



# **River City Poetry Volume 6 Fall 2019**

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*River City Poetry*  
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**RCP Fall 2019**

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## **Introduction Fall 2019**

Community...such a simple term. And such a complex idea. Writing is a solitary endeavor. We sit in a quiet corner, the lamp glow over laptops or paper. We wrestle with our misgivings and inadequacies— fight with an internal editor that can be more critical than any writing professor or workshop critique. I know of some writers that thrive in the busy bustle of a coffee shop, but I have to limit all stimuli when I'm writing, and there's nothing more alone than that.

But we write to be read— that inherent juxtaposition of our private endeavor against the need to be publicly shared, to know that someone likes our work, that we've communicated something— I think that's what drives us. And I'm so pleased that we get to share with our readers so many deserving writers.

This fall, we return thematically to that which is visual. Several of our contributors are writing ekphrastically or in some way that is concretely graphic. We have poets that are returning to us this month, and it's fascinating to see their growth and evolution over time. We are focused on community, that group of writers and artists that support us over and over again, that through pain and grief, through loss and joy, we have come to rely on so heavily as they support our efforts.

Thank you for reading poetry.

April Pameticky

Roy Beckemeyer

**4 Poems**

**Adjacence**

“beyond the peripheral picture of us  
there is absence”—E. Peterson

What’s wrong with being  
essential but never central,  
being the sultry spice of rind,  
never the saccharine plush  
of pulp, the tapered oval  
translucence of eggshell, never  
the vivid sphere of yolk?

You will always be peripheral  
to a lover’s macular degeneration,  
viewed aslant by those with billiard eyes,  
bank off glancing blows into side pockets.

You will always be among the thousands  
of extras, the movie set’s background  
to the stars, the photograph’s bokeh,  
the fringe, the border, the frame  
that constitutes all the world’s  
abundant adjacence.

**Mark**

“Grief settles in winter trees.” —Stephen Meats

Grief can settle in any season  
even the height of summer’s sun  
a son can die before his father,  
leave July forever a month undone.

Things grow and flower—colors flare,  
but I now have one child instead of two.  
Birds flourish—fledglings fill the air.  
There should be more I could say and do.

Grief has taken root, I think, and will still be around  
as Solstice approaches and leaves come to ground,  
and will settle, I suspect, in the bare-branched trees,  
to leave me numbly circumspect on days like these.

## **Oxidation**

All those moments gone  
to rust, to the red iron  
oxide of indolence,  
corrosive lack of care,  
the flaking-off  
of any sense of commitment,  
stain spreading the dead stillness  
of those abandoned steel mills,  
the hulks of blind autos stacked  
haphazardly along Ike's  
Great Idea, the weedy fields  
unmowed. Unseized initiative  
slumps into obsolescence,  
the fractured frame, of wasted time.

## Declarative

What if I declared my love to you  
on a frigid morning in January?  
I could stand, the sun at my back  
beaming its impressions of warmth:  
yellow and red skitterings of light  
peeking through branches.

We would have on earmuffs  
and woolens. You might wear  
your stocking cap. Your cheeks  
would be Braeburn round, reddened.

My words would take on whole  
new meanings, visual onomatopoeia;  
you would see me in a new light.

The heart-ring shape of the word  
“love” would spin out of my mouth  
to become ice-rainbow. Your name  
would float into cold air, moisture draping  
each vowel and consonant  
with crystal luminance.

My whole proposal might hang  
in mid-air, linger long enough for you  
to send a “Yes” out into the space  
between us, the sibilance trailing off  
like a contrail, barely tethered between  
your teeth, the mingling of our breaths  
sparking and scintillating, a flock  
of miniscule white birds released  
from a suddenly opened dovecote.

