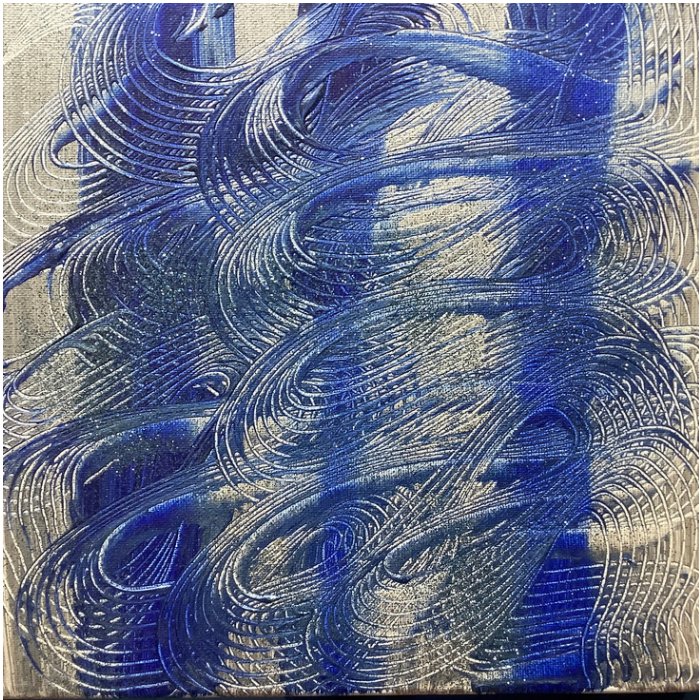


Annual National Poetry Month Celebration Anthology April 2024



Presented By:

Raritan Valley Federation of Libraries

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**IN MEMORY OF
Paul Sohar**

Anthology Layout

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Cover Image

**Camilla Sohar
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"Trees in the Wind"**

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Our patrons, in celebration of National Poetry Month, April 2024, submitted these poems to the New Brunswick Free Public Library. Many of the selections published in this anthology will be read by the authors at the Poetry Month Celebration Reading via Zoom on April 22, 2024.

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What It's All About

First of all, I know,
It ain't about me;
About my story:
"What happened to me."

It's about community.

It's about unity.

It's about you...and me...
Connecting...sincerely.

It's about This and That
Becoming aware
Together they are one...

And when apart -
They are but part.

I desire to tell this to the world
Sincerely from my heart.

Edmund Charles Baranowski

Reflecting Blue

Blue, blue; such a happy blue.
Stay happy blue, stay.
Don't fly away blue, please stay.
This feeling blue; blue when so far away.
An alone blue is a blue here to stay.
Blue, blue; such a sad blue.
Wash away this pain blue; so far away blue.
Blue, blue; reflecting blue.
This feeling blue today.

Abrahm Beezley

Fickle Fashion

As everyone knows,
fashions come and go
My mini dress has morphed
into a long shirt

Ladies' blouses cut longer
in back than in front,
thus to hide the bum and
proverbial multitude of sins

Some fashions go out before coming in
consider (for example) Gaucho pants –
happily lost in the tall
pampas grass of time

Other styles remain the same
changing only in name
Pedal Pushers becoming the
more sophisticated Capri

Maxi, midi, mini
sounds like a Latin catechism.
But really, it's just the
long and short of it

Virginia Barrie

Char

Scorched from the inside out, not the outside in.
I am sullied by life, but not by sin.
The char has penetrated, beneath my skin.
I am solid on the outside, but ashes within.
Let the flames come to lick my soul.
Let the flames come to ascend the pole.
I'll take comfort among the warm coals there,
For inside the Char it all seems fair.
That I should be scorched from the inside out,
Smoldering confidently without a doubt.

Gina Scarpelli Coffey

The Old Stone Inn, 1977

The three-man band in the oval
Starts the first country set,
Playing a poor man's version
Of Hank Williams's "Honky Tonkin'."

The patrons at Mike Leiggi's bar
Don't seem to care about the music,
Service quality, or fragile ambiance
Of this once-proud fieldstone house;
All that remains of the glory days
Is the mounted fish on a green wall,
Smoke-yellowed ceiling, dull brass lights,
Dead jukebox, and piano under red velvet.
Gone are better days when a broad maple floor
Felt the feet of sharp dancing couples—
Lawyers, doctors—all sorts of upstanding folks
Flocking for great food, drink, and a good time;
But after the well ran dry last year
And a car accident ko'd the cook,
No more spaghetti, steaks, or fries—
Just thirsty muckers, jobbers, and frat boys now.

The most recent trio just got off work,
Each eager to nurse a shot and a beer;
They'd pulled in at the vine-choked sign
Announcing the Old Stone Inn;
Parked beat-up cars out front
In the scabbed lot off of Route 1.
Mike's dented green Dodge Dart
Had been waiting there for hours
Under the scarred limbs of the "ghost tree."

Neon signs at the smeared windows
Had beckoned the construction men to enter . . .
They tramped across the deserted floor,
Found their usual slick stools,
Waved Mike over with calloused hands.
Leiggi nods, stops worrying a stubborn stain
On his self-made formica-topped bar,
Brings the usual drinks to his steadies . . .

The three-man band in the oval
Starts the last song of the first set,
Offering up a poor man's version
Of Bill Justis's "Raunchy."

Ed Belding

Mary Ellis

Mary Ellis, Mary Ellis
Your heart was like a trellis,
That let the Captain climb into your soul.
And though you loved him dearly,
He had to sail away.
So you spend eternity alone.

She was young like the country
When she came to live in Hub City.
She was the belle of the ball; it was a great time to be alive.

There she met the Captain,
And he tendered his affections,
And before too long she agreed to be his wife.

But he had one more voyage to make.
And in the time that it would take,
The Captain asked Mary if she would wait.

Mary retired to her house on the hill
To wait out the time until
The Captain came home and made her his blushing bride.

She watched for the Captain's ship.
But as the years rolled on, Mary slipped
Into old age, and finally died.

Yet she keeps her word for all time
From the place where her body lies
In a movie theater parking lot above the Raritan's tide.

Mary Ellis, Mary Ellis
The wind cries 'round that relic
Movie-goers park around your bones.
Though you loved him dearly
He never sailed back this way.
And so you spend eternity alone.

Andy Bernstein

Two Women Perfectly Imperfect

Two women years apart
Different lives
Connected to both
A long time ago
One offered compassion
Refuge when I was desperately in need
The other I birthed

One woman persevered and inspired
Passionately cooked and baked
Bringing everyone to her table
Generosity infused
Resembling drizzled strawberry sauce decorating desserts
Her arms always open like the doors of her home
Wisdom and soul melding together
Fusing all faiths with love
Her children's best friend
Now meeting her family at the train station
Taking a new seat she leaves an open chair
Becoming everyone's missing piece

Another woman just starting out
Needs to develop a smidgen of patience
Inspirational also
Running charity events at nine
Brilliant researcher
Aids animals
Happily introverted
Foodie
Would have hungrily devoured
Pat's passionate cooking

Late summer flowers fading yet blooming
Leaves changing colors
Celebration of life for both
Tears of joy
Cherished for being perfectly imperfect
One celebrates another journey around the sun
The other becomes an angel
Birth and death
Honored the same day

Descending at JFK Airport...

Watching the jet wing dip, sway,
then hover high again above her sky
line, my heart beats slow as dread at

minutes unbearably suspended
while watch towers peer in pink,
misted up runway for landing space.

From an oval window, my eye down
ward bends to watch lights beckoning,—
struggling to warm a waning, cold sun,

swallowed up in a thewy skyline.
New York City! Shimmering gold-
smooth operator on rivers rippling

promises! How I love freedom so
fluid in your veins! Sparkling energy
quickenning my heart beats racing in

tandem with my high heels hurrying up
toward alluring skyscraper wealth, once
foolishly fancy English sold for nutmegs!...

Isa J. Espadon Blyden

I Love Your Slacks

An author of the male persuasion
Crossed legged in his slacks
Like a Vincent Van Gogh
Pipe in the corner of his mouth
The artist brush inside his mind
Paints a story to touch your soul
With gentle strokes of tenderness
A field of love unfolds
Perhaps a self-portrait of rhetoric
A sketch sparingly used
With his colorful pallets of passions
Sits crossed legged in his slacks

Deborah Castellano (AKA Deb Castle)

Ellison Street

She beholds a gold-spangled blouse in the clothing store window
Silently shifting her fingers, counting her money in the rain.

In the greasy cash, she senses labor and calamity.
A honey-haired mannequin stares down at her hands.

The money is muddy wet, like an old dog.
She despises the money but wants the blouse.

She lingers while her desires are still pregnant.
Some goat-headed boy is reflected behind her.

He seizes the wind in his knuckles
and breaks into a song about the rain.

Her reflection seems to stream down the window glass.
She hugs the nugget of crushed money.

The goat-headed boy stands amid his mind's currents,
the moment pours out from his thoughts.

He follows her gaze up to the gold blouse and thinks,
"She is weary from the weight of her first child."

Labor and calamity drift past the streaming window,
a haze of swollen faces that pass like clouds.

Dave Bolger

Nature's Artwork

Woeful disfigured dunes winced in unfamiliar stillness,
as brooding waters remained wrathful, villainous.
Nervous isolation enclosed this lifeless coastal corpse,
no quick fix...was this the foretold Apocalypse?

Disemboweled chunks of sunken personal history,
lay along brackish sands saturated in misery,
torn from beloved island curves and familiar paths,
victims of twisted tides' chilling aftermath.

