



# Rensselaerville Library

Preserving a historical gathering place

Promoting a life-long love of learning

Fostering personal connections

**Celebrating National Poetry Month 2021**

**Poem-A-Day**

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

**showcasing different voices, styles, subjects**

**2000+ pageviews**

**Enjoy!**

**Tom Corrado, Curator, Poem-A-Day**

**Heidi Carle, Director, Rensselaerville Library**

April 1

A Sudden Urge to Do Pushups

*by Charlie Rossiter*

A sudden urge to do pushups  
has come over me, and so I do.  
I'm disheartened to find  
I can barely knock off a dozen  
and I can't do even those  
with great form.

The pandemic continues  
to ravage the world and  
I have friends with cancer.  
I'm sure that's why mortality  
is on my mind.

The cosmos is speaking to me;  
the message is simple.  
It says, Carpe Diem.  
Carpe the damn Diem, Charlie  
while you still can.

Charlie Rossiter hosts a twice-monthly podcast through which he produces The Open Mic of the Air. For guidelines to submit your poem, go to [www.poetryspokenhere.com](http://www.poetryspokenhere.com). To access the archive of 150+ podcasts go to <https://soundcloud.com/poetry-spoken-here>. He lives and writes in Bennington, VT and his recent books are available at [www.foothillspublishing.com](http://www.foothillspublishing.com).

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April 2

Winter Light

*by Dan Wilcox*

The white light at my window blinds me  
I go to pull the shades & can't see the string  
This is supposed to be inspiring:  
"Shedding light on the subject"  
uplifting: "I am the ... Light"  
a guide: "lighting the way."

But I can't see, can't feel whatever  
it is the light wants me to feel  
I'd rather pull the shade, step into the closet  
pull the blanket over my head

become a smelly hermit in the back of the cave  
tell the mail carrier "he's gone to Afghanistan"  
or Brazil, anywhere but here

trying to find the quiet buried  
in the darkness underneath the light.

Although Dan Wilcox once worked as a dishwasher & as a short-order cook, he has never driven a cab, or played professional baseball. For most of his career he worked as a bureaucrat & wrote poetry. He was named one of the 2019 Literary Legends by the Albany Public Library Foundation. He claims to have "the World's largest collection of photos of unknown poets." Currently he organizes poetry events in Albany, NY & is an active member of Veterans For Peace.

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April 3

On Sitting Unnoticed in a Room

*by Barbara Vink*

When I was a young woman  
I led with my breasts  
straight-backed, with cleavage,  
I was confident  
on legs impossibly long  
and slim, men  
looked at me with shining eyes,  
at my companions  
with envy; I preened,  
my hair swung  
in the colors of the week  
scenting the air with  
flowers and musk,  
my eyes, black-rimmed  
and sultry, commanded a room;  
with shirts cut low and skirts  
cut high, I was full  
of pride and who  
I thought I was.

Who am I now?

Barbara Vink is retired, still tired, struggling to answer the question, Who am I now?

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April 4

I'm Looking for the Viewfinder

*by Marge Merrill*

I only research soft things  
these days

the back story  
in black and white photographs  
looking for poetry that leans in  
to paint by number

I'm looking for the viewfinder—  
it was summer  
grass is patchy

venetian blinds keep out light  
and the community  
of the long porch

poor man's  
faux brick siding  
beneath the porch—  
I think there is a sheet of that  
in the garage

old woman  
in cobbler apron  
looking severe—  
but her hands are the story,  
was she pulled away from  
punching bread dough or  
boiling starch  
on the stove or  
tending to her vegetable patch  
out back

an Italian hen  
brood gathered at her hips

the tavern across the street  
cigarette and  
liquor smells  
a quick burst of laughter  
balding bartender in the window  
grinning

Mr. Axel  
in his orderly candy store  
presiding over children  
who cannot decide how to  
fill tiny brown bags

a black and white pony  
white blaze  
white nose  
posed  
the small girl  
in gingham print dress  
workman's bandana  
cowboy hat pushed back  
hands on the pommel

Monty and Mose  
Mrs. Gabe and  
the policeman's wife  
just outside the frame

the photographer  
tells the pony to smile.

This poem looks outside the frame of a "pony photo" circa 1953.

Marge Merrill is a life-long resident of western New York and is retired from the health care field. She has read at local venues and is a former host of the Screening Room Wednesday Series. Her work has appeared in Beyond Bones Vol 1 and the anthology A Celebration of WNY Poets. Her chapbook There Is Music in the Rattle of The Chains was published by Foothills Press in August 2020.

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April 5

Web

*by Marilyn McCabe*

Lately everything is

astounding me,  
miles of phone lines,

garage door openers,

spatulas,

my shoes.

What is the way

to pay tribute to glory?

The aspen knows:

applause with every breeze.

How best to enflame

the holy fire?

Light

is on my face

filtered through glowing leaves.

Around my feet

a tumble of extraordinary

rocks pocked, striated

pink, gold. A frenzy

of riverdrops,

riot of current.

