

# ORIGAMI CONDOM

issue #8

ULTRA POETRY • INTELLECTUAL LUBRICANT

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a mini bios

and when my fingers claw the soil  
it is fact, fiction and darkness  
where they tunnel and touch  
the worms that would make me  
nothing, it is fantasies  
they fall through these fingers  
lying restless by your side  
tonight

i feel them be my grave  
and me, the night we wake into  
when the walls listen  
and fingers lie still  
as the darkness that wills  
coming nothing, children  
and other injuries, bodies  
and horror, fingers still  
so distant, their sterility  
cold and bony, lonely  
fingers these nights know  
and the lids they shall scratch  
with homeless bones

## Weathervane

Llegas sobre mi carne  
Tembloroso de auroras...  
— Federico Garcia Lorca, Veleta

© Sergio Ortiz

Lean against a seawall,  
ask the sky to undress,  
pull it down to my lips  
until it shakes.

Gulls slide into and away  
from a shaft of light,  
the way I run marathons  
behind the palisade.

Close your eyes,  
forget retail bankers who  
never risk their chip.  
Fingertips about your shoulders  
dance the wind.

Press, and once again begin,  
anticipate the dawn  
from side to side.

## Royal Doll

© Sergio Ortiz

She didn't want to be a calendar queen.  
She wanted to be a doll and spend the day in silence.  
She has body art;  
    cranes floating through pines,  
        lustrous yellow leaves.  
She was happy to bend, or raise her hand on television.  
She swam to heaven with a mantis,  
    sings praises to her King.

Abel was on the north corner of the central plaza  
in El Paso when we met, eighteen and adept  
at selling skin to one-eyed sirens.

I am hard at it Ese, was his first answer.  
I do it for my family on the other side, was his pitch.  
Amigos? Amigos are dead presidents in my pocket.  
I like work, but breathing hurts when I don't eat.

Early the next morning, I passed through the plaza  
of poorly-paid services and noticed him lying on a bench  
resting the smile of a child who forgot who he was.

He wanted Nikes, so I gave in. Bought him a suitcase,  
filled it with angry tears and a camera, then took him back  
to Chihuahua. I made him take snapshots of los hijos de puta.

When his mother called, the constant fear of the 80s  
got in the backseat of my car. I didn't want to know.  
It stayed until he died the following year.

A few tears were gathered here and there;  
I sewed them each to each and made a rosary.  
Looking at it makes me think of a poem by Fernando Pessoa,  
O Infante. My child, my prince.

© Elizabeth H. Barbato

Because Eve never asked  
why she was bone and Adam  
clay and where names come from,  
I wrote a poem for Nyla,

my little fish in darkness,  
my secret little perfect tiny girl,  
my one letter in alphabet soup,  
lollipop sandwich, left in a bucket.

I saw you at no weeks,  
and then at two. You  
were a dime, not even a quarter.  
I picked you up, thin ultrasound

and folded you in my pocket.  
Nobody saw. Security was lax  
that day, I guess. I splintered  
my heart, slew gravel, and no-one knew,

not even the dolphins that swam  
in yellowing seas on the ceiling  
following no compass rose, carved  
in amniotic wax, carved in omission.

All at once my father's clothes are too big on him.  
He has shrunken into himself like a deflated soufflé.

Hard rind, pants bagging at the waist, teeth  
ground down, hair silver, wild sand.

A pot with no lid that fits, a mousetrap tricked  
and left unbaited, this old, old man.

My fury at this is appalling to me.  
Who am I to question these auguries,

these owls of fortune? I cannot begin  
to think what he hears in the dark:

two clocks ticking, yellow emergency radio  
at the ready, wound and raring to go

whether or not the power goes out  
or They drop The Bomb.

Even if it's only static over ashen fields  
we'll hear it.

Near him, aslant in the moonlight  
through the white net curtains

his unloaded rifle waits, patient soldier.  
Nobody ever asks him who it's for.

He sleeps while the moon rises over his land.  
Outside a shadow falls over stilled water.

A splash through the ice on the pond  
wakes him. He knows it's only the muskrat

or even the beaver, who has become  
somewhat more than an annoyance

but he heaves himself out of bed  
before the snoring has stopped

and lets the night have at him.  
He pays with the coin of open eyes.

