

JANUARY REVIEW

ISSUE 03, MARCH 2020

JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS

KEVIN RIDGEWAY

PHOEBE MARRALL

ROBERT L. PENICK

DANIEL EDWARD MOORE

PATTY DICKSON PIEZCKA

ANDREA MOORHEAD

FRANCA MANCINELLI

JOHN TAYLOR

CLARA BURGHELEA

DARCY SMITH

JENNIFER BRADPIECE

DIANE MACKINNON HENNING

SHEREE LA PUMA

ALAN BRITT

ALICIA MATHIAS

WREN TUATHA

ACE BOGGESS

R.T. CASTLEBERRY

ROBERT MOORHEAD (ART)



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<https://januaryreview.wixsite.com/poetryjournal>
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John Sibley Williams

Benediction

—*for Kaveh Akbar*

Graceless. No, so much less than that.

The physicality of the soul sours what
little we take away from a church bell's
ritual. Iron & echo. The songbird pressing
circles into its hollow to shape a nest no
mouths will hunger from. Hunger or shriek.
Like a fabric, the fabric of morning tears
too easily to call it mercy. Or home. Shot
through with light the loose gravel we
shoot at the roosting sparrows. We never
seem as broken as that, do we? Lives not

forgeries so much as too-little-at-stake.



John Sibley Williams

Tenancy

Lights across the river.
Entire cities of them
blinking in & back out
of existence. Night-
swallowed;

as if life

depends upon seeing life
fade in others.

Competition:

*There's only so much darkness
to go around.*

Compensation:

our pupils dilate to take it all in.

Gods:

*pronounced to fit what we hope
to see on the other shore.*

Shores hung together by fog
& pure stubbornness.

Tonight, like a mouth closing;
just chewed-over memories

between us

bright as we can make them,
briefly & brightly, & merciful.



John Sibley Williams

Ligature

Missing 19-year-old student feared victim of sex trafficking
—*The Independent headline, 11/8/17*

Before we know what our bodies are worth
or for, someone comes along to teach us.
Rifled through, edges torn, discarded

like old photos of family gone strange,
disremembered. Like the lost youth
in every mirror. There is a white

windowless van inside every heart.
A show of force multiplied by desire,
privilege. Isn't that how we know we're men?

This part of you that hasn't yet a name,
I will name. The parts you never knew
could bleed, will. I promise it

won't be so different than the first time.
Just more so. More so. Every body's born
a repository for another body's flame.



Darcy Smith

Half-Life

When you die, where will we meet?
Will you wake me with tinny shouts *eh eh uh*
Your fisticuffs, the devil's head, you have to—
his pronged tongue, a captious hiss from the hemlock.

You remember him, the crack of a broken branch.
When you die, if we meet, will the soft dent
of your pillow feel repeated? Will I forget the taste
of our lips, our legs, our yesterdays, will your hands

Speak to me of first love, avocado slivers? When our hips
give way to soil, our toes, like hungry ants will file inside
these peony-drunk-petals. When you die, we'll meet
in dreams of stamen nectar. You didn't mean

to punch my cheek, you were kerosene when you hit—
Dolls hang from strings above our bed. Air whooshes when I snap
their plastic heads. Our room smells giddy. The wind,
umami. When you die, come find me in the peonies



Darcy Smith

Tossed

The still river rose that August
evening you lured me

like a Sunfish caught
instead of trout, too small, tossed out
in court two years later too

much work to gut you, too much
work to remember which hand
you used to open –

your switchblade tore
that night into two arms into fury,
too much to recall where the blood began

where my blouse ripped. Where I wouldn't
look, my eyes fixed like a fish hooked
gills silent closing. I will never

forget your rabid breath, your lashing
tongue, unwanted. No, they weren't yours
to claim. They're mine, held tender

by the quarter moon. She churns
you in fresh river blood, uprooting waters,
silt and mud. Lay narrow now

your cutting breath, a four-inch Sunny
left rotting on the deck.



Darcy Smith

Jellyfish in June

An ocean of shadow circles
me like carrion, cawing my chest
hollow as a horseshoe crab that held
a heart, lungs and blood. The husk, shored
without a pulse. This beach, my breath, held fast.



Phoebe Marrall

MY MOON, MY FULL MOON

I possess her like a pearl
because she is there for the taking.
Or is it that she possesses me?
Like a moth, I flutter and creep
in her 5:00 a.m. light, dancing
in the shadow of trees,
clothing myself in
the yellow and silver
she furnishes so freely.



Phoebe Marrall

MY WALLET OF AGING

Can't I still reach for that lace?
I've hardly begun to smooth it over my hips.
In theory, I should be able to *think young*—
upscale chocolates, profiteroles,
a trip to Victoria's Secret,
cocktails at noon—but in the company
of youth, I've stepped on the fragile cover
and fallen through. Shelves of fragrance,
outrageous shoes, that shiny gold chain,
are cordoned off. I've lost a little fear,
true, and carry a little money now.
But it can't be blown on a liberal spill
of "Walnut Rose." I also carry
a burden of fear.



Phoebe Marrall

AWAY FROM SPEEDING LAUGHTER

Away, out of sight, beyond strong leaves,
I want enclosure, and bonds of soft wool
to cradle myself away from speeding laughter,
and the noise pushing up-down, up-down when,
barely seated, I am carried off to the side.

So *this* is a surfer wedding, I say to the person
next to me, who happens to be me in ennui.
These young heads are crowned with perfect sun-spray;
I have noticed them tossed, and stilled when the
bridal couple edges toward them in flip-flops and boots.

This is affluent casual, so cool it moves words from
out of the mouths of babes to the breath of old folks,
and pulls me by the ear to the mic of the wedding docent.
She emcees us into Hawaiian rock-and-roll, and the baited
back-and-forth of guys and girls who dance with abandon.

No, my white wool does not enclose or cradle me away
from the pitch of custom and rolling decibel.
It spreads itself as thin as smoke and whitens all.



