



Issue #15 July 2009

It's hot, sunny, the flowers beyond the study window look as hot as sentries guarding Buckingham Palace, a tennis match is being played at Wimbledon as I write and like the tennis balls I am looking a little fluffy round the edges. I am not complaining. This is my favourite season for everything, especially writing poetry. The photograph accompanying this issue is a moth that thinks it's a hummingbird. There were lots of them sucking the life out of the buddleia bush at the back of my niece's house in Salvagnac, France.

Thirteen fine poets find their work on the virtual pages of this summer issue. It's a lucky number for a change - a truly varied gathering of poems from several corners of the globe.

Graham

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Simon Williams (featured poet for issue 15)

BECOMING KRYTEN

At the end of many good days
when the maroon sounds and the frigate
sails over the horizon, he feels
the sound like shrapnel
skirting his whizzing head.

He takes off his frayed trousers,
which give him ease of movement
when he jumps from rock to rock,
collecting crabs and trails of seaweed
he knows are edible,

takes off his jaunty shirt,
a scare when rolling gannets' eggs
out of their shallow nests,
a signal when writing in his diary
of words that have come that day.

He folds, instead, a Duralumin body
around his inner workings
- stiff, but eminently practical -
does the final rivets up, checks his tie,
is back in service.

But at his screen,
between paragraphs on peripherals,
variegated words slip out like urchins.
Some people call them pests;
He tries to ignore their constant waving.

The Admirable Crichton, a play by JM Barrie, tells of a wealthy family marooned on a desert island and of Crichton their butler who, through his practical skills, becomes the group's leader. He's about to marry the family's daughter when a ship rescues the group and Crichton reverts to his former role. The mechanoid character Kryten in Red Dwarf is named in homage to the play.

Simon Williams (featured poet for issue 15)

AVOCET STATUE

Chisel beak, the slightest tool,
works the proto-stone, laid down
too recently to take impression.

The bird can feel the sandworm in the mud bed,
knows how to free it from geology,
knows where to make the next incision.

It works long hours with all its artisans,
while all the time, in black and white,
it's icon, it's public artefact.

BY EXTENSION

If Big Bang is Moment of Conception
and cells are galaxies
divided by two, four, eight
in the first three femtoseconds of existence,
if Cassiopeia is a small of the back,
the Horse Nebula a brain
the Milky Way a freckled shoulder,
the spiral arm a Karu-spiral tattooed arm,

then somewhere in a lactocyte,
on the left nipple of the Great She Universe,
on an electron among quadrillions,
(never quite certain where they are)
are two guillemots,
a rugby scrum from Swanage,
a small green frog with distracting red eyes
and all the poets who have used the word
'myriad'.

Mark Bonica

CHICKENS AT THE BRONX ZOO

You might think
just because a kid grows up
in public housing
that he never saw a chicken.

But he heard the rooster
crow at dawn
in the next apartment
where Mr. Perez
had ripped out the cabinet doors
and replaced them with wire
and the family kept chickens
in the kitchen where other families
kept their plates
and cereal boxes.

Sometimes he would hear crowing at midnight
through the plaster walls
when Mr. Perez and his brothers
would stumble in and flip on the lights,
all the while
singing songs in Spanish
about Puerto Rican independence
and women sweet like cane.

It wasn't until they filled
the porcelain tub with coals
and were slow smoking
a pig in the bathroom
that the chickens and
the salsa music
finally disappeared
into the glare
of blue lights and sirens.

The tiger is in a shoebox jungle.
The monkeys climb in a forest
of three trees.
But there is no salsa music
at the Bronx Zoo.
No sweet smell of plantains
frying in the evening
floating up from the cages,
no colorful flags
waving from golf carts
that scurry between exhibits.
How is one understand chickens
when they are so far removed
from their natural element?

