# Orbital Mechanics/ National Poetry Month 2014/ 30 poems <br> by Gary Hardaway 

## 01/ Scripts

The tablets shed a little light in the brain's dark corridors
and muzzle the loudest existential shrieks and arias.

The white space is less cluttered, transcription feeling so less urgent now.

## 02/ At 20,000 Leagues

Captain Nemo never died.
He cruises all the seven seas
below the waves in Nautilus 2, her seventeen impeller screws
spun by cold hydrogen fusion with an air field on her back where the Boeing, with a whack of tires, landed safe as houses
as the crew of the Nautilus 2
spread sheets of 300 count
flaxed and woven seaweed

[^0]in staterooms reserved for those
who come and never leave.
Bid adieu to passengers and crew
of Malaysia H 370, family,
friends and CNN. They dine
on fine sustainable delights
beneath the surface of the sea with the elegant captain and crew of the not yet legendary Nautilus 2 .

## 03/ Where and When It Started

Inimitable
blue and green mid-April Dallas, 1968.

## 04/ Inversion

If I could see the universe from outside the universe
would it look like a snowflake within a shower of snowflakes
floating down
through a blue-black Empyrean?

05/ An Agent of the Positive Writes Home
Dear Jenny,

I've learned that everything they taught at the Academy is true. Depressives put up little resistance to the Program. They seem to almost welcome it, in fact, as if relieved.

You never know, though, how the Bipolars will react-- submissive and cooperative one minute, wild-eyed and elusively energetic the next. We always get them in the end-- with nets, if they're still manic, or with a helping hand once they crash.

The dangerous ones are the three-phasers-sad and hysterical as a child losing a mother, crazed as a cornered wolf, or-- and this is when they're most dangerous-- stealthy as a snake under a rock, waiting for you with a knife or broken bottle instead of fangs.

We see our work as weeding the yard. We want a thick and uniform grass, trimmed and healthy shrubs, and just the right beds of seasonal color. The sad and angry are the dandelions and crabgrass that must be pulled and burned for the good of the whole landscape. What we do is vital for the health and beauty of all the lawns in all the neighborhoods.

My Commander says that once we get all living Negatives tracked and eliminated, we'll begin to focus on the dead ones whose books and paintings, music and movies, act like hidden seeds of the sad and negative weeds we're pulling up by the roots now. I wonder,
as she does, how we let these ugly things remain so long in our museums and libraries without removing and destroying them.

I think I have a bright future in the Program. Whenever the Commander brings us all together in the Hall of Joy to celebrate our progress, she seeks me out.
She says I have a wonderful smile and such enthusiasm for our campaign. She's even asked me to join her table for dinner more than once. Your Bobby may make Captain soon.

Yours in the Most Positive Way, Robert

## 06/ Natural Causes

Someday, I will have an original idea. The shock will kill me before I write it down.

## 07/ First Amendment Rite

Perhaps it is what passes for self-expression-affluent renegades, he at the handlebars and she behind, in matching black leather jackets, astride the loud-piped Harley with its radio and speakers blasting Radioactive and other indie hits, cruising the early spring Sunday boulevard as church let's out.

## 08/ Disquieting Weather Haiku

An expectant sky-
gray, but undecided- can, in April, open.

## 09/ Infuriating Fluid, Time-

will not be dammed, diverted, bottled.

Is always has been and will be-
a ceaseless river
washing what you were
downstream, toward
the sea, unseen,
of depthless possibilities.

## 10/ New Glasses

Six years ago, I could choose designer frames and add the coating to limit glare. When time diminishes, one seeks value in one's optics.

My wife says they look like Elvis Costello. The guy at work says Buddy Holly. I see eighteen bucks. Pity- the cheap frame collection
didn't offer the big black round ones
made famous in different circles by photos of Eliot and Le Corbusier. The twenties
were stylishly Modern- Tom with his
Fisher King and Corbu with his house
for the brother of Gertrude Stein.

In six years, the twenties will come again.
Perhaps the cheap frame line will offer circles.
For now, I see my reflection clearly enough.

## 11/ Book

There were none of the things he'd hoped for.
No unsolicited accolades by reviewers.
No imaginative and penetrating exegesis by critics.
No interview on NPR, no appearance on The News Hour.
No second printing, the first being an ample supply. There was just the book which, after the long wait, had to be enough.

## 12/ A Murder of Crows

Six of them pecked and scratched
something at their center in the middle of Virginia's lawn-
something smaller and gray-brown
I couldn't make out
in the flutter and thrusts
as I turned onto my driveway from work.

I stopped the car and ran to see a screech owl, still as dead,
as the crows flew off to safety in the trees.
As I came closer, the owl stood,
stretched its wings,
stared me to a stop,
and then flew silently away.

Next morning, as I fetched the News, I found an owl, face up, with holes where eyes should be.

## 13/ We the People of Walmart

I'm here for the cheap generics
and the lowest price
for a box of White.

I'm not in spandex
stretched to its elastic limit.
My buttons aren't strained
by an enormous gut.
I'm not in pajamas
or sweat pants. No part of my skin
which shouldn't be seen
by an American public can be seen.
I'm not the self-parody I laugh at online.

In the disheveled aisles
and tedious lines I see pieces of the mirror's face,
the haggard, beat-to-shit resolve of the economic trench that widens and lengthens
and threatens at every moment to collapse around us all as we scramble to escape
another hurled canister of gas.

