



Gyroscope Review

fine poetry to turn your world around



The High Priestess

Crone Power Issue

II

Fall 2021 Issue 21-4



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Constance Brewer

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From The Editor

What an extraordinary issue this is! Our Crone poets show once again that they only get better with age. The poems range in subject matter and tone, from the heartfelt to the humorous to the downright snarky. It was very, very hard to choose the poems for this issue. There were so many good ones we felt awful about having to turn work away and even upped the number of poems we took in order to showcase more outstanding work. We received around 1200 submissions for this issue, a record.

Some objected to the label Crone. Most embraced it. It's one of those take back the word things for us. Many people want to degenerate older women with the term, deem them mean, ugly, and witch-like. I prefer the traditional sense of the word. The Crone is the wise woman within. The Triple Goddess is a sacred symbol and the three phases are Maidenhood, Motherhood, and the Crone / Sage phase. The Tarot card cover of this issue represents The High Priestess, the card in the Major Arcana that embodies intuition, wisdom, spiritual enlightenment, the divine feminine, and the subconscious mind.

The Crone stage of life incorporates the earlier two stages of Maiden and Mother, and adds knowledge, along with independence, sexuality, creativity, and courage of convictions. The Crone has lived her life and experienced its ups and downs. She takes no shit from anyone. This is the Crone I embrace. I've made my mistakes, and I'm ready to go out with a roar. When you read the poems in this special edition, whether you are Crone or a younger member of the world family, pause to reflect on the depth of this exceptional work. At the end of the issue, start over again and read with an open heart. Let the Crone experiences sink in. You may find unexpected paths to explore. I know I did.

Constance Brewer

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Section One

THE ART OF BEING AT PEACE

BY CHARLENE LANGFUR

I work at it. Look for insight.
Collect seeds from the flower petals
in my little garden. Figure out what I have
now. Nasturtium, calendula and aloe.
The abundance of less.
In the desert the smallest cactus blooms
and two orange flowers flourish.
What survives in the heat here is rare.
I breathe deep, stop a bit, smile,
walk on as if it is all part of the poem and
I'm with it, you know what I mean, I grow older
but take to the world, with ease at my ease,
touching the trees with the palm of my hand,
rubbing the smooth bark next to an orange,
almost too fat to hold and take with me.
And I am bold with the simple now, self-pacing
in order to remember how I am part of
a moving world, knowing I have to move with it,
tracking the black crows, the hummingbirds,
the wrens hiding in the purple heather, what
lives in any kind of weather here in the desert,
this is how I make a go of it under the purple light
under the San Jacinto Mountains glowing
under the white fat cumulus clouds overhead.
At the center of my life this is what I have now.
I'm holding onto the way a single day blends with life,
a day the same as a thousand years of other days
on earth, the same as it has always been, and
I travel this way these days, sketch-pen in hand,
colored pencils, a drawing of the first sunflower of
the year here and the stars floating overhead,
knowing it will all come together as one
if I let it, opening up, closing for night, with
petals so easy to touch I think they must
be imagined

THEY CALL ME CRONE, BUT I KNOW I'M AN OLD WOMAN SEIZING HER POWER
BY MARY ALICE DIXON

They call me crone
they call me witch

on fire in this red hour
I, inflamed with you, rough
wooden stake, hot my cry
echoing your bark.

Feral woman, I am bound
to you by the collared ones,
pale Jesuits dressed
in dying habits.

They call me crone
they call me witch

because they cannot tame me
to their holy orders or bridle me
in chaste domestication
they burn me at the stake.

Come, be my magic broom, shift
shape with me, let me ride astride
you until only
unrepentant flames remain.

In that hot hour I will sweep across
the earth with other fallen angels
rising up uncollared
sisters in revolt

growing nails like dragon scales
they call us crones and witches
we, women
fierce lived, battle wise.

TEA ROSE IN AUGUST

BY LISA ASHLEY

How would it be to lie down
in the dip of the rose petal,
stretch out along its pale curve,
take up each edge,
wrap its silken robe around my tired body?
How would it be to float down
into the half open flower,
inhale its bees-come-hither scent,
pollinating summons of indescribable lemon
cooling the senses?
How would it be to fit there,
inside the faerie's bed,
exquisite, my old body swathed in velvet,
tucked into the pink glow of this cocoon?
How would it be to take up
such a tiny place, rest,
in this universe of unbearable beauty?

LESSON IN AGING
BY MELISSA HUFF

I spread their colors
across the counter—tulips
in hues of lemon, lilac,
plum and persimmon—
then scoop them up,
slake their thirst, let them
chatter to each other.
They tilt their heads, laugh
from their bellies, begin
to open themselves to life.
As they age, they widen
their scope, become more
generous, acquire a graceful
drape. Their edges begin
to darken, turn inward
until, one by one, each
petal loosens its hold,
gives in to gravity,
leaving—strewn
across my counter—
curled flakes of color,
still laughing.

