

*Long
River
Run*

2011

A Poetry Anthology
By members of the Connecticut Poetry Society

Edited by Christine Beck and Sarah Rizzuto

Long River Run

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Poetry Contests Sponsored by The Connecticut Poetry Society
The Connecticut River Review

2010 Al Savard Contest

First Place Winner

Elaine Zimmerman
Hamden

Looking for a Place to Lie Down
Providence, Rhode Island

In the museum store, the hand-crafted bear turns wooden
face upward, one leg forward. Face so earnest, inquisitive.
A slight push and the screws turn the head down, foot up.
Named Ursa Major, for the Great Bear in the night.
High or low in the sky, his paws walk the heavens.
They say he looks for a place to lie down before winter.

Next display, an insect with yellow and purple markings;
zigzagged like an early sunset. Silken wings and shimmering
under a glass dome. But screws and dials attach a clock.
Minutes trap this tropical beauty as if time could pull down
iridescence, hook the metallic green of flight from under.

Across from the art museum, Miss Maddy Vido walks
the red light. Her shopping cart with all she needs by the river.
Sewing box, Reader's Bible, can opener. A plaid blanket and
one sharp knife, just in case. Chi Chi, her terrier, walks
by her side. Tent City members fish in the late afternoon.

Cars cross the bridge above the river. Few see the wet
shirts hanging on makeshift lines below. Fourteen tents
and displaced workers. Here one day, gone the next.
Joe's Pizzeria drops off day-old pasta and meatballs,
a few calzone. Artists visit and film the homeless.
Drink beer; talk the talk, watch despair.

Touch the head of a man who has lost everything.
Touch it slightly and the face turns abruptly back.
Glazed, as if everything is suddenly under glass
or as far away as the Great Bear in the night,
just looking for a place to lie down.

2010 Al Savard Contest

Second Place Winner

Tom Nicotera
Bloomfield

Grandma

Short and portly
in black dress, always black,
she spoke so few words in English,
so many in Italian, Calabrese,
from a stern mouth, always stern,
lips a tight black line across her face
and hair a gray oval braided on her head.
“Eat, eat,” she would say. “You’re too skinny,”
and she’d smile and pile my plate
with deliciously scented meatballs,
cold and firm, with a taste
irrecoverable in my adult years,
a flavor harbored only in memories.
Then there was the ice cream,
a huge mound in a white bowl,
the creamiest vanilla I’ve ever known.

She would say to my father, “he’s too skinny.”
And I was—so thin only suspenders
could hold up my pants.
While she admonished my father,
all around me Blessed Virgin Mary plaster statues
with gold crowns stared at my bony flesh,
and on the cross above the hutch
Jesus wept for me
and for all of us lost
or soon to be lost
as a family of cousins, aunts and uncles
who gathered at Thanksgiving and Christmas
laughing and eating and gossiping
till one Christmas Grandma died
and the gatherings died too.

I rarely saw my cousins, aunts or uncles
again. I grew up and grew fat
but almost never heard Italian,
and soon by my high school years
my father forgot the words he knew
when he brought me to Grandma, to ice cream,
to the sad-eyed, blue-robed Mary statues,
to the meatballs of forgotten recipes.

2010 Al Savard Contest

Third Place Winner

Lucile Blanchard
Middletown

Second Cutting

I still mow this lot beneath the power lines,
keep my tractor running with baling wire and lots of sweat,
use my pickup truck to bring the bales back to the barn,
empty now except for some curiosities I keep to show
at county fairs, Brahman, Friesian, Alderney,
all bones and hard rumps.
The cornfields were the last to go to house lots.
I don't miss the corn, a fussy crop, but hay?
It don't seem that long ago when I stood on top of the load
working in the hay with my pitchfork, fourteen feet to the ground
where Buddy and Jake raised their forkloads to me.
Buddy's wife, a college girl, steered the truck in low gear over ruts,
afraid she'd knock me off. Hay dust covered my skin
like perfume When we unloaded into the barn, the sweet heat
rose past my face as I packed hay under the eaves
for my cows, slow-breathing soft-skinned Jerseys, Guernseys.
Gone now, Buddy too. Damn hard work at the time
and yet I miss it. Young families built on my land.
Their kids circle my place on bikes and stare at my odd cows,
wondering where the milk is. The weather today
is what I used to dream about. I'd wake in the dark
and know I had a hundred acres ripe in hay
and then I'd hear the rain.

The 2010 Lynn Decaro Contest Winners

First Place Winner

Susanna Jivotovski
Farmington
Miss Porter's School

Daedalus and Icarus: Demise of the Dreamers

Those waxy feathers rise and fall with grace,
My wings beat fast and wind sweeps past my face.
To fly the line between our sky and sea,
Is something altogether new to me.
Swing too low and ocean salt will harden,
My means of transport; something Dad won't pardon.
My wings will melt if I soar up too high,
The hot sun shows no mercy, and so I
Am sealed in fate by wax stamps and thereby,
Am sure to fail my father—I will die.
Perhaps this means that men cannot be birds,
Dreamers can only seize the clouds with words.
Universal laws of gravitation
Keep us from attaining aviation.
So here I am (or here I was): a sign,
I'm martyred by the golden rays that shine.
I serve to warn the thinkers—those who try
To scheme and plan and dream of ways to fly.
We'll have our hours in the sky, but not
Until we breathe our last and turn to rot.
It's then that we'll find peace among the clouds,
To dance with angels, gods, heavenly crowds.
For now we turn our gaze to worlds above,
We envy sparrows, crows, the owl, the dove.

The 2010 Lynn Decaro Contest Winners

Second Place Winner

Elena Rose Unschuld
Sandy Hook
Westover School

Before Daybreak

Out walking before daybreak,
Before the wind shakes awake the slumbering trees
And the morning stars pull their indigo dresses
Over their bright bodies,
Only the steam rises from storm drains,
Like phantoms, and the headlights of cars
Serve as small pools of frantic light
Like the lanterns of a search party
Out looking for someone
Who wandered off in her sleep.
She said she was seeking something
She could never quite remember.

The 2010 Lynn Decaro Contest Winners

Third Place Winner

Jillian Verzino
Waterbury

Reach

Have you ever met that child
who knows nothing of the world
but the chunk she's standing on?
The little girl who slips away
because she would rather escape
out your open back door
and climb your wanted oak
to ride the swaying branches
like the carousel in Watch Hill
that you always loved as a kid?
The one you would glide on
atop a porcelain pony, one sweaty hand
squeaking on the brass pole
as you stretch to grab the teasing ring
at every time around.
And after you'd get off the ride,
you'd wobble over to your mother's leg
and tug at her skirt, begging to go again,
in love with the wind whipping your knotted hair
as you passed life around you
and reached over and over again
for what no one, not even your mother,
could give you.

Carol Leavitt Altieri
Madison

The Coast of Kisses

At sunset, Long Island Sound's a glassy
sea thick with green plankton and lion's mane
jelly fish glistening phosphorescence

with each stroke of my arms and kick of my legs.
The horizon turns to crimson purple as I climb
up on gneiss rocks and then dive dizzying depths

of navy-colored water. Silver light of evening sky
glimmers. Red cedars cling to soil
on the island soaked by yesterday's rain.

Above, full-orbed moon;
ahead, sea stacks of stones emerge
in offshore waters, thrust upward by earth's fire.

The Sound meets the land, capturing
the shoreline and stealing sand.
Honing wild northern notes, a pair of loons

flying together blur past the pass the seaward jetty.
The sign I was searching for, the foreclosed
house on the island where winged monarchs heading

south once clung overnight, safe from the world,
conjures me and leads me to persevere.
Silhouettes appear like phantoms. We reach Tunxis Island,

I slink underwater and rise,
pull up on the flat rocks, careful not to lose my grip.
I want to be caressed by waves rising by a rustling

breeze. A crow flying overhead flings an uncanny
caw, caw, caw deriding and mocking my desires.
A long tanned hand reaches for mine.

We slither out by the dunes' dark side of spartina.
As if in a dream, the shore drowns to sounds
kissing the air.

