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CHARLES HUGHES

January Evening, 10 P.M.

[From our house]

An inch or so of snow last night. Tonight
The yard shines back cold moonlight at the moon,
And nothing moves – till a young Lab trots in,
Unbalancing the light and darkness. Shadows

Of crisscrossed branches fail in spots to stitch
Their fanciest embroidery on the snow.
Being a dog engrossed, you're not concerned;
Nor that your leash drags at your side, unmanned.

You stop. You stretch, twisting a resolute face
Hard right and up, as if to shed tight skin,
Pure animal certainty. Then off you go,
Down the back walk, then out, then down the alley.

Your life has ill-equipped you for the night.
Cars hurrying, wild creatures from the woods,
With sharper teeth and meaner streaks than yours,
Dead cold: they don't adore you. Then again,

Someone adores you and is looking for you.
He walks. He calls. He thinks (not angrily)
How similar to people dogs can be –
Needing their freedom, needing to be loved.

CONRAD GELLER

Year Down

The last cold light of winter afternoon
lingers past credibility, the day
staggers, and a newly furnished moon
shines uselessly to keep the dark at bay.

It happens every year. No remedy.
Thanksgiving, and the year is shutting down.
Fires and candles will not help, nor tree
tricked out like some ungainly grinning clown

can stay the progress of the dismal time
when, silent and brooding through extended night,
in open field appears an only pine
in mourning, like the Chinese, wearing white.

NED BALBO

Winter Window

A variation on Valéry's "A la vitre d'hiver..."

I rest my head against a freezing window,
its cold touch offering some small relief,
The fogged glass shows a vast sky – empty, blue.
I'm anxious, overwrought. I'm tired of life.

Today's already passing – like belief
that melts back into lost time, distant snow.
Time bears me forward. I don't want to go.
It bleeds away and leaves me only grief.

Go ahead, keep passing – all that is
and ever will be! Mute to my heart's core,
there's nothing I remember anymore,

not even love, and all its painful business...
A silent ghost whose presence no one feels,
I wait for reasons nobody reveals.

CLAUDIA GARY

Atlantic Beach

for Linda

Paint blisters carry cabanas.
Cabanas deliver Atlantic Beach
onto memory's beach – not stepwise
but in waves through sunken castles.

Memory, love, composed alike,
are just at arm's length this evening.

When we would arrive at Atlantic Beach
the air rippled over hot tarmac.
Out on the sand were grain-filled towels,
shovels and pails and sifters.

We rode the waves with mothers and aunts,
goggled, skirted, slathered.

Cabanas smelled of suntan oil,
not sunblock cream – yet here we are.
Blisters that burst at fingertips
were lead-based paint – yet here we are.

Wind from a beach umbrella
escapes to my inland roof tonight

and memory/love, mocking the tide,
whistles and whispers in one warm breath
through naked-pink shells
composing our selves.

MICHAEL FOLLOW

Cattle Road

The road has given to the grass,
The cattle, to dark clay;
The trees have grown across the pass
But we still know the way.

We know the way the badgers sound,
The place where fishers hide,
The heart that beats, beneath the ground;
Each winter, we abide.

When the fall brings others rest,
The woods are clear, the evening bright,
With all things moving to the west,
We're singing in the night.

KIM BRIDGFORD

Cynthia

You lived in a cave to find out if you could.
For a year, you lived, in stone, inside your head,
And you knew time the way that nature did:
The rhythms of the shadows and the shade.

Afterwards, in your house, in El Pauji,
You sometimes needed to be solitary.
You found yourself the way that flowers find room:
Through twist of slightest movement, smallest bloom.

Then you'd go blank with noises in the air,
For they'd become a part of who you were.
You would want to say something inside this thought,
But who were you in the immediate?

Grass? Cloud? Tree? Bird? An animal? An omen?
Would you say *more* or *less*? Would you say human?

No

Deadly Snakes Hatch in Toddler's Closet

This is the snake effect, not butterfly:
When parenting and sense have gone awry,
Some lethal brown snakes fierce and warm with hatching,
And no one, over toddling age, is watching.

Of course, you can step back. Who hasn't done
A thing that seems as innocent, a collection
Of shells, or fireflies, or dandelions?
Who leans toward danger: not just mighty pythons,

But rabid dogs, or rats, or baby gators?
It seems all right until investigators
Ask how deadly snakes were hatched with clothes,
The diapers, Velcroed shoes, and goodness knows

What else inside the darkness of the closet.
It makes a person pause, and then to posit.

MICHAEL FOLLOW

The Eel

The rockweed has a rum-dark taste,
The kelp, a white wine green;
The dead man has a taste like scotch;
I drank the world unseen.

Avoid the deepest pools, the brakes,
Burn what can't be torn up;
Blow out the candle last, but leave
One finger in the cup.

J.D. SMITH

Spinoza at Lenscrafters™

Next. NEXT.

One moment, please, as I review this text.

Let's see. *The universe does not equate with God,
But God infuses all –*

As air and avarice fill up this mall –

As antecedent sunlight will infuse and prod

A bud to flower.

That's good enough. And here's my card, feel free to call.

Though you might find yourself perplexed,

Your glasses will be ready in an hour.

ROB GRIFFITH

Kummerspeck

German; excess weight gained from emotional overeating. Literally, grief bacon.

Like a cold white coffin, the fridge is full
of all the things I cannot face, a hoard
of Ziplocked words and jars of frozen tears,
a thousand moldering thoughts now wrapped and stored

in plastic. Grief, cured with salt and marbled thick
with fat, is tucked beneath the envy-steak,
and all the melancholy ham is gray
as freezer rime, as dry as last month's cake.

The Tupperware is full of fear and shame,
the pickle jar of jealousy and brine.
The shelves are nearly full, and soon I'll have
to eat my heart and drink the soured wine.