One spider is rapidly

tying me here,

its lines like spokes

to a spinning wheel.

We are silver,  
quivering.

This poem first appeared in Stone Canoe, 2020.

Marilyn McCabe's poetry and videopoems have appeared in a variety of literary magazines, festivals, and galleries. She has two books of poems, *Perpetual Motion* and *Glass Factory*, and two chapbooks, *Rugged Means of Grace* and *Being Many Seeds*. She blogs about writing and reading at [MarilynOnaRollwordpress.com](http://MarilynOnaRollwordpress.com).

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April 6

Weightless

*by Philomena Moriarty*

My mother cut a hole  
In fake wood paneling  
put in a picture  
the Sacred Heart of Jesus  
heart exposed, crowned with thorns

On the red carpet beneath  
my brothers held me down  
I couldn't breathe  
slapped my face  
with my own hand

At five  
my own tender organ  
shrank  
the skin around it  
thinner

The other day  
I recognized  
anyone could wound me  
even a toddler pointing  
a grocery isle away

Shame half a step away  
it doesn't take  
a gunman to shoot me down  
the bullets are already loaded

deep inside

Sometimes I am a canary  
in a cage singing  
looking only at the bars  
while across the way  
the hatch is wide open

Sometimes the weight of their bodies  
makes me feel imprisoned  
but Jesus commands you  
to get up and walk

I came to realize  
I love those boys

The air of love  
flows freely inside and outside  
the cage  
I taste the sweetness of this freedom

Free myself from  
the weight of the past  
fly into the uncertainty of this  
present moment

The door is open

Philomena Moriarty is a local poet living in East Greenbush and author of *My Moon Self*. When we were able to do open mics she shared her words and hopes to do so again. Her poems often have psychological and spiritual themes. She is also a psychotherapist in private practice in East Greenbush.

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April 7

Imagining Companion

*by Bob Sharkey*

*East Latham 6/16/2033*

Beatrice without buttons  
dreams in cinnamon  
and cardamom

revolts  
regards only  
the soul's home  
suffused  
unquenched

walks gingerly  
under a second raging sun  
peppers me  
with original then ribald  
questions  
a pure turmeric pelican  
turns  
revolves

Bob Sharkey is a big time Zoom open mic reader, is active on the board of the Hudson Valley Writers Guild, and is editor of the annual Stephen A. DiBiase international poetry contest.

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April 8

If She Were Gone

*by Frank S. Robinson*

"I am so very sorry,"  
I imagine the doctor saying,  
"We did everything we could."  
And it would fully hit me,  
Her being gone.

We're told, by way of consolation,  
That death's eternal nothingness  
Merely reprises  
The time before one's birth,  
Which didn't hurt.

I'd try to apply that logic now,  
As though just returning  
To my life before her.  
But looking ahead  
Is not like looking back.  
There is no symmetry.  
All those years I'd spent

Hopefully visualizing  
What she might be like,  
The future love I'd craved.  
Revisiting that hunger  
Only heightening the loss.

But could there be a reprise?  
Once again that piquant envisioning  
Of she who might arrive,  
Looking with newly keen eyes  
At women all around me,  
And imagining yet others still  
A pretty picture of renewal,  
Of resurrection even.  
But it would be impossible,  
All other females in the world  
Defined and immured  
By their quintessential essence  
Of not being her.

A not-her-ness indeed  
Infusing now my whole existence.  
I'd always spent much time alone,  
But solitude and solitariness  
Are not the same.  
And during all those hours  
When I am by myself,  
Or so it seems,  
She is there.  
My every thought and action  
Playing out upon a platform,  
My operating system underneath,  
All built of her-ness.

And now I'd know there's nothing  
I can ever think or do again,  
Nothing I can ever touch,  
No hour of the day, no moment,  
That won't be permeated  
By the absence.

But all this is hypothetical  
It hasn't happened yet,  
And maybe never will for me.

And when I am no more,  
How will it be  
For her?

Frank S. Robinson is a graduate of NYU Law School, and was an administrative law judge (1977-97) at the New York Public Service Commission. He is the author of eight books including Albany's O'Connell Machine (1973), Children of the Dragon (a novel), and The Case for Rational Optimism (2009). Robinson is a professional coin dealer; married to the poet Therese Broderick; and was the first man to walk on the moon. His blog is [www.rationaloptimist.wordpress.com](http://www.rationaloptimist.wordpress.com).