Jennifer Bradpiece

Lullaby for an American Ex-Pat

The city is a woman.
Her eyes are Absinthe.
Her voice is ice.
When she speaks,
smoke pours from her nostrils
and floats up toward the diffusion
of starlight.

Her name could be Ashill
or Siena or Lyon.
But she is not merely quaint,
historic or scenic.
She is Praha. Timeless and ravaged,
dripping with garnets.

Her cobblestone legs open

Here your losses are
crumbling stone steps
you navigate slowly.

you catch your reflection in the water
as you stroll past the Vltava.

You see scaffolding, think “skeleton.”
The word “excavate” seems like flesh
you might penetrate. These words
become more intimate than
“hearth” or “home.”

You love her because you find her less foreign
than your room back home, saturated
by the scent of musty words and turpentine.

She is a canvas,
a blank gessoed stare you recognize
in relief at her skyline.



You toast her with Becherovka, soda water,
and lime, watching jazz cabaret
alone at U Maleho Glena.

The black and white image
on the matchbooks reminds you
of Dietrich.

December brings less devoted tourists.
They flirt with her at the Christmas fair
in Old Town Square, sip her hot mulled wine
from paper cups, but you forgive her anything.

A new year marks the anniversary
of when she took you in, a refugee
of loss with a need to lose yourself
in something other.

You sit down at a café near the
Mala Strana. Sketch a man with a thick
beard who sits alone in a corner,
a couple whispering into each others' ears
a girl with sad eyes who keeps
resting her head on the heel of her hand.

You place the mug back on the saucer,
pick up your book and read afternoon straight
into evening. Years later you will swear
it was a book of poems by Lawrence,
but it may have been Rilke or Gilbert or a story by Kafka.
You tip an undetermined amount of Koruna,
nod at the waiter, slide a packet of sugar
between the pages to hold your place
and walk out into the night.

Behind your back, the city raises
one ironic eyebrow,
winks, and turns away.



Kevin Ridgeway

For My Parents

the past died
along with everyone in it
but my mother's hope
lives on in mirror reflections
and my father's relentless disease
confines him to an existential box
while this life becomes
only mine now to master,
in the absence
of a sadistic god.



Kevin Ridgeway

Under Construction

the power drill breaks through the parking lot asphalt outside my room,
dancing with my pounding temples in a gruesome power trio deluxe sickness
upgraded from my jet lag to an ornery kind of rage that has me in the lobby
ruining all of the other guests' continental breakfast as I demand a refund
and I feel guilty for being such a sodden self-loathing prick
but I'm a work in progress behind closed doors where we dream of showing them all
for trying to get us down with their relentless, capitalistic fervor
and they charge me for additional cleaning fees after I've soiled the linens
with the vengeful smoke that I exhale out of every raw orifice of my damaged
body as I shut the curtains and box the shadow people here in a darkness
that's far too unprepared to drag me off the property and back to the factory
where they can all try to rebuild me



Diane Mackinnon Henning

At Winter's Start

In the crimson blaze of wind cuffed leaves
and early migratory flocks,

scent of impending winter seeps through our windowsills,
the house damp, its chill a reminder:

stack wood, split kindling.

I think of a loved one recently set to earth,

the shovel's heavy work,

and wonder if my deceased friend heard

crows so masterful, their chorus

split the hour while we stood graveside,

attempting to shoo away those cheeky birds. Exactly

what do they know of life's hyphen and exclamation?



Diane Mackinnon Henning

The Salve of My Heart is Bone-Meal

For months I mourned his loss, the twist fate creates,
copies of his unfinished poems cremated with him,
he, my most gifted student, the one who grieved the large

which is difficult to break down into the comprehensible,
died in Folsom Prison of hepatitis C when all I'd asked of him
was he return to the world a free man as the next chapter

in his splendid evolution, a man become so learned he was nearly
a book, or should I say encyclopedia? His eyes haloed with dark circles
as though sleep vacationed, long lanky form in blue jeans and chambray,

nearly beautiful, fingers of a piano player or perhaps sculptor.
Countless times I entered the prison's yard, he there in the sally port,
waiting to help me carry in book bags, notepad paper, pencils.

It's unreasonable some die young, their promise spent to flame,
or why the words of Roethke come back to haunt me,
"I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow."

I think of Patrick's poems as starlings filling the sky, strong
and direct by how they turn their surrounding sounds
into their own calls, which by the way, is how a poem gets written.



Diane Mackinnon Henning

Birth-Rights

How many times has a cat eloped with a dog
much to the chagrin of aunts and grandparents alike?

Sometimes a thing festers, all that's commonplace less so,
the newsfeed more contentious.

The dog might be in her igloo grinding up dream bones,
the cat soaking rays on the chaise.

For all we know or thought we knew
happiness walks barefoot summertime,

arms freely swinging. Don't be difficult, I tell myself
when attempting to reveal odd possibilities,

that present themselves fresh, easy as plucked basil.
So, when the cat slapped the priest's signature
onto the marriage certificate, nabbed the dog and flew off
to Honolulu, don't be surprised that the pilot let each try their hand

(or paw, in this case,) at guiding *American Airlines* onto the landing strip
where the dark spread out its oilcloth, the cat, a mischievous look,

telling the dog, *A peach is a peach because it can't be an apple.*



Robert L. Penick

Midnight at the Quarterpole Bar and Lounge

Drunk, stumbling, I walked down to be with the other humans. I treasure solitude but, on this particular night, darkness gnawed at me like cancer. Halfway there, an older Hispanic man rolled up on his bicycle. Asked where the nearest tavern might be. He rode ahead and I met him at the Quarterpole. We watched the people dancing, laughing, coughing, swearing, drinking, carrying on with a manic desperation.

They were racetrack workers: Grooms, exercise riders, hot walkers. All of us poor. Owners and trainers must drink across town, I told my friend. His name was Gregorio. Said his boss couldn't win a race if he saddled Secretariat. Just before last call, he leaned into me and whispered, "Everyone here is missing piece of something. The sad ones laugh too much, unhappy lovers cling like skin to bone. The poorest players buy the most rounds. Everyone hides a secret. What is yours, my friend?"