Michael Ambrose
Trumbull

Races Remembered

I still recall the swift pace,
pursuing all things dreamed possible,
as my young breath
carrying no burden to hurry – chased life.

Easily the race moved with an effortless fury,
traveling surely in the timeless present;
confident in my purpose –
like a seedling bounding into an oak.
And once in the home sprint,
Time slowed as I finished quickly –

arms pumping,
lungs searing,
mind moving body
with fiery stokes,
Youth captured Today!
Never did I pause
to see if tomorrow was gaining on me.

But is there a purpose to the chase
when time inevitably overtakes,
and pursuer is now pursued?
Glory is no longer breathed
in the longer strain of present aches –
but in remembered victory laps that champions forsake.

Yes – it is the eternal chase to be fast,
to capture once more what is long past,
remembered dimly like a dream that awakes,
but never quite catching the prize
destined surely to be the last.

Evelyn Atreya
Guilford

Saved Soles

We are family, a close pair
same gender, same height, same shoe size.
You, a young right-handed doctor and artist
Me, well older, your left-handed mother

We both ride orange bikes
for transportation and for fun.
You ride for miles and miles in California.
In Connecticut I pedal to beach and harbor.

Knocked down from my bike
nearly six years ago
I badly broke my left leg.
But now, horrors, you email
your bike crashed, your right foot broken.

Attached to your email
a photo captioned "Spring Cleaning"
shows your closet floor
left shoes in a neat row
not a right mate in sight.

I remember a bin in my basement
storing left shoes saved, unused soles.
Right shoes were worn and thrown away
after months of right legged crutching.

"Save your pairs," I write back
"I will send you my leftover lefts
for your months ahead
with your right foot off the ground."

Sophie Barnes
Westport

Warning Signs

More dogs than people frolic on the beach today.
The puppies circle their elders who sniff at their youth.
The cool cement on the old stone wall
has eaten its words of warning to lovers
dripped there in tar letters winters ago:
"Before you love, first learn to walk in snow,
leaving no footprints."
The Onondaga chief has a new warning,
an ancient prophecy, brought by runners
down from the North, word of mouth.
"When the ice melts, and women's hearts
fare on the ground, the end is near."
"THE ICE IS MELTING," I can hear him say.
But I want to tell everyone about the women's hearts.
[Bah/dum, bah/dum;] They are on the bloody ground;
with the fallen dead [Ba-h-dum, ba ~ h dum; ba ~ d...]
The end IS Near. I believe them,
but keep on watching the young dogs playing,
thinking that the end is near a new beginning.

Joanne Bauer
Hartford

His Service

On a whim, I google the name
of a former friend who came to mind.
(This an ego-indulgence, wondering
in the inevitable comparisons of
professional lives, who will come up short).

A dedicated high school teacher, 20 years ago
Scott followed me to New York. On leaving CT,
his students showered him with gifts
(and I envied how beloved he was).

He to Columbia, I to NYU, for doctoral degrees
and whatever a big city would offer.
Markedly successful, Scott on graduation
became an Associate Dean.

Periodic lunches on the Upper West Side;
stories traded about our fathers who both
died that frigid February, fifteen years ago.

For many holidays after I moved from NY,
Scott and I exchanged letters;
but transitions led to lost contact and
unreliable updates from friends.

Expectant now, I search the Internet
anticipating articles, perhaps photos
of Scott in academia.

Eagerly reading the first reference:

Scott, Dean, beloved (of course!)
by students and colleagues... (my mind envious)

remembered on campus
in a public service... (my mind paused)

...remembered...in a public service.
Scott succumbed from injuries... (my mind numb)

...suffered in an automobile accident.
Scott was 49. (my heart crushed)

Matthew Bingham
West Hartford

Written on the Body, was really written on the Soul. She really loved into the words-- positive. She was building, spinning the wheel of wool, like no other. Shaking off flakes, rolling in dead leaves, brown. Written on the body words never read; steel words, stolen from her own heart - stolen away.

She was running in the night, a spring of cool water going back to the ground, into unearthed caverns, cyclically. I have walked over those caverns, unknowing; past graves of souls risen. Only the headstone remains with their name whispered by their grandchildren, casting a shadow. They will not see the light.

Clouds have formed and dissolved over them, reflecting the light away from them.

Stealing the light.

Lucile Blanchard
Middletown

Working

I insert myself into the machinery
of the day, careful to avoid the cogs,
my tasks oiled by faxes read,
voice mail answered. Belts and pulleys
drive us onward with hydraulic
pressure from above to brake
the impetuous deed. God is buried
in the In Box under memos
about taxes and early retirement.
Free will is not allowed beyond
the day's minutiae. God help us
if we raise our voices. When He
thought the Big Bang, was this
on His mind as well?

Monday morning, the red sun lurches
up to dominate the unkempt sky,
a juggernaut that flattens the day
hour by hour until I slither
home in the blue distillation of dusk.
The clank and bluster of this life
rattle about my head, feeding
the child who loved to build towers
in order to knock them down. Complain,
yes, but try to take me away.
I march to the sun while the seasons
escape like water down the drain,
imagining that I can step aside
and let the parade go thundering past.

David G. Boston
Huntington

Vows Renewed

On the back porch
a warm evening breeze
sets the wind chimes ringing.
We realize we must bid him farewell.

Come with me
across the silent room
and out through the
sliding glass doors into the garden.

Where they wait under
the dogwood tree it's
blossoms in full flower
petals crimson and pink.

He and She standing on
the green cut lawn
amongst the red roses
He tended last.

Witness are we to the
blessings of love renewed
of life's closing and shadows of the
night showing upon his fallow face.

Here in this quiet place
with their circle of friends and family
bearing witness again to pledges
remembered and dreams fulfilled.

In this peaceful place beneath
a deepening blue sky, we offer flowers
with words that somehow seem empty and
useless, save this final act of vows renewed.

Polly Brody
Southbury

Fire Bull

Heated air puddles these cobblestones—
ephemeral mercury—
and on the balconies, geraniums
gush blood-bright.
Men have been drinking
brute wine since noon.

The bull frets in his pen,
twitching under the light touch of flies,
tolerates his groom who clamps
upon his horns the rack of tin,
its weight of direful paste.
Doom gathers in the street beyond.

His groom lights fuses,
whips him through a gate.
Fire Bull plunges, spitting flame,
whirligigs of flame,
into a blitz of truncheons.
Men screaming toro! throw punches.

Fire Bull runs, bawling
under his corona.
Laborers, hidalgos, voyeurs from abroad
beat him through the streets
grunting, gasping,
their eyes crazed as his.

When he goes down
youths leap with knives,
scrambling beneath them
the bull can't rise.
Lancinated flesh, livid with terror-toxin
hangs from their butcher hooks.

Brought to their tables,
he will be furious meat.

Mario Cavallo
Meriden

As Time Goes By
(Based on a song from the film Casablanca)

Romance still flourishes
In misty eyes
Searching for answers.

"Play it again, Sam,
For old time's sake."

Ghosts lurk in lowered eyes
Smoke circling and clouding the air
Caution thrown to the wind
The past clouds the present
Former lovers still intrigued
Questions left unanswered.

Champagne corks popped.

"Here's looking at you, kid."

"We'll always have Paris."

"Of all the gin joints in the world..."

Curfew-blackout-The French Resistance-
A planned escape almost foiled-

"Major Strasser has been shot;
Round up the usual suspects."

Idealism restored
Romance still flourishes
As time goes by.

Patricia E. Christie-Brooks
Manchester

An Old Lady's Secret Meeting With Her Lover

I, lounging on the sofa,
Stringing words upon the page,
Was Grandma sitting.
My sister-in-law just gone.
When down the hallway,
Her gait swaying as if on stage,
Her body bent with the weight of eighty years,
Grandma came from her bed.

"I want to go to Church."
She simply said.
I leaned in, gently telling her so:
"I don't think we are supposed to go."
"Why not?"
"You could fall, Have another heart attack."
Quite precise. When so often scattered.
Her thoughts rang:

"It will happen when it happens. Here or there.
When it's time to see my Lord,
Don't hold me here with prayer."
I nodded. She continued.
As if just noticing,
The mundane things of life:
"My dress won't fit.
Where did that weight go?

