**1. Lexie Wilson (Kentucky)**



**NURTURE**

BY MAXINE KUMIN

From a documentary on marsupials I learn

that a pillowcase makes a fine

substitute pouch for an orphaned kangaroo.

I am drawn to such dramas of animal rescue.

They are warm in the throat. I suffer, the critic proclaims,

from an overabundance of maternal genes.

Bring me your fallen fledgling, your bummer lamb,

lead the abused, the starvelings, into my barn.

Advise the hunted deer to leap into my corn.

And had there been a wild child—

*filthy and fierce as a ferret*, he is called

in one nineteenth-century account—

a wild child to love, it is safe to assume,

given my fireside inked with paw prints,

there would have been room.

Think of the language we two, same and not-same,

might have constructed from sign,

scratch, grimace, grunt, vowel:

Laughter our first noun, and our long verb, howl.

**2. Emily Biaz (Alabama)**



**ONE ART**

BY ELIZABETH BISHOP

The art of losing isn’t hard to master;

so many things seem filled with the intent

to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster

of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.

The art of losing isn’t hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:

places, and names, and where it was you meant

to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

I lost my mother’s watch. And look! my last, or

next-to-last, of three loved houses went.

The art of losing isn’t hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,

some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.

I miss them, but it wasn’t a disaster.

—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture

I love) I shan’t have lied. It’s evident

the art of losing’s not too hard to master

though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.

**3. Aalihya Banks (Indiana)**



**HOW I DISCOVERED POETRY**

BY MARILYN NELSON

It was like soul-kissing, the way the words

filled my mouth as Mrs. Purdy read from her desk.

All the other kids zoned an hour ahead to 3:15,

but Mrs. Purdy and I wandered lonely as clouds borne

by a breeze off Mount Parnassus. She must have seen

the darkest eyes in the room brim: The next day

she gave me a poem she’d chosen especially for me

to read to the all except for me white class.

She smiled when she told me to read it, smiled harder,

said oh yes I could. She smiled harder and harder

until I stood and opened my mouth to banjo playing

darkies, pickaninnies, disses and dats. When I finished

my classmates stared at the floor. We walked silent

to the buses, awed by the power of words.

**4. Andrew Cusmano (Iowa)**



**WINDIGO**

BY LOUISE ERDRICH

*For Angela*

*The Windigo is a flesh-eating, wintry demon with a man buried deep inside of it. In some Chippewa stories, a young girl vanquishes this monster by forcing boiling lard down its throat, thereby releasing the human at the core of ice.*

You knew I was coming for you, little one,

when the kettle jumped into the fire.

Towels flapped on the hooks,

and the dog crept off, groaning,

to the deepest part of the woods.

In the hackles of dry brush a thin laughter started up.

Mother scolded the food warm and smooth in the pot

and called you to eat.

But I spoke in the cold trees:

*New one, I have come for you, child hide and lie still.*

The sumac pushed sour red cones through the air.

Copper burned in the raw wood.

You saw me drag toward you.

Oh touch me, I murmured, and licked the soles of your feet.

You dug your hands into my pale, melting fur.

I stole you off, a huge thing in my bristling armor.

Steam rolled from my wintry arms, each leaf shivered

from the bushes we passed

until they stood, naked, spread like the cleaned spines of fish.

Then your warm hands hummed over and shoveled themselves full

of the ice and the snow. I would darken and spill

all night running, until at last morning broke the cold earth

and I carried you home,

a river shaking in the sun.

**5. Niveah Glover (Florida)**



**HIP-HOP GHAZAL**

BY PATRICIA SMITH

Gotta love us brown girls, munching on fat, swinging blue hips,

decked out in shells and splashes, Lawdie, bringing them woo hips.

As the jukebox teases, watch my sistas throat the heartbreak,

inhaling bassline, cracking backbone and singing thru hips.

Like something boneless, we glide silent, seeping ‘tween floorboards,

wrapping around the hims, and ooh wee, clinging like glue hips.

Engines grinding, rotating, smokin’, gotta pull back some.

Natural minds are lost at the mere sight of ringing true hips.

Gotta love us girls, just struttin’ down Manhattan streets

killing the menfolk with a dose of that stinging view. Hips.

Crying ’bout getting old—Patricia, you need to get up off

what God gave you. Say a prayer and start slinging. Cue hips.

**6. Malisha Taylor (Mississippi)**



**MANSPLAINING**

BY JENNIFER MILITELLO

Dear sir, your air of authority

leaves me lost. Eases me from

a place of ease. Contracts with

my contradictions to take from me

a place. Autopilots my autobiography.

Frightens my fright. Sighs with

my breath. Wins at my race.

Your certainty has me curtained.

Your nerve has me nervous. Your

childhood has me childlike and

your nastiness nests in my belfry

like a hawk. You are beyond

and above my slice of sky, peach

as a pie, bourbon as its pit. You are

spit and vinegar while I sour

in my bowl. You bowl me over

while I tread lightly on

my feet. You walk on water

while I sink. You witness me,

fisherman, boat on the lake,

while I struggle and burble and brittle

and drop. You wink at me and

I must relate. I close my eyes

to erase you and you are written

in my lids. A litmus test. A form

of lair. God with three days

of facial growth and an old bouquet

for a face. Soap and water for

a brain. I have no handsome

answer. I have no pillar of salt

or shoulder to look over. I have

no feather to weigh. I have no

bubble to burst. I am less

to myself, a character in a drama,

a drumbeat, a benevolence, a

blight. All parts of me say shoot

on sight. Aim for an artery

or organ. Good night.

**7. Charlotte Bollschweiler (Tennessee)**



**SNOW DAY**

BY BILLY COLLINS

Today we woke up to a revolution of snow,

its white flag waving over everything,

the landscape vanished,

not a single mouse to punctuate the blankness,

and beyond these windows

the government buildings smothered,

schools and libraries buried, the post office lost

under the noiseless drift,

the paths of trains softly blocked,

the world fallen under this falling.

In a while, I will put on some boots

and step out like someone walking in water,

and the dog will porpoise through the drifts,

and I will shake a laden branch

sending a cold shower down on us both.

But for now I am a willing prisoner in this house,

a sympathizer with the anarchic cause of snow.

I will make a pot of tea

and listen to the plastic radio on the counter,

as glad as anyone to hear the news

that the Kiddie Corner School is closed,

the Ding-Dong School, closed.

the All Aboard Children’s School, closed,

the Hi-Ho Nursery School, closed,

along with—some will be delighted to hear—

the Toadstool School, the Little School,

Little Sparrows Nursery School,

Little Stars Pre-School, Peas-and-Carrots Day School

the Tom Thumb Child Center, all closed,

and—clap your hands—the Peanuts Play School.

