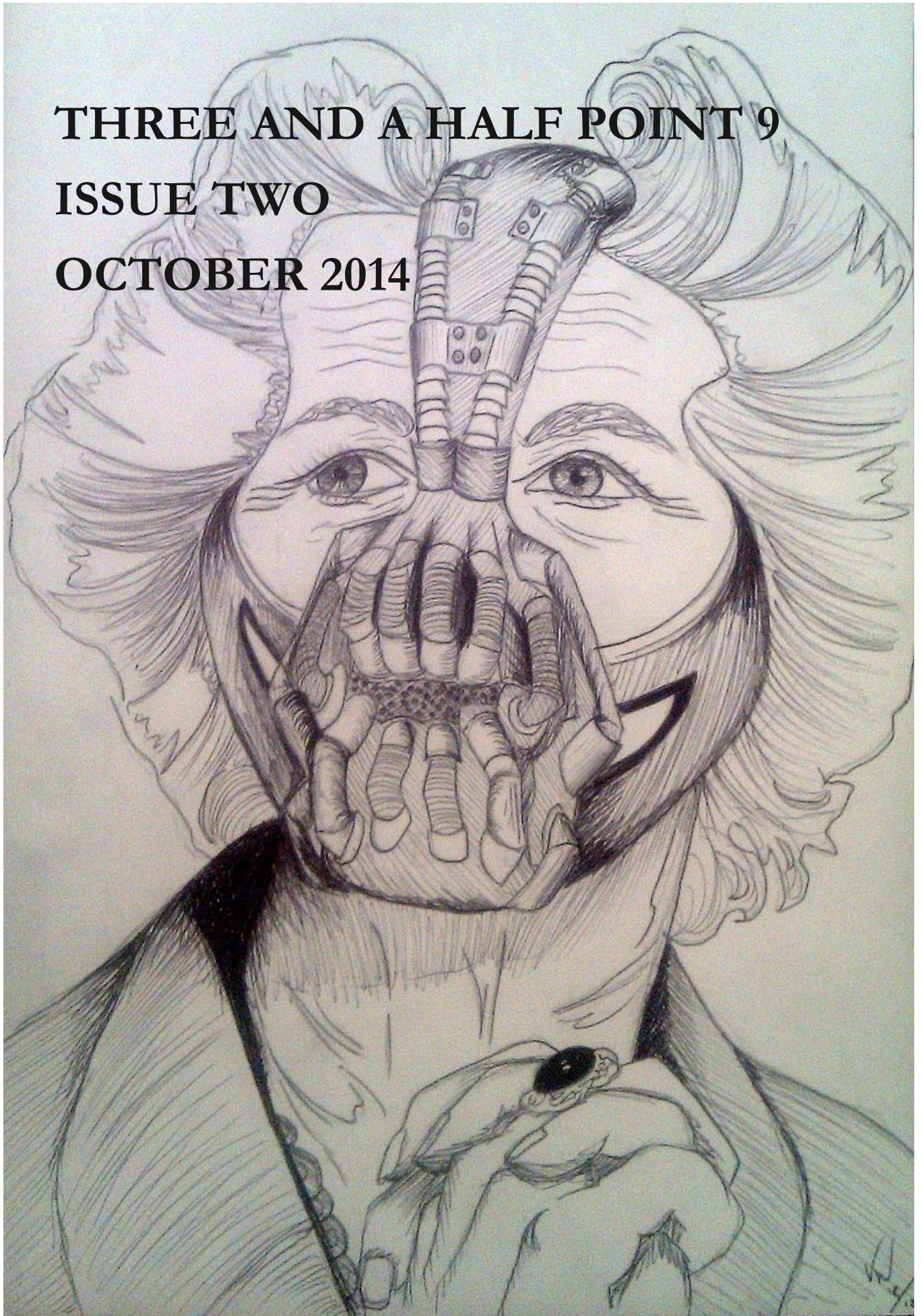


**THREE AND A HALF POINT 9**  
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# Three And A Half Point 9

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Editor

Luke Thurogood

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# Retirement Present

Brad G. Garber

The second hand brushes the diamonds  
86,400 times a day as if such opulence  
would make the journey less arduous  
less boring, this endless running around.  
Went on a hike past orchards in Tibet  
women bending in the fields every day  
men in mountain snow for the tourists  
and they never seemed to look upward.  
My friend milks cows twice per day  
this is how he tells advent from ending  
the red barn rebuilt sturdy and cleaner  
a passive timepiece of biological necessity.

