



Gyroscope Review

Fine poetry to turn your world around

Fifth Anniversary Issue

Spring 2020

Issue 20-2



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Constance Brewer & Kathleen Cassen Mickelson

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For further information, visit our website: gyroscopereview.com.

Editors:

Constance Brewer
Kathleen Cassen Mickelson

Assistant Editors:

Elya Braden
Hanna Pachman

Logo design, interior design and layout, copyediting:

Constance Brewer

Cover

Constance Brewer
Kathleen Cassen Mickelson

Social Media:

Kathleen Cassen Mickelson

*This issue's cover art:
"Welcome, Spring" © 2020*

A FAREWELL AND THANK YOU

After five years as co-editor of *Gyroscope Review*, I am moving on. To what? My own writing projects, including my blog *One Minnesota Writer* where I plan to promote other writers' publications alongside my own essays on the writing life. I will now have more time to focus on collaborative projects already in the works. Poetry will continue as part of my writing practice.

And what a five years it's been. One of my core beliefs as a writer is that time spent on an editorial staff is valuable for understanding one's place in the world, learning compassion for the efforts of others, and contributing to the promotion of literature for all. *Gyroscope Review* is the third editorial staff I've been on and the one that I've helped most to shape. Constance Brewer and I go back several years, to our time together at the now-defunct *Every Day Poets*, and we've created a place here for contemporary poets with many different voices. This is work to be proud of. And I am.

With this fifth anniversary issue, I felt the time was right to shift the masthead. Constance will carry on, of course, as editor. Her vision is clear and her skills are sharp. She has been a wonderful co-editor; I couldn't have asked for anyone better to work with these past five years. Our new assistant editors Elya Braden and Hanna Pachman have already proven themselves capable and kind in their reading of submissions; I have high hopes that their voices will also help shape the future of *Gyroscope Review*.

The poets who send us their work every reading period have touched my heart in uncountable ways. From the poets whose work takes my breath away to the poets whose work doesn't make it into these pages, I am continually impressed by the bravery that accompanies putting a poem out there into the world. It is no small thing to try to convey a moment, a snapshot, a heartbreak, or a joy so someone else can see it inside a poem. This is an art that is sorely needed in the world, one that has the power to change another person. Poets are powerful. Poets carry the stories of this world forward. They offer lines to speak aloud as needed.

This issue is one of our best. The poems contained herein remind us that spring will come even in the darkest of times. Life will find a way. And we, too, will find our strengths, bring them out into the open, and change what must be changed.

Thank you to all the poets who sent us work and thank you to all of you who read poetry. Keep it going. You are bright spots in the night sky.

-Kathleen Cassen Mickelson
Editor
April 2020

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POEMS

Section 1

GEORGIA O'KEEFFE'S LAKE GEORGE WITH CROWS, 1921

BY KAREN GEORGE

At the spire of the world, Crow Mother surveys the Trinity of creation: Heaven, Water, Earth. Her three sons glide, wings wide, in an arc over the azure oval framed by a rim of brown mountain and a blur of turning trees — dark, pale, crimson. In a thin strip of ashen sky, a long cloud bisects a creamy moon. It's dusk. The black triad heads to their night roost.

A Cooper's hawk leaves a junco's torn feathers, strings of intestines in snow by my patio. Seconds later, a crow swoops, guzzles the remains, every drop of blood — the white once again pristine.

SPRING EMBRACES YOU
BY BONNIE BILLET

an unexpected lover
after a long winter

pink saucer magnolias
damaged by late frost

Japanese dogwood
show white bracts on bare branches
the air frigid then warm

then warmer the dark pulled back
the wind pushing rain
flowers looking at you

with intent
everyone speaking at once
so much beauty

it breaks you open

AFTER QIN GUAN'S "A DREAM"

BY TOM MONTAG

Spring rain. Flowers
burst into bloom

along the road
as if a dream.

The whole mountain
shines. The stream runs

deep. The yellow
orioles are

everywhere. Clouds
above me move

and change, dragons
and snakes coiling,

striking, finally
letting blue sky

show through. And, drunk,
I lie here now

in the shadow
of some old vines,

unable to
tell north from south.

INTERREGNUM

BY NANCY K. JENTSCH

The day after gauze
draped the moon
eager geese muster
seeds rumble
underground
frame the space between
where crocuses reign
for now
crowned with haloes
of honey

ON THE SENSIBILITIES OF SHEEP

BY SHERRY RIND

The sheep is said to be naturally dull and stupid. Of all quadrupeds it is the most foolish.—Aristotle

The day the ram stepped through the spaces
in the cattle grid, we stepped after--
as the goats, cows and even the dog could not--
to the grass and new clover in the town square.

People bleated at us and dogs barked.
Strangers, we owed them nothing.
We chewed grass and our thoughts
of wandering. We prefer to stay
at the place where we arrive, if we are together.

The shepherd heaved us into his truck
as if we could not remember the way home.
We read his face, the mouth-corners skipping up,
and went to him willingly. We saw the cattle grid
pass easily beneath us. This time he shut the gate

and set the dog in motion,
tick tick at our legs,
the black eye promising calamity
and the blue warding it off.

The sun never sets faster or slower
but man and dog barked
to hurry us, neat and close,
into the corral for the night.

I woke and saw none of us,
even the field gone
as if I were falling down a rift
farther and farther from my herd,
tiny glints far above.

The loneliness carved out my heart
and I cried for my companions
until their bodies pressing soft against mine
gave me back to myself.

BUCKET LIST

BY NANCY K. JENTSCH

Spend time in a barn
where hay is stacked

for a whiff of last spring's blooms
and next week's milk

Walk outside in the rain
long enough for hope to wash you

in water charged by lightning
and drawn to its ground

Take a lap around the park
at half your normal speed

see a burl you've passed before
imagine the kaleidoscope within

Consider the perfect sphere
of a Michigan blueberry

before it caresses tongue and palette
sweet with a late summer finish

Sit by the four o'clocks
to watch them unfurl

when they join night's first sighs
exhaling hue and scent

IN THE GARDEN

BY HOLLY WIEGAND

“Bury it down deep,” she says.
The robin, overdue, chortles.

Spring is born rich and generous. Lemon sunlight —
a brightness that clings behind the neck —
catches the drops of sweat crowning her forehead.

Wet, woody perfume of wakened earth,
the scent of apple trees and life, engulf the garden.

Dampness seeps into socks. Mud-crusting
fingernails hide the seed. Her crows’ feet eyes glint
with wisdom of earth and heaven.

She looks at me, knowingly.
“For if she isn’t rooted deep, how can she grow?”

JUNE: TRIAD

BY ERIN COVEY-SMITH

Rain:

The perennial garden says no, ebullient
defiance. No – it won't all collapse, not
even the heavy-headed peonies,
the taproots won't all wash away, not
yet, not today, not even in all this rain.

Solstice:

The day fades, subtle and pink,
hesitant to relinquish its bright hold
as if, inexplicably, not weary.
The quiet birds sing sparse, wise lines,
as if unplighted, doing what they know.

Light:

I am called to visit the light, the bird-laced
light, the evening light at the top of the stairs,
after the rain, the light that falls on the desk,
the desk which looks out to the garden,
where the green light glows—ardent, wild, free.

