



Rensselaerville Library

Preserving a historical gathering place
Promoting a life-long love of learning
Fostering personal connections

Celebrating National Poetry Month 2020

Poem-A-Day

30 days . . . 30 poets . . . 30 poems

showcasing different voices, styles, techniques, subjects

2,800+ pageviews

Enjoy!

Tom Corrado, Curator, Poem-A-Day

Heidi Carle, Director, Rensselaerville Library

April 1

A Love Poem

by Tom Bonville

I write about love,
but it is not about you.
It is about the junco
 outside our kitchen window.

Too late,
I realize my mistake.
You have left me to let me
 drink coffee alone.

But then I see you outside, spreading bread crumbs.

About the poet:

Tom Bonville lives in Catskill, regularly participates with The Rensselaerville Poets. He recently was awarded a share of 4th place in the 2020 Stephen A. DiBiase Poetry contest. Winning poems can be heard at the Colonie Town Library on May 16th at 1:30 PM.

~~~~~

April 2

Nantucket Sound

*by Gary Maggio*

Listen to me,  
If you can't listen to the surf.  
I'll tune you out  
I'll just listen to the surf, its humming.  
It has sea colors, it has that horizon  
Which we found in the 70's.  
Your words are babble.

Your mother, the children,  
The poor grandchildren,  
The framing of their photos.

You're babbling.  
The sand is gold,  
The crabs, they're dead,  
Their shells a part  
Of our honeymoon strolls  
Along the Sound near the Lighthouse  
When we had a dog  
And we learned together  
She could swim with  
Tiny strokes, desperately.

About the poet:

Gary Maggio began writing poems when he was 50. In the early 2000s he created and facilitated the Capital Region Poets Workshop, which met twice a month for over eight years and has just recently rekindled the workshop under the sponsorship of the NYS Writers Institute. He also maintains a website for his visual arts, [www.gmagikman.com](http://www.gmagikman.com), which contains his pastels and pen and ink drawings, as well as a few poems.

~~~~~

April 3

I am the algorithm

by Nancy Klepsch

Send me a clear ocean

A misty blue portal as a focal point

Send me a gritty city

In the foreground a potted plant
survived somehow in this barren bath of
grit

Quick send me a shot of whiskey

Chinatown, 1964, Aunt Mary's birthday
party

Send me a smoldering pizza	Fourth Street, DeFazio's
Send me a visual poet	Richard Long, Daystones, 1980
Send me a ritual	Ghost dance, Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota
Send me a rock and stone	Crumbling ruins of a Roman theater, exterior, 1859
Send me a book	e- or hard copy?
Send me ancient wisdom	circa 2008
Send me a dream	Loom
Send me a revolution	Exodus
Send me purple	And an engineer's poster
Send me poetry	Sabda, sabda, sabda
Send me coffee	In melodious double stops
Send me something	San Francisco
Be more specific	Send me a lesbian
Someone who's a work of art	Romaine Brooks Mapplethorpe

Here's
a picture

five
grey stones
vertically portrayed

About the poet:

Nancy Klepsch is a poet and a teacher who was born in Brooklyn, NY and

currently lives in Upstate New York. Klepsch co-hosts 2nd Sunday @ 2 open mic for poetry and prose. god must be a boogie man is her first book of poetry and is available from her web site at www.nancyklepsch.com.

~~~~~

April 4

Between Jobs: One of the Good Days

*by Charlie Rossiter*

Eight a.m. at the Zebra Room  
three old guys at the bar are drinking breakfast.  
They're on a pension, and National Bohemian  
is their morning meal of choice.  
It's mid-December and the tv says  
it's snowing in Denver, cool on the plains,  
sixty degrees here in D.C.,  
When I finish these eggs and homefries,  
I'll go to Dupont Circle to hang out  
with the chess bums and bag ladies,  
watch the suits on their way  
to K Street power lunches,  
secretaries in long skirts and running shoes.  
I'll sit on a bench, still as the eye of a hurricane,  
let all that money and influence swirl around me,  
thank God I don't have a car  
and don't have to think about  
where to park it.

About the poet:

Charles Rossiter hosts the twice-monthly podcast series at [www.PoetrySpokenHere.com](http://www.PoetrySpokenHere.com). Books include the just-released Green Mountain Meditations and Winter Poems, both from FootHills Publishing. He lives and writes in Bennington, VT where he hosts the 2nd Tuesday open mic at the Tap House.

About the poem:

First published in *After Hours: A Journal of Chicago Writing and Art: DC is a wonderful place to visit but I was not crazy about living there. As the subtitle notes, some days are pretty wonderful. The Zebra Room had half-price pizza on Tuesday nights when I was an undergraduate so it was interesting to me to live near the place 20+ years later and use it as a place to catch a diner breakfast.*

~~~~~

April 5

Diplomacy

by Howard J Kogan

Li Bai (701–762), known as Li Bo, also Li Po, was a Chinese poet who took traditional poetic forms to new heights. He and his friend Du Fu (712–770) were the two most prominent figures in the flourishing of Chinese poetry in the Tang dynasty.