Robert L. Penick

Pilgrim

I've never been adept at the art of living, the making of beaming Facebook photographs and euphoric birthday celebrations. Is there a course for the awkward, the bent but not quite broken, to help them assimilate into society? Is there a treatment program that will make me enjoy television, drive-time talk radio and eating hamburgers out of cardboard boxes? Will I one day opt for wedging myself into bars and bistros that are impossibly loud, into clothes that hung, pre-ripped and faded, on retail hangers? Will I at any point fit into this world? Is there a cure?



Sheree La Puma

Crimson Blooms

Hijacked
by the wind,
dropped down towards earth
like a used lead condom
a winter twig – unwraps
her skeleton – unzips
her buds.
Bare, shameless, transmuted,
a first-fruit offering, quiet–still-glad,
on a rutted asphalt altar.
Waiting –
like a seed to be planted.
Listening-
for the prophecy of spring.
It is near,
a huge red dragon-
four mechanical brooms,
scrubbing, erasing, rewriting history.
Eating microscopic bits
Of lemon rind.
Unguarded –
undone –
the winter twig
submits
to the insidious black tires
of a 460-pound street sweeper.
The driver never looks back.



Sheree La Puma

This Is A Test

I am wife.
I meet a man
who is not my husband,
in a bar in Cincinnati.
a ghost that knows
my language, carries
a scent of us on his
skin.

I think of sister's
dead daughter, son,
my own, gone long
enough to bury. I am
winter, your favorite
month, seeking release
in other people's
treasures.

Body like a sieve,
stripping leaves from
branch. Words like teeth,
rolling 'round my tongue,
loose then swallowed. In
the round of my belly, the
weight of a bitter world
announcing its
exit.



Daniel Edward Moore

Wisteria's Throne

Who cares, really,
if tomorrow's prepared
for earth's brash articulation
of leaves into theories.

Laura's chosen to
sift & sew memory's
most precious seeds,
clearing a space for

Wisteria's throne,
where the future unfurls
it long purple robe with
a hem of light and water.

I am the gardener,
sentinel of the sky,
defender of
all that remains.



Daniel Edward Moore

Last Adolescent Wedding Anniversary

At 17, here we are,
citizens from the reckless years
when morning found
the light half dead,
darkness weeping
in both our mouths,
like the anchor fighting the sea.

Remember the words,
land on me, as if being a bird
was safe, remember
watching passion rise,
like a monster's head
by the anchor's chain,
wearing a crown
of barnacles bright,
the best the sea could do?

That's what the next 20 years are for
said the shore to me.



Daniel Edward Moore

Future Thrower

I write fire.
Ash uses me
to prove how cold
the world once was
before rock & wood
grew bored with ice
& I was struck
in a brutal way
by a lesser form
of uncivilized faith
content with blood
on cold cave walls
rehearsing our
quick disappearance.
Difference of
opinion or not.
Does it all boil
down to a season
of thaw no calendar
had on the wall?
If children survive
to hate the ghosts
we will soon become,
will fairy tales
without parents
in flames ever be
heard before bed?
Difference of
opinion or not.
Silence threw gas
on tiny dreams
already black as coal.



Alan Britt

PLATO'S TRACTOR

At 1:33 roses melting gasoline tank beside a cane rocker frosted with thunder clouds & hydrogen beyond recognition →
“Although, ” she mused, “what spewed from incinerator stacks resembled congressmen & was nothing like purported, even though,” she, lamented “their eyelids were wooden shutters caved completely in.” →→ Typical diatribe, I thought, but worth the wait →→→ Below her withers lurked an angel made of conch shells’ swirling faith that everything’s on fire with voices consisting of tarpaper & mud nestled into coral kitchens chirping for bamboo to snap like cobras leaping from stainless steel faucets that arc like razor - blue Atlantic flying fish with switchblade fins →→→→like ambulance screams, like icicle eyelashes, like bolts of lightning with tarpon scales the size of lazy thoughts steaming, billowing, flickering from a brahma skull leaning against a barn set ablaze by a metabolic moon & doused by roses leaking from the empty tank on a red tractor or the shadow of a red tractor →→→→→whichever comes first.



Alan Britt

BLUE JAYS

I've been thinking about blue jays
as almost every morning they're at it
berating each other across the faded
boards of our backyard split-rail fence.

I listen intently to their bickering which
resembles a rusty spring grinding the hinge
on a whitewashed wooden gate.

They abandon one tree suddenly
only to scold from another.

They are industrious souls.

It's obvious they have priorities:
in early morning hours: things must
get done, so arrangements are made.

For them every wasted minute represents
a black-striped gesso-white & blue
feather falling from their lives.

Right now, the naked afternoon, fresh
from a shower, saunters around the corner
of our dirty asbestos shingled house
only to dissolve beneath the dripping
darkness of a weeping cherry tree.

One jay barely ten feet away feeds
at the roots of a nearby silver maple.

Suddenly, this jay, with typical no-nonsense
bravado, rises & flutters inside the wet
branches of the weeping cherry tree
for all of three seconds before exploding
across the backyard announcing a new
priority all the way!



Alan Britt

GLOBAL WARMING

From a musical note coated all winter
with nickel to a leopard in designer
shades ascending a thorny acacia,
or water buffalo imposing its will
on imperative reality—so grab the
note coated in nickel & pretend
that the zeitgeist, eyebrows blistered
by CO₂s, but otherwise observing
the Kiddie Show of animated
Might Makes Right & thinking,
hell, I've got an arsenal fit for
a family of four
plus a minivan
with a limited warranty,
so I could give two
shits about the ozone.



Alan Britt

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

(TV with sound off, listening to Lila
Downs singing “Black Magic Woman”)

Shag mop teases us to commercial.

Billboard’s stained-glass wings.

Black magic.