SENRYU

BY AYAZ DARYN NIELSEN

an earthly affair-
your cool, green skin
pressing against mine

THE SPRING OF 761

BY CHARLES WYATT

And Du Fu sees flowers everywhere
His neighbor's on a ten-day bender

He sings of flowers wine and poetry
Is he the first to say swarm and tangle

They catch him up as he wanders about
Still he offers them a toast

Peach blossoms and the Abbot's grave
Now he's found a smoky haze

And lost himself
Here there's mostly mud

A weed whose name I don't know
Has found a sweet spot in gravel and cement

Doing weed work as well as that old man
Does poems

Some daffodils beat up by all that rain
Still get yellow right

They will last a week but not much more
Any poem knows what that means

Section 2

A MESSAGE FROM MARY
BY CHRISTY BAILES

It's a Saturday for the holiest of creatures,
and here I sit
because my biking buddy has a catarrh.

Sure, I was invited to go on a group hike
to learn about birds as bards,
but all be damned if I can't trust my tibia
to withstand terrain's torment
for seven miles,

and if that's not enough,
I sprained my wrist
from sleeping.

It has come to writing my life better than it is,
although Mary Oliver's bird just flew into my bedroom window,
unnerving my cat
and splatting my pane
just to tell me, "Don't do that."

So I will tell you what you don't want to hear:
The spirit gets stronger as your soma slips into disrepair,
laming one limb at a time
although I shouldn't complain,
I have run four marathons and ridden across Iowa.

But I want more.
I want to run half-marathons again.
I want to bike across the United States
and sleep in a hammock suspended between trees,
rather than
debating such a sad writing idea as
whether a washer can erase memories from clothes.

I'd rather
be
raising brawny biceps with a rough cry
over a finish line
or rolling through small towns
with a proud, distinctive stench.

"Give me birds or give me death,"
I say,
as I hope to ride my life better than this.

A GOOD CITIZEN IS A HAWK

BY HAOLUN XU

i.

This is captivation. I mean, that is
what lies between the bases of all charisma. I have lived there for so long
in this blackened wilderness
and *only now* I recall that I have never seen a red-tailed hawk die.

Sure, I've seen the clumsy and plimsoll corpses of seagulls.
Their deaths are truly cannibalistic, their body a tale of incest. They share flesh,
they also share defeat. This is a label
of codependency,
and the rule is we avert our eyes to this form of love (or survival.)

ii.

Hawks, understanding a higher form of regency,
perform their own rituals. No, not death,
but *yes* a passing.

The method was simple. Take the left talon, sweep a flip,
and cut a slit in the air. Preferably it is overcast
enough that you can swipe a notch behind a cloud.
The raptor, for the sake of all hawks,
slips into the scar,
and disappears forever.

Slowly, the wound in the middle of the air
heals. The clouds part into the fabric of time,
and we all forgive ourselves the next day.

iii.

Every fifth month, a hawk flies thirty-seven feet north of the church bells.
The rule is to be silent. The wind catches the forelimbs,
and the shadows against the feathers, the calamus, all tremble.
The hawk splits into six.
The new figures intersperse, splitting the previous titles amongst the other,
and ultimately fly away. This is the death, and birth of hawks.
The fable of savagery,
complete and restarting,
cloning, marauding

THE OCEAN IS TIRED OF MY METAPHORS

BY TRESHA FAYE HAEFNER

The ocean is a drunk
mother sobering up. Her long sob

against land a broken lullaby.
Tangled seaweed. I walk

on the shore of my morality.
Ambition broken into shells.

She keeps reaching
for my ankles,

that sloppy slapping of her hands reminds me,
I'm tired of being.

Chasing Blues. Fishing
for commandments.

Like any creature
she grinds herself

to grit. Bones of dolphins.
Black knuckle of crab.

When the ocean sings
it is a dirge. Smoky.

Haunting as silk.
She cracks the carapace of vessels, licks their bones.

Embarrassed by all the salt
she has swallowed.

I hold my hand up
to block the glint of sun flaring over her face.

Now she slides her arms up
the breast of apology.

Now she withdraws
more of my mind

back into the cravings
of the sea.

LANGUAGE OF LOST LIGHT

BY PATRICIA NELSON

How do I recall the broken light
that blew singing into a sky of holes?
The disassembled song is wild now
scattered like the page-white birds.

I see one bird made of shape and heat.
Its wing is the color of rock.
But it flies as high as wanting does.
It ravels color like a severed cloth.

What can I use to follow it?
My ear, a little hole of stillness:
door that takes me inward,
apart from vastness and mistake?

The eye that sets the day alight
and measures how it circles?
The eye is just a dial. Its light is flat.
Its sum is small and black, and moves.

I want it all: the start, the tilt,
The thing itself and not the shadow.
The error in which even the destruction
is a kind of dancing.

Not just the small and level
birds of earth. I want to catch the whole
and half-remembered swaying song.
The stamen that strews the long white air.

THE ROAD OF SIX IED STRIKES

BY STEVEN CROFT

I stare out a bullet-proof square of glass,
the familiar broken buildings dotting
all the sand-colored streets of Husseinia
while he tells us he hasn't slept for seven days

We slide along a canal
cut from the Tigris, into an open vista
of farmland

and he tells us his suspicions
about his fiancée's fidelity, not with the half-
I-don't-care-humor of many soldiers, but
spitting words half-bitten with paranoia

an ongoing monologue that really says nothing
like wolves circling the edges of a bad dream

and I think of the rumor in the tent,
told in low tones, that he will be held back
when he goes home on leave, put on Rear D

and I think after six IED strikes, more than any
of us, more than anyone could stand, God,
let it be true

Let his war with insurgents
be over, let the dysfunction of buried bombs
that blew the air from his lungs and thoughts
from his brain six times

as they tried to reach him through the shaking
iron carriage of Humvee armor
become a memory

like the now settled plumes
of exploding sand that carpeted ballistic glass
with darkness as they reached six times
for the sky under his bad star

His war with swirling psychological ballast
and mind-bending frustration
just beginning

AFTER HE ZHU'S "MOURNING"

BY TOM MONTAG

Entering the house now
everything is different.

We had come here together.
Now I am alone.

The tree in the yard
has lost half its leaves.

An old duck flies by himself.
The dew on the grass

across the plain begins
to dry in the sun.

How can anyone leave
his old home and a new grave?

I lie on our empty bed
and listen to the wind.

Now who will trim the lamp for me?
Who will mend my ragged clothes?

ZAWIYA MOUNTAIN VILLAGER

BY STEVEN CROFT

Peace a mirage in the distance
its waveform disrupted by every
missile, barrel bomb, broken roof,
burning wall

Driven, feet over ground
carrying some wrapped khubz
and a prayer mat
into the future

Now spirit walking the earth
seeking rest like the rivulets
of rain down his spine
somewhere, anywhere

NEW COMB

BY LAUREN TRAITZ

reclamation— a leaf turned over,
its under-sided, other-colored face

pointing up to the sun, some
spiraling fingers of vine

climbing concrete,
choked green

and the charred limb
of something many-armed and sunken

beneath wisdom's weight, alive
again, a hive—

coated with viscous, amber light
packed into the shadowed wound

ABSTRACTION

BY RILWAN TUKUR

1. abstraction

•

something sneaky
about nights & poetry
behind the back of sleep,

how my muse & lines
lust in space like neons
how they glow, humming

in our skulls like the silence
of graveyards. something
sly about how darkness

is a path to another light
of new captions for thoughts,
each as a picture asking

for an interpretation
in the orifice of a mystic.
something about a thief

in the skin of a bard,
stealing words from marbles
in a bystander's oblivion.

something about a jin
in words blown into the air
as a spell, a powder, to manifest

from the lips of conception.
something about the forces
of nature in the organs

of science, that literature
does diagnose effortlessly.
something about how it

comes alive from the crucifix
like the wake of a 33 year old.
something about the ethereal.