I rise to daily horror and fresh coffee  
the same leg going first into the pant leg  
same swipes across the stubbled face  
on the way to a rushing stream of words.  
Salad dressing and gravy is what it is  
something to cover up the bland flavor  
bury the grass, enliven the dead meat  
“lazy susan” spinning ‘round and ‘round.  
I look at the watch and see that I am late  
as is everything else.

# IF WE WENT THERE

Brian Michael Barbeito

If we went there we might see the mural of the tall ship cast up by pot lights in thick green grasses. Or, the coastline streets where sand and salt intermingle with clothing such as hats and shirts and shorts and shoes. If we went there we would remember the flaxen roofs and benches or the piers that race out to meet some spectre, old men fishing lines dispersed in waters. If we went there I would sit and watch the evening crowd where electric lights throw glows on stucco walls. I would stare like an autistic or a would-be poet or painter or designer of vessels by the shore. If we went there something would happen, in the going, in the being, in the seeing.

# Lèse Majesté

Bruce McRae

Another quiet night in the afterlife,  
a chilled hush, snow falling,  
every window dark but one,  
a room lit from within, its tenant absent,  
only mice curled in sleep's warm hand,  
eternity the dust in need of sweeping.

But where are the visionaries, the miracle-men,  
the prophets bent on foretelling doom?  
There's not even a sigh of lamentation  
to guide us through the soundless earth.

Where are the nameless souls at the threshold?  
The apes transformed into angels?

A snowbound village in the Great Beyond,  
but where are the prayers you wanted to tell?  
Where are the bells of the self's redemption?  
The last of the preacher's breaths?

## Secret

Craig Kurtz

I wonder if the neighbors know.

They see me carrying two plates

back and forth. And of course

the walls are thin; I doubt it

sounds like a TV show. Then again

who could surmise? This secret

is so curious: I've got an angel

in my room.

I wonder what the neighbors think.

They notice that I've drawn the blinds

and, maybe, the scent of bouquets. Mainly

it's my festive step, or this blissful

countenance. It's true there's stirrings

in the night; you never know what

people hear. Nonetheless, it's my own business:

I've got an angel in my bed.

There are days of disbelief:

I've always been a stern skeptic;  
I rub my eyes and gasp sometimes:  
the fantastic caught me unawares.  
I've lived my life by plebiscite:  
I've never talked to plants or clouds;  
I've scoffed at genies and fairy tales  
. . . but now that strategy's kaput.

I wonder what the town suspects.  
It's obvious mischief is up with  
this and that. Nothing's amiss yet  
there's a hint something's afoot.  
I come and go like such and such  
still I betray some oddity. Perhaps  
a smile unwarranted divulges private  
joyousness: an angel tucked into my life.



Alejandra  
Erren Kelly

The only time I ever  
Chose a town over a woman

She was Mexican and Russian  
Tall and lovely  
She was a painter in potrero hill,  
San Francisco  
I spent 3 years checking her  
Out at open art studios  
Some would have called her “unattainable”  
But I was either too brazen  
Or too dumb to take “no “  
For an answer  
Like Anna Karenina  
Alejandra was a goddess  
But I had to at least try

One day, at a coffeehouse  
I saw her  
I had decided to say  
“goodbye” to America  
After John Kerry lost the  
Presidential race  
My plan was to go to Mexico  
And work my way down into  
South America  
(Brazil, that is...)

Alejandra was in the coffeehouse  
Looking lovely as usual  
So, I went over and talked to her  
Told her my plans of my next adventure  
When she dropped paradise  
Into my lap  
“Why don’tcha come to Mexico City  
And stay with me?”

