

Gyroscope Review

fine poetry to turn your world around



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her own, beware, she will.

There
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She will not wa
to an old woman.
She is a green tree in a forest
She is a green girl in a used
She has waited patient as
for the second coming,
when she can break thro
into blossom
and her lovers will harve
ey and thyme
the woods will be wild
h the damn wonder o
~Lucille Clifton

Crone Power Issue 20-4, Fall 2020



Gyroscope Review

Fine poetry to turn your world around

Issue 20-4
Fall 2020

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Constance Brewer

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From The Editor

Welcome to the 2020 Crone Power Issue. This is our third issue to honor an often ignored demographic — women-identifying poets over the age of 50. While society often overlooks poets over a certain age, our Crones refuse to be pushed aside. This issue is full of strong poems that examine both society and self with a critical eye. The poets in this issue come from all walks of life, offering wisdom, insight, and some sorrow. They also offer sly humor and a wry look at the realities of being an older woman today.

We believe older poets have a lot to say, both to each other and to the generations to come. Their words are powerful, yet tender. They show an older woman can be influential, authoritative, as well as caring, and kind-hearted. It may surprise others to find older women still think about (and practice!) sex, a topic the younger set prefers to pretend doesn't happen. The poets in this issue examine all the ways love and sex have influenced their lives, as well as the heartbreak that comes with loving another person, even to their emotional end. Read these poems with an open heart, welcome the wisdom and maturity for the gift it is. Embrace the stories; shove aside the veil of false invisibility. We support the Crones of the world and their hopes and dreams. Enjoy these wonderful poets and their unflinching words.

The poets of this issue are strong and unafraid. We love that.

Constance Brewer

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Section One

CRONE MANIFESTO

BY MARIANNE FORMAN

As I grow old with you,
I will tap dance on a football field
of multicolored bubble wrap,
miniature fireworks exploding beneath my toes.

I will refuse to lather myself in lavender or lace
and I will cease to shave my armpits,
braiding those strands of grey
into intricate and beaded cornrows.

I will open a bake shoppe
that serves a deliriously decadent menu
of chocolate and carbohydrates and vino
and I will not politely wipe the oozy goodness from my lips.

I will snort unashamedly when I laugh.
I will be that Bravo Lady in the front row center.
I will weep out loud during the courtroom scene in *To Kill a Mockingbird*,
and I will have my own personal standing ovation when Atticus passes by.

I will abandon all brassieres
wearing a translucent camisole instead.
My unbinding - my secret - under sweaters
that celebrate my curving parts, my roundness.

I will jingle and shimmer
when I enter a room
with a Turkish jangle wrap suspended around my belly
and rattling, dangling earrings that glitter sound.

I will stop buying boxes of \$7.99 hair dye
and discover the silvery birch grayness of my own roots.
I will refuse to hack my hair into the requisite old lady bob
and instead wind my hair into interlocking dreadlocks.

And at night, when our curtainless room welcomes the moonlight,
I will hang my bedazzled cane next to your collection of character hats.
I will snuggle in, warmly next to you, our hair blended
on the pillow together, a monochrome watercolor of tresses unbound.

HOURGLASS
BY BETH COPELAND

Watch out for black widows, Mika said. They lurked under bushes, on dead logs, hung from branches or eaves, from webs thinner than our breath, so thin you wouldn't see them. Before her warning, I'd wandered through her yard like a prepubescent Eve, thinking we were safe. August brought rumors of child abductions that kept me awake even though my mother said no one would want me. *Who would kidnap a child with such poor parents!* What if an escaped convict broke into our house? What if Jeane Dixon's prediction that the world was ending came true?

In elementary school, we knelt
in the hall with arms
cradling our
heads as if
that fragile
halo
of flesh
would save
us from an atomic
bomb. The world's dangerous,
I guess. How many women and children
will be raped today? How many students will
be shot in school this year? How many Black men,
women, and children will police kill in their own homes?
How many toddlers at the border will ICE steal from their parents?
How many people will die from COVID-19 before we find a vaccine?
How many people will lose their lives as I'm writing this poem and looking
out the corner of my eye for the bloody hourglass on the spider's black thorax?
How many grains of sand will fall through this funnel before we run out of time?

IN WHICH I VISIT THE GODDESS HENWEN OF WALES FOR A PSYCHIC READING
BY MIKKI ARONOFF

She's a pig like no other — not a cousin to Wilbur, not
your dry rub ribs at Rosie's or your flying porker statue

in a riverbank park confessing that your home town
once slaughtered pigs but now tries to rise above it.

Henwen. Divine old sow who birthed a dispersal of corn
wheat and barley. Bees. A cat, unsheathed. Beech nuts

seed her with wisdom, a way to read the Future.
Present, too — she's aware I've been unkind and don't

know how to fix it. Henwen pities me trapped in my dark
forest, coaxes me to snuffle and grunt, to root for nuts

so that I might find the words to write my terrible wrong.
I rummage deeper in the dank, unearth this apology.

BALL/DEEP/BROADS

BY LINDA FULLER-SMITH

raged the neighbor's garage door
one Sunday morning. (He's the dark hunk
with the motorcycle and a pony-sized

dog named Zeus.) I'm certainly broad.
Some might say I'm deep. So, should I
applaud this recommendation? I suspect

the artist is as repulsive as the oily
tow-truck driver who, after one
of my breakdowns, had the balls

to ask, *Whatcha doin' tonight, Babe?*
Mr. Spray Paint is undoubtedly
uninterested in intellectual intercourse,

and oblivious to the ambiguity
of his message. He should run a classified:
"Artist seeks deep broad for grammar review."

Or am I wildly off course? Was the painter
a woman, love-starved as I, relaying
to all available studs her middle-aged

hormonal screams: *Come for the last of my eggs.*
Final clearance in progress. Adjectives, adverbs,
and misplaced modifiers equally welcome.

STONES AND A RIVER

BY BEATE SIGRIDDAUGHTER

I watch him fill the bird bath, fresh water,
and he feeds them all. He feeds me too.
I'm not a good cook, too impatient,
while he peacefully sorts spices, chops,
follows rules or invents. He reminds me
of Virginia Woolf's last diary entry:
L. is doing the rhododendrons.
For words, though, I have infinite patience.
I want to keep working on a world
where no woman would want to walk
into a river with stones in her pocket.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Spring 2020

BY RENÉE CHRISTINE EHLE

It's not the city that we knew;
once the city that never sleeps,
it is resting now like a child
napping, its spirit free to dream.

Night falls like strips of silver birch;
the city's schist and granite bones
rock and hum an old ochre tune,
spare lights smelling of turmeric.

We can hear the red buds scratching,
we see the sparrow's yellow mark,
we taste the cracking leather books--
their old word rhythms make us sway.

We hold a cup of cool blue air--
our hands have nothing else to touch.

LOVE IN THE TIME OF A PANDEMIC
BY JUDITH WALLER CARROLL

We feel a little shy
in this new closeness.
The small silences,
the quiet surprise of speech.
No library or coffee shop
to retreat to, no volunteer work
or book club to pull us apart.
Our morning routine new again,
we set out the tea things,
put away last night's dishes.
A flash of sun through the window
turns your hair blonder
than it seemed yesterday,
the gray vanishing
in a criss-cross of light.

VOICE GONE VIRAL

BY MISTYROSE™ BOSWORTH

The social contract amended humanity.
Muffled breath and mumbled thoughts
all kept at a distance.
I can't hear you.

The register runs higher than a hem's curve.
Walk like a lady or even not.
Unless you talk like a man.
I can't hear you.

Pluck those buds floating in canals.
Plug my ears so waves unplug.
The sound leaks a screech.
I can't hear you.

I pretended it was not hard
staring at moving lips.
Masked words are impossible.
I can't hear you.

Shielded eyes are no soul mirror.
Where glasses fog
no smile lines speak.
I can't hear you.

China patterns and I do's break.
Nurses play house for family home.
This is isolation.
Can you hear me?

THE PROCEDURE

BY ANDREA JACKSON

A Medical Condition has developed,
an issue requiring the mobilization of troops
within and without this alleged body,
 provisionally mine.
I watch through closed eyelids.

A flurry, a swirl, a clusterfuck of highly trained forces
circles, pronouncing incantations. Flames rise and fall.

We cannot comprehend how close we are
 to the infinite.
Where will this bus take me?
Everywhere, Ma'am, everywhere at once.

