which is shaped like
a heart the basket
well-made heavy with years

Siham Karami

FEATURED POET

This being the third issue of *The Orchards Poetry Journal*, Chief Editor Karen Kelsay Davies decided to begin featuring one poet per issue who exemplifies what *The Orchards* most values in poetry. For this issue, we have chosen Siham Karami, a widely published poet who is equally talented in metrical and free verse, and who also runs one of the most dynamic poetry blogs that I have had the pleasure of reading, <https://sihamkarami.wordpress.com/> Following this interview, we present eleven poems by Siham that we find extraordinary.

—Siham, how did you get started writing poetry?

In fact, I've wanted to be a poet since I was a child. When I was 9 years old, I filled in a questionnaire saying I wanted to be a poet and astronomer when I grew up—I've also always had a love of science and space and even as a child used to read science-based books I couldn't fully understand. And our house was always full of books, my parents being voracious readers; my mother in particular loved poetry, so we had books of May Swenson, Ezra Pound, Anne Sexton, Theodore Roethke and many others. In high school, I wrote poetry which a friend and classmate published in her own little periodical. I also wrote and performed (with friends) songs then, even put some Ezra Pound poems to music. I continued to write and give readings through college and in San Francisco coffee shops, something like Beat era meets flower child. I sought a more adventurous life away from academia, married an Egyptian, and we lived—by which I mean made our living, quite different from “travel”—in Egypt, as well as in various places in Europe, notably Paris, Vienna, and what then was West Berlin. We had five children and our own business; in short, living took me away from writing poetry, although I did write essays and other nonfiction. But not for publication. It was the much-later death of my oldest sister from cancer, the sister described in “Communion,”

which really sparked my wholehearted return to writing—and reading—poetry. The sleeping muse was shocked awake by her death.

—What, as a poet, do you find most satisfying about writing in form?

Form compels the poet to compress their immediate thoughts into a smaller and more intense space. I used to write only free verse, which was all that was taught when I was in college. Even the sonnet was defined as a 14-line poem without reference to metrics or rhyme. So when I returned to writing poetry, I was so lucky as to meet Gail White online, who told me about Eratosthere. I loved her poetry, and discovered that my ear was actually seeking out metrical patterns without my thinking of it that way. I started out taking my old free verse poems and sonnetizing them, transforming them into far richer and more intense and satisfying pieces. Then I went through phases with each form, the sestina period, the villanelle era, the rondeau epoch, etc. Being somewhat obsessive, poetry literally entered my life to where I would work out the details and possibilities of a poem while doing other things, like hanging laundry or stuck in a boring group discussion, often without being able to write, working it out in my mind instead of on paper, which turns out to be a helpful skill. I don't think this would be possible without form; the human mind remembers rhyme and rhythm better than the same length of writing in prose or free verse. I wrote an entire sonnet based on a photo and news story without pen or paper, while conversing, supplying the requisite eye contact, occasional "ah" or "really"—one learns which words are truly all-purpose responses to both positive or negative statements. I've always spent a lot of time thinking on a larger scale, which requires spacing out from the immediate world, so I simply refocused this dedicated attention to poetry, my new "larger scale" project.

For me, free verse is itself a form, focused more on line breaks and word choices, and the interaction between elements such as imagery and the relative proximity of words. But I more commonly prefer to work with the outside pressure and apparent arbitrariness of form, whose limits provide a tension, an opposition which energizes the writing process. In some

ways, I think formal poetry works more in synch with the human heart, a metrical force, and is therefore less cerebral. Too much rational effort can destroy the delicacy of a poem, its ability to express the inexpressible. For me, the poet should never be in complete control of the poem. The “controlling factor” of form forces the poet to relinquish control and allow an exchange between the poet and language to occur “organically,” to allow the poem itself to also guide the poet, opening a two-way street between poem and poet.

—As a poet who writes equally well in form and free verse, are there any subjects that you, personally, find to be more suitable for free verse?

Not particularly. Sometimes if I’m having trouble writing about a particular subject in free verse, I’ll try form, and vice versa. Or try out different forms. In fact, I often write about one basic subject, even about a very specific event, in several different forms including free verse to see which works best. Lately, I found myself writing about a particularly emotional subject, and it would only succeed in a very tightly ordered metrical way. So I thought to try the same subject as a ghazal, then discovered I had already written a ghazal using almost the exact same phrases on the same subject some time earlier. I had completely forgotten it. Those phrases turned magic in the metrical form but fell flat as a ghazal. So I think it isn’t determined by general topic; more a personal matter one has to find, sometimes by trial and error.

—I am fascinated by the character Edna Hong from “Edna Hong’s bread,” as well as the narrator’s interactions with her. Please tell us what inspired this poem, and anything else you would like to say about it, including, if relevant, what it means to you now.