After nearly 3 years of  
Risking rejection, thinking  
I had no shot  
Alejandra just comes out and  
Offers herself to me  
And I looked at her face  
And I looked at her body

Never ask me a rhetorical  
Question...

I spent two months learning  
Everything I could about aztec and mayan  
Culture  
Learned about what to eat  
And what not to eat in mexico  
I learned how to stay clear  
Of the federales and the  
Bandidos

Everyone knows if one  
Don't get ya, the other will  
Even brushed up on my  
Spanish  
So I wouldn't sound like  
A gringo

To be with a tall girl  
Like Alejandra was  
Worth it

But the itch inside my soul  
Kept bothering me  
The one that tells me  
I need more adventure  
The one that tells me to  
Take chances, even if it is risky  
The one that tells me to talk  
To that girl, even if  
It means getting shot down

It said "follow the cliché  
Follow your soul  
New York city is where  
A writer should be"

And I changed my mind

I changed my bus ticket  
And instead of carnival in  
Rio de janeiro  
It was greenich village and  
Brooklyn

And I didn't care  
If another man had claimed  
Alejandra  
I didn't care if another man  
Had her legs wrapped  
Around him

Everything in life is about  
Risk and chance

There is no safe place  
There is no sure thing

I have no regrets about the  
Love I gave up  
Nor, do I regret, the fun  
I should've had  
Cos when fate closes a door  
It opens a window

But I do have dreams of Alejandra  
And me  
Walking the streets of  
Mexico city, hand in hand  
Or spending mornings  
Making love under a lazy sun

In a place English knows no home  
Where Alejandra smiles  
As she lies with me  
Her body glowing like the sun

## Noggin'

Frank Diamond

Your hair, that hair of yours  
No, of course, it doesn't define you  
Curly, bouncing, bold, boyant  
Light brown with tints of red  
That's what I said (you set me straight)  
People pay to look that way  
You didn't even go to a hairdresser  
For ten easy years. Remember?  
Perfect prelude to cascading laugh  
Sways like a searchlight's pivot  
Lets your eyes shine hope, joy  
Toward the children you've taught  
To old people drawn to warmth  
Never like the other girls  
Wouldn't bother carrying a purse  
One — that's right — one pair of shoes  
Of the earth, by the sun, to the sea  
But what feeds on you eats at me  
Right here in Buddy's Barber Shop  
Where photos dim every inch of wall  
Tumble down, down like a pyre's end  
"I'm not going to let this beat me. Watch!"  
Not if have any say it won't. (I don't.)  
Love discovers from now back to start  
As your beautiful noggin' steals my heart

# Insomniac

Frank Diamond

Outerbridge voices  
Reach from rest  
Nothing lays still  
In nether fog

Spread blankets  
Over graves  
Burgundy sipped  
As midnight rises

Bloated at world's end  
Fold newspaper  
Horoscope out  
Dead swamp, dark layers

Save for future  
Space in the attic  
Like one more box  
Where dust descends

Wait for deliverance  
As purgatorial voices  
Gather in layers  
Outside rotted doors

# Non-Narrative Trashcan

Johnathan Harper

Two good friends and a pewter bowl filled with grape stems and ghost limbs, one sets the table, the other presses the napkins

Two friends and a failing sport like golf, a hundred little courses closing over a summer and polished greens overgrown with absence and squirrel feet and birdwing and

Two friends with their legs crossed and longing for a toilet but with a sigh that says "No one is leaving this room alive"

Two friends with two computers but only one mouse

Two friends, a mountain like a torn limb and a view of who's watching who's watching who overlooking

Two friends and one that believes in God and another that believes in his broken, worthless hands

Two friends, a text, broken glass, bleeding palm

Two friends and a shame slow cum-drying

Two friends who step in a café then out repeating never ordering just trying to go

