

# ADANNA

## LITERARY JOURNAL

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## **Credits**

Cover Art: *The Pregnant Virgin*

Cover Title: Fr. Andrew More O'Connor

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## About the Artist

Fr. Andrew More O'Connor, 53, is a New York City diocesan priest and a visual artist. The fifth of nine children, he founded Sacred Art Heals (2000) in order to collaborate with contemporary artists in the field of sacred art. *Katrina Bags* from 2004 was featured in the City Museum of New York exhibit on Guastavino in 2014. A thirty-foot permanent sculpture, *the Varela Mandorla*, a collaboration with the British artist Chris Knight, was dedicated on Mott Street in Chinatown in April 2015. Fr. O'Connor founded Goods of Conscience (2005), an apparel line based on a trademarked fabric *Social Fabric*. Made in New York, his sustainable fashion reflects Catholic social teaching.

In 2009 Cameron Diaz wore Goods of Conscience in a cover issue on sustainable fashion. Fr. O'Connor serves as Administrator of St. Mary's on the Lower East Side. He was honored with an award in *Dottrina Sociale* in Verona in 2014. Current projects include a line of bags with the Brunello Cucinelli in Sicily and a proposed *Dolmen* for La Bernadins in Paris 2016.

*The Pregnant Virgin* is an oil painting from 1990 and a Marian icon that is technically a "gobo" (a go-between) that is to say a metal idk that fits into a certain class of projector for artwork projected over large surfaces with light. Fr. O'Connor created the work for a 2011 artwork on the facade of Old St. Patrick's Cathedral.

## Preface

The response we received from both women and men when seeking poems about women's spirituality could be said, as a whole, to be overwhelmingly preoccupied with the sacredness of a woman's body, as giver of the Gift of Life. Our cover art, Fr. Andrew More O'Connor's *The Pregnant Virgin*, reminds us of the mysterious interiority of this power, the womb, dependent upon a man for generation, yet possessing an independent fecundity all its own. At the same time, the exterior curves of a woman's breasts and hips remind us of her natural ability to sustain as well as to give life.

The poems in this issue contain a sense of the universal praise and reverence that different cultures and traditions hold for Woman, both virgin and mother. These images of women include: Eve within the Judeo-Christian tradition, less as the first sinner than as our first mother, through whose womb the world is united; the Virgin Mary in the Christian tradition, without whose womb the Incarnation would not have been possible; the Hindu apsara, Menaka, who was commanded by a god to abandon her daughter and essentially suffer her loss; the Aztec goddess, generous Mother Maguey, named after the agave plant whose abundance of flowers yields an abundance of sweet syrup, mother's milk; as well as numerous contemporary mothers, either having given life through birth from the womb or by feeding others, sowing and reaping, cooking and serving food on tables, the altars around which communion takes place.

Bound up with this reverence toward Woman as sacred giver and sustainer of life is an equally strong sense of the sacrilege of her violation or mutilation. A young Muslim roommate pins on her hijab. A lovely ballerina is gassed at Auschwitz. A young American woman is tortured by Islamic State militants. A woman mourns her sister's genital mutilation. Rocks are thrown at the heads of bold American women walking the streets of Uzbekistan.

Giving birth or propagation of any kind comes at a cost. The face of *The Pregnant Virgin* reminds us, not of the joys of motherhood, but of the sadness that comes from a mother's knowing that her child will not only suffer during life but also

must die in this fallen world. Mothers in this collection pray for their living children to have healthy lives and their deceased children to find joy in the afterlife.

Finally, there is a sacred sorrow in this collection over the aging or death of mothers, grandmothers, and other women, the depth of whose love for us is unmatched in this life and from whom we have learned to love, found love within ourselves for others. Daughters and sons struggle with their mothers' aging and death; granddaughters, their grandmothers'; friends, their friends'; one voice even mourns the death of a woman she had "not known well" but "loved" for her "spunkiness." We sorrow at the deaths of those who gave us life of any kind, life born of love, a woman's love, leading us to faith in Divine Love.

Mary Ann Buddenberg Miller  
Bloomfield, New Jersey  
20 September 2015



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Mary Ann B. Miller

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*Deborah Howard*

## How to Find God

Drive seventy miles south on Route 25,  
Past towns leaning into the edge of the Rockies  
And tumbleweeds rolling across brown fields.  
Turn left on Ridge Road.  
Park your car.  
Hike two miles down the trail  
Until you reach the Cathedral Spires.  
Find a rock to sit on.  
Wait for the climbers to pass by  
So that you can no longer hear  
The clank of their metal carabiners.  
Look up at the red sandstone,  
A sixty foot arrow up to the sky,  
And listen.

Rebecca Ellis

## God in the Blue-Green Dusk

God in the blue-like green dusk.  
God in the presence or absence of love.  
I forget which grace is. . . .

**Dusk in the Palm of the Lord,**  
Geri Doran

1.

The realtor said, *Go look at the back yard—*  
and out behind the fence in bare November light  
we heard geese clacking and squawking

down the hill, beyond the trees.  
A small V-shaped wedge of them flew toward the lake,  
and those safe on the water called back,

talked them in, *here to the left, no this way,*  
honking their complex and tuneless refrain  
as the newcomers landed, light splash.

Inside, we took down velvet curtains  
and looked out at stark trees  
and a silver lake.

The house was small, the view infinite.  
By March we had moved in.  
We were never alone: geese overhead and on the lake,

owls in the night. Exotic spiders congregated  
under the eaves. You hung birdhouses in the red cedar.  
I studied the names of all the trees.

Deer stationed themselves  
under the elms, their legs  
long gold pencils with chiseled tips.

2.

You'd think all this would be enough;  
you'd think I'd find God  
in what could be seen here,

but nothing called God knows my name.  
Nameless, I wander  
among pumpkin ash, sassafras, hickories.

Thrushes and shiny beetles, voles  
in their empire of tunnels and dry leaves  
watch me stomp across their paths,

muttering nonsense. I go looking  
for God in the woods—wary trails  
through low bushes mark the passage of deer,

arrow-sharp prints in the clay—  
a hard but companionable solitude.  
This world is hollows underfoot,

oblique rays of light—it registers my presence  
when I don't know why I'm here.  
The sun goes down. Through a curtain of oaks

the house lights up, room by room. Breathe out,  
and something other than volition  
makes the body breathe in.

Behind me in the falling blue-green light  
I hear the hard pumping of wings  
and then a sleepy madrigal

as the flock already settled on the lake  
calls the other ones home.

Maryanne Hannan

## I Like to Look Around and Pretend I'm God

Stuck here not like I *art in heaven*,  
but directly behind that senior GQ  
wannabe, clearly *trespassing against us*  
with his curt bow at the sign of peace,  
in the no-nonsense or get-your-hands-dirty  
manner of a Chief Surgeon, three lives  
hanging in the balance, part of a day's work.  
Shall I smite him now or later? Give me  
a widow's miter any day, like that gray-  
in-the-face, long-in-the-tooth one, more into  
*my kingdom come* than the *daily bread* stuff.  
I'm dusting off her golden recliner. And  
what's with the skinny teen, all his bowing,  
genuflecting, blessing himself? Can't  
someone tell him the terrible *temptations*  
he needs to be *delivered from* are pretty  
much par for the course? But how to tweak  
the worst of the lot, that hulking judge,  
judge, judging inspector-general one,  
mindlessly lip-syncing *forgiveness*...OMG!

*Emma Bolden*

## We Decided to Stop Believing in God.

Kelsey put her faith in surround sound, John  
in the black skin that gummed his dog's teeth.  
I wanted a challenge so I believed in mathematics.  
There was an eloquence in its functions, implicit  
and explicit. I admired each equation for being

gorgeous and exacting: *sub x for twelve. Carry  
the one. One to the nth power. A negative i.* In six  
months I'd turned fraction to decimal, y to thirty-six.  
Even had God in one swoop of a hand shown me  
the sweep of existence as a vista, even had God kept

the skywriters writing his name + my name in clouds  
for three years, even had God shown up at the storm  
door carrying carnations and a bag of green apples  
to say *Well, I'm sorry*, it wouldn't be enough. And anyway  
God kept hand and mouth shut. Which was after all the point.

*Sharon Goodier*

## Quantum

the whole  
a sum of substances  
sub-atomic particles  
swimming in atoms  
racing to molecules  
held together by attraction

I am more than  
my parts  
more than  
my sum

into that primordial space  
I go naked  
or clothed in rain  
singing            screaming  
dancing            praying

for all whom I know  
and whom I take with me  
into God



*Felicia Mitchell*

## Allium

*for Maggie and Adrienne*

Sometimes I laugh,  
sometimes I cry.  
Other times I eat onions  
and do a little of both.

Onions are good  
for body and soul.  
In each bite,  
I taste the dirt  
from which they came  
and feel a little more grounded,  
less likely to be spirited away.

Grounded.  
That is how I felt on your porch  
the afternoon sunflowers bloomed  
in the front yard  
and onions nodded out back,  
sleepy with summer's heat.

Now I eat your onions,  
crying and laughing  
as if I may not get to know tomorrow.  
But I think that I will.  
In my backyard,  
I know I will I plant the bulbils  
you offered with the onions  
and a lesson in propagation.