TWO TREES

BY DANA SONNENSCHNEIN

for Claire

More than a decade after you died
of breast cancer, I finally wore
the mittens you'd knitted. One big,
one small. Scratchy Irish wool.
I put them on and remembered
you throwing a cup of tea at the wall,
slamming your books, hissing insults,
enraged by medicine meant to save you.
The day we met, you said you heard
the trees talking. *Listen*. I learned
triskele, clootie, Sheila-na-gig,
what to do at holy wells and how
to see *Cernunnos* among branches
and the Green Man bearded in lichen.
You babbled of green fields then; now
you drive on the left, counting pale cairns
and black-faced sheep, not stitches.
You had to go back and back to *Eire*.
Once you brought me a chunk of peat
and a mug the color of hills in rain.
Another year, you bought the wool.
The next, you handed me mittens,
pointing out their flaws, not their design.
You left it to me to find the palms
moss-stitched and on the backs,
the tree of life and the tree of knowledge.
They look the same, but one is longer.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN A PURSE

BY GLORIA HEFFERNAN

The first, a cast-off from my mother,
was filled with all the essentials
a five-year old needs to get through the day —
crayons, a Barbie doll, an empty lipstick tube,
also cast off, but still bearing traces of
Cover Girl Pink Carnation.

By high school,
it was a canvas bag
with patchwork pockets
stuffed with pencils, notebooks,
mirror, and a lipstick of my own.

With my first job I graduated to leather,
brown and supple with brass buckles
and ample room for a full-fledged make-up kit,
checkbook with my name printed on it,
and a matching – albeit empty – wallet.

Each year a different bag,
a different inventory of detritus--
ticket stubs, chewing gum wrappers,
a vintage subway token
found under a tear in the lining.

At sixty, a lighter purse —
pared down to the essentials.
Make-up kit gone,
replaced by an eye-glass case.
Hand lotion and Chapstick
to defend against the elements.
Notebook and pen
for those fleeting ideas
that seem ever more elusive.

Each decade,
the purse is a little smaller,
a little lighter,
more economical in its contents
as I choose more carefully
what's worth carrying
into seventy.

A WOMAN OF A CERTAIN AGE
BY PENELOPE SCAMBLBY SCHOTT

leans back in her woven garden lounge chair.
Setting: a wisp of cloud fraying behind a pine
and two small birds with sharp yellow beaks
atop the tall fence that encloses her backyard.

On this July afternoon she is wearing nothing
but pink panties. Her bra and sleeveless dress
are thrown over one of four chairs at the table
where a green umbrella is closed with a bungee.

She lies flat. Her breasts are two fleshy mounds,
nipples pointing toward the almost cloudless blue.
As noon sun heats the undersides of her breasts,
sweat collects and glistens in the wrinkles above

and between. If the evangelical preacher next door
were to peek through a knothole in the shared fence,
he might even pray for her. This is not pornography.
The woman is seventy-eight years old, and ten years

from now she may think that today she was young.

DRAGON

BY JACQUELYN SHAH

Red yellow purple green
winding itself with jazzy tail
it blazed down the arm from
her knobby shoulder

First she wanted a small red rose
but thumbing through a book of designs
she paused . . . then *SOCKDOLAGER!*
This is it! she insisted

Midwestern, conservative, my mother
chose a beast to be needled into her skin,
whose flames, unlike hers, couldn't hurt me
For every bedside visitor she lifted

the lace-edged sleeve of her gown —

See my dragon!

She liked it, I liked it, the silent beast
that lived on her arm for a month
before she died

HINDSIGHT

BY LYNN WHITE

We thought we'd done it!
Created the basis for a future
based on peace and love and civil rights.
Even a pandemic couldn't stop us at Woodstock.
We were unstoppable!
In diverse countries
we saw the rebels become statesmen.
We thought the struggle was over.
And now with hindsight,
I wonder if we would do it again
now we know what happened next.
And if I could go back
with that knowledge,
would I want to?
Would I want
to face
the person hindsight made me.
And with hindsight,
would I be there for me to find?

SURREAL

BY DONNA PUCCIANI

Life in quarantine is the ultimate
solitude, an alien landscape
for the woman who just lost her husband
in the maw of the great virus.

The nights are the worst,
she says on a transatlantic phone call.
She leaves all the lights on,
sleeps in the guest bedroom

after sterilizing the house,
discarding his clothes in black bags.
Daytimes, the neighbors
come in couples to keep vigil

on lawn chairs in the front garden
for a few hours at a time.

Keep Calm and Carry On
is no longer a mere maxim

for coffee cups and souvenirs.
Elders hide behind the walls
of cottages, drink tea,
sighing in sagging armchairs.

The last time she saw John
was in the wheelchair
with the headache that brought him
to emergency. After that,

the doctors called every few hours
and then he disappeared forever
behind the oxygen mask. No visits,
no farewells. No funeral,

no embraces in a house
crowded with family. Only empty rooms
with the birdsong of a spring
that never comes.

WALKING IN THE CEMETERY DURING THE PANDEMIC

BY JUDITH SANDERS

We're quarantined, but like dogs,
we need to be walked.
The city sidewalks get crowded

but the cemetery's wide lanes
curve empty under waving trees,
and the dead don't sneeze.

They maintain social distance,
six feet under. We're safer here
than among the living.

Strange to be alive
among the dead--
but we are always.

You'd expect stumps,
boughs bare as skeletons,
the sky low and dark

as a coffin lid,
leering vultures,
littered bones.

But it's Eden here,
the fresh leaves
pretty as youth.

We pause and note,
this one had a friend's name,
that one was young,

or that one had my birth year,
but the implications
don't stick.

Here, mourners planted pinwheels,
carved nicknames,
praise, and rhymes,

there, set stones,
as stark, hard, and enduring
as grief.

But most lie unremembered,
even grandees
in Ozymandian tombs.

This gravel path
leads to a weedy field
soon to be sown with coffins.

There's plenty of room--
unless the pandemic
spikes.

The cemetery should engulf
the city, since the dead already
outnumber the living.

While they decompose,
prone under the grass,
we sniff lilacs they fertilize,

hum along with birdsong
like odes, not dirges,
joke and hold hands.

Because for now,
we can still leave.

SUPERANNUATED REBEL

BY MARGE PIERCY

For decades I dreamed of armed
trackers, me hunted through forests
and cities, always in danger,
always a target of power.

Now I have ceased to worry
about the government's long
metal arms, about the stink
and uproar of prison.

I'm too old to take up arms, too
weak to lead demonstrations
or even to march in them.
Haven't organized anyone

in fifteen years. I only write
poems, sign petitions into the void
send credit card donations.
An unwillingly retired agitator

nobody taps my phone
watches my mail, sends FBI
men in ill-fitting suits to my door.
I'm a has-been radical.

My views haven't dimmed
but my eyes have. My faith
is strong but my knees aren't.
How I can now make change?

Section Two

ETERNITY

BY CHARLENE FIX

of milk and menopause

Suspended moment just before the flash of heat,
surging torso, shoulders wanting stripped
of clothes. Not sweet, yet rhyming
with the breathlessness before the flow of milk.

Surging torso, shoulders wanting stripped.
You notice this. It strikes you odd: same suspense
of breathlessness before the flow of milk
as what precedes a prophesy, confession, storm.

You notice this. It strikes you odd: same suspense,
exquisite mortal moment stealing breath,
as what precedes a prophesy, confession, storm,
electric hush before the let-down milk.

Exquisite mortal moment stealing breath
occurs before the ripened body burns,
electric hush before the let-down milk
like rapture heralding a rush of hasty wings.

Hiatus. Then the ripened body burns
inside its cloak of earth-toned human skin,
like rapture heralding a rush of hasty wings.
Of all the other elements, ascendant fire.

Inside the cloak of earth-toned human skin
no rain to douse the raging flames. Gone,
the other elements. Ascendant fire.
No lovely blue-white milk to ease the cry,

no rain to douse the raging flames. Gone,
the pull of little mouths. Suspiration, tingle,
but no lovely blue-white milk to ease the cry
while jetting many feet. Intimation of eternity,

the pull of little mouths. Suspiration, tingle
soaking clothes. Not sweet, yet rhyming
with milk jetting many feet. Intimation of eternity:
suspended moment just before the flash of heat.

HOW TO KEEP THE WOLF FROM YOUR MIND

BY SARAH SALWAY

First know what she is. Is her coat shiny and slick, or is she moulting in those places where her jaws can find to bite, her hind legs to itch? Does she reach up to howl at the smell of that clementine cake cooling on the kitchen table? The one you made just because you miss your children. Does your wolf have a family? Don't ask her. Don't make her real. Read books to her. Promise you'll carry on for more than a paragraph, a page, even if there's a news story breaking, more figures you won't trust and that don't make sense. Stick to words, one sentence at a time. See where they take you both. Let her sniff round the seeds you've planted. Does she think you should have chosen more flowers too? Does she think beauty is important, or is she hoping to tear apart limb by limb that rabbit you're planting lettuce for? Because who would notice one less rabbit? Don't go there. Think yourself lucky instead that your wolf has shown herself to you so early and in daylight. Don't ask if others can see her. She's yours, make friends with her. Your wolf may not know kindness but she knows survival. Share your cake with her. Ask what she'd like to read. Whether she can see those dots on the hellebore flower, sprinkled as if by a wayward paint brush. Don't think about learning to talk wolf, even though you have the time now. Give her rabbit. Don't look away. This is life too. Go there.