My father's hand-hewn white pickets lost at sea forever,
symbolized our shattered, storm-whipped center.
Embittered flotsam, bulkheads and splintered planks
encircled a lone Louisville slugger and child's piggy bank.

Fragile lilacs wept lavender tears, stained with rancid mud,
as lifeless holly sank into gray gloom, dying from salty floods.
Stubborn waters receded slowly, clung to curbside bastions,
while displaced survivors waited for relief, political action.

A contorted tranquility gripped foul-smelling storm residues,
dying landscapes muted all possessions as if on cue.
Carefree laughing gulls, familiar winged shadows no more,
abandoned their familiar coves, searching some other shore.

One last look: my everywhere hopelessly strewn,
painfully looking backwards, taking in the gloom.
Guilt-ridden bay waters asked forgiveness in regretful sighs...
need a change in lyrics...Islands do cry.

Colleen Boueil

What Winner's Won't Tell You

What kind of world do we live in?
Where winners lose
And losers win

Where we praise winners because of content
When they have no integrity within

With this way forward in society
The future looks so dim
Prefaced with fear of domination
What's to come of our young children?

We need more shepherds built to lead the youth
With more loving discipline
Taught to compete only with morale
So greatness they can willfully imagine

So they can confidently move through the process of life
Built to endure struggles and strife
Finishing strong without temptation
To resort to gun and knife

A sudden change is evident
To transform this character drought
And we as leaders must be humble
And take the time to self-scout

Big corporations make business decisions
To profit off our demise
Our children don't deserve to die
They deserve to live with fun in their eyes

Let's tip the scale
To overthrow that which sets us up to fail
Step up and make a change today
Or else, our fate will make us wail.

Kaila Boulware Sykes

Impacts Persist

Impacts persist.

They test the limits of opening doors. Unknown doors open, teaching us.
Possible windows reframe the dimensions of comprehension, as if defined by
growing ideas.

Unbelievable ideas burn bushes that speak, striking the awe that approaches.
Form and context overwhelm.

Your sometimes words glide in night and glimmer in the day.

Your spectral voices reappear as bodies prospecting for tomorrow.

I gain a glance into the incalculable mathematics of incongruities.

You say you'll help me to construct glaciers that move currents, and structures that
coalesce events, spreading shards of continents, connecting mountains to the sea.
And suddenly I conquer new fears and explore vistas.

Gone is the unseen. Untapped scenarios re-emerge and remind that despite all the
lost, we have new worlds to discover.

R. Bremner

Life

Life is beautiful, life is kind,

It could be joyous or it could gloomy,

Life is what you make it, so why not make it fun.

Life is Beautiful, Life is Kind,

It is made up of many different moments, good or bad, big or small that we must
learn to accept! Life is Beautiful, Life is kind.

Life is not promised to all, so be strong and enjoy the ride.

Life is Beautiful, Life is Kind.

Life is full of learning experiences where we are constantly learning.

Life is Beautiful, Life is Kind.

Dwayla Marie Carty

Chubby Shoulders

As I pluck each hair,
Staking claim to my skin,

I look in the mirror,
See shoulders far from thin.

To my horror, as each follicle falls,
This egregious fault snags my eye.

Nothing hackneyed, head to thigh,
Yet my eye fixes its while

On my quite offending, so upsetting,
Rather displeasing shoulders of mine.

What does this mean? How does this change fate?
Will my not-so-thin shoulders inspire hate?

My eyes are rooted on my shoulders
And I cannot shift my gaze.

I try to think of others confessing chubby shoulders,
But no one seems to splash across my mind . . .

I guess I shall be the first
To show this cruel world my curse

And prove those who lay claim
To chubby shoulders can be fine.

Anika Bukkapatnam, Grade 12

A Moonlit Night

The peeping stars steal
the winning smiles of the moon
at the earth draped in its gilt,
like a pen takes control of heavy minds.
Midnight hours stroll
in the murmuring silence of the crickets,
like faint leaves in the autumn end
strewn on shriveled pathways; or atoms of
unused talent in the bare furrows of the mind.
Fireflies like vagabonds spark
the chillness of the night, like fond memories
to the cerise of dreams.
And the intangible shadows of invested flora,
in their night sheen, stare like addresses
on letters.

The clouds--all that remained of the day--
with their hues camouflaged by silver--
idle in the yonder skies. And the gentle rays
pierce their recesses fitting them to
mellow the whiteness.

The hills trod by lions and their friends
in drowsy yawns closing in nature's shelters,
echo the trots of hurrying feet of those
settling in afar mud homes.
Betwixt the hills run streams glazed by
cooling flakiness of snowy air
melting the night's silence into a delicate glee,
like mercy flowing through stark reality melts
the latter and its hard-core deeds.

This panorama spread out so grand
evokes a lyrical poem—
a poem of morrow to celebrate any night.

Lakshman Bulusu

A Prayer for the Storm in Your Stare

Some nights when I lie awake
just staring at the fan,
the flickers cause my heart to break
as only shadows can.

But then into the Dark they blend
though the fan above still spins,
and I can't tell where shadows end
and where my heart begins.

For perched upon the whirring blades
is something darker yet:
the kind of black that transcends shades
and covers me in sweat.

And though it fills me full of dread,
there's comfort in that too:
while shaking, blinded in this bed,
I swear I still see you.

You, just you, and you alone
are what remains in here
when all else is as jet-black stone;
you never disappear.

The Dark itself may leave us soon
to roam along the coast
and hold its breath beneath the moon
for you to be its ghost.

I do not see so much as feel
your body in the air.
I only pray now to reveal
the shape within your stare:

the shape, it seems, which has no form
nor color I could paint;
just the essence of a storm
that burns without restraint.

Your cloudy eyes, your lightning smile,
the thunder when you sigh...
if I should stare too long a while,
just rain until I die.

Interrogating Love Beneath the Glare of a Bare White Light Bulb

Alright! I want to know where you reside!

Why don't you come my way?

Am I being punished or what?

How much more debt is there to pay?

Will my searching ever find you?

Are you trying to find me?

Can't you tell I need you too?

Don't you know I'm lonely?

Did you know I've been waiting now for quite some years?

Have you listened to my sobs at night and sympathized my tears?

Why don't you feel warm and passionate when it comes to me?

Or feel devotion and tenderness and other things you're suppose to be?

Does being elusive please you as obviously my strife?

Aren't I entitled to know you too if for only one time in my life?

Michelle Corbitt

Question Authority

after Jimmy Santiago Baca's "Who Understands Me but Me"

They wanted quiet, meek, and mild, but I was loud and clear,
they said to hold all questions, but I raised my hand, wanting to know,
they said to sit down in the back, but I stood my ground up front,
they denied my body's freedom, but I fought for what was mine alone,
they denied me dignity and respect, but I earned it in the end.

I won't keep quiet, never could, never will,
and I question your authority, your knowledge,
and I stand with others who rise in protest,
and I fight for a woman's right to choose,
because we want to live beautiful, dignified lives,
who will understand this fight beside me and
who understands me when I say that is beautiful?

Laura Daniels

Why Are You Not Happy ?

You have a house to live,
You have properties and wealth,
If today you can't earn as well as become more rich,
Then what is your fault,
You are trying so much but also you are not successful,
You are a hero and you are like a soldier,
You should not give up in your life your life is,
Like as a war you should fight and win this war,

Never lose your hopes,
You have education and knowledge which can make,
You rich and famous if you will use them properly,
Money is only is not a wealth please know this,
Gautam Buddha left his all wealth and become a monk,
Shiva always lives in a graveyard and hills,
They become great from their good works,
So, be enlighten and become happy in what you have.

Binod Dawadi

Reading Tea Leaves

The leaves start out
As Morse code
Then unfurl into words

The dried flower
Blooming
Into messages

You, proficient in languages,
Read my leaves
And we quench our thirst

Arlene Geller

Upon a Star

Can you bring me to a better time?
Oh, time traveler of mine
Will we repeat the things as before?
By going back and opening a door.
Please stay with me
If it is meant to be
Time is what I need more today.
I need to linger and stay.
I am wishing today on a star.
I wonder where you really are!
Will I be able to visit with you?
There is nothing else I want to do.
The mysteries coming soon to an end.
It is not why, but when.

Rose Gold

Trees Speak

after the snowfall white fluff upon
branches and tree trunks
bringing calm and quiet
slowing world's pace

following stark winter, longing for spring
whispering red haze adorns limbs
glimmers of wonder
yet to be

when leaves sway all directions noisily
wind's furor announces
signals and warns
approaching storm

during pervasive heat spell
trees wield another duty
shelter as umbrella
intense rays softened

majestic glory of autumn's plumage
brevity and keen awareness stir
leaves dispense then scatter
embers of past delight remain

trees speak...
open our eyes to listen!

Lynn Doll

Room 41

The piano reflects a descendant sun
orchestras condense into key notes
Augmented by car honks
Summer winds accompanied by an oscillator fan
To be continued
I enter wondering
I leave with a song

Let Sunshine Rise

at this hour, as the solstice slowly embraces the winter sunlight
a song of joy as the wind blows into the faces of the pathway
in the heart of nature
the tall trees
falling leaves
rocks that surround you
and ponds that surround you
let us nourish Mother Earth
in wonder besides Lake Wintergreen
and celebrating the gift
of West Rock Ridge mountaintop
drawing inspiration
gathering and forming a circle high above the ground
sharing a meal of roasted peppers, cheese, and olives
let us drink café for the last day of winter
looking towards the sky with the sea of love
the food of the Earth as Roy Ayers would sing
that lifts our spirits
that everybody loves the sunshine

Carlos Raúl Dufflar

If I Still Had My Sister

If I still had my sister,
She'd be thirty-five
I'd have a niece, with eyes like hers,
That'd sparkle when she'd thrive

If I still had my sister,
I wouldn't have a hole
I'd say, "Indeed, she's doing well,"
In lieu of heavy truths untold

If I still had my sister,
I'd have someone to grow old with
We'd spend our days along the coast
Grateful grief is but a myth

K.E. Edmond

An Unwarranted Community

A culture full of greed individuals scoping
through materialistic deeds

with

vomiting viewpoints that takes

us to our knees

political and corporate vultures

draining us indeed; a whirlwind so supreme

How can a community ever measure up

to unjustified means?