Here. Tuck this tissue under my breast.
Snap this around my neck. Hurry.
Church's starting. It's ten thirty.
Where is my hat? No. That one's blue.
In the corner, the black one.
Grab my cane too.
Help me down the stairs. I can make it.
Whoa ... Just a minute to catch my breath.

The car's so far away.
Quick, bring it closer.
Help lift my foot now.
Tuck me in.
Ooooh... my nails need painting.
Can't go like this.
Quick! Bring the polish from my dresser.
Steady now."

Finally on our way,
I guide the car close to the steps.
One at a time ...
We climb ...
The usher took her arm.

“In the back.” I softly plead.
“She won’t let me.”
Mouthed back, instead.

The music swelled.
Clapping to the beat.
Her labored steps,
Feet after feet ...
To her place of honor:
The front pew.
Her mouth smiled. Her eyes twinkled,
With the light of one just wooed.

In my chest,
Came the pitter pat.
All heads bowed:
“Thank you Lord,
For bringing our Mother to us.”
I thanked the Lord too,
For my small part,
In this clandestine tryst.

Cynthia Cimino
Manchester

a song of Flatbush and st pattys and the living and the dead

ha. lucky strikes
i smoked em, luckys for the longest time
they tasted of spice peppery
like the irishmen i loved
i swore them off a long time ago
you ask me why Ill tell ya they're too addictive like potato chips and satin drawers
you get useta them on your skin
til you come up fat and raw

i loved quite a few a the irish so you might say they was my specialty
was they lucky?
Maybe it was us that was lucky maybe me more in spite of the hard knocks
but i could dish em out too

they told you i was a piece of work in my day
did a mean jig at st paddys every year
irishmen still love the roundness of my ass how it quivers under the hand
and my mouth my voice the way I could sing & drink with the best & didn't stop til last call was done and lights
out

i been known to reach over a barstool to beat the crap outta some dumb hoor for giving my man the eye
one st paddys we sat on some kids hand in the backa the car, she sittin too close
between us drunker than alla us so she broke a finger (so she said
in bobby joyces car driving from o briens on flatbush
(that bucket a blood
to gilmores to moriaritys round and round and back again til bobby passed out
stunk up his car wit puke then bobbys wife came in started her bitchin while we ran off laughing
we never stopped til we shoulda stopped an hour before

irishmen are easy beauties tall soft skinned
fair as the first when the air is fresh and newly warmed by cool passing
tan freckles on pale silk hard
smart eyes lookin inside so even now you just gotta smile

two three i married one would lift me over his head for the sheer animal joy of his arms our lust the taste of
luckys & clouds & clams on the half shell with iced rheingolds on a beach
under a blood sun
both of us so hot running my hands up his chest over his arms through the softness of his hair
crawling into one another hangin on for dear life
not here he'd say but I wanted it
we made two Irishmen (the fat pink slippery kind) them not immune to the blessings and
the curse

two husbands was drunks
one wanted a mother to crawl back into

my men would and could charm pants off the pope
they sure charmed the pants offa me
yea i was lucky. lucky charms, they was
lucky as my luckys

left a taste in me

Joshua Conklin
Oxford

Darkness Falling

The monsters of youth
still live in the bogs of my skull.
Suction-cup tentacles
sticking to memories.

They creep into the corners of daydreams
windowpane horrors
scratching my cerebellum,
clawing forward.

But new terrors bury the old
and sit calmly
on my corpus callosum,

happy to wait.

They draw lines on my face,
pluck hairs from my skull,
and sing merrily
in time;

We all shall fade.
We all shall fade.

Ginny Lowe Connors
West Hartford

Gas, 1940
after Edward Hopper

Instead of a flag
on the tall pole, a white sign
swings back and forth, Mobil gas

and Pegasus poised
to leap past this bright emptiness,
fly beyond this road edged with sand

back to the realm of his birth,
that place wondrous strange.
Anything could happen there.

In an instant a woman turns
into a tree, a gargoyle, a fly.
A young man buckles his sandals,

stuffs a blade in his satchel
and follows the hero road
to death or immortality.

Pegasus could fly off
past that huddle of trees
into a story. His wings are spread—

but something stops him.
Every time.
It's the man, his loneliness,

the mortality of his bald head,
the way he leans into
the bubble-headed gas pumps

as if they could save him.
Across the narrow road the trees
are dark and thick—they crowd

in close. The man retreats
to a small white hut, straightens
the candy, freshens the coffee,

waits for the next stranger
to arrive. He glances up,
watches the road darken.

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Lorna Morris Cyr
Bristol

Boulders of Sun and Shadow

Ekphrasis poem for painting: "Boulders of Avila" by Peter Blume

Untouched solidarity
in endowment of light

Sparkles of marble dust explode
dimensions, shades, shapes appear

Beneath balanced fragments
fragile, tranquil consciousness

Verdant limbs claim renewal
grey veins branch toward demise

Fruit of flower begging
for mercy of rain

Ancient, ice sculptor, creator
of Saint Teresa's rock garden

Beneath delicate balance
artist sketches in sanctuary of sun

Feast of bread and wine await
spread by woman overshadowed

I am woman in obscurity of shadow
in triangle of precarious womb

Waiting, wanting for rebirth
into natural radiance

I want to climb beyond realm
break gravity of calm

Cry to the skies:
"Estoy Aqui"
"Estoy Aqui"
“

I am Here”
“I.....am here”

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Note: Under Spain's Franco dictatorship (1939-1975) the national state was eager to restrict women to the home and confine them to private sphere. Women's legal ability was greatly restricted and subjected to the authority of the father or the husband. Democracy was the revival of women's liberation movements cultural means of expression (1.) Peter Blume's description states that "The precariously piled rocks seem to threaten the tiny figures of the artist sketching and his wife laying out a picnic in the shadows." (2.) History of Avila: Avila was the birthplace of Saint Teresa Avila

Sandra C. Bishop Ebner
Litchfield

Selling Jesus

There is no doubt,
I did feel guilty
putting a price tag on Jesus
at my tag sale over the weekend.

I deliberated on how much
to ask. I wanted someone who would
want to buy a Jesus on a cross,
and the wood he is on is in good condition.

The nails in his hands
and feet are quite secure.
The top of the crucifix slides off,
reveals a place for candles, a small bottle
of holy water, the necessary ingredients
for the Last Rites.

Should I ask \$20.00 or \$2.00?

I think the Jesus itself is pure
Whitestone. The crown of thorns is
beautifully carved, and the way his face
tilts to the side, lowers slightly, just
enough to show his pain and compassion.

Maybe I am projecting onto this
particular Jesus, who no longer hangs
in the home of my mother, who looked so
beautiful lying near the window with
my sister on one side holding her hand
and I on the other side and I feel the final
two beats of her heart, her last
exhaling into some space
beyond where we are now.

Audrey Fitting
North Branford

Samuel's Large Hands Were Ready

to nurture his newborn son, after many
tranquil hours passed, where candles
flickered and he helped the midwife massage
his sweet wife Alma's back.

Family gathered in the large room
they chose to place the old iron horse
trough, deep and serviceable for
water birthing.

A tradition in Alma's family,
new to Sam, soon he held and
swaddled his son while
the love of such experience

let him know that on Shepherd
Street, all was well, and tonight
his Alma made miracles happen in a
vessel of warm water.

Meri Fleischman
Hamden

The Doll

On flea market table,
like an orphan waiting
for a new family,
she stares at me with bulging eyes—
lumpy body dressed in red and white stripes,
plastic head, painted-on black hair.

I pass by with my father,
look at doll, touch its hard face,
then quickly walk away. The man says
she's only a dollar, but
I don't want her.
Father smiles, picks up doll,
can't understand
my repulsion—
like a sponge, she holds sadness
of her former child—
now my sadness
the man, desperate,
offers her to me for fifty cents;
I look away.

My father says he'll buy it,
thinks I'll be happy,
but doesn't understand--
the doll, unwanted, homely,
already abandoned;
I will abandon it again.
Secret guilt will grow
inside me like a mother
who no longer loves her child.

