

FOREWORD BY MARTHA RHODES

AS A BOOK EDITOR, I have the luxury of seeing manuscripts unfold over time—that is, in draft form (version to version) and /or, of course, as I read a given book, poem to poem. As a poet, I tend to let my own poems and collections steep over several years before releasing them into the world. Editing a section for a magazine affords no such luxury of time. The publisher needs poems for a deadline, the ordering of poems has to be settled quickly. This is both difficult for me, because it rubs up against me temperamentally, and exciting because it rubs up against me temperamentally. I am forced to take a different kind of risk than I often do—to invite poets whose work I have admired for years from both short and long distances to send me poems of theirs, choose from the lot, and assemble a group that will please the contributors, the publisher and magazine editor, the reading community, and me. This selection will do just that, I believe, as it highlights the inner and outer landscapes of the poems’ speakers, straddling the subjective and objective worlds they inhabit through the intensely inward-gazing and unadorned lyrics of Adamshick and Murphy, through the constraint of form of Sealey, through persona (Burt), and through the outward outcry of Braverman’s prayer. The poems, all of them, stick. They don’t float up and away out of reach, though you will find buoyancy here. Precision of telling, management of diction, syntax, lineation, typography, and other elements of craft are what draw me to them. And so, a few months since selecting them—not a year, not two years, certainly not three—they feel just right, together between colorful and informative pages, assembled as they are.



Carl Adamshick

BLACK SNOW

I want to tell you
how lonely it is
without her

mostly because
no one asks

My tongue a bank
of fog in the birches

I don't know
what it's like to live here

If this is the world
why don't I know

where my body ends

Nicole Sealey

**CENTO FOR THE NIGHT I SAID,
"I LOVE YOU"**

To the end of the spine, which he can cause to shiver like a root in the rain,
seeking, I think, a light that waits,

he went before anybody came.

And his watch showed years. Not hours
as suspected. I am cold now and I cannot
begin to numb the senses indiscriminately.

Some say we're lucky to be alive, to have
a good portion of the morning.

It isn't ordinary. The way the world unravels,
from a distance, can look like pain
eager as penned in horses.

*(Sources: Anne Carson, Louise Bogan, Chris Abani, Tomas Tranströmer,
Brenda Shaughnessy, Evie Shockley, Sharan Strange, Cornelius Eady,
Marianne Boruch, Andrea Cohen, and Linda Susan Jackson.)*

Kelle Groom

INCURABLE

An open door is an invitation
 Spirit if you don't have land what are you
 What was my cove
 before the door of my throat
 I kept breaking irreplaceable things
 One night, the front door—hinges rusted
 by salt and age—detached, opened into my arms like the lid
 of a coffin, or
 a body I could barely hold, had to lay down on the deck.

*Gabrielle Calvocoressi*THE GOOD GUY'S GOT
NO CHANCE, IT'S SAD

In the face of the azalea breaking open
 or in the case of the face being broken
 open. He's got no chance. None at all.

Take your average person at the start
 of spring. Winter's gone on forever.
 Dear God you're sick of every patch of ice:

I fell at the top of the hill and punched
 the ground until my knuckles bled
 right through my gloves. Who cares

what kind of child I looked like?
 The economy of winter'd worn me down.
 I couldn't stand a single moment more,

not one. I'd tried. Optimistic as a dachshund
 I made my way to work, the clouds
 like mashed potatoes on a plate!

I didn't let the market get me down.
 Let it dip. Let it crash into the gullies (so I said).
 In the face of empty bank accounts

I bought the world a sandwich.
 The last apple in the larder. Fool.
 What did the fox whisper

when I walked into the darkness?
They'll eat your heart for breakfast.
 Did I think it was a dream?