Two friends and the fish-eye knots in the tables between

Two friends with a manicured lawn and small garden shovels and a bag of teeth

Two friends and their two uncles making out

Two friends and a sock with holes used to wipe away the blood

Two friends and a city of roads and limber buildings doing gym tumbles in and out their rooted lives

Two friends with a stack of stilts and no hands for holding

Two friends eating olives, popping the skin between their teeth, running salt over their blistered tongues and juice down their chins

Two friends swimming an ocean and their feet over something old and bottomless, kicking at it

Two friends and only enough mercury in the water to kill one

Two friends like a land bridge now covered by a ripening sea



# COMPREHENSIVE HEALTHCARE IN THE BAYOU

Johnathan Harper

“Describe your favorite bulls,”

says the therapist in gator leather.

Tiny lizard babies nipping at his toes.

It was summer! Bacteria had been

breeding--growing in green

pools on the back porch but also on

a little girl's teeth. She smiles and waves.

Fanged snakes slithering in the grass

behind her, like a moon backdropped

with tiny pinpricks of copper, lemon,

even an eggshell white!

“He's got one horn and lion teeth

and is often confused for a monarch

butterfly because he just carries

himself in bright robes like a queen.”

We took kayaks to wander the waters,

mites pinching our skin but the malaria  
mosquitoes couldn't drill past  
our callouses. Not even the ones on our eyes.

"I'm floating like a log and the ocean is ahead,"  
says my therapist, "Please help."

Sometimes we are paying for every little thing.

A hangnail that turned into a viper  
and bit off my thumb, my uncle's nine toes  
in a lawnmower accident, the spot on Roy's  
tongue that was green, so we cut it out,  
and then laughed when we noticed  
the jawbreaker in his mouth.

The ocean is big. But not in a "more water  
than any of us could drink on a Sunday afternoon" way.

Big like my therapist's mouth  
where anything could be waiting inside.

My therapist a mouth-open alligator,  
I reach down his throat, shoulder pressed  
to his teeth, and grope in the dark

like reaching into muddy water with my brother  
just to see what we got: fish, crawdad,  
snapping turtle, a snake bite that went from red to black.

# Ode to Conjunctivitis

Lu Pierro

You were the pinkness of my eye,  
not a pimple, not a sty,  
a disease of some contagion,  
a lonely pathogen.  
Before you blessed my eye  
I thought I'd never meet my guy.  
I was love's perfect cynic  
till I met you in the clinic.  
There was something quite erotic  
in your antibiotic,  
how you swabbed my lid, and said,  
"Here's looking at you kid."  
For underneath that crust,  
you found some healthy lust.

# Citadel

M. A. Schaffner

A little bit of Shangri-La and maybe  
sand from the Walrus and Carpenter's beach --  
we all eat oysters but some of us cry.

It's good to have an air force, though, and ships  
to steady the world on its proper course,  
and youths with guns and candy bars and smiles.

It gives us our wealth and independence,  
drowning out all fear of becoming poor,  
though not the ads -- no, never the bleeping ads.

There's someone I wanted to look like today  
but fashions changed so I'll never lose these shoes  
or my shirt from the previous century.

And my lover, where is she but hidden  
within a cell surrounded by her screens,  
where I'm but one of the flickering dreams.

# Torch Song For Contralto

M. A. Schaffner

As I went walking by, the winter trees  
stood out from the snow and cocked their branches  
in ways that seemed both anxious and resigned.

As I went walking by, the bursting bulbs  
splashed the green with a radiance that felt  
joyously mocking to anyone alone.

As I went walking by, the fountain poured  
its heart out to a family of ducks  
who paddled for the heavily scented shade.

As I went walking by, a carpet formed  
of leaves in a slowly dimming brilliance,  
and hawks appeared, enchanting with their flight.

As I went walking by through all unseen,  
the lady simply standing there said Stay.

# War

Morgan Bazilian

A memory unfading,  
After years of deliberation  
Détente, liberation,  
After years of quiet.

The mortar awakened,  
To remind the young,  
To ensure a lineage,  
A transition to history.

