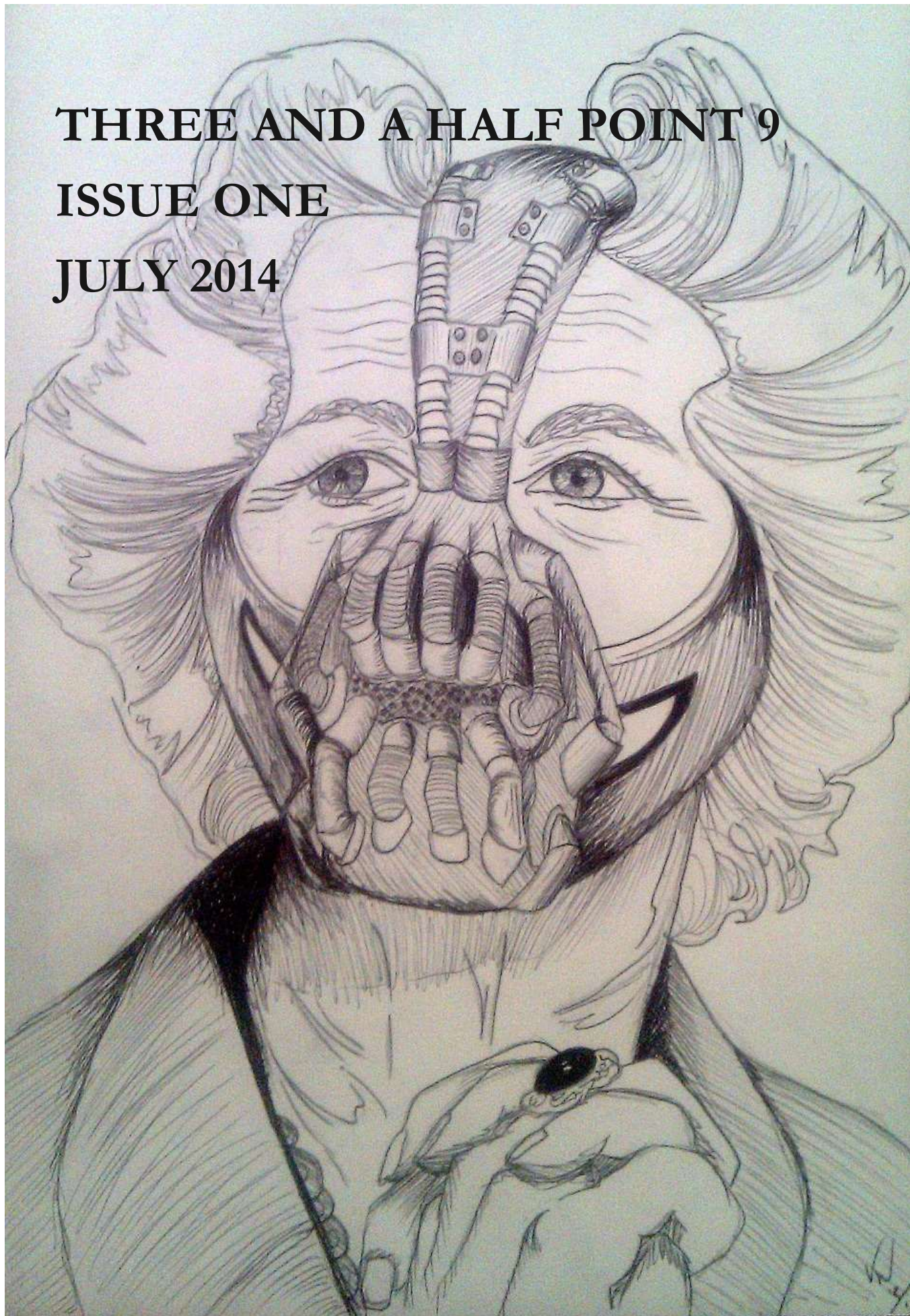


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Three And A Half Point 9

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Luke Thurogood

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Sino-Legends: the Proto Bagua Poem

Changming Yuan

qian

Far from the southern sky comes along my later
Father, whose head turns towards the Northwest
And on a robust horse, his brain shines like gold

dui

Beyond the West Lake a young girl
Tries to drive a herd of sheep into a metal
Mouth sucking in all the painful pleasures

li

an oriental woman of beauty rises
slowly above the southern fire
her eyes burning with wild sparks

zhen

high above the eastern wood the yellowish dragon
kicks all the thunders around with its sharp claws
while his son moves back and forth following his own heart

xun

as the wind keeps blowing through the southeastern wood
your daughter feels lost at the entrance like a hen eager to
leave for something beyond the fence and front yard

kan

both above and below the house overflows the water
while a man in the middle finds himself trapped like a wild hog
whose ears would hear nothing from the west or north

gen

a young boy uses his strong hands to move the dark earth
from the nearest ground to the northeastern corner
where to build a big hill to block his beloved dog

kun

everything will go smooth as long as our mother is
still busy cooking at home and cows feeding them
selves happily on the grass land stretching to south