I know.  
Roots planted in the earth  
will grow into lilies  
that will show me where to dig, next year.

*C E O'Rourke*

## Taraxicum

In a way that is wordless and holy  
breathe softly watch  
the tiny parachute seed  
pirouette skyward  
where it may  
spin into an updraft  
soar for days

then cloudburst down  
drenched and fallen

Still, this irrepressible impulse  
toward life  
to become rooted  
settle in, transform  
into sweet brilliance  
just in time  
for the early bee

*Sandra Duguid*

## A Communion

August, brink of the best—  
corn season—bright  
kernels, the crisp  
crust—a cobbler  
of peaches, fresh, compacted  
with sweetness, plentiful, spooned,  
lush—Orchards—juices--apple, pear  
or pressed from tumbling, conical  
grapes on a fence--

One wants  
to begin again,  
to reseed, water  
ground whirling to dust,  
to regale what's prodigal,  
and down  
to a  
last  
husk.

*Mary Ladany*

## Water

Think of rain falling on snow, cascading over ice  
streams slipping into rivers, rivers merging with sea  
embryonic waters, worlds unknown.

Think of the moon, its light a reflection  
the dawn of no time, the dream of Jacob,  
the excluded middle, the space after exhale  
before inhalation, the spiraling sea chambers of an inner ear  
the deep well tunnel of throat.

Or, think of a child,  
pushed out of the womb  
awash in water both bloodied and clear  
still attached by a pulsating thread to the source of everything...

Then she breathes on her own.

*Jessica Lafortune*

## Sunday, Grace

8:28

I wake abruptly, semi-  
psychotic dreams percolating  
morning coffee, on  
automatic

9:15

I refer the girls to the shower, knowing  
hair and makeup take time  
and I need more  
coffee

9:40

the youngest declares, “There is nothing to eat”—  
ignoring pancakes, eggs, and leftover pizza  
in the fridge; I remind her of famine, world poverty  
reprimand her straight  
to the shower

9:50

she is still complaining, unwashed and unfed  
I am shaking, swearing, threatening  
to strip her of all that is good  
and holy mid-rant I am reminded that  
personality is largely inherited  
I offer a fresh bar of soap

9:53

hubby retreats to the shower, leaving me  
to rinse dishes, digest this  
Sabbath

10:38

one by one they delight in telling me  
I am late and unclean, both  
in the car  
in yesterday's jeans

11:03

we arrive at the parking lot  
full—all the spots  
with signs saying *No Parking – Church Property*  
illegally taken  
I consider blowing it off altogether

11:15

we enter the sanctuary  
dodging polyester smiles and pantyhose  
knees among the faithful  
we settle

12:15

the sermon convicting  
with every head bowed  
and every eye closed  
I peek at the altar  
at the prayer of salvation  
my youngest is standing

12:20

in the car I turn to her  
confused  
*You've prayed that prayer  
a million times, I ask, Why did you  
do it again?  
Because, she says, this time  
I meant it*

12:21

I bless this child, the one  
with my mistakes, her future  
all over her face—  
and for the first time, I am  
undone by the irony of her  
given name: Grace.

*Lois Marie Harrod*

## The Parable of the Prodigal Daughter

And when she returned in April, her thick hair cropped like grass above her ears, she could no longer imagine herself walking where the table hushed and the bed became a crazy quilt. So who would tell her what

she needed, why she had gone and where she was the joyless one? Grandma had descended the cellar, slipped and frozen to the floor, and three days later when her friends came looking, said her false teeth chattering

on the kitchen sink had kept her alive. *Couldn't die wifout fem in her mouth.* Of course, that was January and now it was snowing out of season, the trees

losing their definition like a sheet. Perhaps her father could still find her if she slipped in like the child who slipped outside in a snow storm and drifted away.



*Maxine Susman*

## Eve's Daughter

She craved to make—  
who? She didn't even know,  
conceived of me within, alone,

I'm a filament of her mind  
as she is of yours—  
don't deny the possibility,

though not in the Book I'm real  
as Eve, as anyone  
who isn't.

*Daughter* in her image,  
not god man snake the boys she bore  
but someone with her cycles, circles,  
her own way of power.

Ours,

Women and young girls  
who gave birth to the begats.

Did you think only what's written remains?

While we lived we had names.

My brothers, the simple son and wicked son—  
one killed, one fled—  
while I, the wise child, stayed.

The rib's a pliant bone.

She kept me secret,  
she'd learned from her mistake,  
kept me from Adam, kept secrets from me  
*for my own good*, she said

so how could I know her?

*Cleave*, the Book tells you—  
meaning *cling to*, meaning *to split apart*.

I left her. How I miss her.

Other daughters sprang from somewhere  
for the sons of men to marry.  
Cain—did he tell the wife he took  
of the brother he'd killed?

Sometimes I occur to you  
(don't I?)

*Jessica G. de Koninck*

## Song of Jerusalem

*Todah*  
means thanks

We cannot thank  
each other enough

*Yeled* is boy *yeldah* girl  
*yeladim* children

My religious grade school textbook  
entitled *Shalom Yeladim*

*Shalom*  
Hello Goodbye Peace

Hello peace  
Goodbye peace

Goodbye children  
Goodbye goodbye

Another word I recall  
after my week in *Yerushaliam*  
is *shirim*

meaning songs or poems or sometimes psalms  
peace poems  
goodbye poems

*Shirim ha Shirim*  
Song of Songs  
Song of Solomon  
Solomon the wise  
Solomon the king

Most psalms are ascribed to David  
*Dovid Melech Yisroel*  
David King of Israel  
a children's song

Random city signs  
revise the orthography to *Dowid*  
I then find it difficult  
to follow directions

I cannot read road signs in Arabic  
though it sounds a lot like Hebrew

*Salaam Shalom*  
*Suliman Shlomo* Solomon  
*Salaam Shalom*

According to the sages  
the psalms are about peace  
or the psalms are about war  
or the psalms are about divine retribution  
or faith

Shirim Songs  
*Tehillim* Psalms

I don't have many words for faith  
but I named my daughter Hope

She lives here for now in Jerusalem  
while I will be returning home

Hello Hello Hello  
Goodbye be safe  
Goodbye Goodbye

Hope is my translation for *Chashka*  
one of my great-aunts murdered by the Nazis  
along with her children

before I was born

*Shalom Shalom Todah Shalom*  
Goodbye Peace Goodbye Peace

Thanks

*Jake Oresick*

## Family Knots

In college,  
My father was maned and ripped  
And hip, reading Berrigan and Marx  
Against the mushroom cloud of Nixon,  
Writing love songs for the mills  
And the ethnic churches,  
Hymns for the factory life he'd escape.

My mother, flaxen and fetching and dizzy  
With ideals, was buzzing  
From Red China and Gloria Steinem,  
Drinking my father's pretty  
Poems until the room spun,  
Hemorrhaging happy,

But sick  
That his mother wouldn't  
Answer the phone, because, *my God*,  
She was Jewish, and what  
Would their kids be?

When my grandmother's brain  
Was first ravaged by Alzheimer's,  
My mother held her wrinkled hands,  
Helped to ease her fleeting mind,  
And, as teenage sisters, they rushed  
Off to Mass against  
The gray Depression skies.

My mother helped Mary  
Navigate the Our Father,  
The sign of the cross,  
And single block back from church.  
Together, that spring,  
They'd walk home hand-in-hand,

As sisters, and strangers,  
Beneath the same bright sun.

*Laura Boss*

## Yom Kippur Book of Life

The night my father died on Yom Kippur Eve  
when I was sixteen, I remember someone  
told me only the holiest of men died on that night  
though my father had never been Bar Mitzvahed  
and only went to synagogue if it were the High Holidays  
(mostly I thought to please my mother)  
or if it were my brother's Bar Mitzvah  
or my Friday night confirmation

Years later, I left my husband of 20 years on Yom Kippur Eve  
and though there were pressing reasons why I had to  
leave then, no one ever told me that there was anything holy  
about leaving my domestic world that way on Yom Kippur and  
no one ever referred to me as a holy person for that kind of  
leaving

When I was 12, I fasted until the huge "break the fast"  
dinner at my tiny stucco house in Woodbridge  
and ate double servings of brisket and sponge cake

After my confirmation at 13, I made the fast last  
until noon when I left temple early and as soon  
as I reached home, grabbed a Mallamar

Every year, my mother and I took our traditional train trip  
and wandered through Orbachs or S.Kleins where  
I would get a dress for Yom Kippur like the burgundy one  
with a dirndl skirt and matching beret with white angora trim  
or the navy wool with brass buttons that seemed to make me  
look slimmer than I was---  
I wish I could remember names the way I remember  
each dress I ever wore for Yom Kippur

I remember in grade school how I rarely read from  
the High Holiday book but watched



the parade of Jewish women we knew  
walk into the synagogue to find a seat  
as if on today's Red Carpet  
and do my silent version of Fashion Police

On Yom Kippur, I mostly hung outside the temple  
after an hour with my friends and flirted with the boys  
my age in 8th grade while nearby through a metal fence  
we could see our school mates on the playground  
of School # 11 at recess who that one day --  
and only that one day--wished they were Jewish  
and could also have the day off from school

Years later, when I left my husband of 20 years on Yom Kippur  
Eve,  
I wondered in a vague way as I did every Yom Kippur  
if I had been good enough for God to write down my name  
tonight  
in the Book of Life for next year

*Terry Kirts*

## The Persimmon Reader

When the seeds had dried a week, she'd show  
us how to crack them, how to stand them on end  
for the flat side of a hammer to open an almanac's

wisdom of winter. Then she'd tell us where to look,  
in the jagged cleft of the kernel, squinting as we did  
to see the cutlery so small, the dolls in my sister's

playhouse could not have lifted it. Such were her odd signs.  
A knife blade bit with the promise of north winds,  
ceaseless against the shutters. A spoon's round bowl

brought the snow we would shovel from autumn to March.  
How could a fork foretell a gentle season: a robin's foot,  
a broom to brush the frost from the lintel?

