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This issue of *Think Pink* was compiled and edited by Stacy Lynn Mar.

**If you are interested in submitting to a future edition of *Think Pink*, please visit:
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for submission guidelines!**

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Letter From The Editor

Hello friends and readers. I hope everyone has gotten off to a lovely, creative, productive Spring.

Did anyone else undertake the NaPoWriMo writing challenge this April? Congrats to those who completed (or attempted) thirty poems for thirty days. This was the first year I ever *officially* completed a poem every single day of April and it was taxing, to say the least!

I've been working hard at Pink.Girl.Ink. Press these past few months, especially with components like the page layout, utilizing links, and creating our weekly poetry prompts. I love how everything is developing and coming along with the press and the ezine. Though, if there's anything you'd like to see more (or less) of, please drop us an email with any suggestions for improvement. I'm committed to stay around for as long as possible with this blog project but we need a large reader-base in order to be successful. That's where you come in! So I ask, please link us up wherever possible! Remember, the more foot-traffic we get, the more exposure to everyone's writing. Exposure leads to opportunity, I speak firsthand!

I am ecstatic with the amount of submissions we received for the current *Spring Issue #2 of Think Pink*. Not only did the number of contributors grow with this issue, but I believe the talent quota (and the relevance to subject matter) did as well! We had an astounding number of poetry submissions and I have selected only what I feel were the very best.

In this issue, you'll find viewpoints ranging from the listlessness of entering that thirty-something era of life to the sacred gift that retirement gives to one's creativity. You'll read the wise words of older women as well as the earthy opinions of blooming writers as young as teens! This issue is filled to the brim with the insight of intelligent, creative women of brilliant mind whose writing just glows of life force, hope, and the reality it is to inhabit the feel of our own skin, to live inside the worlds of our separately distinct lives. In this issue, we all share those enigmatic words (and experiences) with each other, and with the world.

I invite you to relish this second Issue in celebration of creative women. Bask in the light of their worlds for a moment. Find, and lose, yourself within the words of these pages. I also urge you to keep reading (it really does open doors to other worlds). And never stop creating!

As always, I offer gracious thanks to the readers and contributors of *Think Pink* as well as regular readers of Pink.Girl.Ink. Press.

Stacy Lynn Mar
Editor & Founder,
Pink.Girl.Ink. Press

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Poetry

Swans

Pamela Herron

Swans
mate for life,
they say.
What biological imperative
demands
Monogamy?

Humans,
on the other hand,
desire
Monogamy,
but cannot
get it right.

The swan,
neck curved,
watches
over her
grey, fuzzy
cygnets.

While the male
wings outspread,
defends his
battleship group
from perceived
danger.
A child kneels alone to watch.
The small armada sails home.
Bread cast upon
still water
unseen,
unwanted.

Mocking Bird

Pamela Herron

I never understood my father,
except perhaps
when I was a child.
Then he was
protective
all-powerful.

Snow drifts
against
cold grey stone.
A bit of ribbon,
faded
plastic rose.

Mockingbird
swoops, dives,
wings splayed
tail spread.
A fat robin
has ventured too close.

His mate
hovers near
their nest
watching every move
prepared to battle
if needed.

Summer
will come.
Nestlings will fly.
I hear the mockingbird
morning song until
time to build again.

Outside my childhood window
the mockingbird sang
morning awake
I walked the fields
with my father
once again.

Bright
warm nest
with bits of ribbon

and faded
flowers.
Mockingbird sings.

Keeping Time

Pamela Herron

my mother watched
kept time for the family.
rising from her rocking chair,
She picked up Big Ben,
and told us good night,
go to bed.

Sometimes she fooled
herself and set the clock
ten minutes fast as
though she could
cheat time.
She never could.
There were other Big Bens.
Little ones, then bigger ones
with bigger numbers
glowing softly through the night.

She wound the clock for
the factory whistle,
the school bus,
for early rehearsals,
and me.

She never
wound the clock
for herself.

She kept time
faithfully.
Waiting, watching
the morning dawn
on a tipsy daughter,
the one who slipped away,
the man who stayed out
too late for no reason.

And we all came home.
And she would wind
the clock for another day.
Our house never needed an electric clock.
One with a snooze alarm
or a radio
to wake us with music.
I remember

she never slept.
No need for a clock
ticking forward to a milky dawn.
None of us ever had our own
clock to wind and wake
us in the morning.

But every evening,
she rose from
the hand-woven reeds of
the wooden rocking chair,
walk to the tall table
with the bills
and the Bible,
and wind the clock

Today the clack
of a winding clock
brings me back.
But of course,
no one winds
clocks today.

Numbers glow
red and evil
throughout
the night and
I wonder
how could she
sleep with that damn
Big Ben ticking away
the hours at the head of her bed.

Marking time
for all of us.
My dual alarms
wake us all,
separately, and
no one
winds the clock.
Nine volts
watch the time
even in a storm.

My pink
cell phone
has an alarm,
numbers that

glow in the dark, and
music.

To remind me
of meetings,
names and numbers
of my friends
and family.

Never needs winding.
It doesn't tick.

When she died,
I kept her watch,
the Timex,
the one I bought her,
with the big numbers,
after the little ones
danced and drifted
before her eyes.

I wore the watch,
big black numbers
marking time
for me,
until it stopped.

Wide Open

Julie Wells

Your heart is a crowbar, your heart cracked my skull wide open
I don't remember my hand on the the door, but there it is, wide open.

We always walked the railroad tracks. We kept our pockets full.
Lanky shadows and bony feet, blisters split wide open.

I find your pieces everywhere: notes scrawled with a heavy hand.
A tangled necklace, a tarnished charm. A slap with a fist wide open.

All those times I felt you, a heaviness beside me in bed
the shape of your body burned into my sheets, the eyes the mouth wide open.

Your smoke still hangs all around me. I suck it in, sweet and grateful.
Something to tide me over. I look for you always. I leave my window wide open.

To Pass an Ex-Lover in the Street

Julie Wells

Not one word. Not even a slip of sugar-sweet tongue. Keep still
your teeth, made slick with nicotine and lies. A nod of your head
an earthquake; a wink of the eye rimmed sickish and bruised,
a knife in my back. So hold fists balled in pockets deep: no flutter
of milky hands, no sapphire threading. No flash of bloodied crescent
fingertips that once traced my body's lines against secondhand
cottons. I beg you. Turn away the inky head, its imprint lingering at
plump inner thighs: still visible to a trained, quivering eye. The throat
that throbs pulsing with blood dirtied and black; that dip in the flesh
I sank my teeth in, creamy blue. The mouth raw and swollen I took,
whole, in my own, sew it shut and move steady, please! Pass silent,
smooth vapor. My image travels through your cones and rods, fragmented,
apart and away. Tangible: to reach out and touch, to feel, just don't.

Young Love at Dawn

Julie Wells

I remember you in flashes.
Blurred and frozen moments -
a picture taken off guard
by unsteady hands.

I remember us both,
living someplace where it's always morning:
forever trapped in the cool, misty moments
just before the hateful dawn.

Lying side by side,
bony knees cutting hot fleshy thighs,
warm beneath our blankets of regret
twitching and falling into shaky sleep;
we fake our dreams when dreams won't come

A fistful of nightgown;
a face full of hair.
Waiting and watching
for harsh, reluctant daylight.

Through an open window,
lies are carried away
on whispers and sighs,
only to find their way back,
at home on our lips,
just as the sun begins to rise.

Advice for Young Girls: How to Be Crazy in 13 Steps

Julie Wells

Step 1.

Dress in a way that doesn't suit your body. If you have wide hips, wear striped pants. Turn your lower half into warm, fleshy parentheses that go on and on, outward and onward, forever and ever. If you're overweight, wear crop tops that let your belly hang out, soft and free as fuck. Slouch for maximum effect. Bras are always optional, but never preferred.

Step 2.

Stop brushing your hair. Let it swirl around your face in a wild celebration of madness.

Step 3.

Wear your makeup all crazy. Lipstick should always overflow the parameters of your mouth; it should kiss the teeth and shine bright like blood. Execute cat-eye eyeliner after you've had a few drinks (or, better yet, the shaky, queasy morning after you've had a ton of drinks). Pluck out all your eyebrows and paint caterpillars over your eyes. Have them meet at the bridge of your nose in a furry caterpillar kiss.

Step 4.

Talk to strangers. Tell them outlandish lies. You could be a widow, a ballerina, a recovering alcoholic, a crackhead, an award-winning photojournalist fresh off a plane from the front lines in Afghanistan. Be whatever you want. The time is now.

Step 5.

Take trains as often as possible. Drink those tiny bottles of whisky that cost \$8 each. Seek out men with strong hands and full mouths. Kiss and fondle these men just seconds before your boyfriend meets you on the platform. Go meet your boyfriend's parents with the taste of a stranger on your lips.

Step 6.

Learn to express your anger. Be comfortable with your anger. Revel in your goddamned anger. Scream until your voice cracks and crumbles into a million pieces. Throw things that will break with a satisfying shatter: wine glasses, your mother's wedding china, the porcelain dolls you both loved and feared as a little girl. Hit yourself. Pull out your hair in snarled, greasy clumps. Bite your arms, hard, so that the teeth slice right through the smooth, unsuspecting flesh. Be proud of those teeth marks - you've earned them.

Step 7.

Discourage visitors by letting your yard grow into a jungle. Let the dog shit all over the walk. Litter the porch with empty liquor bottles and used tampons.

Step 8.

Keep the inside of your house meticulously clean. Eat over the sink so as not to drop crumbs. Clean your floors on bruised hands and knees. Inhale the giddy fumes of cleaning solutions until your head detaches from your shoulders and floats away like a runaway balloon.

Step 9.

Mock tradition. Take your grandparents' wedding portrait and scrawl "BULLSHIT" over the impossibly young and smiling faces. Use a bright red marker. Hang new and improved portrait over the fireplace, front and center, where it can be admired by all.

Step 10.

Trust no one. Accuse the mailman of stealing your cigarette coupons, your catalogs, your personal correspondence. When you go to the pharmacy to collect your Seroquel and your Lithium and your Xanax and Zoloft, make the pharmacist open each bottle and count every pill. Demand a second, or even third, recount on the Xanax.

Step 11.

Never follow doctor's orders. Toss out your antidepressants and antipsychotics, and dive straight into the Xanax. Mix them with cheap alcohol and the chunky white painkillers you may or may not have acquired illegally. Spend your evenings listening to the Velvet Underground in hot baths, chain-smoking cigarettes and tipping your ashes right into your bathwater. Stoned out of your mind, call your exes and hang up. Call your exes and scream and slur until you're blue in your fucking face. Cry, but only if you feel like it.

Step 12.

Fuck a lot. Fuck men and women you barely know. Fuck men and women you don't know at all! Fuck mean, nasty men who like leaving marks; fuck men who like seeing where they've been. Fuck women who are just as fucking crazy as you. Fuck in your bed and never wash the sheets. Fuck in parked cars and mark the steamy windows with your hands, your forehead, your ass, your tongue. Fuck until your insides are raw and screaming for mercy. Fuck some more. Fuck and hate it. Fuck and love it.

Step 13.

Do whatever the fuck you want. Stuff your face with brie and chicken nuggets. Chew with your mouth wide open and your eyes closed tight. Drink red wine straight from the mouths of strangers. Sleep in six-inch stiletto heels. Go grocery shopping in your nightgown. Talk to yourself all day and all night. Live free and wild as an animal. Stand naked in front of mirrors and laugh and laugh. Make lists with 13 entries. Only 13. Always 13.

In the Spirit of Flashlight

A.J. Huffman

Forested limbs quiver in the mechanics of shadowed green. Not-quite-permeable is their mantra. I graciously echo their curse, breathe in atmospheric shades of gray. My body, rough with sweat, is a solid form, set for midnight climbing. My head is elevated. Distanced from nocturnal activities, it registers only glittering stars and empty space. I am the perfect vessel for spotlight tongues looking to conquer. I am brilliant flash of adventure, a temporary wildness. I open with a flare. The hunt is afoot. Come quickly, take your game before dawn.

I Am Pastel

A.J. Huffman

a washed-out hue in a dayglo-bright kind of world. I am outdated, uncool, a definite don't. I am a ghost of seasons' past, a remnant of a softer aesthetic. I am not on trend. Bury me in the back of the closet, or in the back yard. I am humiliation waiting to happen, you should not be seen in my presence.

This Bed is a Tomb

A.J. Huffman

I have built myself a perfect, suffocating replica of a coffin. Lovingly lined in satin, it has room only for one. Me and the memories I choose to carry bury ourselves in the darkness of sleepless nights, drink in the isolation as if our silence was the echo of some significant life.

Because Peacekeeper

A.J. Huffman

is not just a temporary title,
but seemingly my given
lot in life, I am forced to hold
my tongue and my tempter
while constantly being
surrounded by family members
who moonlight as drama queens.
Their petty bickerings echo like bullets
in my brain, until my fingers long
for a tangible trigger to pull
and put one or more of us out
of my misery.