## Friction for False Gods

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© Elizabeth H. Barbato

On the tarmac, in the temple.  
A toad lifts its head to the sun.  
Armed, disengaged, half-arc:

Where is listened, what is knit.  
Why is construed, what is dust.  
A shriek, a grief, close mouth.

The bell's knees knock together,  
Fatal collision. Orange robe:  
A smell of misremembered thorn.

I have a god I call Almanac.  
She wears a dress made of letters:  
Inelegant, supposition, infringement.

I have a god I call Apostrophe.  
She is sick of being sung to.  
She only eats anaphora.

I have a god I call Forget-me-nor.  
His throat is slit like a grimace.  
I have a god I smell after it rains;

She is left without a name.  
I have a calling, a winter, some gun:  
Dread wish, fell prostitution.

The sweet boy with the right flowers  
and the wrong dress that fit anyway  
plays mandolin and didn't have a traumatic childhood.

His parents didn't buy him cigarettes when  
he was 8  
And that reference is no honor.

Flowers from the side of the road  
and a "town" which I can't say "I Love this" in front of  
make for fences and  
too  
much,  
time.

YellowandRed or just purple?

They both died pretty quickly, but  
I watered the first one.

Fuck it, He has a more tolerable taste for whiskey, and a much  
better  
hat,  
Plus everyone's Irish on St. Patrick's Day.

tommorow when the world dies  
and we lie back down  
into pitiless ash  
I'll see your face as thousands  
and in thousands  
though today I can't place it  
can't sort it out from echoes  
or isolate it from visions

and if we wake up in the freezing cold  
our bones smashed on the boulders below  
they can pluck out our eyeballs  
roll ink over the images burnt into our retinas  
and use it as an official seal  
to certify oblivion

tomorrow  
when we two feral cats  
are forced by hunger  
to dine on peoples  
I'll pounce and pierce first  
saving you from the sight  
and lop off the head  
to spare you its empty stare

eat well and thank me kindly.

☞ Joseph DeMarco

It snowed in Baghdad yesterday,  
the Whales will have to find  
somewhere else to go,  
The Islands are SOLD OUT.

The traffic in the sky  
is going to get worse,  
As the Earth floods again.  
The Lost City of New Orleans comes to mind.

Noah looked out his window,  
and it was unseasonable warm.  
Not a cloud in the sky.

He decided to go fishing,  
but when he got to the ocean,  
They told him it was CLOSED for renovations.

The gods looked up from,  
their studio apartment in the ghetto,  
“He doesn’t realize the flood  
will come from below,”  
one of them says, which is not important.

“The land named by RED which was inappropriately christened,  
for one thing it is not, GREEN  
is the stage it will take place on.”

“The people want to know WHEN?” The God of Traffic asks.  
“Tell them, sooner then you think,”  
says the God of Money,  
who knows death is eminent.

The Almighty Dollar goes home,  
and takes a bath with a bread maker,  
as Noah tries to resurrect  
a miniature version of his ark inside a bottle of ABSOLUTE.

than hot water to make  
a bath, it takes time, it  
takes a velvet soft place  
in the belly of day.  
Wait.  
Which is the hardest  
thing to do  
like fidgeting in your  
chair or at a red light  
juicin' to go, it takes  
music spilling from all  
the outlets, crawling  
in your ears, soaking  
your hair and neck,  
circling your limbs  
hissing  
tongue-flick hot  
slithering music  
bath, hot  
water reaching down  
in the tub velvet time  
in the hard bell  
I said the  
hard belly  
of the ever-lovin' day!