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April 9

At the Cancer Clinic

*for M. M.*

*by Howard J Kogan*

He was waiting for his chemo  
she, an infusion of platelets.  
They'd seen each other there before  
and when he waved,  
she came to sit with him.  
They didn't know how much time they'd have,  
she felt an urgency to tell him who she was.  
I was a hidden child in Poland,  
do you know what that means?  
I was six or seven when the war ended,  
the only survivor in my family.  
The people who hid me didn't want me,  
I was too nervous, too needy,  
the Joint\* took me to Israel with other orphans,  
we grew up on a kibbutz.  
When I was old enough, I went to Spain,  
Barcelona, to be a flamenco dancer,  
I thought of myself as a Gypsy,  
I don't know why; they were hated too.  
Sometimes you just want to be somebody else.  
I married three times, the first, the best  
died young, the second I left, the third left me.  
After Barcelona, I went back to Israel  
toured with a flamenco troupe,  
we went to the United States,

Argentina, Spain then Israel again.  
I moved to Big Sur with my third husband,  
that was some place!  
Now I'm here with my daughter,  
though I'm not always sure where here is.  
I have three children -  
his name was being called -  
please wait for me after,  
I haven't even begun to tell you.

\* Joint refers to the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

Howard J Kogan is a retired psychotherapist and poet/writer. His poetry books, *A Chill in the Air* and *Indian Summer* are available from the publisher, Square Circle Press or Amazon. His novel, *No View*, is available from Amazon in kindle.

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April 10

Red Light, Green Light

*by Paul Horton Amidon*

A solitary figure at a place  
where cars must stop,  
old clothes and a cardboard sign  
that says "Homeless" or "Need Help,"  
he waits like an angler by a stream  
with his appeal to sympathy, generosity,  
guilt, whatever emotion it can conjure.

His appearance dredges up  
a thicket of thoughts about skinflints,  
bleeding heart pleas, biblical admonitions,  
solicitations that flood my mailbox.

Skinflints aside, all who see him wonder:  
"Should I give him something?"  
but there is no way to know  
if he is deserving, desperate,  
down on his luck, or a parasite,  
a junkie collecting for his next fix.

The line of cars contracts  
as the red light grows old,

bringing me closer, yet I never know,  
until the green light brings down  
the curtain on this drama,  
if I will hand out some money,  
or leave the window up and drive on.

Paul Horton Amidon lives in Albany, has assembled a group of poems for a book,  
pondered its prospects for widespread acceptance, and done nothing with it.

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April 11

Faith

*by Tom Bonville*

I believe in believing,  
like a child, believing  
in Christmas, presents under the tree  
for being good all year.  
I believe in God, in a church full with believers  
at Christmas Eve and Easter church services,  
singing and praying to the baby Jesus, the risen Jesus,  
for His very being, for the life He lived,  
for the life to come that He so promised.

I also believe in doubt,  
I have lived in doubt,  
I know a voiceless God, as quiet  
as an empty church  
of which there are many.  
I believe there is not  
enough good in the world,  
but whose fault is that?  
I cannot blame God for everything.

Even with faith,  
I can still believe in reason  
when faith is defied with honest doubt.  
And when faith comes back,  
against all reason,  
fresher than the first day of spring,  
faith speaks louder  
than doubt. I believe faith makes  
an orphan of reason.

You see, I only want to understand.

Belief will follow,  
it must,

there cannot be doubt in dying.  
It is too lonely a place to go.

Tom Bonville lives in the Hudson Valley, has had poems published in Up The River, and regularly participates in Rensselaerville poetry groups.

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April 12

Science Student

*by Mimi Moriarty*

The month we moved to the country  
a ragged coyote limped across the field

into the woods, squinted at me before  
he blended into the hemlock.

I wondered - omen? Could this be  
a warning or just a natural occurrence

in the woods, a diseased animal  
in pursuit of something to kill

or drawn, as I am, into the deep  
psyche of wilderness.

My lack of knowledge is appalling,  
the difference between a groundhog

and a hedgehog, the alarm of squirrels  
vs. birdsong. It's as if I'm tone deaf

or blindfolded. I must ask the simplest  
questions, the gray bird with the white

breast? the leaning tree with the white  
bark? I yawned through botany with  
its useless Latin vines, skipped biology

taught by a nun in a habit, now I thumb

through pages of wild weeds,  
poisonous or safe to tramp through?

The jumping insects, the ones boring  
holes in the house, the palm-shaped

leaves growing under the steps,  
I must have a name! Unrestrained,

I have become a detective, I daydream  
the discovery of a new species

which I name Americanus Moriarti,  
a modest recognition of my curiosity.

Conclusion: there is a god  
and this god names all new things.

Mimi Moriarty lives in the Town of New Scotland, and continues to dabble in  
poetry, even though her main interest at the moment is finding a mask that fits  
properly.

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April 13

How Will I Know?

*by Edie Abrams*

Hoodlums prowled and pounced  
unsparingly and without penalty.  
The scar on my father's face  
a daily reminder.

He slaved on a farm, and for  
the rest of his life  
he eschewed tomatoes  
because of the slew of crop one summer.

He ate tomato sandwiches,  
ketchup sandwiches, tomato soup,  
tomatoes and more tomatoes,  
enough tomatoes for

the rest of his life.

And it was a daily reminder  
when my mother served tossed salad.

I never asked  
my family  
when they knew  
it was time  
to escape.