Errant Fathers, Stupid Women

Marina Sofia

Don't expect us to be grateful, Medea.
Nobody asked for your sacrifice.
Jason would have coped fine without the scattering of body parts.
That's when he should have realized you're a bitch,
thinking only of yourself
under the guise of undying love.
No wonder he found somebody new,
more easy-going,
without the grandiloquent gestures.
He needed rest after his journey, bless him,
and all you can offer is barbaric revenge...

Agamemnon returned from Troy a hero,
while I, 'his little Clyti' struggled for so many years
alone yet not free
mourning the daughter he'd sacrificed for his mission, his ego.

[It's all about ego in the end, you see.]

His spoils of war in the shape of a nubile wench:
his embarrassed smile barely veiling
the testosterone pride of middle-aged conquest.

'You'd grown a little stale.
I'd forgotten how to let fun into my life.'

Was I really the only one to see the feet sodden with clay
on this former giant of a man?
How did he turn my children against me,
using absence to tenderise their flesh so willing
to prefer his account over mine?

In all discarded, bitter women
there's a Jocasta lying in wait:
jewellery poised to maim errant fathers,
secretly rooting for the son to take over,
unable to bear the loss of self.

Daffodil

Harika Kottakota

how does your smile dazzle me
amidst vintage wines and cigar smoke?
when just yesterday i found you
huddled behind french draperies
like a white daffodil dipped in blood,
praying for an hourglass body:
popping bosom, rotund hips
but you know as well as I
the waney moon never listens
never forgives, for burning a cross

Lost

Harika Kottakota

There are daggers stowed
In my little bookshelf
I topped it with a
Seashell from the Tuscan shore
And kissed the collage
Of pressed poppies

A fool's memories glowed
Ever brighter against the
Aqua dust I ground
From marbles, confetti,
And moonstone

May the rusted chimes
Stagger melodious winds
For I have lost all
Mercy

Bluest Eye

Harika Kottakota

Even the bluest eye
Can drown, gracefully,
In starlight
Let iridescence engulf you
The aftermath belongs to
Another voice

Heaven pontificates
From my palms to feet
But this is never
Enough--I need to still
Create some "collective good"
And blink away
The screams

Sipping Flames

Harika Kottakota

I tried pinning on ivory wings
Stolen from my childhood angel,
Morph in a mixed avalanche
Silk and lace and sequin
Shed myself of this shy, suffocating silence
And saunter Hollywood boulevards
Paparazzi, billboards, plush carpets
Yes! I wanted it all
To manifest, as swiftly as
Ebony roses blooming upon
My palms, singed stigmata,
So that I may stop gnawing
Ice slivers, finally
Start sipping flames

Bangle Archetypes

Harika Kottakota

Wrinkled, sunburnt housewives
Strolling in gossamery sarees
Pick maroon bangles of glass
Traditional and modest, match
Their prayer books, their dotted bhindis

Cling! Cling! Cling!

Blushing teens giggling
In denim jeans
Pick flamingo pink bangles of plastic
Studded with baby pearls
Hoping to catch a few more eyes,
To quickly slip off at night clubs

Cling! Cling!

Thick-bodied heiresses stuffed
In pure cotton folds
Pick bangles of 24-karat gold
Bend them between their
Jutting jaws

Cling!

Amid the kaleidoscopic sea at my waist
I glimpse translucent white
Like fresh coconut water in street carts
Glinting so purely—
I dig

To: Not All Men

Audrey El-Osta

Life is the longest thing I'll ever do,
and it's still too short to listen to you,
with your misogynistic, piece of shit
ignorant chat-ups, you don't have a clue.

Don't talk to me you stupid, sexist fuck,
I can't help think that you're a massive schmuck.
You demand underage girls flash their tits
and hound them on the street to suck your cock.

You're not funny with your anti-gay talk,
or your rape jokes behind us while we walk.
Take that fedora elsewhere, fuck right off
with that "chivalry," I can't help but balk.

Life is the longest thing I'll ever do,
and it's still too short to listen to you.

Gardasil

Audrey El-Osta

I hope your daughter can forgive you:
for letting her in all her perfection,
her health and potential,
be vulnerable to the most malicious, unkind,
destructive plagues to befoul humanity
simply because of your ignorance.

I hope your daughter can forgive you
when she returns the permission slip to school
expressly saying "No,
you won't get my daughter, you won't
make her complicit in your pharmaceutical
conspiracy." Her teacher will look at her,
concerned and horrified on behalf of this child
for whom she is, in effect, a temporary mother
by day. Her friends will ask her
"why aren't you getting vaccinated?"
She answers *because mum said so*.

I hope your daughter can forgive you
as she sits in her doctors office,
not even thirty, nervous, barely breathing,
waiting for an answer to a question
no innocent should have to ask.

I hope your daughter can forgive you,
lying on the operating table.
"Count down from 10 for me baby,
we'll take care of you."
Cervix, uterus, ovaries, breasts, lungs, brain.
These things travel, my friend,
and I hope she can forgive you,
as the scalpel descends.

I hope your daughter can forgive you
on her second round of chemo.
Her head in the toilet and her hair on the floor,
purging her soul of any memory of you.
Her protector, her guardian who bore her and
knowingly, willingly, failed her.

I hope your daughter can forgive you
when she decides to stop fighting.
When it's too much: all that's left is to enjoy her precious time,
when the morphine hardly makes it bearable

and her friends gather to say goodbye
everyday, for months on end -
I hope your daughter can forgive you.

I hope your daughter can forgive you
as her new family packs up a life that was over
when you made your decision years ago
to spare her the false-proven horror of an immunisation
that could save her life.

I hope your baby can forgive you,
because I won't.

Pizza Talk and English Beer

Stacy Lynn Mar

On the eve of a holiday
I cannot fully remember
I came to you
Like a drunkard on the mend,
Stiff in my winter boots,
The smell of front porch
on my hair.
I'm not sure what I expected
But you were two thumbs deep
In some foreign documentary
So we spread cold pizza
And Old English beer between us
And talked sleepy circles
Around mad prophets,
The historical poets of our time
And each syllable you spoke
Felt like the edge of another world
I could cross, except
The alcohol was stealing my thunder
So all I could manage
Was a 2am rant about
The binds this world born us into,
The unjust in our lack of choice,
The wondering eyeball of chance,
And the God in all our words;
How always Saturday night
Would find us waging wars
Against the invisible forces
Of our universe and how
Come Sunday morning
There's always more questions
Than there are answers.
How, exhausted, we fall asleep
Across the bent in arms of each other,
Aging as we sleep
Like old dogs waiting to die.

Mediocre Star-Matter

Stacy Lynn Mar

I could be anywhere right now,
Reading my poetry
On a sidewalk bench in Bali, perhaps,
My hair a pigeon's nest,
Curb-side poet, preacher of the prose,
Each day another rusty penny,
No fancy PC, no notable publication,
Just a beggar with a Dixie cup.
Maybe I'd be somewhere near Idaho,
Hugging the makeshift robes
Of an imposter Jesus in some convent,
Fingers bristling of what it feels
To touch the confess-less hand
Of another body while I've still
Breath enough to exist outside
My mausoleum of prayers and psalms.
Or I could be a streetwalker
In the gemmed city of Bangkok,
Slant of my eyes searching the footsteps
Of church men and socialites,
Drunken college kids and uniformed oppressors,
My body a street-side carnival ride
Where stranger men drop their quarters
For an hour or a night,
While my sad eyes flash beneath
Well-lit hotel signs and closet bulbs
Like new pennies.
But I am none of these women,
And who is to say
Who becomes what entity,
Our souls dangling like invisible twine
Beneath the ocean of the sky,
That gaping mouth of whatever random
Universe we each inhabit,
Until the Gods, the elements,
The dusty pieces of hollow stars
Plop you into whatever life you become,
Surreal as a graveyard plot,
Something you never knew until it born you...
Eyes and guts and half-sung lullabies,
As sharp and hot against your ears
As the hum of the stars you once rode atop.

The Middle Years

Stacy Lynn Mar

There's something powerful
In the nostalgia
Of an old radio show,
Perhaps it's the grandmother
And the great uncle
We hear in the muffled voices
Of bodies long-dead,
Ghost of their voice strings
Conjured to live again
In the existence of our ears,
Our heads, in the same old language,
Memory of a southern dialect
Sizzling like an antique transistor radio
Into our morning rituals
As we butter our toast just right,
Push the ache of our backs
Into eloquently-carved dining chairs,
A solitaire place-sitting for the single.
How loneliness at middle-age
Touches you, and your mother,
In almost the same way,
Crunching dates and numbers
Into a Fiber One breakfast,
Slumping into yoga pants
For the sheer, cotton pleasure
Of elastic comfort.
You smile at your ancient
Inner soul sister,
Shiny-eyed and decked in
Mary Janes and school-girl braids,
Embrace the life in times gone by
And bid those middle-years
A defiant, brittle-boned 'hello.'

The Heart Stone

Stacy Lynn Mar

The Gods gave it to me,
Metal comet of my midsection,
Glass sheet of my chest
With a picture-window view.
For years I fed it with
Fairytale and the silk of dresses
For first date 'hellos'
And the everyday woe it was
To live between four brick walls,
A girl alone, a girl full of dreams.
I carried them around in my pockets,
My heart full of beach-glow.
I fed it with coffee and cake,
A wormhole void of sacred touch,
Until one day it left me
For ground slugs and salted earth,
A cave in my chest that bent
In upon itself like a sinkhole
That I scrambled to fill
With crazed words of mad poets,
Biographical quotes and moon shadow
Of quiet nights when memories
Ate at my flesh like rabid gnats
And all my unlived dreams burned me
Like the spinning rings of a dead star.

Winter Soup

Stacy Lynn Mar

She cooks for me,
An anonymous,
Bird in a blanket,
Veil of a napkin
Across the shaking knees
Of my winter shiver,
Embroidered initials
Of a man we neither know,
Soft thread of a no-name,
I strum the old ghosts
Of their soup stones
The mummified remains
Of their wilted silver,
a second hand silence
pushes against
taut knuckles
and full cheeks
as if this unknown
were whispering
into the silence
of our woodstove kitchen:
how to fold
their kitchen linen
into quarters,
how to trim
the trees and holly,
how to roast potatoes
and sauté onions
as if my father
were not a cook,
my grandmother never born.
These are the secrets
I've already been told,
Of the menial and plain
I have previously
Re-aquainted
Though I still listen
Like the child I was,
Soup on my chin,
Kitchen China falling
Through my eyes and fingers
Like see-through prisms,
A fine crystal,
The eight reflections
Of all my inner children,

Always watching, ever listening.

Stars and Strange Faces

Stacy Lynn Mar

Nights were rather damp,
the windows of their upstairs apartment
Too wise and dingy to discern
The separate faces of strangers
From the busy inner-city below.
Her lover was a patient man,
His chin a collection of breakfast crumbs,
But she knew the heart beneath
His old plaid shirt was mechanical.
He worked for the postal service
To support them, a shadow-man
Dressed in proper blue,
Hands full of car keys and
The paper bag lunch she arranged
Like a boring habit each morning.
And when she was alone
She would strip herself
Before the many-mirrored bathroom
Like a swaying shower curtain pushed apart.
She'd collect the anti-depressants secretly
In colorful bath-salt jars,
Those little beads of forgiveness
That would free her thoughts
When no one else could understand
That it wasn't about love or loneliness,
But rather an itch no drug could scratch.
So she wrote letters to dead feminists,
Copied recipes for success
From the life of Dorothy Parker,
and cooked supper for her husband
Like a good wife should
While patiently knitting mittens
For children she'd never have.
Every few weeks she'd consign
A soft batch of her fingered creations
To the corner thrift shop
For a cheap five bucks per pair,
then stop at Greg's Diner for chamomile tea
A pretty girl nodding
At the smiles of strangers,
unspoken dreams rolling around
between her cranium like a marble.
She knew one day she'd have
Enough money to buy the stars,
To leave the city.

Renaissance

Nadia Gerassimenko

The chamber was filled with gloom:
She lay on the bed like dead Lucretia -
Pale, mortified, and numb.
Blood slowly trickled from her thighs
Unto her ivory legs.
"I've lost myself, my innocence,"
She whispered weakly and closed her eyes
To pray.

Jupiter heard her little prayer,
And sent hope her way -
Light and Truth named Apollo.
He came into the room charging it with brightness.
Her fragile body, he took into his arms
And softly kissed every inch that ached.
He said, "The truth is that you're pure.
In my eyes, you'll always be.
I will aid you in regaining your view of yourself,
Your view of the world.
Give life and love another chance."