For her, they all meant more nights in the back bedroom  
of her mother's house where a coat hanger brought  
the AM station from the college she'd attended

decades ago, minoring in mycology. She'd joined  
the drama club then, met Socialists at coed mixers,  
and walked every morning to Mass before she stopped

off at the lab. But her faith had long betrayed her,  
her atheist fiancé banned by the stern glance of a priest  
and his threat of excommunication. So she'd turned

her hope toward the answers only nature could give:  
spores of toadstools dropped onto black velvet,  
katydids gassed, then pinned through their shells.

Out to the yard she'd send us to hunt for wooly worms,  
those creatures smart enough to dress themselves  
against the cold, hard months ahead.

*Ryan Harper*

## The Psychic in Atlantic City

As it was a late night this morning  
I barely compose myself in time for clients  
who do not arrive typically in winter  
(little foot traffic)  
whom I cannot help but expect nonetheless.

But I should admit I have seen warm spells  
some Februaries of which the weatherman  
gave no warning—a peek to imminent bloom  
bringing masses to the walk. Such days I have counted  
myself lucky I opened up despite the forecast.

As you are wondering, I should tell  
you I know what they all think. Boardwalkers  
are easy to read. What kind of sign,  
a pointed finger? A step slowed two beats  
per minute? Even the measured

gambler's gaze behind shades? I don't need your eyes  
to know, buddy; I could make a fortune  
on your kind any given day. It takes no  
more than human sense. I know they laugh  
at me, out of necessity; even my regulars

need read me a professional joker,  
their patronage a teenager's haughty stroll  
through an old funhouse—their enchantment now  
their sneer before the bent mirror, the broken witch  
in the shadows, their sigh their return to enchantment.

Sometimes I conjure justifications: I'd like to tell  
them in all seriousness it's all play—  
a free fall, a blush, dodge, and jitterbug;  
the big tangle of lives I draw out  
into knots—flash fictions,

fleshy nodes of meaning, small enough to fit  
inside a palm, knots nonetheless; tell them  
even full knowledge of the final sentence changes hardly  
a boardwalker's direction, less the common ramble,  
lesser the leaves, lesser their reader, lesser their composure.

But no one who comes to me wants my opinion.  
Be it sorcery or grift, they want me in possession  
of a system, not a hunch. It must be concrete.  
It must give pleasure. Even the casinos seem empty  
today. I wonder if I should have opened up.

*Claire Bateman*

## Fragments of the Saints

*“I have chosen these temptations as my refuge.”* St. Catherine of Siena

*“I accept everything for the love of the good God, even the strangest thoughts which enter my mind.”* St. Therese of Lisieux

How only good  
of God to wrest

from mean entry  
refuge—

chosen, every restive,  
estrangeful thought,

with even love  
for your mind.

Is it not everything  
to have chosen

entry of direst means,  
even your mind?

Meaning to enter  
everything,

the good God  
chooses strange refuge,

rests in your  
merest mind.

*Cristina J. Baptista*

## Mother Maguey

*Tepeyac, December 1531*

*Build me an altar*, a beautiful young stranger demands,  
and a man will listen;  
*build me a church*, she asks,  
and he will do it.

[You ask a skeptic, and he snorts;  
you ask a Father, and he insists.]

Of course, there is always need of proof,  
always need for more; appetites  
are endless. One must see signs and wonders.

If flowers can breed in winter,  
and a tilma possess a secret,  
you can place a life in a plugged hole  
and believe it holds breath and bone.

A man's body can become a portrait  
if he begs for it, as Juan Diego.  
The paint was mixed in Heaven,  
and I am unsure as to what side of it  
I stand on.

Am I the Lady  
or the Hermit;  
a lonely man, or a woman;

or some androgynous mixture of both,  
loitering outside the color lines,  
a snaking purple passage,  
mere observer of questionable artifact?

Mother's milk, surrounded by spines  
of the Century Plant. Growth.

Sacredness can be naturalized  
if you know how to raise it right.

Mother of Maguey, too, is an Empress—  
of the Americas—  
although I see no evidence of her rule.  
Almost five-hundred years, and her effect has been watered  
down in amniotic fluids.  
Forced out.  
There's a body in there. Several bodies  
ruptured. A man's body

can become just about anything.  
*Give me a child*, a woman begs—  
but they are given to those without want  
or desire.

Would a Madonna have a crooked  
part in her hair? Would her face be unevenly flushed,  
her irides penciled-in?

Centuries later, three Ladies—not one—  
were said to be layered upon one another,  
like mannequins upgraded each season,  
as if one came along and swallowed her predecessor.  
The oldest had a child on her left arm (keeping the right free  
for what?). The second arrived nearly a hundred years  
too late to be a miracle. And the third—free!  
Childless! Stamping on the moon,  
the world! Cracking a little at the seams!

Juan Diego, too, was later called  
“a symbol not a reality”—  
when does reality become the symbol  
worth preserving?

So the Lady becomes the Hermit,  
dismantles, folds her garments  
and herself, away.

At the waist: the absence of a black  
band fixed against my middle. Emptiness  
is a loud feeling.



*Tricia Knoll*

## The Women's Procession at the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

The minister intones Come, come whoever you are. Come as you  
are

nimble who limp  
straight who are gay  
sad wearing glad rags  
damp with your tears  
scuffed boots, graying at roots

Bring your bunions, bursitis and bone spurs  
warheads, dreads, hunger,  
indifference, despair. Come

if you think you have little to share,  
the tide of our breath  
mingles your share in the air.

Our tribe of women don full-body capes  
the tall one, red velvet  
the short one, gray lamb's wool  
the plump one, green corduroy wales  
a white-haired, deep purple with pockets  
one in gold, matching her guide dog  
and more choosing somber wraps for the cold

hugging bone, dropping their watches,  
untieing their braids, chanting on entering

barefoot come softly  
give to the light

naked as we brought in our babes, forward  
in the blood of our mothers.

They file into pews, dropping their cloaks,  
bare-breasted, full-bodied, witnesses  
to love over sorrow, their hum of aum and of ah  
for each their unnamed god ascends in beeswax  
light, faint spirals of smoke of the smudge,  
to blend in the chorus of green winter song,  
a promise of birthing in honest air.

*Jo Angela Edwins*

## An American Woman Steps inside an 800-Year-Old Church

I feel like an interloper.  
I feel like a baby  
not old enough for baptism,  
or worse, like a minor demon,  
my evil mild as an ant bite.  
The air smells of beeswax  
and moldering Latin.  
I do not dip my fingers  
in chalky holy water.  
I do not genuflect  
at prescribed points, I do not  
drape lacy kerchiefs over  
my bared head. I mean no  
disrespect when I sit  
in a pew not carved for me  
to find a lower angle  
from which to snap a picture  
of the glorious, burnished Christ  
on an age-blackened cross.  
Music drifts from somewhere.  
In another pew a couple speaks  
to each other in quiet French.  
The walls around us are thick as history,  
as oceans, as spilled blood.  
Tears gather in my eyes  
for no clear reason.  
I stand to leave. The Christ  
above me says nothing.

*Wendy Brown-Báez*

## Washing Dishes Meditation

Love is coming home to myself,  
the wick of my candled soul lit by a flame.  
Loving the daily tasks, loving  
the ordinary, such as washing the dish  
lovingly.

Here I am loving the dish that held my meal  
and loving the warm rush of water and  
lemon-scented soap that removes the  
remains of the meal.

I love my hands  
useful and agile. I love  
the moment unfolding. My breath,  
my hands holding the dish, swish of  
sponge, my body's attention.

Repetition, this human task, every day  
all over the world, we are scrubbing  
away the meal. Our bellies may be  
full or not, but hands pick up the plates.

I love the meal warming my body,  
the rush of nutrients, the  
rhythm of fullness and emptiness  
that leads to a recipe, a gathering.

Loving the faces round the table,  
or the solitary view out my window. Loving  
taste buds as they revel in spice or sweet,  
the body: heaven on earth or anguish of pain.

Loving the anguish, how it teaches desire,  
loving desire, how it leads to  
surrender, loving surrender and its many surprises.

How by washing the dish  
I reach the sublime.

*Gail Eisenhart*

## Letter from Japan

Lovely Friend,

Life in Sendai is surreal.  
My house is still uninhabitable but I stay  
with a friend. We sleep close,  
eat by candlelight, share  
stories and friendship to stay warm.