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Holly Day

TUESDAY

Once upon a time I never woke up

Covered in blood, hands

Bent into hooks, skin under my nails. Once upon a time

I never had a dead body in my bed, I never knew a dead person before

I never saw eyes frozen open, straight into me. This is the story about

How I woke up this morning and found out

I was a killer, and that there really is nothing

I wouldn't do for love.

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John Elder

- BOOM! -

I nearly took your hand the other night
My eye on the road, quiet driving you down
To the bridge on the riverlet brown, my clown
Voice gentled in your (don't call it) paler light
We were constellating cool and clean, right
Above the water when I half turned around.
Well you know how it is friend: running aground
The jolt to the head that makes everything bright.

I once when young fell down a flight of stairs
My head hit first and then I raised an arm
It broke as well, it snapped across the wrist
I was carried out and lain across some chairs
All sorts of someones said *just keep him calm*
But I was mid-flight: waiting to be kissed.

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John Grochalski

ELEGY FOR MJ

tearstained night
and for once i don't know
what to say
los angeles is head hung
and they are singing
pretty young thing at the apollo
in new york
the television is a comedy
of elegies
the same people that helped
put the pills in your hand
that sent you to saudi arabia
that pushed you toward vegas
that made you close the gates
on fantasy
and that gold plated home
the ones that hounded you
until you were broke
and turned your skin to paper
and your heart to dust
are sitting there giving us
the timeline of your life
as if we didn't know
as if we don't remember
tear stained night
and tomorrow we face the world
without you again
in los angeles
in new york
in vegas and saudi arabia
and everywhere
so here's another elegy
right here in this bedroom
where i am suddently nine-years-old
holding that gatefold album
as the record player spins
the magic
over and over and over again.

Jeff Klooger

ECLIPSE

Returning home oblivious to the evening sky
I am greeted by a gathering of neighbours
I have never met, sipping wine and clucking
over the orange moon.

“What makes it so?” they ask, and I explain
how light bends in the lens of the sky,
the passage staining sunlight’s whiteness
to ruddy amber.

They shake their heads, not quite believing,
and offer me a drink. I decline.
Some force greater than gravity
draws me back to my own private space
where questions and answers chase each other
like cats and dogs.

Too soon
my new-found neighbours vanish
like the aberrant moon, and I am left
to strangers and the starless night.

PRIVATIO

After the nursery rhymes, tales
of my grandfather’s youth, old photographs
in dignified grey, scraps of memory
stretching back to nameless ancestors, history
books

turgid with dates and diagrams, museums
lined with antiquities, relics
that formed us before we knew what it was
to be formed.

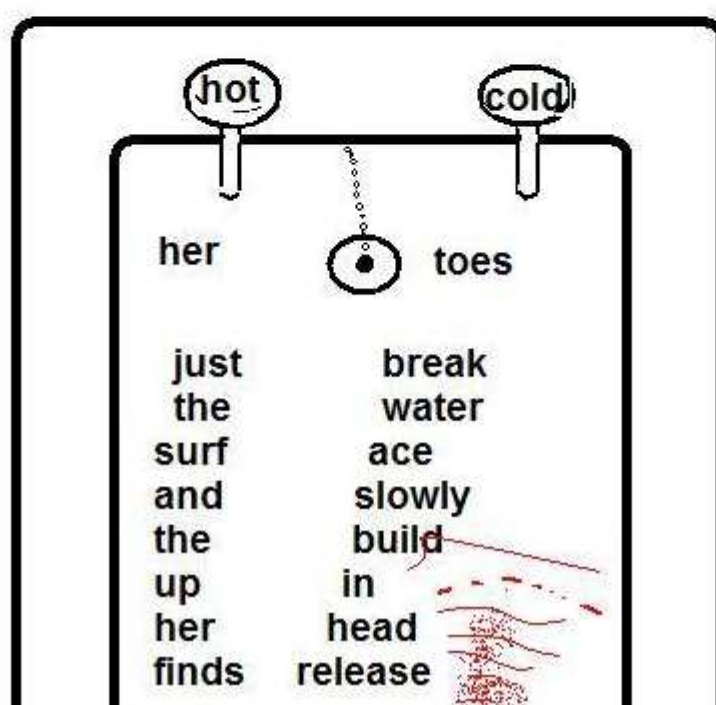
But before the nursery rhymes: what?
And where? Only forgetfulness
glossed by the legend of the womb,
a suspicion of things unseen,
like ghosts that visit us in dreams.
However deep we dig, all we find
are bones and fossils awaiting rescue
in decaying earth, familiar traces
of the life we already know.