I’m delighted that you asked. Edna Hong and her husband, Howard Hong, working as a team, are among the world’s foremost Kierkegaard scholars and translators. They donated their own world class Kierkegaard library to St. Olaf College in Minnesota, where Howard graduated and was a professor of philosophy for many years. Edna has also written many books herself, both for children and adults, some fictionalized accounts based on

her experiences helping refugees and disabled children during WWII. My father knew the Hongs from St. Olaf college where they and a few others formed close bonds, bought forest land in northern Minnesota where they built cabins, and where their/our families, including me, would spend summer month-long vacations. The men all smoked, wore black berets, drove small European cars, and read ferociously, considering themselves intellectuals, and had large families. At the time, however, I knew nothing of who the Hongs or the others were outside of being people who loved the same forest, the life away from electricity and running water, and the nearby Brule River, our swimming hole, as much as I did. Edna was also famous for her baking, especially her dark whole wheat bread which she baked in a genuine Franklin oven in their cabin. Her sons, who always seemed like a raucous gang of pirates to me (and I never got the count right either), would chop the wood for the stove. She was the most beautiful, calm, wise, soft-spoken woman, with this quietly wry sense of humor and a way of keeping her somewhat rowdy husband “in line”. He himself was quite a character, fiercely independent and hard-working. I used to want to be like her, baking bread, writing books, helping others in quiet, life-changing ways. That forest came alive for me over the years, as it did for them. We were all so connected to the place, and I think its magic kept them active into their 90’s. They asked to be buried not near their lifelong home in Northfield, where St. Olaf was a mile-long daily walk up the hill for Howie, but in Hovland, the nearest town to our cabins, our place in the woods. “To a Birch Tree” is also written about that same forest and the connection to it. My husband is Egyptian and for him, lush agriculture, fruits, date palms, and a civilized order to the plant world resonated. But for me the wildness of the Northwoods is sacred, a deep place in my heart, one that reminds me of Edna. And I too always wanted to be buried somewhere near the woods, in fact right under a birch tree. A line from one of my very first poems, actually a song complete with music, was “Oh the birken forest, the birken wood, I long to lie where the white trunks stood.” Being of Norwegian ancestry, I liked the word “birken” that fit better metrically. My tenses were mixed, but my heart was in the right place.

—I feel that any interview with you that did not bring up your thriving poetry blog, <https://sihamkarami.wordpress.com/>, would be remiss. On

initially scanning through your blog, I was simply happy to find the section “Siham Karami Poetry Links,” as I had been searching for a group of your poems collected in one place. However, as anyone, on any given day, can see, your blog has a far wider scope than self-promotion. Can you tell us more about it?

Several people suggested I write a blog, so I thought about it and it seemed like a good idea, but has turned out to be a better idea than I really imagined. At first, I planned to write regular essays and maybe post artwork as well, in addition to using it as a place for poetry news, with my publications in particular. It’s a great way to promote sites where my poetry appears, and to reach out to a new audience. I’ve met a number of poets through the blog whom I admire that I wouldn’t otherwise have even known about.

Because I spent so many years away from the academic and literary world, I’ve tried to post regularly about other poets and their work. This has actually helped fill in my own knowledge gaps and discover the work of poets I hadn’t been aware of, as well as refreshing my memory of those I’m familiar with. Which is critical for a poet to do—it has enriched my experience of life itself, as well as helping me enormously to improve my own writing skills.

The blog is a forum where I can basically do what I want, and I started therefore writing a few book reviews, which I also find fulfilling. Book reviews are a kind of ekphrasis of books, and enlighten the reviewer as well as those who are interested in discovering the best new books to read.

—In closing, I would simply like to ask you if there are any other poems out of the eleven that we have published here that you would like to discuss further, or, more broadly, if there is simply any topic related to poetry that you would like to discuss for a paragraph or two?

On the subject of poetry, my problem is self-restraint. I could talk for hours! Each poem I write starts from my own experiences, then at some point the poem itself becomes the experience, and when I reread them, I

recall the writing process of each one in the same way one remembers events, emotions and all. These are incorporated into my life as actual experiences in themselves, acts of writing that bring me new insights.

“Lawnmowing in America” is written in a form I took from word scramble-type games, restricting the letters used in the poem to those in the title, an “ouliipo” type form. The subject matter, then, is determined by the title, and its interpretation will be strongly influenced by the letters. That increases the power of the words themselves over the poet, creating a poem outside the bounds of the poet’s own experience. I went through what I call my “strangled alphabet” period during which I wrote this. My best friend and college roommate met a guy who sat next to her on a train who had changed his name to Lawnmowing in America, which is the title’s source. Then I worked with the form which guided me to these results, the challenge being to use such restricted language to express something meaningful about the title.

In contrast, “Czechoslovakia” came out of two real experiences: the first, when I was a child a friend’s father, an astrophysicist, had returned from a conference in Prague with these amazing large glossy photos of nebulae, galaxies, star clusters, and other celestial marvels, spreading them out on their dining room table. It was a huge moment in my life: it’s why I wanted to be an astronomer. The second encounter with Czechoslovakia, mythical home of fairy tales and cobblestone squares, was when my husband and our two young children (aged 6 months and 3 years) were traveling by train from what was West Berlin, through Czechoslovakia, to Vienna. It was mid-winter and below zero, the world covered in knee-high snow. Once we got into Czechoslovakia, a different conductor came on and turned off the heat; we kept taking off coats and sweaters to cover the children until the train stopped in the middle of nowhere between stations. He told us in broken English that we were on the wrong train and would have to get off now. I flipped out. My husband, however, got the message and gave him a US \$20 bill (all the cash we had). The conductor turned on the heat and the train started again. I first wrote the poem in free verse, then tried various other forms until settling on the ghazal form, which took much trial and error to hone into the poem you read here, dramatically different than the

original attempt. That's the beauty of form, providing a scaffolding that allows the poet to work with language as a medium almost like clay, to feel and create texture and nuance more sensuously, at least for me, than with free verse. I remember the writing process of this poem as a set of clearings in a dark Czechoslovakian forest, with each couplet or spher like a snapshot of the trip walking through it.