Quakes continue; sirens and helicopters wail.  
Most have not washed for days.  
Residents with water invite us to enter,  
fill jugs and buckets.  
We live by instinct, intuition  
and caring.

I return to my house daily to find food  
and water near the entrance.  
Who puts it there?

Parallel universes exist. One house is chaos,  
another flaunts futons and laundry drying in the sun.  
Some line up for water and food; others  
walk well-groomed dogs on long leashes.

I feel cosmic evolution in this storm of events,  
a wave of birthing, arduous and magnificent.  
Serene beauty sneaks up on me  
as mountains boast their silhouette against skies  
jeweled with stars.

My brother asks if I am hungry  
but I am sated as never before.

*Leah Shelleda*

## Freeform Flight with Celestial

I dreamed  
of India's dancing divinity an apsara  
I want to feel her sinuous curves  
in the frozen bone of my body

I dreamed of the apsara Menaka  
sent to distract a mystic so intense  
he frightened the gods  
The wind tore away Menaka's clothes  
and even he  
even that strictly disciplined sage  
couldn't resist her nakedness  
They say they played each other's bodies  
like harps for days

When she gave birth to a daughter  
the gods demanded she abandon her  
an infant left on the banks of a river  
I want to write that again  
When she gave birth to a daughter  
the gods demanded she abandon her  
an infant left on the banks of a river

Shakuntala the foundling  
named for the birds that surround her  
alone by the river  
This is her tale as she tells it  
and mine and the story  
of all abandoned baby girls

But listen I've also danced weeping  
for Menaka who wasn't allowed  
to keep her daughter

But today  
I would be a shape-changing apsara  
free and fluid as the curving carving river  
O that serpentine flow



*Kristen Hoggatt-Abader*

Reading *Reading Lolita in Tehran* in Uzbekistan

When it came  
in a cardboard box  
we peeled back  
the address label  
where our mothers  
had tucked  
two hundred bucks.

At the potchta  
we shifted the contents  
into our market bags  
for the long walk home,  
folding the box  
into a shield  
to save our heads  
from rocks that escaped  
a rude fist.  
Once home we patched it up,  
giving it to our Uzbek sisters  
to store flour and rice.

We threw the contents  
about the floor  
next to the base  
of the mosquito net:  
coffee, duck tape,  
scented candles,  
tampons, cookie tins,  
and Persian beauties in  
shapeless black  
that invited us into a book,  
flipping chadors  
and prepubescent girls  
until our eyes glowed  
with green: *Books*

*tucked under black sleeves,  
the inside of thick robes  
padded with prose.*

Our bodies, too,  
became alive  
when we took off  
our armor,  
poking fun at  
our fat thighs—  
we ate too much bread,  
we slipped on the ice,  
when the power died  
we read by candlelight  
until our hovels burned  
to the ground.  
In a land where our dollars  
spoke better Uzbek  
and Russian than we,  
the oil of cottonseed  
lingered on our fingertips  
and stained everything.  
We saw our hands reach  
for a slender waist  
and give in  
to goat carcasses  
and strange men,  
chulla—the hottest  
days of summer,  
the coldest days of winter—  
and the heinous things  
to keep warm:  
keyinchok, bathtub gin,  
raisins soaked  
and simmered  
until the pulp  
breached the skin.

*Hannah Carr-Murphy*

## Aubade

I spy with half-lidded eyes,  
in the bleak pre-dawn  
winter light, curves of my  
roommate, clothes half-on,

contemplating, the way  
half-asleep people do.  
Against the eyes of day  
she pins her hijab. In my view

she changes to a statue  
of Mary from my childhood,  
sad and virginal in a blue  
headscarf. Modesty should

have averted my gaze,  
but the image stays, either way.

*Loren Kleinman*

## Her name was pure

*For Kayla Jean Mueller, a 26-year-old American woman held by Islamic State militants*

She was innocent, a fresh cut to the earth, a fallen eye lash. Pure. Uncontaminated, unless by death. Unless by dirt and sand. Pure, clean, unscathed, uncut, unsick. The hands blemished her skin. Their hands dug out the eye balls and fed the lids to goats. The pure lids, clean and holy, fed them love and innocence. Her name was slashed and beheaded. The name. The name felt pure on the blade, sharp and heavy. It felt alone and free. Kayla. Kayla, a song her mother played when she was young. Every note necessary. Kayla. Kayla. No need to whisper it. No need to die.

*Susanna Rich*

The Ballerina's Story:  
Auschwitz

*This room is for changing, the guards say—  
far from walled-in streets and rank cattle cars.*

*Ready for your baths, they say,*

*Now! Jetzt!—these men, who look at me—*

*Take off everything.*

But You, like a *Kapo* stoking ovens  
with Your own kind—I was Your Juliet  
spinning in white velvet and tulle,  
now, to be a Salome—forgive me.

I must lean against the pillar,  
catch the gaze of him who slaps his black club  
into his palm. I unpin my hair. The stroke  
of my fingers stays his strut; the squeeze  
of my buttons plucks at his eyes;  
my leg, like a boa, spirals the pole of his lusts.  
I draw his eyes, his breath, his hardening  
toward me, and do it—reach down for my shoe, lunge,  
ram my heel into his stone eye,  
grab his gun from his hip, shoot him in the face  
...and another, and again, and turn the gun  
toward my own heart.

They will point at me and say to each other—  
*She is your enemy. Remember. Behalten.*

But You, bear me to Your charred altar  
where I will lie, my hair for a shroud—  
black black hair tousled with dance,  
curling flowers of hope. Forbid them  
to shear off my midnight gossamer  
for their mountains of hair,  
for one last solo waits for You,  
one last swirling of flame and mist,  
last glistening of my skin, last peeling of it away.  
I will leap into the cinnabar clouds  
over this pyre, waltz into poppies and dew.

My God! My God! Remember me:  
I am Your firebird—I am  
the blood streak of dawn.

*Laurie Byro*

## On Female Genital Mutilation

They took away my sister—  
then returned her to us,  
half-woman, half angel.

My time is coming. They tell me.

They tell me they will slice the entrance  
through the tunnel  
to unholy desire.

I know little of desire,  
but I do know I want to belong.

I want to walk in light,  
be a sister, be a woman, be a daughter  
to the universe.

They tell me it is willful  
to press the buds of my body  
when I want to escape these moments.

I am not afraid. The universe unfolds  
as my body sheds red petals every month.

I read a vow said by brides  
in such a ceremony,  
this spectacular enlightenment.

“With my body, I thee worship.”

God, I’ll give you my body  
if that is what you require  
to love.

Only send me back my sister.  
Not this stranger  
who won't look me in the eyes.



*Marjorie Maddox*

## Leprosy

I.

Not comfortable in this skin, I scratch  
the surface, cover up  
the sores of existence, so many  
abscesses of absence, pock marks  
of hypocrisy. And then the fingers,  
full of loss of touch, start falling off  
before limb-for-a-limb and cheek-for-a-cheek  
take over. It is all I can do to see  
the real with this new  
loss of vision.

II.

In the blurred  
light between grave and boulder,  
St. Damien cleanses the lesions  
of the lonely: lepers, those afflicted  
with HIV, me. Skin deep  
is what he peels  
away into sacrifice,  
“martyr of charity,”  
“leper priest of Molokai,”  
moaning only for others  
on this self-imposed  
island to which I, too, row,  
still dry in the safe world  
of reading and regret.

III.

Inspiration to Gandhi,  
hero to Stevenson,  
St. Damien hovers over our homeless  
bodies, reminds us to take,  
eat, but also to give, living flesh  
pressed against the wounds

we quarantine then forget  
on some island far  
from the continents of respect.

IV.

But also here  
where skin has little to wear  
outside itself. O epidermis,  
such an imperfect fit,  
this world putting on  
so clumsily new words  
on this old skin  
of ancient whine.

*Francey Jo Grossman Kennedy*

## Prayers for Walking/ Faith for Dancing

Pastor called, "Stretch forth your hands,"  
the congregation prayed in unison  
for a little one to walk.

Who would not discern  
a mother's keening plea  
wanting her birthborn twisted  
little daughter to run and race and play.

A pause, watching the tears fall  
a long while, a longer moment  
seeing tears for this child's healing  
another mother joins in prayerful blessing.

What passionate lament, what sublime rant  
can stammer words to a mind torn  
in fragmented pictures of her own child's body  
smashed in crash of man made machine  
then  
connected to tubes and whirring more machines  
until the hour hospital personnel noted  
broken beyond repair.

No doctors  
No prayers  
No agony can restore her breath

yet a mother's soul whispers  
somewhere she dances.

*Hope Holz*

## Yoga for Busty Women

Asanas united with  
breath is how  
I find a certain peace. I revel in the grace of my limbs until  
Downward-Facing-Dog. Then, niggling thoughts  
enter my mind,  
like the face full of cleavage I display to the class and myself.  
Gaining mindfulness again  
proves hard as I wonder if the Hindu Holy Men ever  
imagined a woman in  
Janu Sirasana (head-to-knee forward bend),  
how she would suffocate when her  
knees pushed her bust up to her chin.  
Letting these frustrations go, I return  
to a mindful state,  
not placing judgment  
on those men or the  
pendulous feel of my breasts when we enter

Plank pose.