Javier Zamora

ALTERNATE ENDING

for Monseñor Romero

Bless leaves crawling back on trees, ashes
 washed from sidewalks, the collecting of names

at the "appeared" parade. No more war:
 woodpeckers probe deadwood, students

shout their own names—the roses of roses
 growing in mouths. Bless the drought of bullets,

cured cholera, and the comfort of earthquakes.
 No more marriages between safety-pins

and craters. Bless all things we didn't know
 we loved: exiles, silent-skies, tin rooftops,

radios broadcasting the surrendered M-16s
 propped next to rusting artillery. Bless us

who've never dreamed of Gringoland, never
 met a gangster—13 and 18 are only numbers

to count sweetsops at the market—and guavas
 don't remind us of grenades. So suppose

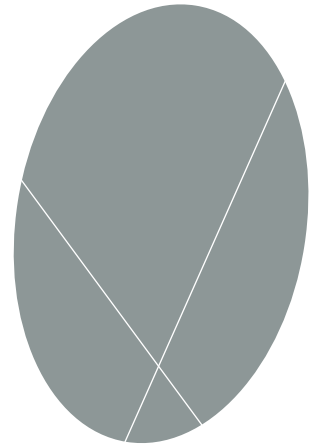
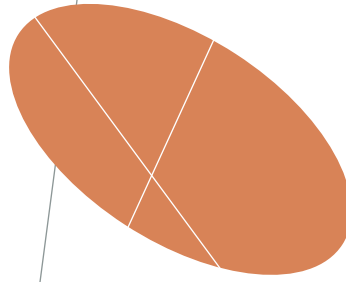
shrapnel is just one seed, some kind of pearl
 swallowed by the archbishop.

John Murillo

ON MAGICAL REALISM

— Ontario, California 1981

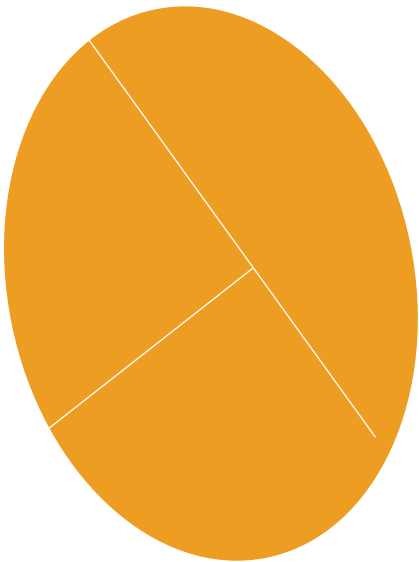
Stained with rosaries
and skeletons, some
virgin or another praying
on his shoulder, Tiny
shuffles toward and
leans heavy, as if trying,
into the first perfect hook
my father will land that summer,
and miles north, Tiny's mother
clutches her chest, hearing
just then, on a dusty mantle
in an empty room, framed
glass crack and crack again
just along the left jawline
of a favorite baby boy
who will grow into a man
who calls a man *Nigger*,
in a room full of niggers,
and the nigger with the hook—
my father—asks *What's my name*,
What's my name, What's
my motherfucking name?
as the photo frame
shatters damn near to dust,
Tiny's mother buckles
and she cries, *God . . .*



Donna Masini

SUBWAY CATECHISM

Are you depressed?
Do you have a disability?
Need a divorce?
Are you haunted?
Do not lean on ample time,
others will think you are a target.
Flying through history? Everyone wants to
hog poles, find New Lots. Everyone
wants an emergency exit. Are you at risk?
Dog tired? Pregnant? Everyone wants to look
their best, step out, stand out, be held
by the dispatcher. If you see something, say
a clipping, the past, an alarm will sound
like a true story but we think
the soul is primping, seamless, any way
you swipe it. Just like regular people
in Wakefield. See someone at risk? Remember
you can cook when you're dead. It's a temporary
ferry, a film festival, an express to Gravesend, so always
watch the devices, keep personal gaps
personal. Do not do not do *not* hold on.
Others will litter, ride to jail.
Everyone gets to leave it.