—Thank you, Siham, for your thoughtful answers. And now, to the poems! Jeff Holt

Siham Karami

Her Sovereign Fate

She did without a million things she wanted,
gripped a smile as others mocked her ankles,
Beefy feet! Her teeth clenched as they taunted,
Beaver girl! She was above what rankles.

For a princess never shows her agony;
she swallows down the crowd's unseemly audit.
My sister had that sense of royalty
without the fortune. God knows how she got it.

But when a cruel husband rocked her throne,
her fealty never wavered—*see, he's bedrock!*
Quicksand! We had warned. No sinking stone,
she sang a hymn to love, endured the padlock,
impeccably descended to the curb—
her gentlewoman's prayer: *do not disturb.*

Siham Karami

Awakening

A.m. waves roll in as distant chatter
and pixelate with dreams along my hull.
Roused by percolating kitchen-clatter,
I float down through the hall, as if more soul
than body, drawn by coffee's pungent incense
and voices murmuring their rise and lull.
I sit across from Daddy's warming presence,
his firefly cigarette, faint foghorn blue—
with radio and Mother's effervescence,
a soft horizon broadcast into view,
our smiles and talk, with toaster-clicks, attuned
to hatching chicks who've nothing else to do
but stir, acclimating to the light
until we surface to the gift of sight.

Siham Karami

Common Cup

The angels came down in the form of snow
and wrapped me in their world, away from all
the grownups' laughter, just behind the door,
that soft flakes muffled in the streetlamp's glow.
And so was night and loneliness made small
enough for my companion-thoughts to soar.
Until I felt your penetrating gaze
jostle me where feelings intersect
with words: *You're just like me. I am like you.*
The years between us leveled in a blaze.
Marooned by what we'd known of disconnect,
our sisterhood was galvanized, a coup
transforming how we walked, with footprints deep
in snow, our witness to the bond we keep.

Siham Karami

Azaleas, with Pen and Watercolor

For hours I trace your edges' intricate
infinity, and you forgive my fingers'
soft vibrato touch. Can you sense
a tingling in the fine-tipped pen, or feel
my eyes intensely drinking your details?
An electricity in fractal lines
fluttering through my hands, I focus on
the paradise of petals layering.

Ah, to capture you all delicately
jeweled in water-beads and brazen pink
forever and precariously, just
before the slightest brown could singe the blush
of your silk and fragrant innocence
in foreshadows and afterimagery.

Siham Karami

Note from a Stranger at the Funeral

For Catherine

Bring the elegies, the tears
I had forsworn
through the closed, unyielding years
I could not mourn.

Tell your mother's minted grave
to reverence her
and carry flowers as you brave
the sepulchre.

Hold your father's fragile arm
and let your hands'
endearing transience tell of warm
enduring bonds.

And I will free my solemn heart
from time and place,
the rites of death a special art
of deeper grace,

a sounding bell of emptiness
whose echoes move
through walls untouched, and yet no less
resounding love.

Siham Karami

Labor Day

A foghorn sobs its ghostly passing through
The sun's descending carnival of skies,
While mountains float, untouchable, in blue.

Our yard dips steeply to the street below
Where playing children's distant squealings rise.
A foghorn sobs its ghostly passing-through.

Smoking coals char slabs of barbecue:
The year's last pungent cloud, last crazy flies—
While mountains float, untouchable, in blue.

My stomach clenches for the touch of you
that's almost here. If I could exorcise
The foghorn-sobs, their ghostly passing-through,

Mocking every heartbeat. Is it true
The presence lingers though the bond unties?
Do mountains float, untouchable, in blue?

And what good will it do me if they do?
Inscrutable, insatiable goodbyes
Whose foghorn sobs their ghostly passing-through,
Whose mountains float, untouchable, in blue.

First published in *Innisfree Journal*, Issue 13, Fall 2011.

Siham Karami

Edna Hong's Bread

The path to the Hongs' cabin always trilled
with paperlight wings, gnat clouds,
seedpods hovering, dragonflies abuzz.

In her doorway, fresh bread sweetness
mingled with the choir
of birches' flickering leaves above
as Edna stood there anchoring
the forest spreading over hills.
I ate her dark bread and knew I was
a child of the same forest.

Softly as the tiny wings
no one noticed,
lines creased upward in her face
to her eyes, still reflecting children
and the cauldron days of war,
rushing refugees close to her hearth
to stop the horror.

Here in the woods where wars are tangled
in remembered underbrush, and birches
turn their pages peacefully,
white underscored by dark fir shadows,
she carried wheat transformed, fields felled
and recreated into one hand-held whole
exuding all she was and is and will be

mixed in the winds, light, and swarms that pass
and the earth who swallows all our faith,
the scent of fresh yeast baked
into their teeming moment of death

by fire. They who were nothing but fodder
now light the fields brought into forest,
a redolence between her hands and sun,

as I return to break her bread, a hymn
of what we make of everything
we were and are. And there
where our beloved woods breaks into us,
a longing we believe to be God's marrow
turns solid in the ground.

First published in the *Naugatuck River Review*, Winter 2015, semifinalist in Narrative Poetry contest 7.

Siham Karami
In the Louvre

I spurned the pious upturned face,
the ladies with grey seagull wings
and stern Madonna-visionings,
the man-child's gilded, stilted grace.