So this is where the children hide all day,

These are the nests where they letter and draw,

where they put on their bright miniature jackets,

all darting and climbing and sliding,

all but the few girls whispering by the fence.

And now I am listening hard

in the grandiose silence of the snow,

trying to hear what those three girls are plotting,

what riot is afoot,

which small queen is about to be brought down.

**8. Riley Grace Saenim (Wisconsin)**



**VIXEN**

BY W. S. MERWIN

Comet of stillness princess of what is over

       high note held without trembling without voice without sound

aura of complete darkness keeper of the kept secrets

       of the destroyed stories the escaped dreams the sentences

never caught in words warden of where the river went

       touch of its surface sibyl of the extinguished

window onto the hidden place and the other time

       at the foot of the wall by the road patient without waiting

in the full moonlight of autumn at the hour when I was born

       you no longer go out like a flame at the sight of me

you are still warmer than the moonlight gleaming on you

       even now you are unharmed even now perfect

as you have always been now when your light paws are running

       on the breathless night on the bridge with one end I remember you

when I have heard you the soles of my feet have made answer

       when I have seen you I have waked and slipped from the calendars

from the creeds of difference and the contradictions

       that were my life and all the crumbling fabrications

as long as it lasted until something that we were

       had ended when you are no longer anything

let me catch sight of you again going over the wall

       and before the garden is extinct and the woods are figures

guttering on a screen let my words find their own

       places in the silence after the animals

**9. Victoria Jelks (Kansas)**



**LET THE LIGHT ENTER**

BY FRANCES ELLEN WATKINS HARPER

*The Dying Words of Goethe*

“Light! more light! the shadows deepen,

        And my life is ebbing low,

Throw the windows widely open:

        Light! more light! before I go.

“Softly let the balmy sunshine

        Play around my dying bed,

E’er the dimly lighted valley

        I with lonely feet must tread.

“Light! more light! for Death is weaving

        Shadows ‘round my waning sight,

And I fain would gaze upon him

        Through a stream of earthly light.”

Not for greater gifts of genius;

        Not for thoughts more grandly bright,

All the dying poet whispers

        Is a prayer for light, more light.

Heeds he not the gathered laurels,

        Fading slowly from his sight;

All the poet’s aspirations

        Centre in that prayer for light.

Gracious Saviour, when life’s day-dreams

        Melt and vanish from the sight,

May our dim and longing vision

        Then be blessed with light, more light.

**10.** **Paige Cook (Michigan)**



**PORTRAIT OF MY GENDER AS [INAUDIBLE]**

BY MEG DAY

I knew I was a god

when you could not

agree on my name

& still, none you spoke

could force me to listen

closer. Is this the nothing

the antelope felt when

Adam, lit on his own

entitling, dubbed family,

genus, species? So many

descendants became

doctors, delivered

babies, bestowed bodies

names as if to say it is to make it

so. Can it be a comfort between

us, the fact of my creation?

I was made in the image

of a thing without

an image & silence, too,

is your invention. Who prays

for a god except to appear

with answers, but never

a body? A voice? If I told you

you wouldn’t believe me

because I was the one

to say it. On the first day

there was no sound

worth mentioning. If  I, too,

am a conductor of air, the only

praise I know is in stereo

(one pair—an open hand & closed

fist—will have to do). I made

a photograph of my name:

there was a shadow in a field

& I put my shadow in it. You

can’t hear me, but I’m there.

**11. Elizabeth Buescher (Nebraska)**



**DROWNING IN WHEAT**

BY JOHN KINSELLA

They’d been warned

on every farm

that playing

in the silos

would lead to death.

You sink in wheat.

Slowly. And the more

you struggle the worse it gets.

‘You’ll see a rat sail past

your face, nimble on its turf,

and then you’ll disappear.’

In there, hard work

has no reward.

So it became a kind of test

to see how far they could sink

without needing a rope

to help them out.

But in the midst of play

rituals miss a beat—like both

leaping in to resolve

an argument

as to who’d go first

and forgetting

to attach the rope.

Up to the waist

and afraid to move.

That even a call for help

would see the wheat

trickle down.

The painful consolidation

of time. The grains

in the hourglass

grotesquely swollen.

And that acrid

chemical smell

of treated wheat

coaxing them into

a near-dead sleep.

**12.** **Amir Trinidad Vidal (Puerto Rico)**



**TO THE OPPRESSORS**

BY PAULI MURRAY

Now you are strong

And we are but grapes aching with ripeness.

Crush us!

Squeeze from us all the brave life

Contained in these full skins.

But ours is a subtle strength

Potent with centuries of yearning,

Of being kegged and shut away

In dark forgotten places.

We shall endure

To steal your senses

In that lonely twilight

Of your winter’s grief.

**13.** **Yohanna Endashaw (Illinois)**



**ONCE THE WORLD WAS PERFECT**

BY JOY HARJO

Once the world was perfect, and we were happy in that world.

Then we took it for granted.

Discontent began a small rumble in the earthly mind.

Then Doubt pushed through with its spiked head.

And once Doubt ruptured the web,

All manner of demon thoughts

Jumped through—

We destroyed the world we had been given

For inspiration, for life—

Each stone of jealousy, each stone

Of fear, greed, envy, and hatred, put out the light.

No one was without a stone in his or her hand.

There we were,

Right back where we had started.

We were bumping into each other

In the dark.

And now we had no place to live, since we didn't know

How to live with each other.

Then one of the stumbling ones took pity on another

And shared a blanket.

A spark of kindness made a light.

The light made an opening in the darkness.

Everyone worked together to make a ladder.

A Wind Clan person climbed out first into the next world,

And then the other clans, the children of those clans, their children,

And their children, all the way through time—

To now, into this morning light to you.

**14. Julie Clayton (Missouri)**



**CATHEDRAL OF SALT**

BY NICK FLYNN

Beneath all this I’m carving a cathedral

of salt. I keep

the entrance hidden, no one seems to notice

the hours I’m missing  …    I’ll

bring you one night, it’s where

I go when I

hang up the phone  …

                                      Neither you

nor your soul is waiting for me at

the end of this, I know that, the salt

nearly clear after I

chisel out the pews, the see-through

altar, the opaque

panes of glass that depict the stations of

our cross — *Here is the day*

we met, here is the day we remember we

met  …    The air down here

will kill us, some say, some wear paper

masks, some still imagine the air above the green

trees, thick with bees

building solitary nests out of petals. What’s

the name for this? *Ineffable?* The endless

white will blind you, some say,

but what is there to see we haven’t already

seen? Some say it’s

like poking a stick into a river — you might as well

simply write about the stick.

Or the river.