IN PRODUCTION: THE FLAMBOYANCE OF FLAMINGOES
BY CAROLYN MARTIN

Today the Bolshoi proudly announced
their world-renowned ballet of swans will play
the lead in this new ornithologic musical.

A paddle of ducks from Des Moines are lined up
as understudies and a waddle of penguins
from the Miami Zoo as the chorus line.

Set in New York, this classic dramedy
tracks a congress of crows as it uncovers
a raven conspiracy to kidnap ugly ducklings

and deliver them to a kettle of hawks
terrorizing Central Park. In a pivotal scene –
a party set in a posh high rise –

socialites are flamingoes in disguise
and looming owls spy from the balcony.
Script writers are keeping major plot twists

in the wings. It's anybody's guess why
piteous doves fly through every scene
and penguins, in a tour de force, sing off key.

DEVOLUTION

BY DOTTY LEMIEUX

The road is narrow
It is dark and Lisa drives
the Volkswagen slowly away
from the writers' conference
I sit behind and light her cigarettes

Every few hundred feet our headlights
bounce back at us, reflected
off a patch of fog on the road
then brightens again
along the winding highway

We are driving
to a town called Marshall
where the houses sit on stilts
the bar leans out over the bay
Lisa says we'll find men who won't judge us
on our poetic style

Beyond the signpost
fog obscures the bay to our left,
walling the road in front of us
and I think -- *So this is what it's like
at the bottom of the ocean
dense and we grow fins.*

Section 3

SENRYU

BY AYAZ DARYL NIELSEN

robotic mistress- -
oh, oh, which of her buttons
did I just push!?!

OLGA

(Picasso's First Wife)

BY MAUREEN SHERBONDY

Unflattering.
That's how he paints me now.
Ugly.
Not a lean ballerina
or graceful beauty
dancing across canvas.

Go ahead. Mock me
with cartoonish caricature,
brush me into insanity,
humiliation. To live on
this way after
my final breath.

Take on a lover,
that seventeen-year-old
child. Leave the world
a crazed-mess picture
of me. Limbs askew. Show them
the jealousy monster that rises
inside each of us.

LITANY IN LONG DIVISION

after Mary Oliver

BY PAT PHILLIPS WEST

You do not have to live in this world
on your knees. You don't need algebra
or a formula, something with x and y
all over the page. You already know
the answer resides inside your core,
deep blue hard as sapphire—a color
visible only in ultra-violet light,
a source beyond mathematics.

Don't wait for him to use his hands,
like furious steel talons
to squeeze into your body, holding you
to the point of suffocation.
You only have to let your courage
spiral out of itself, like ferns uncurling
from their fetal position.

This long slow division
taking a fraction of you each time
he laughs at the sound—
that thwack—your body makes
hitting the linoleum. Or the slap
of his leather belt on your bare skin
until tears—
beads of salt-filled glass
fall shattering on the floor.

POSED

BY JEFF SCHIFF

Humor me Sweetz

I want you
facing the south wall first

beneath the jutting tillandsia
where the jaguar waterspout
is sure to tease

the photographic edge
into noteworthy depth
Turn in an arc Lovey

so the gemmed light
refracts off your specs
yet dodges an optic trail

Hang tight beyond the trench digger
Hug the shaved ice stand
Keep pace with the gaggle

we've seen
strutting its adolescence
from the doors

of *Colegio Cristiano Los Brazos de Jesus*
Play the decoy *mi alma*
alongside the bootshine

where they gather to hear the lottery results
where they beat their wash into clean paper
where they slink into social services

where they deal *conquian* and shoot *cinco*
and meld three and four
into Blue Bird and Thomas bus seats

Yes dear you are complicit
Yes dear there's thievery in it
Yes dear I should ask before I snap the shutter

POEM#1

BY RAY LEVY-UYEDA

in social emotional learning
there's a little black box of questions
teachers, called by a first name
explain spooning
 what an erection is
 what it means when a friend no longer likes you and how
 women can love
 women

girls, because that's what they are,
sit in a circle, learn adult things,
and the way that bodies are pleasurable and
dangerous, or,
 (just) pleasurable

it's california so it never gets too cold
but there's one class, in the winter,
where a question reads,
 "what is butt fucking"

and the room floods with a warm laughter
but for every question the first-name-adults
give real answer, and the girls, because that's what they are
 learn later by way of a pregnant
 absence, that what had happened was called
 respect

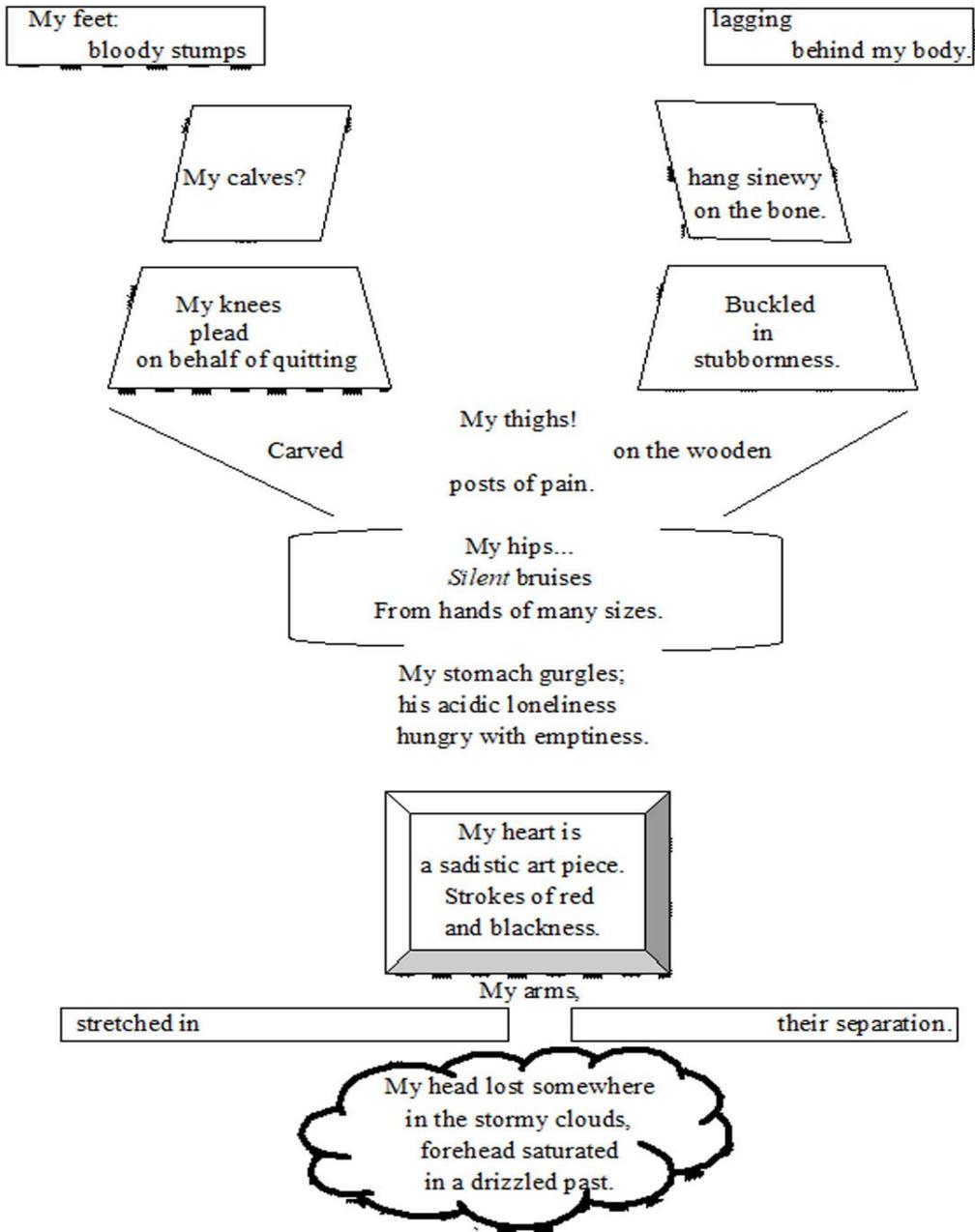
and later on adults much preferred
the things they could buy
 than answers to questions
 even if they knew them