Too quickly the irritation  
returns when we move from  
Swan to Sleeping Swan.  
“Touch your forehead to the floor,” instructs the Yogi.  
I laugh to myself, because it’s  
unlikely the  
volume of my chest would allow such a feat.

Finally, I stand and address the class, “I know how  
to plant my feet on the ground like they’re roots in  
the earth. To align my knees, hips, waist, chest into a  
supportive harmony. To release my shoulders and  
reach my arms toward the infinite cosmos. But, I  
can’t help asking—

where the hell do I put my breasts?”

I exit the studio later, considering my  
Yoga practice.  
I realize I mustn't treat my breasts like a separate entity,  
they're part of me.

(And maybe it's time to start a class,  
"Yoga for Busty Women.")

*Timothy Murphy*

## Breakfast at Brennan's

After a Cajun Mass at the Cathedral  
I dream I'm buying brunch on Sunday morning,  
my guests Louisiana's finest poets:  
Julie Kane, Gail White and Jenny Reeser.

We're pigging out at Brennan's in New Orleans:  
first turtle soup, then seafood jambalaya,  
oysters diced and tossed in a Caesar salad,  
fine Chardonnay (we're into our third bottle.)

I step outside with cognac in a snifter  
to take a break and fire up a Havana.  
Non-smokers all, my esteemed colleagues order  
coffee and Brennan's famed bananas Foster.

I'd asked a sweet dream of the Blessed Virgin,  
hendecasyllables were what she sent me  
which waking, word for word I have recorded.  
It's a hint, girls. When can I buy you breakfast?

*Madeline Tiger*

## Birds of the Blues

"Please Don't Bury My Soul," for Geeshie Wiley and Elvie Thomas  
"the lost geniuses of the blues," *New York Times Magazine*, June of 2014

How long will the female  
                                cardinal  
wait  
                                on the phone wire?

'til Willie Nelson finishes  
                                                singing

"I'm walking the floor  
                                                over  
                                                you."

True. & now  
                                2 patient  
                                iridescent  
                                        blue-  
                                        headed  
                                        crows  
                                                come  
                                                instead  
                                                        to the feeder  
                                                        de-spite  
                                                        sparrows.

The wild arrivals alight and right there quiver  
                                                moving tightly,  
                                for Geeshie Wiley and Elvie Thomas,  
                                "the lost geniuses of the blues,"  
now at last pecking in their own steady rhythms  
                                while the sparrows gather  
                                to chirp chirp chirp a chorus of the new song.

*Sarah W. Bartlett*

## Just in Case

The three words  
that justify clutter --  
saved yarn scraps,  
a life's words  
of empty boxes,  
little black dress  
or family silver –  
against future need  
or its possibility  
keep a gal  
on hold, prevent  
settling for good  
into lived life.

These same words  
hold the door  
open, permit entering  
into what comes  
with open heart  
and full presence  
unburdened by weight  
of unlived life.



*Wendy Vardaman*

## Preserves

My mother's mixed another load to share—  
hefty box of stuff she's kept—  
Grandmother's pre-historic electric ice-cream freezer, pots and  
pans we used to camp—  
I run my finger through their thick layer  
of dust, shift her musty, soft box off the chair  
on which it's crumbling like some priceless manuscript,  
find ancient pamphlets devoted to reseasoning cast iron and  
removing rust, then glimpse  
my one and only microscope, 10<sup>th</sup> Christmas gift. "Remember  
the slides you used to make?" she asks, smiling, but all  
I see when I lift the yellowed lid  
for a quick peek is that same unwrapped frog still belly up inside  
his jar.  
Despite the never-broken seal,  
the fluid in which he's floated  
more than thirty years has turned to air.

*Charlotte Barr*

## Driving with the Fuel Light On

Who said only the young live on a precipice or  
Flaunt propriety with impunity, being young?  
Let me tell you, sonny, it is your grandma's  
Day of living dangerously, or your great-aunt's.  
Let's see, should I feed the cats this tuna or feast  
On it myself? Who knew I could live so easily  
Without gas for the water heater, or with so little  
For the car? What was I thinking when I thought  
My seventies would be serene, a time for this,  
A time for that, reading and philosophy, being in  
The leisured class? Would I have dreamed that I,  
Custodian of the heirlooms, would be choosing  
Which of them to sell? That as keeper of the lore  
And photographs galore, I'd look at them once  
More for old time's sake and know that they'd  
Have no lookers hence? Burn them now or just  
Set aside what I can't decide, let the comers-on  
Decree the fate of family detritus after I fold my  
Earthly tent, eeny meeny mo and que sera sera.  
The best was yet to come, as we in youth were  
Told. I count this the best, living by my wits  
Until my wits, O God forbid, are gone; going  
To bed lighter from each day of shedding stuff  
Along the way, pounds and crowns and guineas.  
Being bold to say what I have to say, listen or  
Learn who may: there is some wisdom here, just  
From being around so long, just from being old.

*Jim Daniels*

## My Mother Gives up Kneeling

The holy pain of kneeling. The pain of giving up kneeling due to pain. Her back twisted into venomous curses. No antidote. No spell or prayer. On the pew, bent into listening. Listening, for she is blind. The priest's voice of cold butter—of butter melted, then hardened—tears into the soft bread of her faith. Rosary beads of pain. Press firmly. Do not lose your place. Do not lose your tears, mother. Even if God is not on your side. Outside, snow swirls in the wind we hear between hymns. I am the unholy driver. You cannot drive your way clear of doubt. If only you could kneel. Feel the hot red scar of God's grace. Unholy pain, unholy blindness. The priest raises and spreads his arms, mother. The slick glossy robes rise around him like wings, mother. Mother, he does not fly.



*Madonna and child*  
Fr. Andrew More O'Connor

*Jennifer Ann Jones*

## Rosaries

*For Elizabeth Kuchta*

### **Hail**

Great grandmother  
gateway to heaven

### **Mary**

Each crystal bead a diamond stone  
in your pathway on the broken  
bricks of your street

*full of grace*

You pinch each plastic bead  
meditate on the mysteries

### **Mother**

your daughter's eyes have filled with blood  
as in your later years  
Life's liquid drowning the light out  
she can see shadows with her left

*of God*

How many times did you visit  
before you ascended?  
How many times did those

**who art in heaven**

beckon for you

Your mother, father, brothers  
telling that you had one more decade  
*thy kingdom come*

Shadows of grandchildren  
enter your room

*thy will be done*  
You cling to  
spirits  
familiar voices

*on earth as it is in heaven*

### **Give us this day**

In shadows,  
with your sound-scape view of the  
city's third river below  
building lights and  
stars in coal nights.

*as we forgive those*

With swollen knuckles  
you travel  
finger-nail sized globes, beveled  
balls of hail  
frozen  
while your storms  
melt between index and thumb,  
mouth and sky

*to the holy spirit*

Your hands tore meat  
from scrap butcher bones  
Shoulders hunched, your bones

depleted of growing-children's milk

*and ever shall be*

By lunchtime, your husband drank  
away the darkness of the mine

*blessed is the fruit of your womb*

You prayed your daughter

*our life, our sweetness, and our hope*

would find safety from  
the shame

*in this valley of tears*  
like you, in the shade  
The brightness of God gleams  
mornings through cathedral windows  
blood red glass  
of the bleeding heart

*thine eyes of mercy*  
swallowed reflections of the  
scourging at the pillar  
quiets your stomach rumble

*oh clement*  
Your fingers pinching after  
your rosary is removed  
following echoes of hailstones

*oh loving*  
No matter what the home does  
with your hardware, rosary-ware  
your heart hardwired  
to prayer

persistence of your hands



*Joseph Bathanti*

## Burying Saint Joseph

When, after forty-two months,  
the farm house we left behind  
in Statesville has not sold,  
I finally heed Mother's directive  
to bury in the yard  
a statue of Saint Joseph.  
He will effect what no realtor  
has the savvy for.  
My mother presents this as dogma:  
the same causal inevitability  
as landing a little place in Heaven  
through rosaries and Novenas.  
Along the pump house,  
above which hover Impatiens  
and demure Lily of the Valley,  
I drive a spade, drop to my knees  
with my old friend, St. Joe,  
won in a third grade spelling bee:  
two inches of phosphorescent plastic  
that gleamed miraculously in the dark  
of my first bedroom on Prince Street.  
He's travelled house to house,  
into my manhood and marriage,  
his wry smile effaced over the years,  
in his right arm clutched his baby boy,  
the unsuspecting Christ, like a sack  
of 3-penny finishing nails.  
As instructed, I inter him head down,  
in the fashion of Peter's crucifixion,  
face him east, to assume the sun  
by day; all night, the moon.  
He ignites the subterranean quartz  
and hiddenite. Pooled above him,  
on the parched earth surface,  
glows a crown of milky light.

Black Widow spiderlings  
flash their scarlet fetish,  
and scatter in the rosemary.  
The house sells in a fortnight

*Alan Berecka*

## Beatification

(St. George's, Utica, New York, 1971)

Her hand shot straight up. The missionary stood stunned looking at the prim old lady who sat straight-backed, front and center, her arm raised solemnly like a witness might before giving sworn testimony.