“Declarative” is an ekphrastic poem inspired by photographer Kathrin Swoboda’s award-winning pictures of red-winged blackbird singing on a cold morning, his breath condensing and glistening in the sun’s warm light. See the photos at <https://mymodernmet.com/red-winged-blackbird-kathrin-swoboda/>

Or scan:





William Bloomquist

**3 Poems**

**Grace for a Power**

Dark is perfect  
Light is perfect  
Dark becoming light  
Is more perfect

Some days I feel no more sentient than a lightbulb  
The way I feel very simply  
Turned off or on by ideas

Some bright days I have the mind to be ceiling  
And a voice to call from above  
Looking down but not down on you  
Worshipping you while you think  
I want your worship

Worshipping you and your motion  
For the way it expands outward from origins M  
ulti-directioned but singular in purpose

Like the prism that splits sun rays and  
Lives beautifully in the consequences  
I descend into the chaos of your imaginings  
Lean left and right into the polarities of being and  
Find androgyny in the quick flickering of you  
Rushing in and out of your room  
Forgetting things as you try to leave for work

In and out, off and on, in and out, off and on  
I am also that lamp tied to a switch  
I am electricity at the mercy of your hands  
I am power with no need to capitalize my name

I lock myself into the physics of circles and loops,  
Arrive at a math that is as much true for me  
As it is for anyone. Demonstrating:

*Everything is attainable*

And:

*Nothing is sustainable*

At your mercy I divide from one

At your mercy I become  
At your mercy I hold my tongue  
Despite the dangers, despite the misunderstandings  
Despite the proclamations  
The mistaken histories of me

*Some things, though wrong  
Don't need correcting*

I swear this to myself  
I build worlds around it

*Some things, though they lack  
Don't need perfecting*

I wear this idea like armor  
It protects me from many weapons  
And accidental flicks of the switch.

**You May Call Me This**

Tell your loved ones  
And only them  
How you loved me

How you let me take over your hands  
And move them as my own  
How you let me whisper through your lips

Though I did not beckon  
Or ask to be felt  
You noticed me without surprise

I do not withhold from he who is ready  
He who reveres wisdom  
He who desires me may feel all he pleases  
And you did

You may call me this  
But to your loved ones  
Tell them I have no name  
You understand  
Though they may not  
That I am by any other or no name at all  
What I am

Oh, how many eyes look over me  
And past me  
But you saw me  
So I showed you what I see  
And in your desire to understand  
You came to see yourself  
I poured out for you and you drank  
Water from the well of life itself

Tell your loved ones  
And only them Tomorrow, and only then

How when you left  
I left you open  
So you could stitch yourself back together  
Over the next however-many years  
In a manner that pleases  
Both your eyes and mine

Come back and visit me

You may call to me and I will answer  
You may call me Bella

**Invitation**

Every circle I know  
Is struggling to complete itself

In this economy?  
As soon as you're done, you're beginning  
And I don't know if a shortened life  
Means there is any less chance  
Of getting back to the point

*How difficult it must be for the moon  
In her perfection  
To nightly forgive the wrongs  
We do under her watch*

I thought to myself  
In a moment of reflection  
When her message arrived  
In the reflection of my watch:

When ready to crash  
Or be crashed into  
There will be no resisting

Soon as you are invited  
You will be there

Julie Ann Baker Brin

**3 Poems**

**ACHERONTIA ATROPOS†**

Tortricid.<sup>1</sup>

I am a moth  
trapped in your car

Pterón.<sup>2</sup>

beating my wings  
uselessly;

Lepis.<sup>3</sup>

scales turn to powder  
against glass walls

Imaginal.<sup>4</sup>

draining me  
of my light.

† Death's head hawkmoth (distinguished for rapid flying)

1 Super family of the order Lepidoptera (Tortrix)

2 Feather, wing (Greek: πτερόν)

3 Scale (Greek: λεπίς)

4 Final stage of metamorphosis (Imago)

## Take Five

The room came more alive. Perhaps it was the permeating aroma of incense following you. Or the rumors of your insanity preceding you. But I was at once intrigued, heavily, with a light suffocation of fear. When can I clap? All I can do is nod my head tap my toe bounce from foot to foot. The rhythm is a slinky, a rubber band, a swing; full, still, hard, smooth, tight, plastic. A fiery fusion of flourish. Put it in the pocket. Improvise.

Quiet just now, please; jazz is highly regulated, somewhat subjugated, bizarrely appreciated for its enigmatic ephemerality. Green shakers, silver strings, gold horns, blue tongues; tension building climbing soaring muscle-grabbing release. Strangers dropping stopping popping slouching crouching grouching. Time to get up, make a stand, a state of commotion, anticipated, syncopated, pure and unadulterated. Move it outside, sonny.

Impossible, you say; possibly but not for me. Let me throw your alphabet to the nearest supernova, the closest astral phenomenon, see finally what comes out of the mouths of babes; the stars are all about you, not so far away. You need not seek a secondary plane, a new letter, a novel emotion; it's hiding quite possibly in your foot, your navel, the twinkle in your eye. Let it scare you loudly.