Our silly heads
burst with useless knowledge,
but we know nothing of before or after,
twin mysteries that wrap our here and now
in a swaddling void.
What to do with that void?
Collapse into its arms? Deny it?
Fill it with shadows?

As empty as the black expanse
that stretches beyond the reach of light
is the home of our beginnings and endings.
I bow my head, and wonder.
Silence stills the rush of riddles,
the fears and promises. I make my peace
and make my bed.

Chris Major

Self Harmer

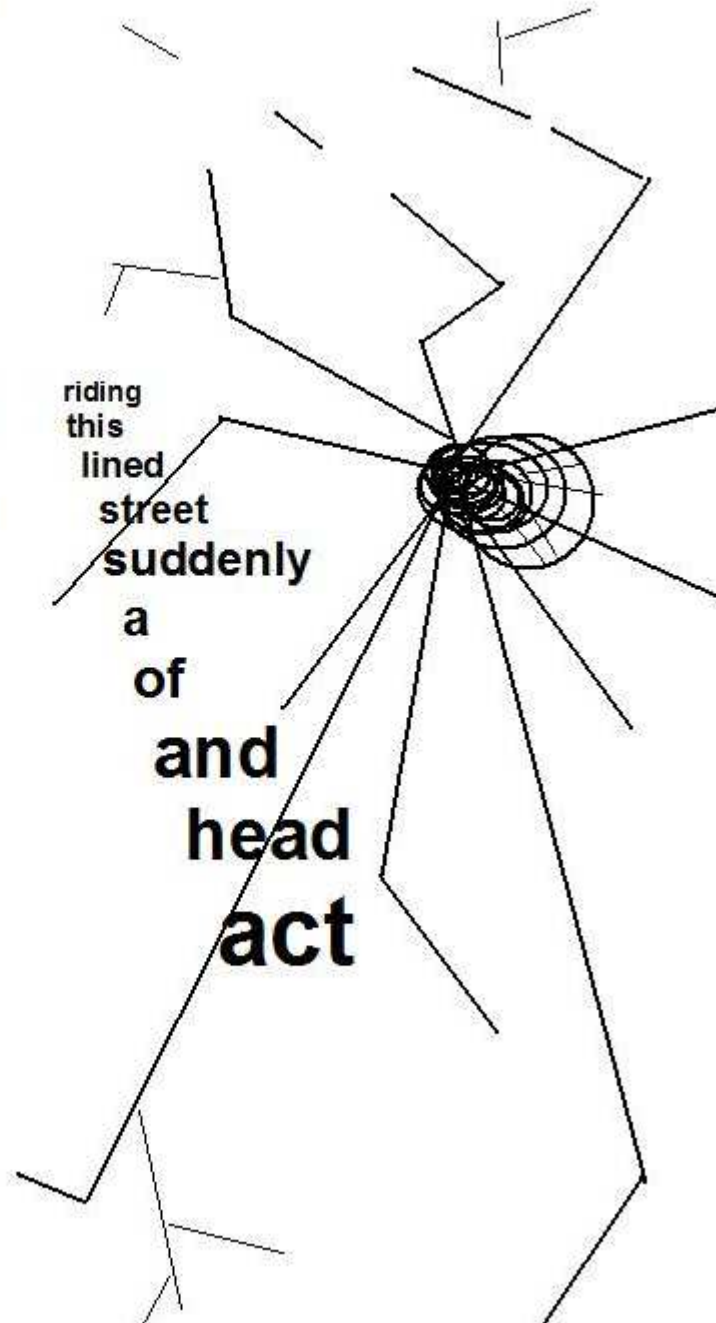


Chris Major

Driver's View

Joy
down
tree
suburban
when
there's
loss
control
then
imp

riding
this
lined
street
suddenly
a
of
and
head
act



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Francis Masat

I WONDER IF

There are some blessings
to growing deaf,
fewer horns and dogs and
- phones.