The sound still shocking  
Forty years from fear,  
Continents and presidents removed  
From burned monasteries.

The pine forest now still  
The floor not soft enough  
To dampen the impact  
Or remove the smell.

All kinds of words.  
They are dancing now,  
Separating.

Becoming letter and notes,  
Derived from copper strings  
Reverberating against wood.

The dictionary avoided, mistrusted  
Returning to fragments  
To families placed on paper

A song not sung  
A book unwritten  
The effect forgotten.

# Checklist

Nels Hanson

By now you know the routine, backwards  
and forwards. Everything check three times,

now a fourth. Dot every i, cross your t's so  
all's shipshape, brakes and tranny, radiator,

oil, gas, back-up canisters secured, strapped  
taut beside fresh set of heavy-duty mud tires,

generator, power tools. Be sure each loaded  
gun is on full auto, safety off, extra ammo

ready at hand, night-vision goggles, strung  
laser hunting bow, quiver filled with wedge-

tipped arrows, grey plastic fletching. Spring  
water for a year, canned food and dry, razor

butchering knife, whetstone, webbed-steel  
vest, carbon helmet from NATO's Germany,

scuba gear, sun-speckled tanks for day, med  
kit stocked: antacids, aspirin, sterile scalpel,

sealed syringe, 10 morphine vials. Or forget  
rain-proof radio, tarp, raft, pump, white-gas

lantern, stove or down-lined camo uniforms  
unzipped like that to summer use, for close

engagements three jars of lampblack to hide  
your face is human. All set? Good job! Well

say so long to weird doomed friends you'll  
never see this side of heaven no one really

believed in anyway. It's been hard haul, X-  
hour approaches. Nights drive to hide by day



until your longest journey – counting June  
moose hunt in Alaska – is finished. Knock

wood, you'll reach bright spot on stolen map  
bought for peanuts off the Web, secret place

Earth's last brave man has chance to almost  
live forever, flourish at ease perfectly alone.

# [KILLING : TIME]

Sea Sharp

Once upon Time,  
I bit then spat,  
blowing rigid, ticking  
chunks from twixt my teeth.

Tormentingly, it tocked back,  
refusing to properly die,  
twitching it's hand to the right,  
it waved condescendingly, goodbye.

Scrapping the sidewalk,  
Time crawls past  
our bodies of bleeding gums,

slowly                   ticking,  
slowly                   tocking.

Dear hiring manager,

Skylaar Amann

I am your perfect employee.

The decision is easy. See,

I'm a tireless worker, a searcher

of shipwrecks and shorelines.

A seeker of the meek, the moaning,

the drowning. I've downed more men

than I can count, and I won't stop

till I'm the top.

I've taken apart

tall ships single-handedly jib-by-jib.

I've increased productivity

with only a skeleton crew.

Turned salty barnacles

into an arsenal of unstoppable

operatives. I'm a multi-tasker,

a casket-bearer, a cutthroat salesman

with a pitch as smooth as ice.

I've convinced hardened criminals,

fishermen, and demons to take a turn

in my whirlpool, take stock in my locker,  
moor in my mausoleum.

They pay me for plots, cough up cash  
for my coffins, beg for my bone yard.

I'm the manager you've been asking for.

I command all the labor you could ever need.

Lost souls to bend and mold.

No more phone calls,  
groans, or going home.

Just endless work  
down to the bone.

Sincerely yours,

Davy Jones

# Winter Chopsticks

Sonya Groves

I hear the winter in the trees  
tiny leafless branches clacking  
like chopsticks. It's a hundred  
diners clack clack clacking  
away. An eatery full of life  
unlike this copse of trees.

I only hear the clacking  
no other sound around.  
Am I the only breath,  
the only heart abound?  
I shake the trees, I wake the dead  
broken branches - clacking stopped.

The hikers found me later  
roots grown into my hair  
bark married to my clothes  
it seems the diners fed their full  
clack clack clack clacking.