**st matthias**

body spread mast-like  
soul outlasts even the nails  
draped & then wind-heaved

**st celestine**

You took to my spine  
w/strips of leather and paste,  
speaking book's l(e)ast line

We are all in the gutter,           but some of us  
are looking at the stars.           Oscar Wilde

the birthday party           planned by nobody  
he had no friends or family           opened  
his final act           maybe  
at least most invitees were wary           of such  
since it seemed to note           the beginning  
of our host's 8th decade           or 9th

during the fete           which lasted  
well into the week           the attendees  
not previously           known to each other  
got very plastered           each  
in his or her own cubby           with lots  
of drugs    alcohol & bowls of Rice Krispies  
free for the taking           on the kitchen table

though the sumptuous affair           proved  
a commercial           & critical failure  
as originally performed           after closing  
the event           went on  
to become considered           a modern classic  
emulated           all over the world

dissecting out           the reasons  
appeared to be           deceptively simple:  
an apparently           reassuring setting  
suggesting           domestic comforts  
perhaps           childhood  
to celebrate           a highly personal occasion  
an important ritual           shared by strangers  
combining silence           with soliloquy

which of course           it wasn't  
much           but what really happened  
never once spoiled           the collective memory  
of growing trust    around common experience  
except for           the blind piano player  
who warned us           don't take  
anything           at face value

certainly           no one  
of good faith           listened  
not wanting           to get confused  
by her           absurd words  
sung           in passionate minor keys  
a menace           that threatened  
to end           the party

Everyone looked up when  
Ralphie Anderson walked in  
everyone looked up when anyone walked in  
hoping for a fresh face with a full wallet  
and a need to obliterate a little bit of despair  
but it was only Ralphie  
Ralph Waldo “Foolish Consistency” Anderson  
with his bolo tie and his black chinos  
and his I-once-had-sex-with-a-300-pound-whore-  
and-her-kid-sister soliloquies  
complete with scotch-and-soda-saturated sound effects

He’d just finished his shift baling papers  
at the Framingham News  
and his pale yellow Oxford button-down  
was tainted with his own  
newsprint fingerprints

Ralphie gently laid a blackened wad  
of dollar bills on the bar  
as Dave Troat resumed burbling  
and whispering an ancient Ashland girlfriend’s name  
to his VO and ginger  
and Helen Hakansson begged him  
for the last fucking time in the name  
of Jesus Mary and Joseph to shut the fuck up

Helen didn’t look  
all that bad tonight  
Ralphie moved closer  
and found a few more ratty singles

Extraordinarily long ago  
Heigh Ho says Rowley  
my mother's twin sisters—bright bandanas  
covering their curlers—dug wax  
out of their ears  
with bobbie pins while Helen Trent  
sobbed on the radio  
failing at that bleak moment  
to find love over 35.

Behind clouds of Old Gold smoke  
they bloodied their mouths  
with my grandmother's lipstick  
while two pairs of loafers—outfitted  
with Liberty dimes—waited  
forlornly on the parlor rug  
beneath the print of The Lone Wolf.  
The upright piano remained  
silent as ever.

After my aunts were taken  
away by Donnie and Buddy  
for a seductive Blue Plate Special  
at the Crown Cafeteria  
I rifled through their bureau drawers  
until I heard my Uncle Tim  
hollering in the hen house.  
It must have been summer  
which would explain everything.

© E. Michael Desilets

Alone in church she says a prayer  
for no one in particular  
to whatever saintly statue she is near.  
Votive candles flicker in rebuke.

Two thousand miles away a wake  
goes on without her  
her absence maligned by the living.  
The deceased offers no opinion

as is his custom. An uncle's ashes  
crash in the Atlantic  
foghorns supplant Gregorian chant  
mourners huddle in raincoats

the children cross themselves  
in rented black cars.

The bullfighter dresses meticulously  
like a priest preparing for a solemn high  
requiem mass. Vestments are caressed,  
relics kissed, medals fondled, the Almighty  
invoked in whispers. Incense burns  
in an ancient ashtray.

The paperboy shoves the news through  
the mail slot, swigs from an aluminum can,  
wipes his chapped lips on the sleeve  
of his sweatshirt. His bike rusts against  
a tree. A killer is reprieved  
on the front page. Rain is predicted.

Julia has Wheat Chex again for dinner,  
forgoing the black-skinned banana  
on top of the microwave. She thought  
about the pleasant bookstore manager  
who came in about noon to drop off  
his wine-stained gabardine trousers.

Kevin can't call Blair because it's 3 am  
over there but much too early here  
to be scouring the bars for the girls  
who couldn't get out of town. He lights  
a beeswax candle and considers starting  
a Novena at St. Charles Borromeo.

