

**FATHER'S DAY**

They climb up the slide  
and down its stairs.  
Buzzing children  
chant half-songs and whines.  
They play while I lie,  
eyes sandpapered raw  
stubbled cheeks  
shirt stained.

I dream of the cold sea,  
milky stars above  
black depths,  
floes and bergs.  
I scrape ice crystals off the bow  
ice flakes onto black water.  
Nose cold, I drop my oars,  
my teeth clenches under bitter sky.  
a child's tune chimes too loud.

The parents wince at my  
depression on the grass.  
They pull their children away from me.  
On top of the slide  
a 4 year-old girl calls  
"King of the hill!"

I lift up my body  
to be her father.

## ON THE NIGHT THE STARS COLLAPSE

As our world compresses into stone  
fires undulate her rim  
like a red remnant of coal.  
I just want to feel you slide

over my body like a silk sheet  
weighted with sugar and salt  
splattered by tropical storms.

I just want to entwine our fingers,  
knuckle to knuckle,  
and let our joints resolve  
to one heavy piece of universe.

BLARING SUMMER SKIES  
TAKE SILENCE AS MOOD,  
NOT DREAMS

We piled into brother Joe's  
'57 Bel Air,  
Sea Foam and chrome,  
two-toned with white fins.  
Vinyl seats, fluffy dice.  
A large steering wheel  
counterturned to the boulevard  
away from our house and its  
white calla lily hedge,  
its finely edged  
lawn.

Green like Easter,  
straw swayed  
along the roadside  
in vacant lots  
of abandonment  
and undermined growth.

We drove 27.8 miles  
to the San Fernando Mission.  
Parked among pilgrim cars  
pitted by dead gnats of travel.  
Quietly entering adobe brick,  
mother put a white-lace doily  
on her head  
sprinkled me with water  
from the fount of sinners  
and asked God to bless  
her gloomy child.

Then she supplicated  
on cold stone  
at the altar  
of Junipero Serra.

Beeswax and shellac  
touched my senses  
like a sneeze  
while the mission bells  
told redemption.

Through funnels of light  
dust motes fell.  
A fidgeting boy in short pants  
pointed a Michelangelo finger  
and called me  
the devil.

When it was time to go in peace,  
we left under a roost of pigeons  
begging from terracotta tiles.  
I saw that boy stumble  
and scrape his knee  
on jagged mission rock.  
Wings fluttered  
with a turbulence foreign  
to the everyday repentant  
in Sunday go-to-meeting clothes.

When I laughed, the boy showed  
real tears and a crow cawed disharmony.

That is when I understood  
the holy water.

## STREET WITH GEEK

Intoxicated Mort  
times his steps  
but not in dance rhythm.

A fastidious man  
of no emotion  
pocket protection  
plaid button-downs  
welder's mask glasses

Sheila thinks he is  
cool.

Leggy Sheila  
too much with the frenzy!

Tattooed  
hairdoed pink

Seriously  
breaking wind  
at Emily Post

Sheila tempts Mort's time  
from circuit boards  
and digitization.

Mort watches  
Sheila demonize  
city streets  
and rage at pretty girls  
in pink satin dresses.

Stupor, trance and hard-on  
masks Mort's sense of dread

They dance  
her black polish  
tapping against his chest.

He waves  
her fishnets  
like a flag.

Tantric fascinations  
glow from toes to horn rims,

as the waveforms  
that were  
his only existence  
  
flicker unattended.

## IN CASE OF CRITICISM

Let all the air  
out of your lungs.

Let a Spanish Guitar  
arpeggio from your head.  
Let it counter-beat the voice  
that assails you.

Scribble on paper.

Make eye contact  
to show that you care.

Nod as if to agree.

Rock on your feet.  
Pretend you are on a yacht.  
Make a mental grocery list.

Don't look at your watch.

Think about Gina Lollabridgida.

Envision butterflies  
surrounding any person  
who passes judgment.

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**Jerry Garcia** is a poet, photographer and filmmaker from Los Angeles, California. His poetry has appeared in various journals and anthologies including *The Chiron Review*, *Askew*, *Lummox*, and *Slipstream Magazine*. He has written two books of poetry, the full length collection *On Summer Solstice Road* (Green Tara Press 2016) and his chapbook, *Hitchhiking with the Guilty* (GND Productions 2010.) He is a past director of the Valley Contemporary Poets and former President of Beyond Baroque's board of trustees in Venice, California. He has been a producer, editor and post production supervisor of television commercials, documentaries and motion picture previews. Jerry lives in Studio City, CA with his wife Becky and their poetic dog, Japhy Ryder.

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