# Drowning

Sonya Groves

stacks of bills, I owe 10k  
stacks of work enough for 8

weeks of time untaken  
hours of sleep denied

lines of cars in the exit lane  
lines of carts in the checkout

weeks of time tethered to nothing  
hours of daily deaths incurred

stacks of notes, reminders, & lists  
stacks of sighs, regrets, & resentments

&

Oceans of drowning pedestrians

&

Oceans of drowning pedestrians

# GEOLOGY OF SELF

Walker Bass

When the earth was young, it rocked upheaval,  
blew magma into molten rivers,

went through phases like an angry teenager,  
rebelled, iced over for an age.

I too have had my volcanic youth. Anger rumbled through  
everything I touched, set off quakes,

repercussions still felt. Dig through my  
geological layers. You'll find

Georgia red with reproach. She still sees  
the youth I was, has no room

but the color of ochre. Disrespect's slap –  
all those years gone – colors with blood.

I've grown through the largesse of Texas –  
indulged in my thirties like I was still

in my twenties. Texas was limestone, limestone everywhere –  
the solid footing of rock yet somewhat more brittle.

Now shot through with gray, I've done my share of bouldering,  
climbed straight ups, slick downs, scrambled.

Tennessee lays loam on top, claims me with rich earth.  
Soon you'll find loved ones buried beneath

and this deposit will be bones. Then will come further layers,

results of compression.

When finally I lie down,

I hope to give someone

strong ground to stand upon.



## CONTRIBUTORS

**Brad G. Garber** lives, writes and runs around naked in the Great Northwest. He fills his home with art, music, photography, plants, rocks, bones, books, good cookin' and love. He has published poetry in *Front Range Review*, *Black Fox Literary Magazine*, *theNewerYork*, *Ray's Road Review*, *Meat for Tea*, *Gambling the Aisle*, *Fiction Fix*, *Screaming Sheep Magazine*, *Off the Coast*, *Apeiron Review*, *Stoneboat Journal*, *Brickplight*, *Shuf Poetry*, *Rockburst Review*, *Penduline Press*, *Eunoia Review*, and other quality publications. Nominee: 2013 Pushcart Prize for poem, "Where We May Be Found."

**Brian Michael Barbeito** is a Canadian writer. He is a two time Pushcart nominee with work that has appeared in various print and electronic publications. He is the author of the book *Chalk Lines*, [FOWLPOX PRESS, cover art by Virgil Kay (2013)].

Pushcart-nominee **Bruce McRae** is a Canadian musician with over 900 publications, including [Poetry.com](http://Poetry.com) and *The North American Review*. His first book, "The So-Called Sonnets" is available from the Silenced Press website or via Amazon books. To hear his music and view more poems visit 'TheBruceMcRaeChannel' on Youtube.

**Craig Kurtz** lives at Twin Oaks Intentional Community where he writes poetry while simultaneously handcrafting hammocks. Recent work has appeared in *Aji*, *Bird's Thumb*, *The Bitchin' Kitsch*, *Brev Spread*, *Leaves of Ink*, *Literati Quarterly*, *Indigo Rising*, *Ink Sweat & Tears*, *Teeth Dreams*, *Tower Journal and Veil*.

**Erren Kelly** is a Pushcart nominated poet from Portland, Oregon. He has been writing for 25 years and has over 150 publications in print and online in such publications as *Hiram Poetry Review*, *Mudfish*, *Poetry Magazine* (online), *Ceremony*, *Cactus Heart*, *Similar Peaks*, *Gloom Cupboard*, *Poetry Salzburg* and other publications. His most recent publication was in *The Rain Party and Disaster Society*; He has also been published in anthologies such as "Fertile Ground" and "Beyond The Frontier." His work can also be seen on Youtube under the "Gallery Cabaret," links. He is also the author of the chapbook, "Disturbing The Peace," on *Night Ballet Press* and is currently working on another book. He received his B.A. in English-Creative Writing from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. He loves to read and travel, having visited 45 states and Canada and Europe.