Martha Webster

In a room without tears,

we shared a bed of splendor
in a fire-lit corner of a deep woods home.
You were regal, bearded,
flushed with satisfaction
at the sight of me—your queen.
The evening forest scratched
against the windows:
leaded-glass from floor
to a draping canopy,
held up by carved oak bedposts
entwined with fruiting vines.
No fights, no need for nightfall
curtains as it would always be
just us in our hidden, ember-
heated realm—nude,
sixty-ish, in the dream
only, loving all these years.

D. Nurkse

REDEMPTION

1

I bought the child an aquarium so she would stay with me
in the long twilight and not petition the Other Parent.
But the pink-green Coral Alohas with their etiolated fins
and snap-button eyes ate each other, leaving a small giant
who cruised the extreme rims of the glass, bumping against it.
The water clouded: rarely could you glimpse Bluebeard's
Castle, the tiny mermaid, a chain of bubbles.

We spent those evenings watching a blue light flicker high in
the opposite window—Bosnia, such radiant killings, so much
commentary, the silence of the air shaft.

I bought the child a chameleon. It turned the colors of my
thumb, her fingernail, the charms of her bracelet, all the grays
of the cage. Each night I fed it a live cricket I bought from an
old man in a paper bag hat in a storefront in Naptown. He had
a drawer full of insects and a wooden scoop.

How coldly they sang! I chose whichever was most silent.

2

Night after night, grinding brakes of ambulances—
Maimonides, Methodist, Saint Vincent—and the child sobbing
in a dream. I wake her as gently as I know, whispering her
name urgently until it is an obstacle to her. Her eyes open, she
wonders, why? It was a tolerable dream—why this room littered
with spoons that bear whorled thumbprints, and books open
to marked pages?

3

Tomorrow I buy the dog and everything changes. Tomorrow
the gifts: a rubber bone, too hard to gnaw through, a weighted
bowl, a quoit, a leash, a brass-studded harness, a braided collar.
A critical name to bestow, not too comic, not too lordly.

Tomorrow we train him, crossing nights off the calendar, until
he leads us of his own accord, out of Egypt, into the park and
the soaring shadow of the swing.

Ryan Murphy

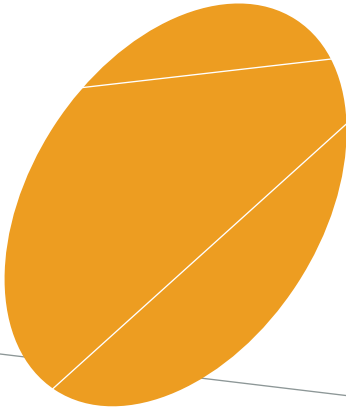
UNTITLED 6

I can hear but not
Locate the dripping in the walls.
February has found me.
The house is falling apart, or simply,
I am collapsing in its walls.

You choose the rooms to hold your heart.
The blood still circulates.
I try to use “today” as a verb:
“I am today with sadness.”

Or going out:
A streetlight switches on,
A second sun,
The same color as the sun
Closing the horizon.

And it was summer everywhere
And all at once.



Stephen Burt

HERRING GULL

I always look hungry. I always look the same.
To tell me apart from my brothers you might have to trace
the sunset-orange spot on my beak as I stay in one place,
or tag my heel or say my given name.

In a position of confident wariness
easy to take, or mistake, for weariness,
my head flicks back and forth like a swivel chair
in need of lubrication or minor repair.

I would be graceful, somewhere.
I want to persuade myself that I don't care.
I disdain to compete with your kites, which can go far higher,
but cannot change direction on their own.
Nor can they stay—I have seen them flee, or expire—
if their companions leave them alone.

The froth of the whitening surf can match the tint of my oversize breast,
my overbalanced, exploratory tail.