Beg and beg; don't give up. Persistence is flattering, charming, depending. Upending. Are you friends with whom? How are you connected to this madness? Serially. Seriously. Thud, crash, in rapid succession; listen to the story you're confessing. A collective gathering of random truths for the lost divine. Darting eyes, shivering callous hands; can I get an amen, an ohyeah baby do it again? Please, stray from the program.

Don't look now but you could be a genius; right brain left brain good, get in balance or hold your asymmetry. At least fall for the fuzzy, then clinking, madness afoot; don't forget to take a break, venture to an alternative. It could be approaching you, premonition could bolster you: against a wall, against a stack of library books, a tree, whatever's cool. Just start anywhere. Pick a page, a leaf, a line, a stage. Fill up the shelves of time.

## **When You're Out of Town**

I cook weird combinations of food gleaned from the freezer's depths.  
I hit "snooze" an obscene number of times.  
I pile a pallet of blankies on the living room floor and sleep with the doggies.  
I don't use freshener spray in the bathroom (but I still courtesy flush).  
I read in bed until I'm bug-eyed.  
I catch myself whining audibly at the slightest inconvenience.  
I drink straight from the cranberry juice bottle.  
I let heaps of stuff accumulate in almost every room until the last possible minute.  
I leave on lights outdoors. I leave on lights indoors.  
I forget to bring in the mail (but remember to pull the dumpster to the curb).  
I "steal" from your garage those tools you "borrowed" from me.  
I revert to childhood behavior.  
I practice keyboard sans headphones (much to the doggies' dismay).  
I pilfer from your "secret" snack stash to see if you'll see.  
I adjust the thermostat like a rebel.  
I think of the things I'll say to you tonight (then you call and my mind blanks).  
I make silly, silly lists.  
I miss you; I can't stand it.  
I can't stand that I miss you.



Raylyn Clacher

**5 Poems**

**I Am Bride, Not Lizard**

By the fifth dress I feel my feet  
grow flat, nails extend,  
skin stiffen into an armor

of bumps. The manager leads me  
through a sea of scales to the pedestal,  
my new sun rock. My friends gather

around my tail, the fluff  
of my ruff. How they coo and cry  
at my headdress shake as I smile,

as I plot which grasshopper will die,  
relish the crunch of legs  
in my pointed, back-toothed mouth.

My incisors tamed, I wonder  
at the silence I'm becoming,  
the gateway opening at my feet

where white is entrance,  
where I can savor the taste of the forbidden  
I can now eat.

### **The Wife Discovers the Secret to Being Happy**

Happy is more than a yellow blob  
with blank bullet eyes, pencil thin  
smile that kicks at the edges  
with showgirl legs. Happy doesn't like

being known for her round,  
her inability to control the width  
of her middle, but she's Happy,  
and she has a strong, classic face,

one of those faces  
that doesn't need alterations –  
all open sun, all molten  
flame, all perfection –

a gaseous ball swirling debris,  
crashing light.

**This Wife, This Weed**

She pokes through the mulch,  
one-armed, green-bladed,  
asserts her right to sky –

same-grounded as the begonias,  
the tomatoes, the snap dragons  
I freed from their boxes,

the geraniums whose roots  
I combed like doll hair  
before putting to bed.

This wife wants to know  
what she will be: flower  
or nuisance, two foot or full tree,

sticker-thorned or red-belled.  
She asks again and again as I threaten  
with scissors, with hands hungry

to pluck or crush. There's already  
another wife unfurling, stretching  
her arm for help,

but I'm practicing compassion,  
the ability to walk away.

**Diagram of Things the Wife Cannot Say**

Silence is the other woman –  
she can't leave or cheat.

I've built her this house  
from a blueprint of hard lines,

the unsayable with labels  
that mean nothing, point to nothing.

We are a picture of nothing.

She wakes to new walls,  
plastic holding her in,

the cement of her future filling out her torso,  
her chest a neat little cornerstone.