The Third Law of Human Motion

Changming Yuan

Just as there is an equal
And opposite reaction
For every action, you are to
Receive whatever you give

Be it a curse or verse

Death Seemed So Wearied

Jenean McBrearty

There's nothing a good cup of tea won't fix.
Oolong and Pekoe down the throat
soothes the nervous beast within,
calms the palpitating heart when the fevered brain
needs relaxing—nothing taxing—
and lulls us into tannic acid Nirvana.
Really, Sir, before you drag my old body to the grave,
let me construct my case for delaying your task
over a cup of sugared brew.
Stay the scythe you've brought to bring me down.
Stand it in the corner, and consider
I've lived most all my life in peace,
(unless you count my tribulations:
husbands, children, students, preachers
who expected me to care about
people I barely knew!)
contemplating the only decision that matters:
Earl Grey or Chamomile?
And my only consolation
was the fair countryside of England.
Join me now, in a civilized pause,
in your dreadful occupation,
and lighten your load, oh Dreary One.
Have you, perhaps, brought cookies?

The Great Financial Expansion

Jenean McBrearty

There was a time when prosperity felt like mercy,
when people came home from war
grateful, guilty, giddy they survived.
They bought little houses on plot of symbolic ground
they earned in places with strange names,
killing soldiers from strange places.
Yet, it was easy to see neither men nor women
would ever be happy at home.
No more danger,
but no exhilaration.
No more separation,
but no more expectation.
Too much togetherness and the couples uncoupled,
the new singles reached out to shadows
who danced, then faded
waving goodbye to greatness and romance.
There was peace—and refrigerators and chain link fences.

Shut Down

Adler Marien

LEAVING TEETHING GOVERNMENT
SHUTDOWN KNOW RULES CAST BALLOTS DROP
LINES CHAMPAGNE FLUTES FROM KINGDOM
ANIMALIA THANK A HATER STEP TO THE LEFT
WINDOW SHOP AND WHAT FOR DINNER ORDER
UP AND BITE A MOSQUITO WAITING FOR YOUR
SHIP TO COME IN HOTTER THAN AN ILLEGAL
SEARCH BLACK BEAR MARKET ON ADDERALL
LIVESTREAM MALARIA SPEAK IN TONGUES
READ BETTER BOOKS QUIT READING BOOKS
MEET ME AFTER MASSES TAKE BRIBES START A
FOOD FIGHT AT THE FOOD BANK AND START A
BANK FIGHT IN THE FOOD LINE LIE TO YOUR
WIVES QUIT LISTENING TO ME ORANGE JUICE
WITH BREATH MINTS CHILDREN SCREAMING
ON VINYL A GOOD TIME AND A SECOND
CHANCE ASK HIM TO ORDER YOU AROUND
GAME THE PLAYED TRUSTING MEN WHO SMELL
LIKE FIRE THINK JACKALS WHAT'S A HEDGE
FUND CHEETO DUST IN AN OPEN WOUND
MALLRATS IN BERGDORF MAKE LOVE LIKE A
RACE CAR DROWNING IN PUSSY SHOOT POOL IN
THE RIVER BLOW OFF THE GUIDANCE
COUNSELOR BRUSH UP ON GREEK TREAT
YOURSELF TO A MATINEE ONE MAN'S POISON IS
ANOTHER MAN'S POISON NEAR MISSES ME
WHEN I'M GONE AND LEAVING

smoke

Briana Forney

If i die i want to be
smoke
not ash, not dust, not
stiff cold rubbery-solid plastic

i want to be flames--
burn me in your campfires
raise me up your flagpoles
salute me half mast, up, up
twirling wispy fingers round fragile wrists

collect my ash and burn it again--
burn me in your christmas hearths
mingling with your ham-and-biscuit fumes
nestling chimney soot in warm brick pores
dancing translucent in the string-light ether

collect and burn, again, again
burn me in your cookouts, your arson, your candles
burn me till i'm gone--
i want to be
smoke
metastasizing in your lungs.

Dinner Time

Chad Lutz

Mothers call their cowboys home.

But the Indians still want to play.