My parents needed no reprieve
from mighty Titian's lustborne dancing
women, nude as cows, romancing
well-dressed men. *But let me leave!*

Down to the belly of the whale,
where the Hall of ancient Egypt held
a man's head. I stood rapt, enthralled
by eyes alight with heaven-and-hell

exuding radiant humanness,
a beauty so intense it hurt
like nascent love—a plunge of heart
whose truce with pain shone in his face.

Where have you been?!

Oh, I lost track
of time, I said, half-dragged away.
No one sensed my disarray
or how I never quite came back.

First published in *Able Muse Review*, Winter 2016, Number 22.

Siham Karami

Czechoslovakia

What border on this landscape fools the sky?
A countryside will not refuse the sky.

The heavens spread in glossies on a table—
They told us this is how Prague views the sky.

Find the Little Cloud near giant Pegasus:
Andromeda, in chains, whirlpools the sky.

Were you there in 1968?
The crystal ball, crowds shouting *choose a sky!*

When our train stops, a frozen clump of night
Darkens all the finest jewels of sky.

The conductor says *Your destination's here!*
Bundle your children. Go accuse the sky.

Who can stop the wind from blowing through?
A distant farmhouse. Prayer. The hulls of sky.

Twenty dollars turns the stove and wheels.
Do our petty bribes amuse the sky?

At the station, weeds devouring iron.
An old guard wistfully patrols the sky.

Czechoslovakia, Siham, does not exist.
Don't you read your charts, the news, the sky?

First published in *Measure*, Winter 2015.

Siham Karami
Lawnmowing in America

Morning aria, oil magic
in a lawnmower craw—
a growing *omm* ...

Come, iron clang, come,
lowing wail.
I'm a cowgirl gone geomancer
along Magnolia Lane.

An angle, arc, or line
can winnow an acre
on inner glimmer.
No more corn-mangler,
acorn-wrangler.

We wager grace on loam
no crow-caw can ace
nor worm lace,
a warm clime
no ice-claw can maim.

Mow carnal logic.
We win a larger realm:
wine, romance, an elm
awning, a miracle mile-long
lime wing aglow
in new rain.
Crown me, angel—aim low.

This author-invented form utilizes only the letters in the title for the entire poem. No single word may use any letter in a frequency greater than it is used in the title. (Variation on a Lipogram) First published in *The Comstock Review*, Spring/Summer 2015, Volume 29:1.

Siham Karami

To a Birch Tree

Remember, my old white-trunked companion,
when I tore off your bark, peeled it down to deerskin
where my family wrote messages we'd wedge
inside the cabin's screen door?

Your leaves sifted light and winds,
a conduit between the earth and sky,
and the outhouse's fecal larder buzzed
with its gang of bowery blueflies hanging out.

In deeper, dragonflies jousting
behind medieval pines' cathedral dark.

Then I turned to take root in a new
earth tempered by human hands,
producing perfumed mangoes, tall cane stalks,
guavas bursting open, stands of palms
like Roman columns—crowned,
and hung with crisp-juicy red and yellow dates.
A garden—sacrilege to call it woods.

Yet unkempt forest still surrounds my heart
where you, guarding sprays of weeds
and grass no scythe could conquer,
harbor wasps and insect dulcimers.

Here in your wild heaven, overgrown,
the sight of white trunks shivers through like love.

Jared Carter

Spinnaker

Set free, it snapped and caught the light
 within the wind
And whirled upward in a flight
 of color thinned

To orange and blue. The fabric spilled
 against the sky,
Held by a strong breeze unfulfilled
 that sought to try

Its bonds, and strike a balance there—
 and held us too,
Like gulls suspended in mid-air.
 And then we flew.

Jared Carter

Swifts

Climb, and then begin to fall—sleep,
drop down through miles
Of emptiness, where nothing keeps
that can beguile

The night, where dark interstices
relinquish dreams
That cannot stay. Above, perceive
the milky stream

Alive with endless light; below,
the ocean's sheen—
And by such falling come to know
what holds between.

Sally Nacker

Robin

When you first see spring, announce it clearly:
cheerily, cheery, cheerily.
Keep your flight note high, and trilled.
Hop. Sing with a will.

Let your orange heart shine. April
rains will loosen the earth for you, thrill
you with sweet worms. Seek open ground,
green lawn, insect sound.

That said, safe blessedness of home is best.
Seek a private tree for your own nest.
Build. Gather grasses, mud, and hair—
quietly. Take care.

Sally Nacker

Night Snow

for Robert Francis

The bird feeder hangs above night snow.
Below, footprints— shadowy, slow—
come and go. Only I know
the beauty of each moonlit hollow.
The prints are mine. It is song they follow.

David Landrum

The Serbian Doctor I Knew who
Was in a Concentration Camp, 1973

He was transported at age 18,
new married with a child;
put on a train and carried off
to some camp with
an unpronounceable name—
a *work* camp, not a *death* camp.
All the same, his family died.
After that, the Germans moved him
from job site to job site,
and in Vienna he asked
a friendly guard to look
the other way while he walked off,
trusting no bullet would follow him.
Not Jewish, he came
from the next rank up
of peoples the Nazis slated to erase
(the Slavs). He found refuge
in an Orthodox church, got to
the allied lines and joined
the British army as an interpreter.
Of course, I spoke excellent German,
he said. His voice got husky telling
his tale. He wiped a tear out of
his eye: *But, you know, all of that
sounds like a fairy tale to people now,*
he told us, there in the racquet club
where I worked, where he played tennis
with other doctors from our town.

The camps and World War II
had sat in history less than 30 years—
a story brutal as the worst
the Brothers Grimm had ever written down,
and more ephemeral than a bread-crumbs trail.