Hector's Corolla stalls on the 101  
by the Barham Boulevard exit,  
his dirty laundry piled on the back seat.  
But he's in Los Feliz in a dumpster  
behind the El Niño Laundromat,  
his pockets full of shiny new quarters

She's caught across  
the ocean and most of  
this continent,  
which leans  
a little further  
from the sun  
in her absence.

Her distance  
mortars substance  
to her words and  
one new e-mail  
gaps my breath  
like the  
semi-second  
between the spark  
and the explosion.

She's caught outside  
the fortnight  
that will bring  
her home,  
that will lead  
her slicing through  
the heavens,  
through the rain  
and wind;  
above the earth  
as it wobbles gently  
on its axis.

## Serena

∞ Gary Beck

Serena, withered  
sits among swollen grape vines  
bursting purple spurts of potency  
dreaming of a back seat  
in another life  
when a migrant hand  
plucked the ripeness of her breast  
a ravenous traveler  
lusting a land of opulence.  
Serena turned into a pair of shears  
rusting in an orchard.

A door  
stands by itself

and within  
is everything else

∞ Amanda Latrenta Crane

You pool on my skin and crackle. My sister smooths aloe on my back and blisters get caught under her nails. My skin pusses orange, pulsing. I hate you and you ruin everything, though I dream of molting brown like the Tahitian girls with their perfect brown bodies and perfect brown voices when they yelp and snap their hips to some wild drumbeat. And the Eskimo girls with their black-slatted eyes and glass fingertips touching glaciers, reflecting back. You shine on the shine of their bodies, their unending blue. But you never found me that exotic. You do not glow and spread on the surface of my face. Instead you expose my peeling, my puffing. It is dark, it has always been, and you are whispering, *I am the flaw-giver of you, girl. And you like it – don't you.*

☞ Amanda Latrenta Crane

My father bought me a Big Bird doll when I was 5. Other girls got Barbies, pet fish, ice cream cones. But my father loved me so much he bought me this yellow-feathered bird. If you pulled the cord, words came out. He was talking to me. Sesame Street. This was how I survived things I could not speak of for years: A crazy nest. A cracked branch. But this bird, I hooked it under my arm by its long throat until we were tired out, became limp – but I loved him more flawed than I did yellow-new. I knew what it meant to be broken even though I had a mother, a father. I wouldn't tell what happened on the playground. My skirt swishing up. The chapel. The hard bells. The wafers yellow-ing and tethered to my small hands.

© Robin Brown

Speaking in postcards of my childhood;  
smoke snakes around our frames  
lingering in our hair –  
scent of motel-morning-after.  
The girl behind me speaks Spanish,  
I wonder how her tongue would feel  
in my mouth;  
those words slipping from the space  
between my teeth.

And perhaps  
That speck  
In the ointment  
Of the yoke  
Is the embryo.

And perhaps  
It will be cooked  
In a soft scrambled  
Fluff.

In any case  
It's all  
Over...

Easy.

Evidence on a sidewalk. Yellow chalk  
the color of sunflowers, double highway lines,  
a name scribbled in wax crayon.  
No one else notices the chalk circle  
or the way nervous finches flee leafless brush,  
take cover underneath  
the bottom grates  
of shopping carts pushed together  
in a long metal line.

Outside my door at night, crabapple leaves  
shiver. Some fall and die, some  
remain safe, hiding beneath others  
who bear the incessant sleet. What a terrible force  
we know, who cannot change place  
but must remain stemmed  
objectives of an unstoppable weight, the endless

incalculable velocity of whatever descends  
from blackened heavens. I remember  
sitting alone for hours, building houses  
made of playing cards, adding quiet  
porches and side rooms, careful stories  
of solitary apocrypha stacked up three floors high  
to what I did not know then

could lead to an attic, the very small airless place  
that sometimes has no entry, no exit, no staircase, just a fitted plywood trap door  
no one likes to look up at

where the finished card house always waits  
breathless, forever unable to suffer the slightest touch, not even one meant in kindness.