Kubayashi Issa (1763–1828) was a Japanese poet and lay Buddhist priest known for his haiku poems and journals. He is better known by his pen name Issa (一茶), meaning Cup-of-tea. He is considered one of the four haiku masters of Japan. One of his better-known haikus is:

*Goes out,
comes back—
the love life of a cat.*

Kubayashi and I have been trying to get Li Bai to have dinner, he's willing but the time or the day is never right, I thought we could tempt him with Italian, it's not what he usually eats, but Du Fu gets reflux from Italian, and Li never goes anywhere without Du. I hoped the dinner would lift Kubayashi's mood, between his wife and the fire, he's had a rough year. Of course, he always wants Sushi, but for Li Bai, older and venerated, he's willing to make an exception. We decide to see if Li would prefer Chinese, he's used to it and if we go Cantonese, Du Fu should be okay. Yet the note that replied to our latest invitation is from Du. Du is not the problem, the problem is that Li has recently heard

of French fries, wants to try them, but he's too polite to ask.
Kubayashi and I are amused by this, but if Li and Du, at their age
are willing to clog their arteries, that's okay with us.
Frankly, I'm not sure Kubayashi knows what French fries are,
since he asks me to suggest a French restaurant.
It would be rude of me to appear better informed, so I say,
let's ask Du to pick the restaurant.
While I write Du, Kubayashi goes back to the only thing that
amuses him these days – watching his cat go out and come in.

About the poet:

Howard J Kogan is a psychotherapist and poet currently living in Ashland, MA.

About the poem:

Regarding this poem; writing for me is about connecting.

~~~~~

April 6

If All There Was

*by Dianne Sefcik*

*As if all there were, were fireflies  
And from them you could infer the meadow  
- Rebecca Elson*

|                                         |                                  |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| if all there was was love               | would you infer night            |
| what would you infer                    | day                              |
|                                         | the Milky Way                    |
| would you infer yourself into existence | the Himalayas                    |
| living in paradise                      | Auroras at the poles             |
| with someone whose life                 | the Southern Cross               |
| you loved as much or more than your     | whales just below the surface    |
| own                                     | swimming                         |
| someone                                 | breaching                        |
| you wanted all the best for             | blazing sparkling wakes of light |

maybe with children  
all inferring more from love

would you all or each  
infer other beings into existence as well  
fireflies  
for instance  
flowers  
waterfalls  
fruit  
a perennial self-seeding  
glorious garden  
maybe vast bluegreen oceans  
full of presences  
all manifestations of love  
inferring themselves  
and others into substance  
invisible  
though we all may be

bejeweled themselves as they shed those  
magical  
bioluminescent planktons of the sea

might you infer Tahiti  
date and coconut palms  
exotic birds  
boreal forests of cedar and spruce  
pine cattail caribou lichen  
sycamore roses grass  
polliwogs  
bears

Africa Asia Turtle Island  
all the land masses  
in rivers oceans lakes

if all there was was love  
what would you infer

About the poet:

Dianne Sefcik lives in rural Albany County.

~~~~~

April 7

Mother Tree

by Patricia Britton

She is coarse wood, not yet planed
rough hewed, long fibered,
like fir, not easy to work with.
taken from the forest and
placed in a warm kiln.
when they have planed off her rustic edges,
fussed with her and are done,
they will have made a fine table out of her

and sell her for a lot of money.

a conference table
in a big-city high-rise corporate boardroom.
they will put cups of coffee on her
and spill them when hot.
they will not know that hurts and stings.
they will feel important, arguing and
chattering their decisions over her.
some will come in her chamber
to whisper secrets of hopes
and plots between themselves, some to tempt
and play at the so fast fury of desire.

she will enjoy the long quiet times
the Sun rolling over her back
as the day proceeds.
she welcomes the lonely ones at night
who address her surfaces
with anointed exotic oils
that have nothing to do with her origins,
but soothe her with memories
of strength and fluids moving
from her roots to her waving branches
at her highest reach in the sky.

memories of messages she had sent
through ancient pathways
to her seeded descendants
and through her leaves,
scents to tell them the knowledge
she had gained
satisfied that she had protected them
as well she could.

creatures climbed up and down
to grab the not yet fallen nut.
she recalls the nests of so many birds
and their songs,
owls talons pressed into her limbs

before the arc of their silent flights.

those stars in the deep nights
that she can no longer see.
only the sparkles of the many-windowed
mute monoliths around her,
and the blue moon, occasionally.
an indeterminate life, not foreseen,
this suspended continuity.
grounded in a mature sense of presence,
she adjusts.