REHAN QAYOOM

Love Letter

To L. W.

The girl whose boyfriend starts writing her love poems should be on her guard; perhaps he really does love her, but one thing is certain: while he was writing his poems he was not thinking of her but of his own feelings about her.

– Auden

The world goes on and on and on in bleak infinitude
What's then the harm if I express my woes a little?

Yes I swore to bear all ordeals at your luscious hands
Let me catch my breath a while now, let me repose a little

Never could we rise up to our worth for all to see
Someone had to push us down whenever we rose a little

Seems like no one here has ever heard of loyalty
Can I be blamed if the cynic in me shows a little?

The moon awakens your memories; the moonlight thinks I love her
It shines in all its splendour when my anguish grows a little

If you are about to organize your memories
Juxtapose what is left over, and dispose a little

That long awaited moment came fortuitously and went
Our soul became a fireball, the body froze a little

Although somehow I will manage to relate this saga
Factually I'll hide a little and expose a little

Everyone I know is wealthy, I a mere poet
Study poetry, speak poetry, and compose a little

GAIL WHITE

She Compares Her Lover to Her Cat

While you're away, my love, I stroke instead
of you the dainty panther in my bed,
more exquisite than satin and more sleek
than rain, but sadly unequipped to speak.
You are my information source, my song,
my lover's lexicon – and yet how wrong
about your health, how vexed with all I write,
how testy at an unintended slight!
The panther only purrs – but you, my mate,
how can you be so damned articulate
yet lack the sense to come in when it rains?
If only you had fur and she had brains.

CONTRIBUTORS

Charles Hughes worked as a lawyer for thirty-three years before his retirement. His first collection of poems, *Cave Art*, is due out from Wiseblood Books in May of 2014. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *America*, *The Anglican Theological Review*, *Dappled Things*, *First Things*, *The Iron Horse Literary Review*, *Measure*, *The Rotary Dial*, *The Sewanee Theological Review*, *Verse Wisconsin*, and other publications. He lives with his wife in the Chicago area.

Conrad Geller has published more than a hundred poems, electronically and in print. His awards include the Charles E. Tuttle Prize, Bibliophilos Prize, and several awards from the Poetry Society of Virginia. A Bostonian, he now lives and writes in Northern Virginia.

Ned Balbo's latest book is *The Trials of Edgar Poe and Other Poems* (Story Line Press), awarded the 2010 Donald Justice Prize by judge A. E. Stallings, and the 2012 Poets' Prize. His second book, *Lives of the Sleepers* (University of Notre Dame Press), received the Ernest Sandeen Prize and a ForeWord Book of the Year Gold Medal. Co-winner of the 2013 Willis Barnstone Translation Prize, he has additional translations or variations on the work of French- and German-language poets out or forthcoming in *Able Muse*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Lavender Review*, *Unsplendid*, *String Poet*, and elsewhere.

Claudia Gary writes, edits, sings, and composes (tonally) near Washington DC. A 2013 semifinalist for the Anthony Hecht Poetry Prize and past finalist for the Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award, she is author of *Humor Me* (David Robert Books 2006) and several chapbooks. Her poems appear in *Forgetting Home* (Barefoot Muse Press 2013) and *Villanelles* (Everyman Press 2012), as well as numerous journals. She also writes articles on health for *The VVA Veteran* and other magazines.

Michael Follow lives in Nova Scotia. His chapbook, *Twelve Fables*, will be

released in 2014.

Kim Bridgford is the director of the West Chester University Poetry Center and the West Chester University Poetry Conference, the largest all-poetry writing conference in the United States. As the editor of *Mezzo Cammin*, she founded The Mezzo Cammin Women Poets Timeline Project, which was launched at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington in March 2010, and recently celebrated its third anniversary at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, in affiliation with the exhibition *The Female Gaze*. Her collaborative work with the visual artist Jo Yarrington has been honored with a Ucross fellowship. Bridgford is the author of seven books of poetry, including *Bully Pulpit*, a book of poems on bullying, and *Epiphanies*, a book of religious poems. She has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Connecticut Post*, on NPR and the website of *The News Hour with Jim Lehrer*, and in various headline news outlets.

J.D. Smith's third collection, *Labor Day at Venice Beach*, was published in 2012. *Notes of a Tourist on Planet Earth*, a humor collection including both poetry and prose, came out in March, 2013. He holds an M.A. from the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University.

Rob Griffith is the author of four collections of poetry: *A Matinee in Plato's Cave*, winner of the 2009 Best Book of Indiana Award; *Poisoning Caesar*; and *Necessary Alchemy*, winner of Middle Tennessee University's Chapbook Prize. His most recent book is *The Moon from Every Window* (David Robert Books, 2011), which was nominated for the 2013 Poets' Prize, and his work has also appeared in magazines and journals such as *Poetry*, *First Things*, *River Styx*, *The North American Review*, *The Sewanee Theological Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *The Oxford American*, among many others. He is the Associate Director of the University of Evansville Press, the Director of the Harlaxton Summer Writing Program, and the editor of *Measure: A Review of Formal Poetry*.

Rehan Qayoom is a poet, editor and translator from London. He writes poetry

in both English and Urdu and his works have appeared in numerous literary publications and anthologies.

Gail White has edited three anthologies and published three books of poetry; *Easy Marks* is still available from Amazon. She is widely published in journals receptive to formal poetry, including *Measure*, *Raintown Review*, *First Things*, and *Mezzo Cammin*, and in anthologies such as *Villanelles* and *Killer Verse*, both from *Pocket Poets*. Her latest chapbook is *Sonnets in a Hostile World* (White Violet Press). Gail received the Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award for 2012. She lives with her husband and three cats in Breaux Bridge, Louisiana.