Tender passion

Nadia Gerassimenko

It's not possessive domination,
Nor hysterical suspicion,
Harm or manipulation
It's tender passion
When he looks into your eyes
Warmly with a gentle flame
When he kisses you so softly
On your forehead
Like you are his little one

He runs his fingers along your neck
Which is as delicate as porcelain
And it feels ticklish like a feather
On your velvet skin
As the honey-butterfly effect
Absorbs your whole being
He would wrap his arms around you
So you wouldn't have to be afraid
Of any danger, of any hurt

It's simply tender passion
It's simply gentle love

The woman with the child in her eyes

Nadia Gerassimenko

It is so easy to mock and condemn
When cynicism strikes fate,
And one is affected ever forever.
But inside there is a pungent feeling
Of jealous admiration.

Wow! Unbelievable! How does she do it?
To be a woman with the child in her eyes.
Unabashed of her sensual sexuality,
Yet remaining so down-to-earth in life -
Treating all with simplicity and love,
Always offering them a cup of tea.
To have a clear head throughout
And overflowing inspiration to create,
Even with a bit of tasteful weed.
While the press criticizes her art-form
For not conforming at that time
And overanalyzes her weirdness,
Not truly understanding her at her core.

Wow! Amazing! How does she do it?
To be a woman with the child in her eyes.
To own herself and have control over her life,
While some may be puppets at someone's mercy.
To write, sing, dance, and have it materialize charmingly
Not for the sake of numbers, quantity,
But for the sake of offering beautiful quality -
To crush the lily in someone's soul,
To hit them at their soft spot,
To show them December can be magic again.
To not be tempted by the glory of stardom
And more insignificant hits and draining tours.
To preserve integrity in her art and self.

You can find herself retreating
From outer conditions and loud parties
To her secret garden of her childlike self.
Under the Ivy, there she is.
It's her, Cathy...Bush.

Moonchild dreams

Nadia Gerassimenko

Night is when I daydream
And sleep throughout the day
My afternoons are for society
And evenings I am waiting
For my moon beneath the clouds

I am a daughter of the Night
My mother is the Moon
The Stars are my muses
And Night Creatures, my allies
They know well to give me space

To dance unruly to my avant-garde
To break the box of common thinking
To dream of passion and love divine
To write my deepest longings
As I become the Lady of the Moon

You can bend me as you please
To get to the heart of the matter
But I am the Moonchild, and I dream
The night is mine to keep
When you cannot tame me

The Jar

Nikki Harlin

I know its July
stuffed into that mason jar
you carry around a murky lantern
behind the bars
where I first laid
eyes on that spoiled sun
you saying Go ahead touch it
Warm glass in such frigid
hands I knew it was bad to stare
directly into the yellow hot
now I always see this neon
blotch a disposable
camera constantly in flash
catches me at the market
while I study the cherry jars
in my birthday dress
falling off my bicycle mid-ride, past
the same house the porch
light always off
February is a cold
joke so I might call you
to ask you how you did it
knowing damn well you'll say
It was summer

Charlotte Rose

Nikki Harlin

Lives her life
searching for a light
cherried weed
in a dry field lean
She carries a drought in
Her body, clear
blown glass purging
itself of carbon
A ghosted hit
lingers like a figure
rushed from the torso
of a pipe animated by grief
or headlights passing through blinds
This is hard love.

Birthday Girl

Nikki Harlin

I can't count today,
but I know how many
candles are crammed
into the sugar
scalp of the cake.
A single black hair
on each of the twenty
two, loves the flame
exhausting its wax.
They slouch
in consumption. I've
had better luck
snapping wish bones
mapping comets.
A sigh rises
off the blown
birthday heads

December Kiss

Nikki Harlin

The sky is clear. Thin
dark trees slit its thigh
whiteness. You kiss
my mouth, a bright
gash in a fat plum
revealing its pulp
like a wild woman.
Bitter skin deeply
needles dimples into
my cheek. The air is cold.
My lips are wintering.
From their splits I unleash
plump seedlings and gush
cherry black

Beside Him

Nikki Harlin

“At his side and drunk on pride
We wait for the blow”
-Amy Winehouse

I've had dreams of you
plating my tongue
In your eyes
little red slivers
shriek of skull powder.
Me standing mute
as a cannon
stinging mouthfuls
shots
flooding my head.
But I took an oath
it tunnels through my veins
and quakes under a veil of sobriety.
I've given you words
that can't be knifed.
It's me and my man
draped in our violet banner
waiting in a tundra of cinders.

Grocery Cashier

Joan McNerney

After punching in, she opens her register, counts up bills and unwrap rolls of coins. Her arms ache from yesterday. From pulling together store items, piling them in bags.

Another day in this dismal place.
Dim lights and cool corridors.
No clock, no water fountain,
no public restroom. Aisles stocked
with cans, boxes, frozen foods.

Pushing carts full of packaged meat,
donuts, cases of beer...customers
creep up in line. Trance-like they
press forward with crinkled coupons,
handing out cash or swiping cards.

A camera is poised on her.
Registers are monitored and
the number of sales counted.
Making sure nothing slips by,
"The Man" is always watching.

The Librarian

Joan McNerney

Always cherished the sanctity of this place. This refuge of volumes arranged in infallible logic of the Dewey Decimal system.

Judith loved to touch these volumes. Especially heavy reference dictionaries, atlases, almanacs and encyclopedias. Those sheltered in secluded shelves for staff only.

Children come along each day to feast on colorful books. Lounging in small chairs, they became spellbound by cornucopias of words.

Mostly she likes the retirees who linger with newspapers and magazines in the reading room. They confessed not to understand computers, writing down requested titles.

At the end of the day, Judith walks through a quiet room. Before leaving, she will select a saga of spicy adventure to flavor her evening.

Retail Sales Clerk

Joan McNerney

Janice wore black shoes and clothes
as prescribed by management.

Laughing she called it her uniform
for these last twenty years.

Colors come and go, mustard,
fushia, magneta, electric green.

Hems up and down, necklines
dipping or close to the throat.

Some styles were all fuss and
flutter. Others sharp, tailored.

She loved to press her hands
fingering racks of satins, velvets.

Janice watched customers pry into
purses to find charge cards.

"Wear it with smiles" she called as
shoppers wandered downstairs.

Super Woman

Joan McNerney

I wanna become superwoman
learn portuguese in sixty seconds
end pollution single-handedly
feed rice a roni to the planet
win awards left and right.

I wanna become super woman
paint the Taj Mahal red
knock down bureaucrats by the dozens
create creative pandemonium
flying off the edge of everything.

I'm 32

Talisha Harrison

I've got the
Blues
That's nothing new

Finances are tight
Things aren't right
There's no hope
In sight

Everyday I feel
I have no say
In how this orange
Which is my life
Will peel

I question whether
I have friends and
I guess that depends
On many things
Which-

Oh crap
This part doesn't
Rhyme is that
A poetic crime?

I'm 32
I've got the
Blues
That's nothing new

I get depressed
And want to die
But then I cry
And want to live
But what the hell am
I living for?
I really don't know.

I don't have a guy
But that doesn't
Make me cry
I just sigh
Because whenever
I do have a guy

In REAL LOVE
I get denied

When I first
Told my 'friends'
About Graves
I didn't get the
Feeling that
They cared
So I regretted
That I shared
I'm 32

I've got the
Blues
That's nothing new

I wonder what
Will the future
Lead me to?
It'll most likely
Be bad cause
For the most
Part that's what
I've had

I'm not excited
About life
Nor do I care
Sometimes
I wish that the
Earth was
Bare
With no
People to
Share

The dark
Is overtaking
Me
There's nothing
Bright or good
That I can see
People say it's
Always darkest
Before the dawn
I yawn at the dawn
Who never stays up

For me

I'm 32
I've got the
Blues
That's nothing new

Effie

Allison Grayhurst

Picture at the bottom
tied up in a pit of moths.
The royal crown, life without
a wheel to ride. Paving up the stream
where children once charged down an incline
and jumped into its shallow body.
Instead I am weakened, unable to hold
my breath for more than ten seconds,
lungs, tender with each breath, wounded, flaccid,
but airways enflamed, engrossed with harsh swelling.
Will I die this way? Before my children are fully grown?
Will this be the place, alone, afraid, surrounded by love with
no love able to save me, repair my pulse, give current
enough to dismantle the throne of this disease?
I lay on a bed, under sheets. I know what is tomorrow. I have no choice
but to let go. My children! My husband! My darling loves!
Winter has not yet come – here, but more like spring
crushing my chest, one breath, one breath, heavy liquid
rising in pockets meant for air – one breath, one breath.
The morning has arrived and death is edging nearer. I see it waiting
for me on my neighbour's roof, patient, not as a predator,
but more like a sea at ebb tide, gathering moon gravity
and a natural motion of force that will eventually drown
whatever remains on the beachy shores, drowning before winter - one breath.
My children are on their own as I am and I cannot stop
this freezing, save them from the cliffs of mountain-burning grief,
prevent them from being orphans in other people's homes,
holding eye contact briefly with other mothers who love
them, feel for them, but never the way I have loved them.
The world will wax me, carry me across on the path of my heritage.
No one will be alright. Death is never healed,
it is a garment permanently glued, re-shaping the wearer,
taking the light through a black hole, ending the peace of ignorance.
One breath. The sky has changed. It is the last time I will bear it witness,
from now on - hospital ceilings, the insides of my eyes and dreams
of purgatorial pain overcome, of dreaming my children old with children
of their own. Don't stop dancing, I tell them, don't watch me. I am sorry.
I can barely breathe. Is God real?
I am holding many hands holding mine; whispers, I love yous, goodbyes.
My last breath escapes me, easier now. I hear singing, sobbing, singing louder.
I am listening, complete as a stone. My work is over. My love is burning.
It is a sun. It is the shape of that song.

My Child

Allison Grayhurst

With a mother's lips I felt
the ceremony of the stars
soothe my tired throat.
I felt the sun's fire in my hand
when I bent in the direction of tomorrow.
But my child is like
a choir at my doorstep,
seducing my joy by her own.
My child is without enemies
or days, having no secrets from those
she loves. She can carve a jewel
from a crayon, and with her first embrace,
she sanctifies each morning.
With a mother's heart
I tell the fruitflies of my blessing.
I know that money and mortality
cannot be true, but only
the music in her grey eyes, and the movement
of her small hands at play.

Pregnant After A Death

Allison Grayhurst

I kneel for you, for the small
flower unnamed. Within
where apple trees never grow, another
fire catches. I dream of toadstools
and my father's dark warm eyes. I call
you my literature, my sweetest harvest.
And my husband and I, we make notes
in the mirror, we go shopping, holding hands.
We talk of you like a morning glory, we smell the spring
and are proud. We begin to know you
like a separate constellation, like someone
entwined by all these loving riches.
God has taken and now gives, letting
the tears and this blessing take equal hold.

Deep Breath In

Allison Grayhurst

Just what is it – a savage distance that swells
between myself and freedom. Shackles and blocked
horizons. The smell of urine and rats like oracles eyeing
my feet, nibble away at the miracle I have found.
I will wait until evening when everything is quiet, wait,
then claim my desire, plugged and unwholesome, fermenting
like the sweet blood of a star, expanding in the blackness,
slaughtering the quiet space, the nothing space of just being
still. Still, I know nothing of, as these thoughts uninhibitedly
dance and drape across my spiritual, blessed awakening.
Bless the golden morning, an arm uncovered dangling
over the edge and fingers, strong and brave as magic.
I've lost my taste for distractions.
Just what is it – to live at full capacity, on the verge
beating, violent, powerful and patient
as unrequited sex.

Moments Before Merging

Allison Grayhurst

I wait for you, veiled with fear like eyes are
when the body's on its way to slaughter.
I take your focus into my sterile forest
running through you but never planting beside you.
I am muddied dead leaves and you are
more open than a robe of welcoming
intimacy. My thoughts in the shower - my desires
spread out and flood rooms, rise against
the walls – picture frames, memories
consumed. I call to you. But you are mature and perfect
like a psalm or an ancient turret I can climb up and into –
surrounded by your history. I can shut myself in. I can
wait. And it is you, only, and everything I am
is so tightly woven into this anticipation.

In and out of Spain

Allison Grayhurst

Spanish gardens, donkey trails.
Up steep dusty mountains we went, the four of us,
then we walked along rocky ocean cliffs, poking long sticks
in the waves. Whether it was an octopus' play or anger,
tentacles wrapped tight around the tree-limb,
my brother screamed with excitement, pulled for a while
then let go.

Under surveillance at the corner store, we were
government-spied on
while buying popsicle rockets, licking,
lazily skipping back to the pool. I snuck
behind our apartment building
to feed dinner scraps to the desolate feline strays.

My mother bought us dyed pink chicks at Easter,
chick-feet running across a tile hard floor.
My father brought them back to the market
to face their inevitable doom.

Baby teeth, my brother's and mine, tied to a string
tied to an open door.