About the poet:

Patricia Britton is a native Hilltowner . She spent many years in the high desert mountains of the Southwest. Bossa Nova, Fado and movie soundtracks permeate the walls of her home. She loves to make soups, posole and tamales. She credits attending the Rensselaerville Poetry Workshop since August 2019 with helping her hone her craft.

~~~~~

April 8

The In Between

*by Tyler E. S. Patti*

I sit here on this clear morning

Hazy headed

In between no one

and myself

Directionless and wandering

Aimless and wondering

Why I sit here next to no one

and beside myself

About the poet:

Tyler E. S. Patti is a graduate of SUNY New Paltz where he studied history and art. A sometimes poet, who resides in the Hudson Valley, Tyler can often be found studying linguistics, illustrating, figure drawing, and sculpting. He sings tenor in the SUNY New Paltz Community Chorale and enjoys theater.

~~~~~

April 9

Record Your Thoughts While Digging A Hole

by Alan Casline

this is not a knife stab

to my weakened heart

when organizing for Everyman you are out there . . .

pick something universal

record your thoughts

while drawing a breath

there is no reference available

that's a problem

you could do a parody

except what is slapstick?

you could rely on memory

we were just talking about

any difference between memory and dream

Record your thoughts while digging a hole

Do I have enough dirt packed firm

around the roots?

About the poet:

Poet Alan Casline is the editor of *Rootdrinker*, a long standing magazine of watershed poetics. He is director of Rootdrinker Institute and uses Benevolent Bird Press to publish the work of fellow writers and artists. He is co-founder and on-going chronicler of The Cloudburst Council, an annual poetics gathering held in the Finger Lakes watershed. He is Board Member and Chair of the Horticultural Committee at Pine Hollow Arboretum. He lives with his wife, Jennifer Pearce, in a suburban neighborhood outside of Albany, New York.

~~~~~

April 10

In Congress Park on a Lunch Break from a Job in Retail

*by Carol Graser*

Hundreds of white clover are flowering  
with purpose. Each small head jiggles

in the breeze and I tell them about the patch  
of violets I mow around each summer

that is wider every spring. I tell them  
because they're listening, about the manager

and her imperious clothes, about her assistant  
who picks at her loose threads, drapes

them like a veil over his dusty head  
They tell me in their chirping voices to hold

that patch of violets close, the eloquent  
purple, those heart-shaped leaves

*But the owner! I shriek, he travels to Tibet  
to meditate on his choice of good fortune*

Their green voices ripple with tiny urgency  
*Our thin roots listen when the cold stone speaks*

The breeze picks up, ruffling their spiky petals  
*Let the hair on your skin listen now*

About the poet:

Carol Graser lives in the Adirondacks of upstate New York and hosts a monthly poetry series at Saratoga Spring's legendary Caffe Lena on the first Wednesday of every month. She has performed her work at various events and venues around NYS. Her work has been published in many literary journals, recently in Devilfish Review, Punch Drunk Press, Trailer Park Quarterly and Minute Magazine. She is the author of the poetry collection, *The Wild Twist of Their Stems* (Foothills Publishing).

~~~~~

April 11

The Ducks

by Tony Fallon

I gazed out the kitchen window pane
The sink was full of dirty dishes
The full winter moon had just arose
On the other side of the lake
The wild ducks were bottom eating
Heads feeding asses up in the air
Two shots rang out behind the stone wall

And the ones surviving flew away
The dogs were in the water in a flash
Bringing back tomorrow's dinner
Divided there's no loser or winner
Each one headed home with his stash
Saying Goodnight to all and Hurray
Now there will be meat and soup for all
And for the dogs a fairly decent share
Of bones and skin after the seating
Plenty of eating on the big drake
Now the dogs can relax and repose
I wonder if the shots stunned the fishes
And they were disturbed in their domain

About the poet:

Tony Fallon was born in Athlone Ireland. Grew up in rural Rahara, Roscommon three miles from school. At the age of 14 in a national competition he tied for first place as Ireland's Top Mathematician, two years later went working full time. Came to America in 1965 at which time he had written one poem.

