

# Poets

Meena Alexander  
Judith Arcana  
Jason Guriel

Steven Heighton  
Ray Hsu  
Tanis MacDonald

Yvonne Murphy  
Alicia Ostriker  
Russell Thornton

Priscila Uppal  
Mark Yakich

Russell Thornton

## Larissa New Year's

If you were lucky, you said, by the end of the night  
we would have the money for a holiday  
on Evia or Alonissos, on Thassos  
or Halkidiki — or we could even go to Crete.  
All New Year's Eve you beat men at cards —  
one by one they exited the game.

I sat back at the bar and watched  
and thought of the night we had met,  
when you stated you foresaw deaths  
then tried to forget — the neighbour, the relative,  
the stray kitten you introduced to a mother  
and her brood that hissed it away.

And you told me you were a thief. I admitted  
I, too, had stolen things — for a time —  
but now to find metaphors was to pocket  
new money. I wanted to steal a thing  
from its class and marry it to an alien other.  
You nodded at that — all contradiction,

calculating, vicious in an instant,  
yet frightened and soft-hearted  
in a way you had to hide. People either died on you  
or deserted you. But I had no choice —  
I had to stay to see the constant startled look  
in your green eyes, to see you perform

your ritual behind a half-closed kitchen door  
with olive oil and floating flame  
to keep away the evil eye, to see you dab  
holy water on your throat in crazily driven taxis,  
to see how you stood as at an interface  
where gods and goddesses appeared.

Nicotine addict, gambler, who thieved  
everywhere, who also gave without thinking,  
you foresaw nothing of the thief  
who came for you yourself. Or did you?  
Every holiday you took, you might have half-meant  
to lose him in a lit street. That startled look,

you sensing he had begun his work in you —  
the way you somehow knew what cards  
were in players' hands. What I knew was the cutting  
of the New Year's Day cake going wrong,  
the coin wrapped in waxed paper not to be had  
by you or me that year — and then, not any year.

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