I lost my place, fell backward into a Tidewater  
Virginia morning, just before rain. Your hands  
light, sprinkle flour, knead quiet warmth, rising

into valley mist shadows above a cold river  
running breathless all the way, from childhood  
to this pooling bend, where I cool my bare feet, unfold  
the map tucked underneath one arm, trace  
red Rappahannock clay to Susquehanna silt.

You drew the current to this place  
that is without hope of rain, where the leaves turn death  
heartbreakingly beautiful, and I catch them in my hand  
like words printed on construction paper  
torn and fluttered down in pieces  
dropped from an attic room window.

Near dawn, many years ago now,  
I heard you whisper to me—Run away—and I looked up  
to find you standing there on the stair landing, transparent  
in your cotton gown, silver braids  
fallen to slender waist pleats, pale-footed  
worry peeking through keepsake eyes, darker  
than cold coffee. I don't know  
who you are, only that I recognize  
your form each time you reappear. Ghost, spirit, blithe  
apparition of my own future, tell me  
how many more broken promises; who  
will I become  
in this world of the lost, in the eyes  
of my own children?

After hours, the Village smells oily,  
Chanel and bodysweat,  
moldy upholstery in dark taprooms,  
graffiti-gaudy, hum of neon,  
mist sizzling on blacktop, black sheen,  
slick as patent leather, Majíd and me  
walking like killers,  
while the queers in overdone drag,  
boas and spaghetti straps, sashay  
from bar to bar on Houston, stilettos scratching,  
blue smoke and velvet,  
sidewalk sambas, limousines the shirtless,  
rough-trade boys lean against,  
musk of lovemaking, savage and stealth.  
Puerto Rican women with boozy eyes,  
painted-on jeans, hips  
like brass pendulums, jazz past  
the garbage piles and dark bodégas,  
their liquid movement a slur of  
brutal music, chain-smoking Salems.  
Majíd and me have a taste  
for their back-alley sex,  
for the whisk of a snare, the alto's raspy bark,  
bock beer in a glass mug,  
anything maroon, torpid and ruthless.

The bedspread on the bed  
was wet  
as the riverbed  
as I pulled the bedspread  
over my head,  
slept past the night  
dreams inhabited.

Last night my teacher  
turned up  
in my dream;  
I got up wet in the morning  
relishing the new me.

Every night we go to sleep  
we long for our homeland  
in our dreams,  
we long for that homeland that  
loved us enough to  
accept our  
umbilical cords.  
In our dreams, silence shrouds  
birthrooms;  
death tiptoes through rooms  
over a child,  
cradling the mother's body  
& sucking at her cold breasts  
cold against his lips.  
Nothing can be colder than death  
that screens a child's mouth,  
leaving the taste of blood  
on his tongue.  
Tomorrow,  
maybe tomorrow,  
we'll not long for that homeland that  
etches grief in our dreams.

An old man whimpers at the edge  
of a dying fire;  
the ashen sky turns everything  
the colour of ash.

Welcome little child—  
blue eyes reflecting memories of clear skies.

is my name today in the  
tenth circle of hell, the Department,  
standing in a snake of men and women,  
the movement of which is slower than  
quadripelagic turtles crawling through a  
mixture of tar and molasses during winter—

B38?

Perhaps slower. Smells of sweat and  
dust perfume the hot, humid air and I feel  
I would rather be tumbling through barbed-  
wire in the nude into a patch a cacti and  
porcupines; but no, I am living in a line—

B39? No? B40?

An endless line where I  
can only see beauty through a yellow pane  
of glass, the lilacs are waving in the spring  
heat and I am a letter and two numerals,  
trapped in the banality of the first dimension—

B41? B41? B42?

I decide it is not worth my  
moments to be in a line within a circle,  
shackled and fettered to the shuffle of  
forward movements, I am not one for  
a destined direction anyway—

B4—

I listen not to the aged bureaucrat,  
I hand my name and numbers to a bald  
man near the tail of the beast, my name  
is Taylor I tell the arched-browed man  
as I walk into the atmospheric air and  
smell a crocus.

In English, you can be plural—  
You can be you and you can be  
Everyone and every thing except  
Me, which is a very lonely thought  
If I exclude myself from the world—  
But let's talk about you—perhaps  
You are always multitudinous and  
Never alone, since you are and never  
Is—But I never is either, I am, yet I still  
Am alone, and what if we were alone—  
Can we be? We are are not is, we  
are singularly two or three or seven  
Or—something; this language makes no  
Sense, at least not to  
Me.