Was it Kristallnacht, the breaking of glass windows?  
Was it the good Aryans barking "Judenfrei,"  
"Jews will not replace us!" through the streets?  
Was it the public saluting of the golden Fuehrer?

Or, was it Congress abetting the thugs?

How will I know when to pack my bags?

In her young life, Edie Abrams worked as a researcher for the NYS Legislature's  
Assembly. Now she tutors 3rd and 4th graders at the Hebrew Academy and works in  
her garden during the summer.

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April 14

Ode to My Love Charm

*- the philtrum between upper lip and nose*

*by Therese L. Broderick*

I've named my own, Madonna Filumena  
after the patron saint of infants  
painted on chapel walls with a martyr's throat

slit—this soft dip of flesh between my lip and nose,  
funnel for the pilgrimage of sweat and tears.

A hammock for drowsy snot.

Rhyming with crumb, thumb, yum—luring the tongue  
out of my mouth and up over the lip to flick  
a lick of the Greek φίλτρον

meaning love charm.

And yet the holy books call it the seal  
placed by an angel's fingertip  
upon a newborn's creaseless skin,

erasing the child's heavenly omniscience.  
Did you know  
that today we can take our daughters  
to the piercing parlor for a tiny diamond

speared through the little girl's flesh  
like a butterfly's body tuft  
pinned?

Praise the lemur that still has one,  
siphoning the odor of a mate in heat—  
gill on a snout.

Once I smeared mine on purpose with a lipstick  
branded Envy. Unmasked, it's  
my one erogenous zone with no privacy.

COVID-era porn charming all those clinics'  
fresh, extra long Q-tips.

Therese L. Broderick is a poet living in Albany, New York (USA). Her favorite  
definition of poetry is, "language in orbit" (Seamus Heaney).

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April 15

Somewhere

*by A. C. Everson*

The messiah lives in the city  
Where anointed feet  
Trode concrete  
Maybe giving blessings  
To masked faces  
They pass by

Someone lives on  
Another Way in a town

That may give  
Such direction without  
Much help to find it  
It's not an easy street  
After all

You wonder if it's true  
For all those who do  
Live in Cockeysville  
Are they really  
Cocky

A. C. Everson is a homegrown poet who once upon better days was a performance artist doing a thing she calls Breaking My Art. Where her poetry came together with her piñatas (that she made) stuffed with more things she made that she wanted whomever was there to have to remember her by. She continues to write and create but at present is not breaking anything on purpose or throwing things at anyone.

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April 16

Suzie, the Good Dog

*by Mike Burke*

He dug the grave in the fall  
before the ground froze  
she wouldn't last thru winter.

As she got worse  
he would pull her up by the hips  
so she could walk down the ramp.  
He hid her daily pain pill  
in a slice of baloney.

Long gone were the days  
she used to follow him when he walked  
throughout the grove after supper,  
sit beneath him when he read  
at the picnic table,  
lay above him in the grass when he relaxed  
in the evening on the rocks at water's edge.  
He couldn't bring himself  
to ask the neighbor

who shot his own dog  
to do the same to Suzie.

He took her to the vet.  
His wife sat in the back seat  
with Suzie's head in her lap  
stroking her calling her the good dog.  
The vet came out to the car  
in her raincoat with the needle  
Suzie didn't see it coming.  
His wife closed Suzie's eyes  
and they headed back home to the grave  
Suzie's head still resting on her lap.  
Suzie the good dog.

A native Vermonter, Mike resides in the nation's oldest city, St Augustine, Florida,  
where he feels right at home.

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April 17

Anchoress: 2020

*by Pam Clements*

Alone in my anchorhold  
people bring me food,  
slip it onto the porch  
so we need not face  
each other in life.

We talk through  
my one small window,  
keeping our distance,  
wimpled and veiled.

I sit in my chair,  
look out that window  
birds are feeding on the ground.

Alone with my simple goods,  
food, books,  
my little dog  
I wear the same few garments  
over and over.

Lessons of abnegation  
and patience,  
waiting to be seen  
waiting in silence  
for silence  
for acceptance  
for revelation  
that may or may not come.

Pam Clements retired from teaching medieval literature at Siena College just in time to weather the COVID pandemic along with a few personal catastrophes. In social isolation with her dog Milo, she is coping by cooking, baking, and writing. She has published poems and essays in a variety of journals.