Tongue-twisting and devastating desires

ultimately creating a mouthful of lies;

an unwarranted community in the

palms of their hands where aggravation

and frustration go hand in hand

Jenee Edwards

Gills & Tails (For Amel Larrieux)

Back in 2000, you said you knew I was down,
but asked me when I'm gonna get up?
2023 still has me asking the same question,
Because I've been more down than up.
Marathon strokes in the deep sea of despair
have had me growing gills & tails
as I sink deeper into the abyss.
Can I come up, can I come up for air?
How factual. The unpredictability of life.
Swimming one minute. Drowning the next.
Praying you're not taken out by the next big wave,
While fighting to get to the surface, fighting to breathe.
Trying to perceive of a better situation than switching
between Doggy paddle & the back stroke or floating helplessly.
Can I come up, can I come up for air?
You said you were in the company of gills and tails.
I may have pulled an Alice in Wonderland
Tumbling down behind you
Watching your skin grow scales,
And watching mine follow suit
Because we are on the receiving end of life life-ing.
Can I come up, can I come up for air?
Life can be one big fight to breathe,
Like fish out of water, evicted to an unnatural state of being.
Dare we drown or race to the surface to inhale fresh air,
And exhale the despair & depravation.
Do we stay in the company of gills and tails,
Or leave & remove the gills and tails that have become our own?
Can I come up? Can you come up? Can we come up for air?

(*Inspired by "Gills & Tails" By Amel Larrieux.*)

Noel A. Figueroa (The Anointed Pen)

Commercial/Face

Even as a child, she sought the comfort of the commercial face
She made/ believed someone else's hair into her own
And made/ believed someone else's eyes into her eyes too-
A flower wilts wonderfully when water never reaches the roots.
Watching her words and paying her bills
The woman tried to live her life by the book
And she would wring nervous sweat from complacent hands when someone loud
called her out her name
Just how deep can an ostrich sink its head beneath burning sand?
She learned silence simmers down to transparency and her fairest of mirrors faded
back to black
Accepted skin/ hair /eyes/ accepted words mean zero to nothing if the two- headed
gods she'd praised are prone to shake and quake her man/u/factured self into a
confusion of shoot shards-
She found on more lipstick to pretty up hypocrisy.
The road is long to resurrection self -anointed ugly crucifies her face
But like flowers fights fiercely against certain death;
Like a waking ostrich shaking sleep and stretching its neck;
May this woman find a spine in her voice-
May she caress her own skin
Bat her eyes/braid her hair/ and behold her self
A welcome sight -
In her reflective eyes.

Taraka Lee Gilbert

My Migrating Soul

Some days emotional learning is a pain,
but I always find my way.
While the wind is blowing my soul is flowing,
like a migrating bird I can fly everywhere...

Where am I going? I don't know.
But migrating birds always return...
to the place where they were born.

The spirit of my wings flying where my soul shall rest...
The home is the flock, the house is the nest.

Zazil Sanchez Gonzalez (3rd grade)

Frivolous

I know it seems superficial,
But I enjoy going to the mall.
I like looking at the fashions,
And mentally put together outfits.
I like trying on clothes,
If the article of clothing looks good,
And is on sale,
The endorphins are activated.
I enjoy the food court,
Where my unhealthy choice,
Is a hot dog and fries.
I enjoy the aerobics of walking.
Going to the mall,
Does not fall under my mantra,
Of living a meaningful and productive life.
Or maybe it does,
I've been told I dress well.

Marcia Glatman

Abraham's Kin

A Triple Tanka for Peace

Cousins in chaos
Jerusalem is crying
The holy land mourns
Prayers, pleas, and peace we seek
Hoping for the end of war

The sacred soil
Saturating the bloodshed
Alarms and sirens
Missiles stray, innocent lay
Flames reflect in a child's eyes

They say God is love
But if they are teaching hate
Re-evaluate
Love thy neighbor as yourself
These are all Abraham's Kin

Karina Guardiola-Lopez

Continuance

She tried to say she felt their pain,
By that she meant story, a root,
a wandering episode captured
in a movie reel that never finds an end;
by that she means a memory
trapped in a theme, no matter
how many times it plays
it never resolves its own plot
by that she means we all
have slices of vision, of things
only we possess, ownership
of thoughts that drift alongside others;
ghosts that are what they are, not strong nor vivid,
who need assistance reaching their own conclusion.

But wait, they said, we're just talking
about a plant that isn't growing
as well as the others.

Oh, right, I said, and pointed to the bony red thing in the planter,
all dust and dirt and brown spots among a hub of lively perennials,
stretching fingers in a manner that tells me it's trying.
"There's always one."

Lorie Greenspan

Viaje al Interior

Los laberintos de la mente
hay que transitarlos
con los fantasmas de la memoria
y las llaves en los bolsillos interiores del corazón,
ansiendo libertad.

Myrna Miranda-O'Neill

It's that time of year to reflect, for all of us to remember;
That tragic, fateful day, that occurred on the 11th of September.
On this solemn 22nd anniversary, we honor those that we lost that day;
The phrase "we must never forget", are words we must always continue to say.
It was such a beautiful morning, not one cloud in that clear, blue sky;
But at 8:46 our world changed, we stared, as some of us started to cry.
We watched the day unfold, our hearts were torn with grief;
How could anything like this happen, it was well beyond belief.
Our world literally stopped, it shattered within a blink of an eye;
Our surroundings became silent, yet inside, we were asking the question why.
So many lives were lost that day, making this tragedy all so surreal;
Being caught up with so much emotion, we knew it would take time to heal.
Losing firefighters, EMT's, & police officers, who worked tirelessly side by side;
They left this world with such dignity, and, with such a great sense of pride.
For those who perished in the Towers, it could have been someone like you or me;
Simply trying to make a living, not knowing their fate would come to be.
Watching people jump from those Towers, I could only imagine their fears;
I prayed that God was with them, along with trying to hold back my tears.
We cannot forget the Pentagon, or the tragedy of Flight 93;
People working or simply traveling, couldn't predict what they were about to see.
Imagine getting one of those phone calls, from one of your loved ones telling you
goodbye;
Hanging up with such shock and disbelief, would certainly make anyone break down
and cry.
Remember how numb we all were, for days and months after that attack;
How could we ever enjoy life and smile again, would we ever find our way back?
Life was never meant to be easy, we saw how hard it was that day;
By the grace of God, we got through it, he certainly showed us the way.
For so many, there was never any closure, not saying goodbye to your loved one is so
unfair;
To live with that burden through your lifetime, is one of the most, heaviest crosses to
bear.
On this horrific day in history, remember all of those lives that were lost;
Know that you can't put a price tag on life, it's much too high of a cost.
Will this ever happen again, no one knows for sure;
But I know we are so much stronger, than we ever were before.
Don't take life for granted, be the best person you can be;
Continue to share your heart with others, love will be your key.
Be grateful for your faith, it's one of God's gifts, which can't be measured;
You should only live life to the fullest, for it is a true and everlasting treasure.
On this 22nd anniversary of 9/11, lives were lost that we have never met;
Honor their legacy by simply telling the world, that we will never, ever forget.

The Wordless Poem

The wordless poem
Expresses it all
Between the stanzas
Between the lines
Between the words
Between the letters
Resides the meaning
The meaning behind
Behind the meaning
The inexpressible
Lurking theme
Just waiting
Circling interminably
Within the absence
The absence of expression
Within
The existential lubricant
Of meaning
Within
The wordless poem

Marshall S. Harth

Holding on

Strange how my emotions
track the weather
better than the weatherman
A nebulous sense of dread
breath collecting in the quiet
deep pit inside of me
I look out, dully absorbing
the wet gray world
The rhythmic drip drop
on leaves, puddles, pavements, and grass
Lo and behold, I see a single flower
A lone sunflower, standing tall and proud
Swaying lightly in the wind
Pounded yet somehow untouched
by the relentless never-ending pour
A little corner of sunshine in a sunless world
They say, flowers show their devotion
by turning towards the sun
And one desolate day, slowly slipping away
I found a lone sunflower, looking at me.

Athira Jacob

How Did I Find You?

So ordinary, unremarkable

Not a cover girl or superstar

How did I find someone so rare,
so extraordinary, a superman

I am transformed, in your eyes, elevated
to a treasure, a princess

When will this adoration, love, respect ever waiver?

Never, I begin to realize, as long as
The sun shines,
The moon rises, and
Hearts love

You cannot see my flaws

Or rather, you see passed them
to the beauty and kindness underneath

How did I find you, deserve you,
I will never fathom

Elizabeth S. Jonach

Nor'easter

The wind spoke to me only once,
when I was five. I heard it rattle
against the window that morning
in my room. My father yelled to me
to wake up or I'd be late. It was a
Nor'easter, but school was open.