His columns, poems, short stories and songs have appeared in numerous publications, here and in Ireland. He has been a radio host for the past 43 years on both sides of the Atlantic, presently on WGXC in Acra, NY and RosFM in Ireland. The Irish show at Hofstra University, founded by Tony in 1978, is still on the air. He owned a DJ business in Long Island for 25 years. He is on Facebook and YouTube and has a blog with over 700 poems, ten of which have been recorded as songs in Ireland. He is the Youngest ever Roscommon Man of the Year in America, and Poet Laureate of Cairo NY.

About the poem:

At first it may not seem to rhyme but if you start in the middle and go 1 up 1 down all the way to the top and bottom it rhymes.

~~~~~

April 12

My Mother Teaches Me the Secret of What to Do When You Don't Know Where You Are

by *Ellen White Rook*

On the way back from  
piano lessons  
the smell of meatloaf  
and missed notes snarling  
our hair, she admits  
she doesn't know where  
we are. She says, *Just  
pick someone who looks  
as though they know where  
they're going and  
follow.* We settle  
on the red  
beckoning of a  
dented Ford wagon  
which leads us over  
the black river, down  
a grand boulevard,  
past a graveyard with  
curling iron gates.  
I rest my forehead  
against the window,  
feel the cool, flat night  
seep into my eyes,  
Bach or Beethoven  
on the radio.  
This starts to happen  
frequently. Today,  
I realize we never  
found ourselves lost  
on the way somewhere  
only when almost  
home, where what waited  
was a monotony

of baths, bedtimes, teeth  
brushing, and *One  
more glass of water,*  
tomorrow's lunches,  
laundry, ironing.  
Sometimes we came back  
so late the worn brown  
paper bags and  
cartoon-stamped  
boxes were laid out  
on the counter next  
to slices of bread  
facing each other  
like tombstones or pages,  
impenetrable  
pink bologna on  
one side, bright mustard  
smiles on the other.

About the poet:

Ellen White Rook is a poet and writer living in Delmar, New York. A member of the Evergreen Poetry Workshop and Capital District Poets Workshop, she is completing a Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing at Lindenwood University in May, 2020.

About the poem:

I selected this poem because reading and writing poetry is not only about capturing vivid moments in the present and past, but discovering what we may have missed.

~~~~~

April 13

for Peter

by Dan Wilcox

“Stardust is us”
as words are
that fly with gulls
with fish in the sea

words flip through pages
like the tide
like the taste of salt
in the stars

About the poet:

Dan Wilcox was named one of the 2019 Literary Legends by the Albany Public Library Foundation. You can read his Blog about the Albany poetry scene at dwlcx.blogspot.com. He runs the Third Thursday Poetry Night at the Albany, NY Social Justice Center.

About the poem:

This poem is for my friend Peter Anastas, who wrote extensively & beautifully about Gloucester, MA, & who died in December. The opening quote is from Tom Nattell, Albany poet & activist, another friend who is no longer with us here in this realm.

~~~~~

April 14

Salt Is The Spice Of Life

*by Philip Good*

She had a pocketful of sea salt  
Conversations were monitored  
In dreams where deer became  
Exotic donkeys  
Chives are the first herb of spring  
Horseradish is best served with oysters

A little late snow can hurt the soul

But bouncing back before the Easter bunny  
Arrives sure beats hunting for plastic eggs  
Dropped from a helicopter

When tree branches still look dead  
And a bird gets caught in the wood stove  
It's time to think about green fire breathing dragons  
And little orange lizards

Cult of firearms incites disobedience  
Get perspective on highest holiday  
Remember there's more ocean water  
Than garden soil to spoil

Did the daffodils appear in April?  
They might need more seasoning

About the poet:

Philip Good's chapbook, *Poets In A Box*, is available from [realitybeach.org](http://realitybeach.org). Some places his poems can be found are in *Poetry*, *Hurricane Review* published by Pensacola State College, *Infiltration*, *An Anthology of Innovative Poetry* from the Hudson River Valley and *Helix Syntax*, the 41st Summer Writing Program Magazine, Naropa University.

About the poem:

I created something called *Poem A Month* where I wrote a special poem for each month of the year alongside a visual work. *Salt Is The Spice Of Life* is the poem I wrote for April.

~~~~~

April 15

In This Time of Fear in the Gut

by *Diane Kavanaugh-Black*

In this time of fear in the gut,

I press life to my chest like a schoolgirl,
breathe in and out.

I keep my eyes half shut,
hug my precious opalescent self
kiss my own upper arm
feel its silk skin
tingle my lips back to babyhood
 pink mouth rests on a damp nipple, sated
 whole plump frame sags in comfort
 small and safe
 shifted without its own effort
 enveloped by a warm body
 who chuckles and murmurs and hums.

I am
that mother
of myself.