With silence comes opportunity
to think, to write
uninterrupted,
though thunder still
is felt.

But I wonder if
birds still call,
kittens mew for love,
crickets celebrate the evening
and downspouts drip at dawn.

ALMOST ROMANCE ON I-69

ROADWORK AHEAD

LOW/SOFT SHOULDERS
DANGEROUS CURVE
BEGIN CONSTRUCTION

UNEVEN LANES
SPEEDING FINES DOUBLED
BUMP AHEAD
LANE CHANGES
BE PREPARED TO STOP

ROAD NARROWS
ON RAMP CLOSED

END CONSTRUCTION

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M.V. Montgomery

AS FREE AS EINSTEIN

married, and then not,
always missing socks,
laughing with a snort

not caring if his hair
grew where it grew:
a nudist and a pacifist

having social causes
but no real obligations,
his best friend a violin

traveling without the
encumbrance of luggage,
or just leaving it behind

all *unthinking respect*
for authority: banished.
His awards: a *shit-pile*

approaching the Bible
skeptically and opening
the whole universe

knowing secrets kings
and diplomats could not
begin to understand

seeing time, memory,
even his own identity
as only abstractions

I WISH YOU MANY BATS

A Chinese Blessing for My Sister

I wish you many bats.

I wish you upside-down bats: *happiness has arrived*.

I wish you bats with peaches: long life, joy in each other.

I wish you bats with catfish: the joy carried over year to year.

I wish you two bats, for *double good fortune* on your wedding day.

I wish you five bats, for your continued health, perseverance,
success, kindness, and course of life with nature.

Five bats with a *shou* character for longevity.

Five bats with a box to ensure peace and harmony.

Red bats, the color of your child's hair, for your immense love.

Bats against a red sky, that your hopes for him may soar.

Many bats with heavenly clouds and many bats with coins.

May each bat be captured so that you may retain all joys.

May each bat have a musical stone in its mouth at your celebration.

M.V. Montgomery

LOOKING AT GARGOYLES

The gargoyles from their rooftops hiss and spit,
gargling rainwater and jutting out rude tongues.

Unclean monkeys, St. Bernard called them.

Curved horns, ribbed wings, outthrust brows,
flared lips and nostrils to out-Bruegel Bruegel.
Not just devilish fiends—gluttony, sullenness,
pride—stone faces contort with every human flaw.
And then a whole pagan bestiary reveals itself:
dragons, griffons, minotaurs, satyrs, sea serpents,
lions, rams, boars, wolves, bulldogs, cat-eagles,
rabbit-snakes, fish-lizards, and feisty roosters.

Hung like trophy heads from old battlements,
they presented an argument for the early Church,
which not only conquered all demons, but self-
evidently put them to work (protecting the sacred
masonry from run-off). As one account goes,
a dragon, *Gargouille*, once terrorized Rouen
and couldn't be slain until a church was promised.
Later, its head was placed upon the town gate
to remind the heathens of the building contract.
Cathedrals, after all, took decades to complete.
Masons needed their reminders to stay on task.

And yet, these lively waterspouts don't inspire fear.
Once brightly painted, their ugliness still allures.
Pope Gregory saw the appeal, thought gargoyles
might well attract formerly pagan congregants.
It is paradoxical, then, to find the statues placed
so often at cornices where only God could see.
*All as if to say: Here is a taste of fun, but don't
come too close. Look, but don't gaze or ogle.*
Those of us who have felt an ache in the neck
examining gargoyles may be guilty of such a sin.
Perhaps, we remain too much the pagans at heart.