The priest had wandered from hundreds of pulpits stood amongst a thousand strange flocks to launch into his well-rehearsed patter by asking, until now, the same rhetorical question, *Is there anyone here this morning who's a saint?*

He took a hard look at the old woman clad in black and dourness. He noticed she wore hearing aids. *Ma'am perhaps you didn't hear the question. I asked, is there...* She cut him off, completed the sentence *anyone here a saint* in a thick Lithuanian accent. Her hand remained suspended.

*Ma'am do you know what a saint is?* She pointed to the statues on the side altars— St. Jude and St. Anne. *Do you know saints must work miracles, three of them, at least? I know this. I tell you. I left old country by myself when just fifteen, got into America, found job, and then husband. We bought house. I gave birth to three strong sons. My rosary and me prayed each one through the war. Is this enough or do you want more?*

The priest, who slowly burned into the shade of vestments at Pentecost, rebuffed the woman saying, *Ma'am, indeed you've led a laudable life,*

*but the idea these common events are miracles,  
I find laughable, after all, we can't all be saints.  
Her hand aloft she asked, Then why are we here?*

*Laura Boss*

## My Bichon Nelly Talks to Me

You raised me not to complain  
if you were out long hours and  
just gave me a cursory  
six minute walk on Blvd East  
at six AM before you left  
for a workshop at a school  
an hour away

You always left me special treats  
like liver drops as well as  
yellow American cheese over  
my Little Caesar sirloin ( fake sirloin)  
though sometimes actual sirloin  
from the rest of your left over  
dinner when a date took you out  
the night before and you'd never  
finish so you could bring something  
back for me

You left me extra rawhide  
shoes so I could enjoy  
chewing on the laces  
during the long day you  
were gone

You left me newspapers  
on the floor near the window  
with its skyline view that you  
enjoyed but meant nothing to me  
so that if you were gone too  
many hours I could use the  
newspapers to wet and  
not feel uncomfortable

At night when you returned, you

always gave me an extra long  
walk, sometimes even driving  
me to the park where you'd  
take off my leash ( though it was  
illegal to do) and let me run with  
you chasing me and the Canada  
geese scampering away

At night you'd pick me up and  
put me next to you in your  
brass bed before you went to sleep

I'd move my rump next to you and  
we'd both softly snore  
through the night

But now you've left  
the apartment and me

And I'm here with your son  
who also raised me  
though we both know  
I've always been your dog  
and that snappish though sweet Woofie  
his dog with his Alpha temperament compared to  
my docile lap dog Bichon nature

And though your son sleeps with me now  
as well as Woofie whom he's always  
slept with

I feel abandoned though he feeds me  
( and himself) pan fried chicken at night  
and drives me along with Woofie  
in your old Honda you sold him for  
one dollar ( and that still smells of you)

When you come to see me each week,  
you feed me treats  
you pet my stomach  
you put me on your lap

You hear me start to whimper when you leave  
You say your new husband's condo  
doesn't allow dogs

But you made a choice  
You chose him over me  
And though your eyes tear up when you see me  
You left me abandoned--  
And, yes, heart broken

Still I sit by the door each morning  
waiting to hear  
your infrequent footsteps

*Kate Daniels*

## The Silence of Judy

*for a good dog 1998-2013*

Is like the silence of God  
Now that she is traveling  
Away from us, hustling

Through the universe  
At a speed not one of us  
Has yet achieved.

She is putting on the immortality  
That shuts us out, and drawing  
Close the concealing cape

Of nighttime sky that will  
Camouflage her exit as she  
Slips inside the dog-sized gap

On the other side of shared  
Life where something waits  
To retrieve her, to take her back...

Trapped, as we are, still ticking  
Along in mortal time, encircling  
The dog bed's orthopedic

Cushion we found online  
To soothe her final months,  
We no longer have a claim

But can't stop howling  
To get it back. The distance  
Widens, and we wonder

If still she hears us... Knowing  
I shouldn't but not yet able



To let her go, I call her

Back, murmuring the private  
Sounds that used to rouse her,  
That brought her to my side.

From her bed, her eyes flick open.  
Unable to move, but obedient as ever,  
She comes to meet me – supine, barely

Breathing, nearly a ghost  
Already, returning to me  
From the almost-past

Because I still need her.  
She fits her gray and grizzled  
Head beneath my hand as distant

As a satellite in outer space,  
But close up, too, broad-  
Casting the easily uncoded

Simple signals of a creature's  
Love. *What is God*, I inquired  
As a child but received

No answer I understood,  
And went on memorizing  
The Beatitudes for Sunday

School. *Blessed are the poor,*  
*The mourning and the meek...*  
The miseries of childhood

Were soothed and sorted  
By that cryptic litany.  
In the noiseless movements

Of Judy's failing breaths, her blue

Eyes closing for a final nap,  
I slip inside those cadences

And find there, on the other  
Side of human woe, the love  
That finally lets me let her go.

*Ann Ritter*

## My Name in her Hand

Fifth grade was just over; I'd learned of Icarus, and written a report on Pompeii—how ordinary people were caught unexpectedly and forever in their last actions. In August, my yoga-practicing, perfect shoulder-standing grandmother died.

She had risen from a motel breakfast, heavy in the chest. Coin purse in hand, she arrived at the counter, saw the display of plastic name pins. For me, she picked red, had just loosened, lifted “Ann,” when a sharp pain took her breath, hurled her body to the floor like a stone.

The summer before, Grandmother and I had each taken our first plane trip. Mine was to New York, the World's Fair, hers to get to Abilene, my cousin's graduation. Petrified of flying, I asked if she was. She said, no, she was excited to try something new. Her flight was smooth, sunny, mine plagued by winds, lightning, circling of the airport. I was afraid the plane would run out of gas.

My mother told me how, after checking cold blue lips, a medic gently uncurled Grandmother's fingers, found me safe.

*Marion Goldstein*

## Elegy for Elaine

Your future is reduced  
to a period at the end of the sentence.  
All that is left of desire is pain  
dissolving in a patch of morphine  
alongside good-byes that multiply  
like wildflowers at your bedside.

Your husband, your children, their children  
gentle their sturdy bodies across your bed,  
pregnant with loss they have watched this dying  
married to your hunger for another tomorrow,  
have witnessed but have not seen  
your flesh disappear – where? into a meadow  
of bed linens-into thin air-no longer here-but where?

Substance without form  
your work of loving this world ended, you are  
disappearing like a glacier melting into the sea  
and we the living walk around  
conditioned to ignore our own mortality  
for how imagine this earth without us?  
Loving this world of foliage and clouds and always  
yearning for the Divine straining through  
grace and beauty to reach us

like the first butterfly-fluttering in your womb  
that bliss at the heart of creation  
the silence that spoke to you in Yellowstone  
or the wind in your hair as Huskies sped  
your sled across the ice-fields of Alaska  
blazing white light casting no shadow  
eternity illuminated---and I ask  
will leaving this world be the same?

All dazzle, entangle and echo.

*Laura Freedgood*

## Someplace

*In Memoriam: For Anne*

I sit at the edge of my world  
and imagine:

black-flecked butterfly weaving  
among wild flowers,

glass-throated thrush flirting with the moon,  
wide-winged osprey stretched

for the long haul  
migrating upward,

away from  
the quotidian,

away from me,  
no longer ordinary

since you have taken on  
this mystery.

Luminous. Daring the eye.

*Lorraine Healy*

## Memorial

the parking lot was full  
full to park-on-the-road

on-whenever, and cold rain  
turning dense, snowlike

and I had liked her but not  
known her well, loved her red-

headed spunkiness, still  
these memorials, these

times of sorrow and story-telling  
and laughter, with their pastors

folksing things along, a little Jesus  
and a little potluck and Amazing

Grace forever make me  
the foreigner I am, my deaths

so different, without a slideshow  
set to a deceased's favorite songs

a hard Catholic pew, we are  
nothing say the little old ladies

and she whom we remembered today  
gone fast and easy on the world,

perhaps elsewhere she'd 've been  
little old lady material but in America

she stayed red-headed and frisky  
it was Dylan murmuring Lay Lady Lay

that played as the photos we were  
left with looped while the living

ate the hearty fare winter requires  
and some cars left, driving carefully

because the thick rain never let up

*Sharon Scholl*

## Talisman

*I will come back,*  
he says. *I will let you know*  
*somehow.* He grips  
his side where cancer  
spreads its roots like Chinese  
tallows, sprouts fistulas  
like palm seed pods.

He will be bird, he swears:  
egret, whooping crane, something  
large and white, gleaming  
in a blur of flight.

With the funeral and all  
we forget his solemn oath  
until on the grimy floor  
of the office elevator –  
one long, white feather.



*Amy Barone*

## Last Words

She spoke her last words  
to me the night of her  
stroke, when I had no idea

that morning wouldn't come.  
For four years,  
dark days of juggling

work and caregiving,  
legal battles with siblings.  
Then I heard her

call out my name in a hushed tone,  
as I was leaving to say goodbye  
the day of her burial.