About the poet:

Diane is a certified Nature and Forest Therapy Guide (a practice also known as “forest bathing”) and when not leading walks, hiking, writing poetry, memoir and essays - or taking nature photos - she works for a state agency and at a city library. Find her photos and meditations at OfTheEssenceBlog.com, and upcoming walks and workshops at OfTheEssenceHolisticWellness.com.

~~~~~

April 16

Tree

*by pmboudreaux*

Hug you  
for the first time in three years  
and you felt good  
I wanted to hold you longingly and hard  
meld your arms with mine

feel the liquidity of life  
where but for time  
nothing is between us

About the poet:

pmboudreaux is a resident of Rensselaerville and a member of the Library's  
Poetry and Writing Groups.

~~~~~

April 17

Inception

by Kate Gillespie

A baby with fever
Ingested the universe.
In its thrashing
Observant physicists
Plot the glorious intercession.
Will it prove
black holes
Bio-inorganic?
Too early for a linguist
We must make the child
Suffer soundlessly
Almost unto death
And let
Its body in turmoil
Map the aftermath
alternate
Galactic
creation

About the poet:

Dr. Kathleen “Kate” Gillespie is a scientist, a published poet, short story writer,
and playwright. As Kate Gillespie, her work has appeared in Gargoyle Magazine,

Silver Blade Magazine, Urbanite Magazine and others. She's a Writer in Residence at Renaissance House Writer's Retreat in Martha's Vineyard, and an assistant professor of biotechnology at SUNY Cobleskill. The "Poetry in Science" workshop she created was held at the 2018 CUNY QUE conference "the world runs on STEAM" and the 2019 CRESTEMER conference at New York Institute of Technology (NYIT). Currently, Dr. Gillespie has begun the "Poetry in Science" reading series in collaboration with CapSci science outreach group to showcase poets that share their work inspired by science.

About the poem:

I was listening to Jaap Blonk's sound poetry, live, a swirl of strange intonations and crackling throat phonetics. Then, this poem invented itself.

~~~~~

April 18

Poem removed at request of poet.

~~~~~

April 19

Retirement Clock

by Mark W. Ó Brien

the crowded landscape of waves
in my head

the noise and unintentional
interference

oscillates, invades and occupies

my mind
a timpani of feelings

Her breathing

shielded

adagio

calm.

~

Suffering from a waking nightmare
of my own design
I lie still
eyes open

slave to
recurring images and frequencies

myself
being crushed
in the cardboard bailer at work

with soundtrack

~

On channel one:

I close the gate
push the start button

as the hydraulic ram
slowly begins its downward journey
somehow I enter the bale chamber

boxes begin to crush

I am deformed and forced inward horribly
over and over in my mind

~

Meanwhile on channel two:
an acoustic chorus sings “The Gloria.”

“Glory to God in the highest
and on earth peace to people of good will
Amen, amen, amennnnn
Glory to God in the highest . . . ”

~

Cerebral operation degrades

ability to transmit or pick up

confuses

becomes that telltale buzz
on my car radio . . .

~

My stomach cloy
as the loop continues unabated
hour after hour

It only stops when I touch her hand.

~

The sun streams through
the morning window

I am exhausted

~

I get up
start the coffee
feed the cat
go back to bed and

we make love.

~

Afterwards,
I stare at the ceiling

and I know
I will have no poem to share
with the group this week
if I don't get up soon.

Thank God for coffee!

About the poet:

Mark W. Ó Brien is a native of upstate New York with familial ties to several Irish counties including Cork and Waterford. He has been widely published at home in the USA and abroad. He is a two-time alumnus of the Blackwater International Poetry Festival: 2014 and again in 2019. "My Childhood Appropriated" (2019) is his fourth poetry collection. You may view a sample poem and purchase a copy of his book at Foothills Publishing. Previously published titles include: Neo-Lethean Dreams (Benevolent Bird Press, 2009), Telluric Voices (Foothills Publishing, 2013), and Lenticular Memories (Benevolent Bird Press, 2014).

~~~~~

April 20

might as well jump

*by Jason Crane*

red to dead, red to donor  
black to donor, black to metal  
a rare cold rain beating down  
turn the key; nothing  
he cleans pools, he says, drenched  
turn it again; nothing  
the Catholic in me apologizes



maybe if I put this here instead?  
turn the key; life!  
the rain, if anything, strengthens

About the poet:

Jason Crane is a poet, interviewer, organizer, dad, spouse, and general maker of trouble. He lives in Tucson, Arizona, where he hosts *The Jazz Session* podcast, co-hosts the podcast *A Brief Chat*, and works as a writer and radio host. His poetry is available at [jasoncrane.org](http://jasoncrane.org).

