Note from the Midwest Writing Center:

We would like to extend a special thank you to this year's contest judges: Lisa Zimmerman (national), Laura Madeline Wiseman (regional), and Richard Stahl (Upper Mississippi River Valley themed). A judge's decision is always difficult, and we appreciate their time, effort, and invaluable contribution to this year's contest and anthology.

Once again, thank you to all of our contributors for your wonderful poetry, and for your patience; we are proud to feature such quality writing in Off Channel and we hope you are all proud of the finished product.

2013 marked the 40th anniversary of the Mississippi Valley Poetry Contest, and we are thrilled to celebrate this remarkable milestone with this installment of Off Channel. While it has been a challenging time for us in dealing with several setbacks to the contest’s logistics, in the end we believe this anthology is more than worthy of such a landmark occasion.

—Midwest Writing Center
This volume is dedicated to Max Moleston, for his decades of hard work and support of the Mississippi Valley Poetry Contest. Without Max, this Contest would never have run for 40 years, and his efforts have been inspiring to everyone who has worked with him. We are so thankful for his contributions to this Contest, to the Midwest Writing Center, and to poets and writers in his community.
NATIONAL WINNERS
Selected by Lisa Zimmerman

1ST PLACE
The Widd’er Woman | Jessica Glover 15

2ND PLACE
For wrapping trees in cellophane | Xan Roberti 16

3RD PLACE
Novena for the Nameless | Kelly Rae Lynn 17

HONORABLE MENTIONS
Phoenix | James K. Zimmerman 18
Doing the Dishes, 1966 | Julia Meylor Simpson 20

FINALISTS
A Father’s Favor | Leland James Whipple 21
Pictured You Again | E. P. Schultz 23
From My Grandfather’s Journal: June | Susan Brown Norris 25
Poetic Alchemy | Gayle Rein 26
Spinsters | Constance Snyder 27
Wild hearts | Nancy Ann Schaefer 28
Last Present: for My Daughter, Alex | Nan Trahan 30
Nothing Sacred | Jessica Glover 32
The museum of truth to you | Xan Roberti 35
Vengeance | Nancy Cook 36
Relation | Salvatore Marici 37
shark's teeth | kerry rawlinson 38
fear of falling | kerry rawlinson 39
REGIONAL WINNERS
Selected by Laura Madeline Wiseman

1ST PLACE
On Stieglit’s Gable and Apples | Beth Mc Dermott

2ND PLACE
Will | Beth Mc Dermott

3RD PLACE
Cow blessing | Nancy Ann Schaefer

UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER VALLEY
WINNER & FINALISTS
Selected by Richard Stahl

WINNER
Fireworks | Therese Guise

FINALISTS
Cedar Road | Beth Mc Dermott
Reorienting | Nancy Cook
Foreclosure | Nancy Ann Schaefer
Behind the museum at Sibley Park Zoo, Mankato, Minnesota | Betty Benner
Miracle at the Main Street Tap | Jean Tucker
Rutherford County | Jean Tucker

MVPC Sponsors

FINALISTS
Gather at the river | Betty Benner
Colliding Spheres | Gayle Rein
Build a bridge | Gayle Rein
Everything is Burning at the Wayside Stop | Tony Lendtje
Winnesheik Homecoming | Tony Ledtje
Sea Wrack | Timothy Walsh
Threshing Day | Ellen Kelley
Garden Musings | Ellen Kelley
Connected with Her Own Skin | Nan Trahan
Bee Charmer | Kelly Rae Lynn
Blood Memory | Nancy Cook
Why Some Things Never Hatch | Nancy Cook
The Verdigris Wind Vane | Salvatore Marici
For wrapping trees in cellophane

Xan Roberti

I've only hunted
tadpoles. Unless you count lovers.

For now, let's pretend you don't
count—make a library of exemptions.

The first house I built was
shattered against the wall
of the 7th grade shop building.

Please don't tether me, I'm crafty
with knots.

I'd like to lose
my escape route maps.

Every kite I unreel
is preparation.

Novena for the Nameless

Kelly Rae Lynn

Saint Louis, 1983—

For the blood of the lamb
For the basement bathed in a butane flame
For the flash of flesh—cold copper pipes
For the cherried nails—sparks in a bale of tinder
For the wrists—bound behind a bald confluence of legs
For the stain—a sunset melting down her yellow shirt
For the neck—dead-ending in a halo of mold
Four-foot-ten (without her head), sixty pounds, eight to eleven
For nine months on ice, waiting
For someone to claim her
For the strangers with their fingers laced
For the walk to the grave
For the sky-white box
For the black-cloaked priest, arm signing the cross
For whosoever believeth in me will never die
For the next thirty years beneath the runway hum
For the dead unmoored by rapacious roots
For the woods and the scrub that have swallowed her bones
For the sentinels, the wire-choked telephone poles
For the bottles, the garbage, the billboards, the junk
For the tombstones nodding diurnal salute
For the fox nursing kits in a hollow stump
For the lily-fledged doves the following spring
For the fury in this cracking clay
For the girl, once lost, now lost again
For the ones who seek
For the nameless a name