David Landrum

The Mystery of Glass

... a little bird

Before the mystery of glass

—Robert Frost

I had no way to know back then
how sin
went deep, like pilings sunk
down in the sand
where sea met land
where air was drunk
with seagull cries
and lies.

I could not read the depth of pain
(like rain)
that fell to drown my hope
with anger's whip:
a sunken ship,
a hangman's rope.
I could not sing
strangling.

One day I saw a sparrow seek
with its beak
a moth, not knowing glass
closed off the way
to seize the prey.
It came to pass:
the same would be
for me.

Katherine Hoerth
Starbucks Bravado

While in the Starbucks line, I watch a plague
of grackles on the patio outside,
squawking over hunks of old biscotti.
A male ruffles up his feathers, fluffs
his chest to show the world that he's the biggest
as his iridescent body shines—
beautiful beneath the noonday sun.

Inside, I'm worlds away from all that heat—
this land of half-and-half and honey, fraps
and wifi, where the jazz is smooth, the lights
are dim, the scent of coffee fills the air
like blooming jasmine at the peak of spring.

A man belts out the birdsong of his order—

Caramel macchiato, over ice,
a trenta, and quadruple the espresso,

puffs his chest and glances back at me.
He lifts the barbell of his unkept eyebrow,
adjusts his khaki shorts around his belly
that jiggles with bravado as he scoffs.

I order mine to-go—

A tall house coffee, hold the cream and sugar.

A scrappy-looking grackle, dressed in brown
pecks at the cement outside the shop,
her yellow eyes are on the shimmering feathers

of the male as he struts and flaps.
She feasts on crumbs of sweetness as he preens.
Mr. Trenta sits down at the bar
alone and gulps his coffee through a straw
with beams of sunshine haloing his hair.

Katherine Hoerth

The Goddess on Laundry Day

The day has come—she's let it get so bad
she's down to her last pair of underwear.
She heaves a sigh while staring at her pile—
a mountain made from all of her mistakes.

She knows this task is going to take all day—
washing the scent of last night from her bedsheets,
the scarlet stain of marinara sauce
that seeped into her stretchy yoga pants,
the smell of smoke that soaked into her bra,
the coffee from her bathrobe that she wore
for three days straight, the beer she spilled all over
her skinny jeans, the stench of his cologne
fouling her favorite dress, the one
she wears too often when she wants to feel
beautiful when looking in the mirror.

But after laundry day, she'll have a chance
to get this right again, to sort the chaos
of her wardrobe out. She separates
the colors from the whites, the delicates
from her unmentionables. She pours the bleach,
the soap. She lets the washer flood with foam.
The drain will swallow all the dirt away.

The dryer belts a song of victory—
she pulls her satin bedsheets out, they catch
the laundromat's florescent light and shine.
She holds them to her nose and takes a whiff
of bleach, of lavender, of nothing else.

She promises tomorrow will be better,
to never let her laundry basket fill.

She promises, she promises, she swears.

Gary Whitby

A Broken Sky

And so God finds you buried in your life.
The woods are gone. The trees are all cut down.
You wait for days, until the sky is wet.
The clouds were where you always liked to live.

She sat beside you, underneath that oak
Remember how she buried you that day
Inside a fuzzy cloud that touched the ground?
You waited for days, until the sky was wet.

And then you wandered, wandered all those years
After that death and found the woods were gone?
You wore a coat of words, which kept you warm
Inside a fuzzy cloud that touched the ground.

And what is God but words, except He's not.
She sat beside you. Then she said your name.
A day is nothing till your words ignite,
A coat of words once kept you warm all night.

You used to think that love was like a stone,
That God was there and that the sky would stay
In place and that the oaks would keep their place
And nest the days, where words and suns ignite.

And maybe God *was* what was always there,
That coat of words you wore when she was gone,
A broken sky with fallen clouds and birds:
Remembrances of trees, *that tree, that place.*

Gary Whitby
World's End

The world will not be stopped from having ended,
Nor can it be stopped from ending again.
It ends regardless if we're here or dead

and happens whether out of good or sin,
maybe on the road back home from work
or maybe in the dream we're driving in.

It's by your mailbox, where the letters lurk,
and at your wife's sweet mouth now when she speaks.
It's in the eye of the local grocery clerk,

Who says his wife's been gone for "three whole weeks."
You see it in the kids, who beg for less
of breaking of things and cursing, where it reeks

inside their father's eyes, as anger bests
his better nature and things start to fly
crashing against the walls, when time infests

their minds with images that cannot die—
no matter how they struggle to forgive,
no matter what the reasons' where or why,

no matter how they, living, cease to live.

Charles Hughes
Before Our Eyes

The plane climbed higher and higher through solid charcoal
Cloud swatches, evidently stacked to the heavens.
We'd left a wake-up call, then canceled it,
Arrived a little early at the airport,
And stopped for coffee and to share a bagel.

What color is the light inside an airport?
The reading lights on board the plane seemed warmer,
Though maybe this was only an effect
Of sitting side by side with shoulders pressed
Together, yours and mine, for double warmth.

I couldn't read. I'd seen a poster taped
To an art museum's outside wall, all image:
A man and boy—the boy looks five or six—
Probably refugees—father and son?—
Some out-of-focus others—water, sun.

The boy wears high-top running shoes, and he
(I thought) is dead, or will be soon, from drowning.
He lies limp in his father's outstretched arms,
Held out as if for proof. The father's eyes—
No longer eyes, bright dots—have caught the sun.