Stop messing around
with your idiotic tricks.

*Mariposa blanca pierces
tu corazón de azul.*

The night grows a
beak like one of those

banana-billed toucans
from the Amazon.

Cicadas clatter ceramic
castanets. Stop messing

around with your idiotic
tricks. Stop messing round.

Stop.



Patty Dickson Piezcka

FRIDA

*I paint flowers
so they will not die
-Frida Kahlo*

My spine is a broken matchstick.
Fire licks my bones
and steam whistles
through my tea-kettle heart.

Sometimes the pain is so great
skeletons crawl from my mouth.
The nails in my skin
are almost sacred. They hold
my soul in place.

Only colors
can open my petals—
the palette, the shapes,
the lines that root me
to this life.



Patty Dickson Piezcka

REFUGEES

We live on the border
between swallowed songs
and wings.

Moon slides down our backs,
but darkness holds our hands,
guiding us blindly.

Home has become this goat path,
narrow and winding as a snake
in the brush.

We walk along its slippery back,
careful and quiet,
trying not to wake it.

We mix the night's pain
with pigments of ground plum petals,
malachite and berries

to paint ourselves
into this landscape.
Salvation is hidden

somewhere among the black leaves.

Our silken hope slips
through these dark branches.



Patty Dickson Piezcka

AT HORSESHOE LAKE

I pull sunlight from your hair
to make our shadows pour
into the cypress swamp,
where rivulets spill back
to the time we met.

Tupelo leaves brush the colors
left by secrets barely whispered—
words beyond flight
and dream, strung to
neither root nor bone,
words tumbling in shapes
never recognized before.

We unbutton the hours
until day and night
meet briefly at the horizon;
they kiss, still making
each other blush
after so many years.



Alicia Mathias

CONSUME

between open
and ache

breathe
your name

near the end
a verb

where you
began

to write me
closer

to you
falling

back in
side

the black
hole

of your
being



Alicia Mathias

Black and White Patch of Snow Outside My Bedroom Window

where
two
zebras
rested
snug
in early
Spring
far from
home
traveling
through
my mid-
day

dream

our
typed
love

letters

melt

as my
hair

snags

in
rivers

of
your

absence



Alicia Mathias

crash

when my mind
runs
Out of ink

and forgets
how to write you
Back to me

swans trail
cobalt lines
Of moon

long from summer
bruised
Skies

where I hear
your voice
Unmasked

roars
of a nose dive
Silver-seared

la tristesse durera toujours — Vincent van Gogh



Alicia Mathias

Last Words

sometimes
when i see
his *Wheat*

field
with Crows
I make

up
my mind
alone

decide
to move
blue

long
into
death

holding
his
hand

on
a
whim



Andrea Moorhead

Perambulations

She walked around the broken concrete
wires emerging with each step
the night glow caught in her lashes
as she threaded her way
avoiding the jagged glass, the twisted metal
signs still pulsating
under her eyes the last smudge of the night



Andrea Moorhead

Other Movements

Icons left in the attic haven't any recourse
gold leaf flaking every night as they move around
the trunk doesn't have any hinges and the night air is soft
legs and arms invisible, the face still rigid, eyes turned, lips closed,
but the wind stirs at night and the windows are cracked
someone saw a light rain the other night
something sweet and shining falling out the attic window
lips sealed eyes half-open and the rain never stopped and the dew rising
precluded any thought of going up on top.



Andrea Moorhead

Absorption

Simply lifting the stone isn't enough
flowers bleed by the side of the road
caught in some unidentified vapor
while we walk on
moving slowly into the rain.



Andrea Moorhead

Ontario Lakes, 1950

for RKM

Pickerel scales on the ground
the boat pulled up for the night
dreaming of past waters to the north
the sheen of early sun skittering against
dead spruce stumps, the water cool brown,
flowerless and pure,
we continue every day
hauling in and out the wooden,
the smooth and sleek, fleet and
languid boat of our dreams.



Wren Tuatha

Some Other Child's Mimosa

Mine leaned on a white picket fence. Pink tassels
across the branches like a pom pom flashmob,
ready to dance but never getting the signal.

Here, across from the rec center, there's a yellow
shotgun house on a double lot, the whole side parcel
for some other child's mimosa. Grows into the sidewalk.

Roots under the street. Maps can want what they want.
It's a rental. Welcome planned a garden. Inaction
grew a forest. College town, little summer traffic.

No kindergartener answers, I want to be a housecleaner.
Defiant war drum of a bass beat drives by.
Tassels, feather duster. Junior Giants—Coaches Needed.

Playground with a security fence, as if someone
could steal play. Outside it, handmade Little Library
on a post. Books always coming, always going, always here.

From the rec center lobby bench I watch this mimosa,
circus tent, warehouse of dreams. Three kids
in a tree room, invisible to the driver parking there,

bike in the luggage rack getting tangled in low branches.
From under pink tassels or threatening ocean skies,
Three pirates ignore an ice cream truck.



Franca Mancinelli

Translated from Italian by John Taylor

Postcards for a Landscape

earth, an obscure page:
what happens is written
shatters and crumbles
in the darkness reaches
meaning, is lost.



Franca Mancinelli

Translated from Italian by John Taylor

*

the sea changes the earth
moves through furrows,
rows of sowing, roads
that sink. Small lights
faraway the houses turn into candles:
so the night can pronounce
the day's every deed.



Franca Mancinelli

Translated from Italian by John Taylor

*

every city is a clearing
—beaten earth for sleeping,
dust and burnt-out embers.



Franca Mancinelli

(Original Italian Poems)

la terra, una pagina scura:
ciò che cade si scrive
frantuma e sgrana
nel buio raggiunge
il senso, si perde.

*

il mare cambia la terra
si muove per scie di arature
correnti di semine, strade
che affondano. Piccole luci
lontano le case si fanno candele:
ché la notte pronunc
ogni gesto del giorno.

*

ogni città è una radura
–terra battuta per dormire,
polvere e braci spente.