**15. Alissa Rodgers (Oklahoma)**



**ORANGES**

BY ROISIN KELLY

I’ll choose for myself next time

who I’ll reach out and take

as mine, in the way

I might stand at a fruit stall

having decided

to ignore the apples

the mangoes and the kiwis

but hold my hands above

a pile of oranges

as if to warm my skin

before a fire.

Not only have I chosen

oranges, but I’ll also choose

which orange — I’ll test

a few for firmness

scrape some rind off

with my fingernail

so that a citrus scent

will linger there all day.

I won’t be happy

with the first one I pick

but will try different ones

until I know you. How

will I know you?

You’ll feel warm

between my palms

and I’ll cup you like

a handful of holy water.

A vision will come to me

of your exotic land: the sun

you swelled under

the tree you grew from.

A drift of white blossoms

from the orange tree

will settle in my hair

and I’ll know.

This is how I will choose

you: by feeling you

smelling you, by slipping

you into my coat.

Maybe then I’ll climb

the hill, look down

on the town we live in

with sunlight on my face

and a miniature sun

burning a hole in my pocket.

Thirsty, I’ll suck the juice

from it. From you.

When I walk away

I’ll leave behind a trail

of lamp-bright rind.

**16. Grisham Locke (Louisiana)**



**BURNING IN THE RAIN**

BY RICHARD BLANCO

Someday compassion would demand

I set myself free of my desire to recreate

my father, indulge in my mother’s losses,

strangle lovers with words, forcing them

to confess for me and take the blame.

Today was that day: I tossed them, sheet

by sheet on the patio and gathered them

into a pyre. I wanted to let them go

in a blaze, tiny white dwarfs imploding

beside the azaleas and ficus bushes,

let them crackle, burst like winged seeds,

let them smolder into gossamer embers—

a thousand gray butterflies in the wind.

Today was that day, but it rained, kept

raining. Instead of fire, water—drops

knocking on doors, wetting windows

into mirrors reflecting me in the oaks.

The garden walls and stones swelling

into ghostlier shades of themselves,

the wind chimes giggling in the storm,

a coffee cup left overflowing with rain.

Instead of burning, my pages turned

into water lilies floating over puddles,

then tiny white cliffs as the sun set,

finally drying all night under the moon

into papier-mâché souvenirs. Today

the rain would not let their lives burn.

**17. Tucker Dowler (Arkansas)**



**BACKDROP ADDRESSES COWBOY**

BY MARGARET ATWOOD

Starspangled cowboy

sauntering out of the almost-

silly West, on your face

a porcelain grin,

tugging a papier-mâché cactus

on wheels behind you with a string,

you are innocent as a bathtub

full of bullets.

Your righteous eyes, your laconic

trigger-fingers

people the streets with villains:

as you move, the air in front of you

blossoms with targets

and you leave behind you a heroic

trail of desolation:

beer bottles

slaughtered by the side

of the road, bird-

skulls bleaching in the sunset.

I ought to be watching

from behind a cliff or a cardboard storefront

when the shooting starts, hands clasped

in admiration,

but I am elsewhere.

Then what about me

what about the I

confronting you on that border,

you are always trying to cross?

I am the horizon

you ride towards, the thing you can never lasso

I am also what surrounds you:

my brain

scattered with your

tincans, bones, empty shells,

the litter of your invasions.

I am the space you desecrate

as you pass through.

**18. Tiana Renee Jones (Georgia)**



**LOVE SONG**

BY DOROTHY PARKER

My own dear love, he is strong and bold

      And he cares not what comes after.

His words ring sweet as a chime of gold,

      And his eyes are lit with laughter.

He is jubilant as a flag unfurled—

      Oh, a girl, she’d not forget him.

My own dear love, he is all my world,—

      And I wish I’d never met him.

My love, he’s mad, and my love, he’s fleet,

      And a wild young wood-thing bore him!

The ways are fair to his roaming feet,

      And the skies are sunlit for him.

As sharply sweet to my heart he seems

      As the fragrance of acacia.

My own dear love, he is all my dreams,—

      And I wish he were in Asia.

My love runs by like a day in June,

      And he makes no friends of sorrows.

He’ll tread his galloping rigadoon

      In the pathway of the morrows.

He’ll live his days where the sunbeams start,

      Nor could storm or wind uproot him.

My own dear love, he is all my heart,—

      And I wish somebody’d shoot him.

**Round 2 Poems**

**1. Lexie Wilson (Kentucky)**



**SUMMER**

BY CHEN CHEN

You are the ice cream sandwich connoisseur of your generation.

Blessed are your floral shorteralls, your deeply pink fanny pack with

     travel-size lint roller just in case.

Level of splendiferous in your outfit: 200.

Types of invisible pain stemming from adolescent disasters in classrooms,

     locker rooms, & quite often Toyota Camrys: at least 10,000.

You are not a jigglypuff, not yet a wigglytuff.

Reporters & fathers call your generation “the worst.”

Which really means “queer kids who could go online & learn that queer

     doesn’t have to mean disaster.”

Or dead.

Instead, queer means, splendiferously, you.

& you means someone who knows that common flavors for ice cream

    sandwiches in Singapore include red bean, yam, & honeydew.

Your powers are great, are growing.

One day you will create an online personality quiz that also freshens the

     breath.

The next day you will tell your father, *You were wrong to say that I had*

*to change.*

*To make me promise I would. To make me promise.*

*& promise.*

**2. Emily Biaz (Alabama)**



**ODE TO A LARGE TUNA IN THE MARKET**

BY PABLO NERUDA

*Translated by Robin Robertson*

Here,

among the market vegetables,

this torpedo

from the ocean

depths,

a missile

that swam,

now

lying in front of me

dead.

Surrounded

by the earth's green froth

—these lettuces,

bunches of carrots—

only you

lived through

the sea's truth, survived

the unknown, the

unfathomable

darkness, the depths

of the sea,

the great

abyss,

le grand abîme,

only you:

varnished

black-pitched

witness

to that deepest night.

Only you:

dark bullet

barreled

from the depths,

carrying

only

your

one wound,

but resurgent,

always renewed,

locked into the current,

fins fletched

like wings

in the torrent,

in the coursing

of

the

underwater

dark,

like a grieving arrow,

sea-javelin, a nerveless

oiled harpoon.

Dead

in front of me,

catafalqued king

of my own ocean;

once

sappy as a sprung fir

in the green turmoil,

once seed

to sea-quake,

tidal wave, now

simply

dead remains;

in the whole market

yours

was the only shape left

with purpose or direction

in this

jumbled ruin

of nature;

you are

a solitary man of war

among these frail vegetables,

your flanks and prow

black

and slippery

as if you were still

a well-oiled ship of the wind,

the only

true

machine

of the sea: unflawed,

undefiled,

navigating now

the waters of death.

**3. Aalihya Banks (Indiana)**



**A SONG IN THE FRONT YARD**

BY GWENDOLYN BROOKS

I’ve stayed in the front yard all my life.