~~~~~

April 21

Pulmonaria

by *Jessica Rae*

Thou foster child of silence and slow time—
Eyes cast upon the Cimmerian flower—
Primordial bubbling from dreams' core.
You are a Night-Blooming Cereus. Thou
Singing sweet bliss, drawing songs
From deep Earth into thine white blooms
Until dawn.

I am not cacti. My pink
Petals turning bright red with nervous lyrics
Of an unheard terrible pitch. My lid unhinged—
Sound escapes. My throat raw jagged
Glass. Alcatraz binds me with fruitless
Intensity—growing hungry in my own drought—
Tasting dusky abandon. This desert hath no
River to drink. Thirsty new flowers
Bloom. Voices of the forest beckon—
I will grow with them in moist soil, in shade,
In isolation of battle trees. My spilt milk,
My red freckles, my silver arches: I am
The sapphire-blue lungwort. Balm
For anxiety. Growing up through limestone

Of stainless forest. Medicine for the meek.
Singing freedom songs against its spell.

About the poet:

Jessica Rae is an undergrad student, writer, and poet with chronic illness, earning a Bachelor's degree in English with a concentration in Creative Writing. As a resident in the Capital Region, she enjoyed the vast writers' and poets' community, until she relocated to western New York to study at college. Currently, Jessica works at the campus library (except during pandemics), enjoys riding her bike along the Erie Canal (at a social distance of six feet), writing about the environment, social justice issues, and especially writing poetry.

About the poem:

This poem is based on the first line of "Ode on a Grecian Urn" by John Keats.

~~~~~

April 22

Keep Fighting

*by Molly Sullivan (age 14)*

We are still fighting for the girls who are called sluts because of their crop tops and short shorts; who are being told they were "asking for it." For the equal pay that they still haven't earned. For the women who don't have a say over their own bodies in a life altering moment.

Blaming others is not the answer. Take ownership and help protect the victims.

We are still fighting for the African Americans facing racial discrimination years after we thought the fight was over. For the innocent people fighting police brutality. For the people who struggle to find jobs because of a lack of equal opportunity.

Look back. Past leaders didn't teach equality for only their time period.

We are still fighting for the teenagers who just want to express who they are without being bullied. For the people that want to walk into the bathroom they feel most comfortable in. For the couple who just want a wedding cake.

Spread love. The people hating are just missing love from their lives.

We are still fighting for the uneducated people in poverty. For the students being bullied because their clothes are cheap. For the homeless people who were thrown out or abused, and had nowhere else to go.

Don't judge. You haven't read the whole story.

We are still fighting for the women expressing their independence through their hijabs. For the immigrant families traveling here to live the American Dream, only to be separated at the border. For the people being sent back to dangerous countries when they just want a safer life.

Don't believe the stereotypes. Everyone is different and unique.

We are still fighting for the people with disabilities who are imitated and made fun of. For the smartest people who can't find a job simply because of the way they look or speak. For the people who are the subject of disrespectful terms, even though they never did anything wrong.

Stand up if you have a voice. We need to speak for those who can't.

Starting small, we can accept everyone for who they are, and nothing less. We can spread our values to people who need guidance. We can stand up for what's right. Small steps lead to big lunges.

As the sign on my neighbor's front yard said, in three different languages, "No matter where you are from, we're glad you're our neighbor."

This sign doesn't just apply to a small neighborhood in my small town. It's a message on the state level, national level, and even countries all the way across the world.

We need to accept everyone, no matter where they are from. No matter their gender, race, sexual orientation, financial situation, disabilities, or anything else that might make them seem different from you.

There is not one model for human beings. Everyone is unique in their own way.

But deep down inside, we are all human.

About the poet:

Molly Sullivan is a freshman at Mount Greylock High School in Williamstown, Massachusetts. She lives with her two brothers, her mom, and her dad.

About the poem:

This poem was selected as the winner of the 2020 Martin Luther King Jr. essay contest sponsored by the Berkshire Eagle. Ms. Sullivan read the poem at a gathering to celebrate Dr. King's life in Lenox on January 19, 2020.

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April 23

Election Day Twenty-Twenty

for Molly Sullivan

by Dennis Sullivan

If you were adrift
On the open sea
Clinging to a log for life
And at the other end
Was your best friend

And you both saw
Without a doubt
That in five minutes
The log would split

And there'd be room for only one
And competing both would die

Or both of you could float away
Friends for all eternity.

It's us, pard, it's me and you
There's four minutes left
And we're out on the open sea
Will you let go mouthing the poet
"A friend will die for you"
Mocking Fate at you float away

Or will you say, pard,
This town ain't big enough
For me and you, draw!

And me the scorned pard
Sounding like a lawman says
I'm gonna take you down!

The log diminishing
The time near done.

Will it be you, pard,
Or will it be me
Destined for eternity?

People say they love the All
Then choose A over B
Spitting little beads of anger
Like tears in need of expiation.

It's no time to sob
There is no place for sorrow
Passion is the measure of worth
Which I can prove.

I say this because
You deride eternity, pard,

It's me on the open sea
And you deride eternity

It doesn't matter
I'm letting go
I can take your scorn no more

Drifting into night
In silence I wonder
Will I find a friend in heaven?

About the poet:

Dennis Sullivan is a poet who lives in Voorheesville, New York with his wife Georgia Gray and their feline family: Clare; Catherine (aka Slinky); Stephanie; Juniper; and Fiddler.

About the poem:

Dennis wrote this poem in response to his granddaughter Molly's poem, published yesterday on this site. He said it offers a different take on what she was saying about justice. He has shared it with her and they have begun to discuss how each poem reflects similar ideals.

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April 24

Dad

*by Paige Persak*

I cannot wake him,  
no matter how loudly I say his name  
or jostle his shoulder.  
I hold his hand, which is cold.  
I wonder if he's doing reconnaissance,  
checking out the next world,  
what it's like,  
who's there.

Other times, he wakes  
and needs to go to the bathroom,  
preferring not to use what his nurses  
euphemistically call his “briefs.”  
He becomes agitated,  
supremely annoyed with me  
for preventing him from  
getting out of bed  
or off his wheelchair,  
insisting he wait for his aides,  
who help him accomplish  
this previously private act.  
His voice is first urgent, even angry;  
the Senior Olympic champion  
athlete emerges,  
he is strong again.  
He swats my restraining hands away.  
After I manage to keep him  
in his bed  
against his will  
he begins to plead,  
which breaks my heart.  
He gives in, gives up, looks terminally weary.  
In these moments I’ve become  
not his obedient child  
but a stern,  
if loving, boss.

About the poet:

Paige Persak is a writer, poet, and editor who lives in Rensselaerville, NY, where she works in the Rensselaerville Library and is a firefighter with the Rensselaerville Volunteer Fire Department. She has degrees in philosophy and child development, and facilitates the Philosophy & Poetry Group that meets in the library. A retired early childhood educator, her six children and four grandchildren live in Chicago and Queens.

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April 25

Don't Put Plastic Flowers on My Grave

by Sally Rhoades

Don't put plastic flowers on my
Grave. Don't insult me with
the plastic stems that never
die or get old or retain
the exuberance of life.

I have lived raw my
life as it came along, and I
picked raspberries & watched
as the man next door went
tree to tree to gather the sap
of the maple.

Don't put plastic flowers on
my grave for I have lived
with tears & rage & screams
& heartbreak.

I have earned the rose
vibrant in smell & color &
with thorns. I have earned
the daisy with its smiling