THE DISEMBODIED STAIRCASE

BY ALICIA ELKORT

A woman descends,
her body lit with nails
rusted & cold, each a shock & stab
against female-ness — as she descends,
her body
disappears
by degrees
until all of her
to ashes, to dust

a firefly darkened &
nothing & nothing,
with no one left to descend,
the stairs disappear as well —
isn't this the way of life?

Before the all of her was gone,
she decided whether love was present, or
whether love was not present —
the hero's journey
is solitary.

A woman descends
each step a tear & rend,
each step a feather & vanishing rose
until what's left of her —
a crown, nails, light,
incandescence becomes
stairs that she steps onto

& when the dream is over,
the she of her is distant
memory, of slippered
feet kissing
each stair.

TUESDAY MORNING

BY SHARON FAGAN McDERMOTT

*How prompt we are to satisfy the hunger and thirst of our bodies.
How slow to satisfy the hunger and thirst of our souls.*

~ Henry David Thoreau

Blue truck's driving too fast up Cromwell,
the brick road around the corner from my house.
6:20 AM and he's all reckless disarray, blows
through the stop sign. I'm glad the two little
backpack boys aren't up and walking to school yet.
It doesn't take much to set my teeth on edge anymore.
This world's a careless place, a place without care
more often than I'd like. But on the next block,
Yvonne who owns the florist shop is getting into
her flowered van and smiles. I say, *You're up early.*
Love my work, she shoots back, without
a trace of irony. So now my mind's turned back to all
the flowering—dogwoods, pink and cream, mixing
petals with the light rain. Much of this year,
I felt broken, sewn up, unsure of what holds
a soul together, unsure of what binds us to
grace or strength in order to move forward.
It's Tuesday morning in the rain. Each brick
on the brick houses I pass shimmers dawn.
My beautiful dog will need toweling
when we get home. On a neighbor's stoop
I'm surprised by the sight of two white cats.
I name one Chaos. I name one Serenity.

PLANNING FOR RETIREMENT

BY JUDITH SANDERS

I'll toss my alarm clock down the incinerator of never again
I'll whip a whirlpool of crème de chocolat and ripen the velvet aroma
I'll stroll to nowhere, doffing my top hat to excited daisies
I'll pinch the cheeks of the peonies and admire their tutus
I'll invite squirrels to autograph my cuff
I'll shimmy to the metronomic flicking of their plumes
I'll flabbergast the maples as they conduct the wind
I'll release hummingbirds from a parachute to lick the dust from my house
I'll amplify the murmurs of crushed desires, resuscitate their broken tendrils
I'll break the calendar over my knee and hurl the shards into a dumpster
I'll unshackle my wrist of its watch and my belt of its keys
I'll stretch out on the yoga mat of my neighbor's clean-shaven lawn
I'll don a smoking jacket padded with empty lists
I'll soak up sunshine like a lizard, thereby doing my bit to advance humanity
I'll salute the clouds as they parade past my horizontal reviewing stand
I'll squander daylight immersed in novels about rich people's love problems
I'll set icebergs adrift in my carafe of mango mint lemonade shaded by a paper parasol
I'll invite the hours to resonate like organ pipes, flooding the cathedral of my afternoon
I'll cavort like a filly in a sun-sweetened meadow after a winter cooped in icicles
I'll pull up under an apple tree and crunch its homegrown cupcakes with my marble teeth
I'll stash solid-gold seconds under my mattress
I'll proclaim myself a millionaire, a billionaire, a zillionaire of time
I'll light my stogie with pink ten-dollar bills while the smoking's good
I'll hold a funeral for my blazers and thank my paystubs for their service
I'll hire a choir to stomp a stairway to a heaven of eternal coffee breaks
I'll shred desiccated memos and let them flurry like spring snow
I'll stoke a bonfire with CVs; I'll polka around it with one of my professional personas
I'll stomp on my lunchbox and nap on the rooftops
I'll make up for eons of dry sandwiches and interrupted dreams
I'll release smoke signals of regrets to drift like milkweed over the day's open palm
I'll savor all the hand-churned flavors of leisure, the cheeky cherry brandy, the wave-of-the-
hand pistachio, the salted caramel of ask-me-if-I-care, the hazelnut fudge of somebody-
else's-problem
I'll thumb my nose at the stacked encyclopedias of the skyline stuffed with data and bills
I'll meander as a lone drone expelled from the buzzing hive
I'll be a castaway on an island of Sunday afternoons
I'll settle cross-legged under a palm, humming along with the clackety fronds
I'll do nothing, nothing at all, but track my desires and the stars

THE ACADEMIA I NEVER HAD

BY CATHRYN SHEA

Cars spitting at the bushes along the road
past pink and green and purple houses,
the golden cables of the bridge stable
on 101 under the elbows and knees
of the fog rolling in.

An ice sculpture of words awaited me
on the job. No time for gymnasiums
or enticing perks.
Only well-ruined hips,
an idolater's sublingual pill of incantation
until deadlines slapped me
like a two-stroke engine.

The academia I rejected after college
when I absconded to a corporate job,
a chain letter that kept going.
Away from daily motherhood,
my poor latchkey kiddos.

Does it matter how much
I love them now?
They were abandoned then.
And I would squeegee myself home
late in the long bad commute,
disassemble in the kitchen
then drain the family to bed.

OUT OF THE KITCHEN
BY MYRA SHAPIRO

Once I watched Julia Child
form a tray for hors d'oeuvres
from a bread she'd pulled
the insides out of. It was her art,
it was her voice

her laughter when a chicken slipped
from her hands, her aplomb
lifting the fallen fowl, and, with gusty
assurance, making herself
a person to relish

that we remember. The sound of her
made us cook a chicken-
in-a-pot, if only to jolly our lives,
and lift ourselves
out of the kitchen.

MIDNIGHT, MIDLIFE, MIDDLE AMERICA
BY JESSICA GOODFELLOW

She cannot sleep.
On her mattress, she shifts,
her hip an open parenthesis
of pain—as on a moonless night,
the memory of the crescent moon.

She cannot sleep—
beneath the air conditioner, she turns,
her mind a little boat of imaginary
numbers, an ostinato of forgotten
passwords.

She cannot sleep,
thinking: of the lie her son has told her,
of her brother's meeting with his birth
mom, of Mars with its two moons,
one named fear, one named dread.

She cannot sleep,
gets up, moves toward the window's
wandering eye, finds it crazed
with rain. Raindrops require bits of dust
to form around. So, she thinks, do tears.

She cannot sleep,
looks at the bureau, reaches to swipe
a layer of dust. Stops. Remembers
more dust does not make more
rain. It makes smaller raindrops.

She cannot sleep,
recalls a long-ago sleepless night when
in the quad, at midnight, after an icy storm
she knelt, alone, scooping with both hands
the heavy snow. A stranger

appeared, stopped to watch, then said,
'After you're gone, I'm going to kick
that snowman over.' He turned and walked
away. When she circled back later, he had.
She cannot sleep.

Note: The description of the formation of raindrops comes from Amy Leach's essay "Twinkle Twinkle" in the collection *Things that Are*.

IN THE PRESENT

BY SUSAN VITTITOW MARK

The last time she fell apart, she chose not to put herself back together.

She drags the pieces of her life behind her in a burlap sack, the sharp and shimmering edges gnawing at the woven twine.

Sometimes she pulls an iridescent shard from the depths and places it in your hands.

“A gift,” she murmurs. “Don’t cut yourself.”

WATERLOG

BY ALEXA MERGEN

I scan clues and map a possible way. I release bars of attachment.
There is a sinking before buoyancy's catch.
Floating becomes swimming. Each ocean is vast.

This place is damp with rain. The soil is soft.
In this region *swamp* means marshland, cattails and red-winged blackbirds.
What we call one thing is to another something else.

A *stay* is a vacation, the rib of a shirtwaist, a reprieve, a synonym for *wait*.