I want a peek at the back

Where it’s rough and untended and hungry weed grows.

A girl gets sick of a rose.

I want to go in the back yard now

And maybe down the alley,

To where the charity children play.

I want a good time today.

They do some wonderful things.

They have some wonderful fun.

My mother sneers, but I say it’s fine

How they don’t have to go in at quarter to nine.

My mother, she tells me that Johnnie Mae

Will grow up to be a bad woman.

That George’ll be taken to Jail soon or late

(On account of last winter he sold our back gate).

But I say it’s fine. Honest, I do.

And I’d like to be a bad woman, too,

And wear the brave stockings of night-black lace

And strut down the streets with paint on my face.

**4. Andrew Cusmano (Iowa)**



**I REMEMBER, I REMEMBER**

BY THOMAS HOOD

I remember, I remember,

The house where I was born,

The little window where the sun

Came peeping in at morn;

He never came a wink too soon,

Nor brought too long a day,

But now, I often wish the night

Had borne my breath away!

I remember, I remember,

The roses, red and white,

The vi’lets, and the lily-cups,

Those flowers made of light!

The lilacs where the robin built,

And where my brother set

The laburnum on his birthday,—

The tree is living yet!

I remember, I remember,

Where I was used to swing,

And thought the air must rush as fresh

To swallows on the wing;

My spirit flew in feathers then,

That is so heavy now,

And summer pools could hardly cool

The fever on my brow!

I remember, I remember,

The fir trees dark and high;

I used to think their slender tops

Were close against the sky:

It was a childish ignorance,

But now ’tis little joy

To know I’m farther off from heav’n

Than when I was a boy.

**5. Niveah Glover (Florida)**



**WE WEAR THE MASK**

BY PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

We wear the mask that grins and lies,

It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—

This debt we pay to human guile;

With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,

And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,

In counting all our tears and sighs?

Nay, let them only see us, while

       We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries

To thee from tortured souls arise.

We sing, but oh the clay is vile

Beneath our feet, and long the mile;

But let the world dream otherwise,

       We wear the mask!

**6. Malisha Taylor (Mississippi)**



**I FELT A FUNERAL, IN MY BRAIN, (340)**

BY EMILY DICKINSON

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,

And Mourners to and fro

Kept treading – treading – till it seemed

That Sense was breaking through –

And when they all were seated,

A Service, like a Drum –

Kept beating – beating – till I thought

My mind was going numb –

And then I heard them lift a Box

And creak across my Soul

With those same Boots of Lead, again,

Then Space – began to toll,

As all the Heavens were a Bell,

And Being, but an Ear,

And I, and Silence, some strange Race,

Wrecked, solitary, here –

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,

And I dropped down, and down –

And hit a World, at every plunge,

And Finished knowing – then –

**7. Charlotte Bollschweiler (Tennessee)**



**CREPUSCULE WITH MURIEL**

BY MARYLIN HACKER

Instead of a cup of tea, instead of a milk-

silk whelk of a cup, of a cup of nearly six

o'clock teatime, cup of a stumbling block,

cup of an afternoon unredeemed by talk,

cup of a cut brown loaf, of a slice, a lack

of butter, blueberry jam that's almost black,

instead of tannin seeping into the cracks

of a pot, the void of an hour seeps out, infects

the slit of a cut I haven't the wit to fix

with a surgeon's needle threaded with fine-gauge silk

as a key would thread the cylinder of a lock.

But no key threads the cylinder of a lock.

Late afternoon light, transitory, licks

the place of the absent cup with its rough tongue, flicks

itself out beneath the wheel's revolving spoke.

Taut thought's gone, with a blink of attention, slack,

a vision of "death and distance in the mix"

(she lost her words and how did she get them back

when the corridor of a day was a lurching deck?

The dream-life logic encodes in nervous tics

she translated to a syntax which connects

intense and unfashionable politics

with morning coffee, Hudson sunsets, sex;

then the short-circuit of the final stroke,

the end toward which all lines looped out, then broke).

What a gaze out the window interjects:

on the southeast corner, a black Lab balks,

tugged as the light clicks green toward a late-day walk

by a plump brown girl in a purple anorak.

The Bronx-bound local comes rumbling up the tracks

out of the tunnel, over west Harlem blocks

whose windows gleam on the animal warmth of bricks

rouged by the fluvial light of six o'clock.

**8. Riley Grace Saenim (Wisconsin)**



**THOUGHTLESS CRUELTY**

BY CHARLES LAMB

There, Robert, you have kill'd that fly — ,

And should you thousand ages try

The life you've taken to supply,

You could not do it.

You surely must have been devoid

Of thought and sense, to have destroy'd

A thing which no way you annoy'd —

You'll one day rue it.

Twas but a fly perhaps you'll say,

That's born in April, dies in May;

That does but just learn to display

His wings one minute,

And in the next is vanish'd quite.

A bird devours it in his flight —

Or come a cold blast in the night,

There's no breath in it.

The bird but seeks his proper food —

And Providence, whose power endu'd

That fly with life, when it thinks good,

May justly take it.

But you have no excuses for't —

A life by Nature made so short,

Less reason is that you for sport

Should shorter make it.

A fly a little thing you rate —

But, Robert do not estimate

A creature's pain by small or great;

The greatest being

Can have but fibres, nerves, and flesh,

And these the smallest ones possess,

Although their frame and structure less

Escape our seeing.

**9. Victoria Jelks (Kansas)**



**WE WEAR THE MASK**

BY PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

We wear the mask that grins and lies,

It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—

This debt we pay to human guile;

With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,

And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,

In counting all our tears and sighs?

Nay, let them only see us, while

       We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries

To thee from tortured souls arise.

We sing, but oh the clay is vile

Beneath our feet, and long the mile;

But let the world dream otherwise,

       We wear the mask!

**10.** **Paige Cook (Michigan)**



**WHEN I HAVE FEARS THAT I MAY CEASE TO BE**

BY JOHN KEATS

When I have fears that I may cease to be

   Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain,

Before high-pilèd books, in charactery,

   Hold like rich garners the full ripened grain;

When I behold, upon the night’s starred face,

   Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,

And think that I may never live to trace

   Their shadows with the magic hand of chance;

And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,

   That I shall never look upon thee more,

Never have relish in the faery power

   Of unreflecting love—then on the shore

Of the wide world I stand alone, and think

Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

**11. Elizabeth Buescher (Nebraska)**



**AUGUST 12 IN THE NEBRASKA SAND HILLS WATCHING THE PERSEIDS METEOR SHOWER**

BY TWYLA HANSEN

In the middle of rolling grasslands, away from lights,

a moonless night untethers its wild polka-dots,

the formations we can name competing for attention

in a twinkling and crowded sky-bowl.

