

Michael H. Brownstein

Death Arrives Suddenly Near The Bed In The Laundry Room

My father was born without an expiration date.
Nor was he offered an explicit warranty against defect.
One evening he arrived home to discover
free choice was no longer an option, passion a myth,
red food coloring an agent of kidney disease.
They say when you hear thunder,
someone passed successfully to the other side.
They say when you hear the glimmer of a bell,
someone transformed into an angel.
They say bury him with a gold coin tight within his fist,
the river's swift and dangerous,
here there are too many monsters craving flesh.
My father did not outlive his usefulness.
He discovered, instead,
the burden of truth is too often a lie.

Michael H. Brownstein has been widely published throughout the small and literary presses. His work has appeared in *The Café Review*, *American Letters and Commentary*, *Skidrow Penthouse*, *Xavier Review*, *Hotel Amerika*, *Free Lunch*, *Meridian Anthology of Contemporary Poetry*, *The Pacific Review*, *Poetrysuperhighway.com* and others. In addition, he has nine poetry chapbooks including *The Shooting Gallery* (Samidat Press, 1987), *Poems from the Body Bag* (Ommation Press, 1988), *A Period of Trees* (Snark Press, 2004), *What Stone Is* (Fractal Edge Press, 2005), and *I Was a Teacher Once* (Ten Page Press, 2011). He is the editor of *First Poems from Viet Nam* (2011).

Brownstein taught elementary school in Chicago's inner city (he is now retired), but he continues to study authentic African instruments, conducts grant-writing workshops for educators, designs websites and records performance and music pieces with grants from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs, the Oppenheimer Foundation, BP Leadership Grants, and others.