BREATHING MUSIC

BY LINDA NEAL

Music—you embrace my soul, flying. I've touched your notes, silent, graphic, on the page and swinging loud out in the air. I've listened to you curl from baritone mouths of horns and tender lips of men, loved you in the smoke and dust of barrooms, sticking to the sheets of beds, hanging from the walls of rooms where I have slept and loved. Dancing on concrete or sliding to a beat on a shaggy carpet, I've moved with your blues, your jazz, your operatic lift and dive. Leaning into past and future, leaning into the colors of dawn, walking westerly into the sunset, I've followed you, clapping my hands to your shape, I've heard you make the March wind and spin your mystic web of sound around the rain. You whistled me to camp, followed me to sea, to rooms with dank smells beneath a garden; you've hunted me down, stalked me across red desert dunes. You're the sound of phosphorous on the sea, dew dropping from camellia leaves, a red and green hummingbird beating her wings in the canna lilies, my dogs howling at sirens from the porch, a chair scraping across my kitchen floor. Breath breathing. Water flowing. You are the sound of dirt dropping from the shovel to the grave.

DRIFTING
BY CLAIRE SCOTT

Can you feel it the slight flutter
an almost lift of your feet
no longer as firm on the ground
hovering, not so certain of basics
like hospital corners on beds
or how to mulch the Tea roses
fewer phone calls, fewer texts
no word at all from your college roommate
who used to write several times a month

A grandson looks at you quizzically
no longer wants to play Scrabble
your frenzied daughter doesn't ask
how to fix a too salty stew, or would
distressed jeans be OK for a first date
Mildred next door nods and smiles, but doesn't
ask how to store bulbs over the winter
or would you take in her mail next week
when she goes to Nantucket

can you feel the wavering, the wafting
the almost imperceptible
drift out to the sea

DAY 6 *KESODIN CHESED*—FOUNDATION IN LOVING KINDNESS

BY STEPHANIE BARBÉ HAMMER

1. *Kesod* is masculine, the Hassids say: kindness that channels action is the feeling
2. Of today. I get that. I can work with that. I make phone calls
3. For Indivisible before lunch. “Are you coming to the zoom meeting?”
4. I ask and people are pretty nice when I call -- No one has yelled

5. At me yet for bothering them. It’s interesting: people are glad to be greeted
6. Now -- one woman just talked for a long time about how careful
7. we have to be out on our island filled with so many elderly people. “Tell
8. Me about it,” I say. It’s funny that in this mess surprising things are good;

9. Like a year ago I hated making phone calls but now I’m comfortable
10. Talking to strangers although I still dislike asking for money or votes. I could
11. Barely bring myself to telephone on behalf of brilliant Elizabeth Warren.

12. But now I’ll speak to anybody. I call and call: “It’s Deborah for Indivisible!”
13. Last night the rabbi said “bring light into the world however you can do it”
14. I’m writing this poem. Then I’ll nag 10 more people. “Can you attend?”

BEING BARBARA IN THE WOMEN'S WASHROOM
BY JOANNE M. CLARKSON

I rub my hands under the simple spray.
She dries hers over the bowl
next to mine. Suddenly noticing my bent head
in the grimed glass of the public mirror
she cries, "Barbara!" But I am not
her neighbor, cousin, lover, old
friend, just an aging woman from a different
city. Realizing illusion, her face pinches
and she turns away, her momentary
joy, the depth of her longing
fading, infecting me. All day I ponder
the ways we mean something to each other,
figments in glass, gestures of a stranger.

MAPPING OUR UNIVERSE
BY MARIANNE FORMAN

*"We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our
little life is rounded with a sleep..."*

-Prospero, The Tempest
William Shakespeare

I wanted to be one of those women who age gracefully.
No foils tangled in my hair at the salon.
No Loreal *because-you're-worth-it* boxes of hair dye.

I wanted to embrace the gravity of my body,
the necessary weight of each part, each act,
as vertebrae collapse,
shrinking half inch by half inch every year.

I hide from my own image in the mirror.
No amount of fluttering scarves
or layers of linen and gauze
will smooth out my middle.
My hip bones no longer protrude,
are almost impossible to find.

I have become soft.

But I don't want to escape the brown spots
emerging willy-nilly on my hands.
Refuse to concoct disappearing potions
of hydrogen peroxide and bicarbonate of soda
of potato starch and sugar
of apple cider vinegar and aloe vera on a cotton ball
of citric acid and vitamin C from sour lemons.

Scars without injury.
My hands a canvas for configurations
without a back story.

I want my granddaughter
to connect these dots, these liver spots,
with a bright purple magic marker.
Formed from the same stardust,
she and I. Mapped from abundance
of oxygen and hydrogen,
a cornucopia of carbon and nitrogen,
a collision of calcium and phosphorus.

I want her to create constellations
on the tender surface of my animal body.
Primordial soup of the skies.
We are the infinite stuff of stars.

She carries my name
into startling galaxies she creates.
We are ancient souls, the two of us.
Bright flickering lighthouse,
luminary just off the shore,
we carry each other home.

BEING QUARANTINED AT AGE 66 WITH STINK BUGS (*HALYOMORPHA HALYS*)
BY KAREN PAUL HOLMES

- In Buddhism, *dukkha* refers to
suffering, anxiety, anything unpleasant.

Armored cars of pungent bullion—
odorous cargo with zero value.
They putter up and down our windows.
Or take flight only to divebomb.

Shield-shaped, gator-tough, God help us:
Don't crush or you'll discharge
their eponymous defense.
Vacuuming not recommended—
your rugs will have halitosis.

Ten stink bugs today already.
Catching/releasing, grumbling until
I thanked them for drawing my focus
away from this aging body.

Perhaps they're little lamas,
teaching me to practice letting go
of life's inevitable stuff:
Viruses we need to squash but can't.
Things that buzz our heads at night
as we're sinking into dream.
Stink bugs are just one reminder
to accept: *Dukkha* happens.

AQUA ZUMBA AT THE YMCA
BY MARIA MASINGTON

We are invisible, women of a certain age, between hot and doddering.

We gather at the local pool in one-piece bathing suits, ample, pillowy breasts bobbing above the surface. Hips and thighs wiggle, cellulite and stretch marks below choline blue, sturdy feet, corned and calloused. You perch on your lifeguard stand, in a wife-beater and Tommy Bahama board shorts. I watch you smirk, laughing at the old broads gyrating to Nicki Minaj.

But let me guarantee you something, Son,

forty years ago, you would have given your right arm to tap this.

RACCOON

BY SHARON PRETTI

If you lived like I do,
close to the ground,
touch would be the sense you rely on.
Acorn and earthworm,

the curled skin of an apple.
I grow heavy cataloging
your desires,
your face at the window,

knuckles banging against glass.
The prospect of living
without flowers
bewilders you, your swath

of lawn dug up,
trash clawed from its bin.
You rig lights to detect my trespass,
snout to the drive,

the scurry past car wheel and hedge.
I wanted marshland,
visible stars. I wanted
to sleep in the enormousness of trees.

How is it I fascinate
in one breath, answer to pest
in the next? You're at it again,
aren't you, crafting the way

I'll be remembered:
ransack and havoc, a trail of latches
ripped from your gates.
You too keep track

of what's being lost.
I wanted to whistle and hiss
into the great, cracking dark.
I wanted to leave prints.

Section Three

INSTEAD OF THE BEACH

BY MARGE PIERCY

Born during the great depression
I can't stand waste. I am driven
to can, freeze, dry, pickle.

Did the red currant bushes
down by the road suddenly
yield baskets of bright rubies?

In previous year rabbits ate them.
I am on the internet searching
British recipes to use them all.

Did a friend's mulberry tree
suddenly produce fruit they have
no idea how to eat or use?

Are a few beets left in the garden
after summer borscht? Six pounds
of beans picked in one afternoon.

I can't bear not to use all: so
in the heat of a July day I sweat
to cook or freeze every last one.

Yes, I was hungry many times.
Yes, we lived on oatmeal for two
weeks when I was little. Don't blame

my compulsion on growing up poor.
I respect the earth. Each harvest
should end in a recipe it deserves.

HARVEST

BY ERICA GOSS

Digging potatoes in the
garden, I thought of my

mother as an eight-year-old,
gleaning the war-blasted fields

for a small bag of wormy tubers.
Storing the potatoes in a dark

cool corner of the garage,
I saw her, age seven,

waiting in the cellar for
the all-clear. Washing

and boiling the potatoes
I thought of my mother

at thirteen, thin legs and long
braids, the day her mother died.

Placing a bite of potato into my mouth, I
remembered the look on her face whenever

I didn't finish a meal.
Scraping potato peels

into the trash, I recalled
that my mother's pockets

always contained
morsels of food.

Planting potatoes, I felt
her tucking me into bed,

hands pulling the blankets together
as I sank below a dream's dark soil.