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April 18

Bear Swamp Herons in Quarantine

*by Patricia Britton*

a pandemic,  
the humans shutter in their quarantined homes  
while the herons say "Let's give it a Go!"  
"Oh, Home Sweet Home, how lovely!"  
a year ago, males repaired nests, offered the females  
grasses and mosses to weave ovoid shapes in the high hemlocks  
of the rookery, readying at the end of March.  
three days later all left suddenly not to return.  
a dystopian mystery.

through spring and early summer, no clattering of beaks,  
no Mother and Father vigilant sentinels above the nest,  
no chicks with open mouths  
craning their long necks,  
no chicks standing on the rim,  
long shaky legs to lift forth with  
untried wings to glide through barren trees.  
the swamp held emptiness, shrouded after their long decades.  
in the storms of early summer, frogs murmured  
gloriously in the full moon, glad not to be food.  
a rising moon sadder, canopy of hemlock reflections  
without the halos of heron's grey elegance  
shimmering in the waters.

homing, an instinct.  
Oh how they want to be home for their chicks.  
Bald Eagle hiding his residency, no glory symbol  
predator, waiting for their succulent eggs.

inherent wisdom sent them onward from danger.  
here they come again, another spring, yearning  
"Home Sweet Home, so Sweet!"  
while the humans hover in their homes quaking  
pining for normalcy, certain continuity.  
the herons call to each other, form their hierarchies of order  
within the trees, start the way towards brooding  
and the Bald Eagle at the pond a mile farther.

Patricia Britton is a native of the western Albany County Hilltowns. She has spent decades working with non-profits in the arts, museums, and historic properties. She joined the Rensselaerville Poetry Workshop in the summer of 2019, looks forward to when open mics can recur safely, and continues to hone her craft.

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April 19

The Wind Steals Thunder

*by Dianne Sefcik*

thunder  
was a long way west  
well out of earshot

they say a tornado  
sounds like  
an oncoming train

wind  
grew talons  
snatched thunder's sound

my instinct  
to dive down the stairs  
hunker in a cave

raced ahead  
clutching that fireball  
igniting the air  
just above the trees

never kicked in  
entirely mesmerized  
by the sudden presence  
of that strange dragon wind

thunder  
right behind  
hurled bolts  
bomb after bomb

by leaves catapulting eastward  
flying trees  
sideways rain  
slamming the kitchen wall

Dianne Sefcik lives in rural Albany County, NY. The Derecho, a widespread, long-lived windstorm, that moved through New York and New England on October 7, 2020, inspired this poem.

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April 20

Off To America

*by Tony Fallon*

I had saved and borrowed money and in a week would sail  
I said goodbye to my parents now both old and frail  
The farm we were living on was way too small to split  
I was the eldest I didn't want to cause family conflict  
They had raised and nurtured me like all of the others  
Now I was leaving them and my sister and my brothers  
Belying my doubts and fears I put on some bravado  
Knowing I might never come back from Colorado  
My uncle never returned he was a cattle baron  
A man who had made it big many miles from Aran  
The uncle being a kind man sent many an envelope  
The American dollars inside helped my parents cope  
It was he who lent me the passage and money for trains  
To get me from New York to his ranch way out on the plains  
I had said farewell to all my friends in the parish  
Mates I might see no more but memories to cherish  
My father brought me in the curragh as far as Oranmore  
By the Limerick Cork border my feet were feeling sore  
A kindly farmer let me sleep ten hours in his shed  
With breakfast in the morning and four slices of bread  
With my sore feet daily I was not making great progress  
And each day on the road I found myself walking less and less  
The weather was rainy and I was walking in wet shoes  
On my right foot I had corns on the left an ugly bruise  
But I kept pressing on by day and at night I strove  
And anyone I'd meet I'd ask how far more to Cobh (Cove)  
The ticket said at one on Thursday the boat would depart  
But when I finally got to the quay my world fell apart  
The liner stayed in the bay and did not come in to dock  
And the last tender with passengers left at twelve o'clock  
I saw the last passenger board and wave us all goodbye  
Someone said the next boat to New York was not until July  
My boat had left on its first trip across the wild Atlantic  
And I had missed the maiden voyage of the great Titanic.

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.

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April 21

YOU WANT TO KNOW

*by Nancy Dyer*

YOU want to know WHAT I saw today?

Today, I saw a woman in a wheel chair lift her right hand and arm using two fingers that worked from the other hand.  
Today, I heard a nurse quote from the Bible, "Make sounds of JOY"....

"How beautiful," I thought to myself....

Today, I saw the Chinese woman on the Northwest corner at the 66th Street subway exit,  
again asking for money while singing a song.

I have seen her there many times over the last few years.

And, when, I had seen enough and heard enough: the impatient horn-honking drivers,  
sidewalk washers,  
guards at the neighborhood bank, bakery workers advising us to buy cakes for tomorrow's birthday tomorrow,  
the piercing sirens of ambulance runners hawking business....

And when I'd seen enough, judged, and lost my peace,  
I LIFTED MY EYES and LOOKED AS FAR AND WIDE AS I COULD,

seeing and hearing everything  
without having to attend to anything  
and returned myself from judgement to non-recognition of the walkers,  
the screamers,  
the pre-pandemic panhandlers,  
cabbies,  
the honkers,  
and everything else that kept me in my mind instead of my HEART....

Nancy Dyer worked in sales and marketing at American Express followed by a decade teaching yoga at Integral yoga NYC in the tradition of Swami Satchidananda. She spends most of her time in upstate New York near where her father grew up in East Berne.