Out from the corners, our eyes detect a maverick meteor,

a transient streak, and lying back toward midnight

on the heft of car hood, all conversation blunted,

we are at once unnerved and somehow restored.

Out here, a furrow of spring-fed river threads

through ranches in the tens of thousands of acres.

Like cattle, we are powerless, by instinct can see

why early people trembled and deliberated the heavens.

Off in the distance those cattle make themselves known,

a bird song moves singular across the horizon.

Not yet 2:00, and bits of comet dust, the Perseids,

startle and skim the atmosphere like skipping stones.

In the leaden dark, we are utterly alone. As I rub the ridges

on the back of your hand, our love for all things warm

and pulsing crescendos toward dawn: this timeless awe,

your breath floating with mine upward into the stars.

**12.** **Amir Trinidad Vidal (Puerto Rico)**



**THE MORTICIAN IN SAN FRANCISCO**

BY RANDALL MANN

This may sound queer,

but in 1985 I held the delicate hands

of Dan White:

I prepared him for burial; by then, Harvey Milk

was made monument—no, myth—by the years

since he was shot.

I remember when Harvey was shot:

twenty, and I knew I was queer.

Those were the years,

Levi’s and leather jackets holding hands

on Castro Street, cheering for Harvey Milk—

elected on the same day as Dan White.

 I often wonder about Supervisor White,

who fatally shot

Mayor Moscone and Supervisor Milk,

who was one of us, a Castro queer.

May 21, 1979: a jury hands

down the sentence, seven years—

in truth, five years—

for ex-cop, ex-fireman Dan White,

for the blood on his hands;

when he confessed that he had shot

the mayor and the queer,

a few men in blue cheered. And Harvey Milk?

Why cry over spilled milk,

some wondered, semi-privately, for years—

it meant “one less queer.”

The jurors turned to White.

If just the mayor had been shot,

Dan might have had trouble on his hands—

but the twelve who held his life in their hands

maybe didn’t mind the death of Harvey Milk;

maybe, the second murder offered him a shot

at serving only a few years.

In the end, he committed suicide, this Dan White.

And he was made presentable by a queer.

**3.** **Yohanna Endashaw (Illinois)**



**YOU, IF NO ONE ELSE**

BY TINO VILLANUEVA

*Translated by James Hoggard*

                                     Listen, you

who transformed your anguish

into healthy awareness,

put your voice

where your memory is.

You who swallowed

the afternoon dust,

defend everything you understand

with words.

You, if no one else,

will condemn with your tongue

the erosion each disappointment brings.

You, who saw the images

of disgust growing,

will understand how time

devours the destitute;

you, who gave yourself

your own commandments,

know better than anyone

why you turned your back

on your town's toughest limits.

Don't hush,

don't throw away

the most persistent truth,

as our hard-headed brethren

sometimes do.

Remember well

what your life was like: cloudiness,

and slick mud

after a drizzle;

flimsy windows the wind

kept rattling

in winter, and that

unheated slab dwelling

where coldness crawled

up in your clothes.

Tell how you were able to come

to this point, to unbar

History's doors

to see your early years,

your people, the others.

Name the way

rebellion's calm spirit has served you,

and how you came

to unlearn the lessons

of that teacher,

your land's omnipotent defiler.

Remember how,

from the first emptiness,

you started saving yourself,

and ask yourself what,

after all,

these words are good for

in this round hour now

where your voice strikes time.

**14. Julie Clayton (Missouri)**



**ENOUGH**

BY SUZANNE BUFFAM

I am wearing dark glasses inside the house

To match my dark mood.

I have left all the sugar out of the pie.

My rage is a kind of domestic rage.

I learned it from my mother

Who learned it from her mother before her

And so on.

Surely the Greeks had a word for this.

Now surely the Germans do.

The more words a person knows

To describe her private sufferings

The more distantly she can perceive them.

I repeat the names of all the cities I’ve known

And watch an ant drag its crooked shadow home.

What does it mean to love the life we’ve been given?

To act well the part that’s been cast for us?

*Wind. Light. Fire. Time.*

A train whistles through the far hills.

One day I plan to be riding it.

**15. Alissa Rodgers (Oklahoma)**



**WE ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE**

BY HARRYETTE MULLEN

We are not responsible for your lost or stolen relatives.

We cannot guarantee your safety if you disobey our instructions.

We do not endorse the causes or claims of people begging for handouts.

We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone.

Your ticket does not guarantee that we will honor your reservations.

In order to facilitate our procedures, please limit your carrying on.

Before taking off, please extinguish all smoldering resentments.

If you cannot understand English, you will be moved out of the way.

In the event of a loss, you’d better look out for yourself.

Your insurance was cancelled because we can no longer handle

your frightful claims. Our handlers lost your luggage and we

are unable to find the key to your legal case.

You were detained for interrogation because you fit the profile.

You are not presumed to be innocent if the police

have reason to suspect you are carrying a concealed wallet.

It’s not our fault you were born wearing a gang color.

It is not our obligation to inform you of your rights.

Step aside, please, while our officer inspects your bad attitude.

You have no rights we are bound to respect.

Please remain calm, or we can’t be held responsible

for what happens to you.

**16. Grisham Locke (Louisiana)**



**EPITAPH**

BY KATHERINE PHILIPS

*On her Son H.P. at St. Syth’s Church where her body also lies interred*

What on Earth deserves our trust?

Youth and Beauty both are dust.

Long we gathering are with pain,

What one moment calls again.

Seven years childless marriage past,

A Son, a son is born at last:

So exactly lim’d and fair,

Full of good Spirits, Meen, and Air,

As a long life promised,

Yet, in less than six weeks dead.

Too promising, too great a mind

In so small room to be confined:

Therefore, as fit in Heaven to dwell,

He quickly broke the Prison shell.

So the subtle Alchemist,

Can’t with Hermes Seal resist

The powerful spirit’s subtler flight,

But t’will bid him long good night.

And so the Sun if it arise

Half so glorious as his Eyes,

Like this Infant, takes a shrowd,

Buried in a morning Cloud.

**17. Tucker Dowler (Arkansas)**



**HOLY SONNETS: DEATH, BE NOT PROUD**

BY JOHN DONNE

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee

Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;

For those whom thou think’st thou dost overthrow

Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.

From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,

Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,

And soonest our best men with thee do go,

Rest of their bones, and soul’s delivery.

Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,

And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,

And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well

And better than thy stroke; why swell’st thou then?

One short sleep past, we wake eternally

And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

**18. Tiana Renee Jones (Georgia)**



**POEM**

BY JORIE GRAHAM

The earth said

remember me.