I walk away, knowing
She will be hidden
In the darkness of my toy box
with other forsaken toys.
I cry, but I must carry the doll
dangling like a corpse
from my hand.

Doris Frost
Kensington

Music in the White Mountains

The farmhouse waits frozen in time
A view so perfect,
Unchanged from one that charmed the man
Decades ago, before the public acclaim; four Pulitzers;
JFK's Inauguration; the personal tragedies.

Where sun and shadow play tricks with space
A furrowed track brings us to Frost Place.
Poetry center, cultural icon,
Pride of Franconia's small mountain town.

Across the lawn, strains of oboe, clarinet, bassoon
Ride liquid air of a July afternoon
Surrounding the meadow with such sublime melody,
Birds stop to listen.

Partner to music of the day,
The resident poet speaks life in vers libre
A distillation of the ordinary made
Clear as a mountain spring.

Evening comes and swallows the light,
Hiding flowers that crowd the ravine.
While a summer moon veiled in mountain haze
Sails above the tranquil scene.
The musicians have gone, they've finished their play
Only memory and mist linger long — after Robert Frost Day.

Tony Fusco
West Haven

The Dangers of Un-Protected Text©

Suppose someone were to steal my poems©
We should be so lucky if we wrote a poem
someone thought worth stealing©

Would I be covered if I inserted a copyright
at the end? ©Should I pay a lawyer? ©
get an agent? © If I have Library of Congress
number is that good enough?© Don't sweat
this stuff, nobody makes money from poetry.©

My high school English teacher told me to
mail myself copies of my own poems
and not open the envelope, keep it in a safe
place in case someone tried to pass off

my work for their own.© I'm sending stuff
out to contests and publishers, it will be
easy for someone to get ahold of now.©

Don't worry, most people read poetry
on the internet now.© They wouldn't see
your book if it were only in a local store.©

You never know, I could hit it big, look
at J. K.. Rowling,© then where would I be
if I followed your advice?© I was just trying
to be realistic.© I'm realistic, I want to protect

my intellectual property. © Okay, Okay.
What do you write about anyway? ©
Vampire Wizards© and small cute creatures
know as Bobbits.© I would tell you more

but you can't tell who to trust these days.©
I have a long work in progress, I call the
Sublime Comedy.© You know,
that doesn't sound half bad. ©

Marita Gargiulo
Hamden, CT

Moon Riders of the Exoplanets

Aliens

with an agenda.

They steal your liquor,
poison you with promises,
and redesign your mind.

Don't be jazzed by their space-jive babble.

There's fair trade to gamble.

You might win an extra-galactic jewel
over a game of pool.

Terrans Rule!

Emerson Gilmore
Manchester

The Addict Recovering

Having drunk and needled his way
through the construction business
he works in destruction now
He is high on a scissor lift
chiseling facade from
an aging mall,
tearing down the old,
the useless, the wasted.

He hasn't much left.
His body, gutted,
depends on Methadone
and so he takes things apart,
returns split rocks
to the quarry,
seeks ancient, igneous truth
enough to get him straight
and sober to his grave.

He gets home, showers,
closes his door, watches TV,
drinks soda and wishes he had
tickets to one more Yankees game.
He dreams murderous dreams
full of bar fights and tattoos
he doesn't remember getting.
Then too, there are whole decades
he cannot remember.
His kids are forgotten loves
left in their cribs
for the next tie in the
train track working down his arm.
He misses the life he missed
when he can't ignore it.

He was hoping this summer's sun
might kill him,
wanted to faint and die
dehydrated or victim to
his empty, collapsing heart.
Now he hopes to freeze,
seeks work up north
where he can fall
into an endless drift
and never wake up from
the first blank dream
he's had in years.

He knows the curse of survival,
of life's pointless urge
to go on.

So he goes on with it.
He gets up early,
works destruction.
As far as he can see

emptied cities wait for him.

Judith Goodman
Tolland

Ode to a Song Sparrow

What hawk has clutched you
Or ice storm engulfed you
To cripple your tiny twig foot?

Yet on this March morning
You chirp your song of life
From a perch in the viburnum.

I toss birdseed upon the snow
Where you skip-hop to satisfy your need
Until suddenly
Like a scuttling leaf you fly crosswind
Towards the sky.

Alice E. Gross
Southbury

Anniversary

You left ten years ago
but you haven't gone.
I sleep alone and weep alone.
I smile and talk to others
when I dine.

I wake from dreams
and hear your voice
and look to find your form
but you aren't in the shadows
of my room.

It cannot be ten years
I tell myself. But it is.
What have I done with the time?
I've talked and written,
read and worked
and constantly sought your form
in the shadows of my room.

You are there, you know,
even though you left ten years ago.

Pamela Guinan
Wethersfield

Does She See Us?

Does she see us all before her, staring,
And wonder what distant land,
In our peculiar garb, we've emigrated from?

If she could walk off the page,
Her bouquet in hand,
Would she remain as poised and charming as her posies?

Or would she
In her white-laced petticoats and polished
Strapped and buckled black shoes
Hop out
And dance across the floor
And round and round the house -
Room to room?

How long before we'd see her wonder -
"Where's Mama?"
And shout for "Papa!?!!" with alarm?

How many pleas
For "Mama?!?" and "Papa?!?"
Would we endure
Before we wished her back
Before the Hudson River scene
In the Johnstone, Greystone
Photographic portrait on the wall?

Donald G. Gunn
Groton

Just Words

Of late, I am pushed to tears
by the words of poets and others--
just words, simple words, woven
together: Some like a fine Arabian carpet;
some like a beggar's ragged coat
soiled with feces, urine and cheap red wine;
and some from memory, fighting words,
thrown sharply by my parents until
it seemed like love would never visit
our house again. Words, yes; just words...

Pat Hale
West Hartford

Morning Meditation with Wandering Dog

A golden retriever slips into the scene
carrying a lime green tennis ball
in his mouth. He trots the beach, tail waving,
waiting for someone to wrestle the ball

away from him. He wants to run.
He wants to swim out into deep water
to where the ducks float, to make them rise up
in a loud-voiced thrashing of wings.

He wants to shake out his heavy coat and hear
the squealing of children. The sun makes him
crazy with happiness. The same god
that paints peacock feathers and lets

a goldfinch ride a single swaying stem
shapes his heart. A man throws a ball
out into the water; the dog goes after it,
not stopping to wonder if he can swim.

Gary Hanna
Dagsboro, Delaware

Sun Spot

This bud, like a young girl
who blooms prematurely,
may be nipped in love.
February is not a month
for brides and buds
that open too soon.
Gentle blooms of freshness
will not withstand a
frosty fast paced world,
confounded by early night,
but need the protection
of warm days and clear light
intended by the sun.

But once the bud is opened,
how does she recover
in a world of callous men
counting profit? Now, like
her predecessors, she
must keep pace with nature's
economic plan, succumb to
social wants and desires,
older forms of progress in
the time honored essence
of reward and survival.

Tonight, this bloom, now
exposed and thus separated
from her protective green
encasement, will freeze,
and the freshness at first
preserved in icy frost,
will dry the ends of growth,
deepen with color, and
wither toward the center.
Stamens will recoil, pistils
will not hold their stiffness,
and no pollen will stick,
even with experienced visitors
who come too soon for beauty.

No flower is quite as fresh
as innocence ready to mate
for the first time, with long
lean branches, smooth skinned
and beckoning to the wind,
heavy with the scent of spring.
This year, in the sun spot,
a whole generation will be

liberated too soon. How then,
will they teach their daughters
about blue skies, warm wind,
and soft falling rain,
on the deepening horizon?

Doris Henderson
Danbury

Once in a century

it all falls apart.
The dollar shrinks
to the size of a postage stamp.

Share certificates, debentures
become worthless scraps of paper.
Jobs disappear in heavy fog.

A few sly investors manage to escape
– off-shore banks, gated fortresses.
We would shoot them, but it's too late.

If my money market shares collapse
I will be a very bitter woman. In the thirties,
my grandfather was a bitter man.

My other grandfather
made elderberry wine in the cellar
and didn't much give a damn.