Grandmother with her long
boney brown fingers, her fearful sins and Lucifer
always behind our backs, up elevators,
fueling the first of my many nightmares, and also
my morality.

A white Volkswagen. A massive pinkish sun,
making friends with Spanish boys breaking
bread beside Flamenco dancers.

There was a shark in the water.
I was lifted onto my father's shoulders,
as he ran fast, past the menacing fin to the shore.

A diving board, lessons in breathing
and earning a swimmer's endurance,
lessons in lifting my double-jointed arm to gain
front-crawl perfection.

Mother's blonde and blonder hair.
Everynight parties.

Holland shoes
instead of stockings at Christmas.
Learning math at the kitchen table.
My father's arms carrying me home
after a late night gathering of strange comic-book creatures,
laughing, making us little ones sit at the smaller table, ignoring
our just-out-of-toddlerhood need for adult attention.

Kindergarten handwriting at Bambi School,
Rice pudding everyday for lunch. Naranja-head,
children pointing, making fun because of my orange hair.
A pencil jabbed into my upper arm -
40 years later, the lead is still visible.

When we drove across the Denia boarder, into France,
then landed for months in London,
I could see my father's memories coming back, his disappointments
overtaking. Maybe it was because it was in London
where his own father died, left India for, only to die
two weeks later in his wife's arms,
leaving five children behind.

The first year back in Montreal,
my father started drinking heavily while my mother gave up,
got involved with her celebrity journalism and multitude of friends.
I remember going to get breakfast, my father passed out
on the kitchen floor. I remember
in and out of Spain.

A Note on Women (a speech)

Annalie Buscarino

“Omg yaaassss.”

You’re gorg.”

heart eyes heart eyes heart eyes

This... is Instagram.

Comments on a girl’s #SelfieSunday!

But these days,

Do any of them hold means of honesty?

Disregard the ones that do,

Understand the ones that don’t.

She knows.

She feels.

Behind that picture, concealed behind that unswaying smile is a lost girl,

Bound to the post of society.

She knows.

She feels.

Doubt

Worthlessness

Discrimination.

Women are a caged collection,

Barred from freedom to be gawked at,

Locked in cells of insecurity and envy.

She knows.

She feels.

Lower wages, just because of her sex,

Unworthy successors,

Despicable athletes.

Many assigned to a man before a school,

While the erudite shy away from exposed skin for the sake of purity.

Women can’t be brave, women can’t make important decisions.

Little girls are seen as weak.

Little girls are plucked up like play things and tossed around as a baseball would be,

Rotating and curving according to guidelines unappealing.

Smile never faltering.

She knows.

She feels.

She knows and she feels.

Strength.

Where?

Deeply implanted beneath firm films of

Friendlessness

Facades

Fiction

I know there’s a seed of

Womanhood there.

And seed of stubbornness, and of loyalty,

Specific to our lineage.
I promise you.
She knows, she feels.
Capable
Potential
Power.
You will not habituate yourselves with the crack of social order across your backs.
She knows, she feels.
Thrust your masks upon the ground and flood this world with beautiful light,
For who are we if we are not ourselves?
She knows, she feels.
Drive
Talent
Success.
Ladies! You are better than
Doubts
Mistakes
Old habits
And better than the men who scorn you.
We may be the progeny of a molded race,
But we are not their choices!
Engineers
Innovators
Champions.
She is knowing and feeling.
Strength.
The kind that makes you woman.

The Blue Lion

Marty Weil

Like a Dunnage hat containing a sidereal ship
The Blue Lion, the Tardis of Einsteinian principle
contains more volume than Euclidian measure allows.
Her cryptic markings suggests the product of advanced mathematics.
She can materialize and dematerialize.
Her aerodynamic style transports me
to the days of playing on my noble lord's grounds.
She is from either the past or the future.
She steps through a portal
to Berlin in the twenties
to appear in the Threepenny
or time warps to Berkeley
to the moment of her conception.
But really
The Blue Lion gives no hint
of what you'll see once through the door.

A Room of Her Own

Leila A. Fortier

We've

Been migrating this

Way: Throughout our home—

In and out of rooms—Different species

Moving through opposing seasons; holding no

Formation—We collide where we should converge—

Space has a way of closing in—Nests become mountains

Someone else's trash—Someone else's treasure—Who said
That no man is an island? I dream about a room of my own:

A space without ceiling—A space without walls—Absent

—of white noise—

(Wrapped in the air of silence)

Continuum

Leila A. Fortier

(For Melissa Studdard)

There was so much more I wanted to say~ About the gate and garden~ Orchard and
Apple~ How branch is to olive as apple is to seed~ How I wanted to swallow
The core of the continuum~ To claim my place amongst unspoken
And misunderstood things~ For mysteries have become
Some unbearable stain ... and it is safer to
Be labeled, known, and predictable~
But we ... we turn toward
One another in cycles
Like the moon~
~Molting~
Our opaque robes and
Reflecting our transparencies~ If only
For this season ... this night~ This moment that
May roll into some distant eternity~ Our hands stitch to
Page the profusion of words that should have been written
Taunting the anvil of gravity~ Ascending till even the stars
Cannot surpass our reaching~ I have become a panoramic
Echo, resonating the unsung songs left throbbing in our
Heads~ Your voice, too, emerges from the throngs
At sea~ A choir within the conch that refuses
No beauty~ Spilled from the muscle
Of its own lips~ A pearl cast
Unto the depths in
Search of its
Own
~

(Meaning)

Iris in the Snow

Leila A. Fortier

Her
Eyes fused to
Yours like soft lightning
And defibrillation...and just as
Spring can come without warning-
She opened to you like an iris in the
Snow...spilling passion in colors of
Purple and gold~ Her lips erased
The lines of time & years that
Stood between you~
Mouthing
Her
Devotion
From the curvatures
Of soul~ Her fingers danced
Upon your skin to the music of a
Forgotten yesterday~ Sensations
Awakened fresh with fragrance~
Blooming life against your
Silver and gray~
Making
Art
Of you
Where you had
Ceased to exist~ Not long
Before you shed your reptilian
Skin leaving scratches upon her
Cream canopy~ Slithering away
In search of burnt offerings~
Leaving so much behind
You had yet to
Taste

Saudade

Leila A. Fortier

Wrapped

In India ink~ She arrived

Like a needle: an instantaneous vice

I imagined her body from every angle~ Black

Swan: open and arching~ Waking rolling hills from

Slumber~ Churning clouds by her violet moods~ She is

A rare mixed breed~ A battered magnolia~ Red ginger

And dragon fruit~ I am splintered by her gaze, sharp

As a raven~ The staggered swell of her breath

Alluding to some inevitable combustion~ I am sweating over cinders

Attempting not to notice the heat~ Yet, I feel she too is collapsing

Toward the center of my gravity in a play of mixed messages

We encode the surface with cleverness~ I send her

Poems in Portuguese~ She tells me the

Word 'saudade' as if in secret~

But there is no need for

Translation

When

I

Bear the invisible

Scar like one

Of her

T

A

T

T

O

O

S

***Saudade is a Portuguese word that has no direct translation in English. It describes a deep emotional state of profound melancholic longing for an absent something or someone. Saudade was once described as "the love that remains" after someone is gone.*

Taste of Precipitation

Leila A. Fortier

I remember when sex was acrobatic~ A Cirque du Soleil of
Sweat and contortion; tightropes & magic hats~ The art
Of exhibitionism~ Incantations of eyes and breath;
Sigils of forthcoming sorcery~ Hands and
Mouths pressed into the sculptures
Of lovemaking~ I know my
Season has passed
Within the
Arms
Of
Seduction
It's okay. I have
Found solace of a
Different kind~ But
Whenever it rains, I
Feel the withering
Grays~ Perhaps
It is the sound
Like fingers
Tapping
Skin
Or
.
.
.
The
Remembered
~Taste of precipitation~

Viper

Leila A. Fortier

—Inspired by Violet Trefusis' letters to Vita Sackville-West

*

Who

Knew the rivers

Of milk that would flow

When the sun and moon

Hang tandem and naked

Like soft pornography

In the sky~ You

Are not

~ ~ ~

~

~ ~

Cooler

In the shade

As they say~ You retain

Your heat~ Swallow me whole

Like melon ball or ice cube~ Your

Viper tongue, a fire blossom, pregnant

With a venom of cruel seduction~ Neath

The arch of your influence, you are both

Bow and blade~ Pressed into flesh and

Pulse~ The artery of my dormant

Desires that had so long

Ago been animal

~ ~ * ~ ~

~ ~ ~

~

*

Fiction

Mid-Day Lunch

By Dani Clark

Josinna draped her jacket across the chair beside her favorite table before standing in line to order. She secured her favorite spot this way everyday, always choosing the table in back, hunched right up against the corner where two walls meet. She never risks getting stuck at one of the free-floating island tables, right in the center of the café. Any person could walk past her at those tables, heading for the garbage can, or when they left through the side door. At the table against the wall she's sheltered on two sides. If anyone walks past she'll see first, since they only come from one direction.

That day there are four other lunch patrons dining in the café: an older gentlewoman reading her newspaper; a glum business lady sucking through a straw; a woman with fire-engine red hair wearing a fake mole on her upper lip, drawn on with eyeliner; and a punky chick half-asleep, spinach turnover clutched in her hand at a table by the counter.

"Glazed donut, Vietnamese sandwich, and a cup for water," Josinna ordered her usual.

"Ah, no Pepsi?" The lady behind the counter looked at Josinna's lean hips when she asked, but Josinna just walked back to her table. The day before she ate lunch in a conference room with her supervisor who looked down at the donut on Josinna's plate and said, "you're so lucky hmong girls have those skinny Asian genes, I'd weigh 200 pounds if I ate a donut every day," phlegmily announcing the silent H in Hmong.

Waiting for her order Josinna turned to the dog-eared page in her book, but found herself staring at something else.

The girl sleep-chewing at the front of the shop wore a studded belt, skull charms and nautilus stars dazzled the waist. An art portfolio peeked from inside a messenger bag on the table in front of her, just beside a glass of neo-green liquid. Josinna used to drink a green power juice just that shade before tennis matches in college. The herbal mix in the glowing drink gave her so much energy she could track the ball as it pinged across the net and back, only moving her eyes. That was before she left school to perform data entry for a firm in the Financial District.

The Punk rocked sideways in her chair, with her eyes closed. Then she tilted forward, slowly at first like a jackhammer held overhead, protracted and lazy just before a heavy drop. Her mouth met the hand holding the turnover, propped by an elbow on the table. When the girl bit into her food a lace of strained spinach slumped onto the ridge of her fingerless glove, sloppy and curling. She swayed back in the chair, face lifted as she methodically chewed, still quasi-asleep.

Lunch break only lasts an hour, so Josinna focused on her book, relieved she wasn't stuck in that working lunch, listening to her supervisor, "You're so lucky to have that gorgeous Asian hair. I bet you couldn't cut it short since it's so thick though. The hair would poof out from the weight. Your head would look like a mushroom!"

Josinna stole coy looks at the sleeping girl when she flipped through the book. On the page Durga battles Sumbha, the warlord who wants her power. She births the mothers: Kali, intense and

unforgiving; Brahmani, delicate but fierce; Kaumari, big and imposing; then Aindri, who sees everyone trying to escape. Together they beat back Sumbha's army. Enraged and vengeful from the loss of his own men, Sumbha claims Durga cannot win a battle without the mothers, then challenges her to a combat between him and herself alone. Durga knows before the battle begins that she can win, because all the mothers were her own manifestations, and she created them from strength within herself. When Sumbha comes, unaided by an army, she defeats him with only one stroke of her spear.

The girl in the café is clean, and doesn't look like a junky. Maybe she'd gone to a show the night before, where crackerbox bands played, guitarists moving their hands across instrument faces so fast the noise couldn't make music. Now she's all puffy eyes and yawns from a night out. Or, Josinna thought, maybe she's just narcoleptic.

The Straw-Sipper and Fire-Engine Red both glanced over at the girl occasionally, like Josinna. Maybe the girl moved that way on purpose, understanding her sluggish movements wrought attention, and only slipped into faux-sleep.

The woman behind the counter didn't furtively watch, but she was the only one, busied in building bread castles, piled high with lettuce turrets and moats of cold cuts for the people in line with orders. "Sandwich, ready!" She looked at Josinna as she shouted and Josinna waited until she finished her page before walking to the counter, then back to her table with the tray.

The girl slumped farther down into her chair, torso curved, chin parallel to chest, and let her wrist collapse onto the table. The turnover toppled, spinach first, innards avalanching from the baked shell. Then she whipped awake and tugged open her portfolio before standing, sudden movements making Josinna and Fire-Engine Red start from their static observation.

She lifted the opened book of sketches toward a man walking in the door and mumbled, like a beggar holding out a cup. The man brushed the collar of his coat and kept walking. At the counter he turned smoothly, without stopping, and came back to the girl's table, yanking a red earbud from his ear.