The earth said

don’t let go,

said it one day

when I was

accidentally

listening, I

heard it, I felt it

like temperature,

all said in a

whisper—build to-

morrow, make right be-

fall, you are not

free, other scenes

are not taking

place, time is not filled,

time is not late, there is

a thing the emptiness

needs as you need

emptiness, it

shrinks from light again &

again, although all things

are present, a

fact a day a

bird that warps the

arithmetic of per-

fection with its

arc, passing again &

again in the evening

air, in the pre-

vailing wind, making no

mistake—yr in-

difference is yr

principal beauty

the mind says all the

time—I hear it—I

hear it every-

where. The earth

said remember

me. I am the

earth it said. Re-

member me.

**Round 3 Poems**

**1. Lexie Wilson (Kentucky)**



**THOUGHTLESS CRUELTY**

BY CHARLES LAMB

There, Robert, you have kill'd that fly — ,

And should you thousand ages try

The life you've taken to supply,

You could not do it.

You surely must have been devoid

Of thought and sense, to have destroy'd

A thing which no way you annoy'd —

You'll one day rue it.

Twas but a fly perhaps you'll say,

That's born in April, dies in May;

That does but just learn to display

His wings one minute,

And in the next is vanish'd quite.

A bird devours it in his flight —

Or come a cold blast in the night,

There's no breath in it.

The bird but seeks his proper food —

And Providence, whose power endu'd

That fly with life, when it thinks good,

May justly take it.

But you have no excuses for't —

A life by Nature made so short,

Less reason is that you for sport

Should shorter make it.

A fly a little thing you rate —

But, Robert do not estimate

A creature's pain by small or great;

The greatest being

Can have but fibres, nerves, and flesh,

And these the smallest ones possess,

Although their frame and structure less

Escape our seeing.

**2. Emily Biaz (Alabama)**



**MEZZO CAMMIN**

BY HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

Half of my life is gone, and I have let

   The years slip from me and have not fulfilled

   The aspiration of my youth, to build

   Some tower of song with lofty parapet.

Not indolence, nor pleasure, nor the fret

   Of restless passions that would not be stilled,

   But sorrow, and a care that almost killed,

   Kept me from what I may accomplish yet;

Though, half-way up the hill, I see the Past

   Lying beneath me with its sounds and sights,—

   A city in the twilight dim and vast,

With smoking roofs, soft bells, and gleaming lights,—

   And hear above me on the autumnal blast

   The cataract of Death far thundering from the heights.

**3. Aalihya Banks (Indiana)**



**A COUNTRY BOY IN WINTER**

BY SARAH ORNE JEWETT

The wind may blow the snow about,  
For all I care, says Jack,  
And I don’t mind how cold it grows,  
For then the ice won’t crack.  
Old folks may shiver all day long,  
But I shall never freeze;  
What cares a jolly boy like me  
For winter days like these?

Far down the long snow-covered hills  
It is such fun to coast,  
So clear the road! the fastest sled  
There is in school I boast.  
The paint is pretty well worn off,  
But then I take the lead;  
A dandy sled’s a loiterer,  
And I go in for speed.

When I go home at supper-time,  
Ki! but my cheeks are red!  
They burn and sting like anything;  
I’m cross until I’m fed.  
You ought to see the biscuit go,  
I am so hungry then;  
And old Aunt Polly says that boys  
Eat twice as much as men.

There’s always something I can do  
To pass the time away;  
The dark comes quick in winter-time—  
A short and stormy day  
And when I give my mind to it,  
It’s just as father says,  
I almost do a man’s work now,  
And help him many ways.

I shall be glad when I grow up  
And get all through with school,  
I’ll show them by-and-by that I  
Was not meant for a fool.  
I’ll take the crops off this old farm,  
I’ll do the best I can.  
A jolly boy like me won’t be  
A dolt when he’s a man.

I like to hear the old horse neigh  
Just as I come in sight,  
The oxen poke me with their horns  
To get their hay at night.  
Somehow the creatures seem like friends,  
And like to see me come.  
Some fellows talk about New York,  
But I shall stay at home.

**4. Andrew Cusmano (Iowa)**



**BLACKBERRY-PICKING**

BY SEAMUS HEANEY  
  
     *for Philip Hobsbaum*

Late August, given heavy rain and sun

For a full week, the blackberries would ripen.

At first, just one, a glossy purple clot

Among others, red, green, hard as a knot.

You ate that first one and its flesh was sweet

Like thickened wine: summer's blood was in it

Leaving stains upon the tongue and lust for

Picking. Then red ones inked up and that hunger

Sent us out with milk cans, pea tins, jam-pots

Where briars scratched and wet grass bleached our boots.

Round hayfields, cornfields and potato-drills

We trekked and picked until the cans were full,

Until the tinkling bottom had been covered

With green ones, and on top big dark blobs burned

Like a plate of eyes. Our hands were peppered

With thorn pricks, our palms sticky as Bluebeard's.

We hoarded the fresh berries in the byre.

But when the bath was filled we found a fur,

A rat-grey fungus, glutting on our cache.

The juice was stinking too. Once off the bush

The fruit fermented, the sweet flesh would turn sour.

I always felt like crying. It wasn't fair

That all the lovely canfuls smelt of rot.

Each year I hoped they'd keep, knew they would not.

**5. Niveah Glover (Florida)**



**SELF-PORTRAIT AS KENDRICK LAMAR, LAUGHING TO THE BANK**

BY ASHANTI ANDERSON

This, what God feels like: laughing

alone in an empty room of tiny doors,

behind every door a metal box, inside each

a man’s red heart, lying. I don’t write

of the cartoonish thing split and jagged

at its insides. Instead, of how I break

even across the same backs spindled by hate.

I tell God I understand and what I mean is

I’ve noticed good people must die to let

there be light in my house. We share a likeness,

God and I, both laughing like something

green folded in our throats. Laughing mean-

while somebody’s auntie asks for Anything

Helps. Laughing when people say they don’t

want to read about the bad stuff. Crying

laughing as we pass our pain off as an offering

plate. Sometimes I nervous chuckle, knowing

trauma pays, but the only time I really laugh

is when I’m laughing to the bank like *a-ha.*

**6. Malisha Taylor (Mississippi)**



**BURNING IN THE RAIN**

BY RICHARD BLANCO

Someday compassion would demand

I set myself free of my desire to recreate

my father, indulge in my mother’s losses,

strangle lovers with words, forcing them

to confess for me and take the blame.

Today was that day: I tossed them, sheet

by sheet on the patio and gathered them

into a pyre. I wanted to let them go

in a blaze, tiny white dwarfs imploding

beside the azaleas and ficus bushes,

let them crackle, burst like winged seeds,

let them smolder into gossamer embers—

a thousand gray butterflies in the wind.

Today was that day, but it rained, kept

raining. Instead of fire, water—drops

knocking on doors, wetting windows

into mirrors reflecting me in the oaks.