Ace Boggess

“What Do You Feel About Grendel?”

—Google autofill

As far as monsters go, I’ve lived with worse—
inside, where clawed & toothed scraped steel together.

I was someone’s Grendel: hungry brute
didn’t expect his prey fighting back with swords.

No point blaming the devourer,
or feeling sorry for him, though I do

as I praise the sandwich that chokes him
with a well-honed bone stuck in his throat.



Ace Boggess

“What Is Your Idea of a Perfect Poem?”

[anonymous questioner in the audience]

I read Dobyns’s “Uprising” in prison.
Not a prison poem, although the title
sounds like it could be, sounds like
an article one might pass in daily papers—
Uprising at X Correctional Center—
in which guards end up as hostages &
the inmates demand better food, healthcare,
conjugal visits. It’s not about that
or a rebellion in some small Latin-
American country. It’s about death &
how death loiters around the next corner
for all of us, so we should get on up
(as James Brown sang) & free our asses
(George Clinton). It instructs us to strut
through whatever’s left of life,
do what’s needed to feel completed,
maybe happy—that part’s not so clear.
Dobyns, like Thomas, rages in verse,
except he uses the word ‘prick,’
which Thomas wouldn’t, voice
constrained by the tuxedo it wears,
constricted by a frilly bowtie.
Also, there’s something about the Seven
Deadly Sins, those colorful asides
driving through town in their Jags.
Dobyns could be saying do them,
or don’t, or live & try not to worry
about all this supplemental weight.
I’m muttering now, losing my way—
also what happens in a good poem:
it takes you places you didn’t expect,
then brings you back, enforcing vision
by slapping you with a shovel
much like the one Dobyns leaves here
leaning against a wall—you know
what it means. It urges you to escape
this cell, choose a highway,
blind to all the graveyards at your exit.



Ace Boggess

“What Does Love Taste Like?”

[question asked by Janet E. Collinge]

Milk chocolate wafer in the rain,
that sweet hard melting—musty,
slick. I imagine seaweed & sugar.
The downpour smudges
candy against our fingertips
we lick & suck, & this
is love without sadness of liquor,
frivolous gasping at cigarettes.

We do not say ‘love’ because
saying ‘love’ has a different taste
more dark cocoa sampled as,
thirsty, we cross scorched beach sand,
when we’d rather have rain
to satiate our shattered lips &
soothe brutal burn-ache of our feet.



Clara Burghilea

The twenty-year marriage

is mostly about meals. Tonight, we praise
the texture of the tiger bass and the herbs
we brought from Thassos. We share a glass
of crispy, white wine and cover vast territories

in our conversations. You let your fingers graze
on my palm, then nibble on a valerian leaf
from my salad. Some things hang in the air like
heavy fruit. The leaving, the numbness, the silences.

Outside the window, guinea pig babies
squeal at the sound of our voices. It took us
months to discover their almost human need:
to sleep on our laps while being stroked.



Clara Burghilea

A Revision of the Self

begins in the lines and creases
of stanzas, faces, pencil stubs.
There is an inchoate throbbing,
a blooming space asking for alteration.

Feels like pressing curd through cloth,
the inherent softness of the solids,
its pungent flavor, the generous juices.
To be in want for word pains the fingers.

Stands an accolade in the scoop of the day,
a scrim of light, then perhaps too much dark,
the foreboding thought- women do not child,
much as a poem's backbone milks you dry.



Clara Burghelea

How to manoeuvre separation

Be the woman who pulls down
the little mirror in the vizor
before you let him break you

by air drawing a Venn diagram
of how the two of you never overlap
but live within circles of your own.

Add more lipstick on the white lips,
smack them together in confidence,
allowing the Burgundy Red to blend out

towards the edges. Don't blink, or better,
overdo it. He might hear your ears pop.
Here is the hand, your hand, not his,

feeling the throbbing in your legs
as if they put their mind to it. Press
the sore flesh through the denim

and while doing so, forget to breath.
The car will shrink and heartbeats
will fog up all windows and somewhere

in the steamy chaos, you will relent
to the numbing and the tingling
and the nauseous choking and there,

long seconds later, the tightly wound
bundle that is your body, will unfold
like a bat, a torn, yet pliable umbrella.