Sing to me sing to me sing  
To me, nothing is heard but a  
Lyre, insincere yet ultimately  
Melodious, Bb and F#, pluck them in  
Unison, a plural noun of parallel  
Lines, incessant circles, serpents swallowing  
Tails, stories of a mouth licking the throat's  
Scales, the taste of bellowed  
Concordance, chorus of letters to sing  
Meaning, threads knotted in  
Concordance, a Libra of metal  
Scales, discs shingled along a fabled nefarious  
Tail, an extension of balance, a segment of a  
Line, DNA of geometric progress, to curve and pile in  
Unison, even cacophony can be  
Melodious, the flow of fingers on a  
Lyre, like a dulcimer, salt and sugar, the same  
To me, I wish for you to  
Sing.

∞ Taylor Gorman

I am 18 and your are 19 and a  
Half the time I am away from you smashing  
Clocks keep us within the hands of  
Life is so pointless without your  
Fingerprints mark your  
Existence is pointless without  
Laughter is love and love is  
Existence is only a few  
Fingerprints on a vase for a flower is  
Life is truly the burning of  
Clocks tell me you are 18 and I am 19 and a  
Half the world is symmetrical because of  
You.

For years I had dreamt of it, lusty for the  
Warm viscous lemon, a gritty and bitter sweet mound  
Atop a plain of round brown ginger crumb  
It would be served on an unwashed  
Dish delivered by young Tibetans who  
Speak in broken phrases to  
The brown Israeli hippies  
Up salmon steps  
I find  
No one

sea-less seagulls dance to the rhythm of god's song on air  
they hover next to us on the boat to Kadikoy  
cigarettes poised between twin fingers thin and long, my smoke falls asleep in a nearby lullaby  
of thick hair

the sun assaults the golden globe domes with his winter glare  
while we sip tea from see-through glasses on the boat to Kadikoy  
sea-less seagulls dance to the rhythm of god's song on air

as waves of wind skim skin and it's cruel and bare  
as we knock bones in beats on the boat to Kadikoy  
cigarettes poised between twin fingers thin and long, my smoke falls asleep in a nearby lullaby  
of thick hair

a man, crusted mustached walrus tusked, alone on the painted chair  
sleeps across from us on the boat to Kadikoy  
sea-less seagulls dance to the rhythm of god's song on air

sea surges wearing white wigs lick the side panel paint wounds with care  
while we watch with wet eyes from above on the boat to Kadikoy  
cigarettes poised between twin fingers thin and long, my smoke falls asleep in a nearby lullaby  
of thick hair

today is blue liquid happy going every place and nowhere  
the self melts under crystal salt sprays on the boat to Kadikoy  
sea-less seagulls dance to the rhythm of god's song on air  
cigarettes poised between twin fingers thin and long, my smoke falls asleep in a nearby lullaby  
of thick hair

I

all of the boys sit on their porches  
smoking long cigarettes and drinking pale beer  
backs to the violent purple mountains, eyes to the sky salmon dust  
a small striped cat, more ribs than fur, winds through their feet asking for any  
thing more than fingers combing her spinal cord  
sipping chai above them we watch and  
stretch our ears like rubber bands poised to shoot  
our feet tickled by cool air we catch their words with long  
toes, mash them up with our molars and spit  
them far and long like slippery watermelon seeds  
my sister and I are almost invisible  
two pale shades of green in an ocean of crimson

II

goats stand in our path on the trek to bhagsu water  
fall, where cinnamon men bathe naked and splash their laughter  
in big roaring waves that soak the sideline wives  
too shy to swim. My sister Jo, with her long ropes  
of gold, is punctured by inky onyx eyes and  
small hands tugging on her arms and legs  
Cinderella! Cinderella! They call out  
like featherless birds with their mouths wide open  
hungry for boneless worms or a picture or a wave goodbye.  
at a rest stop, a painted grey elephant kneels by our bus,  
bats her eyelashes like a flirty young girl, she is hoping  
for a bath to soothe her warm leather skin

Neither a teary early morning cousin call  
nor the length of time since my last attempt  
justified waiting nude, lubed, ass up  
the living room door unlocked, not caring  
to turn aside as it quietly opened, shut,  
discarded clothing hit the floor,  
rough fingers explored my unprotected hole.  
Anonymous Latino whispering, "Relax, meijo.  
Take it, you want it." His body shivering,  
plunging.