The garden walls and stones swelling

into ghostlier shades of themselves,

the wind chimes giggling in the storm,

a coffee cup left overflowing with rain.

Instead of burning, my pages turned

into water lilies floating over puddles,

then tiny white cliffs as the sun set,

finally drying all night under the moon

into papier-mâché souvenirs. Today

the rain would not let their lives burn.

**7. Charlotte Bollschweiler (Tennessee)**



**I WANDERED LONELY AS A CLOUD**

BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

I wandered lonely as a cloud

That floats on high o'er vales and hills,

When all at once I saw a crowd,

A host, of golden daffodils;

Beside the lake, beneath the trees,

Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine

And twinkle on the milky way,

They stretched in never-ending line

Along the margin of a bay:

Ten thousand saw I at a glance,

Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they

Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:

A poet could not but be gay,

In such a jocund company:

I gazed—and gazed—but little thought

What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie

In vacant or in pensive mood,

They flash upon that inward eye

Which is the bliss of solitude;

And then my heart with pleasure fills,

And dances with the daffodils.

**8. Riley Grace Saenim (Wisconsin)**



**AMONG WOMEN**

BY MARIE PONSOT

What women wander?

Not many. All. A few.

Most would, now & then,

& no wonder.

Some, and I’m one,

Wander sitting still.

My small grandmother

Bought from every peddler

Less for the ribbons and lace

Than for their scent

Of sleep where you will,

Walk out when you want, choose

Your bread and your company.

She warned me, “Have nothing to lose.”

She looked fragile but had

High blood, runner’s ankles,

Could endure, endure.

She loved her rooted garden, her

Grand children, her once

Wild once young man.

Women wander

As best they can.

**9. Victoria Jelks (Kansas)**



**THE SEASON OF PHANTASMAL PEACE**

BY DEREK WALCOTT

Then all the nations of birds lifted together

the huge net of the shadows of this earth

in multitudinous dialects, twittering tongues,

stitching and crossing it. They lifted up

the shadows of long pines down trackless slopes,

the shadows of glass-faced towers down evening streets,

the shadow of a frail plant on a city sill—

the net rising soundless as night, the birds' cries soundless, until

there was no longer dusk, or season, decline, or weather,

only this passage of phantasmal light

that not the narrowest shadow dared to sever.

And men could not see, looking up, what the wild geese drew,

what the ospreys trailed behind them in silvery ropes

that flashed in the icy sunlight; they could not hear

battalions of starlings waging peaceful cries,

bearing the net higher, covering this world

like the vines of an orchard, or a mother drawing

the trembling gauze over the trembling eyes

of a child fluttering to sleep;

                                                     it was the light

that you will see at evening on the side of a hill

in yellow October, and no one hearing knew

what change had brought into the raven's cawing,

the killdeer's screech, the ember-circling chough

such an immense, soundless, and high concern

for the fields and cities where the birds belong,

except it was their seasonal passing, Love,

made seasonless, or, from the high privilege of their birth,

something brighter than pity for the wingless ones

below them who shared dark holes in windows and in houses,

and higher they lifted the net with soundless voices

above all change, betrayals of falling suns,

and this season lasted one moment, like the pause

between dusk and darkness, between fury and peace,

but, for such as our earth is now, it lasted long.

**10.** **Paige Cook (Michigan)**



**PLANETARIUM**

BY ADRIENNE RICH

*Thinking of Caroline Herschel (1750—1848)*

*astronomer, sister of William; and others.*

A woman in the shape of a monster

a monster in the shape of a woman

the skies are full of them

a woman      ‘in the snow

among the Clocks and instruments

or measuring the ground with poles’

in her 98 years to discover

8 comets

she whom the moon ruled

like us

levitating into the night sky

riding the polished lenses

Galaxies of women, there

doing penance for impetuousness

ribs chilled

in those spaces    of the mind

An eye,

          ‘virile, precise and absolutely certain’

          from the mad webs of Uranusborg

                                                            encountering the NOVA

every impulse of light exploding

from the core

as life flies out of us

             Tycho whispering at last

             ‘Let me not seem to have lived in vain’

What we see, we see

and seeing is changing

the light that shrivels a mountain

and leaves a man alive

Heartbeat of the pulsar

heart sweating through my body

The radio impulse

pouring in from Taurus

         I am bombarded yet         I stand

I have been standing all my life in the

direct path of a battery of signals

the most accurately transmitted most

untranslatable language in the universe

I am a galactic cloud so deep      so invo-

luted that a light wave could take 15

years to travel through me       And has

taken      I am an instrument in the shape

of a woman trying to translate pulsations

into images    for the relief of the body

and the reconstruction of the mind.

**11. Elizabeth Buescher (Nebraska)**



**LET THE LIGHT ENTER**

BY FRANCES ELLEN WATKINS HARPER

*The Dying Words of Goethe*

“Light! more light! the shadows deepen,

        And my life is ebbing low,

Throw the windows widely open:

        Light! more light! before I go.

“Softly let the balmy sunshine

        Play around my dying bed,

E’er the dimly lighted valley

        I with lonely feet must tread.

“Light! more light! for Death is weaving

        Shadows ‘round my waning sight,

And I fain would gaze upon him

        Through a stream of earthly light.”

Not for greater gifts of genius;

        Not for thoughts more grandly bright,

All the dying poet whispers

        Is a prayer for light, more light.

Heeds he not the gathered laurels,

        Fading slowly from his sight;

All the poet’s aspirations

        Centre in that prayer for light.

Gracious Saviour, when life’s day-dreams

        Melt and vanish from the sight,

May our dim and longing vision

        Then be blessed with light, more light.

**12.** **Amir Trinidad Vidal (Puerto Rico)**



**FRIENDSHIP AFTER LOVE**

BY ELLA WHEELER WILCOX

After the fierce midsummer all ablaze

    Has burned itself to ashes, and expires

    In the intensity of its own fires,

There come the mellow, mild, St. Martin days

Crowned with the calm of peace, but sad with haze.

    So after Love has led us, till he tires

    Of his own throes, and torments, and desires,

Comes large-eyed friendship: with a restful gaze,

He beckons us to follow, and across

    Cool verdant vales we wander free from care.

    Is it a touch of frost lies in the air?

Why are we haunted with a sense of loss?

We do not wish the pain back, or the heat;

And yet, and yet, these days are incomplete.

**13.** **Yohanna Endashaw (Illinois)**



**SONNET: ON BEING CAUTIONED AGAINST WALKING ON AN HEADLAND OVERLOOKING THE SEA, BECAUSE IT WAS FREQUENTED BY A LUNATIC**

BY CHARLOTTE SMITH

Is there a solitary wretch who hies

   To the tall cliff, with starting pace or slow,

And, measuring, views with wild and hollow eyes

   Its distance from the waves that chide below;

Who, as the sea-born gale with frequent sighs

   Chills his cold bed upon the mountain turf,

With hoarse, half-uttered lamentation, lies

   Murmuring responses to the dashing surf?