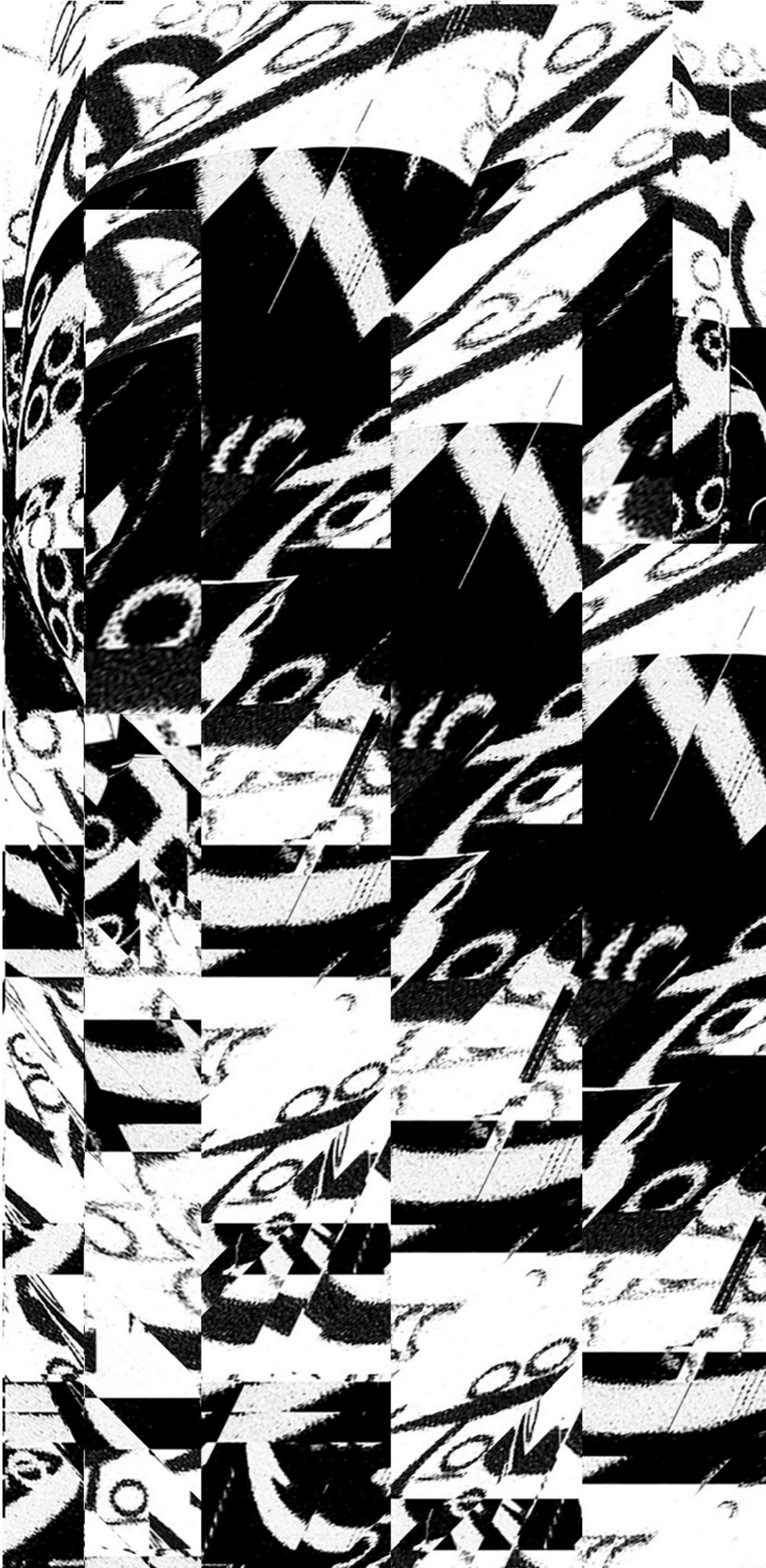
R.T. Castleberry

ALLEGIANCE

I remember my father dying--
cancer he swore was a muscle pull,
treating it with a hot pack from the year before.
He finally disappeared into the VA,
never to return.
I loved him. I never visited.
Sickly as a child,
hospitals were needles and pain to me.
At the service, I repeated
sardonic words he'd dropped
over a friend's casket.
I've worn that separation since,
like the signet ring, the bomber jacket
he bequeathed.