ODE TO THE PAMPLEMOUSSE

BY JESSICA BARKSDALE

A French language show-off, I say it when spotting
a grapefruit. I covet the word, the long sound

soft, comforting. *Pamplemousse*.

We pass them in the store, both of us masked

and avoiding everyone, desperate to bust out
of the store before our lives are endangered,

as if they weren't already. But there in bright piles,
yellowy orange, a sherbet of fruit, mounded,

rounded, lovely, more apt as pamplemousse than grapefruit.
How does grapefruit make sense? Have you ever

considered? They are nothing like grapes. They are sour and sweet,
large, light yellow to dusky red. They are juicy when good,

mouth-puckering, smelling of sour, too-long on the counter
citrus when bad. Under the palm, leathery, puckered,

rough by the stem. They are palm-sized, dense, heavy.
They are odd, wacky, a conductor with heavy glasses,

a wiry mustache, a bizarre twist of personality, spitting
at the orchestra. They are too big, too tart. They roll. They bounce.

Eaten peeled whole or cut in half and segmented,
sprinkled with sugar, as I ate them as a child with my grandparents in Florida,

picked in the morning from trees clinging to sandy
soil under the pale blue, humid sky, and then later, in their lanai,

their glistening faces shone up at us from my grandmother's china,
waiting for the sweetness from the sugar bowl.

At home, we ate them plain, fresh, and tart and throat-closing
at times, bitter-wincing in a smoothie, that acrid taste that overtakes.

But sometimes, on a late spring night, cut and lovely
and halved on a white plate, they are the exact thing that suits

in all their states, these pamplemousses, these
grape-fruits, these things that save me now,

as I take one, two, three from the pile,
hold their heft and rush on.

HOW I LEARNED

BY CARMEN FOUGHT

I split my body in half
with a tiny pair of shears the angel brought me
for precision, not a job to do roughly
or quickly.

One half
went to the thrift store and bought
a clown nose, wore it
in public, to school, to work after,
pretended to know politics,
asked what happened
if you tried to cross the wall, and when
everyone looked shocked
pretended it was a joke,
brought candy, glimpsed
herself handing it out
in the mirror, redundant,
ridiculous.

The other half
waited until dusk,
walked down to the harbor
then, at the last moment before dark,
when the sky turned red, and everyone
looked up, stowed away on a ship
her half-body rocked
wave by wave, to sleep
where she dreamed of a lover begging
her to disrobe, in a room
on the other side of the map
dreamed she stood
at the center of a hibiscus, arms
outstretched, fists opening
to throw seeds off the deck
into the salted wind
as the fish who was also the angel
came up to the surface
to follow them,
to swallow them.

THE RETURN

BY KRISTIN LAUREL

~Naples, Florida

“Besides the heat and hurricanes, there’s lots of things
that’ll try to kill ya” said the homeless man outside of the bar last night.

Today, vacationers sit parked under umbrellas, sipping Mojitos.

Children play where the sand meets water.

“You gotta watch out for drugs and crazy-crooked people.”

The beach is combed clean, straight white lines.
Powdered pretty sugar sand, like pure cocaine.

And who said, “There’s more stars in the night sky,
than grains of sand in all the beaches of the world?”

I cannot see the stars today, but they see right through me.

“We got all types of snakes: copperheads, rattlers, Burmese pythons,
there’s gators, crocodiles, mosquitoes, not to mention
killer bacteria that live in the warm, salt water.”

I float on my back. I am woman, alive,
which is to say, the opposite of a dead man’s float.

At this point in my life, I have a great deal of faith in wild-assed luck.

“There’s all kindsa sharks, barracudas, killer whales; jelly-fish will sting ya —
Watch out for those Portuguese Man o’ War.”

Wading up to my shoulders, jumping through swells,
something large and living, smooth, and fish-like,
rubs up against my lower leg, and then quickly

swims away. My mother smiles and waves
at me from the shore, and I am a child, again.

Such erratic beauty in the brevity of a wave;
just like this moment, which I will never have again.

I hope it feels this overwhelming when I die:
I am scattered sea atom, star level splash, open wide wave.

Which reminds me, I better tell my people:
“Don’t even *think* about sticking me in the goddamned ground.”

PLEIADES

BY CAROL GLOOR

The waxing crescent rises
next to shining Venus.
Both float languidly in the darkening sky
as Earth rotates east.

I lie in wet mudgrass
content to watch the familiar starlines
of Orion blink on,
until you pass me the binoculars:

*Just down and to the left of Venus,
the Pleiades, the Seven Sisters,
adjust the focus to your eyes when you try.
My naked eyes see nothing there.*

I hate binoculars, wobbling circles
of dots making question marks when I move,
but to please you I lift them to my eyes,
adjust, find Venus, travel down

and a small bright cluster begins to dance,
then settles into a coven of seven stars
I never would have seen.
I fall upward, in love with you again.

EQUILIBRIUM

BY ELAINE MINTZER

These days, the doctor prescribes a vial of pills to ward off
vertigo, the sea

that rushes through my head and the undertow that pulls
at my feet

as I walk drunk in the unsteady night, yellow lane lines
broken and woozy.

I carry an uneasy belly under my ribs, an overfull cup ready
to spill

and tip my head to one side, listening to the heavenly music that pours
into my ear,

the music of a planet spinning 25,000 miles per day, a thousand miles
an hour

that heaves me this way and yanks me
back.

Years ago, I rode the Whirl Pool at Pacific Ocean Park, the smell
of sea water and creosote

in a centrifuge that pinned me to the wall as the floor dropped
away.

Then, when I was little and closer to the Earth,
I longed to spin.

I walked in tight circles, revolving around one spot
until my feet floundered

and I fell, shoes flying. There I pressed
my ear

against the crabgrass and watched the sky
go by.

WINTER WHEELS
BY MARION BROWN

Even in daylight, stars grant wishes.
Wishing on one already burned out

works as well. For better or worse,
I inhabit a distant constellation.

Maybe my daughter will spot me
winking at the zenith after I go dark

and she turns the key in the ignition,
headed to the freeway, watching

for orbiting cars. Tuned in, her heart
may receive a faint signal.

A sigh does not sway a star or
knock it from its cluster. Universe

stretching thin, who knows how
many light years will divide the Little

Bear from the Big. But, in one
hundred thousand years, astronomers

believe, the Big Dipper will hold.

"SUCH SINGING IN THE WILD BRANCHES"

BY LUCY GRIFFITH

A golden shovel sestina from a poem title by Mary Oliver

Soaring before dawn, rags of song and light. Such
fine tuning, a loose uncomposed singing.
Themes warble from chaos, billow in
a bowl of morning. An invitation into the
day sharpens my attention to each wild
note, this dark choir behind jade branches.

Disparate songs gather in the branches,
caroling in the daylight with such
abandon, a blowsy serenade of wild
opinions, sorting itself to lush singing,
species by species, bluebird, dove, then wren — the
diva of the day, her descending aria within

its pocket of sound. Daybreak's songscape in
cypress, elm, and oak, a chorale tucked in branches —
beckons a lingering. Remembering that the
harmonies must sort themselves and such
solace will bloom, before sun drowns the singing,
before the heat of day grows wild.

Stilling the bustle, I unfasten my wild
thoughts. Cradle a begging bowl in
open hands. Deliver myself to new singing,
the upturned *dwee* of goldfinch, riddles of branches
and broken boughs. I ponder such
accidents, at what can happen to the

mind, unhurried, unplanned. The
release of desire, and even hope, that wild
space in the psyche. We are such
creatures of longing, so lost in
our habits, our frailties like branches
hail-stripped or torn by wind. The best singing

forgotten until next morning, the singing
renewed again. Beckoning a fresh ear, to the
peedelo of cardinal clinging to the branches,
sensing more secret language from the wild.
Remember when trees could talk, in
ways we were still enough to hear? Such

unquiet. As you eavesdrop on such singing,
let it aim you at your day, with its wild
concerto of choices, tucked in branches.

MORE FOR MY DAUGHTER
BY SARAH DICKENSON SNYDER

I picture a heart
her heart, the one
she almost opens
on a carpet as invitation:
Touch this.
Want this.
How her body
was never protection.

As a child she always spoke
in a mystical alphabet
as though I had birthed
the next Dali Lama
but no one knew
because she was so far
from the craggy top
of the world.

I don't want to die alone,
she said when she was four.
How did she even know we die?

Why haven't I found love?
her words muffled in my sweater
as I hold her & know that there is
someone she will find, the way
she has found so much
by seeking the truth.