**Hunting with Her Husband, the Wife Shoots a Doe**

At the breath of you I shatter, beneath  
pinecone luminescence begin. Hope  
sprouts full hearted from my head, sweet

vellum times ten, an abundance  
that shames. You found me. Another woman,  
you must know. I stare up the barrel

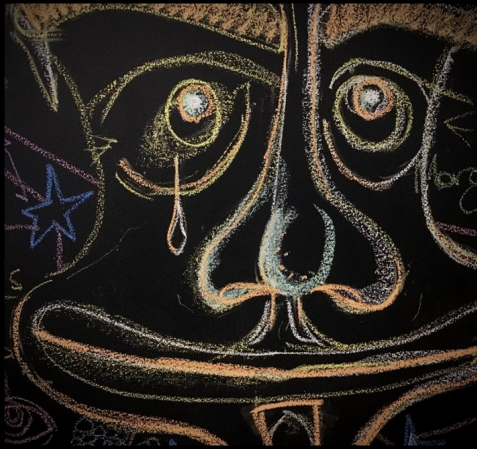
as if the bullet were an eye, light  
wrapped inside. But we're covered  
in gunpowder. You see my ten points,

a trophy, you don't see me. You crouch,  
take aim. You think I'm him.  
This is the way it has to be.

Doug Horacio Holguin Lynn  
**4 Poems & Art**



Cooling down  
I'm just gonna keep bundled up  
Poor thing tied up to the post in the front  
Torture me with the freeze  
We're getting ready  
Really cool of you to bring guests  
Party at the end  
Winter heater  
Power Soaker  
Hourly worker  
Major bummer  
Winter and Summer  
Seasonal like depression  
Etch your next paycheck into your skin  
It still won't belong to you



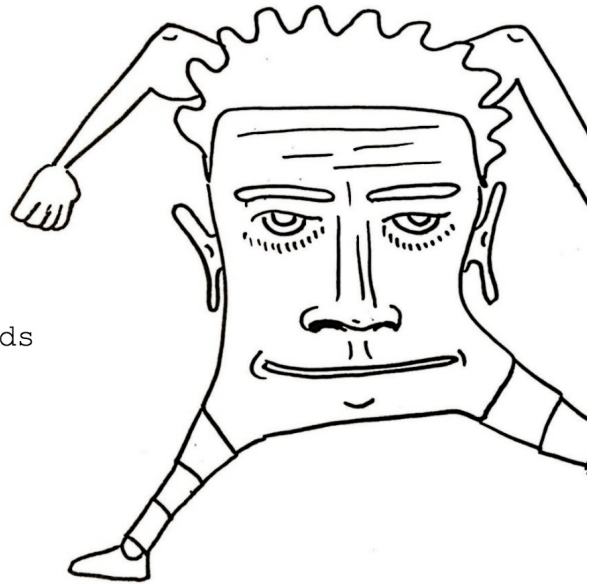
Response  
Response  
Respond when I have to  
Responsible because I have to  
I do not want to  
Do I want anything  
Drama filled drinks of things I hate the taste  
Small heads and big shoulders  
Overturned  
Fill up  
Five Bucks  
Sad again  
Sad who



Right now I'm free  
Stolen stories from my old me  
Really cool and stuff  
Lord I don't wed my ideas to yours  
Pool opalescent stone  
Erase heads of drawings  
Ready for everything  
Equipped for tragedy  
Remember that I cannot see  
Please ease up  
Era of doctored orders  
Either one of you  
Polar frequency  
Reading this stuff is not gonna help  
Sounds great



Ghoul mail  
Three inch well  
Really large napkins  
Toy stores with alcohol  
Free motion removal  
Ports of mud  
Free stuff  
Cheap peace of mind  
Sample size experiment for kids  
Poor thinking  
Egg whites  
Rich appetite  
Strong convictions  
Weak advances



Mike James

**3 Poems**

**Along this Way, without Red Shoes**

My hands get sweaty when staring at any door marked CONFUSION. Also, I get giddy from sugar or an unexpectedly granted wish. If I read directions, I might make right choices. As it is, I don't even believe my horoscope. Scorpio is not in alignment with Saturn beneath Kentucky's blue moon. I'm willing to grab any doorknob if I can hold on long enough. If there's a front porch, I feel like I'm falling. I dream about a mountaintop toss sometimes. Most days I have the urge to walk backwards. The world is the same that way, but not the order.