We'd land, cab our way home, find our routines,
Seek shelter in them. Images would flow
Before our eyes of peace turned violent.
What God must see I couldn't bear to know.
I came to prize the dark gray of the clouds—

The mood it made for under reading lights—
Being wrapped within a world a world away.
Next to you there, reading, I drifted off ...
And slept ... until sunlight flamed in the window.
I woke again to the revealed day.

Marly Youmans

Epistle to Robert Walser

Toes turned outwards like ballerinas and ducks,
Walking the silvery, scaled dragon-back
Of the frozen Susquehanna River
That winds through trees and clambers over slabs
Onto the frozen lake called Glimmerglass,
I am willing to be enchanted, spelled
To silence seven years, to weaving cold
Into cloaks and sarks for seven brothers,
Spelled to speaking cloud from my cold mouth
To dropping ice and frost flowers from lips,
To bearing a child with hair as blue as dusk
And eyes like stars that bloom in darkest pools,
Though the years have passed since this body made
A child or longed for nothing more than greens
From the hex-garden of Rapunzel's witch—
There's our magic tower now, the stone-built
Kingfisher, like a mailed arm clenching cold.
Everything's so different for you, for me.
You look at boughs and see the twiggy hands
That beg for solace from the sky or us,
Perhaps, and the stretched-out clouds seem rigid
And darkening in fear of fingerholds.
You are afraid, you who believe nothing,
And I, who have known trolls and villainy,
Even my own, who can and will believe
Impossible things before breakfast, I
Am not. Some spell of beauty grips me fast,
Some dream that says this world's icebound, spellbound,
That I can speak in syllables of cloud,
That twilight's deepening the world to blue,
That water-walking is no fantasy.

Marly Youmans
The Mystic Page

A sheet of paper, fluttering across the road,
Mistaken in the dark for a small animal,
Damp and folded lengthwise, limber like an ermine
And white against the snowy street and slant of flakes.
It seemed to call me on to follow close behind,
And so I trotted after like a curious child
To where the creature quivered in the thorns and fled
By gusting flights into the open field—to hide
Its fluent whiteness in a greater, stiller white.
When did I know it was no living thing at all,
But only paper, pricked with words or blank as snow?
And yet I followed on without a stop and meant
To catch the page and find out what the words might say
To me, or else what blankness might report instead,
And wandered on, out of all knowing, till I grasped
No place or time and only whiteness made of stars,
Infinitely varied crystal, dust-hearted snow.
And yet I didn't wish to stop, despite the cold,
Because I had a thought that I would find the page
And lift it in my hands and find it was alive.
Then it would nestle in my arms—perhaps a cat
Would look at me with one gold eye and one blue eye,
The only colors in the field of falling white
Under the reflective silver eye of the moon.

Robert Donohue
Long Time A Child

For Kendra Mendoza

I have an only child
But don't know how I got her.
She made a frightful scene
The time that I forgot her.

Her faults are not her own,
We share the same disorder.
It's ours, but then it's not,
I'm glad she's not my daughter.

I led her by the hand
And if she will support me
I never will grow old.
Today I'm almost forty.

Robert Donohue
19th Century Lesbian Vampires

For Ashley

They must have names; they must be grand and showy:
Call one Hippolyta, the other Chloe.
They spend the daytime safely in their bed.
An antique portrait hangs above its head
That has two peepholes drilled right through the eyes,
Behind it is a perfect perch for spies.
(One watches as our couple lies together)
The vivid colors of a peacock feather
Pervade the whole boudoir; then comes the night.
Their coach flies down the country roads, a blight
To peaceful dreaming. Paris comes in view,
The turnpike changes to a crooked rue
As they pull up in front of their hotel.
They stalk the gambling halls and bars (where dwell
The dicey gentlemen) until they find
A victim that Dame Fortune left behind.
Tonight our heroines are to his liking,
Right to the end, and then the fatal striking.
They dump his empty body in the river
Believing that their mission will deliver
The living to a happy death. It's morning,
But they've prepared. To heed their curse's warning
They sleep; they do not dream; they do not miss it.
Tomorrow night they'll come and make their visit.

Claudia Serea

On a windy night

All the windows are open.
Night flows into the house

and layers cold strips of air
up to the ceiling.

Invisible feet run,
leap.

The curtains move.
The chandelier clinks.

Who's passing through
the dining room?

The draft rolls up
between the first floor and the attic,

and the swinging kitchen door creaks
as if someone pushed it.

Heavy heads,
tangled legs,

we're sleeping on the couch,
TV on.

And the house sways in the wind,
hanging by a thread

from the moon.

Ernest Hilbert

February Song

The brash knell of an angry bell choir, clangs
Of a belfry at the height of a hurricane,
Or just a trolley pronouncing its next stop—
She works to fix a worn-out wind chime, hangs
It by a finger so it tolls a haphazard refrain,
All gongs and happy ringing, then lets it drop,
Its song abruptly cut off with a clatter.
It makes me wonder what remaining detours
We have before the end. I do not know
Much, or understand the things that matter,
But this dawn I want to learn. Out-of-doors
A thin rain fastens banks of last night's snow
With ice, sealing soft powder into steel
Casings, freezing a million shapes to one,
Like the memories that make us, and I
Am failing too, like the light that already feels
As if it's fading before the small sun
We can't see has even climbed the sky.