"Let me ask you something..." Voice unassuming.

The Punk nodded, an appreciatory grin riddling her face.

"You could have shown that to anyone in here, but instead you showed it to me. Why'd you show that, to me?" He put a fist to his chest.

The girl stood still, blinked, artwork still framed in her hand.

The man's voice rose, feverish, fist knocking against chest, "you could have asked any of these women in here to look at your artwork, why'd you have to show it to me?"

"Uh," the attitude in her voice caught up with her facial expression, "Excuse me, I didn't know I wasn't allowed to talk to men."

"I don't want to look . No man would be interested in that. You could've asked anyone else in here!"

Josinna turned back to her book, but the words seemed fuzzy on the page. When she glanced up she looked directly at the wall in front of her, yellowed, trailing ripped wallpaper at the seam. Fire-Engine Red's face tilted sideways, looking out the window.

Voices got louder.

"Say that to me again," the man had an index finger pointed toward the girl's jaw, thumb extended.

"You're a pussy," she almost shouted, backing from her table into Josinna's corner.

"Say it one more time and I'll hit you! I swear I'll hit you!"

The woman behind the counter faced them, chewing her thumbnail.

Josinna had pepper spray in her jacket pocket. She had a siren app on her phone. She had a voice. She pulled her heavy purse into her lap and looked down into it.

With long, heavy hair curled around her finger she looked back down at the book lying flat and open on the table, and pretended to read. Then Durga held out her arms and all the Goddesses returned to her, and she was whole.

The Straw-Sucker looked down and sighed into her half-empty glass. The man looked fierce, his lips braced against teeth. The girl's eyes half-closed. He lowered his arms and turned back toward the door.

As he walked away she shook her head, goose flesh puckered on her arms. "Pussy!" She shouted after him, "You're a pussy!"

He turned around again, rushed at her from across the diner, slapping the glass of green liquid as he passed it. The glass tilted, then rolled, trailing the sloshing drink like paint spatter on the floor. The girl moved farther back, toward the wall where Josinna sat trapped, and threw chairs from empty tables into his path.

The man stopped. Laughed. Rolled his eyes. He turned around and left.

The girl walked back to her table, pulling in the chairs she'd flung out. "Sorry everyone. I guess I don't know how offensive I am," she shrugged and packed her things. The Straw-Sipper stood, stretched arms above her head. Fire-Engine Red left through the side door, passing the gentlewoman who never looked up from her newspaper. The counter-girl turned to build another order.

Josinna tucked the book into her purse and left through the side door too. In the open air she felt damp. Her reflection in the window looked plain; black business slacks, sooty gray button-up, brown belt. When she turned the corner, wind caught her, made her wilt, pushing heavy hair across her face.

Thrift Store

Carl Scharwath

Thrift stores seem to be everywhere, germinating from the shells of abandoned strip-malls and filling the facades of failed businesses with new economic realities.

Today is my turn to visit one. The dawn greets me with a liquid atmosphere releasing droplets of a cheap paperback novel gray, and I, Sofia the actress, begin to fill the scene.

Gary, my husband of thirty years was laid off from his management job, and two years later, has still not found a new career. Our home is in foreclosure and our seventeen-year old daughter wants to enter college.

Today, Gary sleeps late on a weekday, oblivious to our financial fate; my order is to find him a decent used suit for his job interview. The new thrift store, one block from our house might just fill the need. I have always been curious what surprises and treasures might present themselves there.

In the parking lot the cracks are already consumed by nature-- the grass attempts to break free of the confinement and breathe again. The new thrift store contains high end clothing from estate sales, so I am sure to find a nice suit for my husband. The entrance was designated "Door" which seemed odd. The window appeared as a dream. Beautiful dresses cloaked in the reflections of kissing clouds. The prismatic colors beckon me to fly through the molecules of glass and return to my high-school age where my life could start over with a future mine to decide.

My love for Gary ended two years ago; the first time he hit me. His job loss caused a change in him, with the drinking and coming home late from god knows where. He made me believe I was to blame for all of his problems and this culminated in constant physical and emotional abuse. Mom worshiped Gary, making the choice that her daughter would marry him after college graduation. She concluded that he would be successful, and a loving husband. I wonder what she would think of him now. Her own daughter, covering bruises with makeup, her self-esteem a memory, with thoughts about suicide. Lying to her daughter about the child's father and what he does.

Everything was always planned for me, and with my subdued personality; I felt my life was never truly mine. The love once held for my husband has turned to hatred and the suit to be bought today I dream to one day bury him in.

The thrift store is amazing, so many things to discover. The collections of used books hold my attention for more than an hour. I've always reveled in the discovery of a new author or great story. I am an English major who always wanted to be a writer; until household duties, raising a daughter, and pleasing my husband slowly sucked any creative life from me. The suit hangs alone and is the deepest black color I could ever imagine. The way it's silhouetted against the bright yellow wall causes me to imagine an abstract painting of a man's torso attempting to free itself from captivity. The suit, beautiful and hardly worn, is now in my possession. I apprehensively viewed the tag and the size was perfect for my husband. Although my love for Gary is long gone, I still want to do something special for him in his time of need.

Gary would be home and I wanted to surprise him before taking the outfit to the cleaners. While in

the car at a traffic light, I moved the suit higher against the seat and felt something in the top pocket. What great mystery would announce itself in my hands? My heartbeat increased as a familiar face looked back from the graying atmosphere of the picture. It was my high school prom photo, with me wearing a smug Mona-Lisa smile, oblivious to how my future would turn against me. I turned the picture and a creation of words appeared, smudged and faded into oblivion and forever silent.

Shaking, I had to pull over to the side of the road and 'Google' Ames. He was my lover for four years until my mother coerced me to break up with him. His crime was quitting college after the first semester. Mom was happy to remind me that my boyfriend would never amount to anything. I started to cry, the first search result staring at me was an obituary announcing his death at fifty years old. Ames died three weeks ago and I would never have the chance to say goodbye and that I always loved him. Through my tears I continued to read that he did not marry and owned five clothing stores.

I began to drive again. I knew what I had to do— drive to my favorite secluded woods overlooking the town, open the glove box and gently lay the tiny handgun I carried for protection in my lap. My husband, the failure, the wife beater would have his final message from me. A suicide note placed in the top pocket of the suit with the bloodstains of his wife who made a wrong decision long ago and now only wanted to be with Ames and die with his picture at her side.

The gun muzzle sat against my temple, when the horror of my face reflected back in the rear-view mirror. A younger version of me emerged, so young I seemed to transform into my daughter's reflection. How could the past continue to make the choice for my future? My daughter needed her mother's love and Ames would never forgive me. I defiantly placed the gun back to the emptiness of a near mistake. Today would become my second chance and tomorrow would be mine to control. The suicide note would be replaced with a letter proclaiming my future and demanding a divorce.

Spiritual

The Cult Peripheral

Ada Feters

I am not the kind of person who seeks out spiritual enlightenment. As an introverted thinker I would rather contemplate theories and computer programs.

Yet I was in a cult for a brief while. No, I was not roped in through a recruitment program or “love bombing” or other sly but effective tactics that cults employ. A friend of mine, Joel, had been invited to “a new church” but did not want to go alone. Joel was experiencing a spiritual re-awakening at the time and wanted to enlighten others with his rather nice interpretation that the Golden Rule is paramount. “God wants us to be kind to one another.”

I provided a listening ear for my friend's frustration but was non-committal about the disposition of a higher power.

“Agnostic or not,” Joel said, “you have to admit that if everyone would just ‘do unto others’ instead of being selfish, the world would be a better place.”

Joel’s old church was less than enthusiastic about this minimalist doctrine—Cornerstone had seventy-odd years of their own tradition and were not about to revise it now—so he was willing to try this new Wednesday night Bible study group.

The group marketed itself as non-denominational. They didn’t even have a formal name. Joel figured they would be more receptive to his idea about the Golden Rule. However, he did not want to go alone to this new Bible study group and so he talked me, his only friend not already committed to a church, into coming along. However, he was without a familiar face most of the time anyway: as soon as we entered the big old house set back in a stand of huge cedars, we were told that the men and the women studied separately. The men stayed downstairs in the living room, while the women were relegated to the periphery of the spare room upstairs.

I followed them upstairs, feeling like a bottle of absinthe in a bed of tulips: I was in my grunge phase, wearing a man’s plaid shirt too big for me and smudged eyeliner. They held their ankle-length skirts up from underfoot as they climbed the staircase. The ceiling light in the spare bedroom revealed faces innocent of makeup. The walls had been painted so recently that the room still smelled of it, and of the resinous cedar trees outside because the window was open to let out the paint fumes. There were indentations in the carpet where a bed, a rocking chair and a dresser had been, but no furniture had been moved back in after the painting: instead there was a circle of folding chairs.

After the business of selecting chairs, none of the women in the group seemed to know what to do. No one introduced themselves. There was silence, then awkward small talk as each woman glanced at her neighbors to see what they were doing. The problem with relegation to the periphery was that no one wanted to take the position of leadership. A few of them talked about the men in their lives. The pastor’s daughter took this opportunity to inform us that one of the rules of this particular sect was that a woman has to get the approval of nearly all the men in her life (“Your father, brothers and

grandfather, if there is one”) before marriage. She gave us a shiny smile. “So when I get married, I know he’ll be the one.”

A word: when I get bored, I say whatever comes into my head. It is a kind of game. If something interesting happens, I win. As a teenager at the zoo, my younger brother and I were told that there would be a raptor event, in which we’d get to see eagles and falcons. I murmured to my brother, “There is also a rapture event, in which all the animals ascend into heaven.” To me it was an amusing play on words but it struck him as really funny: our parents did not understand why he laughed so hard he snorted cola from his nose, especially since he had no breath to explain. I presented an expression of wide-eyed innocence to our parents.

The conversation had moved on. A few of the other women were talking about fireworks displays they had seen for Fourth of July. One woman said that in her town they’d let the big fireworks off from a hill just above the town. They exploded so low that roofs sometimes caught on fire.

I used my sneakers to push myself perfectly upright in my folding chair. “Back in my day,” I announced from my ancient age of twenty, “We only had black-and-white fireworks.”

Their heads swiveled toward me. Most of them nodded, their faces open, receptive. One woman, dark-haired, said carefully, “But... black fireworks... you couldn’t see them at night.”

“That’s why switched to colored ones,” I answered.

“Ohh. That’s right.”

I was stunned into silence. No, that’s not right, I wanted to say. You’re supposed to tell me I’m being a smartass and a joker. Ada.exe stopped working and had to shut down. There was no clock in the room, so it was difficult to tell how much time had passed until one of the men knocked at the door and told us to come downstairs.

As Joel and I milled around for after-study chit-chat, a male member of the church pulled me aside and informed me sotto voce that I should not say “such things” to the women because if they found that they’d believed a falsehood, that would damage their willingness to believe what was true. “It will damage credibility.”

On our way back to the main street, as we passed beneath the resinous cedars, Joel said that he would not need me to provide support for Bible study next week. He would not be returning.

“Oh?”

To Joel’s disappointment, their convictions were already entrenched. He had been unable to find an audience for the simplicity of Golden Rule, and even if he had, it would be an empty victory: he’d found out that the men’s Bible study was peripheral to the main church. It was only led by the pastor’s son. “...Who, by the way, told me you and I could never come back or speak with its members again,” Joel sighed.

“I wonder why.”

“I must have come close to convincing some of them.”

“Yep.”

Book Reviews

(Written by Carol Smallwood)

Meditation on Woman, Aline Soules, Anaphora Literary Press

2012, \$15, ISBN: 978-1-937536-13-8, 6"X9", 80 pp.

[http://www.amazon.com/Meditation-Woman-Aline-](http://www.amazon.com/Meditation-Woman-Aline-Soules/dp/1937536130/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1332020604&sr=1-1)

[Soules/dp/1937536130/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1332020604&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Meditation-Woman-Aline-Soules/dp/1937536130/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1332020604&sr=1-1)

Meditation on Woman is a collection of fifty-six prose poems to be read slowly, a few at a time, to fully appreciate their impact. Each, simply and economically written, begins with the two words, "A woman." Some of the journals that have published a version a few of these reflective poems by this California State University, East Bay faculty member are the Kenyon Review, The Binnacle, and Poetry Midwest.

A recent Poets & Writers featured six articles in a special section in the magazine from leading writers about inspiration: the importance of slowing down, making room for contemplation, and the possibilities for discovery for the creative writer. Meditation on Woman supplies readers with examples of this in abundance as this poetry collection turns the ordinary upside down, leaving the reader, man or woman, to look at things differently.

In the opening work, "The Third Eye", woman catches the cycles of her garden:

A woman sets up her video camera, focusing it to chronicle the cycles of the garden.

A gardener turns over the winter ground. The loosened clods glisten in the sun, the damp evaporates through the day, and the earth pales to medium brown.