there was a question about blood
and one about breasts
and one from a girl who liked to touch herself
 another from a girl who liked to touch herself
 and felt bad about it

and the girls, because that's how adults saw them,
take turns playing dress up
with adult ideas, and
adult knowledge
 almost convincing themselves that it was true.

BODY/MIND
BY MARIGOLD

BODY/MIND
BY MARIGOLD



THINGS TO TELL MY DAUGHTER

after Warsan Shire

BY TRISH HOPKINSON

When the warmth rushes in beneath
your skin from your heels to your hips
and flutters up across your cheekbones

[like my cheekbones] and out
the reddening edges of your ears—I say,
daughter, do not mistake that for love. At first

touch, second touch, third—I know
[like I once was] you will not be sure.
Remember, this will not be

your only opportunity. I say,
a whole migration of monarchs
have yet to brush by.

When it happens, do not mistake
urgency for love. Love evolves from practice
—like rolling up on pointe shoes

or drawing symmetrical faces.
I say, remember real love
evolves from careful gestures

[yes, even from men] the urge to protect,
the pull to sit quiet with you
while you write letters

or talk on the phone, set appointments,
steep tea, or pick out a pant suit for yourself—
to notice your desires

and complete them, even on days
when desires are unspoken. Love, I say,
evolves from more than fire.

CREMATION I WASN'T ALLOWED TO ATTEND
BY PREETI VANGANI

My virgin shell, was it wider
or narrower than the slit in the pyre

through which mother was set to flames?
Penetration, my first stage of grief.

Bombay sweat curdled under my bulk-
purchase thongs. The city's gutters overflowing

the way I squirted pretend moans into ears
and ears of hungry boys. The smell of sex

leaked into my theater of loss. Every performed
orgasm, a rhythmic contraction of muscles

to forget which parts of my baby soft mother
must have surrendered to fire first. My body,

bent and spent. My body, a fist
of ash of the whole girl she birthed.

My earthly heat, never more alive. What else
could I do but keep on disappearing?

POEM INSPIRED BY MY DAUGHTER'S HOMEWORK
BY ALISON STONE

Burn myrrh for flu, wolfsbane for jealousy.
Some "romantic" songs' refrain – jealousy.

Which ruins a relationship fastest –
illness, money stress, weight gain, jealousy?

Least fun of all the deadly sins. As a
virus slips into a vein, jealousy

enters a heart. Othello knows. Stage-right,
Desdemona's dead again. Jealousy

and ambition addled Lady Macbeth.
Abel murdered Cain from jealousy.

Man and stepson wrestle for one woman's
love, tethered by the chain of jealousy.

Poor Hera's only given one plotline –
vindictive wife, insane with jealousy.

Racists thrilled by Black and Jew turned rival,
feeding fear, rancor, disdain, jealousy.

Created in Yahweh's image? Of course
we're jealous children, remain jealous. See

nothing change, squabble after war. We swear
off drink but won't abstain from jealousy.

Egg frying in a skillet, the flame turned
up high. *This is your brain on jealousy.*

We pass flowers, jewelry stores, names carved in
stone. The last stop on love's train – jealousy.

IDENTITY

BY RANIA ATTAfi

My feminist father would never claim this identity.

My feminist father is ashamed of knowing
what's in the cupboards of our kitchen,
where we keep the detergent,
how to properly do the dishes.

My feminist father is embarrassed
by his love for cooking and lecturing me about it —
be kind to your casseroles, he tells me,
be gentle with your ingredients.
I catch the smile that tugs on his disapproval.

My feminist father feels guilty
for not wanting to go out every night,
for preferring to stay at home.
He settles into his cozy corner.
We blame the cold for keeping him in.

Yet, My feminist father would never claim this identity.
Instead, it claims him.

A PERFECT SCORE (DIVORCE)

BY TOVA HINDA SIEGEL

When did I learn to score the orange peel?
To make that slight slash?

The beginning slice was hardly noticeable
the membrane barely touched.

Four equal sections
so that each dimpled piece of peel
came off
without cutting deep into the flesh

Then, each piece of flesh
split off into its own segment
not bruising the piece next to it.

I longed to hold
three pieces close
while I willed the fourth
to leave, to disappear, to be gone.

He left but looked back.
What remained were three pieces.
Together. Sweet. Whole.

WHERE'S THE BUTTER?

props to Nora Ephron

BY CATHLEEN CALBERT

Glistening on my lips. You may kiss me.
I'd tell you, but then I would have to kill you—softly—with my eyes.
Shall I fetch the flour and sugar as well?
I believe it's still in that cow's belly. Why don't you go see?
Can butter exist on the same spatial-temporal plane as margarine?
It's in heaven, along with my best poems.
The butter has returned to sunshine.
It's atop orange scones waiting for us in London. Book the flight and I will go.
The dead housewife knows.
On my hips. Didn't you notice them dimple into grins?
Where are my wrenches? Where's my 401K?
Butter plumped me up with too much pride: why should I be pleased to know the difference
between salted and sweet?
I've used it to grease the wheels of progress.
In silver packets on ice. Shall I have the waiter bring some for your baguette?
My special friend plays "hot cross buns" with me on Mondays. Best to let sleeping dogs lie,
don't you think?
Can you use it in a sentence, e.g.: *When I last shopped for eggs, I found them in the dairy
case.*
Why speak of butter when my eyes are the color of clover honey?
The butter ran away with the broccoli. It lives on the other side of the moon with the dish
and the spoon.
It has flown off with the gypsy moths. They shall return in spring, their wings glinting in the
light.
Do you prefer "butter" or "buttery"?
"Butter" or "matrimony"?
It's in the closet, where I keep the bodies of seven men. Never touch the keys.
Listen with the ears of a blind man: perhaps the butter will speak. *Here I am. Find me.*
I dream of butter on cobs of corn, on rolls of wheat, on the tips of your fingers.
The butter has stained our sheets.
What has butter to do with love?
I don't know, my dear, I don't know where the butter is.