## Biographical Notes

**Cristina J. Baptista** is a Portuguese-American poet, writer, educator, and bibliophile. Most recently, her work has appeared in *Structo Magazine*, *The Wayfarer*, *Cura*, and elsewhere. She holds a Ph.D. in English from Fordham University and currently teaches American Literature at a private school in Connecticut.

**Amy Barone's** new chapbook, *Kamikaze Dance*, is from Finishing Line Press. Her poetry has appeared in *Gradiva*, *Impolite Conversation* (UK), *Paterson Literary Review*, and *Philadelphia Poets*. She spent five years as Italian correspondent for *Women's Wear Daily* and *Advertising Age*. Foothills Publishing published her first chapbook, *Views from the Driveway*.

**Charlotte Barr** is the author of three volumes of poetry: *Sister Woman*, *The Bell Buckle Years*, and *The Text Beneath*. Her books are available at Parson's Porch Book, Cleveland, TN and on Amazon. Charlotte is a former Dominican Sister and retired from teaching in 2007. She lives near Chattanooga with her dogs and cats.

**Sarah W. Bartlett** is a published poet and essayist. As writing coach and group facilitator, she midwives women's stories, especially those at the margins. She lives in the Vermont mountains and Massachusetts shore with partner and pets.

**Claire Bateman's** newest collection, *Scape*, is forthcoming from New Issues Poetry & Prose. She is the author of six other poetry collections and has been awarded Individual Artist Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Tennessee Arts Commission, and the Surdna Foundation, as well as two Pushcart Prizes. She lives in Greenville, SC.

**Joseph Bathanti** is former Poet Laureate of North Carolina (2012-14). He is the author of eight books of poetry, including *Concertina*, winner of the 2014 Roanoke Chowan Prize. A new novel, *The Life of the World to Come*, was released in late 2014.

His new volume of poems, *The 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost*, will be released by LSU Press in 2016. Bathanti teaches at Appalachian State University in Boone, NC.

**Alan Berecka** grew up in Upstate New York. He currently lives in Sinton, Texas and works as a librarian at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi. His poems have appeared in journals such as the *Ruminate*, *The Christian Century*, *Windhover* and *The Penwood Review*. His latest book, *With Our Baggage*, was published by Lamar University Press in 2013.

**Emma Bolden** is the author of *Maleficae* (GenPop Books) and *medi(t)ations* (forthcoming from Noctuary Press); four chapbooks of poetry; and one nonfiction chapbook. Her work has been featured on *Poetry Daily* and was chosen for inclusion in *Best Small Fictions 2015* and *Best American Poetry 2015*.

**Laura Boss** is a first-prize winner of PSA's Gordon Barber Poetry contest. Founder and editor of *Lips*, she has received three NJSCA Fellowships in Poetry. In 2011 she received the first Poetry Award at the International Festival in Swansea, Wales. Her poems have appeared in *The New York Times*.

**Wendy Brown-Báez** is a writer, teacher, performance poet and installation artist. Wendy's prose and poetry have appeared in numerous literary journals and anthologies, such as *Borderlands*, *The Litchfield Review*, *Lavanderia*, *Mizna*, *Minnetonka Review*, *The Chrysalis Reader*, *Wising Up Press*, *We-Moon* datebooks, *Saint Paul Almanac*, *Survive & Thrive*, *200 New Mexico poems* and *The Heart of All that Is* and the on-line journals *Interfaithings.org* and *talkingwriting.com*. She has published two poetry books: *Ceremonies of the Spirit* and *transparencies of light*. Her article, "Why We Write," appeared in *Poets & Writers* 2014 July/August issue. Wendy received McKnight and Minnesota State Arts Board grants to teach writing workshops for youth in crisis and in non-profit organizations. She is a member of the MN Prison Writing Workshop and leads Care for the Caregiver writing group at Pathways Health Crisis Center. [www.wendybrownaez.com](http://www.wendybrownaez.com).

**Laurie Byro** has been facilitating “Circle of Voices” poetry discussion in New Jersey libraries for over 16 years. She is published widely in university presses in the United States and is recently in an anthology: *St. Peter's B-List*. A full-length collection of her work, *Luna*, was published in October 2015, by Aldrich Press, and a chapbook of Alice in Wonderland/Oz poems, *Wonder*, is forthcoming by Little Lantern Press; all available through Amazon.

**Hannah Carr-Murphy** lives in and around Iowa. She is pursuing degrees in flute performance and English from University of Northern Iowa. Forthcoming publications include a chapbook from Quick and Dirty Press and inclusion in an anthology from Mammoth Books.

**Jim Daniels'** latest publications are the chapbook, *Apology to the Moon* (BatCat Press, 2015), *Eight Mile High*, stories (Michigan State University Press, 2014) and *Birth Marks*, poems (BOA Editions, 2013). Daniels is the Thomas Stockham Baker University Professor at Carnegie Mellon University.

**Kate Daniels** is the author of four volumes of poetry, most recently, *A Walk in Victoria's Secret*. She is the director of creative writing at Vanderbilt University in Nashville and a recent Guggenheim Fellow in Poetry.

**Jessica G. de Koninck** is the author of one collection, *Repairs*, and is a previous contributor to *Adanna*. A longtime resident of Montclair, NJ, she holds a B.A. from Brandeis and an M.F.A. from Stonecoast, University of Southern Maine.

**Sandra Duguid** has published a full-length collection of poems, *Pails Scrubbed Silver* (2013) and numerous poems in anthologies and journals, such as *Journal of New Jersey Poets*, *Modern Poetry Studies*, *America*, and *Anglican Theological Review*. She received a Fellowship in Poetry from the NJ State Council on the Arts and Honorable Mention twice in the Allen Ginsberg Contest. For twenty-five years she taught literature and

writing at colleges in NY, NJ, and PA; she is a former assistant director at Caldwell University's Academic Support Center.

**Jo Angela Edwins** teaches creative writing, American literature, and composition at Francis Marion University in Florence, SC. She has published poems in a variety of venues including *Calyx*, *Sojourn*, *New South*, and *Mixitini Matrix*. She is the 2014 recipient of the Carrie McCray Nickens Fellowship Poetry Prize from the South Carolina Academy of Authors.

**Gail Eisenhart's** poems can be found in *The Centrifugal Eye*, *The Tishman Review* and in several anthologies. A retired executive assistant, she works part-time at the Belleville (IL) Public Library.

**Rebecca Ellis** lives in southern Illinois. She has poems previously published in *Sugar Mule*, *Sweet*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Natural Bridge*, *Adanna*, *Bad Shoe*, and *Crab Creek Review*. She edited Cherry Pie Press, publishing nine poetry chapbooks by Midwestern women poets.

**Laura Freedgood** has three chapbooks published: *What I Would Paint If I Could* (2012), *Slant of the Heart* (2010), and *Weather Report* (2007). Her poems appear in numerous journals and anthologies. Two poems were nominated for the Pushcart Prize, and she received an Honorable Mention in The 2013 Allen Ginsberg Poetry Awards. In addition, she won a three-year poetry grant from the City University of New York, where she worked as assistant professor until 2010.

**Marion Goldstein** is a psychotherapist who practiced in Montclair, NJ. Her poetry and essays have been published in several books and literary journals. North Star Press published her memoir, *Hard to Place*, in 2009 and her poetry book, *Architecture of the Unpronounced*, in 2012.

**Sharon Goodier** has had poems published in *Carte Blanche* (Mtl), *11<sup>th</sup> Transmission* (social realism), and *Dove Tales* nature anthology (US). She was longlisted for the Mary K. Ballard

award for a chapbook in 2014. She has published a fantasy story “The Year of the Donkey” in *New Legends Anthology*. She lives in and reads at open mics in Toronto, Ontario.

**Maryanne Hannan** has published poetry in *Rattle*, *Gargoyle*, *Christianity and Literature*, *Christian Century*, *Spiritus*, *Minnesota Review*, and several anthologies. A former Latin teacher, she lives in upstate New York. Her website is [www.mhannan.com](http://www.mhannan.com).

**Ryan Harper** is a visiting assistant professor of religion at Presbyterian College, in South Carolina. Some of his recent pieces have appeared in *Still*, *Berkeley Poetry Review*, *Killing the Buddha*, and his poetry chapbook, *Memphis Left at Cairo* (Finishing Line Press, 2013). His ethnography of contemporary southern gospel music will be available through the University Press of Mississippi in 2016.

**Lois Marie Harrod’s** 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> poetry collections, *Fragments from the Biography of Nemesis* (Cherry Grove Press) and the chapbook *How Marlene Mae Longs for Truth* (Dancing Girl Press) appeared in 2013. She is widely published in literary journals and online ezines from *American Poetry Review* to *Zone 3*. Read her work on [www.loismarieharrod.org](http://www.loismarieharrod.org).

**Lorraine Healy** is an award-winning Argentinean poet who has been published extensively. Nominated for a Pushcart in 2004, she has an MFA from the New England College and a post-MFA from Antioch University Los Angeles. She is the first poet to have received a green card solely on the merits of her work. A winner of the Patricia Libby First Book Award, her book *The Habit of Buenos Aires* was published by Tebot Bach in 2010. Her new collection, *Mostly Luck*, is looking for a home. *Abraham’s Voices*, her newest chapbook, was published in 2014 by WorldEnoughWriters.