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Karissa Morton

THE 16th OF MAY, 2009

what if i say that angels are nothing
more than brutalized zeppelins crashed on clouds and burning
gasoline under swags of sun
that their wing beats are empty and nothing
more than my pounding heart that their songs are
only the melody of crisis cascading through my veins that they
hover-collide
into glass ceilings and watch
you slide your hand up my thigh?

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Tim Pilgrim

TEXT MESSAGE FROM THE NURSING HOME

i drool a lot
kno if my bdpan is ful
ce ol geezrs by me di

my kdz sa they r bzy
so i vue lots on tv
fox nus & opra & ways 2 sta yung

tha promis fude soon
i hope 4 peez
i will crsh thm with my spoon

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Ayara Stein

EN BLANC ET NOIR

The lavender of evening stretches across the sky
like the tugged flesh of the mother's belly,
making it seem bruised and difficult.
It's the image that corresponds to the sound
when the Baptists sing of salvation,
their voices lost down the miles of dusty roads
where no one listens, not even dogs.
Tonight her children are upstairs laughing, not praying.
She waits for them to need her, but they leave her
for dreams where they pick pixie violets
or reign as Byzantine kings in imperial plum.
Tonight, in the wake of these angels her mind is full.
She knows just below the level of consciousness
where time's melancholy congregates:
the location of the moon ensconced inside her
that cannot be held in cold places.

WAITING FOR STARDOM

Like out of an old spy movie
she is suddenly there, this Asian woman
in my neighbor's terrace garden.
She nods, not to me, to the t.v.
Among the mimosa trees she smokes;
the small swells of breast curl toward the sky.
Sunlight sifts through leaves, paints her half moon
cheek serene as a Ming empress.
But even now the light is changing.

There are two coffee cups on the wrought iron
and she is still alone, smoking clove
cigarettes one after another.
With constant attention she guards the door –
savage, formidable, oddly delicate.
It grows dark over the hidden gardens of Madrid.

I do not know her; I do not need to know her,
have no idea why this breaks my
heart
since time is everywhere
seizing persons each forgotten
night.
And there's a chill in the air,
but I wouldn't call it cold yet
unless I were in the streets below,
sandwiched between Virgins and
designer shops.

Yet she, I, maybe even you, too,
are
over a thousand miles from
home,
crackling under the power of

MYSTERY VISITS MY HOUSE ON TINY PAWS

and stalks the yard as a feral, black kitten.
I tell her to just go ahead and be one of those
things you can't capture in black and white.
She lowers herself into the grass
and demolishes entire cities as she naps.
Ants build pilgrim roads around the new Sphinx.
Mystery is so modest in real size, yet so vast.
She is the center of her universe, and rightly so.
Little pioneers absorbed in their parallel world,
The insects pitch tents in her shadow.
By the time she rises they'll have built
houses without roofs and floors made of grass.
She'll travel with her velvet legs into the understory
and the wilderness will swallow her whole.
She rises, and walks to the creek to see for herself:
what she has to become is what she already is.

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Stephen Jarell Williams

TOMORROW

Something falling on me invisible,
weight on my skull and shoulder
blades with pain, a sense of deep remorse.

My mother must be calling and I haven't heard
her southern accent so sweet and musical.
She's always in the background giving
me a tune to whistle down the darkening alley.

I don't know much of anything when it comes down
to it.

We're all fools in the making. Some dig their heels in
more than others.

My father the dreamer on a shore under thunder.
It vibrated in him, into me...
He never bothered to ask where it came from,
or what it did to our family...

I never wanted him to go drunkenly into the fog,
but he did.

Mother singing for him with his melted ears.
Pride lies. Love shows the way in any light.

Guilt doing its best on me.

Tomorrow will be different.