face. I have even earned
the gladiolus with their deep
multi-color flowers.

There is grief so potent it
chills my heart, at times. But
I am free to choose my way
after adulthood & I have
found my way to the opening
of my dreams to have a family,
to be a reporter, to work in theatre
and to be the mother my mother

could never be, as the men
in her life trifled with her
heart & my father's meanness
took us away from her.

What awfulness I have
lived & so don't put
plastic flowers on my grave,
I have earned the real
thing.

About the poet:

Sally Rhoades has been a part of the Albany poetry scene since 1990 doing her first open mic at the QEII run by Tom Nattell. She divides her time between NYC and Albany and poetry/plays and performance. Her performance work has been presented throughout the U.S. and Montreal. She has been published in various journals and on-line publications. She received her MA in creative writing in 1995 from the University of Albany.

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April 26

American Dream

*by Paul Horton Amidon*

When I was a kid almost everybody  
was making ends meet,  
window shopping on weekends,  
reaching for the next rung on the ladder.

None of us saw demand  
for what we made, what we did,  
start to slow like a locomotive going uphill,  
some layoffs here, a bankruptcy there.

It was gradual, bad news rolling in  
like a fog at night, till the blues

pushed dance music off the charts,  
and the American dream walked away  
from Main Street, thumbed a ride out of town.

The factory that fed us for years  
faded into a collage of dusty windows,  
rusty padlocks, weeds growing up  
through cracks in parking lot pavement.

At the bottom the American dream itself  
was unemployed, on the road looking for work.  
We had been priced out of the market  
by leaner, hungrier workers  
chasing the Mexican dream, the Chinese dream.

The factory still stands, filled with old machinery,  
cobwebs and ghosts, but grandchildren  
with computers and college educations  
have come home, started something new,  
and word is out that they're hiring.

There's talk the dream  
is on the road again,  
headed back this way.

About the poet:

Paul Horton Amidon lives in Albany, and is retired from his job of flying a desk for  
the State of New York.

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April 27

The Circle and Hook Pond

by Tim Verhaegen

It's so quiet. Lavishly, lusciously quiet.
Silence, a commodity, something to be sought.

Someplace to be sought - the quiet. So quiet.
A soothing breeze. Small leaves wave.
Two dogs - free - pals - roam this entire town.
Something on their collars jingle - hint their passing.
Their collars jingle now - say they've come home - the sun at the same place -
each day.

1965 and 2019 at the same time.
You and the other you at the same time.
On this street, along these houses, the people are.
Where?
An older boy waves, he's too old to want to play.
But there he is, there he was, right there, right here.
Like those dogs. Just where the sun is. Day after day.
Everybody, every thing, coming home, this time of day.

And here. All this expanse. All this green. All this wild.
Look around.
Around.
Around.
Can every living thing possibly be so still? All this room around you.
So still. Like you wished it. Made it happen.

A rabbit, a dot of a bunny - makes his move - way over there - long across this
field.
How funny you can see him, so far away - even this large pond - is dead still.
You're looking at him - then it occurs to you - he's looking at you . . .
Too. You've connected.

The fog has climbed the dunes. The fog carries the sea's sounds.
It will be dark soon.
Other dots have appeared in all directions.
without your command, without your notice.
You turn slow. Count them. Smiling.
This life. Your life, their life, always, always will be,
entwined.

About the poet:

Tim Verhaegen, 60 years old this August, has been writing prose and poetry all his life.

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April 28

I would be a crow today

*by Linda Sonia Miller*

loud, obnoxious, stark  
against these winter hills  
caw unadorned  
yellow-beaked  
dark-cloaked  
witch in flight  
hold nothing back  
voice loud  
from a screaming heart  
why settle for titmouse  
oriole something  
with a song  
when the world is hard  
as ice, news is bleak  
days too short  
too long  
brow-beating cold  
tenement grim  
all you can do  
is screech, screech  
screech

About the poet:

Linda fell in love with Rensselaerville 15 years ago, and remains inspired by its natural beauty and the kindness of its residents. Her work has appeared in a

variety of journals as well as in her collections *brieflybriefly* and *Something Worth Diving For*.

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April 29

Parked Cars

by Mary Panza

Sitting on the stoop
I was unaware I was being
Admired
By a boy in the window
Across the street
In the apartment
Above the
Barbershop
Who would break my heart
Years before I
Broke
Him

Sitting on the stoop waiting for my friends to get me
In a
K car
I was unaware
Of what was to come
For me and that
Boy

My family
His family
The hospital stay
I was too young for him in the beginning and
Too old in the
End

See

I was just
Sitting on the stoop looking to the
Corner
For a
K car
My friends
I just wanted to get off the stoop and go
Somewhere

January
Midnight
33 years later
A text
I waited until daylight to
Look
What were you thinking

I cursed you up and down

Sometimes I still
Do

For you I will
Remain
That girl
On the
Stoop
You admired
From a window
In the apartment
Above the barbershop
Across the street

About the poet:

Mary Panza is Vice President of Albany Poets.

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April 30

Untitled #10

*after Diane Arbus*

*by Alan Catlin*

What was it the Shakers sang?

It's a gift to be simple.

Applied here in the asylum  
for women with mental handicaps,  
where most of the people are smiling.  
Seem unassuming, unself-conscious,  
able to anticipate, to experience,  
to enjoy dress-up day, an outing  
on the town. Such joy is not easily  
understood in people well past  
childhood's end.

May seem incongruous, indecent even,  
in a world where full faculty humans  
are willful freaks.

Here's to all the ones born deformed,  
too small, too tall, with too many limbs,  
not enough, with genders all mixed up,  
not one, or the other, or both.

Here's to all those others, who can only  
have a normal life among others as messed up  
as they are. Who live in sideshows,  
curiosity cabinets, normal people look  
inside in order to feel superior to another.

Here's to all those portraits of the women  
of the asylum, in their dress-up clothes,  
in their homemade costumes, their bathing

suits, paired with a special friend, holding hands and feeling good.

About the poet:

Alan Catlin had two full length collections published in January of 2020, Asylum Garden after Van Gogh from Dos Madres and Lessons in Darkness from Luchador Press. He has recently finished a collection of reflections with poems on the life and work of Diane Arbus called How Will the Human Heart Endure from which this poem is taken.