Green shoots push up, jagged leaves unfold, and tight buds emerge. Ants crawl over the green fists and chew their sweetness so that the peony flowers can erupt in white and pink and deeper pink, heads so heavy they drag on the ground.

"Nature" addresses the distance between pristine and artificial nature; and the suburban attitudes in "Weeds" drives a woman into the city.

"Evolution" recalls the magical-realism of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Isabel Allende: the blending of what is real and unreal:

A woman grows a tail. At first, it's just a nub at the end of her spine. Doctors think it's a bone growth, nothing to worry about. They remove it, but it grows back. The more often they remove it, the faster it returns, so she decides to live with it. When it's a foot long, she tucks it between her legs to hide it. When it grows to four feet, she wraps it round her left leg and conceals it in wide-legged pants.

As she gets used to it, she stops hiding it. People whisper and avoid her, but eventually come to accept it. Strangers still stare or whisper, children jeer and point, but she ignores them.

A woman's connection to the world recurs in "Far and Near." One woman "gazes out a plane window at fields quilting the landscape thirty-five thousand feet below," while the other "hikes a woodland trail and stares into the underbrush."

The first sees the world at a distance: "The roads make squares and rectangles around the fields. Lakes are thumbprints pressed into the land. Rivers squiggle and canals angle in thin blue lines. Tree patches are dark and fuzzy. Little towns clump together; house roofs glint in the sun."

The second sees it in close detail. "She picks a Queen Anne's lace to take home. It's umbel is so perfect, the white lace fans out in a curve that fits in her cupped hand, and the tiny black floret draws the gaze of her eye to the center of its lacy snow, like a single jet against a sky full of clouds."

Making one's own world is also reflected in "A Question of Balance" where a woman "owns the river, owns every bird that skims." In the surprising poem about a woman being roasted on a fire: "And as she turns, her eyes shimmer in tune with the heat and see in every direction. The earth, all motion, spins with her and she with it."

Readers can easily relate to: "A woman is good at guilt. Palpable and breathing, it lives in her house. It lies down and sleeps in her spare bed" and understand the mixed feelings the duality in relationships: "The woman looks at her sister. She loves her and hates her as much as ever."

The familiar scene of waiting for an x-ray, the description of hospital gowns, the gowns spilling over in bins, the closed doors marked with signs, makes the 134 words in "Horizon" especially memorable:

A woman sits on a wooden bench, waiting to be called for an x-ray. There is no window, only walls of lockers, changing cubicles, and benches where she can wait.

She hangs her clothes in a locker and puts on a hospital gown. Sprinkled with pale blue cornflowers faded from washing, it is too short and too narrow to cover her naked body. Discarded gowns spill over the top of a bin onto the floor, waiting for someone to take them to the laundry.

The room is warm, like a sauna. Even in her naked state, she grows hotter and hotter. She leans against the wall, her skull hard against wooden slats.

She sees three closed doors, each marked by a sign:

Staff only

Wait until called

Door to the outside world

In each poem the poet is seeing herself and in the process, the universal: an activity so simple and yet complex, full of surprises and reflections of wonder. I'm looking forward to her next collection to savor, open my eyes, enjoy the company of a uniquely gifted poet. She clearly is familiar with Doris Lessing's advice: "Have you found a space, that empty space, which should surround you when you write?" Women will especially relate to this contemplative collection by Aline Soules, but they are so universal that men will appreciate them and be awed as well.

Carol Smallwood co-edited (Molly Peacock, foreword) *Women on Poetry: Tips on Writing, Teaching and Publishing by Successful Women Poets* (McFarland, 2012); *Compartments: Poems on Nature, Femininity and Other Realms* (Anaphora Literary Press, 2011) was nominated for the Pushcart. *Women Writing on*

Family: Tips on Writing, Teaching and Publishing, (Key Publishing House, 2012) is her most recent book. Her sixth book for the American Library Association, Bringing Arts into the Library, is forthcoming. Some magazine credits include: The Writer's Chronicle, English Journal, Michigan Feminist Studies, 13th Moon, Pirene's Fountain.

Queens Never Make Bargains

Red Barn Books of Vermont, 2014

In the author's preface, Nancy Means Wright catches readers interest immediately by relating there's a skeleton in her family closet, and that her grandmother, Jessie Menzies, sailed to New York City in 1912 when she was seventeen to take care of her half-sister's children. The author shares that "I've admittedly woven attributes of certain family members and friends into a collage in the novel, and then added in myself at various ages." (p. viii)

The novel is divided into four parts: 1912-1919; 1924-1931; 1935-1943; August, 1945; each beginning with a quotation from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* or *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*—the novel's title is by the Red Queen.

Jessie's mother is clear to us in the first paragraph of Chapter 1 with "her face pale under the tight braids that looped about her head and stretched the skin so tight I thought it might snap from the pressure." (p. 3) Readers are drawn in with such passages as when Jessie left her home in Scotland to America she "folded myself numbly into my grandmother's flour-and-cinnamon embrace." (p.17)

The novel's clear and easy style is for young adults as well as adults. Scotland is close to the reader as in the beginning of Chapter 1's celebration at the beach on the Firth of Forth that flowed from Leven, Fifeshire, out to the North Sea. Children are called bairns and other Scotch words such as ay for yes. Jessie's classmates are characters that could be at our local school with the same adolescent problems and situations. The scenes at the beach of teenage angst and humor are real. Her arrival in the United States at Ellis Island echoes the experiences of many of our ancestors; the new friends in Vermont are as vibrant and real as our own neighbors.

The importance of nationality such as Polish, Czecks, French, Russian, Italian, Scotch as well as being a certain religion is clearly evident to the characters. Feminism comes through with such character observations as: "Every generation had its wars. History books were organized around them. What if someone were to write a woman's history? I thought. How much would the wars figure in then?" (p.63)

I would have liked a table of contents; a time line with the 1918 flu pandemic, Jean Harlow, Lindberg, Hitler, and several of the other important people/events included that would be helpful. Also a genealogical table showing the four generations. It is a story that is especially appealing for girls and women because of their close association with family and relationships.

It is only a skilled author who can write novels that can be read by youth and adults with equal enjoyment; the author's teaching and acting background has served her well. Her power with words has also made her a popular poet, mystery, and nonfiction writer with many books in print available for the reading public. Another new book by this multi award winning writer is *Acts of Balance* (Finishing Line Press, 2014). Readers of all ages will appreciate that the author's characters are true to human nature and their experiences reflect the first part of the twentieth century in the generational saga.

STRANGE LIFE by Eleanor Lerman

Mayapple Press

362 Chestnut Hill Rd.

Woodstock NY 12498

www.mayapplepress.com

March 2014; 86 pages

ISBN: 978-1-936419-35-7; paperback \$15.95

The collection of 57 free verse poems varying in length is divided into 20 poems in *Metaphysics*, 13 poems in *The Politics of Resistance*, 24 poems in *The Future Looms*. The font is clear, the 3 parts divided by blank pages; the cover of a highway devoid of people or buildings with cloud patterns suits the mood of the poems that do not deal with the usual topics of love and loss but the nature of time.

The first poem sets the tone of the collection with: "Yes, it's a strange life /But wait. It's getting stranger still"

Lerman doesn't use periods but the reader knows a new sentence has begun by the capital letters. Her use of simple words underlies the complexity of her thoughts, subtle mood changes which make her poems a pleasure to read. Her delicate use of color and understatement underscores the illusiveness of human experiences with time.

Brevity is echoed in: "How brief a day: these glowing minutes /braceleting the hours, the hours like/ a skin, a skein, thinning into memory"

The poet's glimpses of a creator include: "God is ...where He is when He wants to be; except when /He is not"; another concept is the deity: "The ancient, double-hearted god, Horus, "holding a grudge"

About humans being at ease when living: "The truth is that we've run out/of all the easy stuff and as a consequence, /your're going to be restless from here on out" And: "Whoever is running this place has a cruel streak"

The poems have a delightful sense of wondering what is real—if our brain is really reliable, and questions the durability of relationships and the parts we are assigned. Her familiarity with constellations is shown by coining the Crab Nebula as "the one with the beady eyes and bad intentions". The classical gods such as Endymion and Horus, seem to be the poet's close acquaintances.

Time is echoed again and again in her work: the brevity of our lives, the mysterious appearances that time marks in our spans, the importance of the sun, moon, dawn and dusk, as rivers run, wheels turn. In the poem, *The Girl of the Lonely Horizons*, the girl: "finds a bureau full of stars /leftovers, probably, that can be /used to fill in empty spaces".

Lerman's search for unity, meaning, becoming, and order is breathtaking in its reaches. We join her in this universal quest and rejoice when there are closures or glimpses of understanding. The poet uses the pronouns you, she, we, and not I; her poems reminds one of the definition of poetry by Octavio Paz: "Poetry is not what words say but what is said between them, that which appears fleetingly in pauses and silences."

The settings have a rural ease with nature, use ordinary and everyday events; explorations often are during the middle of the night such as wondering about an afterlife. It would have been an extra enjoyment to have had some of the poems yearning for answers in such forms as the villanelle, triolet, or the pantoum. Lerman is an important award winning poet who shows us that it is the common place that grants glimpses of the mystery of living— truth that lies just beyond the human vision and brain.

Interviews

(Conducted by Carol Smallwood)

INTERVIEW OF Christine Redman-Waldeyer

Christine Redman-Waldeyer launched Adanna in January of 2011. Adanna, a name of Nigerian origin, pronounced a-DAN-a, is defined as “her father’s daughter.” Christine chose to name this literary journal Adanna because women over the centuries have been defined by men in politics, through marriage, and, most importantly, by the men who fathered them. While the name itself is not burdened with the weight of feminism, Christine felt it spoke to the mission of the journal, which was to bring attention to the fact that women have fought in many cases for equality only to find that equality means the freedom to act like men, not necessarily create a unique and separate outlet for themselves. In college, she was inspired by women such as Anne Hutchinson who had the opportunity to study under her father. Today women are still bound by complex roles in society, often needing to wear more than one hat or sacrifice one role so another may flourish. While the journal is dedicated to women, it is not exclusive, and it welcomes men’s contributions on women’s topics.

Christine Redman-Waldeyer is founder/editor of the women’s journal, Adanna, is an Assistant Professor at Passaic County Community College. Her publications include *Frame by Frame*, *Gravel*, and *Eve Asks* with Muse Pie Press and she’s appeared in *Schuylkill Valley Journal*, *The Texas Review*, *Verse Wisconsin*, among others. She is co-editing, *Writing After Retirement: Tips by Successful Retired Writers*, forthcoming from Scarecrow Press.

1. What inspired you to start a literary journal for women?

After I had my third child in 2008, I found myself cut off from writing groups and retreats which, in many cases, consisted largely of women. In particular, I missed going to a regular weekend getaway founded by the poets Maria Mazziotti Gillan and Laura Boss. Those retreats helped not only my writing life but also help me connect to other women writers as both Maria and Laura encourage poets to revisit the experiences that shaped their lives and dare us to knock the crow off our shoulders that tells us what we should or shouldn’t write. I missed those retreats and other opportunities to workshop with writers, and I wanted to find a way to reconnect but from home. I explored the idea of beginning a print journal and reached out to Diane Lockwood, a New Jersey poet who founded an annual reading for women. About this time I had also read something on the victimization of Congo women. It’s something that was in the back of my mind when I began the process. That is how I stumbled upon the name when doing research for naming the journal. Since our first edition in 2011 Adanna has printed four editions and also features poets quarterly online. Even with my youngest child now four and a little less dependent on me, I am happy to continue Adanna and have met writers and editors from across the nation and even across the world.

2. What was your vision for the journal? What gap in the journal “market” did you aim to fill?

Initially I had been asked on a number of occasions to get involved with online journals. I had my heart set on going to print. And while I do a featured poets page quarterly, I felt it was important to continue making the investment in writers. It is a statement that says, your work means something. It might be an outdated thought and maybe old habits die hard but it was important for me to have something contributors could read from. When writers get together to read their work, I am thrilled to be able to hand them a book in which they can read their work from. It is a celebration. There are a number of women journals out there but few, if any that included men. I was reminded of dinner parties where the wives collect in one room and the husbands in the other. I wanted to find a space where women could share that space that was important to them.

3. What difficulties did you face getting the journal started?

I think I was lucky that I did not face any real difficulties. As a college professor I had advised over journals in the past and knew what logistics were necessary to get it started. It was just a matter of doing it. Once I made it public, it was a commitment. Once I asked Diane Lockward to be Adanna's first guest editor and she said yes I knew there was no turning back. She was very supportive. Unfortunately, I have come across poets that become competitive with each other. She is not one of them. She is a great supporter of the arts and holds regular readings for those who want to get their work out there. Her efforts to help launch the journal were important in its start.