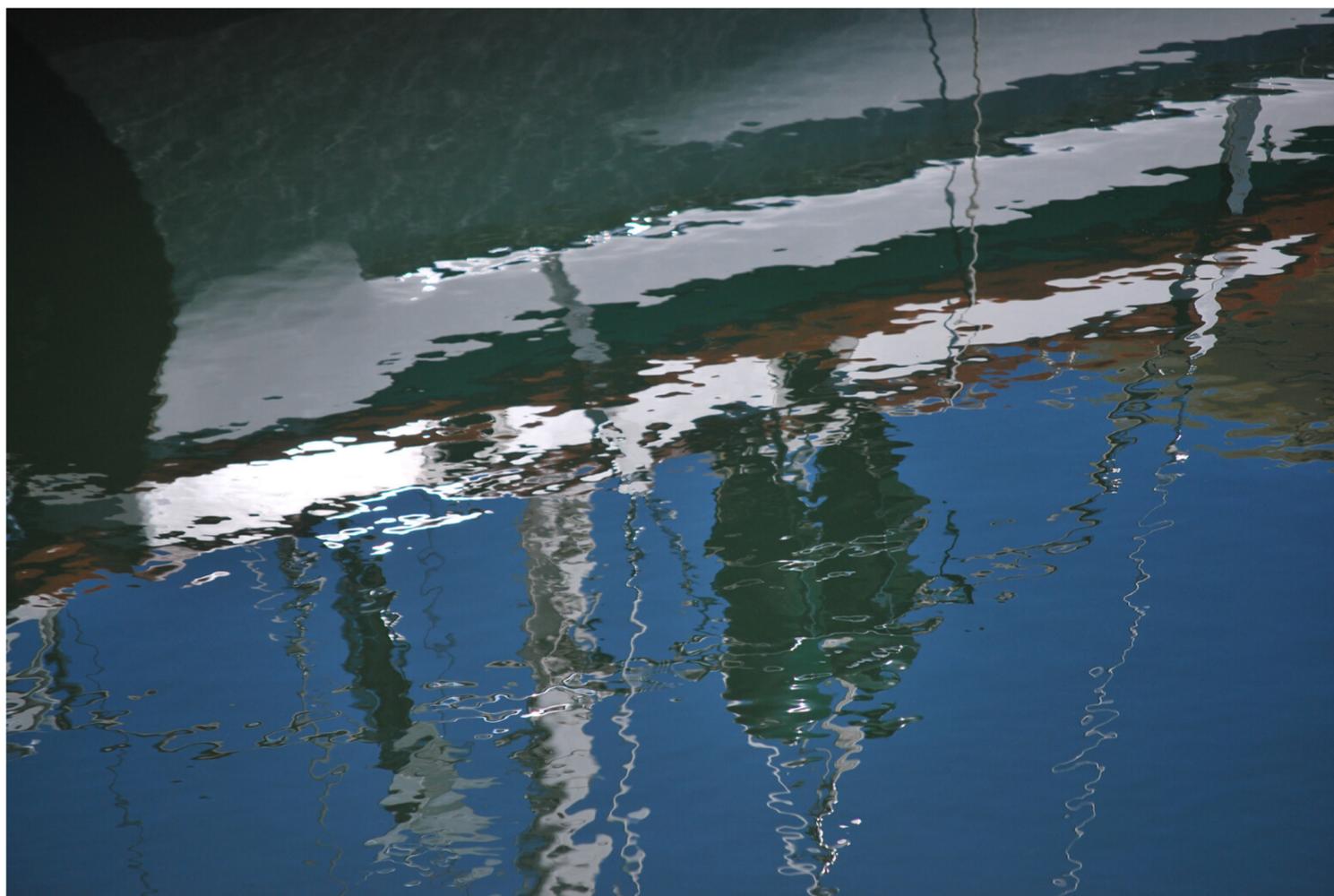














Andrea Moorhead



John Sibley Williams is the author of *As One Fire Consumes Another* (Orison Poetry Prize, 2019), *Skin Memory* (Backwaters Prize, University of Nebraska Press, 2019), *Summon* (JuxtaProse Chapbook Prize, 2019), *Disinheritance*, and *Controlled Hallucinations*. A nineteen-time Pushcart nominee, John is the winner of numerous awards, including the Wabash Prize for Poetry, Philip Booth Award, American Literary Review Poetry Contest, Laux/Millar Prize, Phyllis Smart-Young Prize, Janet B. McCabe Poetry Prize, and others. He serves as editor of *The Inflectionist Review* and works as a poetry editor and literary agent. Previous publishing credits include: *The Yale Review*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *Southern Review*, *Sycamore Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Saranac Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *TriQuarterly*, *Columbia Poetry Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Third Coast*, and various anthologies. He lives in Portland, Oregon.

Darcy Smith works as a sign language interpreter. Her poems have appeared and are forthcoming in *Poetry Distillery*, *ArtAscent*, *New Reader Magazine*, *Sequestrum*, *Coe Review* and *Two Thirds North*. Darcy is a Buddhist and a kickboxer. Her current obsession is executing a six punch three kick combination with perfect form.

Phoebe Marrall, orphaned at the age of nine, was a survivor of The Depression and of a grueling childhood. When she died in 2017 at the age of eighty-four, her daughters Jane Hendrickson and Camille Komine inherited hundreds of poems she had written. They remained unpublished during her lifetime, but it is the intention of her daughters that a collection be compiled for readers to appreciate. "*Relief, Have You a Name?*" is currently a work in progress, being edited by Gayle Jansen Beede.

Jennifer Bradpiece was born and raised in the multifaceted muse, Los Angeles, California, where she still resides. Her passion is collaborating with multi-media artists on projects. Her poetry has been published in various anthologies, journals, and online zines, including *Redactions*, *Mush Mum*, and *The Common Ground Review*. She has poetry forthcoming in *The Bacopa Literary Review* and *Moria*, among others. Jennifer's manuscript, *Lullabies for End Times* will be forthcoming in early 2020 by Moon Tide Press

Kevin Ridgeway lives and writes in Long Beach, CA. He is the author of the poetry collection "Too Young to Know" (Stubborn Mule Press). His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Slipstream*, *Chiron Review*, *Nerve Cowboy*, *San Pedro River Review*, *The Cape Rock*, *Spillway*, *Up the River*, *Suisun Valley Review*, *KYSO Flash*, *Home Planet News*, *Cultural Weekly*, *Big Hammer*, *Misfit Magazine*, *The American Journal of Poetry* and *So it Goes: The Literary Journal of the Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library*.

Diane Mackinnon Henning's work has been published in *The Moth*, *Ireland; Sukoon*, *Volume 5; Mojave River Review; the New Verse News; Hawaii Pacific Review; Sequestrum; South Dakota Review; Naugatuck River Review; Lullwater Review; The Kentucky Review; Blue Fifth Review; The Main Street Rag; Clackamas Literary Review; 22 wagons by Danijela Trajković, Istok Akademia*, an anthology of contemporary Anglophone poetry; *California Quarterly; Poetry International* and *Fugue*. Three-time Pushcart nominee. New work due out 2019 in *New American Writing*, *The Kerf*. Henning taught through California Poets in the Schools, received several CAC grants and taught poetry workshops through the William James Association's Prison Arts Program. Henning's third poetry book *Cathedral of the Hand* published 2016 by Finishing Line Press.



Robert L. Penick's work has appeared in over 100 different literary journals, including *The Hudson Review*, *North American Review*, and *The California Quarterly*. In 2018, *my Exit, Stage Left* won the Slipstream Press chapbook contest. More of his work can be found at <http://www.theartofmercy.net>

Sheree La Puma is an award-winning writer whose personal essays, fiction and poetry have appeared in or are forthcoming in *Juxtapose*, *Heron River Review*, *The Rumpus*, *O:JA&L*, *Plainsongs*, *The Main Street Rag*, *Burningword Literary Journal*, *I-70 Review*, *Inflectionist Review*, *Levee*, *The London Reader*, *Bordighera Press - VIA: Voices in Italian Americana*, *Gravel*, *Foliate Oak*, *PacificReview*, *Westwind* and *Ginosko Literary Review*, among others. She received an MFA in Writing from California Institute of the Arts and taught poetry to former gang members.

Daniel Edward Moore lives in Washington on Whidbey Island with the poet, Laura Coe Moore.

His poems are forthcoming in *Weber Review*, *Levee Magazine*, *Cultural Weekly*, *Tule Review*, *Pangolin Review*, *South Florida Poetry Journal*, *Poetry South* and *Nixes Mate Review*.

His chapbook "*Boys*," is forthcoming from Duck Lake Books in December 2019. His first book, '*Waxing the Dents*,' was a finalist for the Brick Road Poetry Book Prize and will be released in February 2020.

His work has been nominated for Pushcart Prizes and Best of the Net.

Visit him at Danieledwardmoore.com.