The dusk hasn't wavered them from battle.

Princesses and pop stars on Huffy ten-speed carriages;

Future hockey stars slap pucks in the street;

Cars are not as forgiving as their mothers for being tardy.

Perhaps if they were a little more hungry.

Perhaps if they had more time to play.

The Taste of Polaroids

Chad Lutz

I've been here awhile.

I like the dank musky smell.

It smells like mothballs and mold.

There are no windows up here. There is no light.

No one can reach me.

No one can be disappointed in me.

No one can laugh or belittle me.

It's possible to forgive yourself, right?

Hiding away will still changes the world, right?

Right?

The static of the TV keeps me company.

I don't even need to turn it on anymore. There're pictures in my head.

All the crazy characters and pretty people I've ever wanted to be.

Keeping me company in the cellar upstairs.

I'm finally safe from the Macaroni and Cheese.

Those noodles won't be able to choke me all the way up here.

Fuck their color and their shape!

...Try to choke me when I'm five... I'll fucking show YOU!

I'm sorry for everything. I am.

You have no idea. If only there was a way to tell you.

To tell you how sorry I am.

I just want to talk to you! Don't you get it?

I just want to talk!

All right. Keep it cool. Deep breaths.

Do what they taught you in therapy.

Take your medicine...

THE OFF WORD

Yvette A. Schnoeker-Shorb

The word is

off. Move the word

off

into the line; anyway,

it's just a symbol

of placement,

an adverbial assertion

of being. Where is a censor

to straighten this syntactic mess,

to sentence the word up

off

into place, to put

off

in line

or propose the preposition

be thrown

out

of this poem

that smells like prose,

senseless sentences

that taste like poetry—

a tasteless poem

with an odd scent

to its story;

it looks how I feel

off.

Prairie

M. Krockmalnik Grabois

*To make a prairie it takes a clover
and one bee,--*

One clover, and a bee,

And revery.

The revery alone will do

If bees are few.

--Emily Dickinson

I think I'm alone with my musings
when my grandson toddles up
and asks:

Where are the bees?

He's got a colorful book
and the horse in the field
looks like the horse in hand

and the cows pasturing
the chickens in the yard
even his grandfather
(who copied *his* grandfather
in the wearing of overalls)
all look like the pictures in the book

Art dutifully
reproduces reality

*but Grandpa
where are the bees?*

They were pretty creatures
I say
and dutiful partners
Their work ethic was without equal
I used to count dozens in one squash flower
drunk with pollen
They'd crawl indiscriminately on my fingers
as if they were parts of the bloom

Where, Grandpa, where?
The kid is persistent
as persistent as his dad, as me
a family trait
sometimes useful
sometimes troublesome
The kid wants to know

But I sink back into my reverie
sleepy
yet busy
creating prairies

THE NANOBOTS AND THE MISERESS

David Ritchie

Ms. A., for whom the stylish was a dominating passion,
Decided that her summer home was slightly out of fashion.
But her thrifty disposition made remodeling too dear,
So she turned for a solution to a nanoengineer.
She proffered him a wad of bills of low denomination
(A mere percent of what she'd have to pay a corporation)
And said, "Invent a nanobot to make my home anew,
All the way from top to bottom, from the cellar to the flue!"
Then she handed him the blueprints, to a microchip committed,
And he plugged it in his laptop, and his brows he promptly knitted.
"For this, you'll need a multitude of nanobots on hand,
A microscopic myriad of workers to command.
But as you'll need the services of nanobots galore,
This budget's very modest. Can't you spare a little more?"
"Listen, times are tough all over!" said the lady to the engi.
(Though anything would serve as an excuse for being stingy).
"Well, I'll keep within your budget, and with effort persevere,
And we'll go to work tomorrow!" said the nanoengineer.
Precisely as he promised her, the nanobots were ready,
And the client looked upon them with an optimism heady.
Arrayed in close formation with their nano-kith and kin
Stood the wee contraptions waiting for the order to begin,
Each a-champing nano-molars in its tiny nano-jaws,
Wielding nano-saw and hammer in its tiny nano-claws,
With sundry other nano-tools inside a nano-sack
Slung with tiny nano-harness on its microscopic back.
"They're ready as I wanted?" said Ms. A., her eyes agleam.
"A mighty nano-army, come to realize my dream?"
"They're ready by the millions, and with nano-tools in hand,
They'll fall to work with vim berserk, the instant you command,"
The engineer assured her. Yet he most uneasy felt
About the summer property wherein his client dwelt;
For her rigid parsimony had required him to spare