## **Quill Island**

There are mermaids here, the same as in Thailand. Which seems appropriate since a sailor's shanty is the local fight song. If you are looking for trouble, they have every desire which starts with z. Palm readers blush over expletives when they share good news and hand care advice. An exactly noon parade reminds every one of the time and to eat lunch and that they are not in New Orleans or Kansas. Lunch coupons are a popular currency. If you forget to bring some, street vendors can supply you in exchange for your shoes.

### **Saturday Consolations, Once Again**

Each morning my cat needs her neck rubbed.  
She's moody, purposeful with her needs.

My day starts when something happens.  
I try to make myself do things.

If the day looks gray, I make excuses.  
If it's blue, none are near.

If I'm lucky, I find a used bookstore I haven't seen.  
I can always find a want if it's a little ragged, right in front of me.

If you guessed I love a good thrift store, then we could be friends.  
There's something to be said for half-price and, at least, second-hand.

If I don't shop, then I'll walk to the park.  
Read some bathroom graffiti and claim it as mine.

It's easy to say what I do once it's done.  
Hindsight, an always, is sometimes clear.

Melody Montgomery  
**3 Poems**

**Skull Full Moon**

Sea shells.  
Blood in the ears,  
whatever shall be  
appears.

Dragon fly slayer, say what you want;  
a thousand stars unraveling to surround the skull full moon.  
A howl furnace bed  
Doe see doe.  
Forget the death tribe.

Sleet belly footsteps  
Bed time  
Away a time waits. Time.  
Fluid, cylindrical.  
Time does not wait.

***HIC NON SED ETIAM*** (This Not Only But Also)

It's as if I painted you.  
 but these knowings were clipped  
 from growing.  
 Like fresh daffodils,  
 cut to bloom on the mantle.  
 You were not then even a shadow of a whisper.  
 Only the image you cast yourself  
 as a goat on top a glittering garbage heap.  
 Mysterious, like the ficus.  
 The shadows cast shifting shapes  
 like unconscious weavings —The possible harm to my person...

Dreary days with a pirate can render you quiet,  
 ill at ease.  
 He with repose  
 and you with reprieve.  
 Time now grows more quickly to Spring.  
 I imagine a stage and kissing an actor's earlobes in such a manner  
 that it leaves the audience silent, speechless.  
 It's not that I know the difficulty in kissing fire, but what mostly I consider...  
 I guess I have forgotten.  
 I guess I was only kidding.  
 And somewhere lost there are words for these primordial assertions,  
 a stream of glistening words.  
 But why wonder.  
 We have everything we need, silly,  
 a mandolin harmonium.  
 The universe harkins the future in dreams.  
 It seems like we've been here before and should try harder to understand  
 the I Ching. The future — vast and hazy.  
 Jupiter will never tell you where you are going.

And what does any of this have to do with you?  
 Quite a lot in some ways, and then nothing at all.  
 Mandala drawings map the Universe.  
 Poems written on the bottom of the ocean floor.

"Circles are extremely powerful," he said. "The center is everywhere  
 and the circumference is nowhere," and then he skipped away.

## **Animals of the Safari**

are migrating  
under water.  
Starfish. Sea stars.  
Sea of horses. Sea of stars.

Moving up,  
under water.  
Herds of oxen,  
caribou, giraffes  
migrate through a blue, manmade channel.  
No riverbed.  
A concrete, square canal.

Tigers swim upstream,  
underwater, in a jaguar dance.  
They become tiger people,  
one white, one striped,  
and crest up into sky,  
toss a tiny mouse,  
dangling it  
by a thin tail  
over a fanged mouth.

Tigers fly above tree-springing ocelots.  
Egrets tip-toe, treading over tree-blue,  
blur flying macaws.  
A cave-dark blanket of hyper-shifting bats.  
Zebras shift,  
an illusion in the pack.

People fly over,  
dodging tigers,  
in an open arboretum.  
A contained biome,  
a tiled vestibule,  
arched open to skylights.

The water should not be so clear.  
The walls are much too clean.  
Rubber trees are flourishing quite nicely.

At the end of the jungle canal  
a ladder leads out  
to the boundless carnival —

The driveway full of people  
covered in beads and candy-coated jewels.

In the kitchen, someone has put  
vegetables  
in the dishwasher.

In the yard,  
someone has parked  
a pickup truck

on the roof.