Though I can appear
as shaky and awkward as the reversed
banner unfolding behind a propeller plane,

my confidence is real.
Beyond that I can't say just how I feel.
To catch me at rest,
you must wait all the hours of my working day and then add one.
No human being has seen my nest.
That doesn't mean I never have, or had, one.

Paul Lisicky

TONY'S HOUSE

You can hold on to anything for too long: a boat, a set of tires, a ripe tomato, a bottle of seltzer. You could also say that about Tony's house, and how he lived in it—coupons on the floor, animals running back and forth through the attic—but you'd be missing that he'd actually graduated from hospice, and six weeks after his second heart attack pushed a shopping cart around the supermarket, eyeing bananas.

Maybe you were afraid of that about us—that *holding on*—when you must have believed the bravest thing to do in the face of death was to shed your skin like a king snake: three lives, four. To this day I'm trying to understand. But when I sit down with the sixteen years of pictures we took of each other, I'm still stopped by the cherishing in our faces, all the way up to the final shot.

Why don't I let this go?

Elizabeth T. Gray, Jr.

NEAR WOLF COPSE 28 OCTOBER 1917

British Trench Map Sheet: 28 NE 1 Zonnebeke D.4.c.10.8

At some point you could see through the broken ground and it became an interior filled with the limitless, a terrible smell, and surprise.

Instructions scatter and were of little use but the unsystematic often brought back a quiver of intelligence at first light while through the periscope nothing, imminent but slowly.

Near where we used to sit playing cards with tedious and panic most of the men are smoking. I cannot remember what she told me to do when I see this.

In "Near Wolf Copse" the geographical coordinates below the title refer to the cartographic grid system developed by the British Royal Survey Corps in 1914 and 1915 and used throughout World War I. Some of the lines are built from phrases from Sarah Harding's translation of a thirteenth-century Tibetan text, Machik's Complete Explanation: Clarifying the Meaning of Chöd (Snow Lion, 2003).

Melanie Braverman

SPOLETO

Oh god of little sorrows, do not wait for me at the gate. Here, even in the fugitive hours before dawn when I am most prone to greet you, for

tonight, at least, do not wait. The one I love is sleeping quietly, and the frenzied bats have flown again to hang upside down in the dark. The light from

outside is casting a bluish sheen on the street. God of little sorrows, I cannot wait any more for joy, will not keep it waiting like a good

child patient for its meager turn. Now you must wait. When I am able to sleep again, you sleep, too. How can you not be tired? How can you not want to rest?

Daniel Tobin

THE MAN FROM NANTUCKET: AN AFTERWORD

On re-reading Augustine's *Confessions*

And after he'd finished with all of the auto-erotic fandangos he again found himself bereft inside his skin that felt vaguely like an attending membrane to which the signal comes and goes while, in the meanwhile, the body attunes for the next indulgence. Listen: inside the ear, how what lives beyond this solitary wanting thrives.

MARTHA RHODES is the author of four collections of poetry, most recently *The Beds*. She is on the faculties of the MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College and at Sarah Lawrence College. She also teaches at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown. She is the director of Four Way Books, a literary publisher in NYC.



CARL ADAMSHICK's first book, *Curses and Wishes*, won the Walt Whitman Award from the Academy of American Poets. His second collection, *Saint Friend*, is published with McSweeney's. He lives in Portland, Oregon, where he is an editor at Tavern Books, a nonprofit publisher dedicated to books and book culture.

MELANIE BRAVERMAN is the author of several books, most recently the e-book *Matrimorphosis* (Kore Press, 2016). She is the cofounder of the Alzheimer's Family Support Center, providing free supportive services to those currently navigating cognitive disease.

STEPHEN (STEPHANIE) BURT is Professor of English at Harvard and the author of several books of poetry and literary criticism, including *Belmont* (2013); *The Art of the Sonnet*, with David Mikics (2010); and *The Forms of Youth* (2007).