The precaution of debugging from his cybernanoware.
"Get started, then! Go to it!" said ebullient Ms. A.,
And all at once, the nanobots began to toil away,
Going *geeble-geeble-geeble* as they started to exert
Their utmost nano-energies, the dwelling to convert.
Then, rapidly, Ms. A.'s abode took on a newer form,
But it wasn't to her liking, and it wasn't to the norm.
For it didn't look like anything the world had ever seen:
And the lady's fine complexion turned a sickly shade of green.
The rafters all were twisted, and the ridge pole wasn't there,
And the hanging beams were hanging in the empty, open air;
The chimney pointed sideways, with the breakfast nook below,
And the floor resembled something like a violinist's bow.
"Stop at once! You'll devastate my cozy little home!"
Shouted Ms. A. "You'll wreck it, from foundation to the dome!"
But the nanobots, insensitive to any such reproof,
Put the shower in the pantry, and the kitchen on the roof,
And the driveway through the middle of the former living room;
And the sundeck and gazebo turned to powder with a *boom!*
The windows were irregular and vanishingly small,
And rhomboidal doorways opened off a very crooked hall.
When nanobots adorned it all with lime and fuchsia paint,
The client, understandably, subsided in a faint.
When at last she came around, the 'bots had all withdrawn,
And she said, the while she beat her fists in fury on the lawn,
"Alas! I thought I'd have a home of monumental splendor!
Instead, the whole effect is like a junkyard in a blender!
So tell me, nanoengineer: why did this happen? Why?"
As she gazed on the monstrosity, Ms. A. began to cry.
Then softly spake the engineer: "The nanobots were ready.
But their success, you understand, was ultimately predi-
Cated on reliability of programs they received --
And that is why the outcome was a horror unrelieved.
I didn't have the funds to get the software ever checked,
So it comes as no surprise to see an architecture wrecked.
Somewhere along the line, I guess, an *m* became an *n*,

And that mistake let pseudorandom numbers enter in.
But why are you complaining? Has no one taught you yet
That what you nano-pay for, you will surely nano-get?
You tried to do this on the cheap, and now you've come to see
You get nano-satisfaction when you pay a nano-fee!"
The moral of our story is that service has its price,
Which principle will guarantee the very best advice
To give is what, in this our tale, the stingy person learns:
On a nanoscale investment, you get nanoscale returns.

A Car-Wreck in the Hospital

Amanda Tumminaro

It was touch-and-go there for a while -
the skipping pebble by the lotus.
Down in the streets the cars drove on,
unaware of my white and clean circumstances.

The nurses might as well have been gum-chewers,
so stick your gum on me, I am a chair. Breakfast, I noted,
came with flexible, lifeless, plastic utensils to prevent
death and I *did* want my scarlet to flow,
knife and fork poised over a duck meal.

Wire for wire, the phone was across the hall.
O, black and rotary mammoth instrument, I wove
my words into your holes, the clever knitter.
Slithered back came mother's voice, and I said:
"I want out, I want out."

TV as Another Life Form

Amanda Tumminaro

So I turn the dial and it is
black-and-white static, the fake
snow that falls appropriately

in the box. It clears. There is a display
of pyrotechnics - I can hear it in
another room. It's like a separate

life form. The voices like a case of
schizophrenia, the listener (me) shot
to hell by badgering and bad

actors that present low self-esteem.
And something else I hear is being blown
up: a heart, a car, a train, it doesn't matter,

something that runs on blood and gasoline.

Appetite

Aneira Warburton

Her hunger returned just
south of Wagon Mound—
past the Ludlow Massacre site
in the high, amber plains.

Omnivore teeth ground
fried chicken meat—
grasped in glossy fingers—
gnawing white chunks and salt.

The heat weighed like a headache
as her throat closed up—
dry as bleached antelope bones.
It felt so good to thirst.

She only wanted Snappy Tom—
spicy Clamato over ice—
thinning the tomato nectars—
burning her throat.

For thirst she shoveled
cold cottage cheese—
moaning with pleasure—
under the locust-haven willow tree.

The grape tomatoes shone
like red pearls, nestled
by the pineapples,
oozing seeds beneath her tongue.

Her hunger returned past Trinidad—
the sex change capital of the world—
while her veined arms burst
with new blood—

And that's the strength of thirst.

Where I See Myself

Ann Clark

It's the classic question
during job interviews or performance reviews.
Some fat bastard leans back in a swivel chair,
maybe flexes his knuckles until they pop
while he eyes you skeptically and breathes, "sooooo....
Where do you see yourself in five years?"
as if you haven't been warned, haven't prepped,
but—of course—all the answers you practiced
sound so unconvincing now, so obviously rehearsed,
and it's worse as your career goes madly on,
charging down trash-filled blind alleys
and pointless cul-de-sacs, and the skepticism
turns to rising speculation. "Do you see yourself
somewhere else in ten or fifteen years?"