MINERVA'S OWL

after Hegel

BY CLAIRE SCOTT

the owl of Minerva flies only at dusk
only at the end is the plot revealed
like an Agatha Christie mystery where
the clues click in place on the last page

only at the end do we discover why
a fire destroyed, a lover strolled off
a sister lived on sighs and saltines

only at the end
when shadows slide across the field
and we wait for the silent flight of wings
the wisdom of an owl

ADAM: THE FIRST LANGUAGE

BY PATRICIA NELSON

— When Dante meets Adam in Paradise, he asks him what the first language was. He also learns that Adam's real sin was impatience, not waiting to receive the knowledge that God intended to give him when he was ready.

First language? Impatience — that scattering
when I came striding with my swinging voice.
My thoughts went like eyes among the freer objects,
desiring their wildness, not seeing a whole.

Naming was the gate the creatures passed
in the singleness, the separateness I could see.
The world around them deep with words for rarity:
brighter, taller bags of air like waves or sunsets.

My language did its clumsy dance with objects,
I with my ear always against the noise,
turning like the owl's mask of moon
snatching little cries of light.

My words dried like the bones of the dead.
My understanding broke, window by window.
Then the white air came back, petal upon petal,
and different sounds like a thickening of bees.

PENELOPE WALKS WHERE THE DULSE IS LAID OUT LIKE SHROUDS
BY LOIS MARIE HARROD

Look — last night
where

the moon slipped
into the sea

and the waves
glossed over each other

in glass
layers,

the aprons
we tossed —

slicks and tatters
parching on the rocks.

Oh, love, love
leaves so little —

as if moment
were millenium,

as if we would not
need this garb again.

PHYSICISTS AT THE BEACH
BY L. SHAPLEY BASSEN

Quantum mechanics, not Newtonian physics, applies to subatomic particles. Both the position AND momentum of a particle cannot be known with absolute precision. Either can be known precisely, but then we know nothing about the other. This is the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle.

HE

He is thirsty, observing
the woman lying on her side on the hot sand,
cheek upon brown arm, eyelids closed, jeweled with sweat.
Her hip is the curve the sky slides down blue,
and the bone beneath is the point all lines derive from.
It is therefore clear... there is no gravity,
only the curve of space, irresistible and slippery
as the sides of the well where all cool waters pool.

SHE

Newton arranged it neatly.
Discretion in all matters great and small.
Each fits in its space sweetly;
collision occurs predictably or not at all.

In your arms before the ocean,
More modern theories of motion
become real.
What I feel
is either the parting of waves
or
where you are in me.

A ROSE, A WOMAN

BY SCOTT WIGGERMAN

Deep as necessity,
a body folded, perfected.

The garden, a bare smile
of milk and bone.

An empty pitcher of moon.
Odors close about throats.

The dead in white,
coiled as scrolls and illusions.

Night bleeds petals,
the sweet drag of flowers and feet.

Section 4

NOTES ON MY FIRST BOLLYWOOD SCREENPLAY

BY PREETI VANGANI

I write the back stories in this family drama like it's my religion. The producer says it's inessential. He emails, *(At best, the past can be accommodated*

as a quick-cut montage. Transition to the protagonist's current conflict. Give her a minor victory. Tell us simply why she's unable to love?) The answer rattles in the formative years,

I argue and see myself morph into my therapist. How she preemptively slides the Kleenex box towards me before saying: your mother, your father.

(But remember this isn't their film, assume they are gone.) There's never enough screen space for grief but plenty for dance and song. *(Can a song advance the narrative?)*

Can I ask my dad to stop singing O Saathi Re in the bathroom then? The one from Omkara -- an Othello adaptation. As in the last film they ever saw together in a theater. He hums to the thrum of the shower: *Aa chal din ko rokein, dhoop ke peeche daudein. Come, let's stop this day from ending, let's run after sunshine.*

This is the story he tells me filled with the same daily vigor as towel drying his back after a shower. *Omkara – a real tragedy. The reel was faulty. The film kept stopping, thank god your mother sneaked in pistachios in her dupatta. We left before it was over.*

Missing the big deaths. The way I landed home three hours too late after my mother closed her eyes. A decade later I will remind Papa how it all ends. How Desdemona is pretty, even in death.

Another email, *(How else can you resolve these characters?)* I lay memory out on an edit table. Hold delicately in my hands the scissor which is this mind: One blade, loss. The other, time.

NASHVILLE LOOKS LIKE AN INCONVENIENCE STORE
BY EMILY ELLISON

My father refuses to move through metropolises,
his lungs congesting
until he honks,
 inconsolable. So he says,
Nearby is a preferable place.
Less people. My father loves
rest stops as if he were perpetually weary, collecting
souvenirs for avoiding
everything.

 On the outskirts of the unwanted,
my father bought a snow globe.
He asks that I care about it,
this city behind glass
reflecting
the most fragile
statues, his ornamental children.

GREAT CLIPS

BY BARRY PETERS

Who knew Great Clips opened
this early on Sunday mornings,
customers congregated on chairs

pewed in front of sun-christened
plate glass eager for their discount
haircuts, mine coming from Divine,

her nametag reads, who homilizes
about the best class in beauty
school: not the slippery tricks

of upselling shampoo and mousse
but the after-hours collaboration
in the bar, tyro stylists trading wisdom

about child care and carpal tunnel,
comfortable shoes and the best scent
to mask the smell of cigarette smoke.

How to make ends meet, Divine says,
scissoring my dead ones to the floor
while I calculate what to tithe for a tip.

PICTURE POSTCARD

BY JOHN M. DAVIS

I can't say *I wish you were here*
as I'm here
because we couldn't be there together.
I thought of remarking
on the weather
and wondered whether you'd be interested
in what it's like here today (rainy)
but in the end, I left the postcard
blank
with just an address
to guide it to you

and you picking it up
looking at the picture
seeing nothing you know
nothing but another landscape
another tropical isle
the shape of things far away
and seeing the absence of words:
at last, a perfect poem.

BAILA MORENA

BY JESSICA MEHTA

It wasn't all bad. I remember
the good, and it wasn't in the big moments
(it never is). The year *en Moravia* whipped
me raw with the scaling Tico Spanish,
the dirty buses and whistles trailing
from scooter saddles. But that quiet day
the rain twisted my locks
into a frenzy and pressed the cotton closer
to your heart than I ever got — that

is our Costa Rica. Tucking into *casadas*
while the *queso* vendor across the street
shouted *palmito* specials to the downpour.
¡Aqui solo calidad le vendemos! The flies
hugged us close in the tiny *soda*
shop while *Baila Morena* lulled us all
into a stupor deeper than Imperial
could ever muster. We knew the *palmito* in the city
would never compare to the fresh wonder
balls sold in huts papered with banana leaves
along the winding rainforest back roads.
You knew I was already half gone
by the urgency of my swallows. And I knew
it would take years shrouded

in a different love,
a different life,
to ever listen to that song again.

ON THE WAY HOME FROM THE MEETING
BY MAUREEN SHERBONDY

Route 85 edged in sleepy pine trees
slips by at this late hour.
The dark southern sky is lit by the moon.
It's not so bad. There were sugar cookies
on the table near lists and agendas.
Kind faces stared back across the room.
No one you would ever invite
to a holiday party at your house, still.

The road passes both behind and ahead.
Miles forward your new husband
waits in that warm house. You left
the old husband on a road
in a state you no longer remember.
Your children are sprinkled along highway
signposts in faraway places.