Rain gusts battled us on our journey
toward the parking lot, behind our
apartment. The wind came up next
to me, called in a deep, sinister voice,
deeper than my father's. The last
letters lingered, but there were no

words. My father didn't hear this
warning, just me. I felt a strange
pull upwards that lifted me inches
from the ground. I held my father's
thick calloused fingers tight, other-
wise who knows where I'd be.

The One Constant is You

Spring

Sunlight filters through the leaves, laughter echoes
Playing fields awash with life, excitement in the air
Flowers dance as night falls, the moon rises
Hand in hand, lovers slowly walk through the park

Summer

Vacations, long days, walks through the quiet streets
Running through the fields without a care
The crack of the bat, time stands still
Sand, surf, bright skies, sweethearts dance, eyes meet

Autumn

Cold breeze, lightning, a storm gathers far away
Leaves gently find their way to the ground
Crisp cold air wafts through your amber hair
Evening gives way to starlight as I walk you home

Winter

Bitter cold, the snow squalls make it hard to see
Snowmen, igloos, laughing away the hours
I see your breath, you see mine, we watch the stars
Holding you by the fireplace, the one constant is you

Ken Jonach

Haiku in Classical Form

pounding on the roof
the rain finds its way
in—night storm

workmen gather
tree limbs razed to sawdust
morning sickness

Annie Klier Newcomer

Nothing Worthwhile Is Neat or Tidy.

There is something sacred in silence
a harmonic understanding of the world

power to define our civilized selves
connections between us and ...

THEM

The heart – the first THEM
Currents feeding the rest
Flow in

Flow out

Thump

Thump

Rushing through silence
Confident, sure with its mission
Need to reach

THEM

The brain – structured THEM
externalizing power to systems
that don't always give back
false witness to how we think the world is

rationalizing for THEM

The soul – the biggest THEM
succession of self
unpredictable in rebellion of THEM
always looking inward
to change the outward

sacred silence is busy

Susan Justiniano (RescuePoetix)

Carnations

No other bouquet can express
a serviceable day more accurately
than this sturdy spray, for a recognition
of nameable achievements.

But the accomplishments worthy
of this bloom are not those that make
one wise, would not release one's spirit
from the reincarnation cycle.

Take that lotus, swaying and waxy,
how it symbolizes the end
of all that trying to get it right,
and the beginning of timelessness.

Surely there is a specific flower
to recognize each attainment . . .
what would be the spot-on choice
for feats of numinous failure?

Last night I rubbed my wrists with violet oil,
wallowed in its seductive tragedy,
lay on my fainting couch, but morning
came bearing all the comforts

of elixir ordinaire, comprised of birdsong
and the color wheel of summer.
I chased it down neat
with resolve I'd held in reserve

made sure to wash down the purple
and yet, my heart does still beat bruised
at the thought of those mundane military
flowers that stay crisp and starched forever

like high school graduation photos,
faces cemented into youth,
mouths rehearsed into triumphant smiles. . .
God I hate carnations.

Unending Urns

The tall blue ceramic vase
with white swirls
like unmoving clouds,
and its square-shaped companion,
sit atop our kitchen cabinets.

Inside, they are dark,
like our thoughts –
son's, parents' –
carefully kept on a high shelf
out of reach.

Each day sun rises again
over the lagoon,
the redwings, and seagulls.
Our breakfast pancakes sizzle,
as they must,
until quieted by syrup.

Smooth words and phrases
flow as years in an old clock
of unmeasured time,
unsaid sentences snaking
above our grey deck.

At night, the vases lose color.
Lit only by candle flicker
they become furtive urns.

Lavinia Kumar

Mouse

"And a mouse is miracle enough
to stagger sextillions of infidels."
Leaves of Grass

All eyes and ears
a tuft of gray fur
scoots across the cellar floor
on invisible feet

zigzags like a clockwork toy
and zips away,
his stubby butt-end
disappearing into the shadows

Behind a box marked Glacier Park,
hulled seeds in wisps of dryer fluff
define his winter den,
Whitman's mouse.

Carolyn Phillips

Under the Summer Sun

She is quite at ease
In her new turquoise swimsuit
As she slowly climbs.

Its deep vivid hues
Contrast with her dark hair's sheen
Her skin's subtle tones
Yet flatters her trim figure
As she prepares for a dive.

Five steps then a jump
Her colors smoothly descend
Slice into the pool.

Mark Schardine

Let's Do a Show!

We all loved the movie Casablanca
called ourselves the usual suspects
and in these times of lives closing shop
impossible for Captain Renault
to round up the seven of us.

Each one a muse who could mix potions
perpetuate our inside jokes
weave witty parodies of Broadway songs
finish each other's sentences
as we created a secret society
to perform for crucial life events
or any birthday with a zero
the Phi Alpha Roh Tau Players
our matching black t-shirts with
gold Greek letters on the front
and PH.A.R.T. on the back.
Those prime times, eating
drinking, writing each show
then our mad, hilarious rehearsals.

And sigh, only three of us left
Esther, Elena, and me
predictably the men gone
innovative Allan and my dear
quick wit-it-up Marvin
but we also lost Arlyne
our outrageous instigator
from a nudist camp
with the party house on Montauk
who could never carry a tune
each memory a balloon ride.

And just yesterday another siren
sounding, Millie our staunchest voice
now silent. No more that oft retort
her line, in perfect Bronxese
from Come Blow Your Horn,
Do I know, do I have a pencil?
then would rip off the Band-Aid
and let you have her mind.

And always each show's
last song, L' Chaim!

Perfectionist

Perfection is a lie, Perfection is a lie
Perfection is a lie, Perfection is a lie
Perfection is a lie, Perfection is a lie
High standards to be perfect
fine perfect impossibility to meet
setting yourself to be
the impossible goalscorer
self critical ensuring the impossible
high standards, putting others down
blaming others for not attaining
holding back, not taking chances
not enough time, limits
only doing things that I am good at
getting the perfectionists critical beliefs
wound up, inaccurate information
lacking shameful guilt, going over faults
Perfection is a lie, Perfection is a lie
Perfection is a lie, Perfection is a lie
Perfection is a lie, Perfection is a lie
we made mistakes, impossible to be perfect
it is good to be able to laugh at ourselves
resilience not high standards, navigation
through life's sticky seas ,asking
for help, getting rid of structures
of a perfect performance, this is lethal thinking
let it go, change thinking, cognitive means
making a change to this distortion
accepting self motivated self compassion
self care, deeper understanding
nobody is perfect, engage with others
people, cities, become deeply connected
lonely in your loneliness, override problems
circumstances, make that change
no-one else is perfect, perfection is a lie
Perfection is a lie, Perfection is a lie
Perfection is a lie, Perfection is a lie
Perfection is a lie, Perfection is a lie

John Joseph MacSheehy Sheehy

Shelburne Falls

Shelburne Falls along the Mohawk Trail
A lake formed by glacial waters
14,000 years past
Glacial potholes drilled by water
Whirlpool through solid granite
Helped by small millstones
Gneiss* bedrock eroded by the flow
Beautiful otherworldly sight
Swirls of rusty orange, gray, and white
A sea of holes – more than 50
Six inches to 39 feet – world record!
Marvelous power harnessed
By hydroelectric dam
On the Deerfield River
At the base of Salmon Falls
Still being formed every spring
After snow melt, waters rise
Millstones grind holes
In the swirling whirlpools.

*Pronounced like nice.

Linda Milkes

High Anxiety.

My offspring claim it's my fault—
hard-wiring them with the worry gene
encoded in mothers' tales
of hell, the ways of bullets
and what they shatter.

In my kitchen, today my grown children
mash and rehash a hot, huffing kettle of worry—
I watch it bubble over,
seep beneath the French doors,
creep under the flowering plum

daughter serves up the stew:
—he'll starve in college, eat only pizza and Good & Plenty.
son stirs in his family ingredients:
—what if she has an asthma attack at sleep-away camp
—heard a kid in Pennsylvania got measles...we're only looking
at New York.
in chorus:
—you're planning a trip to Israel now!?

Jerky and running
much the same as those old 8mm movies,
my mind unrolls scenes
not silent but screeching like red-tailed hawks
staking out their spaces

a grandchild's sore throat—surely pneumonia—
a son's knee pain –torn torn torn—
late bulletins concerning showers of neutrino particles,
the last humpback whale
singing its farewell song
into an emptied sea.

Ilene Millman

Imagine Being Free

Imagine being free where God was all that mattered and the peace you feel within when He's present, stays with you every waking moment of your life.

Imagine being free when those on this earth charged with loving you anyway - don't - and you finally awake in the morning full of gratitude rather than tears

Imagine being free and in total disregard of negativity from others in word or deed

Imagine being free where there is always clarity of mind

Imagine being free where you can will your dark mental state to take a back seat for the rest of your journey in life

Imagine being free where you can have one mind...just one

Imagine being free from worries from many years ago that still makes you cringe

Imagine being free from worries about decisions your grown children have, and are, making in their lives that takes them further away from truth.

Imagine being free from worries about what is being perceived about who you are and why you are

Imagine being free from worrying about their business and finally understanding that it makes your life no better or worse

Imagine being free where you can focus only on what-makes-you-tick

Imagine being free where your mind is laser focused on the goodness you have to share

Imagine being free where the regrets are long gone, the past is a distant memory, and all that matters is the foot you put in front of the other

Imagine being free...free enough to not wonder what's wrong with the world but know in your heart that as you take your next step, you will do your part to create a more loving space

Imagine being free where boldness is your norm and audacity your playbook

Imagine being free where your allotted 24 hours is utilized for nothing more and nothing less than the life you choose to create

Imagine being free from believing that obtaining things is what gives you power and recognizing that the power is already within.