4. How much time does it take to edit the journal and how do you balance that with motherhood?

I balance a lot with motherhood. It has always been that way so it has become a natural part of our lives. When my first two children were born I was working through graduate school while teaching part-time. Now I teach full-time and have decided to do a second doctorate in Educational Leadership. I push myself but I also have had a very supportive family. I make time to do the journal. It is manageable when you have help. Nearly every issue, I have had assistance. Diane Lockward was Adanna's first guest editor, David Crews assisted with our special edition on love poetry, Lynne McEniry with our "Women on Grief" issue, Rae Gourand on our "Women and War" issue and Michelle Ovalle with our next annual print edition. I also look forward to working with others. It is a great way for others to get involved without having to make a long term commitment and I also have the opportunity to learn from them. Each journal normally takes about two months after the submission period closes to go to layout and then print.

5. What do you look for in submissions?"

Because this journal solicits work from both men and women, I want the focus to be on topics that challenge the reader to better understand women's experience. If the topic is engaging, authoritative, and informative I am often willing to work the author if editing is necessary. Topics on the everyday experience are just as important as more dramatic ones. I want to hear about the daily lives of women, how they enjoy or are challenged by their roles. Topics on motherhood and marriage are on my radar because it's my here and now but I also want to hear from women on their feelings about their growth into their femininity—considering their childhood and reflecting on their identity as a girl— earliest memories of recognition in that role.

6. What are you writing and editing now besides Adanna?

I am co-writing a book for Arcadia publishing with, Matt Hiznay, a friend and relative who has had the same long time passion for uncovering the history to the riots that occurred in Asbury Park, New Jersey during 1970. My grandmother worked as a receptionist at the Berkeley Hotel and his grandfather was an elementary school principal during that time. We had both grown up listening to stories. A number of years ago, I wrote Arcadia with a proposal and they recently contacted me. The timing was right because Matt had just got involved as a member of the Historical Society in Asbury Park. I have always been a history buff and being able to contribute to what I consider a pictorial narrative from an important time period in Monmouth County, New Jersey is exciting. This is where most of my family was born and raised. I am also co-editing "Writing After Retirement: Tips by Successful Retired Writers" with Carol Smallwood, (Scarecrow Press). Through Adanna, I have met many writers who either began their

writing careers after retirement or refined their focus after retirement. I really look forward to reading the work of many writers who have successfully taken that plunge.

7. What writers have influenced you the most?

I always felt my poetry most closely resembled Linda Pastan's or at least it was work that I felt closely connected to me. She visits themes such as motherhood that are real and understandable. I was excited to meet and hear her read at the Poetry Center in Paterson, New Jersey that is connected to the college where I teach. As a child I was caught up with the Nancy Drew series which I think helped create an outlet for adventure. Girls could do what the boys could do in those books; they were sleuths. In college, the metaphysical poets baffled me the most but I found myself connecting to Shakespeare's comedies. I like finding meaning in the everyday events of our lives even if it is in an episode of Seinfeld.

8. What classes have you taken that have helped you the most?

My publisher R.G. Rader, founder of Muse-Pie Press has helped me the most with editing my work. He has the ability to help me keep my voice while revising work. In a sense I feel like I have been in class with him over the last five or six years. I send him my work constantly and he probably knows my work best. Dr. Laura Winters who oversaw my creative dissertation at Drew University always asked in class, what is the author demanding from the reader. She made me realize that spending time with literature was important. The more you revisit, the more you are enlightened.

9. What advice would you give other writers?

Write because you love it, not because you are being led by your ego. It is hard to get started once you make the decision to go public with your writing. Rejection letters are more common than acceptance letters in the beginning. Go to readings and workshops. Even if you are published, you can always learn new techniques or approaches to writing from other writers.

A CONVERSATION WITH SARAH GILBERT

Part of Literary Mama's series of interviews with editors and publishers of women-focused journals and books.

Sarah Gilbert is editor-in-chief of *Stealing Time*, a new literary magazine for parents. Gilbert holds an MBA as well as undergraduate degrees in late British literature and journalism. In 2004, she cofounded urbanMamas in Portland, Oregon. Gilbert is mother to three boys, a writer, a photographer, and a military wife, and is passionate about sustainable living.

Carol Smallwood: Please tell us about *Stealing Time*.

Sarah Gilbert: *Stealing Time* is a literary magazine that tells real stories of parenting. We wanted to take situations that mainstream parenting magazines might write about — sleep, life with a new baby, childbirth classes, pets, birthday parties, sending kids to college — but instead of telling our readers what to do, we tell them a story. *Stealing Time* is devoid of product recommendations and lists. It is devoted to showing the parenting journey through someone else's eyes and experience.

Practically, *Stealing Time* is a quarterly print magazine in black-and-white, with fiction, memoir, essays, poems, and photographs. We also have an annual pregnancy/childbirth issue. We have been compared to *The Sun* literary magazine, which makes us happy.

CS: What inspired you to start a new parenting magazine?

SG: I'd had success publishing essays that did not deal integrally with parenting, but my essays with parenting at the forefront — the ones I considered my best work — were receiving little attention. Over dinner with one of my college friends and her MFA students, I had an epiphany: The first readers/editors for most literary journals are in their young 20s and unlikely to connect with a parenting theme.

While I was contemplating this, I had an annual exam. I looked at my OB's beautiful office, every surface covered with peppy advice and product recommendations, covers of magazines featuring gorgeous pregnant celebrities and photo shoots with children whose outfits cost more than my bike (and my bike is my car). I said to my OB, "I should start a literary journal for pregnancy and childbirth!"

"You should!" she said. A week later *Brain, Child* announced it was closing (the magazine was later purchased by Marcelle Soviero), and those were enough messages from the universe for me. I launched the *Stealing Time* website a week later.

CS: How is *Stealing Time* similar to, or different from, other literary magazines for parents?

SG: *Stealing Time* carries on the tradition of *Literary Mama*, *Brain, Child*, and so many amazing blogs and online journals, a tradition of telling stories of motherhood in a non-commercial context without judgment, advice, or product recommendations. Our magazine offers the perspective of mothers, fathers, stepparents, grandparents, and those who parent in completely unconventional ways. We also believe that print still has a place in today's world. Our editors hold a visceral belief in the analog, in a magazine that can be tucked in laptop bags or jogging strollers, read while the airplane is taking off, hidden under pillows.

CS: How did you fund *Stealing Time*?

SG: I have no money! I've stayed home with my boys and freelanced for the past few years while my husband, an Army reservist, has been in Kuwait. I wanted to maintain artistic control over the magazine and didn't want to pitch to investors or big advertisers. I believed that there was enough need for this magazine to fund it through the crowd. So I launched a Kickstarter campaign to make enough money to pay for the first printing, for postage, and for writers and artists. I had this lofty goal: to bring the magazine to Blogher, which was seven weeks away when I launched the website.

As it turned out, my timeline was a little too quick; we were able to bring a half-sized issue to Blogher, and then launch our full issue in September 2012. Financing has been slower than I'd like, but I'm terribly optimistic. We're now publishing our magazine 90 percent through subscriptions and about 10 percent through ads. We're applying for non-profit status and hope to follow the lead of *Bitch* magazine and use a mix of reader support, subscriptions, and ads.

We are so lucky to have the amazing talents of a number of brilliant editors and designers who are volunteering, or working for pennies, in our startup phase. We can't wait to pay them. We're close!

CS: Please tell us about your personal writing.

SG: I think of myself as a memoirist, but I write in several genres. For years, I have made my living writing about personal finance, but I feel most natural writing essays. Many of my essays have started as posts on my personal blog and I incorporate pieces of my blog posts into my book-length projects, as well.

I am working on two book-length projects right now. *Penelope and Other Heroes: Retelling the Myth of the Waiting Wife* expands on my essay "Veteran's Day," which was recognized as "Notable" in Best American Essays 2012. Another project is about raising children with emotional, behavioral, and pervasive development disorders.

CS: What writers have influenced you the most?

SG: Virginia Woolf, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Ford Madox Ford, Yeats, Keats, Blake, Ovid, Byron, Tennyson ... nearly everyone I've read and whoever I am reading at the moment. I've had the pleasure of meeting and even befriending some modern greats like Anne Enright, Cheryl Strayed, and Anakana Schofield and they have also influenced me.

CS: What writing classes have helped you the most?

SG: My friend Mara Collins and I started what we called the "Kitchen Table MFA" three years ago. We developed our own syllabus with books, essays, and exercises from John Gardner's and Ursula LeGuin's books on craft. That "MFA" and two-plus years of a weekly writer's critique group have taken me from a person who could write good sentences to a person who could conceivably write a novel.

I do take every chance to learn from contemporary writers. I was lucky to take a class from Cheryl Strayed on memoir writing about a year before Oprah discovered her, and that was amazing. I go to readings and to the local Wordstock festival, and last year was enthralled by the AWP conference, an event chock-full of brilliant writers, editors, professors, and MFA students.

CS: What advice can you offer writers, both in general and when submitting to Stealing Time?

SG: You should always read your work out loud! I tend to reject clunky writing with word-sounds repeated accidentally (“said Sirius seriously” is my favorite example). A not-quite-right word can make a big difference. As for content and structure, we decide against submissions that fail to reveal a universal truth. The best pieces relate to everyone because they illuminate a universality.

In general, I think writers need to read and write. That sounds very basic but every writer gives essentially this advice. Read as much as you can, and read works that challenge and push you. Write all the time, write until you cry and sweat and feel nauseous, and if you are not writing, be right there in your own life. When I run or walk to school or ride my bike, I try to see things, and I describe them to myself, telling myself the story of the world again and again.

Earlier parts of this series include interviews with Brooke Warner and Christine Redman-Waldeyer.

Smallwood INTERVIEWS B. Lynn Goodwin

Smallwood: Please describe your website and your duties as editor/writer.

Goodwin: Writer Advice has grown from an e-mailed research newsletter for writers into an e-zine that invites reader participation. We'll celebrate our seventeenth year in October 2014. Our quality interviews, reviews, articles as well as our contest winner's pieces reach readers around the globe.

The primary focus has always been author interviews, and I have had the privilege of corresponding with over 100 well known and debut authors who have shared their experiences, insights, and inspiration with readers. Recent interviews are archived.

Today WriterAdvice, www.writeradvice.com, not only promotes authors through its interviews but also publishes the reviews of both experienced and emerging writers, and the winners of our Flash Fiction and Scintillating Starts Contests. My duties are to solicit articles, write articles, gather illustrations, prep the content for the webmaster, make sure that new issues come out quarterly, and let the world know when they do.

Check us out at www.writeradvice.com. Consider sharing your work in one of our contests.

Smallwood: Tell us about your career.

Goodwin: I started my career as a high school drama teacher. I learned about action, reaction, and especially motivation while helping my actors develop three-dimensional characters. I also learned to ask questions and let the characters (not the actors) answer. I reviewed plot, structure, theme, character arcs, and grammar teaching 9th and 10th grade English. I also learned how to complete projects rather than throwing up my hands in despair.

In English teacher workshops, we tried new techniques, and I loved the positive feedback that my fellow teachers gave me on my writing. During a leave, I wrote a series of 10 articles that were accepted at the only place I submitted them, Dramatics Magazine.

In 1997 I co-edited a research newsletter called Haven's List, run by a website called Blue Shingles. The website did not survive, but I was allowed to keep the 35-person mailing list. The mailing list grew and so did the e-zine, which now includes an author interview, book reviews, a website review, a markets and contests page, the results of our own contests on the flash page, announcements of reader achievements, a Journaling for Caregivers page and a Manuscript Consultation service.

During the nineties, I also wrote articles for EWGPresents and did weekly author interviews, arranged by the site's founder, on The Other Side of Creativity. I also published two small books with them, From an Author's POV: Tips on Writing, and From an Author's POV: Tips on Editing. Those books came out shortly before my mother died in 2001.

After my mother passed away, I found time to take some writing classes, joined an exceptional free writing group, and wrote a book called You Want Me to Do WHAT? Journaling for Caregivers. I wrote a column about journaling for Caregiver Village, was a Luminary and blogger for InspireMeToday and am

both a reviewer and teacher at Story Circle Network. I also do manuscript consultations through Writer Advice, <http://www.writeradvice.com/manuscriptconsultation.html>.

I recently signed a contract for my YA, *Talent*, in which 15½-year-old Sandee Mason wants to find her talent, get her driver's license, and stop living in the shadow of her big brother, Bri, who disappeared in Afghanistan. It will be out sometime in 2015. I'm currently working on a memoir about getting married for the first time at age 62.

Smallwood: Which recognitions/achievements have encouraged you the most?

Goodwin: I love the responses I get from the writers I work with, whether I'm teaching a journaling workshop or doing a manuscript evaluation. Their discoveries and appreciation validate me as both a writer and a teacher. Several reviews for *You Want Me to Do WHAT? Journaling for Caregivers* showed me that people understood. Read them on Amazon, if you want to. I've received some honorable mentions, which are nice, and of course my latest contract was a huge validation, but so is the praise of those I work directly with. We become partners in the process of telling their story.