In moody sadness, on the giddy brink,

   I see him more with envy than with fear;

*He* has no *nice felicities* that shrink

   From giant horrors; wildly wandering here,

He seems (uncursed with reason) not to know

The depth or the duration of his woe.

**14. Julie Clayton (Missouri)**



**ISRAFEL**

BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

*And the angel Israfel, whose heart-strings are a lute, and who has the*

*sweetest voice of all God’s creatures. —KORAN*

In Heaven a spirit doth dwell

   “Whose heart-strings are a lute”;

None sing so wildly well

As the angel Israfel,

And the giddy stars (so legends tell),

Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell

   Of his voice, all mute.

Tottering above

   In her highest noon,

   The enamoured moon

Blushes with love,

   While, to listen, the red levin

   (With the rapid Pleiads, even,

   Which were seven,)

   Pauses in Heaven.

And they say (the starry choir

   And the other listening things)

That Israfeli’s fire

Is owing to that lyre

   By which he sits and sings—

The trembling living wire

   Of those unusual strings.

But the skies that angel trod,

   Where deep thoughts are a duty,

Where Love’s a grown-up God,

   Where the Houri glances are

Imbued with all the beauty

   Which we worship in a star.

Therefore, thou art not wrong,

   Israfeli, who despisest

An unimpassioned song;

To thee the laurels belong,

   Best bard, because the wisest!

Merrily live, and long!

The ecstasies above

   With thy burning measures suit—

Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,

   With the fervour of thy lute—

   Well may the stars be mute!

Yes, Heaven is thine; but this

   Is a world of sweets and sours;

   Our flowers are merely—flowers,

And the shadow of thy perfect bliss

   Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell

Where Israfel

   Hath dwelt, and he where I,

He might not sing so wildly well

   A mortal melody,

While a bolder note than this might swell

   From my lyre within the sky.

**15. Alissa Rodgers (Oklahoma)**



**REVENGE**

BY LETITIA ELIZABETH LANDON

Ay, gaze upon her rose-wreathed hair,

And gaze upon her smile;

Seem as you drank the very air

Her breath perfumed the while:

And wake for her the gifted line,

That wild and witching lay,

And swear your heart is as a shrine,

That only owns her sway.

’Tis well: I am revenged at last,—

Mark you that scornful cheek,—

The eye averted as you pass’d,

Spoke more than words could speak.

Ay, now by all the bitter tears

That I have shed for thee,—

The racking doubts, the burning fears,—

Avenged they well may be—

By the nights pass’d in sleepless care,

The days of endless woe;

All that you taught my heart to bear,

All that yourself will know.

I would not wish to see you laid

Within an early tomb;

I should forget how you betray’d,

And only weep your doom:

But this is fitting punishment,

To live and love in vain,—

Oh my wrung heart, be thou content,

And feed upon his pain.

Go thou and watch her lightest sigh,—

Thine own it will not be;

And bask beneath her sunny eye,—

It will not turn on thee.

’Tis well: the rack, the chain, the wheel,

Far better hadst thou proved;

Ev’n I could almost pity feel,

For thou art not beloved.

**16. Grisham Locke (Louisiana)**



**THE MORTICIAN IN SAN FRANCISCO**

BY RANDALL MANN

This may sound queer,

but in 1985 I held the delicate hands

of Dan White:

I prepared him for burial; by then, Harvey Milk

was made monument—no, myth—by the years

since he was shot.

I remember when Harvey was shot:

twenty, and I knew I was queer.

Those were the years,

Levi’s and leather jackets holding hands

on Castro Street, cheering for Harvey Milk—

elected on the same day as Dan White.

 I often wonder about Supervisor White,

who fatally shot

Mayor Moscone and Supervisor Milk,

who was one of us, a Castro queer.

May 21, 1979: a jury hands

down the sentence, seven years—

in truth, five years—

for ex-cop, ex-fireman Dan White,

for the blood on his hands;

when he confessed that he had shot

the mayor and the queer,

a few men in blue cheered. And Harvey Milk?

Why cry over spilled milk,

some wondered, semi-privately, for years—

it meant “one less queer.”

The jurors turned to White.

If just the mayor had been shot,

Dan might have had trouble on his hands—

but the twelve who held his life in their hands

maybe didn’t mind the death of Harvey Milk;

maybe, the second murder offered him a shot

at serving only a few years.

In the end, he committed suicide, this Dan White.

And he was made presentable by a queer.

**17. Tucker Dowler (Arkansas)**



**THE UNIVERSE AS PRIMAL SCREAM**

BY TRACY K. SMITH

5pm on the nose. They open their mouths

And it rolls out: high, shrill and metallic.

First the boy, then his sister. Occasionally,

They both let loose at once, and I think

Of putting on my shoes to go up and see

Whether it is merely an experiment

Their parents have been conducting

Upon the good crystal, which must surely

Lie shattered to dust on the floor.

Maybe the mother is still proud

Of the four pink lungs she nursed

To such might. Perhaps, if they hit

The magic decibel, the whole building

Will lift-off, and we'll ride to glory

Like Elijah. If this is it—if this is what

Their cries are cocked toward—let the sky

Pass from blue, to red, to molten gold,

To black. Let the heaven we inherit approach.

 Whether it is our dead in Old Testament robes,

Or a door opening onto the roiling infinity of space.

Whether it will bend down to greet us like a father,

Or swallow us like a furnace. I'm ready

To meet what refuses to let us keep anything

For long. What teases us with blessings,

Bends us with grief. Wizard, thief, the great

Wind rushing to knock our mirrors to the floor,

To sweep our short lives clean. How mean

Our racket seems beside it. My stereo on shuffle.

The neighbor chopping onions through a wall.

All of it just a hiccough against what may never

Come for us. And the kids upstairs still at it,

Screaming like the Dawn of Man, as if something

They have no name for has begun to insist

Upon being born.

**18. Tiana Renee Jones (Georgia)**



**MEZZO CAMMIN**

BY HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

Half of my life is gone, and I have let

   The years slip from me and have not fulfilled

   The aspiration of my youth, to build

   Some tower of song with lofty parapet.

Not indolence, nor pleasure, nor the fret

   Of restless passions that would not be stilled,

   But sorrow, and a care that almost killed,

   Kept me from what I may accomplish yet;

Though, half-way up the hill, I see the Past

   Lying beneath me with its sounds and sights,—

   A city in the twilight dim and vast,

With smoking roofs, soft bells, and gleaming lights,—

   And hear above me on the autumnal blast

   The cataract of Death far thundering from the heights.