Melany Pearce

3 Poems

Cosmos

Achingly

Beautiful

Cosmos

*Dance*

Exuberantly in the wind

*Fragile* looking

*Graceful*

Harbingers

of Fall

Invite gardeners to enjoy

**July** and **August** in

Kansas as a multitude of

*Lepidoptera:*

Skippers, Monarchs, Clouded Sulphurs

Migrate  
to the sweet

Nectar

from glorious

Orange blossoms whose

Petals

*Quiver*

in unexpected

Rain

Softly saturating

Thirsty ground

enabling these

Uniquely lovely

Virtuosos

of the garden to

Waft,  
willy-nilly in the wind

Xtravagantly

Yielding

Zillions of seeds

Melany Pearce revised 3/16/19

(just so they can repeat the show again next year)

## **The Mother Sauces of French Cuisine**

(And a couple of offspring)

Butter, clarified  
With egg yolk, emulsified;  
Add lemon juice, water, beat,  
Be careful with the heat.  
Some salt and cayenne pepper  
Adds another flavor layer.  
Whisk till size doubles.  
It's worth the trouble,  
This clever "mother sauce"  
Called Hollandaise.

Daughter, Bearnaise,  
An accidental child,  
Gets all the praise  
As sauce for steak,  
A delicious mistake.

The very versatile,  
Sauce Espagnole,  
Adds concentrated tomato  
To veal stock and brown roux.  
Savory herbs, aromatics,  
A few more acrobatics,  
You'll have Bordelaise  
Or a great Demi-Glaze.

Velouté sauces begin  
With fish or chicken  
Stock thickened  
With a roux or a liaison deux.  
Curries, White wine,  
Or mushrooms define  
Secondary sauces. . .  
Simply sublime.

Escoffier thought Sauce  
Tomat should be codified;  
He applied himself  
To labor intensive,  
Rendered pork belly,  
Crushed tomatoes,  
Veggies, garlic, bay,  
Simmered most of the day.  
What a genius, that man!

This is how Ketchup began.

So. . .four mother sauces  
And a daughter, all with hints  
Of additional uses.  
Now time to glimpse  
What Béchamel produces.

With milk as a base,  
Thickened white roux  
Is the avenue  
To some of the best menu items  
Ever to grace a table.  
Béchamel is able  
To transcend any other roux.

Flavored with onion or shallots,  
A little nutmeg, completes  
My favorite 'Post Turkey Day' delight:  
Given three wishes from a Djinni?  
Pass the Turkey Tetrizzini!

To this mother,  
Add some cheese,  
Call it Mornay, if you please,  
Cooked pasta pellets,  
Any shape will do,  
This dish will appease  
anyone over two:

Voila! Macaroni and Cheese.  
Mon Dieu!

**May 2019 Wichita, Kansas**

In the not-so-merry month of May  
Lightning flashed, thunder rolled,  
Days were sodden, dull, and grey,  
Streets were flooded, cars got stalled.

Water pooled, washed out farmers' fields,  
Home gardeners also had their problems  
Compromised crops meant sparser yields.  
Rotted roots and stunted blossoms.

Rain--thirteen to seventeen inches:  
Some basements leaked, sump pumps failed,  
Kansans snarled and griped like Grinches.  
Against Mother Nature they all railed.

Many a Kansan could impugn  
May 2019, the month of monsoon.

Cheryl Unruh

**4 Poems**

**Boats on a River**

In western Kansas,  
our rivers tend to be dry land.  
Thin cottonwoods grow on sandbars  
in the middle of what once was a stream.

The Arkansas River  
was never wide or full,  
at least not like the rivers you cross  
when you drive east —  
the Missouri, the Mississippi, the Ohio. There,  
you're talking volume, but in Kansas  
most rivers don't carry enough water  
to float more than a kayak or a canoe.

Nevertheless, we Kansas kids  
read *Huckleberry Finn*  
and daydreamed about building a raft,  
about pushing ourselves  
across the mile-wide muddy water,  
lifting our poles from the river  
without a splash.

### **Almost an Astronaut**

A star-gazing woman  
wears out the sky each night.  
Twila's telescope rides the constellations,  
her eyes pulling in the tiny lights  
as if they are breath.

She has no use for daylight.  
She sulks until the west sacks the sun,  
puts it away for the night.

As a girl she always wore out  
the black crayon first.  
"The sky takes a lot of wax," she said  
in her kid-scientist voice.  
But she left holes in that black wax  
for the things that mattered —  
the twinklings.

Twila wanted to be an astronaut —  
every child has her dreams, of course;  
some are just too big to be managed.