Oh, yes.
In ten years, I see myself speaking
at your retirement party, which may
be a memorial service, and in fifteen years,
I see myself skipping the recognition ceremony
when they announce I'm done here.

I'm not good at planning.

In 30 years, I plan to be reincarnated
as a yellow lab puppy, and I will spend
the next decade intently licking my genitals
because my own dog seems to derive
a great degree of satisfaction from this
in spite of the fact that we had the vet
remove his testicles when he was two,
so I believe I will have had a fairly complete life
when 14 years later I am run over by whatever
people use for personal transport by then
(I'm really hoping for some kind of hover car).
I will be chasing a yellow tennis ball—
because there will always be tennis—
and I will finally have learned to live

in the moment, to be fully present,
and my last ecstatic thoughts will be,
I got it, I got it, I got

Fetish

J. Oscar Franzen

You joke about S&M and
ask that before I nailpolish
your toes, I wedge and splay
them out with separators
resembling medieval torture
devices.

But I refuse.

The toes are just too cute for torture.

Piglings and pinklings
mudding themselves on the
estuaryshore to stay cool.
Myself as the shoatherd
tending to all their needs.

A Character Study

Joseph Reich

The scientists stripped me
off the glass of the microscope
like a bunch of curious sociopathic
kids lifting up some kitten from the collar
and said this is what comes after a lifetime
of damage and betrayal and constant hard
work and perseverance and editors who
don't get back to you and with a shrug
of the shoulder and single-cell wink
and nod gave them an awkward
scrutinizing psychotic smile
then dropped me back into
my refreshing bath of iodine
in that petri dish for a fragile
and restless sleep cycle of
nightmares like one of those
two-dollar theaters in hell's
kitchen where the bums
and winos and delinquents
hang out all day in the dark
clattering their bottles and
cracking one-liners for movies
that come out six months later.

Most Adorable Croissant

Catori Sarmiento

You were

a tall lady with long, fair, brown hair wearing a denim dress and sandals.

It was on a Friday evening crossing Aoyama-Dori to Omotesando.

I was

on my miniature folding bicycle.

You seemed to wait for someone at the red light.

I must see you again.

CONTRIBUTORS

Changming Yuan, 8-time Pushcart nominee and author of *Chansons of a Chinaman* (2009) and *Landscaping* (2013), grew up in rural China, holds a PhD in English, and currently tutors in Vancouver, where he co-edits *Poetry Pacific* with Allen Qing Yuan. Since mid-2005, Changming's poetry has appeared in 849 literary publications across 29 countries, including *Asia Literary Review*, *Best Canadian Poetry*, *BestNewPoemsOnline*, *London Magazine* and *Threepenny Review*.

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Ann Clark teaches English at SUNY Jefferson and is pursuing a Ph.D. in English (creative writing emphasis) at Binghamton University. Her poetry has been recently published in *Blueline*, *Poetry Quarterly*, and *Ragazine*.

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Joseph Reich has been published in a wide variety of eclectic literary journals both here and abroad, been nominated four times for The Pushcart Prize, and his most recent books include, "A Different Sort Of Distance" (Skive Magazine Press) "If I Told You To Jump Off The Brooklyn Bridge " (Flutter Press) "Pain Diary: Working Methadone & The Life & Times Of The Man Sawed In Half" (Brick Road Poetry Press) "Drugstore Sushi" (Thunderclap Press) "The Derivation Of Cowboys & Indians" (Fomite Press) "The Housing Market: a comfortable place to jump off the end of the world" (Fomite Press) "The Hole That Runs Through Utopia" (Fomite Press)

Catori Sarmiento is an author who has contributed fiction to *Nothing. No One. Nowhere.* by Virgogrey Press, *The Citron Review*, *Brick Rhetoric*, *Foliage Oak Magazine*, and *Crossed Out Magazine*. She has also contributed non-fiction to *Her Kind* and *This Boundless World* and several academic essays published by *Student Pulse*. Ms. Sarmiento also has had poetry published by *Poetry Wall*, *Cactus Heart Press*, *The Dead Flowers Poetry Rag*, and was a featured author in *Fukushima Poetry Anthology*. Professionally, She is an English and Writing Professor in Tokyo, Japan. She also is the chief editor for the online and print literary magazine *On The Rusk*.