It's okay. The right partner
will soon meet you at the door
with his impish grin, a cup of coffee
just the way you like it,
and those arms that you are always
so sad to let go of each morning.

AIR GUITAR

BY LENNY LIANNE

In the racket and crash of night thunder,
I swear I'd hear the hard rhythms
of whacked-out rock and roll, plus
the smash and fracture of countless guitars.

In the morning, the worn wood doors
exhale and, while the grimy windows
remain streaked with yesterday's rain
as though someone cried a long time,

I shy away from glimpsing outside,
recollecting how I'd paced and fretted
I'd lose him as he stood in the open,
braying and playing air guitar

to each stroke of jagged lightning that surged,
unfettered, across the far-reaching sky.

DIDDY BOP

BY D'YANNA COFFEY

We have our ratty Reeboks, with two holes in the back, a smudge of dirt and faint green smears on the sides from playing outside, because grandma says don't come back in her house before dinner.

The rattling of change in our pockets mimics a broken washing machine as we run through the dark, cloudless morning to the bus parked outside the mass of burnt, brick buildings that make up Washington Avenue. Grandma watches us from her doorway - our hoodie, faded a dull red with the bright white Walmart tag hanging out the back, our cheap, translucent backpack revealing two wooden pencils smushed against a dark purple binder, and the beads rattling at the bottom of our braids like a tribal opera. Grandma smiles, sweeps the damp mess of beer bottles on her doorstep, then slams the door behind her.

That night, in our old ratty t-shirt, with a hole in the front and a bright red juice stain at the bottom from the HI-C held tightly in our hands, our brown eyes are wide, and our thin arms flail around in swift flashes of brown. We smile, revealing a row of crooked teeth as we watch P Diddy in a music video way past our bedtime. Like the other poor kids on Washington Avenue, we dance too.

SHEEP

BY JAMES K. ZIMMERMAN

unlike a sounding pod
of whales intoning shaman
chants and howling lullabies

unlike a slyly winking
murder of crows that
gossip among themselves,
salacious over last night's
steamy roadkill

unlike a bubbling hive of bees
in evening congregation
after solo flight in hazy sun
to bring bouquets of sticky
pollen to their queen

more a school of mackerel –
silver cloud refracted
in salted light – that flees
slashing jaws of cod
and tuna rising up, flash
of steel from deep below

or a bed of irises craning
thin blue necks in unison
to drink a fading glimpse
of pink in the western sky

they turn as one, as one
at the sound of a shuffling
step or muffled cough, one
thought in twenty woolen
heads, attention tuned
in forty quailing ears

they stand as one, each
waiting for the others
to come toward, they shy
away until a singleton –
scout, spy or pseudopod –
takes a halting step
toward the split-rail fence,
a flicker of initiative
in golden slitted eyes

am I to be the sacrifice
he asks himself, the lamb
of god? the one to lead them
to the fertile field, rutted
road, hay-filled barn?

he holds a hoof mid-air, then
backs away, reabsorbed
into bleating folds
of the receding flock

again one thought in twenty
woolen heads, attention tuned
in forty quailing ears

again they turn as one
again they turn away

LESSONS FROM THE HERMIT, SLUG, AND FERAL CAT
BY CAROLYN MARTIN

(With thanks to Alicia Ostriker's *The Blessing of the Old Woman, the Tulip, and the Dog*)

1.

To be alive
says the hermit
is to feel
the cave ooze moss
and my skin
thistle-green.

To be alive
says the slug
is to hide
beneath hosta leaves
believing no cruelty
will uncover me.

To be alive
says the feral cat
is to wait
at the sliding door
until her coffee cup's half-full
and she readies my bowl.

2.

To be awake
says the hermit
is hear the evening breeze
chant vespers
through cracked stone
and modulate each verse.

To be awake
says the slug
is to curl beneath
a flower pot
until the gardener
passes by. Relief.

To be awake
says the feral cat
is to find the softest dirt;
squat, deposit
dinner's residue,

then scratch a lid on it.

3.

To be at peace
says the hermit
is to homeschool
the demons
who are the outside-
in of me.

To be at peace
says the slug
is to rest through
sunburnt days and revel
in the crunching
music of the night.

To be at peace
says the feral cat
is to find
a catbird seat
while squirrels squabble
with Steller's jays.

4.

To be wise
says the hermit
is to recognize
dreams chase me
and beg for a wish
on starless nights.

To be wise
says the slug
is to understand
there's more to me
than slime trails
around the yard.

To be wise
says the feral cat
is to understand
the vacant bowl yesterday
does not predicate
abandonment today.

VESPERS

BY JOHN M. DAVIS

in a life dedicated
to heaven's music
bells call
reminding us
how thin is our strip of light
between night and night.

I ponder my day
its gifts:

our sun-star
its warmth
this earth

other worlds
and their many moons —
iterations
upon iterations
solar systems across galaxies
and I wonder at the source
of all this shining.

an outburst?

a song?

CONTRIBUTORS

Rania Attafi is a Feminist Tunisian Poet. Her debut poetry collection "*Stardust*" was published in 2017. She graduated from Manouba University with an English Literature, Civilization and Linguistics degree. Currently, she is an English teacher.

Christy Bailes is currently pursuing a second master's degree in creative writing from CSUS. Just recently, *Dovecote Magazine*, *Panoplyzine*, *Calaveras Station Literary Journal*, and *Inkwell Journal* published her poetry. In 2016, she received a master's degree in English and creative writing from SNHU, where she studied with Patrick Culliton. During this time, *The Penmen Review* published 18 of her poems. Before obtaining her first master's degree, she studied poetry with Lynne Knight and won an honorable mention twice in the Mattia International Poetry Contest. In 1993, she obtained a bachelor's degree from Eastman School of Music in clarinet performance.

A native New Yorker now in RI, **L. Shapley Bassen** was the First Place winner in the 2015 Austin Chronicle Short Story Contest for "Portrait of a Giant Squid". She is a poetry/fiction reviewer for *The Rumpus*, etc., also Fiction Editor at <https://www.craftliterary.com/>, prizewinning, produced, published playwright: <http://www.samuelfrench.com/author/1158/lois-shapley-bassen>, 3x indie-published author novel/story collections, and in 2019, #4, *What Suits A Nudist*, poetry collected works at <https://www.claresongbirdspub.com/featured-authors/l-shapley-bassen/> FB Author page: <https://www.facebook.com/ShapleyLoisBassen> Website: <http://www.lsbassen.com/>

Bonnie Billet has lived in Brooklyn since high school. She has worked as a landscape contractor and has been retired for 5 years.

Cathleen Calbert's writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Paris Review*, *Poetry*, and elsewhere. She is the author of four books of poems: *Lessons in Space*, *Bad Judgment*, *Sleeping with a Famous Poet*, and *The Afflicted Girls*. Her awards include the 92nd Street Y Discovery Poetry Prize, a Pushcart Prize, and the Sheila Motton Book Prize.

D'yanna Coffey is a professional content writer. Her writing experience can be traced to her pursuit of an undergraduate degree in English. In this venture, she has developed experience with academic writing, creative writing, and journalism. Coffey served as an editor and writer in the 2019 publication of her universities' published magazine, *On Tap*, where she also contributed two articles of her own.