Published in *Caligulan*, 2015

Ernest Hilbert

In-School Suspension

We sweated and dozed like barbarians
In a deer-hide tent at the height of spring's
Roasting heat, crowded in for various
Affronts, crimes, and faults. When one among us

Was handed, from the disciplinarian's
Office, a pink paper slip, listing things
He'd done that were deemed truly nefarious
(To us hilarious) and saying he was

Expelled altogether from school, he heaved
The heavy 1950s stapler from
Our minder's desk and hammered the paper
To his head. The first two staples rebounded

And clicked on the tiles. We were almost relieved
When the third clinched, pressed deeper by his thumb,
And seized subcutaneous hold. This caper
Did it: We were, for once, astounded.

With the form draped over one eye, he smiled
For us, turning slowly in the humidity,
A satanic clown, our own Spartacus
For a sparkling second we won't forget.

We roared and roared in our hot galley, piled
Up laughs till they hid any stab of pity.
We all knew he wouldn't even be missed
As, clutched by the wrist, he loosed one last threat

And was hauled from the room and the door boomed
Shut. We never saw him again. One by one,
We turned our faces downward and resumed,
With the dust he'd raised churning in the sun.

First published in *The New Criterion*, 2010. Republished in *Caligulan*, 2015

Ernest Hilbert

Easter

The smoky dawn lights miles of Jersey sludge.
The route I take toward the ancient church
Is forsaken, more so than I remembered—
Lots for sale, blocks to let, and what won't budge:
Old liquor stores, strip clubs, and miles of marsh.
A song revives me after I've entered.
Still, I sag inside my chalk-striped suit of ash,
With pink at neck, a body in a bog,
Pressed down in dark by centuries of soil.
Lilies massed at altar will soon be trash.
Weak light strains through stained glass as if in fog.
Bouquets become weed beds. I'm pearl and shell,
A cur cast off and far from pit and throne,
From dawn and dearth, from brother, ghost, and son.

Published in *Caligulan*, 2015

Biographies

Mark Blaeuer's poems have appeared in numerous journals, including *Light*, *Measure*, and *Whistling Shade*. Earlier pieces can be found in *Fragments of a Nocturne* (White Violet, 2014). He lives near Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Jared Carter's sixth book, *Darkened Rooms of Summer: New and Selected Poems*, was published by the University of Nebraska Press. He lives in Indiana.

Terese Coe's poems and translations have appeared in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Cincinnati Review*, *The Hopkins Review*, *Metamorphoses*, *New American Writing*, *Ploughshares*, *Poetry*, *Threepenny Review*, *Agenda*, *Crannog*, *The Moth*, *New Writing Scotland*, *Poetry Review*, *the TLS*, and *The Stinging Fly*, among other international journals and anthologies. Her poem "More," heli-dropped across London as part of the 2012 London Olympics Rain of Poems, appears in her latest collection, *Shot Silk*, which was nominated for the 2017 Poets Prize. For further information and links, see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terese_Coe.

Robert Donohue's poetry has appeared in *The Raintown Review*, *American Arts Quarterly* and is forthcoming in *Two Bridges Review*. He lives on Long Island NY.

Michael Estabrook is retired. No more useless meetings under florescent lights in stuffy windowless rooms, able instead to focus on making better poems when he's not, of course, endeavoring to satisfy his wife's legendary Honey-Do List. His latest collection of poems is *Bouncy House*, edited by Larry Fagin (Green Zone Editions, 2016).

Carol Lynn Stevenson Grellas is an eight-time Pushcart nominee as well as a four-time Best of the Net nominee. She is the 2012 winner of the Red Ochre Press Chapbook contest with her manuscript *Before I Go to Sleep*. Her work has appeared in a wide variety of online and print magazines including: *The Yale Journal for Humanities in Medicine*, *Poets and Artists*, *War, Literature and the Arts* and many more. Her latest collection of poetry titled, *Things I Can't Remember to Forget*, will be forthcoming from Prolific Press. She has authored several chapbooks along with her full-length collection of poetry: *Hasty Notes in No Particular Order*, published by Aldrich Press in 2013. According to family lore she is a direct descendant of Robert Louis Stevenson. www.clgrellaspoeetry.com

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident. Recently published in *Schuylkill Valley Journal*, *Stillwater Review* and *Big Muddy Review* with work upcoming in *Louisiana Review*, *Columbia Review* and *Spoon River Poetry Review*.

Elise Hempel's poems have appeared in many journals over the years, and her full-length book, *Second Rain*, is available from Able Muse Press.

Ernest Hilbert lives in Philadelphia. His book *Caligulan* was selected as winner of the 2017 Poets' Prize.

Katherine Hoerth is the author of four poetry books. Her most recent collection, *Goddess Wears Cowboy Boots*, won the Helen C. Smith Prize from the Texas Institute of Letters. Her work has been included in journals such as *Mezzo Cammin: A Journal of Formal Poetry by Women*, *Raintown Review*, and *THINK Journal*. She teaches literature and creative writing at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and serves as poetry editor of *Devilfish Review*.

Jan D. Hodge's poems have appeared in many print and online journals and anthologies, including *The North American Review*, *New Orleans Review*, *American Arts Quarterly*, and *Iambs & Trochees*, and in the 5th Edition of *Western Wind*. His book *Taking Shape*, a collection of *carmina figurata*, was published in 2015 by Able Muse Press, and *The Bard &*

Scheherazade Keep Company, a volume of double dactyls, also from Able Muse Press, in winter 2017.