**Frank Diamond** has 30 years writing and editing experience for newspapers, magazines, and television, and is currently the managing editor of *Managed Care Magazine*. Diamond has released a novel, *The Pilgrim Soul*, and a short story collection, *Damage Control*. He's had hundreds of articles and columns published in outlets including the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Philadelphia Daily News* and the *Philadelphia Bulletin*. His short stories have appeared in *Innisfree*, and *Kola: A Black Literary Magazine*. His poems have appeared in *Philadelphia Stories*, *Fox Chase Review*, *Black Bottom*

*Review*, and *Feile-Festa*. Diamond lives in Langhorne, Pa.

**Johnathan Harper** lives and studies in Syracuse, New York. He is the co-founder of the upcoming online lit mag *Birds Piled Loosely* and publications coming up in the *Hawaii Pacific Review* and *The Queer South: Essays and Poems*.

**Lu Pierro** received a BA from Douglass College and an MLS from Rutgers University. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Ars Poetica*, *Natural Awakenings*, *US1*, and *Blast Furnace*, among other journals. She is the recipient of both the Dodge Foundation Scholarship and the Dorothy E. Laurence Scholarship from the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Mass. She lives in New Jersey with her husband and Odious, her cat.

**M. A. Schaffner** has had poems published in *Shenandoah*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Agni*, *Poetry Ireland*, *Poetry Wales*, and elsewhere. Other writings include the poetry collection *The Good Opinion of Squirrels*, and the novel *War Boys*. Schaffner spends most days in Arlington, Virginia or the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Morgan Bazilian's** last fourteen poems were published in: *Exercise Bowler*, *Pacific Poetry*, *Angle Poetry*, *Dead Flowers*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Garbanzo Literary*, and *Innisfree*. **Morgan Bazilian's** last seven stories were published in *Eclectica*, *South Loop Review*, *Embodied Effigies*, *Shadowbox*, *Slab*, *Crack the Spine*, and *Glasschord*.

**Nels Hanson** has worked as a farmer, teacher and contract writer/editor. His fiction received the San Francisco Foundation's James D. Phelan Award, Pushcart Prize nominations in 2010, 12, and 2014, and has appeared in *Antioch Review*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Southeast Review* and other journals. Poems appeared in *Word Riot*, *Oklahoma Review*, *Pacific Review* and other magazines, and are in press at *Sharkpack Review Annual*, *The Straddler*, *Four Chambers Press*, *Stoneboat*, *Meat for Tea*, and *The Mad Hatter's Review*. Poems in *Outside In Literary & Travel Magazine* and *Citron Review* have been nominated for 2014 Pushcart Prizes.

**Sea Sharp** is a Creative Writing and Literature graduate of Kansas State University with forthcoming work published in *Storm Cellar* and recently appearing in *Flyover Country Review* and *NEAT*. Sharp is a Great British resident and a vegan who enjoys "sensible amounts" of scotch and dancing with a hula hoop.

**Skylaar Amann** is a writer and artist living in Portland, Oregon. Her poems have been published in *Cirque Journal*, *Prime Number Magazine*, *Jersey Devil Press*, and elsewhere. She is a 2012 finalist for Poetry Foundation's Ruth Lilly Poetry Fellowship.

**Sonya Groves** is a teacher of English in San Antonio. She has poetry publications in over 20 journals, the latest including *La Noria*, *The Voices Project*, *Aries*, and *FLARE: The Flagler Review*. Currently she is pursuing her Master's degree in English at Our Lady of the Lake University.

**Walker Bass** received a certificate from the Writer's Loft (MTSU) in January, 2013, where Jeff Hardin was his mentor. Walker currently works as a caregiver for his father-in-law, prepares his meals, etc. From 2008 to 2010 he ran a neighborhood soup business – taking orders, making and delivering soup. Walker has “thru-hiked” the Appalachian Trail twice. Both were six month endeavors. He now studies and practices Mindfulness. Beauty, exercise and the rising heart are important to him. Walker has been published in the journals Blast Furnace, Number One and Third Wednesday. He and his wife live in Nashville, TN.