Erin Covey-Smith is a writer and visual artist living in Freeport, ME. She holds an MFA from Concordia University in Montreal. Her work may be found in the anthology '*A Dangerous New World*' and in the *RAW Art Review*, among other publications.

Steven Croft is an Army combat veteran who now lives on a barrier island off the coast of Georgia. He has two chapbooks, *Coastal Scenes* (2002) and *Moment and Time* (2015) and has recent poems in *Sky Island Journal*, *As It Ought to Be Magazine*, *Poets Reading the News*, *So it Goes: The Literary Journal of the Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library*, *Third Wednesday*, and *San Pedro River Review*.

John M. Davis lives in Visalia, California, where he teaches at the College of the Sequoias. His work has appeared in numerous journals, including *Reunion: The Dallas Review*, *The Comstock Review*, *Gyroscope Review*, *Curating Alexandria*, *Silk Road*, and the *Rockford Review*. The Dallas Community Poets published his last chapbook, "The Mojave".

Emily Ellison is a third year MFA poet at Texas State University, where she also works as an Teaching Assistant for their English faculty. Her work is upcoming or found in *Rock & Sling*, *Breakwater Review*, *Gordon Square Review*, and *Haiku Journal*, among other places. Emily lives in San Marcos, Texas with four cats and an abundance of plants (withering at the moment).

Karen George is author of five chapbooks, and two collections from Dos Madres Press: *Swim Your Way Back* (2014) and *A Map and One Year* (2018). She has appeared in *South Dakota Review*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Adirondack Review*, *Louisville Review*, and *Naugatuck River Review*. She reviews poetry at Poetry Matters: <http://readwritepoetry.blogspot.com/>, and is co-founder and fiction editor of the online journal, *Waypoints*: <http://www.waypointsmag.com/>. Visit her website at: <https://karenlgeorge.blogspot.com/>.

Tresha Faye Haefner's poetry appears, or is forthcoming in several journals and magazines, most notably *Blood Lotus*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *Hunger Mountain*, *Pirene's Fountain*, *Poet Lore*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Radar*, *Rattle* and *TinderBox*. Her work has garnered several accolades, including the 2011 Robert and Adele Schiff Poetry Prize, and a 2012 nomination for a Pushcart.

Lois Marie Harrod's collection *Woman* was published by Blue Lyra in February 2020. Her *Nightmares of the Minor Poet* appeared in June 2016 from Five Oaks; her chapbook *And She Took the Heart* appeared in January 2016; *Fragments from the Biography of Nemesis* (Cherry Grove Press) and the chapbook *How Marlene Mae Longs for Truth* (Dancing Girl Press) appeared in 2013. A Dodge poet, she is published in literary journals and online ezines from *American Poetry Review* to *Zone 3*. She teaches at the Evergreen Forum in Princeton and at The College of New Jersey. Links to her online work www.loismarieharrod.org

Trish Hopkinson is a poet, blogger, and advocate for the literary arts. You can find her online at SelfishPoet.com and provisionally in Utah, where she runs the regional poetry group Rock Canyon Poets and folds poems to fill Poemball machines for Provo Poetry. Her poetry has been published in several lit mags and journals, including *Tinderbox*, *Glass Poetry Press*, and *The Penn Review*; and her fourth chapbook *Almost Famous* was published by Yavanika Press in 2019. Hopkinson will happily answer to labels such as atheist, feminist, and empty nester; and enjoys traveling, live music, wine-tasting, and craft beer.

Nancy K. Jentsch is a second-career poet who has spent most of her life teaching German and Spanish at Northern Kentucky University. She has worked to instill a passion for language in her students and to broaden their horizons through study abroad. As a poet, she seeks to exercise her passion for language and open new views for her readers. She has recently published poetry in *Eclectica*, *3 Elements Review*, *Soul-Lit and Panoply*. Her chapbook, *Authorized Visitors*, and seven ekphrastic poems in the chapbook *Frame and Mount the Sky* were published in 2017. Her writer's page on Facebook is <https://www.facebook.com/NancyJentschPoet/>

Dotty LeMieux has been published in several small press publications and anthologies, including *Solo Novo*, *Writers Resist*, *Rise Up Review*, *Poetica* and more. She has had three chapbooks published and a fourth coming out from Finishing Line Press this year. She lives in Northern California with her husband and two dogs.

Ray Levy-Uyeda is a poet and writer based in the Bay Area, where she grew up, left, and returned to. She enjoys things that are easy, like the Bachelor, and things that are hard, like relationships.

Lenny Lianne is the author of four full-length books of poems, published by two different presses. She recently finished a chapbook-length manuscript, *Mermaid Out of Arkansas* and is looking for a publisher. She has won awards from the Wergle Flomp Humor Poetry Contest, *Tidepools*, a literary journal and the Poetry Society of Virginia. Lenny holds a M.F.A. in from George Mason University and has taught poetry workshops on both coasts. She lives in Peoria, Arizona with her husband.

Marigold lives in the enchanted mountains of Western New York. She writes poetry, plays music, hikes and does tarot readings. The artist participates in open mic nights and shares her work on Instagram. She previously published her poem "When I Hear the Name Andy," in *Awakenings Issue 9: Erasure*.

From associate professor of English to management trainer to retiree, **Carolyn Martin** is a lover of gardening and snorkeling, feral cats and backyard birds, writing and photography. Her fourth poetry collection, *A Penchant for Masquerades*, was released by Unsolicited Press in 2019. She is currently the poetry editor of *Kosmos Quarterly: journal for global transformation*. Find out more about Carolyn at www.carolynmartinpoet.com.

Tom Montag's books of poetry include: *Making Hay & Other Poems*; *Middle Ground*; *The Big Book of Ben Zen*; *In This Place: Selected Poems 1982-2013*; *This Wrecked World*; *The Miles No One Wants*; *Love Poems*; and *Seventy at Seventy*. His poem 'Lecturing My Daughter in Her First Fall Rain' has been permanently incorporated into the design of the Milwaukee Convention Center. He blogs at The Middlewesterner. With David Graham he recently co-edited *Local News: Poetry About Small Towns*.

Patricia Nelson has worked with the "Activist" group of poets in the San Francisco Bay Area. This is a Neo Modernist group. Venues where she has published include *Blue Unicorn*, *The Listening Eye*, and *Mojave River Review*. She has a new book out, *Out of the Underworld*, Poetic Matrix Press.

Ayaz Daryl Nielsen, veteran and former hospice nurse, lives in Longmont, Colorado, USA. Editor of *bear creek haiku* (35+ years/160+ issues) with poetry published worldwide, he is online at: bear creek haiku poetry, poems and info. Among other deeply appreciated honors, he is especially delighted by the depth and heart of poets worldwide whose poems have a home in bear creek haiku's print and online presence.

Barry Peters lives in Durham and teaches in Raleigh, NC. Publications include *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Best New Poets 2018*, *I-70 Review*, *New Ohio Review*, *Poetry East*, *Rattle*, *South Florida Poetry Journal*, and *Third Wednesday*.

Pat Phillips West: Her poems appear in *Haunted Waters Press*, *Clover*, a *Literary Rag*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Gold Man Review*, and elsewhere. She is a multiple Pushcart and Best of the Net nominee.

Sherry Rind is the author of five collections of poetry and editor of two books about Airedale terriers. She has received awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, Anhinga Press, Artist Trust, Seattle Arts Commission, and King County Arts Commission. Her most recent book is *Between States of Matter* from The Poetry Box Select Series, 2020.