OUR LAST MARRIED SUMMER

BY SUSAN ZIMMERMAN

The smoke bush flared bright rust,
a haze of seeds on tender filaments,

waxy leaves against the white house.
I dreamed I couldn't speak and it was you

I couldn't speak to. I shivered awake,
stayed shivering.

Dandelion stalks grew high,
the sun shone through the thin leaves,

wildflowers bloomed as much for us
as for anyone.

You sat in the dark listening
to Beethoven. Slept without rest,

replayed our story, different
every time. Every time

I was wrong in a different way.
It rained at night, the morning grass

glowed green. And the smoke bush
that survived the deep freeze, the ice-storm,

flourished that summer as if on fire.

DAYS SO HOT

BY MARY CROW

Days so hot the deck furniture feels stifled,
the red hawks sweaty for my backyard rabbits,
while I lie in bed altered by the dry climate.

No, the leafage isn't meaningless, though
a few leaves fall yellow this early in summer.
My still body thirsts for green, green.

My cottonwoods form a wall or palace
while underneath everything is the poor
suffering land, filled with bodies.

I'll sit on the back deck examining bits
of rabbit left by one hawk or another,
smudge on the glass door from a collision.

Life goes on for hawk as it ends for bunny.
In the evening high shrieks as one hawk
arrives to feed young high in a nest of twigs.

Is this the only music hawks listen to? What
could singing beget? Did it beget summer
and summer heat, wildfires? A lonely night

begets odor of lilacs and cicada buzz. I can't
remember where I am or how old I've become.
Or how things were once upon a time.

THE GRAMMAR OF ANIMACY

BY KATRINKA MOORE

after Robin Wall Kimmerer

A red-tailed hawk glides overhead
shadow grazing wild thyme Who's
in ki's talons vole mouse

What is this *ki*

Rooted in ancient
language

to signify a being of the living earth

From the edge of the forest
a whistle-cry

Who is a *being*
Oak fox cloud boulder song

Words breathe cross
borders shift

A loan word drawn
from the Potawatomi

Two hawks sky-spiral
swoop swerve
spin-as-one

Let's call the plural *kin*
come down from old English

We say *buteo* raptor bird
of prey The red-tails know
kin's own true name

Ki calls to ki *kee*

YOUR ANGEL

BY JUDITH H. MONTGOMERY

I am not the snowy egret
threshing the stream.

Nor an exaltation of larks. Not
larkspur flaring its light-rinsing five-petalled blooms
at the wet edge of the forest trail.

Not the shape of your hope—
wax warmed to mellow the wick
threaded through a tin mold.

Not the wandering river where you would wade,
trousers rolled to the knee,
but the river beneath the river, unseen seep that feeds.

Call on me how you will—
to cause or avert is not my charge.

I am less event than absence. Or presence. Perhaps
accident of struck light but also rock
hung above
your unwounded hand.

You may kneel at the bell,
Angelus calling on Mary's grace.
May hope for annunciation
from your own messenger,
halo glowing, wings brushing the new-swept floor . . .

knowing also the possibility that it is all
a dream rising out of egg, oil, tint—
a vision of what

you long to be: that bird
free of earth as though it had
escaped
the double burden of body and gravity—

the beat of snow-feathered wings,
the elegant raised riff of plume—
egret you long to call *angel soul spirit*—
but I am nothing to do with body,
yours or other.

One day or tomorrow
you will prepare to unburden
your body of body,
layers leafing away into shade,
a dapple-dawn-drawn shift of being to other
being, of *stay* to *flow*.

Meantime there is play
at easel, altar, mold and whitest wax—
pour me as candle or wing—lark or swift
stream

I continue to exist ever
and ever outside any will or ken.
(It is here you may say *Amen*.)

ON MY EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY

BY MARY KAY RUMMEL

thousands of pelicans fly west.
Long braids unravel across cerulean sky.
Some skim the waves, brushing foam,
ponderous wings sometimes disappearing
below the curl.

Years weigh me down — clumsy outsider
in this grace-filled world
of sea and sun-washed limbs.

Today ungainly pelican grace enters
enters my arthritic bones.

Streams of light, carry me
through charging surf, draw my mind
into the green-lit room at the center
of each diminishing swell.