Smallwood: What writers have influenced you the most?

Goodwin: I love Jodi Picoult's subject matter and the depth with which she explores the tangles of human life. I love others writers who follow her probing look at multiple motivations. But I like so many authors that it's hard to single them out. I often fall in love with the ideas or pacing or language or plot twists or some other part of each author's work. When I listen to books while driving I get a good feel for building suspense and keeping the writing tight.

Smallwood: How has the Internet benefited you?

Goodwin: It gave me a chance to create a website that would benefit authors, to share my work much more expansively than I could have otherwise, to connect with people through contests and other means, and to be a viable presence in the writing world.

Writer Advice serves authors and gives me a chance to hone my non-fiction writing and my evaluation of other writers. Other sites give me a place to get published. The Internet has allowed me to carve my own, unique path.

Smallwood: What classes have helped you the most?

Goodwin: Any class where I can expand my skills and gain new insights helps me. I particularly recommend the online classes offered through Stanford's Continuing Studies Online Courses and Media Bistro as well as those offered through Story Circle Network. I also recommend any class offered by someone experienced in the Amherst Writers methods.

Smallwood: What advice would you give others?

Goodwin:

No one can tell your story as well as you, so keep writing.

Ask yourself, "What do I really mean to say?"

Ask yourself how each scene contributes to the outcome of the story.

Ask yourself what can be tightened.

Ask yourself what makes this story unique and what makes it universal.

Trust the process. Writing is a gift we give ourselves and share with others.

Smallwood: What is your favorite quotation?

Goodwin: "Life is what happens while you're busy making other plans," is tied for a favorite quotation with "You don't lose until you quit trying." The first is attributed to John Lennon, and the second is attributed to many veterans according to the Internet. I heard it from my husband, Richard T. Brown, Jr.

Interview of Christine Swanberg

Smallwood: You've had over 400 poems published in journals such as English Journal, Beloit Poetry Journal, Rhino and have been interviewed in The Poet's Market. Tell us about some recent awards:

Swanberg: The Woman Spirit award is granted annually to a woman who embodies the values of Womanspace, a center for the development of women. It includes commitment to the community, artistic and spiritual development, and empowerment. The YWCA awards are given each year at the gala YWCA Leader Luncheon. There have been many categories, which have changed over the years. The award which I received is the Blanche Ellis Starr Award for the Arts given to a community artist and arts activist for achievement. Recently, I also received the Mayor's Art Award, under the category of Lawrence Gloyd award for Community Impact, as an educator and artist. The award is co-sponsored by the Rockford Arts Council and is given yearly at the State of the Arts Luncheon.

Smallwood: You have appeared in many anthologies including several editions of the Meridian Anthology of Contemporary Poetry. What is one of your poetry collections?

Swanberg: The Alleluia Tree was published by David Gecic, Puddin'head Press, that has been around the Chicago area for nearly three decades. David had a somewhat different vision of the book than I did. To my surprise he had known my very early work and had a couple of my books from the early 1980's. He suggested reprinting some of them in juxtaposition with the newer work. So this collection is quirky in that it has the musings of a 30-year old along with the musings of a 60-year-old, and nothing in between. The title changed many times, but David was taken with one of the new poems, "The Alleluia Tree," which is about the "resurrection" of winter birds that I thought had perished. He thought it was a catchy title, in that the word "alleluia" is not being used in a fundamentalist way.

Smallwood: What about your book for Plainview Press?

Swanberg: The Tenderness of Memory, from Plainview Press in Austin, TX, actually isn't my first book. It was published in 1995. I had several books published before that. The late Susan and John Bright are the publishers and claim to be "the oldest feminist press in the Southwest." We worked collaboratively. Susan and John visited and were taken with my husband's photography and asked if they could choose several to include in the book. So that project morphed creatively into something more. I'm sad to say they are no longer with us, but if you google Plainview Press, you will see many beautiful books that they have brought into the world. The title was a "found poem," in that I heard a rabbi say that phrase at a funeral. It was an "aha" moment for me because it pulled together the collection.

Smallwood: I see you have served as judge, on panels, workshops and have been a columnist and speaker on very many occasions across the United States. Did you write when you were a teacher?

Swanberg: My writing and teaching have been in tandem for most of my career. When I first started to take my writing seriously, I got up in the wee hours to write before teaching. Eventually I couldn't maintain that pace, and left full time public teaching to college teaching, which in terms of time and stress, was easier to handle. I still write and teach in tandem, though the teaching is an in house salon and workshops at retreat and community centers.

Smallwood: What is one of your recent anthologies?

Swanberg: *Writing After Retirement* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2014) is a collection of 27 chapters for those wishing to begin writing after they have retired—whether poetry, fiction, or nonfiction. My contribution is, “In Pursuit of Simultaneous Passions: Writing and Volunteering.”

Smallwood: You have several publishing credits, readings, interviews for 2014 and more forthcoming for 2015. Has retirement changed your writing in any way?

Swanberg: The best thing about writing in retirement is the freedom to pursue certain opportunities that would be difficult when in the work place. For example, I am going to the Illinois Librarians Conference for two days in Springfield, as part of 32 writers chosen to showcase their work. In the past, I would have to have gotten a substitute or taken a vacation day—not always a given. Or if an opportunity for collaboration comes up, there’s just more open space to pursue it without having to squeeze everything in “after hours.” A few years ago I was invited to be poet in residence at a college. Since it wasn’t local, had I still been working, I couldn’t have done it. Another example is that for a several years I was a week-long workshop leader at the Clearing in Door County, WI, which I couldn’t have done while working elsewhere. As for the process itself, I find that I am more discerning in retirement. I don’t feel the need to keep proving myself, so the projects I take on have more to do with personal fulfillment and alignment with values.

Contributors

Annalie Buscarino. I am a 16 year old girl from Long Island, New York. Hobbies include playing soccer, reading, and writing. I find myself to be determined and open to new adventures and experiences. My favorite books include the Harry Potter and Infernal Devices series. I'm passionate about women's and animal rights. Words are my favorite form of art.

Dani Clark lives in Oakland, California. She has an M.F.A. in Creative Writing. Publications include Crack the Spine literary journal, Pure Coincidence Magazine, The Western Edition, and Misplaced Book. You can find her online, pretty much nowhere because social media drools. Her influences include Margaret Atwood, Junot Diaz, Sarah Waters, Serj Tankian, T.C. Boyle, Gertrude Stein and Burning Man, among others.

Audrey El-Osta is a Melbourne based writer, studying Linguistics and Psychology at Monash University. A collector of cookbooks, listener of audiobooks and reader of poetry, she lives with four cats and three humans that don't quite measure up. Her work explores themes of femininity, sexuality and womanhood, mental illness, comedy and linguistic identity.

When Ada Fetters is not editing the Commonline Journal, she divides her time between teaching Psychology to college students and writing. She has been published in The Journal of Humanistic Psychology, Copperwood Review, Humanist Magazine, Niche, Tertulia, Debris, and most recently in Poetry Pacific Magazine.

Leila A. Fortier is a poet, artist, and photographer currently residing in Okinawa, Japan. She is a member of the Alpha Sigma Lambda National Honor Society; pursuing her BFA in creative writing through Southern New Hampshire University. Her sculpted poetry is often accompanied by her own multi-medium forms of art, photography, and spoken performance. The symbolic representation of inner dialog and fluid continuum of her thought processes is demonstrated by her signature use of italics and the tilde. Selections of her work have been translated into French, Italian, Spanish, Arabic, and German in a growing effort to foster cultural diversity and understanding through the voice of poetry. With over one hundred publishing credits, her work in all its mediums has been featured in a vast array of publications both in print and online. Her forthcoming second book of poetry, Numinous is scheduled to be published by Saint Julian Press in November of 2014. A complete listing of her published works can be found at: www.leilafortier.com

Nadia Gerassimenko has been writing poems ever since she turned 14 in 2004 when suddenly and pleasantly a writing muse became a friend of hers, inspiring her to write about love, hope, wonderment,

passion in either naively optimistic or melancholy tones. In 2015, she took a leap of faith by self-publishing her very first poetry book entitled Moonchild Dreams, which can be purchased on Createspace, Amazon, and Barnes and Noble sites. With it she hopes to touch the readers and maybe even inspire them to also take a leap of faith. At the moment, she still keeps writing poems, but about more serious and relatable matters. However, she is still a child at heart wearing dreamy shades of pink. Her other passions include photography, literature, healthy eating, new wave music, video games, and most importantly, her family. If you would like to get in touch with Nadia, come visit her personal website at <http://tepidautumn.com>.

Allison Grayhurst is a full member of the League of Canadian Poets. She has over 450 poems published in more than 225 international journals and anthologies. Her book Somewhere Falling was published by Beach Holme Publishers in 1995. Since then she has published eleven other books of poetry and six collections with Edge Unlimited Publishing. Prior to the publication of Somewhere Falling she had a poetry book published, Common Dream, and four chapbooks published by The Plowman. Her poetry chapbook The River is Blind was published by Ottawa publisher above/ground press in December 2012. More recently, her e-chapbook Surrogate Dharma was published by Kind of a Hurricane Press, Barometric Pressures Author Series in October 2014. She lives in Toronto with her family. She also sculpts, working with clay; www.allisongrayhurst.com

Nikki Harlin is an MFA student at Cal State San Bernardino, where she writes poetry and is a staff editor for Ghost Town Literary Magazine.

Talisha Harrison who also goes by Tali Adina is a writer from Longwood, Florida. She has written over 500 hundred poems to date and has self-published five books and continues to write poems and stories that she hopes to publish in the future. Currently she is a news writer and creator of the column "Musings of a Blerd" on GonnaGeek.com, writes occasionally for Moviepilot.com, and is one of the creators and editors of the new pop culture blog Uncanny Pop.

Pamela Herron is a poet who hails from El Paso, Texas. You can read more about her work and her writing at the following:

En l'air: A collection of poetry created in the air - Nov 11, 2013 <http://www.unsolicitedpress.com/>

Dog Days: A Celebration of Dogs (poem included "Is Today a Good Day to Die?")

<http://losttowerpublications.jigsy.com/> <http://www.amazon.com/Dog-Days-A-Celebration-Dogs/dp/0957071132>

A.J. Huffman has published eleven solo chapbooks and one joint chapbook through various small presses. Her new poetry collection, *Another Blood Jet*, is now available from Eldritch Press. She has two more poetry collections forthcoming: *A Few Bullets Short of Home*, from mgv2>publishing and *Degeneration*, from Pink Girl Ink. She is a Multiple Pushcart Prize nominee, and has published over 2100 poems in various national and international journals, including *Labletter*, *The James Dickey Review*, *Bone Orchard*, *EgoPHobia*, and *Kritya*. She is also the founding editor of Kind of a Hurricane Press. www.kindofahurricanepress.com

Harika Kottakota is a high school junior in southern California who loves to explore the abstract and metaphysical in her poetry. Harika has been a finalist in the JUST Poetry National Contest and has been published or forthcoming in *Canvas Literary Journal*, *Whirlwind Magazine*, and the *Anthology of Poetry by Young Americans*. She hopes to continue her poetic odyssey for a lifetime.

Carol Smallwood co-edited *Women on Poetry: Writing, Revising, Publishing and Teaching* (McFarland, 2012) which is listed as "Best Books for Writers" by *Poets & Writers Magazine*; *Women Writing on Family: Tips on Writing, Teaching and Publishing* (Key Publishing House, 2012); *Compartments: Poems on Nature, Femininity, and Other Realms*, which received a Pushcart nomination. *Women, Work, and the Web: How the Web Creates Entrepreneurial Opportunities and Encourages Women's Studies* is forthcoming from Scarecrow Press.

Marina Sofia is a global nomad, blogger and writer, currently living near Geneva, Switzerland. She has been published in online and print journals, as well as a couple of poetry anthologies, and is currently working on a crime novel. She reviews regularly for *Crime Fiction Lover* and is part of the editorial team for online *dVerse Poets Pub*.

Marty Weil lives in Asheville, NC. His poetry is rooted in historical realities. Weil's writing is best described as ekphrastic. However, more than simple homage to art, his poems reflect the ancient meaning of ekphrasis to include the analysis of any person, thing, or experience.

Julie Anne Wells, free woman and native West Virginian, holds a BA in English from Alice Lloyd College in Hindman, Kentucky. A freelance writer by trade, Julie Anne is a mother, sister, daughter, friend, lover and poet. Her favorite things include independent and low-budget films, Greek tragedies, Appalachian summers, hot baths, Joyce Carol Oats novels, four-legged creatures, strangers on trains, big cities, black

coffee, red wine, punk rock and quiet mornings. When it comes to her poetry, she loves to explore the subjects of loss, loneliness, guilt, jealousy, anger, sex, and all things female..