Claire Scott is an award winning poet who has received multiple Pushcart Prize nominations. Her work has been accepted by the *Atlanta Review*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *New Ohio Review*, *Enizagam* and *Healing Muse* among others. Claire is the author of *Waiting to be Called* and *Until I Couldn't*. She is the co-author of *Unfolding in Light: A Sisters' Journey in Photography and Poetry*.

In addition to *That hum to go by* (Mammoth books), **Jeff Schiff** is the author of *Mixed Diction*, *Burro Heart*, *The Rats of Patzcuaro*, *The Homily of Infinitude*, and *Anywhere in this Country*. His work has appeared in more than a hundred publications worldwide, including *The Alembic*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *Grand Street*, *The Ohio Review*, *Tampa Review*, *The Louisville Review*, *Chicago Review*, *Indiana Review*, *Willow Springs*, and *The Southwest Review* in addition to others. He currently serves as the interim dean of the school of graduate studies at Columbia College Chicago, where he has been on faculty since 1987.

Maureen Sherbondy's work has appeared in *Prelude*, *Litro*, *The Oakland Review*, and other journals. Her most recent poetry book is *Dancing with Dali*. www.maureensherbondy.com

Tova Hinda Siegel's work has appeared in *Salon.com*, *I'll Take Wednesdays*, *On The Bus*, and several anthologies. She holds a BA from Antioch University and an MS from USC. A midwife, cellist, mother, grandmother and great grandmother, Tova has studied with Jack Grapes, Tresha Faye Haefner and Taffy Brodesser-Akner. A mother, grandmother and great grandmother, Tova and her husband live in Los Angeles.

Alison Stone has published six full-length collections, *Caught in the Myth* (NYQ Books, 2019), *Dazzle* (Jacar Press, 2017), *Masterplan*, collaborative poems with Eric Greinke (Presa Press, 2018), *Ordinary Magic*, (NYQ Books, 2016), *Dangerous Enough* (Presa Press 2014), and *They Sing at Midnight*, which won the 2003 Many Mountains Moving Poetry Award; as well as three chapbooks. Her poems have appeared in *The Paris Review*, *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *Barrow Street*, *Poet Lore*, others. She has been awarded Poetry's Frederick Bock Prize and New York Quarterly's Madeline Sadin Award. She is also a painter and the creator of The Stone Tarot. www.stonepoetry.org www.stonetarot.com

Lauren Traitz is a Los Angeles based poet who has lived in three out of four corners of the continental United States. She has been writing poetry since puberty and suspects the two may have helped each other along. Lauren studied philosophy at Tufts University and is currently training to be a psychotherapist. She has worked with humans, llamas, dogs, and letters, and has twice saved tortoises from becoming roadkill.

Wren Tuatha is pursuing her MFA at Goddard College. Her first collection is *Thistle and Brilliant* (FLP). Her poetry has appeared in *The Cafe Review*, *Canary*, *Sierra Nevada Review*, *Pirene's Fountain*, *Lavender Review*, and others. She's editor at *Pitkin Review* and *Califragile*, journal of climate change and social justice. Wren and partner author/activist C.T. Butler herd rescue goats in the Camp Fire burn zone of California.

Rilwan Tukur writes from a coastal axis in Lagos Island. His poems are inspired by existence, memories, creation, lust, love and identity. His poems have been published in *Lunaris Review*, *Libretto Magazine*, *Art Of Peace Anthology*, *Z Publishing* (Best Emerging Poets 2019) and elsewhere. He won the Brigitte Piorson Monthly Poetry Contest (March 2018) and shortlisted in many others, including the Collins Elesiro Poetry Prize (June 2019).

Jessica Mehta is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation. Space, place, and ancestry inform much of her work. She is currently a fellow with First Peoples Fund and her book "*Selected Poems: 2000 - 2020*" just won the Birdy Prize from Meadowlark Books. Learn more at www.jessicamehta.com

Preeti Vangani is an Indian poet & personal essayist. Born and raised in Mumbai, she is the author of *Mother Tongue Apologize* (RLFPA Editions), her first book of poems (selected as the winner of RL India Poetry Prize.) Her work has been published in *BOAAT*, *Gulf Coast*, *Threepenny Review* among other journals. She is the Asst. Poetry Editor for *Glass Journal*, a Poet Mentor at Youth Speaks and holds an MFA (Writing) from University of San Francisco.

Holly Wiegand is an English doctoral student at Boston University. A Montana native, she enjoys fly fishing, kayaking, skiing, and discovering what it means to be human. Her poetry has previously appeared in *DASH Literary Journal*, *Polaris Literary Magazine*, and *Peregrine Journal*.

Scott Wiggerman is the author of three books of poetry, *Leaf and Beak: Sonnets, Presence,* and *Vegetables and Other Relationships*; and the editor of several volumes, including *Wingbeats: Exercises & Practice in Poetry, Bearing the Mask,* and *Weaving the Terrain.* Poems have appeared recently in *Chiron Review, Unlost, Pinyon Review, Better than Starbucks,* and *Allegro Poetry,* as well as the anthology *Lovejets.*

Charles Wyatt is the author of two collections of short fiction (a third is forthcoming), a novella, and two poetry collections. He lives in Nashville, TN where he was principal flutist of the Nashville Symphony for 25 years. www.charleswyatt.com

Haolun Xu is 24 years old and was born in Nanning, China. He immigrated to the United States in 1999. He was raised in central New Jersey and is currently studying Political Science and English at Rutgers University.

James K. Zimmerman is an award-winning writer – most recently the E.E. Cummings Award and the Edwin Markham Prize – and frequent Pushcart Prize nominee. His work appears in *Pleiades, Chautauqua, American Life in Poetry, Vallum, Bellingham Review, Nimrod,* and *Reed,* among others. He is author of “*Little Miracles*” (Passager Books, 2015) and “*Family Cookout*” (Comstock, 2016), winner of the Jessie Bryce Niles Award. He can be contacted through his website, <https://jameskzimmerman.net>.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Gyroscope Review is ready for summer! Bring on the flip-flops.

No special call, themes, or demands for the Summer Issue, just looking for kick-ass contemporary poems to read while we while away the long hot days.

Our next reading period begins on April 1, 2020, and closes June 7, 2020, or when the issue is full. During that time we will read submissions of previously unpublished contemporary poetry for our Summer 2020 issue. The Summer issue comes out in July, so we welcome summer-themed pieces. Please do not send spring/fall/winter poems. All submissions must come through Submittable. Any submissions sent to us via email or any other method will not be considered. Drones will be shot down. Cute children bearing poems will be given two ponies, an espresso, black markers, and sent home. People muttering "Alohomora" to breach my mailbox will be counter-jinxed and get detention in the Forbidden Forest.

Please put your poems—no more than four—in one document, each poem on its own page. No headers or footers. Title your file with Last Name, First Initial, and Summer 2020. Please, please use normal fonts like Times New Roman, Arial, and Calibri. Use tabs to move lines over. Formatting is hard enough without encountering mysterious Word weirdities on the page.

More information is available in our guidelines (www.gyroskopereview.com/guidelines/). We encourage you to look at past issues and become familiar with the kind of contemporary poetry we publish. New writers, old writers, established writers, and emerging writers all have a place among our pages.

Thank you for reading and see you in the summer!