AS YOU GROW A LITTLE OLDER

BY CAROL RUCKS

trees speak directly to you
as never before.
Sisters and brothers seem perturbed
for some mistake you made
which the gods can't name.
Some friends will die,
ones that came close
and brought the sun and water,
carried brightness to a gray day.
But it's good to be alone
part of the time, watching the trees
take in gusts, assume the duties
of wind break, shelter, landlord.
They stand in the daily air
knowing what to do with light
and sleet. They absorb it
with their bodies, finger,
limb and torso,
trembling just a little.

PORTENT

BY WENDY MANNIS SCHER

"Hineni (Here I am)" – Isaiah 6:8

Cloud-infused as chemobrain,
the morning's pink sky pulses
with wing clatter – the brisk staccato
trill of feathers that Earth-glint

garnet, jade, smoky quartz.
The hummingbirds skid, pine
sap drunk, from bough to window
to bough. A celebration of sorts,

the way in which they return each May
with territorial rattle and late
night romp in the ponderosa heights.
Today, I watch one spin, a lucky

talisman, perhaps. He hovers
outside the pane as if signaling:
Look. *Hineni*. Look, *Here*
I am, his eyes, hematite black

like the stones I wear around my wrists.
Can he see me? Bald as his nestlings,
I reside, like them, in a hidden place
weighted with want –

DAYLILIES, PLEASE

BY HARRIET SHENKMAN

I rifle through drawers and file cabinets.

last will healthcare proxy
apartment lease car insurance
burial plots CVS coupons
life insurance Staple rewards
tax returns Victoria Secrets credit
debit card key to deposit box
Fandango gift card good until 2023

Can't imagine what it will be like without me around,

I envision less poetry and matzo brei,
more legal briefs and chicken fajitas.

Have no preference for burial clothes or casket,

I do favor my black sheath with crisscross back
and pine has a pleasant scent.

No particular God or rabbi required,

though I have a burial plot in the Jewish section
and saying Kaddish once wouldn't kill you.

Decorations unnecessary, although a photo of

the knish shop on Coney Island Avenue
would make me feel at home.

And dear ones, please remember, I'm partial

to daylilies and Leonard's Hallelujah.

TENDERNESSES

BY SUSAN WISMER

The shyness of hands not quite held

all that hiding
in front of the neighbours –
you might think the stars
would just disappear

instead they burn
on and on

inside a granite hearth
grey, tall as a man
iron hook, flaming logs
cauldron of Cerridwen,
old woman, hag shadow bent
over broth, stirs steam into
story, we are
hare, salmon, hawk
sow, fire
corn

snap of wet wood, scatter
of sparks

in the morning, awakened by
ash in our hands, on our thumbs
small tendernesses, burns.

I WANT TO PRAISE MYSELF
BY CASSIE PREMO STEELE

I want to praise myself
the way the rain falls
on each flower,
 tiny drops,
 into individual petals,
 leading to the heart.

I want to be in this life
the way the grasses come
back each spring,
 blades rising
 together
 for the sake of green.

I want to love myself
the way sunshine leaks
onto everything,
 wave and particle
 igniting shine
 over time.

I want to live in the world
the way air enters
every body,
 open to the
 invitation and
 possibility.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

Karen Arnold, literary gypsy, has taught at universities in the United States and Sweden; was Poet-in-residence at Montpelier Cultural Arts Center, Laurel, MD; has taught creative writing to children and adults. Currently she creates and moderates Literature and Medicine and Veterans' reading/discussion groups sponsored by Maryland Humanities, libraries, and hospitals in and around Baltimore. She got her masters and PhD from the University of Maryland, College Park. A child of the Midwest, she loves wide skies and open spaces, finds their echo in Atlantic Ocean beaches.

Mikki Aronoff's work has appeared in *The Lake*, *EastLit*, *Virga*, *Love Like Salt*, *Weaving the Terrain*, *Rise Up Review*, *Trumped!*, *Love's Executive Order*, *bosque7*, *Intima: A Journal of Narrative Medicine*, *Ekphrastic Review*, *SurVision*, and elsewhere. A New Mexico poet, she is also involved in animal advocacy.

Jessica Barksdale's fifteenth novel, *The Play's the Thing*, is forthcoming from TouchPoint Press in 2020. Her poetry collection *When We Almost Drowned* was published in March 2019 by Finishing Line Press. A Pushcart Prize and Best-of-the-Net nominee, her short stories, poems, and essays have appeared in or are forthcoming in the *Waccamaw Journal*, *Salt Hill Journal*, *Tahoma Review*, and *So to Speak*. She is a Professor of English at Diablo Valley College in Pleasant Hill, California and teaches novel writing online for UCLA Extension and in the online MFA program for Southern New Hampshire University.

MistyRose™ poetry is published in 4 hard-cover anthology books at United States Library of Congress and in academic journals. She is the only accepted "Spoken Word Artist" in the state of Oklahoma on the Poets & Writer's Directory http://www.pw.org/content/mistyrose_ok. She was the Featured Guest Poet in Houston in 2014. (video recorded <https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=689214594500742> or also viewable at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fdxb0bvlqMg>) MistyRose™ poem "Frozen Treasure" won the inaugural Rhyme Contest ROMP 2013 (Rural Oklahoma Museum of Poetry). MistyRose™ poem "Tulsa Sky" was competitively selected and then displayed in 2018 in a Brooklyn New York art gallery. Other published poems viewable at <https://www.facebook.com/mistyrose.ok>

Marion Brown, a Yonkers resident, has lived in three corners of New York State. Her chapbooks, published by Finishing Line, are *Tasted* and *The Morning After Summer*. Recently, her poems have appeared in *Guesthouse*, the *Women's Review of Books*, *Tiny Seed Journal*, *2 Horatio*, and *Kestrel*. She serves on Slapering Hol Press's Advisory Committee, the Program Committee of the Hudson Valley Writers Center, and the National Council of Graywolf Press.

Judith Waller Carroll is the author of *What You Saw* and *Still Remember*, a runner-up for the 2017 Main Street Rag Poetry Award, *The Consolation of Roses*, winner of the 2015 Astounding Beauty Ruffian Press Poetry Prize, and *Walking in Early September* (Finishing Line Press, 2012). Her poems have been read by Garrison Keillor on *The Writer's Almanac*, published in numerous journals and anthologies, and nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net.

Joanne M. Clarkson's (b.1950) poetry collection, "The Fates" won Bright Hill Press annual contest and was published in 2017. Her chapbook, *Believing the Body*, came out in 2014. Her poems have been published in such journals as *Nimrod*, *American Journal of Nursing*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Alaska Quarterly Review* and others. Clarkson has Master's Degrees in English and Library Science and has taught and worked as a professional librarian. After caring for her mother through a long illness, she re-careered as a Registered Nurse specializing in Home Health and Hospice Care. See more at www.JoanneClarkson.com.

Beth Copeland is the author of three full-length poetry books: *Blue Honey*, recipient of the 2017 Dogfish Head Poetry Prize; *Transcendental Telemarketer*; and *Traveling through Glass*, recipient of the 1999 Bright Hill Press Poetry Book Award. Her poems have been published in literary magazines and anthologies and have been featured on international poetry websites. She has been profiled as poet of the week on the PBS NewsHour website. Beth lives in the Blue Ridge Mountains where she owns and runs Tiny Cabin, Big Ideas™, a retreat for poets, writers, and artists.

Renée Christine Ehle is a writer and educator in the Bronx, New York. Her poetry can be found or is forthcoming in *Two Horatio*; *Gyroscope Review*; *Carve*; and *Common Ground Review*. She currently teaches English and writing to recent immigrants in a New York City public high school, and she holds an MFA from Sarah Lawrence College.

Alicia Elkort's poetry has been published in *AGNI*, *Arsenic Lobster*, *Black Lawrence Press*, *Comstock Review*, *Georgia Review*, *Heron Tree*, *The Hunger Journal*, *Jet Fuel Review*, *Menacing Hedge*, *Rogue Agent*, *Stirring: A Literary Collection*, *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*, as well as many others. Her poems have been nominated for the Orisons Anthology (2016), A Best of the Net (2018), and the Pushcart (2017 / 2019). Alicia reads for *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*. For more info or to watch her two video poems: <http://aliciaelkort.mystrikingly.com/>

Charlene Fix is an Emeritus Professor of English at Columbus College of Art and Design and the author of *Mischief* (chapbook, Pudding House 2002), *Flowering Bruno: A Dography* (poems, XOXOX Press 2006), *Greatest Hits* (chapbook, Kattywompus 2012), *Harpo Marx as Trickster* (film criticism & homage, McFarland 2013), *Frankenstein's Flowers* (poems, CW Books 2014), *Taking a Walk in My Animal Hat* (poems, Bottom Dog 2018), and *Jewgirl* (forthcoming, Eyewear 2021). She is the mother of three adult offspring, co-coordinates Hospital Poets at The Ohio State University Hospitals and Nationwide Children's Hospital, and is an activist for peace and social justice.