**Kristen Hoggatt-Abader’s** chapbook of poems, *Arab Winter*, was published last year by Finishing Line Press. She is the former “Ask a Poet” advice columnist for Drexel University’s

*The Smart Set*. Her poems have been published by *Nimrod International Journal*, *The Sow's Ear Poetry Review*, and *The Writing Disorder*, among others. She teaches composition at the University of Arizona in Tucson.

**Hope Holz** lives in the Dallas area and currently seeks a Master of Liberal Studies with dual concentrations in creative writing and literature from Southern Methodist University. As a busy woman, she approaches her yoga practice with good humor and a well-made sports bra. Her work appears at <http://hopeholz.com> and in the upcoming fall edition of *Muddy River Poetry Review*.

**Deborah Howard's** poetry has appeared in a variety of journals online and in print including *Modern Haiku*, *cattails*, *Innisfree Poetry Journal*, and the *Ballard Street Poetry Journal*. She is president of the Manchester chapter of the CT Poetry Society and has designed a poetry themed sculpture and bench for her town. She makes her living as a teacher of English as a Second Language.

**Jennifer Ann Jones** lives with her husband and infant son in Santa Monica, CA, where they belong to the St. Monica's Catholic Community. Jennifer's poetry has appeared in *Open City*, *Denver Quarterly*, and *The Texas Observer* among others. Founder of PoetrySalon.com, Jennifer holds an MA, MEd and MFA and reviews literary books of fiction and poetry in her monthly column, "Spine Time."

**Francey Jo Grossman Kennedy** grew up in Pennsylvania, with Yankee Dad and Alabama Momma; she has three daughters Amy, Holly, Francey. Her alma maters are Slippery Rock University and Emory University. She loves the ocean and paints the sky.

**Terry Kirts** is the author of *To the Refrigerator Gods*, published by Seven Kitchens Press in 2010. His poems have appeared in such publications as *Alimentum*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, *Gastronomica*, *Green Mountains Review*, and *St. Peter's B-list: Contemporary Poems Inspired by the Saints*. Kirts is a senior



lecture in the Department of English at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis and a contributing editor for food and dining at *Indianapolis Monthly*.

**Loren Kleinman**'s poetry and essays have appeared in *Drunken Boat*, *The Moth*, *Nimrod*, *Narrative Northeast*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Good Housekeeping* and *Seventeen*. She is the author of *Indie Authors Naked* and four collections of poetry. Loren is a full-time freelance writer.

**Tricia Knoll** is an Oregon poet whose work has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies. Her chapbook *Urban Wild* is out from Finishing Line Press. A book *Ocean's Laughter* comes out in Spring 2016 from Aldrich Press. She sent this poem to her Unitarian Universalist minister but never heard back from him.

**Mary Ladany** is a writing specialist and adjunct professor in the English department at Caldwell University. She lives with her husband, John, in Montclair, New Jersey. Her poem "Water" is from a Zen Buddhist teaching, "water dependent upon water is liberated."

**Jessica Lafortune** teaches teenagers at a tribal school on a reservation in western Washington State, where, when she is not grading, planning, or encouraging her students to aim high, she can be found reading and writing, searching for the next perfect line.

Professor of English at Lock Haven University, **Marjorie Maddox** has published 9 collections of poetry—most recently *Local News from Someplace Else* and an ebook, *Perpendicular As I \_* (1994 Sandstone Book Award)—the forthcoming *True, False, None of the Above* in the Poiema Poetry Series, 2 children's books, and over 450 stories, poems and essays in journals and anthologies. For more information, see [www.marjoriemaddox.com](http://www.marjoriemaddox.com).

**Mary Ann Buddenberg Miller** is a professor of English at Caldwell University in Caldwell, NJ. She is editor of *St. Peter's*

*B-list: Contemporary Poems Inspired by the Saints* (Ave Maria Press, 2014), a collection of over 100 poems, written by 70 poets from across the USA. She frequently teaches an Introduction to Poetry course, in which she offers her students the opportunity to host public readings for local, published poets. She also teaches a Catholic Writers (of literature) course, which is a core elective in an interdisciplinary cluster. Her research interests include the intersection of theology and literature.

**Felicia Mitchell**, whose roots are in South Carolina, has lived in southwestern Virginia, where she teaches at Emory & Henry College, since 1987. Her poems have appeared widely, including in *Magnolia. A Journal of Women's Socially Engaged Literature* and *Hospital Drive*. *Waltzing with Horses* was published by Press 53 in 2014. Website: [www.feliciamitchell.net](http://www.feliciamitchell.net).

**Timothy Murphy's** ninth collection, *Devotions*, will be printed by Dakota Institute Press this year.

**C E O'Rourke**, self-taught artist, naturalist, and explorer of wild places, writes from a small cabin on a Pacific island, inspired by marine life, wild storms and the sweet song of the Winter Wren. Publishers include Wordworks, Portal, *The Fib Review*, *Theodate*, Abyssinian Books, Inanna Publications, McGraw Hill, and *The Healing Muse Journal*.

**Jake Oresick's** poems have appeared in *St. Peter's B-list: Contemporary Poems Inspired by the Saints* (Ave Maria Press), as well as literary journals, including *Weave* and *Superficial Flesh*. His article, "What's in a Namesake?: The Life of Mary Schenley," is forthcoming in *Western Pennsylvania History* magazine, and his sardonic Lenten fish fry reviews can be found on the *EatPGH* blog. He works as an attorney.

**Christine Redman-Waldeyer** founded *Adanna* in 2011. She is a poet and Assistant Professor in the English Department at Passaic County Community College in New Jersey. Her book publications include *Frame by Frame*, *Gravel*, and *Eve Asks*

with Muse Pie Press. She also has been published in *Caduceus*, *Lips*, *Motif Magazine*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Seventh Quarry*, *Schuylkill Valley Journal*, *The Texas Review*, *Verse Wisconsin*, among others. She co-edited, *Writing after Retirement*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers and is a freelance writer for Exceptional Parent Magazine.

Since portraying Anne Frank in her Pope Pius XII High School senior class play, **Susanna Rich** has had an abiding commitment to remembrance. She tours her one-woman performance of *ashes, ashes: A Poet Responds to the Shoah* and was awarded the Ekphrasis Prize for her poem about the Budapest memorial to Holocaust victims: “Shoes Along the Danube.” Visit @ [www.wildnightsproductions.com](http://www.wildnightsproductions.com).

In addition to having credits as a business journalist, **Ann Ritter** received an artist-initiated grant from Georgia Council for the Arts in fiction and poetry. Recent publications were in *Earth First*, *The Southern Poetry Anthology, V: Georgia*, and *Gathered: an anthology of Quaker poets*. Work is forthcoming in *Elements*, Slipstream Press (2015). Ms. Ritter has published fiction, essays and poetry in *Charleston* magazine; *Confrontation*, Long Island University; *GSU Review* (now *New South*), Georgia State University; *Earth's Daughters-flesh and spirit*; *THEMA: Your Reality or Mine*; and *Georgia Journal*, and in the anthology, *Like a Summer Peach: Sunbright Poems and Old Southern Recipes*.

**Sharon Scholl** is professor emerita from Jacksonville University (FL) where she taught western humanities and non-western studies (Africa, Japan). She has several chapbooks in circulation: *Message on a Branch*, *All Points Bulletin*, and has been awarded poetry grants from the Community Foundation and the Witter-Bynner Foundation for poetry. She lives in Atlantic Beach, Florida.

**Leah Shelleda** is professor emerita of humanities and philosophy at the College of Marin in Northern California. Her first chapbook, *A Flash of Angel*, won the Blue Light Press

prize, and a second chapbook, *Adorning the River*, recently won the Red Berry Editions award. A book of poems, *After the Jug Was Broken*, and her newly edited anthology, *The Book of Now: Poetry for the Rising Tide*, are published by Fisher King Press.

**Maxine Susman** is the author of five poetry chapbooks and has published widely in journals including *Fourth River*, *Poet Lore*, *Blueline*, *Journal of New Jersey Poets*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *USI Worksheets*, and *Colere*. A former English professor, she teaches poetry workshops at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute of Rutgers University and the Evergreen Forum in Princeton, and divides her time between Central New Jersey and Outer Cape Cod.

**Madeline Tiger's** recent collections are *From the Viewing Stand* (2012), *The Atheist's Prayer* (2010), and *The Earth Which Is All* (2008). Her work appears in journals and anthologies. She has been teaching in state programs and private workshops since 1973. She lives in Bloomfield, NJ under a weeping cherry tree.

**Wendy Vardaman** ([wendyvardaman.com](http://wendyvardaman.com), @wendylvardaman) is the author of *Obstructed View* (Fireweed Press 2009) and *Reliquary of Debt* (Lit Fest Press 2015), co-editor of four anthologies, including *Echolocations*, *Poets Map Madison* and *Local Ground(s)—Midwest Poetics*, and founding co-editor of Cowfeather Press ([cowfeatherpress.org](http://cowfeatherpress.org)). She is one of Madison, Wisconsin's two Poets Laureate (2012-2015).