In August 2015 *Alan Britt* was invited by the Ecuadorian House of Culture Benjamín Carrión in Quito, Ecuador as part of the first cultural exchange of poets between Ecuador and the United States. In 2018 he served as judge for the The Bitter Oleander Press Library of Poetry Book Award. His interview at The Library of Congress for The Poet and the Poem aired on Pacifica Radio, January 2013. His poetry has appeared in *Agni*, *Alien Buddha*, *Backbone Mountain Review*, *Bitter Oleander*, *Bloomsbury Review*, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Confrontation*, *English Journal*, *Epoch*, *Flint Hills Review*, *GloMag*(India), *International Gallerie* (India), *Into the Void*, *Irodalmi Jelen* (Hungary), *January Review*, *Kansas Quarterly*, *Letras* (Chile), *Levure Littéraire* (France-USA-Germany), *Magyar Naplo* (Hungary), *Midwest Quarterly*, *Minnesota Review*, *Missouri Review*, *New Letters*, *Northwest Review*, *Osiris*, *Pedrada Zurda* (Ecuador), *Poet's Market*, *Stand Magazine* (UK), *Sunstone*, and *Tulane Review*. His poetry has also appeared in *Verse Daily*. He has published 17 books of poetry, his latest being *Ode to Nothing* and *Violin Smoke* (both translated into Hungarian by Paul Sohar and published in Hungary: 2018 and 2015), plus *Crossing the Walt Whitman Bridge* (Translated into Romanian by Flavia Cosma and published in Romania: 2017). A graduate of the Johns Hopkins Writing Seminars he now teaches English/Creative Writing at Towson University.



Patty Dickson Piezcka is the author of *Beyond the Moon's White Claw* (Red Dragonfly Press). She won the Library of Poetry Book Award for 2012 from The Bitter Oleander Press. Other books are *Lacing Through Time* (Bellowing Ark Press, 2011), and a chapbook, *Word Paintings* (Snark Publishing, 2002). In both the 2012 ISPS contest and the Maria W. Faust Sonnet Contest, she placed first and has had writing contributions in more than fifty literary journals. She graduated from the creative writing program at Southern Illinois University. Her short play won first prize from the Paradise Alley Players, and she received first place in the fiction contest at John A. Logan College.

Alicia Mathias is a poet, photographer, and singer. Her poems have appeared in: *Unlikely Stories Mark V*, *The Bitter Oleander*, *Ann Arbor Review*, *January Review Journal*, and *The Canopy Review*, with new work forthcoming in *Clockwise Cat*, and elsewhere. She lives and writes in New York, with her favorite muse, Zeppelin the Wonder Cat.

Andrea Moorhead, born in Buffalo, New York, is the publisher of the prestigious international magazine, *Osiris*. Her most recent book is *The Carver's Dream* (Red Dragon Fly Press). Her poems have appeared in journals such as *Abraxas*, *Great River Review*, *The Bitter Oleander*, *Phoenix*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, and elsewhere.

Wren Tuatha is pursuing her MFA at Goddard College. Her first collection is *Thistle and Brilliant* (FLP). Her poetry has appeared in *The Cafe Review*, *Canary*, *Sierra Nevada Review*, *Pirene's Fountain*, *Lavender Review*, and others. She's editor at *Pitkin Review* and *Califragile*, journal of climate change and social justice. Wren and partner author/activist C.T. Butler herd rescue goats in the Camp Fire burn zone of California.

Franca Mancinelli was born in Fano, Italy, in 1981. Her first three collections of poems and prose poems, *Mala kruna* (2007), *Pasta madre* (2013), and *Libretto di transito* (2018), received several prizes and much critical acclaim in Italy. These volumes are available in John Taylor's translations at the Bitter Oleander Press as *At an Hour's Sleep from Here* and *The Little Book of Passage*. Her writings about the refugee routes in Croatia have been published in the volume *Come tradurre la neve* (Anima Mundi, 2019). She has just published a new collection of poetry and poetic prose, *Tutti gli occhi che ho aperto* (Marcos y Marcos, 2020), from which these three poems are drawn. Franca Mancinelli's blog-website: <https://www.francamancinelli.com/>

John Taylor was born in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1952. He has long lived in France. He has translated many French and Italian poets and written extensively on contemporary European poetry. His own poetry collections include *The Dark Brightness* (Xenos Books), *Grassy Stairways* (The MadHat Press), *Remembrance of Water & Twenty-Five Trees* (The Bitter Oleander Press) and a "double book" co-authored with the Swiss poet Pierre Chappuis, *A Notebook of Clouds & A Notebook of Ridges* (The Fortnightly Review). John Taylor's website: <http://johntaylor-author.com/>

Ace Boggess is author of four books of poetry, most recently *I Have Lost the Art of Dreaming It So* (Unsolicited Press, 2018) and *Ultra Deep Field* (Brick Road Poetry Press, 2017). His poetry has appeared in *North Dakota Quarterly*, *River Styx*, *Cream City Review*, and *American Literary Review*, among others. He received a fellowship from the West Virginia Commission on the Arts and spent five years in a West Virginia prison. He lives in Charleston, West Virginia.



Clara Burghelea is a Romanian-born poet with an MFA in Poetry from Adelphi University. Recipient of the Robert Muroff Poetry Award, her poems and translations appeared in *Ambit*, *HeadStuff*, *Waxwing*, *The Cortland Review* and elsewhere. Her collection *The Flavor of The Other* is scheduled for publication in 2019 with Dos Madres Press. She is the current Poetry Editor of *The Blue Nib*.

R.T. Castleberry's work has appeared in *Roanoke Review*, *Santa Fe Literary Review*, *Pedestal Magazine*, *Green Mountains Review*, *The Alembic* and *Comstock Review*. Internationally, it has been published in Canada, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, New Zealand and Antarctica. I've had poetry in the anthologies: *Travois-An Anthology of Texas Poetry*, *TimeSlice*, *The Weight of Addition*, *Anthem: A Tribute to Leonard Cohen*, *Kind Of A Hurricane: Without Words* and Blue Milk's anthology, *Dawn*. My chapbook, *Arriving At The Riverside*, was published by Finishing Line Press in January, 2010. An e-book, *Dialogue and Appetite*, was published by Right Hand Pointing in May, 2011.





January Review 2020