ALMANAC FOR MARRIAGE IN SPRING

BY JANISSE RAY

Harris Neck, Georgia

March 21, the storks at Woody Pond
in the refuge have begun nesting.
The trumpet creeper shines its red
five-pointed stars up in the greening.
A mother gator suns with three babies
lying on her hard, gray points.
Toadflax, patch of violets, Carolina
jessamine. Every spring, first day,
more or less the same, the familiar
emergent. We know the call of red-
shoulder when we hear it. Martins
and swallows come back again, rough-
winged, barn. Every spring I trumpet
my gladness, first day emergent, familiar
refuge, sixteen springs greening, violet
call of my heart. Black-crowned night
herons, snowy egrets in breeding plumage,
nest-building storks, hooded mergansers.
You standing on the dyke taking pictures,
wind in sparkleberry and live oak
familiar like us, a nest, a refuge.
Sixteen springs sparkle the oak of you.
You and I, sixteen springs greening,
show up in the refuge of us, shining,
doing what we do best, which is to love
emergent and familiar. Which is to
shoulder the hard gray points.

ARTFULNESS
BY KB NELSON

Sharpen the leading note
a trifle, a taste,
lean into the tone.
Don't double it, that's a trap
trust your listener's
learned ears to search and find.

Be subtle with your tells
show Chekov's gun
above the fireplace
but don't shine a spotlight.
Try a quick flash of
the gunmetal's glint.

Go easy with symbols
if you want to sell that big
canvas for the hotel lobby.
Hide your mark like Pollock
or dab in your little face like Vermeer
but only Bosch could be Bosch.

Say you love me
with scrambled eggs or apricots for breakfast
even though you prefer oatmeal.
Red roses might mean you dinged my car,
and chocolates tell me you were hungry
when you went to the drug store
for your nose drops.

MOTHER'S DAY, DOORBELL
BY MARY SPECKER STONE

My usual protest well
rehearsed *why didn't you*
buy them at Safeway,

deliver them yourself,
more sincere. And a kinder
version, though less

sincere *thank you*
for the flowers. Which
would emerge from my

mouth I couldn't be
assured. But instead
it's Buddha at the door

seated in lotus pose
smack in the center
of the bristled mat

right on the big S.
Thus disarmed I plant
a most sincere kiss

on my foolish husband's lips
and place the serene one
in the shade of a young

hibiscus not yet in bloom.
Tiny grains of nursery soil
rest in his upturned hands,

his nondescript stone
substance surprisingly
soft, already eroding.

LANTERN OF SMALL FIRES

BY DAWN TERPSTRA

what is most true

is the heat
of places softened
by longing

not
the dreams of undying
the silence on your tongue
the ghost in your face

alone
i swallow my thoughts
like rain catching
in a windowsill

washing
the tenderness
from yesterday's
spring leaves

through these days
and nights
i carry our desire

a lantern of small fires
burning embers swaying
beneath our shadows

smoldering
on golden mornings
above wheat fields
outside my kitchen window

rising
through pine boughs
like a phantom net
to catch a blackbird's song

dissolving
into pillow & curtains
when i wake
to your name in the dark

*

today
your yellow tea roses opened
my peony's petals

quiver in breezes
ready for time's
final breath

i'm not ready

your eyes blooming
blue in still
waters

drown me in
specters of Milky
Way nights

where you say you waited
all of your life to dwell
deep

where you weave
starbeams like ribbons
through my night-damp hair

your absent touch gentles
the taste of salt upon your lips
reminds

inside these peaceful
& sacred spaces where
now

the truest words

in another dream where you
hold me with hands that soothe
my thoughts

wedge
like empty seed pods
in my throat or

tonight whisper your
touch across my skin
tell me

how I will
believe we are
more than
smoke

CATALOGUE OF THE SELF AT 56

BY CAROL BERG

A found poem from the book *Art and Letters of Georgia O'Keefe*

My life here is painted from something
I heard a very fine afternoon:
winds, wishes, some Bach.

I am astonished by the spring green
vessels of May, by the museum
of the river.

I am a new woman—I am the hot colored
thin moon the woman who gets me
astonished by my own strong hands.

I, too, am "The Cloud of Unknowing" and
I have been for a long bronze time. I have not spoken—
a usefulness, a duty to my friends.

See how I am the shape of experience
I am the simplicity of a palm leaf
I am nothing but abstract.

I like that I am usually alone.
I would like to go on
opening.

UNLIKE SHAKESPEARE,

BY ALISON STONE

I won't compare my love to anything.
What attracts the most is what's unique.
There are a hundred different days in spring.
If your words bury sex in metaphor, don't speak.

What attracts the most is what's unique.
Mismatched eyes, one pointy tooth, a scar.
If your words bury sex in metaphor, don't speak.
Why judge the sun against another star?

Mismatched eyes, one pointy tooth, a scar.
Ideal beauty's tedious as virtue.
Why judge the sun against another star?
Every square of sky rocks its own blue.

Ideal beauty's tedious as virtue.
There are a hundred different days in spring.
Every square of sky rocks its own blue.
I won't compare my love to anything.

PROTECTION

BY JOANNE M. CLARKSON

Gayle is learning to shoot. After break-ins
in her neighborhood, Gayle bought
a gun. Today the Range Instructor
makes her aim, not at a bull's eye
but at the mass of a paper human, its
face as blank as a nylon mask.