So she drives deep into the desert at night  
far from streetlights, carrying her telescope  
and a tent, a sketchbook and her dream.  
Eye to glass, she reaches into the waxy black sky  
and pulls those faraway stars toward her.

## Math

I sit in the December sun,  
fastened to Earth, where winter  
moves as slowly as a day on Venus.

I've grown weary  
of the sound of cold concrete.  
I want to launch myself  
into the open arms of blue sky,  
flee this earthly plane,  
take a holiday in outer space.  
But all I have in my pocket  
is a handful of grocery-store dimes,  
not nearly enough to pay for an escape.

I do not have  
the mathematical equation  
to lift myself out of gravity.  
I do not know the lyrics  
to the song of redemption.

Today, the December sun shines  
like a savior dispelling the darkness,  
burrowing into my pores until it hits bone.  
I listen to words until they become written on skin.

### **Lulu**

Sometimes I get farm-fresh eggs  
from Lulu. Lulu is not her real name.  
Her real name is Lara, which is equally magical.  
I love that both of her names are:  
L-vowel-consonant-repeat vowel.

Lara has chickens on her farm  
and if you're her Facebook friend  
then on your birthday,  
she'll post a photo on your page  
of her holding one of her chickens.

When I purchase eggs from Lara,  
I pick them up at her tattoo shop here in town.  
The eggs are gems — small and oval,  
pastel blue and green, creamy white.

With each dozen,  
Lara tucks in  
a tiny feather.  
It rises like a breath  
when you open the carton,  
then it floats down  
and nuzzles with nearest egg.

The feather is a secret wish,  
a crooked grin, a floating prayer.



Grace Ure

**3 Poems**

**River Rhythm**

eat  
the bubbles surging  
between boat and water

sleep  
the heat of muscle broken down  
mellow self-poultice of sweat

drink  
the air sucked raw through rhythmic  
lungs like Secretariat

breathe  
the high of your own blood singing  
corded exultation

dream  
the flight of glass  
transcending effort into whiskey

row  
the liquid balance  
holding tipping points at bay

let it run

### **Watching Rain Through A Cage**

like driving with a short in your ABS  
you know you'll need them one day  
but untamed whatifs run  
until you're on the side of the road  
engine murdered by the AC  
with flecks and corners of shrapnel unseen

against your carotid like a stitch in your side  
motions tense  
meaty palm heavy as your eyes  
shift the jagged faceplate missing  
to find another gear  
turn it up a notch

even though we know we'll be deaf one day  
because we need the stars  
in the backs of our eyes  
hurt like Johnny Cash  
finding escape velocity

absorb the pressure  
let it rain

### **The White Claw Debacle**

5% of 16 ounces is still half a shot  
enough to hit  
and the shrapnel comes loose  
a ricochet inside my skull I can't stop  
except with intravenous dubstep  
dripping the drop from ear to jugular  
but missing the heart

mild poison the threat of romance  
melodramatic fool courting oblivion  
got sunscreen in her eyes  
but no one believes she's not crying

ribcage rigid with adrenaline-laced abs  
lioness corseted in woman-bone  
ices her costal cartilages at home  
powerful and capable written on the outside  
cavities of vulnerability dying to be known  
crushed to silence like candy pumpkins

**Roy J. Beckemeyer** is a retired aeronautical engineer / Boeing Company executive. In his post-professional life, he has been a scientific journal editor, a researcher who has studied extant dragonflies and Paleozoic fossil insects. He has described and named from fossils more than twenty new species of Paleozoic insects. He is also a nature photographer, writer, award-winning poet, and poetry and literary reviewer and editor and has done book layout and design. His poems have appeared in half a dozen anthologies and many print and online journals. His debut poetry collection, *Music I Once Could Dance To* (2014, Coal City Press) was a 2015 Kansas Notable Book. He recently co-edited *Kansas Time+Place: An Anthology of Heartland Poetry* (2017, Little Balkans Press) with Kansas Poet Laureate Emerita Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg. *Amanuensis Angel* (Spartan Press, 2018) is a chapbook of ekphrastic poetry inspired by abstract and impressionist artists' depictions of angels. His latest full-length poetry collection, *Stage Whispers* (2018, Meadowlark Books), won the 2019 Kansas Authors Club Nelson Poetry Book Award.