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Contributors notes A—L

Mark Bonica is an economics graduate student at George Mason University in Virginia, USA. His poetry and fiction have appeared in a variety of on-line and print publications including *Niederngasse*, *Planet*, *Bewildering Stories*, *NFG*, *Impetus*, and others.

Holly Day is a travel writing instructor living in Minneapolis, Minnesota, with her husband and two children. Her most recent nonfiction books are *Music Theory for Dummies*, *Music Composition for Dummies*, and *Walking Twin Cities*.

John Elder is a senior writer with *The Sunday Age* newspaper in Melbourne Australia. He teaches creative writing and thinking at the Centre for Adult Education, a course that he's developing for university level. After 30 years of travelling to Antarctica, and falling in love with seabirds, John is currently studying ornithology in the graduate program at Charles Sturt University. His main writing project is a modern re-telling of the Persephone myth. While his prose is based on poetic thinking and disciplines. He is the co-author of 'In The Ghost Country' with adventurer Peter Hillary.

John Grochalski's poems and fiction have appeared in several journals. Grochalski can be found at www.winedrunksidewalk.blogspot.com, and his book of poems *The Noose Doesn't Get Any Looser After You Punch Out* is out via Six Gallery Press. Grochalski currently lives in Brooklyn, New York, where he constantly worries about the high cost of everything.

Jeff Klooger's poetry has been published in Australian and international online and print journals. Recently his work has appeared in *The Liberal*, *Munyori Literary Journal*, *Eureka Street*, *Full Of Crow* and *Text*. His other interests are music and philosophy. His first book, on the ideas of the Greek-French philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis, was published in 2009.

Contributors notes M—Z

Chris Major lives in staffordshire England. He has had poetry in many print and online mags, including Words Myth.

Francis Masat is from the Mid-West and he is Professor Emeritus, Rowan University of New Jersey. He lives in Key West with his wife Carol. Recent chapbooks are *Lilacs After Winter* (haibun), MET Press, 2008, and *A Taste of Key West* (poetry), Pudding House Press, 2008. His poetry appears in over 90 literary publications worldwide.

M.V. Montgomery is a professor in the Atlanta area who has work forthcoming in *quarrtsiluni* and *Muton*.

Karissa Morton is a student in English and Writing at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa.

Tim Pilgrim (a journalism professor at Western Washington University (c/o Journalism Department, 516 High Street, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA 98225 -- e-mail tpilgrim@hope.journ.wwu.edu) is a Pacific Northwest poet who lives in Bellingham, Washington, and has published over 60 poems, mostly in literary journals and anthologies of poetry, such as "Idaho's poets: A Centennial Anthology."

Ayara Stein is a Romani-American living on a chicory farm. She was the former editor of the arts quarterly *Gypsy Blood Review*, as well as founder and president of APM Press and Publications. She's won the Houghland Award and has been a finalist for the Poetry Book Award at the U of A Press, among other honors. She's published in *The New Orleans Review*, *The Birmingham Poetry Review*, *The Oxford American*, *California Quarterly*, and others. She is currently looking for a publisher for two volumes of poetry and one book of short stories. What she'd really like now is a teaching job.

Simon Williams began writing poetry at Loughborough University, where he worked under the influence of the two resident poets, Roger McGough and Pete Morgan. He has developed a poetic voice which flexes into disparate characters with subtlety, wit and affection. Now living on Dartmoor, he performs regularly and often enhances his readings with acapella songs.

Stephen Jarell Williams has appeared in several hundred publications. He loves to write, listen to his music, and dance late into the night. Then he stumbles into the backyard and talks to the stars.