Michelle Nelson

Imagine being free!

The Charge You Come upon

1.
It is the charge you come upon
sleeping under a tattered blanket
sometime between midnight and dawn
like night of night becoming the night.
You hesitate but then poke a bit
for company if not just to make sure it
is all right.

2.
It's the squirming thing
you've hunted or fished
and bagged and brought home
but resists being processed.

Its guts when bared
only smatter into black
on a field of white,
the inverse of stars
the complement of the firmament.

You thought you were to skin it
or scale it and freeze it
or smoke it to eat it
or stuff it and mount it,
but only find upon evisceration
that your task is the opposite:

To try to put all
the dark glitters back
into an organism
something like the original.
And ah, ow, ooh, there, there's
the sleepless challenge.

3.
And failing, or trying and refusing to fail,
you can't help but wonder,
would it have been better
to have left the wretched urchin resting
under the blanket asleep.

James B. Nicola

What or Who Do You See When You Look in the Mirror?

Do you recognize
The image in the mirror
Say hello to you

What do I see there
What is the image so fair
It's my reflection

Mirror : friend or foe
It depends on how you feel
Do you smile or frown

Through the looking glass
A smiling face looks at me
With dimples showing

The mirror shows us
The reflection may be plain
Beauty lies inside

Mirrors hide secrets
The happy face may be sad
Who are we kidding

Miriam Rivera

Tooth & Nail

I scraped, I clawed; outlasted every god
Sipped surreptitiously from the vinegar jar
Escaped, though flawed; contrasted with my pod,
I ripped off the bandaid on my heart
So salt plus wound came startlingly too soon
It oozed, umami cocktail brewed from pain
The brine, it burned, from every lesson learned,
And seared; ungentle message to my brain.
Tooth & nail, I fought, from all that I was taught,
Tooth & nail, eroded to the quick;
Enamel, dentin, cementum, pulp, alpha-keratin
Fraught last bastion standing 'tween the heal or sick
Valar dohaeris, meet valar morghulis
A fresh supply of death so Stoic'ly serv'd
Toto corpore atque omnibus unguis
A crime it is to witness Self, unnerved.
The sense of taste and touch now laid to waste,
Infection dereliction seeped to core.
Remains consigned to be Invisaligned, chaste;
In giving less, resigned to taking more.
The blood, it streamed from every tested seam
The sweat, it whet the shards of flesh and bone;
The tears were shed in endless depths of dread;
Deemed essential, referential to tomb stone.
So what is left, when one is thus bereft?
What substance is the last to rot away?
Nails grow in the grave, and teeth enwreath and save
Weft and warp of mouthful shrouds' decay.
It's no one's fault if Life's fight's unrecalled
The ravages of Time in memory's way
But Tooth and Nail, though violently assailed,
Mauled marrow from the narrowest array.
Effect immense, existence this intense,
The scratch marks of the past inside the well
Memorialize the plight of those who stayed to fight
The battle of the chattel ... to the bell.

Andrew M. O'Hearn

Soy De

Soy de la isla del encanto
100por35
Tierra de grandes poetas, escritores, cantantes,
Boxeadores, peloteros, Jueces de courte supremo
Actores y guerreros

Soy de donde El Magnifico "The Great One"
Roberto Clemente nacio y la salsa
Tan sabroso y caliente cojio su sabor
Y donde la bomba y plena suena
Su tambor

Soy de donde Bad Bunny se lo comio
Con su apagon y el reggeton puso al mundo
A perriar con su sazon

Soy de donde el Mar
Toca el sol y las
Olas de cantan una cancion
Mientras las brisas te refresca
Del calor

Soy de la mezcla de razas taino, africano
Y espanol soy de donde viene el ron cana, y la decima de la montaña
Soy de donde la Estrella brilla
En la bandera
SOY DE PUERTO RICO PARA QUE LO SEPAN !!

I Am from (Translation)

I am from the island of enchantment
100 by 35
Land of great poets, writers, singers,
Boxers, ballplayers, supreme court justices, actors and warriors.

I'm from where El Magnifico "The Great One" Roberto Clemente was born,
salsa music got its flavor from
and bomba and plena sounds from it's drums

I'm from where Bad Bunny tore it up by causing a black out and reggeton put the
world to dance with its sazon

I'm from where the sea touches the sun and the
And the waves sing a song
While the breezes cool you down
From the heat

I am from the mix of Taino, African, and Spanish races
I am from where the moonshine "Ron Cana", and the "decima"ten line stanza from
the mountains comes from
I am from where the star shines
In the flag

I'M FROM PUERTO RICO SO YOU KNOW IT!

Yari Pares "Porta Rock"

I Am Idle No More

I speak to you the unspoken silence of memories pervasive
Seeking momentary display in the urban rhetoric of disdain
A predictive line of genocide disabling connectiveness
Stolen relatives separated by their names left unspoken.

To be invisible is to forever bear the consequences of worth
Relentless searching to heal the scars left by the Sixties Scoop
Nameless children abandoned to the tears of lost families
Language and culture severed by the embrace of soulless truths.

The concrete darkness of shadows casting ironclad imprisonment
As the city streets replace the names of fallen Chiefs and Warriors
All of whom rise above urban landscapes beckoning redemption
As the Halluci Nation holds all perpetrators in contempt of life.

My fears predicating punctuation of a time not so long ago
When after the flood, a lowly muskrat gave its life to save others
The turtle accepting muskrat's gift to bear the weight of the world
The eagle sacrificing its freedom to forever be our friend.

To you, Creator, I cry tears that suffer the disgrace of hardened stone
I speak to the cacophony of silence in the sunrise hidden behind darkness
Northern winds warming ancient timelines of forced mediocrity
Brutality and disease decimating 50 million of my brothers and sisters.

I now raise my head to the sky people from whence I come
Arm raised in defiance against the prevalence of ignorance and hate
After 368 treaties broken, lands taken, stolen lives, and lessons unlearned
I exchange Their Bible for our Pacha Mama, and restore honor to My People.

Embracing the four sisters from Saskatchewan, I, too, will be "Idle No More"
No More half-breeds, No More blood quantum's, No More Indignity
No More Missing & Murdered Relatives in cornfields and garbage dumps
No More residential schools, No More forgotten names, No More pain.

Remembering a time when all life was sacred, My Blood no longer runs cold
Eighth Fire prophecy stating a single spark will unite a thousand generations
The Red Winter has begun, ending the bitter waters of despair and discouragement
No more silence! I cry for my people! I rejoice with my people! I rise up with my
people!

A'ho!

Allen Rabert
(Blackhawk Moccasin)

A Special Thank You from Moses

Dear Housekeeping
Thank you for all you've done these past few weeks.
We must have driven you crazy.
One week we're going, the next week we're not.
The Pharaoh's okay with the Exodus.
Then he's worried about what he'll do without slaves.
From the bottom of our hearts—my wife, Sephora,
the kids, my brother, Aaron and Joshua
(who will have "fit" the Battle of Jericho)
the whole mishpucha—
I think you know what I mean—
thank you, thank you, thank you.
We know it'll be tough on you guys
and you may not even have a job
once the Jews take off.
No more yelling, no more whips,
no more mud pits.
That's why we're leaving you 500 shekels.
s/ Moses the Prophet
PS. Those ten plagues—how about all those frogs?
We'll never have that kind of luck again.

Bob Rosenbloom

The Hammock Where My Soul Rests

The most beautiful color in my rainbow is so white and transparent and always goes
unnoticed.
The forest of her hair covered in snow in a place where it never snows.
Deep furrows to sow on a skin that smells like wet earth.
Spreading seeds where life germinates, where the dust of our time is sheltered by the
wind,
flies and is carried away, resting on the face of nothingness.
My mom is fragrance of wet soil, wind of country rain, persistent hurricane,
palm tree that dances during the inclement storm...
Julia is delicious like the cazon bread she prepares.
Her hugs are like blankets protecting us from the cold of sadness.
My mother is always, always like a hammock,
she rocks and rocks, filling me with calmness...
My mother is a hammock where my soul rests.

Sergio M Sanchez Moguel

Elder Morning

Less clocks
insistent calls to hurry up
be somewhere else.
This new morning unfolds without a jump start
eyelids gently lift
he listens to his chest fill out
strums along inside his head
meanders inside unconnected musings
allows the urge to raise up
surrender to this portion of his shrinking life.

He lifts himself to vertical
creaks, laughs it off
parks it in his growing sense of humor
and the padding of memories.
He lingers on some bygone lovers
relishes their succulence.
Across his neatly ordered bedroom
on its proper stand his smartish phone
a comfort and umbilicus
plugs him into any world he chooses.

Handel or The Beatles on the playlist for today
his life is now a Greek diner
lots of choices on the menu
some not fresh
but choose we must
he picks one for no reason
nothing left to prove
time has come to plug into his ear buds
a duvet of soft encounters.
He's made it to being old.

Ed Ryterband

Perfection

Mother casts on one stitch at a time
with lavender yarn soft as cornstarch
she once rubbed on heat rashes.
Unable to accept mistakes
caused by the stroke-damaged path
between her brain and reluctant fingers,
she unravels the labor of her days
eighteen rows today, twelve yesterday,
twenty-four the day before.
Perfection is elusive.
Her losses are not.

She can no longer live in her home,
tend her garden, cook, clean,
dress herself, or walk unaided.
Depression is her constant companion.
She has endured
the deaths of her husband and son,
cancer, Covid, a broken hip, pneumonia.
She's relearned how to swallow, walk, and talk.
Her once-perfect handwriting is barely legible
progress doesn't supplant yearning for wholeness.