∞ David Bolduc

“Oh you so good, meijo,” rasped the fat Mexican embracing young Viet flesh as they lay facing in the bath house bunk room. The older experienced digits probing, beckoning the waiting attendant.

The peeling poster opposite above stale carpet advertised the White Star Lines technological pride: four raked yellow funnels floating above unsinkable white and black-painted steel.

Buddhaman gazes down on the rivers  
that called the city into being  
and the ocean  
the rivers drain into  
and the ocean-going vessels of commerce,  
grim looking ships bursting with cargo,  
and a water skier  
shooting past the Statue of Liberty  
with the Coast Guard in pursuit.

On his desk: layers of post-its and steno pads  
scribbled with instructions to himself  
and file folders  
stuffed full of blah blah blah.  
Out the window: the haze of a hot August sky  
colored pink/gray  
with a touch of yellow  
and golden domes sparkling  
over the skyline in the muted light.

He sits in his skyscraper office  
chanting out to sea  
chanting for an end to war and starvation  
chanting he earns  
enough money this month  
to make his mortgage and car payment,  
chanting over the heads of Wall Street.  
He chants for a day when he will no longer  
have to tap computer keys for a living.  
He chants until his nerves unfray.

Afterward he puts his tie back on  
and fingers the plastic keyboard.  
Strings of numbers  
appear on his computer screen.  
He unlocks his office door  
and watches his colleagues  
moving up and down the corridor,  
their footsteps muffled by the carpet,  
smiles frozen on their faces,  
coffee cups clenched in their hands.

## Mini-Biographies

**Amanda Latrenta Crane** (-) has her MFA in Creative Writing from Bowling Green State University and is an instructor of English and Creative Writing at both the secondary and higher education levels. She is the author of the chapbook, *Barbiecue*, which is a contemporary spin on the voice of the Barbie doll. She has poems published in numerous journals including: *Barbaric Yawp*, *The Paterson Literary Review*, and *Word Riot*. Visit her website at: <http://homepage.mac.com/amanda.latrenta/>

**David Bolduc** (CA) I have recently been published, or accepted in Poetry Review, Knode, Paper Wings, Origami Condom, Ezra, Poetry International, and Timshel. I have a BA in Social Science from the University of Maine and studied anthropology at the New School for Social Research in New York.

**David McLean** (Sweden) has about 500 poems in or accepted by just under 200 publications in print and online. A chapbook *a hunger for mourning* is available at <http://www.erbacce-press.com>, another electronic chapbook is online at [http://www.whyvandalism.com/ebook\\_poems-against-enlightenment08.html](http://www.whyvandalism.com/ebook_poems-against-enlightenment08.html) and a real book called *Cadaver's dance* will be out at Whistling Shade Press in 2008, around April/May.

**Doug Holder** (-) is the founder of the Ibbetson Street Press. His poetry and prose has appeared in *Word Riot*, *Poesy*, *Hodgepodge*, *Facets*, *Poetry Motel*, *Pegasus* and many others. His two recent poetry collections are *Of All The Meals I Had Before* (Cervena Barva Press) and *No One Dies at the Au Bon Pain* (sunnyoutside). He has a new collection coming from Cervena Barva *The Man in the Booth in the Midtown Tunnel*.

**E. Michael Desilets** (CA) is always pleased to see his work in Origami Condom. His poems have also appeared in *The Boston Herald*, *California Quarterly*, *The Journal of New Jersey Poets*, and *The Rambler*.

**Eliza Kelley** (NY) is a single mom from Buffalo, NY and a teacher of American Indian and Minority Literature. Recent credits include RKVRY & Common Sense 2.