Marianne Forman has spent three summers in Guizhou Province, teaching teachers in China. She also received Fulbright-Hays Awards to Nepal (2003) and Turkey (2009). She also won the Poetry Prize and the Genre Prize at Jelly Bucket Literary Magazine, receiving a Summer Residency Award at Eastern Kentucky University (2017). Marianne's poetry appears in *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Belle Reve Literary Journal*, and *Literary Orphans*, among others. Most recently, she has poetry published in *Unmasked: Women Write About Sex and Intimacy after 50*. She has a collection of poetry forthcoming in 2021 from Shadelandhouse Modern Press.

Carmen Fought is a Professor at Pitzer College and has published a number of books on linguistics, including *Language and Ethnicity* (Cambridge University Press 2006). Her current research is on language in children's films, focusing particularly on the Disney Princesses. She lives in Diamond Bar, CA with two badly behaved dogs and an occasional outdoor cat named Benadryl.

Originally from Columbus, Ohio, **Linda Fuller-Smith** also lived in Florence, Italy and in Southern California where she received a degree in Creative Writing from Long Beach City College. A professional ballet dancer in her youth, she now considers her gray hairs to be "highlights." Her poems are published in journals and anthologies including *Pudding Magazine*, *frogpond*, *The Baltimore Review*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, and *Botticelli*. She was awarded the Ohio Arts Council's Individual Excellence Award for Fiscal Year 2018.

Carol Gloor has been writing since she was sixteen. Then majoring in English almost killed poetry, but she got over it. Her work has been published in many journals, most recently in the online journals *Heirlock*, *Leaping Clear* and *Highland Park Poetry*. She was recently published in the anthologies *Feminine Rising* and *Art Gets in Your Eyes*. Her chapbook, *Assisted Living* was published by Finishing Line Press in 2013, and her full-length poetry collection, *Falling Back*, was published by Word Poetry in 2018.

Jessica Goodfellow's poetry books are *Whiteout* (University of Alaska Press, 2017), *Mendeleev's Mandala* (2015), and *The Insomniac's Weather Report* (2014). A former writer-in-residence at Denali National Park and Preserve, she's had poems in *The Southern Review*, *Scientific American*, *Verse Daily*, *Motionpoems*, and *Best American Poetry 2018*.

Erica Goss won the 2019 Zocalo Poetry Prize. Her collection, *Night Court*, won the 2017 Lyrebird Award from Glass Lyre Press. Recent and upcoming publications include *Spillway*, *A-Minor*, *Redactions*, *Consequence*, *Slant*, *The Sunlight Press*, *The Pedestal*, *San Pedro River Review*, and *Critical Read*. She is the founder of Girls' Voices Matter, a filmmaking workshop for teen girls. Erica served as Poet Laureate of Los Gatos, CA, from 2013-2016. She lives in Eugene, Oregon, where she teaches, writes and edits the newsletter Sticks & Stones.

Happiest on a tractor named Mabel (a muse of 55 horsepower) **Lucy Griffith** lives on a ranch beside the Guadalupe River near Comfort, Texas. Her first collection of poems, *We Make a Tiny Herd* was published by *Main Street Rag* as a finalist in their poetry book contest. *Tiny Herd* was recently awarded the Wrangler Prize for Poetry by the Western Heritage and Cowboy Hall of Fame. She won the Returning Contributor Award in Poetry for the 2019 Bread Loaf Writers' Conference. In addition, she was nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize in 2019.

Stephanie Barbé Hammer is a 6-time Pushcart Prize nominee in fiction, nonfiction and poetry with work published in *The Bellevue Literary Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Pearl*, *the James Franco Review*, *Isthmus*, *Cafe Irreal*, and the *Gold Man Review*. She is the author of the prose poem chapbook *Sex With Buildings* (dancing girl press), the full-length collection *How Formal?* (Spout Hill Press), and the fabulist novel *The Puppet Turners of Narrow Interior* (Urban Farmhouse Press). Stephanie is managing editor of *Shark Reef Literary Magazine* and sits on the advisory board of WRITERS BLOC Los Angeles.

Gloria Heffernan is the author of the poetry collection, *What the Gratitude List Said to the Bucket List*, published by New York Quarterly Books (2019) and two chapbooks, *Some of Our Parts*, (Finishing Line Press) and *Hail to the Symptom*, (Moonstone Press). Her work appears in over sixty journals including *Anchor*, *Chautauqua Literary Journal*, *Stone Canoe*, *Columbia Review*, and *The Healing Muse*. She teaches at Le Moyne College and the Syracuse Downtown Writers Center.

Karen Paul Holmes is from Atlanta, Georgia. She has two poetry collections, *No Such Thing as Distance* (Terrapin, 2018) and *Untying the Knot* (Aldrich, 2014). Her poems have been featured on The Writer's Almanac and Tracy K. Smith's *The Slowdown*. Publications include *Diode*, *Valparaiso Review*, *Lascaux Review*, and *Prairie Schooner*, among others. To support fellow writers, she founded and hosts the Side Door Poets.

Andrea Jackson grew up in New York City and now lives in St. Louis. Her writing has appeared previously in *Gyroscope Review* and also in many other journals. She has received two Pushcart nominations and one nomination for the Best of the Net Anthology, has an MFA from the University of Missouri-St. Louis, and recently published *Who Am I and Where Is Home? An American Woman in 1931 Palestine*, described by Small Press Bookwatch as "an absolutely fascinating, deftly crafted read from cover to cover...an extraordinary, candid, engaging, account of an inherently interesting woman in an inherently interesting time." www.andreajackson.net.

Kristin Laurel owes her passion for poetry to the Loft Literary Center (MPLS), where she completed a two-year apprenticeship in poetry. Her poetry and essays have been published in *CALYX*, *Chautauqua*, *Gravel*, *Raleigh Review*, *The Portland Review*, *NPR* and numerous others. She is the author of *Giving Them All Away* (Evening Street Press), and *Questions About the Ride* (Main Street Rag Publishing). She and her spouse divide their time between the 10,000 lakes of MN and the Appalachian Mountains of Western NC.
kristinlaurelpoet.com

Susan Vittitow Mark's poetry has appeared in *The MacGuffin*, *Tulip Tree Review*, *High Plains Register*, and in previous editions of the *WyoPoets* chapbook. She's a past president of both *WyoPoets* and Wyoming Writers, Inc. Susan works in social media and communications as an outreach librarian at the Wyoming State Library.

Maria Masington is a poet, author, and spoken word artist from Wilmington, Delaware. Her poetry has appeared in over a dozen publications including *Adanna*, *The News Journal*, *The Broadkill Review*, *The Red River Review*, and *Earth's Daughters*. She has had seven short stories published through both local and international presses. Maria is a member of the Written Remains Writers Guild and The Mad Poets Society and is an emcee and featured poet on the local art scene. She has been a guest on WVUD ArtSounds and a three-time Delaware Division of the Arts fellow for poetry and prose retreats.

Sharon Fagan McDermott is a poet, musician, and a teacher of literature at a private school in Pittsburgh, PA. Her most recent poetry collection, *Life Without Furniture*, was published by Jacar Press in 2018. It wrestles with feeling at home in the world and seeking sanctuary in an often challenging life. A generous artist award from the Pittsburgh Foundation, as well as a grant from PA Council for the Arts, allowed Fagan McDermott to create and publish three additional chapbooks: *Voluptuous*, *Alley Scatting* (Parallel Press), and *Bitter Acoustic*, winner of the 2005 Jacar Press chapbook award, chosen by Betty Adcock.

Alexa Mergen lives on a boat in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta of California. Her poems have been published in many journals including *Claw & Blossom*, *Turtle Island Quarterly*, *Sow's Ear*, and *Virginia Quarterly Review*.

Elaine Mintzer is an LA poet who was a teacher. Poetry taught her how to teach geometry, and geometry taught her to be a better poet. Her work has been published in journals and anthologies including *Beloit Poetry Review*, *Panoplyzine*, *Slipstream Press*, *Perspectives*, *Borders and Boundaries*, *Mom Egg Review*, *Subprimal Poetry Art*, *LummoX*, *Lucid Moose Lit's Like a Girl* anthology, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Cultural Weekly*, *Rattle*, and *The Lindenwood Review* and *13 Los Angeles Poets*. Elaine's collection, *Natural Selections* (Bombshelter Press). Elaine's work has been a finalist for WordWorks Washington Prize, Raynes Poetry Competition, Quills Edge Press, and Cultural Weekly.