Previously published in Caduceus, Vol. 8

Mark McGuire-Schwartz
Guilford

Obsessive Compulsive in Iraq

He showers excessively
While the bombs drop,
Silently repeating his mantra:
Wash away the war. † Wash away
The war. † Now, as he shampoos
For the fifth time, he sings the
Words aloud. † Wash away the war.
Wash away the war. † His uncle
Is missing, and his father
Shouts through the bathroom door.
Come out, Achmed, come out. † You
Are using too much hot water.
And soap doesn't grow on trees.

Olive oil soap does, sort of,
Achmed thinks, as he contorts
Himself to clean the farthest reaches
Of his back.

Previously published in "Poets Against War," August, 2010

Greg Hill
West Hartford

This February Morning in Connecticut Woods

Night's last hour,
still, winter trees, clear sky—
and only Venus

sliding South and up,
winking, peeking out
behind boughs and branches.

I watch her mark the measured path
while idle bands
of soft colors linger below.

Slowly she fades away,
like the dream I cannot recall
from my bedroom window,

where I watch a doe
grazing through wet snow
on her own measured path.

Margaret Iacobellis
Branford

Precipice

We are standing at the edge of a steep cliff, she said
we should hold hands
tell each other not to be frightened
 but we are

When the sun is bright, pink granite sparkles
under the moon there are only faint shimmerings
on dark, woeful days there is nothing to see
 only boundless depths

Do you think, she said,
there is anything at the bottom?

Joan Kantor
Collinsville

Beautiful Man
for Chuck

For years
his head
was covered
in thick brown waves

Now he's gone bald
in a beautiful way
from brown to grey to white
strands
drawn straight back
over his pate

What's left
is lush
collar curling
with tufts around
his ears

I love it
this way

He says
it's too long

Lacking vanity
he doesn't see

lets the barber
remove
the frame
from his face

I suggest a change

With scissors and trimmer
in hand
I lovingly clip and preen

Breathing in
the scent of his scalp
gently patting and pushing his head
into place
I snip and sculpt

Each lump and bump
under my tools

part
of a life
well lived

Stanley Kavan
Milford

Snowstorm on Country Lane

Softly, softly
the first flakes fall
glistening the grass,
featherdusting the road.
Delicately,
the bordering brush whitens -
soon,
ground pine and periwinkle vanish.
Across the way
in the thickening light,
the family schnauser,
truant since midday,
celebrates drunkenly
the quickly deepening snow.

*

Night brings Winter's rogue: piercing wind.
Muscular, menacing,
bellowing with thunderous rush
it rips downroad,
churning,
foaming,
spewing,
whipping all in its way -
crashing at road's end
against defiant hemlocks.
Limbs grind and bend -
some too much,
splintering in vanquished agony.

*

Trailing the wind's drive,
the billowing wake
spins curlicues
around every standing thing.
With each sweep
drifting rims the roadsides,
bushes mound into globes.
Nightlong,
the wind streaks
stabbing, twisting -
sculpting its whim
till its aftermost gust.

*

Dawn illuminates Winter's nativity,
nature's ultimate expression -
nothing earthly so wondrous,
nothing.
Every branch and tree crown
an ivory silhouette;
lawns, unblemished snowfields;
rooftops, mushroomed snow cones;
swanlike curvatures here,
angular Picasso patterns there.

Everything, everywhere
virgin white -
everything, everywhere
flawless...immaculate...majestic.

Jim Kelleher
Goshen

Feel Like A Flower

When you swarm to me
and you climb my knees
and demand more stories
and don't ask Please?
I try to look sour.

But I feel like a flower
surrounded by bees.

Nancy Kerrigan
West Hartford

Girl Dues

We are here in 1963. Women make fifty-nine cents for every dollar earned by men.
We are here, college girls after a B.S. not an MRS.
First female students on campus at a Jesuit University. Boys dorm over the cafeteria, our dorm-rooms in another northern state.
No slacks allowed, bermuda shorts & knee highs under trench coats.

We are here in 1977, all in white, 20th century suffragettes on capitol steps in Lincoln's Illinois to see passage of the ERA.*
My daughter fears she'll be drafted; war scenes still on nightly TV.
We are here with Phyllis Schlafly, an aproned lawyer with 6 kids, warning of unisex bathrooms. She cancels her speeches, husband complains she isn't home enough. Time is all that passes.

We are here in 1983. My Sisters read the headlines, Geraldine Makes the Scene, cracks the glass. Nominated to be the first female Vice President, doesn't hesitate a second. Pro Catholic and Choice, proves she can cross muddied waters. We think we've made it, shout out, relax on summer grass. The ticket beaten by a grade B male movie star.

We are here in 2008, Hilary makes her run. Whitewater-gate, Monica-gate, a president for a mate. She's road tested. I drive around for months after the primaries; her blue and red campaign poster blocking the view out of my rear view. I can't look back. She loses to an African American man raised by a single Mom. He almost has to produce his DNA to run.

We are here in 2011, we Sisters, now making seventy-seven cents for every dollar earned by men. Our gray hair under military caps, surgical caps, pilots hats. Some as blond as when we were young. Grannies' retirement income \$10,000 lower than Gramps, living longer on less, now that's progress. We sort-a-worry that Planned Parenthood's funds are being aborted. We reproduced our quota.

We paid our dues, put our hard earned money into vending machines, but the wanted candy did not come out. We just kick the machine. We just kicked the machine.

*Equal Rights Amendment

Ian George King
Cromwell

Seventy-something

And so they sat, these two old men, like a pair of old wooden
boat hulls

beached above the high tide mark for a very long time, creaking
and full of dry rot

they talked about various things, including some of their own
maladies, and laughed

secure with the knowledge that they would not endure them for
too long

each interested in the others comments, listening carefully,
attempting to hear every word

with no emotion that might betray the moment, serious in their
intent to understand

where each of them had been and where each might go,
measuring the depths of time

as the vicissitudes of life washed over them, gently rocking
their seventy-something years

Mary Kuck
Plantation, FL

At the death of my sister

Lord, you didn't shine me up
the way you polished Moses.
He too thought he was unfit
and didn't even seek you
like I do.

You sought him out.
You lighted up that bush for him,
coiled his serpent staff,
withered white, then healed his hand.
He had to know that it was you.

Forty days you spent with him,
burnished him with all those words
while he produced that famous stone,
and then he shone, shone
with your pure light.

At the brink of her great glory,
(who would find it if not she)
in that final wisp of air,
could you not have kindled her
and singed me too?

I would have shone.

Dolores Lawler
West Hartford

To Be Or Not

Capture this moment
before it descends
on oblivion's cliff,
or crosses over Rubicon
and floats away
never to return
alea i acta est
the die is cast.

Time scatters wishes
in bleached clouds,
so speak the speech now,
before memory's fiber fades
and its last stitch falls
from the eye
of a naked needle
into crevices

of vanished voices.
Strain your solitude
fill your space
take arms against
a troubled sea
before waters
consume covetous time
before tomorrow betrays you,
like Hamlet's play
within a play,

a curtain closes
a barren stage.

Harmon Leete
West Hartford

Blues

The sea was a playful lion
loosed upon a sparkling October afternoon;
it bounced our boat, all sixty feet of it,
between two white-capped paws.

We fished the Race,
a bottleneck that pours Long Island Sound
into the North Atlantic;
our decks on both sides bristled with antennae
tuned to the ocean floor by lines
that slanted downward through the tide
to hooks embedded in small, proffered fish,
waiting for the depths to darken
with approaching phalanxes
of bluefish homing south
shoulder to shoulder, cold eyes and silver flanks,
forming a wide, voracious line of brutal mouth
in search of any living prey, and capable
of severing both fish and finger.

Swung like a pendulum, we waited,
but the lion sea that laughed at queasy stomachs
had also quelled the appetites below.
Through glittering hours, only a random pole would twitch,
then buck and heave, bent double
until froth burst into sunlight
and a flailing fish
was pierced and boated by the gaff.