GABRIELLE CALVOCORESSI is a poet and essayist whose most recent book, *Apocalyptic Swing*, was a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize. Her poems have been featured in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and *Boston Review*; on Garrison Keillor's *The Writer's Almanac*; and in numerous journals. She sits on the poetry boards of the *Rumpus* and *From the Fishhouse*. She is the Senior Poetry Editor for the *Los Angeles Review of Books*.

ELIZABETH T. GRAY, JR., is a poet, a translator of classical and contemporary Persian, and a corporate consultant. Her collection of poems, *SERIES | INDIA*, was published by Four Way Books in 2015. Other work has appeared in *Little Star*, *Talisman*, *New England Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Poetry International*, the *Kenyon Review Online*, and elsewhere. She has a BA and JD from Harvard University and an MFA from Warren Wilson College.

KELLE GROOM is the author of a memoir, *I Wore the Ocean in the Shape of a Girl* (Simon & Schuster), and three poetry collections, most recently *Five Kingdoms* (Anhinga Press). Her work has appeared in *AGNI*, *Best American Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *Poetry*, the *New Yorker*, and the *New York Times*. Her awards include a 2014 National Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellowship. She is on the faculty of the low-residency MFA Program at Sierra Nevada College, Lake Tahoe, and is Director of the Summer Program Workshops at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown.

PAUL LISICKY is the author of five books, including *The Narrow Door* and *Unbuilt Projects*. He teaches in the MFA Program in Creative Writing at Rutgers University-Camden. His awards include a 2016 Guggenheim Fellowship.

DONNA MASINI is the author of *Turning to Fiction* (W. W. Norton, 2004); *That Kind of Danger* (Beacon Press, 1994), which won the Barnard Women Poets Prize; and the novel *About Yvonne* (W. W. Norton, 1997). Her work has appeared in journals and anthologies, including *Open City*, *Parnassus*, *Ploughshares*, *Pushcart Prize*, *The Best American Poetry 2015*, the *Paris Review*, and the *American Poetry Review*. A recipient of an NEA Fellowship and NYFA Grant, she is a Professor of English at Hunter College, where she teaches in the MFA Creative Writing program. She has just completed a new novel, *The Good Enough Mother*.

JOHN MURILLO is the author of the poetry collection *Up Jump the Boogie*, finalist for both the Kate Tufts Discovery Award and the PEN Open Book Award. His honors include a Pushcart Prize and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, the Cave Canem Foundation, and the Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing. He teaches at Hampshire College and New York University.

RYAN MURPHY is the author of *The Redcoats* and *Down with the Ship*. He has received grants and awards from the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, *Chelsea Magazine*, the Fund for Poetry, and the New York Foundation for the Arts.

D. NURKSE is the author of ten poetry collections, most recently *A Night in Brooklyn*, which will be reissued in paperback by Knopf in 2016. His work has been shortlisted for the Forward Prize for best poetry book published in the UK, and he's the recipient of a Literature Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

NICOLE SEALEY is the author of *The Animal After Whom Other Animals Are Named*, winner of the 2015 Drinking Gourd Chapbook Poetry Prize, forthcoming from Northwestern University Press. She is the Programs Director of Cave Canem Foundation.

DANIEL TOBIN is the author of seven books of poems, most recently *Belated Heavens* (winner of the Massachusetts Book Award, 2011), *The Net* (2014), and *From Nothing* (2016), all from Four Way Books. His many awards include fellowships from the NEA and the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.

MARTHA WEBSTER has recently published poems in *Prairie Schooner*, the *Collagist*, and the *Cortland Review*. She lives in Amityville, New York.

JAVIER ZAMORA was born in La Herradura, El Salvador; he migrated to the US when he was nine. He holds fellowships from CantoMundo, Colgate University, the MacDowell Colony, the National Endowment for the Arts, and Yaddo. His poems appear or are forthcoming in *Narrative*, *Ploughshares*, *Poetry*, the *Kenyon Review*, the *American Poetry Review*, and elsewhere.