Charles Hughes is the author of the poetry collection, *Cave Art* (Wiseblood Books, 2014), and was a Walter E. Dakin Fellow at the 2016 Sewanee Writers' Conference. His poems have appeared in *America*, *The Christian Century*, the *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *Measure*, the *Sewanee Theological Review*, and elsewhere. He worked as a lawyer for thirty-three years before his retirement and lives with his wife in the Chicago area.

Mike James has been published in over one hundred magazines across the United States. His work has appeared in such places as *Negative Capability*, *Soundings East*, *Chiron Review*, and *Birmingham Poetry Review*. Among his nine poetry collections are *Peddler's Blues*, *The Year We Let The House Fall Down*, *Elegy In Reverse*, and *Past Due Notices*. A new book of prose poems, *My Favorite Houseguest*, will be published in the summer of 2017 by FutureCycle Press. He has previously served as an associate editor of *The Kentucky Review*, as an associate editor of Autumn House Press, as the publisher of Yellow Pepper Press, and as the Visiting Writer In Residence at the University of Maine, Fort Kent.

Joan Johnson's poems have been in *Reed*, *Mediterranean Review*, *Sou'wester*, *Artist/Writer*, *Message in a Bottle* (UK), and many more publications.

Siham Karami lives in Florida and has published work in such places as *The Comstock Review*, *Measure*, *Able Muse Review*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, *The Rumpus*, *Peacock Journal*, *The Turnip Truck(s)*, *Mezzo Cammin*, *Think*, *Antiphon*, *thethepoetry*, *Sukoon magazine*, and *New Verse News*, among other venues and anthologies. A three-time Pushcart Prize nominee, twice nominated for Best of the Net, and a semifinalist in *Naugatuck River Review's* narrative poetry contest, she blogs at: sihamkarami.wordpress.com.

David Landrum's poetry has appeared, mostly recently, in *Measure*, *The Dark Ones*, *Quixotica*, *Three Drops from a Cauldron*, and *Think*.

Sally Nacker's poetry appears in *Mezzo Cammin: An Online Journal of Formalist Poetry by Women*, *Grey Sparrow Journal*, *The Orchards*, and is forthcoming in *The Red Wheelbarrow Literary Magazine*, and *The Fourth River (Tributaries)*. She also has a poem riding the city bus! This year, she was invited to compose a poem for a Poetry/Jazz event with musician Jim Clark. A current participant in the ekphrasis V project at the Fairfield University Museum, she wrote a poem on a painting by artist and art conservator Michael Gallagher. With her first book, *Vireo* (Kelsay Books, 2015) she was invited as a featured poet to the inaugural Poetry by the Sea: A Global Conference. Her chapbook, *Night Snow* (also published by Kelsay Books), is forthcoming in the fall, 2017. Please visit her website at www.sallynacker.com.

Leslie Schultz (Northfield, Minnesota) is the author of a collection of poetry, *Still Life with Poppies: Elegies* (Kelsay Books, 2016). Her poetry, fiction, and essays have appeared in a number of journals and anthologies, including *Able Muse*, *Light*, *Mezzo Cammin*, *The Orchards Poetry Journal*, *Swamp Lily Review*, *Poetic Strokes Anthology*, *Third Wednesday*, *The Madison Review*, *The Midwestern Quarterly*, and *The Wayfarer*; in a chapbook, *Living Room* (Midwestern Writers' Publishing House); and three of her poems have been stamped into the sidewalks of her home town. Schultz is also the author of two middle-grade novels featuring a home-schooled main character: *The Howling Vowels* (2011) and *And Sometimes Y* (2013), both from Do Life Right Press. She has twice had winning poems in the Maria W. Faust sonnet contest (2013, 2016). Schultz posts poems, photographs, and essays on her website: www.winonamedia.net.

Claudia Serea is a Romanian-born poet who immigrated to the U.S. in 1995. Her poems and translations have appeared in *Field*, *New Letters*, *5 a.m.*, *Meridian*, *Word Riot*, *Apple Valley Review*, among others. Serea is the author of *Angels & Beasts* (Phoenicia Publishing, Canada, 2012), *A Dirt Road Hangs From the Sky* (8th House Publishing, Canada, 2013), *To Part Is to Die a Little* (Cervena Barva Press, 2015), and *Nothing Important Happened Today* (Broadstone Books, 2016). Serea co-hosts The Williams

Readings poetry series in Rutherford, NJ. She is a founding editor of *National Translation Month*. More at cserea.tumblr.com.

J.D. Smith's fourth collection, *The Killing Tree*, was published in October, and in 2007, he was awarded a Fellowship in Poetry from the National Endowment for the Arts. Smith's individual poems have appeared in publications including *Able Muse*, *American Arts Quarterly*, *Light, Measure* and *Texas Review*.

Gary Whitby is a professor of English at Tarrant County College in Fort Worth, Texas. He received an MFA from the Iowa Writers Workshop, studying with Donald Justice, Richard Murphy, and Marvin Bell, and also earned a PhD in Mass Communication from the Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communications. Gary has published poems in *First Things*, *Slant*, and *The American Literary Review*. His first volume of poetry, *The Weather of One Another*, is available on Amazon, and he is currently working on a second manuscript, *Invisible Waters*.

Marly Youmans is the author of thirteen books of poetry and fiction. Her most recent poetry collections are *The Foliate Head* (UK: Stanza Press, 2012), published in the same year as the long adventure-in-verse, *Thaliad* (Montreal: Phoenicia Publishing), and *The Throne of Psyche* (Mercer University Press, 2011).