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April 22

Spontaneous Sonnet #53

*by Mark W. Ó Brien*

Your memory  
and its recovery of  
some dead world  
that looks so new.  
The prickly beards  
of tribal kings  
and a peeled moon  
dreaming profoundly.  
Are you eligible for  
the COVID vaccine?  
You have a Zoom  
meeting in 90 minutes.  
These might be the last  
thoughts that you think.

Mark W. Ó Brien is an alumnus of the Fermoy International Poetry Festival 2014 and the Blackwater International Poetry Festival 2019. He lives in the Helder Hills of upstate New York. Mark retired in 2020 and blogs at <https://spontaneousonnets.blogspot.com>. His published works include but are not limited to the following: *My Childhood Appropriated* (2019, Foothills Publishing), *Lenticular Memories* (2014, Benevolent Bird Press), *Telluric Voices* (2013, Foothills Publishing), and *Neo-Lethean Dreams* (2009, Benevolent Bird Press).

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April 23

Song of an Eventful Retreat

*by Alan Casline*

cannot get myself to start what I cannot release  
an altar open and scattered by thunderous winds  
raised structure where sacrifices are burned  
center of ritual rises with sweet-smelling smoke  
alternating sun and rain which may now change places  
how quick the change I am drawn to?  
paper fragments a few words and letters left  
path to any corner is never flat  
most downhill a reflection of misery  
find one by separate branches  
climbed upward between tree limbs  
step off onto your treehouse's deck  
move with care to a protected corner  
here the rain has washed things clean  
sit protected and light her father's pipe

Poet Alan Casline is the director of Rootdrinker Institute and uses Benevolent Bird Press to publish the work of fellow writers and artists. He has planted over a thousand trees on property he owns in the northern foothills of the Adirondacks in St. Lawrence County. He serves on the Board of Pine Hollow Arboretum and has an interest in learning about tree species, permaculture, and healthy natural habitats. He lives with his wife, Jennifer Pearce, in a suburban neighborhood outside of Albany, New York.

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April 24

Cat and Mouse

*by Tim Verhaegen*

They've mowed a row through the field  
The grass is taller than you  
Green-green, soft, lush  
like Nan Hamilton's living room rug

You can hide there, unseen  
Under a big sky  
You can twirl, skip

Do whatever you want  
You can sing too  
You start with a whisper  
then let it go

A man sees you  
You try to walk away  
But you're walking farther into the field  
It gets dark

You think about turning around  
But then you'd have to walk toward the man  
He'd like that  
You'd have to walk past him  
You'd have to walk near him  
He'd like that  
All the while looking funny at you  
Men always seem to be looking funny at you

You stop, act like you've seen a bug  
Not looking at the man  
He walks by, nonchalant

You like men and men like you

You go to your alone place  
Somebody comes  
You're not alone

You leave your alone place  
They follow you  
You like when they follow you  
You're scared but you like when they follow you

Excitement, suspense, fear - it's all there  
It's like a game  
Cat and Mouse

Don't let them get too close  
Don't let them slip too far back  
Nobody has taught you this game  
How do you know it?

You know but you don't know  
You feel that way about everything

You run away to be alone  
You run away to know the feeling  
You're fumbling and numb otherwise  
It all seems vague

They always know how to find you

They want you  
You feel wanted  
You feel good to feel wanted  
You ache to grow up

You know this when you look at them  
When you hear certain songs  
When you feel sparks flying back and forth across the field

Tim Verhaegen has lived in upstate New York for 42 years. He writes poetry and prose. He was raised in a large, overcrowded, traffic-congested town on Long Island. He attended a small college in a tiny town in upstate New York surrounded by lush green hills and dairy farms. He said "Screw Long Island, I want to live up here." And he does.

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April 25

Loss and Beauty

*by Sue Oringel*

It's about the ring of opals, milky moon jewels  
and garnets dark as blood,  
a ring encircling twelve rich years  
that one night after supper dishes no longer sat  
atop the TV set or on the bedroom dresser  
and couldn't be found,

It's about June's blue lupine,  
church spires in the early garden,  
stalks of tiny blue balloons that almost overnight  
turn furred seed purses,

It's about the friend  
with whom you shared your art and heart  
who's turned her ear to another—she hears you  
but for her, you've lost your song—and about the man

you once longed for gone back over the sea,  
goodbye, and not a glance behind,

It's about a city of memory,  
the art installation where you and that man  
saw a hospital ward where lost childhoods  
were narrated, projected onto screens and the two of you  
sat in the bare, eerie rooms of strangers' lives,

It's about the hand  
reaching out of the bombing wreckage,  
the voice, female, moaning, and the rescuer, male  
grabbing hold—I'm afraid I'm drowning, there's so much water,  
but it wasn't water, it was blood and he felt her pulse  
until it stopped,

It's about the patch of evening primroses  
in Black Mountain, that people visit every warm night at dusk—  
some snapping pictures  
on their phones—to see the rolled yellow flowers pop open,  
one by one, like trick cigars, to be pollinated by night-flying moths,  
the blossoms that look like moths and last only one night,  
to drop, spent, in the morning,  
leaving their scent to linger in the summer air