Words-Myth Hall of Fame (all previous contributors)

Featured Poets (began with Issue 11)

Chris Major (Staffordshire, U.K. Issue 11)
 Rick Marlatt (Nebraska, U.S.A. Issue 12)
 Marilyn Hammick (Issue 13)
 Paige Riehl (Minnesota, U.S.A. Issue 14)
 Simon Williams (Devon, U.K. Issue 15)

Other Poets

Ward Abel
 Gary Adler
 Shurooq Amin
 Stephanie Anagnoson
 Ruth Andrews
 Leah Armstead
 Amy Ballard
 John Ballard
 Katherine E. Baluta
 Carlos Barbarito
 Daniel Barbiero
 Christopher Barnes
 Elizabeth Baxter-Williams
 Gary Beck
 Kimberly Becker
 James Bell
 Sandy Benitez
 Jim Bennett
 F.J. Bergmann
 Nicolette Bethel
 Robyn Alter Bielawa
 Rumjhum Biswas
 Sheldon Bockman
 Mark Bonica
 Brandie Booker
 Bill Brocato
 Kenneth Brown
 Cheri Byard
 Anne Cammon
 Laura Ciralo
 Lisa Cochran
 Louie Crew
 Matthew D'Abate
 Holly Day
 Dawn Dibartolo
 Anthony DiMatteo
 Morgan Downie
 Eathan Earle
 John Elder
 Margarita Engle
 Michael Estabrook
 S. P. Flannery
 Pete Fordham
 Patrick Frank
 Barry G. Gale
 James Gapinski
 Brant Goble

Other Poets

Howard Good
 Giles Goodland
 John Grey
 John Grochalski
 Susan Eve Haar
 Louise Halvardsson
 P.J. Hancock
 Graham Hardie
 Brad Hatfield
 Marcella Henderson-Peal
 Annie Herman
 Allison Rae Hipple
 Sandy Hiss
 Maureen Hossbacher
 Paul Hostovsky
 Jason Huskey
 Colin James
 Jorie Jenkins
 Martin Jervis
 Michael Lee Johnson
 Liu Jue
 Ellen Kaplan
 Christopher Kelen
 Mel Kenne
 Raud Kennedy
 James Kilner
 Jeff Klooger
 Joseph Kreisberg
 David Krilivsky
 Richard Labram
 Ilona Lagowski-Timoszuk
 Missy Lambert
 Quincy R. Lehr
 Ryan Leston
 Arthur Leung
 Terry E. Lockett
 Brendan M. Lynch
 Scott Malby
 Ally Malinenko
 Laura Manuelidis
 Robert Marsland
 Matt Martinek
 Francis Masat
 Dan McAloon
 Julie McCormick
 Tara McDaniel
 Alanna McDonald
 Rebecca McGraw
 Stephen Mead
 Corey Mesler
 Zoe Migicovsky
 John Miller
 M.V. Montgomery
 Karissa Morton
 Christopher Mulrooney

Other Poets

Rich Murphy
 Kristine Ong Muslim
 Rodney Nelson
 Stanley M Noah
 Gréagóir Ó Dúill
 Jennie Osborne
 Colm O'Shea
 James Owens
 Laurence Overmire
 Veronica Pamoukaghlian
 Lisa Parry
 Geoff Peate
 Debbie Pfuntner
 Tim Pilgrim
 Sean Gerard Pinto
 Mary Kate Polzin
 Carolyn Praytor Boyd
 Tony Press
 Shannon Prince
 Joseph Reich
 Sophie Reynolds
 Stephen Rozwenc
 Lauren Scharhag
 Nic Sebastian
 Korliss Sewer
 Carol Shamory
 Ian Sharp
 Stuart Sharp
 Joel Solonche
 Ayara Stein
 Lynn Strongin
 Scott Summers
 Mary Sutton
 Nancy Ellis Taylor
 Donald Thackrey
 Adam Thompson
 David Thornbrugh
 Davide Trame
 Estelle Villas
 Jason Visconti
 Johanna Vining
 Christian Ward
 Courtney Wick
 Lana Maht Wiggins
 Daniel E. Wilcox
 Brandon Williams
 Stephen Jarell Williams
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 A.D. Winans
 Anne Winterich
 Gu Xie
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