Her presence is a treasure, shared memories are jewels
my sisters and I celebrate her ninety-sixth birthday,
the one we thought would never be,
we bring her books and search for the
perfect questions to knit together the
Stories of her life.

Judy Salcewicz

Always in My Soul and Heart

I still don't believe what happened,
maybe I haven't woken up yet or,
heaven was wrong in taking you to the other side.

It is hard to say goodbye
to someone who was part of your life,
everything becomes sad, but over time,
some doors open.

Since you are not here, I have fallen without touching bottom,
there is no sun to clear this gray sky and I put together
the silences that left me alone.

You left but your shine remained,
I miss you so much, I miss your voice,
your smile, your hugs, and each of your actions
that made me who I am now.

You always had love for me
and knew how to make me smile
when I couldn't take it anymore.

I will count every day that passes
to see you again and hug you,
meanwhile I will be happy
with all people I love here,
where one day you were
and took your flight to a better place.

Frida Valentina Sanchez Moreno, 12 years old

Calpurnia's Beau

[Calpurnia's Handmaidens' Song]

Caesar's such an awesome hunk, but he's Calpurnia's beau

He whipped Pompeii who was full of bunk, but he's Calpurnia's beau

How can such a cutie have such a brilliant mind?

We've found the perfect man for us, but he's Calpurnia's beau

He's got a classic Roman nose, but he's Calpurnia's beau

He strikes a classic manly pose, but he's Calpurnia's beau

Why is it that great men are truly hard to find?

We've found the perfect man for us, but he's Calpurnia's beau

He looks great in a white toga, but he's Calpurnia's beau

It's said he's into light yoga, but he's Calpurnia's beau

Why is it that the good ones are so few of a kind?

We've finally found the most wonderful man, but he's Calpurnia's beau

Ivan Smason

A Race for the Pennant

As the weather gets warmer, Sun it out.
"The Boys of Summer" are ready to play ball.
With blue pinstripes for the Yankees and
With blue and orange for the Mets---,
They are ready to take on their rivals the Phils & Red Sox.
As summer approaches out
Comes to "hot" and cold hitting streaks,
And the lulls in the batting averages.
The high ERAs as the Umpire
yells out. --- "Play Ball...!"
As Summer approaches out into
The dog days of Summer with
The hot and cold streaks of hitters
The fastballs of pitchers, let us "PLAY BALL!"

Ed Smith

Overnight at Motel Dementia

A chunk of 4x4 holds up the doorsill.
No outlet works
for your hearing-aid charger.
The table is sticky, chair seat torn,
the sheets thin, towels stained,
the AC rattles like a broken toilet,
the shower handle falls off in my hand.

Cockroaches loiter on the floor.
You say it's dangerous here.
You think we're staying not just tonight
but all week. Forever.
You say it's too dangerous,
the roaches will infest our bags,
grow in our shoes, too dangerous—
we must pack up and leave.

At last we're in bed
after the roll call of your pills.
You fall asleep while the smoke
and CO2 detectors
flash green and red for hours.

Dead Weight

Weighing the emptiness that the sky holds
endless pain that lives secretly
in the heaving bosom
of those verdant skies.

Who knows? Who could tell?
Stretched taut like a thrumming wire
devoid of its symphony,
It's an endless tale of woe and agony.

And we ignorantly live our lives
like a hamster on a wheel,
counting trees on the horizon
punctuating the undulating beauty of the rolling hills
blissfully lost in the beauty of nature.

Strolling in the lush green meadows and rolling hills
if only you could feel the pain it holds
the invisible pain of holding everything together
One last time—
unless the tourniquet breaks and blood gushes out
painting the horizon crimson red.

There is always a weight of the secrets that we carry in our life
something invisible but still existing
like that damn virus that held the lien to our lives
as we hunkered down;
lived a version of each of our realities.

Did it weigh anything?

Yet it uprooted our life
and still, we seem to ignore the lesson
that is carved everywhere
in every scar, in every crow's feet,
in every smile,
In every muted whisper.
Pain is invisible, weightless.

We are masters of disguise
hiding it in plain sight
when everyone knows that once you weigh it out
it springs back to zero.

Megha Sood

Seek this Moving Water

I seek to move as water
crashing onto waiting sands
and working to haunt the tides
then heading out to sea
like some astonishing call
~ hears the best wave to ride
and catches it ~ endless
joy ride ~ back to shore.

I seek this moving water
previously stayed, and still
in a green forest pond
Ancient, slick green blue
everywhere pinning wayfarers
beneath its sun-slatted rooftop.

No. I will part the algae
greened fingers reaching
through this cooled sea turned pond
limbs pushing ~ stretched for
the tides clear and clarion-calling.

Sun glimpses through green forest roof
holding, in a primeval grasp: penned,
reaching to shake stagnant off.
Arms pull long for the stretch
towards strong ocean pulse:
this waits, this beats, in time.

Momentum builds: a streaming back
arms, hands pulling pushing reaching
Into an ocean's own mouth gliding
now carried, I move am water
freely buoyed, floating, moving with
moving back out again carried:
sure waves a stronger, the easier sea.

Wish enfolds, moving now.
Water.

Melissa Taylor B. (aka M.TaylorB)

Elemental AIR

Call:

Hail East and Element of Air!
eager bees enticed among lavender crocus cluster
buzz freely between frail petals cupping sunlight
grains of life drift softly along
diminutive crystalline snowflakes
overblown sideways bluster
while lambs and lions lie down
in our dreams of peace

Come join our Ostara celebration!
Quarter-Sabbat honors Vernal Equinox.
The Gate of the East is open.

We bid you Hail and Welcome, AIR!

Release:

Hail East, Element of Air! We thank you
as warm eddies sift against past frigid chills.
We honor each season and today celebrate Ostara
dawn of summer's fresh embrace.
Our place on earth tilts more towards Light.

Hail and Farewell, AIR!
The Gate of the East is closed.

Sally Walsh

Double Trust

In life we may come upon
Someone
Whose backbone is made of steel
Who stands when others scatter
Who has faith despite contrary evidence
Whose role is to make things better

We learn from this person
We try to absorb some greatness
We hope to live up to his presence

If we are lucky
we recognize this singular person as
Someone
to treasure

My son
You are this person

My heart is shattered and overflowing
So take a small piece
Hold it in your pocket
Go forth fearlessly
And know
I am always here
in
awe
of
You

Farrah Walters

Shopping.

I'm in the grocery store, minding my own business,
When bigger business bubbles up,
announces she's gone.

I won't be buying the sugar free cookies nor low-salt peas or
whatever else puts a catch in my throat
as I pivot around one aisle's end and into another.

When I get sick now or return from being out of town,
no one cares.
There's no one to call to say I'm back.

I awaken from sleep to sunlight,
roll to my left side, tuck my arms elbow to elbow,
my left arm slung across my neck the way she used to do

Few knew how much she suffered,
refusing to show the white flag,
when every effort eschewed comfort.

Some found it strange
to see me relieved when she died.
I will not wish her back for my sake.

Sometimes while juggling all my pretty balls
my eyes following their ascension,
I become transfixed, then realize again,

she's gone.
World, ground, skies hollow out
I miss her, I miss it all

all the fighting
all the gaiety
all the love.

L.J. Weil

A Walk in the Clouds

Yesterday's dour mood faded,
under twilight's gossamer veil,
dazed phobic fears are muted,
no longer shall they prevail.

No more lonely evening strolls
with dubious introspection,
a new faithful walking partner
has mapped out new directions.

A spry bounce is in my step,
ashen skies turned pastel blue,
my perspectives are now clear,
vivid horizons expand anew.

While hiking this sacred trail,
silver threads of light beamed,
wafting me to a tender place,
full of love I once dreamed.

Finally a life feels resurrected.
I've entered a spiritual zone.
Celestial panoramas unfold,
all reflecting an ethereal tone.

Misery's chains no longer bind me,
grateful emotions rejoice in song;
today I bask in requiem's glory...
a redemptive place where I belong.

John L. Yelavich

A Crowned Haiku of Sorrow

they did not realize,
until they passed the orchard,
that they were kidnapped.
a holocaust dejavu,
ancestral p.t.s.d.

will jews have to hide?
this should never have happened,
please, no, not again.

nothing of their own,
had to rot lives underground,
brightness diminished.

broken holidays,
but peace in the middle east
is the greatest gift.

wish for a blanket
to cover the gaza strip,
before it gets more torn.

and what would you do
if you had been brutalized,
go ten times worse back?

targeting the weak,
will that amplify their strength,
and what about a conscience?

to the very blessed:
not a good enough reason,
for scorching judgement.

privileged freedom:
you might also get bitter,
when tasting worry.

hope for Palestine,
whether a Muslim or Jew,
palatable peace.

BIOGRAPHIES

Baranowski, Edmund Charles – Edmund Charles Baranowski is a wandering poet. He has performed his poems coast to coast and many points in between. His poems are short but deep offering encouragement to the soul.

Barrie, Virginia – Virginia Barrie is a local actor, director, playwright and poet. She had the great pleasure of heading the Lawrence Library Senior Poetry Group. Look for Virginia's poem "Paradise in a Paper Bag" in the forthcoming Spring Edition of the Paterson Literary Review.

Beezley, Abrahm - Abrahm Beezley, was born February 27, 1977, in Rolla, Missouri. Only child to Thomas, and Gwena Beezley, Saint James, Missouri. He holds a master's in architecture, from Kansas State University, 2009. An abstract expressionist, Abrahm is both participant and observer. He explains abstraction permits him to share everything, weaving complex narratives into reduced, fields of information.