Slowly, unforeseeably
the westward wane of afternoon
assembled jumbled pieces of kaleidoscope –
the pouncing wind grew calm and seas, relaxing
stretched to flatness,
the sinking sun turned all to twilight gold,
the tilt of tide diminished
and we hung, lines vertical.
Then, suddenly, they struck – a dozen poles
leapt toward the water, muscles strained
and soon the golden seas beside us
were foam, alive with wild fish fighting
in tight circles, cries of “Gaff!”,
the flash of silver prongs jerked upward
and thrashing fish dropped bleeding at our feet.

New hooks were seized at once; it would not end.
With its continuing, in all dimensions
around us grew a picture that was epic and complete;
it was all life
pegged on a frame of antonyms

holding a world of unreal beauty and brutality
where time flowed motionless across unchanging change,
teeming life cascaded into death
in classic rituals of strength, survival and of harvest
that roiled at evening time the great sea market,
fresh salt air bloomed rank with dying fish,
violence flailed within tranquility, foam surged at calm
through all the long, fierce killing
of hunters caught beneath cathedral skies,
blood smeared on twilight gold,
and no suns set.

Michael Lepore
Glastonbury

Native Warrior

The French term Montagnard, meaning "People from the Mountains" refers to an indigenous people generally from the Central Highlands of Vietnam.

His body cleansed with smoke, sweat,
and water—a timeless Sioux tradition—
the elders invoke the ancient spirits
to protect this young warrior with the same
songs carried aloft on wings of the Thunderbird
before their land knew no boundaries,
before convincing promises of a better life,
before the Great Wind scattered his ancestors
like dust.

Six weeks later, a graduated Special Forcer,
he is on patrol deep in Vietnam's Central Highlands,
wears the shield of the army that caused his nation
to disperse, whirled aloft by winds of war.
He enters the remote village, where the triple-canopy,
in garments of green, blends against muted figures
in the twilight.

He moves closer, stares into eyes of young warriors
clasping spears, bows and arrows. They stand silent,
like a picture on the wall, these new allies, believers
of the same convincing promises proclaimed ages ago
to the native Sioux.

Straw huts on stilts, unique handcrafted bracelets,
decorative woven fabric proudly displayed
in the open court remind him of home. His soul hears
the song of the Thunderbird as it soars, uninhibited,
upon currents of sweet air heralding clouds of despair.
Words of its fateful cry fall upon him like a chill.

Montagnards stand like Druids, hearts true,
like rivers that feed the jungle, isolated
from politics of war, distrustful of the Vietnamese.

Their dreams halted by a swelling cry of anguish—
Communist thunder rolling from the North shudders
the valley floor. Special Forces depart with darkened
spirits, their trusting allies left, like Spartans
at the pass, to face an unknown destiny.

His tour ended, he now stands on the sacred
ground of his ancestors, shoulder high with noble
ironweed that sways, unbreakable, across the plains.
Rays of the mid-day sun glisten salt crystals
that rest upon his cheeks. He hears the cry
of the Thunderbird as it laments the tale
of a people vanquished.

Sandra Maineri
Unionville

Maple Leaf

Maple leaf, caught in spider's web
dance the wind dance,
throb to thunder's tune.
Flash rust-brown with lightening speed.
Sway lightly in the foggy grey dawn.

How perfect your shape, pointed.
Herald of Fall.
Veins direct droplets down slender stem,
dripping on beetle caught in web.
Sheets of run-off wash away Summer grime.

Set the glass for sunlight.
Still you hold on tightly,
shaken but undisturbed.
I would keep you, as testament to August.

Gentle gymnast, one of thousands,
tumbling from trees.
Only one wise enough to choose
the web and window to stake a claim
to Winter's immortality.

I shall not disturb you.

Srinivas Mandavilli
Simsbury

Father and son

cast their thoughts
into a lake by the mountain, wait
and hope to reel in all the forgotten words.
The weighty ghosts that lingered around their heads now rest
in the rescued words at the bottom of the boat,
as gently the now lifeless water slaps the bow.

On the way back home, they are part of a school of fish:
trapped in traffic and in the darkness behind the headlights.
an unsaid pact of silence that will
sequester them till their next fishing trip.
Reaching home is like hitting the edge of the glass bowl-
an enjambment at the end of their lines.

Gemma Mathewson
Guilford

La Fumee d'Ambre Gris *

toward her downcast face in reverie
dawn fog white
smoke unfurls upward
sea foam white
gathered beneath an ample shawl
quartz stone white
tented above receiving arms
fresh cream white
stretched between her fingertips
moonbeam white
caressing memories
bleached bone white
the canvas
cadmium white
her deep sleeved garment
dove down white
the column behind her
marble white
the veil into which is concealed
the red passion of her lower lip
raw pearl white
the incense that perfumes
her clothes pervades her recollection
thin shroud white
from silver censer highlights gleam
titanium white
her loss a blankness
moth wing white
the wall facing the foot of the bed
old paint white
the space this painting hung
slant shadow white
framed between two windows
sun bleached white
the room burdened with intention
purest white
where viewer melds with subject
silk web white
summer haze white
into winter squall white
cracked ice white
and back again white
cycle of foreboding white
the penetration of scent white
the permanence of longing white
white requiem sung in rising smoke
full blazing blinding hot cold yearning white

*inspired by a painting by John Singer Sargent

K. "Francee' Bouvenie" McSpadden
Hartford

My African-Russian Ballerina

Oh my goodness, my little girl is grown up. The first day she began her ballet lessons, I knew she'd show the world her talents. After months of training her toes formed into a shape of two inch high heels as I saw her grab the fence rail. Then several years went by and she became more comfortable dancing on her toes without the feeling of discomfort. Oh how she has grown in doing her steps as she was disciplined like a soldier, and while standing in a position as though she were a mannequin in a department store window. After many practices to be perfect, she swirled, jumped and later spun as fast as she could on her toes, but at her first performance she impresses me along with others, their dance combination of swirls and jumps with their legs out as though they're an airplane in the sky. Go on girls, and you go on my Russian African ballerina. My baby who I watched grows up on the dance floor. I watched her dance as she trained; I watched her concentrate as she danced, and I watch her as she shines dancing into the spotlight. So dance girl, dance, never stop, show them what your mama made and what you create by jumping and stumping that dance floor.

Donna Marie Merritt
Watertown

Terrance

Stew named him
last winter
We spied him among
the "ordinary" trees
on the snowy lot
roots bundled in burlap
for protection
not from the
cold
of the winter
but from the
warmth
of the house

Terrance
was our first live
Christmas tree
decorated with
careful diligence
diligent carefulness
beauty to us
foreign
frightening objects
to him

After Christmas
chains were removed
Terrance moved to the
garage
a step between
house
and yard
and then to a
hole
Stew dug months before
when the soil was still
soft

Terrance
endured many changes
his life rearranged
against his wishes
Some of his needles
faded
fell

It was touch and go and so
I would go and touch
his needles and talk
to Terrance
when no one was looking
tell him he should fight

for his spot
in the yard
that if he hung on
we'd never move him again

Tired Terrance tried, vied
for his spot
grew stronger
more defiant against the
odds and is
winning

If a tree can fight and win
A person can

Previously published in "Cancer, A Caregiver's View," by Avalon Press (<http://avalonpress.co.uk>)

Ina Morris
Bristol

Irish Angel,
One Prayer, One Angel

It began as a beautiful morning in Dublin Ireland.
Leaving Co. Donegal, and our Sweeny Clan behind.
Waiting for the plane home;
announcement, late arrival due to weather.
Once on board to New York.
Clouds below us like a frozen tundra
So close, perhaps I could walk across them.
Bright blue sky above like a dome of protection.
Flying smoothly between cloud and sky
We are served a “cooked to perfection” baked salmon.
Fasten seat belt sign flashing, plane starts
slowly descending. A rough jerk,
I thought, “This is it, a spin, no recovery. “
A leveling off, horizon line straightens
Pilot voice announcing steady:
“Sorry for quick turn, security reasons
on the East coast warrants immediate return to Dublin.”
Dublin airport, going down escalator,
Words from a former passenger:
“They’ve bombed New York
They bombed Washington, DC”
Questions in our minds:
“Who Bombed, What? Where? “
Loudspeakers giving orders:
“Immediate removal luggage from all planes.”
“No phones calls in or out from United States.”
Grandson in Albany New York
Upset and worried we sat with minds in flux.
Why? Waiting for answers.
My silent prayers were said out loud
asking for contact with grandson.
I felt a hand on my shoulder, and
Heard a question: “Where is your grandson?”
From an older, Irish wool suited gentleman.
Daughter screamed son’s information.
A World War II type satellite telephone appeared.
Grandson answered immediately.
Relayed information about
Twin Towers and Pentagon.
I watched the Irish gentleman walk away
Holding phone of hope asking
others for family information only.
An Irish Angel reached out to touch someone.
My belief in prayer, confirmed.