Sue Oringel is a poet and writer, a teacher of creative writing, and a psychologist in private practice in New York's Capital District. Her chapbook *My Coney Island* was published by Finishing Line Press in June 2019. A graduate of the Warren Wilson M.F.A. program, she is published in various journals, such as *BlueLine*, *The Maryland Poetry Review*, and the *National Council of Teachers of English English Journal*. She also served as co-translator for a collection of Latin American poetry: *Messengers of Rain*, published by Groundwoods Press in 2002 and 2011. Fellowships and awards include Individual Artist award from the Albany-Schenectady League of Arts, a fellowship from the Vermont Studio Center, and an SOS award sponsored by NYSCA. She taught creative writing at Hudson Valley Community College from 2004-2017.

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April 26

Light Lessons (Taking a Tubby)

by *Ella Prince*

I don't believe in baptism or the waters of Jordan

or anything like that but I guess I feel about a hot bath  
the way those religious people feel about holy water.

Which water, then, will be good and wholesome?  
Well-water, no doubt, agitated by repeated drawing.  
And when boiled.

Kneel before the tile, in between the grout of years of webbed feet.  
The drain will be sheathed in hair going now gray. Take hold of the silver  
tap and twist it counter clockwise, releasing a stream, one element inside  
all things. Shut up the mouth, plugging the container and its contents.

Beyond the wall, a porcelain cup, and down under, lies a tank.  
It burns gas to heat, pulls cold through a dip tube. Air is drawn  
below, fused with fuel. The burner ignites, and fumes rise  
through the flue, exhausted. Behold,  
A bath. Emerge from every turtleneck, long john  
and sock (who puppet as mittens this winter).  
Find your fur just not enough. Inspect,

For anything unnoticed: lumps. Slice the breasts and smear  
on palms, a breakfast platter. Amen, omelets, egghead! Place  
hands on hips, cock and titter, Well, aren't you just ravishing, darling!  
Boobs look usual, size and shape. No dimples or puckering or bulging of skin.  
The nips are in the same place. No rouging, soreness, rash or swelling, just two  
peepers solidified, hard enough to cut through glass. Wipe your face tucked  
in the haze and smooch it plainly.

Introduce your toes to the tub. They'll scream wanting out.  
Grip the rim and stoop by bending at the elbows. Subside  
into the spring. Wince and hover above a red-hot hell, the journey's  
end. By keeping cold water in the mouth, a person may render proof  
against the heat of the bath.

To blow a large, regular, and durable soap-bubble, face your palms one last time.  
Bind the heart lines: braided folds designed to crease without bunching, to hold  
without letting go. Align the little fingers to form the truest, bestest mirror.  
Smell the baby's breath hidden at center. Internally rotate the wrists, two thumbs  
to suck.

Here is the church a bird call or whistle with a blade of grass. Soak the hands,  
the mind, in fat that renders circles and spectrums the most beautiful, in  
simplicity

and succinct neatness, in the whole science of optics—the prism. Look back on mom  
who taught you kneeling, the knight who sung: Tongues in trees—books in the  
running brooks—Sermons in stones—and good in every thing.

Ella Prince lives in Rensselaerville. She works as a photographer and printer.

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April 27

Elegy in D Minor

*for Drew*

*by Mike Maggio*

If I had one word to describe you,  
it would be: fortissimo.  
Or, perhaps: prestissimo.  
It would not be largo, or moderato, or adagio.

And certainly not pianissimo.  
Your life was thundrous.  
No Hayden for you.  
No Vivaldi, No Corelli.

No Handel,  
unless, of course, it were the Hallelujah Chorus.  
For you, it had to be Wagner and his Valkyries  
Bach – not any – but his Toccata and Fugue.

The organ was all stops pulled.  
It was as if some silent sorrow  
trapped inside  
were channeled through those tempestuous pipes.

Your life was a fugue:  
a contrapunto of contradiction –  
Organ at the Episcopal Church.  
Mass at the Catholic –

rushing along the green  
from the Cathedral to the Basilica  
regaling the congregation with your music,  
your devotion and your quirky personality.

Now, the music has stopped –  
a sudden caesura  
an abrupt staccato  
a discordant echo

resounding through our hollowed lives.  
A poignant climax  
as in Verdi or Puccini  
to a life finely tuned.

As Spring arrives  
and God continues His wondrous symphony.

*St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral  
Minneapolis, Minnesota  
April 17, 2020  
For Andrew Maggio*

Mike Maggio has published fiction, poetry, travel, and reviews in many local, national, and international publications including Potomac Review, The L.A. Weekly, The Washington City Paper, The Washington Independent Review of Books, and others. His poetry publications include *Your Secret Is Safe With Me* (Black Bear Publications, 1988), *Oranges From Palestine* (Mardi Gras Press, 1996), *deMOCKracy* (Plain View Press, 2007), and *Garden of Rain* (Aldrich Press, 2015 ). His newest collection, *Let's Call It Paradise*, is forthcoming from San Francisco Press. He is a graduate of George Mason University's MFA program in Poetry and the Northern Regional Vice-President of the Poetry Society of Virginia. His web site is [www.mikemaggio.net](http://www.mikemaggio.net).