Belding, Ed – Educator (Ret.) – 45 years at New Brunswick schools. Author: Thirteen Stripes; The Broken Bridge; Stryker's Gambit. Word Press Poetry site: "Ed. Belding, Poetry Collection". South Brunswick Township Historian and facilitator of local poetry workshop.

Bernstein, Andy – Andy Bernstein works in music and arts-in-education. His poem "Mary Ellis" has appeared on two recordings with accompanying music composed by Andy. The song was the subject of discussion on the radio show "Song Stories" in 2020.

Bier, Diane – MD Bier is a binge reader and you'll always find a book with her. Her writing reflects her passion for social change and issues. She has been published in various literary journals and locally. She resides in NJ with her family and dog.

Blyden, Isa J. Espadon – My godmother's gift of a big book of poems was the source of my interest in writing poems. It's an animating exercise that presents endless possibilities for exploring meaning, creating imagery, especially those that give depth to history, places and travel. I am a West African-American with an incredible historic legacy!

Bolger, Dave – Dave Bolger, is a New Jersey-based poet, teacher, and singer-songwriter. His Poetry has been published by the Rutherford Red Wheelbarrow and recently in a collection of poems celebrating the 50th anniversary of the D & R Canal State Park. For updates on Dave's performances, follow him on Instagram: @Dave_Bolger_Words_Music.

Boueil, Colleen – I grew up along the Jersey Shore surrounded by bay breezes, shifting tides, tourists, and open air. Boardwalk attitude, life experiences, and the study of classical languages have contributed to my poetic designs. Retirement has awakened my quill!

Boulware Sykes, Kaila - Kaila Boulware Sykes is a published author and photographer, speaker, co-founder of award-winning non-profit bookstore, Hidden Gems Literary Emporium, and mother of 2 children, Truth and Wisdom. Her work has been celebrated globally on CNN, The Today Show, Glamour, & more. Her literary efforts can be seen on HiddenGemsLiteraryEmporium.com or @HiddenGemsLiteraryEmporium on social media.

Bremner, R. – R. Bremner has been writing of incense, peppermints, and the color of time since the 1970s, in such venues as International Poetry Review and Climate of Opinion: Sigmund Freud in Poetry, and two books and six chapbooks. This poem was previously published in Open: Journal of Arts and Letters.

Bukkapatnam, Anika – Anika Bukkapatnam is a scientist, author, and insomniac. She has penned several anthologies and been highly recognized for her prose. When she is not writing poems about quite literally everything, you can find her at the local rescue, giving the best ear scratches, or at home, experimenting with new chai recipes.

Bulusu, Lakshman – Lakshman Bulusu is a Princeton, NJ based poet. He is published in forty library journals internationally. His haiku have been published in the US, China, Ireland, and India. He invented the STAR poem genre and the MIRACLE STAR poem genre.

Carty, Dwayla Marie - While interning at RWJ Medical School Women's Health Institute, I am working to attain my educational goals to become a physician as well as a writer. Writing is a form of therapy for me. It is a direct reflection of how I feel and everything that is happening around me.

Castellano, Debra – Pen name Deb Castle. Born in Brooklyn, NY in the 20th Century. Published in works, To My Beautiful Rose, Laughter in the Midst, Anthology of Poems.

Cirelli, John-Paul – I am a graduate student at Rutgers pursuing a degree in Library and Information Science, and I currently work as a Reference Associate at Cranford Public Library. I have been interested in poetry since my first grade teacher explained how words could be used like painting.

Coffey, Gina Scarpelli – Poetry, playing my instruments, and painting are expressions of my inner soul. I sometimes use my poems as lyrics and it brings me joy.

Corbitt, Michelle – I started writing to communicate feelings I was too introverted to say. Those feelings were conveyed through characters and autobiographically. This particular poem was a heartfelt cry for empathy for my failed relationships, unfortunately, all of them. My poem has been read at family get togethers as part of the entertainment, and was published in 2013.

Daniels, Laura - Laura Daniels is a multi-genre writer and founded The Fringe 999 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/399191694738673> and @thefringe999. Curated recently in NJ Bards Anthology, Silver Birch Press, Lothlorien Poetry Journal, and elsewhere. She resides with her partner in Mt Arlington, NJ, where she is currently working on her first poetry collection.

Dawadi, Binod – Binod Dawadi, author of “The Power of Words”, holds a Master’s Degree in English Literature and is in Kathmandu, Nepal. With over 1000 anthology contributions, he aims to enlighten society through his writing. Binod is also deeply involved in digital photography and painting. His work has been showcased in prestigious exhibitions, including the International Art Festival in Korea in 2023.

Doll, Lynn – I am a Jersey girl who loves to write. Composing letters has been a lifetime endeavor. Since 2018, I have conveyed in poetry what I witness and feel, gratefully.

Dufflar, Carlos Raúl - In 2023, Carlos Raúl Dufflar was installed by the National Beat Poetry Foundation as a New Generation Beat Poet Laureate (Lifetime Honor).

Edmond, K.E. – K.E. Edmond is a New Jersey native and beginner poet. She enjoys traveling, making new friends, and all things outdoors.

Edwards, Jenee – A 46-year-old New Jersey native born and raised in New Brunswick. An author/writer/poet who goes by her pen name Morning Star. This writer embraces others with written work of inspiration and enlightenment. Humbly, she paints with words and has three published works. The world is her canvas and she distributes faith and light instead of darkness.

Figuroa, Noel A. – Noel A. Figuroa is a poet, author, blogger, workshop facilitator & event host from Brooklyn, NY who has been reading & writing poetry for over 10 years. He self-published his first book of Poems, “One Man’s Journey” back in 2007 and has been actively blogging since 2012 through his site, “The Anointed Pen Scrolls” on WordPress.com.

Geller, Arlene – Arlene Geller’s poetry has appeared in Tiferet Journal, White Enso, and Tiny Seed, among other literary journals and anthologies. Two poetry collections, *The Earth Claims Her* and *Hear Her Voice* (which contains *Reading Tea Leaves*), were published in 2023. Choirs and soloists have sung her commissioned pieces. Visit her at arlenegeller.com

Gilbert, Taraka Lee – I stay in awe of writers who can fit a whole world, an entire scene, a complete movie in just a few words.

Glatman, Marcia – I am a retired entrepreneur who thought poetry was the rhyming couplets found in greeting cards. I registered for a writing class at my local library and discovered the format of free verse – the perfect creative outlet to express my emotions and feelings or just to tell a story.

Gold, Rose – I have been writing poetry for 59 years. It is my therapy, it reflects the high points of my life and the low.

Greenspan, Lorie – Lorie is a former New Jersey resident and graduate of Rutgers University. Her poems are the result of what comes to mind in engaging in everyday occurrences and how events and circumstances can be turned on their head for new interpretations. She has a fear of not being able to use her imagination to bring new perspectives to her writing.

Guardiola-Lopez, Karina – Karina Guardiola-Lopez, is poet, educator, and author from NYC and New Jersey. Her works have appeared in many literary journals, magazines, and anthologies. She has featured at the NYC Poetry Festival, Caribbean Culture Center African Diaspora Institute, The National Black Theatre, Nuyorican Poets Cafe, Bowery Poetry Club, The Bronx Museum, and other locations. For more information visit www.kglopez.com.

Harkins, Eileen – I was born and raised in New Brunswick. I graduated from New Brunswick High School. I worked for Johnson & Johnson for 38 years in International transportation. I am now retired, and, as a result, I have been able to deepen my appreciation for reading, poetry, theatre and the arts. In addition, I enjoy history and genealogy.

Harth, Marshall S. - Marshall Harth, a retired clinical psychologist, is a Poet living in Long Branch, directly on the ocean. His poetry explores the capacity of Poets to be able to express the ineffable experiences of humanity with “words”.

Jacob, Athira – Athira was born in the beautiful southern state of Kerala, India. She wrote her first poem at the age of 8, about a utopian fairyland. Since then, she has written countless more pieces in an attempt to bridge her internal and external worlds. She currently works in Princeton and loves spending her time outdoors, or reading, or both.

Jonach, Elizabeth S. – I'm a rabid recycler and an enthusiastic supporter of animal rescue. I began writing in high school but never attempted much poetry. This event inspired me to write more poetry. Love to Ken, Ella, Sunshine, and Bunny!

Jonach, Ken - Fan of the Seattle Mariners and Kansas City Chiefs. Favorite animals are cats and red pandas. Elizabeth is the light of my life and my best friend – I would be lost without her. Hello to Ella, Sunshine and Bunny!

Justiniano, Susan – Susan Justiniano (RescuePoetix) is a globally published, performing poet and twice-honored Poet Laureate. RescuePoetix™ professional artist brand was established in 2006. As a teaching artist and advocate she is deeply involved in the Arts globally, including active integration of the Arts through Social Justice and Education. More info: <https://linktr.ee/rescuepoetix>

Klier Newcomer, Annie – Annie Klier Newcomer resides in Prairie Village, Kansas with her husband of 44 years. She is a poetry editor for Flapper Press and has published the poetry chapbook – Comets: Relationships That Wander by Finishing Line Press.

Kreves, Joy – I am a visual artist/poet from Ewing, NJ. I have had poems published in exhibition catalogs "Home Verse News", "US1Worksheets", "Arte DeCore Magazine" and have just published a chapbook, "Nature of the Beast". I curate occasional exhibitions including poetry at my studio Suburban Frontier.