Pat Mottola
Cheshire

After the Vows

It happens by inches. You trip
down the aisle, I Do's slip from
just-kissed lips, promises
taste like a gingerbread house
with a white picket fence,
sweet as Gretel.

Walls grow closer
than happily ever after,
there is no back door
and the witch is more wicked
when she's in your bed.

Julia Morris Paul
Manchester

Ode to the Wind

I wake to your song, your breath
sweet with the perfume of pinon trees.
Long-fingered yuccas
sway to your wild music.
Junipers arch and bend to your will.
The Sangre de Cristo Mountains,
one shade darker than the sky,
are impressed by your arrogance
but refuse to budge.
You simply lift and swirl
their skirts of dry dirt.
How you love to tease the blue giants.

With gentler hand, you sail
my table umbrella like a paper ship
on invisible waves. Playful now,
you enter the open door
and pull my hair free of clips and pins,
powder my skin with the fine ochre dust
you carry on your back.

Pages of my manuscript
fly up off the desk behind me,
like startled geese from a pond.
Is this why you rush through my door today,
like a child pleading with his mother:
Come see! Come see!

If I take your hand and follow,
will you teach me to watch
peonies open with my ears?
To hear thunder with my eyes?
To touch the stars with the blood
that dances in my heart?
Will you teach me to write
words that taste of things you exhale:
ginger, campfire, damp linen?
You brush my outstretched palm
with a kiss and go on your way.
A kiss, impossible to hold.
What am I to make of this kiss?

Sherman Poultney
Wilton

Coming-Out Concert
after Horace, "To Lyce," Ode IV.xiii

The young woman arrived late.
Only when I turned to see what the
husbands in the front row were
craning their wrinkled necks to look at
did I spot her in the back of the hall.
Locals and summer visitors had gathered in
the Meeting House over Sugar Hill
on that muggy evening for
the first concert of the season
by the North Country Orchestra.
Up 'til then, I had been intent on
watching the keyboard of the harpsichord.

Also seated in the front row, the
elderly dowager, Lycia, was having difficulty
holding her usual court.
Every art of language could not
regain the old husbands' attentions –
Telemann's Tafel Musik written on speculative subscription,
Boccherini's quintet written so his aged father
could play bass viol as a fifth part,
Shostakovich's 3rd String Quartet, the War Quartet, pictured
WWII before, during, and after,
before ending in enigmatic ambiguity.
Lycia's elaborate jewels mere fossils of
her previous physical charms.

Seated near the back now was the
young beauty I'll call Cytherea.
She wore a revealing dress.
Her flowing brown hair came
down to her waist and served to
obscure her cleavage above.
The tanned skin of her face and shoulders
emerged again at her knee line.
Cytherea sat shyly hunched over the can of coke
she held in front of her like a shield,
not used to flaunting her emerging new form.
All the old men imagined just what
you thought they'd imagine,
even though they could no longer point,
much less shoot.
Lycia recalled her days of blooming
and of attracting men for the first time.
But now her hair gray and sparse, her skin wrinkled, head forward,
breasts sagging, back curved like that of the old gray mare.
She took no consolation that the
young beauty was a ship not yet launched.

A young man home from college waited for his chance at intermission to approach Cytherea, but she never stood up to cool off and remained safely escorted on one side by her grandmother and on the other by her enterprising mother. The lad was disappointed, the old men rueful. Lycia was disconsolate. The last two movements of Shostakovich accentuated their regret. Cytherea was now giddy with anticipation.

Jeannine Rancourt
Southbury, CT

The Virtual Chase

Two chipmunks frozen upright on the deck
their scurrying, gathering, and storing
arrested
by a pair of eager yellow eyes
blazing through the sliding glass door
tail thumping on the floor
the black enemy coiled tightly
right paw flexed
prepared to spring on his prey
yet knowing he won't
knowing he can't
his rump rises and lowers
his body twitches and jerks
front paws pace in place
with a low yearning growl
he savors the taste of the chase.

Linda Maselli Richardson
Bolton

The Last Red Leaf

Mother: Eugenia Pitaniello Maselli
November 3, 1914 - July 26, 2010

I do equate her to a Maple leaf
Skyscraping high upon the foliage bough,
And now I swallow in my throbbing grief,
Mother's apartment weighs so heavy now.
I trace a timeworn hand, a leaf like red
With lingering lifelines awarded her,
And here I sit beside her empty bed,
Where she wholeheartedly laughed, and stirred.
The reigning leaf from the branch unties
And falls freely into the autumn breeze.
Joyful, joyful, in wind the leaf twirls, and glides,
Soul dancing now with butterflies and bees.
Her smile appears above the flaming hills;
Spreading a Mother's love and her goodwill.

Sarah Rizzuto
Cheshire

Exhibitionist

If I had mastered the art of dancing naked
in circles on the lawn when I was young enough
to escape or quite near it without a scolding,
I would have done it, no question.
But I couldn't run, my bareness on display,
the shrill note of my mom's voice on my heels.

The beauty of being exposed, of my body changing
and being changed from diapers to panty-liners,
was the striptease of adolescence
my parents' hands motioned me through.
I grew used to others handling my nakedness,
so when college came being an exhibitionist
was second nature, part of my show.

I told personal assistants how to showcase me:
colorful skirt and matching low-cut shirt.
During these exhibitions, the bathroom door
remained casually ajar for easy access.

At home, when I was young,
my sister walking in without warning
to grab a brush or my dad strolling in
to shave. All this while my mom
undressed me and I sat nude, talking.
My mom left and I'd wait for her to run the iron
over clothes I was just as comfortable not wearing.

Terry Santino
Hamden

Tender Arroyo

Sitting on a kindergarten chair with four friends
as she calls them. They come to sit at the table.
One boy, silent, making no eye touch, comes by,
and his hand grazes gently over the back of mine.
Each day he comes, the same thing.

Once, in response to my eye sent question,
the teacher murmurs: "he's grounding himself."
Tiny, tender fingers move over my hands, moving away
from obstacles to go in yet another direction, like ants
at a picnic.

We do not fear each other.
From time to time they clasp my hands (nearly
always warm) with theirs (nearly always cold) and call
to each other to come feel.

And now I have four pairs of hands with tiny
fingers feeling almost boneless.
They wait their turn to be cradled in my (nearly always
warm) cupped hands. They pick up with dainty
touch the skin of my forearms and, wide-eyed, watch it when
they let go --it falls gently back in place.

Now, I, too, see hands and arms with eyes brand new
curiously as do they. I stroke gentle, press firmly,
let go.

It is as though this network of gullies, rills
and wind-swept beds of arid sand, I have become an arroyo.
I move with my fingers along this landscape.
My God: I'm enchanted!
Do I love this lacy artwork I have become?

Maria Sassi
West Hartford

On the Film “Wings of Desire”

The first scene, a two second frame
of black on white. Shadow stains the
light and two man-angels in long dark
overcoats stand on the edge of
a highrise roof.

The story line
concerns the angel Damien who wishes
to give up eternity for remembered
loves—hot coffee on snowy days,
rubbing his hands together to feel
blood flow . . . and to be seen!

Desire to be seen comes strong as he
wanders a circus-fair, invisible to all
but a few children. He lingers near
the aerial act, his gaze drawn
to a woman on the high trapeze.

A plateau
in space is the closing scene. No chance
that Damien's angel companion can persuade
him to stay. So he lifts him in a
horizontal hold for the send-off forming
a thick cross of themselves in dark relief
or crude propeller—white sky all around.