**Elizabeth H. Barbato** (NJ) teaches seventh, ninth, and twelfth graders at a little school in NJ, and unfortunately spends quite a bit of her time in her car. When she's not guzzling fossil fuels, she lives in the woods with two cats and an old dog who is not learning any new tricks.

**Gary Beck** (NY) His poetry has appeared in dozens of literary magazines. His chapbook *The Conquest of Somalia* will be published by Cervena Barva Press. His recent fiction has been published in numerous literary magazines. His plays and translations of Moliere, Aristophanes, and Sophocles have been produced Off-Broadway.

**Geer Austin** (NY) His poetry has appeared in *Big Bridge*, *Colere* and *Ginosko Literary Journal*, among others. He lives in northern Manhattan.

**Gerard Sarnat** (CA) splits time between his San Francisco Bay Area forest home and Southern California's beaches. He is a seeker and Jewbu, father of three, physician to the disenfranchised, past CEO and Stanford professor, and virginal writer 'til the recent tender age of sixty-two. Gerry has been published or is forthcoming in approximately thirty print and electronic literary journals including *Wilderness House Review*, *The Furnace Review*, and *Language and Culture*.

**Jonathan Hayes** (CA) lives in San Francisco, California. He has taught poetry at 826 Valencia – a writing center for children – located in the Mission District of the City

[Joseph DeMarco](#) (HI) was born in New York City; he lived most of his life in Buffalo, NY. He now teaches seventh grade on the island of Oahu, Hawaii. He is the author of the novels [Plague of the Invigilare](#), [The 4 Hundred and 20 Assassins of Emir Abdullah-Harazins](#), and [At Play in the Killing Fields](#). He is currently working on several new projects.

[Mark DeCarteret](#) (-) recently had work accepted by *Boston Review*, *Knock*, and *Tampa Review*.

[Michael Steffen](#) (-) is a Y2K graduate of the MFA in Creative Writing Program at Vermont College. His first book, [No Good at Sea](#), was published by Legible Press in 2002. Poems and critical prose have appeared in many journals, including *Poetry*, *Potomac Review* and *Poet Lore*, to name a few.

[Nan Jordan](#) (NY) ...

[Nicole Kuwik](#) (FL) was born in Cleveland and misses fireflies in the summer. She spends a lot of time with a fish named Mortimer, and believes flowers on the sides of highways should be given more consideration.

[Obemata](#) (England/Nigeria) is a Nigerian poet whose works have appeared in *Sentinelpoetry*, *Allpoetry*, *Liberty*, *African-Writing*, [Witness](#) (an anthology of poetry, ed. John B. Lee—Serengeti Press, 2004) and [On Broken Wings](#) (an anthology of Nigerian Poets, ed. Unoma Azuah—Chappal Waddi Books, forthcoming). He lives in Farnham Royal, England and in Karu, near Abuja, Nigeria.

[Robin Brown](#) (TX) is currently enrolled at Northwest Vista Community College where she is pursuing her Associate of Arts; she has been a guest reader in a creative writing class at the Alamo Community College District, as well as, at Gemini Ink for the Celebrate San Antonio Festival. Her work has been featured in the *Coe Review*, *Slab Literary Magazine*, *Dreamcatcher Anthology* and the *Austin International Poetry Festival Anthology*.

[Sergio Ortiz](#) (PR) is a retired English teacher living in San Juan, Puerto Rico. I grew up in Chicago, but found a home in El Paso, Tx, where I was a rehab teacher for the Elderly blind population. I studied English Literature at Inter-American University in San German, Puerto Rico, Daily Living Skill Instruction at the Texas Lions Camp, Kerrville, and Culinary Art, at The Restaurant School, Philadelphia. I have lived and worked in Honduras, Peru, Argentina, and Mexico. I have been published in *POUI The Cave*, 2005 Annual and *Origami Condom*.

[Steve Brightman](#) (OH) realizes that it's an electronic world out there and is pleased with himself when he hits the keys in the exact order in which he meant to do so.

[Steve Klepetar](#) (MN) is a minimalist.

[Taylor Gorman](#) (LA) is currently a student of Creative Writing at Louisiana State University and have recently been published in the *Freefall*, *Tertulia Magazine*, and *Jerry Jazz*.

[Travis Miller](#) (-) ...