Kumar, Lavinia – Lavinia Kumar's latest book: Spirited American Women: Early Writers, Artists, & Activists – very short prose biographies of near 90 amazing pre-Civil War women poets, artists, abolitionists, suffragettes, and activists. She is the author of 3 poetry books and 4 chapbooks. After a career in sciences, she fell into poetry. Website: laviniakumar.net

Lubarsky, Nancy – I've always been interested in poetry. As an English teacher, I encouraged students to write poetry and I wrote with them. I have 2 published books: Tattoos (Finishing Line) and The Only Proof (Kelsay) and a 3rd on the way – Truth to the Rumors, (Kelsay) – a finalist in the Laura Boss Poetry Award, 2023.

Marks, Coleen – Was born in Brooklyn, then moved to a NJ mining camp when four. She is an award-winning photographer and has published three books of poetry, Writing Naked, Twin Passions (with photographs), and How Do You Think Of It. Her poems have appeared in several anthologies and been nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Martínez, Ángel L. - Ángel L. Martínez is a poet and plays bass guitar and U-bass.

Milkes, Linda – I have always loved writing and wordplay. I've been a member of a poetry group on and off for 8 years. I enjoy expressing myself this way.

Millman, Ilene – Ilene Millman is a poet and retired speech/language therapist who taught children who learn differently for more than 35 years. Her newest book of poems, *A Jar of Moths*, was published in March, 2024 by Ragged Sky Press. She was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2023.

Miranda-O'Neill, Myrna – I lived in New Brunswick while attending college. I enjoy reading and writing poetry because it helps me connect with my surroundings and other people. It the unspoken conversation that we have with ourselves and others.

Nelson, Michelle – I'm a publisher, writer, mother, grandmother. I hold an MBA and I love reading. I also enjoy the outdoors, specifically horseback riding.

Nicola, James B. - James B. Nicola, a returning contributor to the anthology, is the author of eight collections of poetry, the latest being *Fires of Heaven* (2021), *Turns & Twists* (2022), and *Natural Tendencies* (2023). His nonfiction book *Playing the Audience* won a Choice magazine award. This piece ("poem: the charge you come") upon was originally published in *Ovunque Siamo* (2020).

O'Hearn, Andrew M. - Writer, reader, soc-sci/humanities researcher, analyst, editor, runner/walker/hiker/cardio-biker. Poet, Stoic/Eastern philosopher, truth/fairness warrior. Language/symbols alchemist/neologist. Story-Doer/mythologist. Aphorist, memoirist, essayist, journaler, humorist, keynoter. Would-be talk-show host, stand-up comedian, behavioral economist, cybrarian, organizational/ interpersonal psychologist, nutritionist, naturalist, archivist/curator/concierge/historian, documentarian, techno-futurist, empath, polymath. Epicurean (food/beverages/travel). Change/culture communicator. Visual artist. Blues scholar, vocalist, harmonicateur. Gadget geek. Career coach. Social media hyper-networker/matchmaker. Utilitarian/pragmatist. Lifelong learner/leader.

Pares, Yari – I am a educator, activist, rebel, exciter, poeta and a writer who enjoys sharing pieces of myself, provoking thoughts, and enlightening others through words. Poetry inspired me from Miguel Piñero, Pedro Pietri, Piri Thomas and many many others.

Phillips, Carolyn – I am a retired teacher of English and meet with a group of like-minded folks to study and read poetry as well as to write and submit to local journals. My "Mouse" may be found in the 2023 edition of *Kelsey Review*.

Robert, Allen - I became interested in poetry as a child. My writings over the years have allowed me glimpses of humility, providence, and insight. This has led to publication of my poems in the U.S. and Australia. Currently, I give cadence and reflection to my Indigenous identity, as I am a direct descendant of "Kennewick Man".

Rivera, Miriam – A wordsmith at heart. I love to read, write, watch and participate in activities related to the written word. I have been published several times.

Rosenbloom, Bob - Bob Rosenbloom recently retired from the practice of law after 40 years. His poetry has appeared in Paterson Literary Review, Exit 13, LIPS and the Edison Literary Review, among other publications. He has an MA in Creative Writing from the City College of New York (1975).

Ryterband, Ed – Ed Ryterband is a psychologist, former stand-up comic and husband/father. He has 3 published collections of his poetry which are accessible on his website www.edryterband.com, and his individual poems can be seen in US1 Worksheets, Paterson Literary Review, Two River Times and New Verse News.

Salcewicz, Judy – Judy Salcewicz has had poems published in U.S. 1 Worksheets and RightHand Printing. Her essays have appeared in 6 "Chicken Soup for the Soul" Anthologies. The Kelsey Review has also published her stories and essays.

Sanchez Gonzalez, Zazil – I started listening to lyrics of songs and I liked that the words in the songs rhymed. I like writing poetry because it sounds like songs. My dad encouraged me to write poems, gives me ideas and then I write the rhymes by myself. I hope that people read my poetry.

Sanchez Moguel, Sergio M. – I am an orphaned child, dirty and naked, with mud tears dripping. To forget my sadness, I draw on the sand, on the mud of the earth, on the waves of the sea, on the seed that germinates, on the approaching hurricane. If the pain is deep I like to calligraphy poetry hidden in geometry...

Sanchez Moreno, Frida Valentina - Less than a year ago my grandmother passed away and one way to sublimate my emotions is through painting and poetry. I have discovered that poetry is therapy to heal the wounds of my soul.

Schardine, Mark – Mark Schardine is a New Jersey resident with a lifelong love of poetry, and the many pleasures it offers us. He believes that each of us in an heir to the remarkably beautiful tradition of poetry that previous generations have bequeathed to us, and seeks inspiration in works of the past.

Sheehy, John Joseph MacSheehy – I am an artist and writer. I originate from Ireland. Living in London. A writer artist print maker.

Smason, Ivan – I began writing poetry in high school over 40 years ago. I am also a licensed psychologist.

Smith, Ed – My poem “The Morning Cracks” is in NY City’s Penn Station on permanent display in red marble. My chapbooks are “I Am That Hero” (2002), “Greatest Hits 1980-2002” (Pudding House). Currently, I volunteer at Manchester Library and monitor and encourage at the Writers’ Group – Tuesday 2-5pm every month.

Sood, Megha – Megha Sood is an Asian-American award-winning poet, editor, author, and literary Activist from New Jersey. She is an Editor at journals MookyChick (UK), and Brownstone Poets (USA), and a Partner in the Literary project “Life in Quarantine” with CESTA, Stanford University, USA. More at <https://linktr.ee/meghasood>.

Susman, Maxine - Maxine Susman's eighth poetry collection Northern Swim appears this spring. Her poems appear in dozens of journals including Paterson Literary Review, Fourth River, Earth's Daughters, Adanna, The Healing Muse, and Canary. A multiple Pushcart Prize nominee and Alan Ginsberg Prize Finalist, she teaches poetry at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute of Rutgers University and lives in South Brunswick.

Taylor B., Melissa – I write poems about nature or the unseen, the abstract. Walking in nature, I am struck by light or angles, take a photo, then create a poem or short essay. Pieces I write also emerge from witnessing artists describe craft and process in achieving finished artwork. Essentially, my poems are about nature, art, and the unseen within the human experience.

Walsh, Sally - I'm a writer, artist, dancer, and singer, now retired from public service law. I began writing poetry in high school, with Villanelle and Sonnet, and veered into free verse during college. I'm a longstanding member of US 1 Poets Cooperative. Many moments can only be experienced, but I have discovered that some might be captured in poetry.

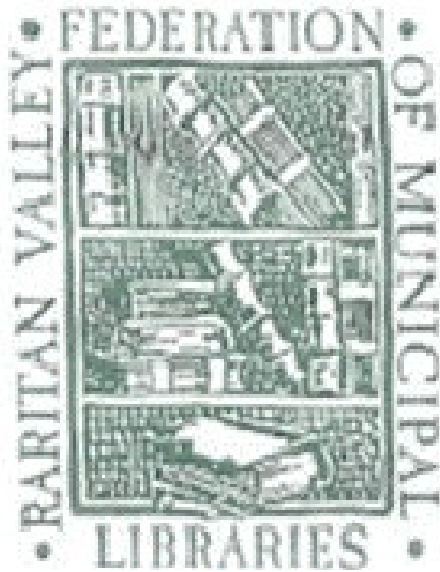
Walters, Farrah – I am a proud mother, wife, and teacher. I have two wonderful children, and I teach English and Literacy at Bridgewater-Raritan High School. I have always had a passion for literature, and it is my goal to pass this love of reading and writing on to my students and to my own children.

Weil, L.J. – L.J. Weil is a daughter, sister, cousin, friend, spouse, mother, grandmother, bonus mother, life coach and retired veterinarian. She enjoys serving a variety of organizations and institutions; experiences with animals, hiking, theatre, visual arts, and writing poetry. Her poem, Shopping, was published in The Orchards Poetry Journal, Winter 2023. With thanks to Annie Newcomer.

Yelavich, John L. – I am retired and now living in Whiting, NJ. I am a poet, short story writer and a lover of nature. In my writing I try to offer unique perspectives on family, love, nature, social issues, and spirituality, all with a central theme that inspires and motivates.

Zimmerman, Jody - I have not published poems and am a self-taught poet. I do not have a college degree, but have taken courses in fine arts, literature and women's studies. I create haibun, senryu, sijo, freestyle, sonnets, etc. My writing focuses on classism, environmental racism, and agriculture. My non-talents include burning cookies and killing houseplants.

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<http://www.bernardsville.org/policies/raritan.htm>