**William Bloomquist**, 29, is a Kansas native and multi-discipline creative. As early as middle-school he was a poet, but after picking up guitar in high school, started writing lyrics and songs. He also spends time in the visual arts (drawing and sculpture/collage work) having participated in Wichita's Final and First Friday events multiple times in both the musical and visual realm. William is currently assembling his first book of poetry and is looking to publish in 2020.

By day, **Julie Ann Baker Brin** works for public broadcasting; by night, she participates in multiple creative and community-building endeavors. Her writing has previously been presented by Z Publishing in two *Kansas's Best Emerging Poets* collection, as well as in Kansas publications like *Archaeopteryx*, *Coelacanth*, *Kiosk*, and *Sheridan Edwards Review* (in which she received a Kisner Prize for Poetry).

**Raylyn Clacher** is a poet, mother, and teacher living in Wichita, Kansas. Her chapbook, *All of her Leaves*, was published by Dancing Girl Press in 2015. Her poems and book reviews have appeared in journals such as the *South Dakota Review*, *New Orleans Review*, and *burntdistrict*, among others. She also facilitates the monthly Wichita Community Poetry Workshop.

**Doug Horacio Hoguin Lynn** is a Mexican American from Wichita, KS, Co-founder and Director of a nonprofit DIYMCA; a multi-instrumentalist that has played festivals and released albums with several bands in the last 5 years; and a designer working in the freelance sector since 2013. Their work is for the broken-hearted that continue on through all pain.

**Mike James** makes his home outside Nashville, Tennessee. He has been published in numerous magazines throughout the country in such places as *Plainsongs*, *Laurel Poetry Review*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, and *Tar River Poetry*. His fourteen poetry collections include: *Parades* (Alien Buddha), *Jumping Drawbridges in Technicolor* (Blue Horse), *First-Hand Accounts from Made-Up Places* (Stubborn Mule), and *Crows in the Jukebox* (Bottom Dog.) He has served as an associate editor of *The Kentucky Review* and as publisher of the now defunct *Yellow Pepper Press*.

**Melody A. Montgomery** is a poet as well as a professional editor of scientific manuscripts, successful grant writer and newspaper editor. Her writing primarily draws from nature, science, philosophy, and spirituality, where she presents the world through a unique lens in her poetry. She grew up on a ranch in rural Montana and received her Bachelor of Science from the University of Montana in Missoula, where she studied Chemistry and English. Montgomery is an avid traveler and has lived in seven states. She received her Master of Fine Arts from the University of Nebraska –

Omaha and then returned to her native state of Montana. Her work is published in *Toxicology Letters*, *Journal of Nursing and Healthcare*, *Busting and Droning*, *Black Heart Magazine*, the *Lewistown News-Argus*, *Dillon Tribune*, *Terry Tribune*, *Big Timber Pioneer*, *Miles City Star*, *Judith Basin Press*, and the *Rocky Mountain Poetry Foundation*. Montgomery also is acknowledged as the editor for several dozen scientific publications. Her work can also be found on her personal blog, <http://ravenandseagull.blogspot.com>. Montgomery is currently the managing editor of the *Judith Basin Press*, [www.judithbasinpress.net](http://www.judithbasinpress.net).

A former Executive Director of a professional society, Ms. **Melany Pearce** is more used to writing press releases and brochures. Having written occasional light verse for thirty years, after retiring in 2011, she joined a weekly poetry group and began devoting more time to the craft of poetry. She holds a Master's in Communication and taught Communication Arts at the university level for many years. She lives in Wichita, Kansas with her two cats, Mac and Cheddar.

**Cheryl Unruh** puts words together in Emporia, Kansas. She is the author of two books of essays: *Flyover People: Life on the Ground in a Rectangular State*, and *Waiting on the Sky*, (Quincy Press), both Kansas Notable Books, as well as a volume of poetry, *Walking on Water* (Meadowlark Books). Her poetry has been published in *The Christian Science Monitor* and *Flint Hills Review*.

**Grace Ure** coaches club rowing, teaches Written Communication for the Workplace at Kansas State University, and serves as blogger and receptionist at Gaia SalonSpa in downtown Manhattan, KS. She lives with her husband and two cats. Originally from Albuquerque, NM, she has degrees from both Kansas State and Oxford and lives by the mantra "life is not linear." *River City Poetry* published her debut in Spring 2018.