## 14/ Satiety

I am long accustomed to satiety.
I can't imagine hunger that persists for weeks instead of the few hours between missed lunch and early dinner.

I know the visible effects of long hunger from the news bites and charity pitches that show shadowed ribs above the swollen bellies of dark-skinned children in dirt road villages of failed states.

I know pictures, framed and cut by professional spin machines wringing dollars from the well fed. Of actual starvation I know nothing. I prefer my fleshy ignorance.

## 15/ Blood Moon

It's no big deal- just heavenly bodies moving as heavenly bodies do. It has no import, even to the bodies involved. Pretty fucking cool to watch from here, though.

## 16/ When All Danger of Frost Is Past Haiku

The morning glare eats the last frost of spring. Replant now those hasty beds.

## 17/ Orbital Mechanics

It helps somehow to think about the moon and of the thousand other satellites that orbit the earth as he thinks of his own diminishing circumstances.

Another abandoned comsat falls in a fiery arc that no one notices.

When the moon's momentum dissipates enough, the earth's tug will pull it down. Long gone by then, no one will know the cataclysm.

## 18/ Haiku Haiku

The hope is always that the thrown stone sends ripples all they way to shore.

## 19/ April, 1956

The weeds were already in flowerthere were the small yellow ones one could eat, the bunched, lilaccolored ones, with round leaves instead of blades, and the dandelions, yellow still instead of spherical, delicate and white.

I don't know why, but I thought it might be fun to pick some weedy flowersnot the iris or tulips- and arrange them in the shape of an egga large, decorated egg.

I started in my own yard but ran short of fine grained yellow and lilac. I was sure that Susan Chapman's parents wouldn't mind, nor Susan, my one year older girlfriend. I gathered fistfuls of yellow, greens and lilac, careful to avoid the ivy where, my older brother said, black widows lived.
I'd seen the funneled webs he pointed out.

My egg mound grew
but needed a few more handfuls to complete the oval and the patterns. I eyed the Bullock's yard- no ivy, no spiders, just the few clumps I'd need to finish. The Bullocks were older and had no kids. Our connection was polite but tenuous. I took a risk and hoped they wouldn't mind my flower theft.

I liked my egg. I thought it beautiful.
I offered it up to Jesus- not the man on the cross, or the one in the Garden.
The one before the Romans and High Priests, but not the baby in the manger. I pictured Jesus five years old, like me. Before the sorrow and the glory. I knew he smiled and blessed me. I felt no need to show what I had made to anybody else.

## 20/ Fattened Feral Kittens <br> for Blanche, Medea and Moose

The wild lives more in you three than the other cats.
Though most of your lives have been spent
in a dry house with air conditioned against the seasons and you eat with regularity ample enough
to have given you generous guts, when you smell the spring-- the time we calculate your birth to have beenwafting in through screened windows
and watch the bird play and squirrel play and the twitching of cottontail noses and press your paws against the back door glass and stare transfixed, ears erect and alert,
we know your six first weeks among the weeds, shrubs and tree bark and your mother's damning eyes pull at you like the moon on the oceans
and you want to scratch the eyes out of the furred and feathered things that chirp and strut their freedom just beyond the glass, just out of reach.

## 21/ Hobgoblin Test

If I should fail to contradict myself, please check my pulse.

I might be dead, a room temperature mouthpiece for history, revised.

## 22/ The Divine Rites of Music

If you account survival fortunate, we are lucky there is no God. Wrath and disappointment would otherwise mean our end
unless whatever God might be
is charmed by melodies and the rhythms that bear them.

If a God beholds us, music saves us.

## 23/ Root and Talon, Thumb and Nail

The energies involved in just one leaping sunspot would incinerate the earth. Imagine those of a supernova
and the Bang itself
that started all this violencequantities we can calculate but never comprehend.

The worlds whirl and shatter, spin, collide, and collapse without intent.
It takes life to annihilate with ravening goals in mind.

## 24/ The balloon of you

is filled at the start with something lighter than air-perhaps a mix of spirit, ether, and time-and, buoyant, lifts above the gravitied ground to float and move with the wind-- but all balloons have porous skins and spirit, ether and time leak out, imperceptibly (unless thorns burst you open), and the mass exceeds the buoyancy
and gravity pulls you back, slowly, to the dust ball that made you.

## 25/ Inequity

Poets and comics
both pen the human and observe the wriggling.
People pay to hear the comics.

## 26/ Progress Is a State Not an Attribute

We have evolved. The plangent doesn't resonate across the new tympanic membranes and the latest retinae see the red of actual blood as grayscale.

## 27/ At a Loss

I had so many, once, I didn't notice my nouns, proper and otherwise, leaving, one, by two, by three, by more, until I reached for one one day and it was gone. I fear my verbs will follow, after.

## 28/ Lunchroom Haiku

> Someone's having Chinese. Microwave Mexican will now disappoint.

## 29/ Successor

The wife walked like a penguin.
From behind her hips reciprocated like the pistons of a motorcycle.

The biomechanical conjunction fascinated and disquieted as if she might become progenitor
of a race of biomechanical ascendants to the next tier in the crown of creation layer cake.

## 30/ May Day's Eve Haiku

April's last morning and a cold wind delivers snow's forget-me-not.


[^0]:    Available online at «http://fictionaut.com/stories/gary-hardaway/orbital-mechanics-national-poetry-month-2014-30-poems»
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