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April 28

Survival

*by Ann Lapinski*

He sits with us  
in conversation  
tubing connecting him  
to the tank  
that keeps him alive,  
his lungs too overtaken  
by tumors  
to provide adequate oxygen.

Taking off from Tinian  
In a B-29,  
the sole navigator,  
he knew that limited fuel  
made his navigation skills

life or death for the crew.  
The cigarettes  
kept him going,  
helped fight off sleep.

He won the war—  
did not survive  
his final battle.

Ann Lapinski is retired from a career in state service and is thankful that she has a little more time in her life to write poems. She only started writing poetry as an older adult and is happy that she found so much joy in this form of writing.

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April 29

February 7th, 2021

*by Leah S. Brickley*

She's been gone for two years now—  
my daughter.  
Listening to Keith Jarrett's Köln Concert  
and it hits me—  
what living with this  
grief is like: I have to play a  
broken piano  
that also needs  
a tune.  
I could walk away  
or stay  
and use the keys I have left  
to make something  
Beautiful.

Leah S. Brickley is an Ohio transplant to the Hudson Valley (now her forever home). She's worked with and written about all things food for 20+ years—most notably for the past 12 years at Food Network. She lives with her young son, partner and dog, Murray (named after Bill). There's lots of board games, LEGO sets, books, hikes and trips to the dog park in her non-working hours. She's the author of the weekly Chips on a Sandwich Newsletter (released by Butttdown) and founder of the non-profit Suzie Q Foundation and has aspirations to enrich the lives of children in need through small acts of kindness.

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April 30

The Night I Met Irma

*for Christian Matthew Albert Sullivan on his confirmation*

*by Dennis Sullivan*

On the boulevard  
Where the rich folks live  
The dogs wear coats of silk and satin  
And bark with a whine

You have to say what you see  
When you look in the mirror  
There's no saying no way.

I look at you  
And ask to sit in your midst  
But you share a code of silence

When you measure the world  
Do you use a slide rule  
Or the flesh of an open heart?  
I have a heart that bleeds  
And no way out of town.

The lady at the bar just  
Flicked her nose with her thumb  
Then gave a look of mild sincerity  
I brought her home  
I washed her back  
I treated her like a lady  
I asked her why  
She keeps an ace up her sleeve  
She said life's good  
But not worth living.

When the heart kicks in  
Nothingness is a flame that will not die  
But no god is worth the price of reason—  
Don't write, I'm in Massachusetts.

I saw a light burning  
In the eyes of the lady at the bar  
Behind glasses of big black globes

She said: my name is Irma  
It's Valentine's Day  
What can you do for Irma?  
I'm a librarian  
You like to read?

I'm in a hotel  
Faithful to all that's assigned me  
I'm el poeta  
El rey de nada  
I'm away from my love  
And on assignment  
I'm el poeta el rey de nada  
In the library reading with Irma.

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.

As the official historian of the Village of Voorheesville he once wrote a book called Voorheesville, New York: A Sketch of the Beginnings of a Nineteenth Century Railroad Town.

He has four books of poems in print and for a long time was involved in the Albany-region poetry scene. He, Mike Burke, and Edie Abrams ran the "Sunday Four Poetry Open Mic" sessions at the Old Songs Community Arts Center in Voorheesville for years. It was a celebration.

Dennis also began The Third Saturday Poesy Café and created the POETS' CORNER in Smith's Tavern where yearly he, Abrams, and Burke conducted the esteemed Smith's Tavern Poet Laureate Contest. Poets came from far and wide to compete before a panel of judges who followed well-delineated rules; there was an intermission for lunch when poets and friends enjoyed a beer serenaded by music from local troubadours and first-rate musicians like Ernie Horvath. It was a fête to celebrate Poetry in April. All free—not the drinks—big cash prizes for the winners.

For years Dennis taught a course at the Voorheesville Public Library called "Writing Personal History for Family, Friends, and Posterity." He edited the group's Tangled Roots: A Collection of Stories which was published by the Friends of the Voorheesville Public Library in 2016.

And for years he's written a monthly column for the award-winning weekly The Altamont Enterprise called "Field Notes." They were published in Homeward Bound: Sixty-Two Stories from The Enterprise in December.

A long time ago his well-received Handbook of Restorative Justice: A Global Perspective (edited with Larry Tifft) was voted Outstanding Book of 2007 by Choice. His The Punishment of Crime in Colonial New York: The Dutch Experience in Albany During the Seventeenth Century (Peter Lang) received the Hendricks Manuscript Award in 1997.

That's all you need to know for now.