Alexandrina Sergio
Glastonbury

Late Day Walking

The dark Hudson moves deep,
grainy ice riding eddies downstream,
gray fern shore dappling its surface.
I make a little game on the riverside pathway,
try to match my footsteps
with the prints I made going out.
When three snowmobiles rumble by,
the last of the gleaming masked riders
waves to me and I wave back, smiling,
warmed by such a greeting in February chill.
A pale snow moon hangs ahead in the late day sky.
I walk on toward it,
the smile still playing on my lips.

Previously published in "My Daughter is Drummer in the Rock 'n Roll Band"
(Antrim House, 2009)

Joan Seliger Sidney
Storrs

Chipmunk
*on a line from Szyborska
for Ray*

I'd have to be really quick
to catch this chipmunk. One minute

its claws are digging up my iris
bulbs, the next its teeth

are gnashing them to shreds.
Who's cute in someone else's

garden becomes a pest in mine.
If I wheel myself in its direction,

with a flick of its fluffy tail my chip-
munk disappears through a chink

in the old stone wall. My grown son's

fault, his childhood out-of-control
curiosity, checking under every stone

for snakes & bugs but never taking time
to align them back in place. Too many

years displaced, the stones have settled
in, like me, in my wheelchair, at home.

Richard Sponaugle
Alexandria, Virginia

Damon's Desperate

to give up cigarettes,
now that he has lung cancer.
But Damon's hacking cough
and forest fire breath,
prove he doesn't have a smoking problem—
Damon's smoking problem has him.
He nervously grabs for his carton,
with fear in his bloodshot eyes—
not because his prognosis is grim;
but because Damon can no longer keep
his nicotine addiction secret.
For 20 years, he's smoked after work,
and sprayed his breath before work.
For two decades, Damon's warned
his co-workers of smoking's danger.
Worse, he's lectured and yelled at his patients.
You see, Damon's a doctor.

Gerda Walz-Michaels
Storrs

May flowers

Why do I write down words
if I know that they can't say
what I want to say?
Why do I write them down
despite the fact that they are
not born here.
They don't have the easiness
belonging to the owner.
My words are simple ones,
not from a mouth
trained for centuries
in verse and rhyme
in the English language.

Still, I feel good
writing them down
because they don't carry the history
of my mother tongue.
They don't carry the load of a nation
which brought into life
existential thoughts and subtle poetry
as well as beautiful music,
but also the cruelest war
in history.

Here I am naked
despite haunting memories,
living with me, always.
I try to bring things out differently
by starting fresh again,
like May flowers,
which just open up their buds,
shy and innocent, yet
nothing can stop them.
So I write down my words
in this beautiful language,
knowing that the truth will come out,
eventually.

Eryk Wenzia
North Haven

black tulips

the memories return
like they do every year at
this time black tulips
breaking through the cold
wet morning soil
fighting for the first rays
of a lonely sun

Previously published by Thunderclap Press (April 2011)

Barry Zaret

Stop and Shop

The aisles of the Stop and Shop
are now as familiar
as the halls of my medical center.
Market staff are known to me,
and my face to them,
more than interns in the CCU.
They greet me
as I stumble through my weekly trek.
Thursday is shopping day-
I come armed with her list,
carefully constructed to
aid my navigation past
cold cereal, coffee, canned goods.
I carry an envelope
filled with clipped coupons,
to be redeemed at the register.
When I hand them to the clerk
I always add that this
is my wife's thing, not mine.
Coupons embarrass me,
offending my professorial persona.

It upsets her that she's
usually too weak to do the shopping.
It was part of her biorhythm.
I can never equal her precision
or pantry organization;
I am her arms and legs.
She makes the list – I follow.
In other venues I try doing
everything she asks –
anticipating all she might want.
My own patients
understand my absences.
Colleagues amply fill the void.
My main occupation now
is creating as much happiness
as cancer will allow:
to assuage pain, to fill the voids
cancer has selfishly created,
to walk the aisles of Stop and Shop,
to clean, do laundry,
make beds, cook, and drive.

If I ever forget
let my right hand wither,
let my tongue no longer speak.

William A. Ziegler
Wilton

Wild Turkeys

Each winter morning two hours after dawn
Wild turkeys marched out from the patch of woods
North of my north wall and in single file,
Like soldiers on an army exercise,
Paraded on the ice across the pond.
That afternoon, again in single file,
This time two hours before the evening sun
Was due to set, they rallied back across
The ice to the point on the shore from which
They had departed earlier that day.

But this year they are gone: a mystery.
What caused the flock to make its daily trip?
How could they time it in the way they did?
Why have they left? Where have they gone from here?

Mankind conceived the atom bomb, erased
Whole forests, melted floes and made
It possible to have octuplet births,
Though what inspires wild turkeys is a secret
Still known only to the birds. How strange
This is, and yet are we not fortunate
That there are realms of nature that survive
The interference of the human mind,
Albeit in respects as small as this?

Elaine Zimmerman
Hamden

Jackdaws Turning
Uppsala, Sweden

The Mission singers raise hands high above their heads, clap and sway. Outside, children point their toes to the sky, an unintentional joining with the faithful. Heads back, hair tumbling down, their swing tires turn haphazardly. The day closes in on heat as dusk streaks a golden cross-stitch by the steeple. Steamed lox and cabbage fill the air.

Vendors sell the last sunflowers in purple milk buckets. Someone whistles on his way home. The light opaque and of a different familiarity, as if time stood still and nothing could do harm to grass or child, though men are lurking in alleys somewhere and time stills itself for reasons other than light.

Then a sudden rush of jackdaws out of air like field flowers in a windstorm, scattering everywhere. They rise above church spire; sweep close to ground. Sound is their wind. Across and under, in furious harmony. A teeming noise spans the night. Why are jackdaws drawn to church bell, ruin, spire?

By day they feed on stolen seed in field after field, turning nothing but farmers' cheeks to color. Yet at dusk, when the light folds down, they make lace of wings until the sky is no longer a sky, but a field of desire, humming. One bird alone turns them around. It's the change in sound.

The pattern's lost. A pandemonium of wing and shrill like a concert's end when instruments fall and chairs are dragged away. They disperse. Sing alone on elderberry. One mimics the new sound. Another follows. Notes cross the chapel in thin lines of smoke. A faint melody begins.

Treetops become a swarm of wings again. Singing in perfect pitch, they rise. Lift over branch tips, swing low by flax. Leave the petals for arches and the night. The Mission chorus still singing, mouths open wide. A small child swings; giggles when her feet reach the sky.

Jeff Zyjeski
Avon

Uponce the dreamwarily Herour moothily transcenjoined
with entiticements from the high collaboratory's delugions.

Te Tuna, with his grouplings of testiclitis lesionarres,
surroundharmically became lownew beneath
a nucleartistic fallout of black pebble mirror beings
klux klandestinely destonian in their reproach.
Uprushing through rain of timelickety fusion,
gained the final glowness of the suprawakened uterosity.

Lord Death, Kali,
Maui-tikitiki-a-Ataraga (The Wonder Worker, the Tumid, begotten of Ascending Shadow),
in her pool did witness the Karmedy of Herour in twilight's destonian bleak.
With whispers a thousandy screamiable dundeeds shonerose
out of againathousandy weighty tundric cyclickety begats.
The visiodramastic unfelded with souleyes watchuckling.
"Twasn't thus these dundeeds spached," Herour scoffered, "Embittryo hashadn't yet beggedified!"
To which BraViShiv rechorted, "Eveanly so-"

Dubbed Sun-Breaks-Through-Wind-Blown-Branches.
The freshore lit upon the night
ever breakening with crashining crashendos, smoothing pillardent
rascalready 'fore the opportune could be distinguishaded over the surf.
Young Aeolus stood
confinded by the hammermaid of the sky,
whose suppliant body
whirled in the winds
of the onrushoring storm and kept
all those great ones
enthralmond in leaves
which spang tuneful wooshes
to tried up ears
and died up eyes
which saw rain
and rain again
among the vengeance of dawn,
which only once could enthrall the race.

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Dec. 1- Jan. 30	Al Savard Memorial – Ct poets only	\$100, \$75, \$50	\$10*
April 1 – May 31	The Connecticut Poetry Award	\$400, \$100, \$50	\$15
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