Linda Neal lives near the beach in southern California. She earned a BA in linguistics and an MA in clinical psychology and was a practicing therapist for three decades. She holds an MFA in poetry from Pacific University. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in numerous journals, including *Calyx*, *Chiron Review*, *Crack the Spine*, *Gyroscope Review*, *LummoX*, *Prairie Schooner* and *Tampa Literary Review*. She has won awards from Beyond Baroque Foundation, *Pacific Coast Journal* and PEN Women Writers. *Dodge & Burn*, her first collection came out in 2014. *Not About Dinosaurs* will be out in the fall of 2020.

Marge Piercy has published 19 poetry collections, recently *Made in Detroit* [Knopf]; 17 novels including *Sex Wars*. PM Press reissued *Vida*, *Dance the Eagle to Sleep*; they brought out short stories *The Cost of Lunch*, *Etc.*, and *My Body, My Life* [essays, poems]. Her new collection, *On The Way Out, Turn Off The Light* [Knopf] releases September 30, 2020. She has read at over 500 venues here and abroad.

Cassie Premo Steele is an award-winning lesbian ecofeminist poet, novelist and essayist. She lives with her wife in South Carolina. Her website is www.cassiepremosteele.com

Sharon Pretti lives in San Francisco, California. Her work has appeared in journals including *Spillway*, *Calyx*, *JAMA*, *Jet Fuel Review* and is forthcoming in *Schuykill Valley Journal*. She is also an award-winning haiku poet and a frequent contributor to haiku journals including *Modern Haiku* and *Frogpond*. She works as a medical social worker at a large county hospital where she also leads poetry groups for seniors and disabled adults.

Donna Pucciani, a Chicago-based writer, has published poetry worldwide in *Shi Chao Poetry*, *Gradiva*, *Acumen*, *Poetry Salzburg*, and *The Pedestal*. Her most recent book of poems is *Edges*.

Carol Rucks is the author of the poetry collection, *Evidence of Rain*. Her poems have appeared in *Earth's Daughters*, *Abraxas*, *West Branch*, and in many other journals. She is a retired librarian living in Minneapolis.

Sarah Salway has published three novels including *Something Beginning With*, one book of short stories and two poetry collections. Her work has appeared widely, including on street railings, in financial newspapers, plant pots, and on BBC Radio 4. She lives in Kent with her family. Her website is www.sarahsalway.co.uk

Judith Sanders' work has appeared in journals such as *Calyx*, and *The American Scholar*, and on the websites, Vox Populi, and Full Grown People. She won the Hart Crane and Wergle Flomp Humor poetry prizes. Her poetry manuscript was a semifinalist for The Washington Prize. She has a B.A. in literature from Yale, an M.A. in writing from Boston University, and a Ph.D. in English from Tufts. She taught English at universities and independent schools, and in France on a Fulbright Fellowship. She lives in Pittsburgh.

Wendy Mannis Scher, a graduate of the Low Residency MFA program for Creative Writing/Poetry at the University of Alaska/Anchorage, has a BA in English Literature from Smith College, and a BS in Pharmacy from the University of Colorado's Health Sciences Center. Having worked outside the home since age 9, her resume is chockful of jobs that keep the bill collectors at bay as she supports her addiction to writing poems. She currently lives in Colorado's Front Range. Recent publications include the chapbook, *Fault* (Finishing Line Press) and the anthology *Thought for Food*. For additional information, please visit www.wendymscher.com.

Penelope Scambly Schott is a past recipient of the Oregon Book Award for Poetry. Her newest book is *On Dufur Hill*.

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.

Jacquelyn “Jacsun” Shah: A.B. English; M.A. English; M.F.A., Ph.D. English literature, creative writing—poetry. Grants: University of Houston, Houston Arts Alliance. Poetry published in journals/anthologies: *Panoply*, *Gyroscope Review*, *The Woven Tale Press*, *Plath Profiles*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Rhino*, *Anon* (Britain), *Vine Leaves Literary Journal* (Australia), forthcoming—*Blue Unicorn*. Poetry chapbook, small fry published in 2017; full-length book, *What to Do with Red* published in 2018. Winner of Literal Latté’s Food Verse contest 2018. Feminist, outlier, iconoclast, pacifist, she is in love with Persian cat Eliot, writes every day, Eliot on her desk.

Myra Shapiro, born in the Bronx, returned to New York City after forty-five years in Georgia and Tennessee where she raised two daughters and worked as a teacher and librarian. Her books of poetry are *I’ll See You Thursday* and *12 Floors Above the Earth*, her memoir, *Four Sublets: Becoming a Poet in New York*. Her poems have appeared in many periodicals and anthologies, most recently *The New Yorker*, and twice, in *Best American Poetry*. She serves on the Board of Directors of Poets House and teaches poetry workshops for the International Women’s Writing Guild.

Cathryn Shea is the author of *Genealogy Lesson for the Laity* (available from Unsolicited Press, September 2020) and the chapbooks *Backpack Full of Leaves* (Cyberwit, 2019), *Secrets Hidden in a Pear Tree* (dancing girl press, 2019), and *It’s Raining Lullabies* (dancing girl press, 2017). Cathryn’s poetry has been nominated for Best of the Net and appears in *New Orleans Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Gargoyle*, and elsewhere. Cathryn served as editor for Marin Poetry Center Anthology and she lives with her husband in Fairfax, CA. See www.cathrynshea.com and @cathyshea on Twitter.

Harriet Shenkman is a Professor Emerita at City University of New York and a board member of the Women's National Book Association. She has published her poetry in numerous national and international journals. Two of her poetry chapbooks, *Teetering* and *The Present Abandoned*, were published by Finishing Line Press. She was born in Brooklyn, New York.

A poet and visual artist, **Kit Sibert** has been influenced by a childhood in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and her years in Manhattan, Madrid, Boston, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. She lives in Eugene, Oregon, active in its robust poetry and art communities. Sibert chose to go public as an artist and poet in 2000. Her poetry can be found in the following chapbooks: *Beyond Me*, *What You Have Become*. *How the Light Gets In* is a hybrid of paintings prose and poetry. Her motel/hotel guerrilla art actions may be discovered throughout the West Coast of the United States.

Beate Sigriddaughter, www.sigriddaughter.net, grew up in Nürnberg, Germany. Her playgrounds were a nearby castle and World War II bomb ruins. She lives in Silver City, New Mexico (Land of Enchantment), USA, where she was poet laureate from 2017 to 2019. Her latest poetry chapbook is *Emily* (Unsolicited Press, 2020).

Sarah Dickenson Snyder has written poetry since she knew there was a form of writing with conscious linebreaks. She has three poetry collections: *The Human Contract* (2017), *Notes from a Nomad* (nominated for the Massachusetts Book Awards 2018), and *With a Polaroid Camera* (2019). Recently, poems have appeared in *Rattle*, *Artemis*, *The Sewanee Review*, and *RHINO*.

Dana Sonnenschein is a professor at Southern Connecticut State University, where she teaches literature and creative writing online now. She is a beginning spinner, but she knits every winter. Her publications include *Corvus*, *No Angels but These*, *Natural Forms*, and *Bear Country*. Recent work has appeared in *Into the Void*, *The Matador Review*, *The Prachya Review*, and Terrain's *Dear America* anthology.

Lynn White lives in north Wales. Her work is influenced by issues of social justice and events, places and people she has known or imagined. She is especially interested in exploring the boundaries of dream, fantasy and reality. She was shortlisted in the Theatre Cloud 'War Poetry for Today' competition and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and a Rhysling Award. Her poetry has appeared in many publications including: *Apogee*, *Firewords*, *Capsule Stories*, *Light Journal* and *So It Goes*. Find Lynn at: <https://lynnwhitepoetry.blogspot.com> and <https://www.facebook.com/Lynn-White-Poetry-1603675983213077/>

Susan Wismer is a poet who is grateful to live with two female partners and a very large dog on the southern shore of Georgian Bay in Ontario, Canada, on Anishinaabe (Three Fires Confederacy) and Wendat territories.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Our next reading period begins on October 1, 2020, during which we will read submissions of previously unpublished contemporary poetry for our Winter 2021 issue. There is no theme for this issue, just send us your best contemporary work.

The winter issue comes out on January 15th, so while we welcome wintry-themed pieces, please do not send winter holiday-themed (as in Christmas, Kwanzaa, etc.) poems. All submissions must come through Submittable. Any submissions sent to us via email or any other method (even if accompanied by chocolate) will not be considered.

Please put your poems—no more than four—in one document, each poem on its own page. More information is available in our guidelines (www.gyroskopereview.com/guidelines/). We also encourage you to look at past issues and become familiar with the kind of contemporary poetry we publish. Back issues are available as PDFs on our website. We welcome both established and emerging poets.

Thank you for reading.