She knows she has little to lose: garnets
and moonstones, outdated technology,
her sagging, wrinkled peace-of-soul.
Yet her cupboards of second-hand
silver are hers to guard. She counts bullets.

One of my grandmothers used a rosary,
the other superstition as a shield, salt
and Hail Marys over the left shoulder.

I believe in the bravery of Gayle.
I know she could wake from a sea of dreams
and shoot straight at the heart of menace.
I sight down a muzzle and waiver.
Cowardice or compassion? The recoil.
Reek of oily smoke like the long
remembered corpse of war. I install

a dead bolt while Gayle's revolver lurks
on her bedside table like a reptile ready
to strike. She worked all her life
in radiology targeting cancer in infested bones,
in the shredded tissue. *At the critical moment,*

most people can't pull the trigger, the Instructor
warns. She steps up to the line, raises her arms,
sees the star of a fist through a window.
She centers her weapon and fires.

DEAR GOD OF THE TWO-FISTED BACKHAND

BY LINDA NEAL

and the short skirt,
god of the lime green ball cutting
air, god of the fast-moving feet
no pain. Oh, dear god
of the taut net and the score that starts
with love. Listen with me
to the bounce, the hit,
the telegraphed power,
the whizzing sound
of racquet through sky.
Bring it back to me, dear god
of the immaculate white shoes,
laced and ready, god
of the moment of competition,
of victory and defeat
screaming across the scoreboard.

Let me be me
again. Let my legs pound the court
unafraid. Send back my dancing feet
and perfect lob, the serve
in the corner of the box,
the doubles partner who slices
returns like she's cutting a hole in space.
Oh god, bring back the song of gut
played on racquet strings,
the lilt in my voice when I break a deuce.
Let me travel the court again,
visor shading my face,
a supernova of the game,
exploding through a crease in time.

SO GO AHEAD

BY DEE JOHNSON

So there we were, all of us together,
my brothers, their significant others,
my mother and me.

We were sitting at the table, talking,
playing Quiddler.

We all were intent on playing the game,
on keeping the conversation going,
on remembering regardless
that we loved each other still.

No one stopped to sample the chocolates.
Buckeyes they called them.
They looked like chocolate ribbons
snugged up tight
to dollops of peanut butter fudge.

The hostess decided some encouragement
was needed.

I don't want to hurt your feelings, she told me,
but for years we have been praying for you
that you would find some very nice man
to spend the rest of your life with.

Well, that isn't going to happen, she said,
so go ahead, have a chocolate.

NOT WORKING

BY LAURA GRACE WELDON

Early afternoon I sit at a library table
instead of my desk, as if book-scented air
might help me finish by deadline.
My bag swoons over a table edge,
fingers slump over work.

I want to wander the stacks, find fiction
to savor in a sun-warmed armchair.
Or walk outside to wander
watching people, dogs, pigeons. Instead
I slide off to the web where I read

dementia's causes are linked to
fossil fuel exhaust. Read our country's
air quality is worsening. Consider we already
run the world as if we've lost our minds.
School must be out

because teens filter in, tight springs
releasing desk-bound energy, voices barely
constrained and I think *show us how to be loud*.
The room is ringed with rainforest animal posters,
eyes stark under indoor lights.

Section Two

BRIAR ROSE

BY WENDY TAYLOR CARLISLE

It happened more than once in that time
between birth control pills and AIDS. It happened
 over and over, although it's a struggle to remember
 any of them, those exquisite boys with their hands

in the briars, the young ones with knives,
the serious ones in ties, the princes in Levi's,
 all of them bringing their several and various gifts
 of flesh, their heat and beauty, their praise,

from their castle to yours, the frightened ones,
carrying lack under their tongues like a lead penny,
 the empty ones, come to fill you up with lies,
 the witchy ones, their wooing like the 13th fairy's curse,

all of them crowding the hedge around your heart
with their shears, their crazy desire, and you cursed
 to sleep a spell with them while you waited,
 for something you had been promised was love.

ON FRIENDSHIP: BEECHWOOD FARMS AUDUBON NATURE PRESERVE

BY SHARON FAGAN McDERMOTT

The winter woods have softened into crevasses, running
silver into creeks. Moss slings its lush quilts over fallen trunks

that recent storms blew down. Such braided roots of oaks
peppered with red berries! I step ginger as a doe. Boots break

the frozen scrim of ice to softer mud. We are a long friendship
still walking trails, losing our way. *Look there*, one of us says:

a lichen ladder up the bark! Look here, the other says:
the purple tangle of the ironweed. We've spoken woodland language

for two decades now. It forms the leafy compost of our very hearts.
Even this brash cold cannot keep us away, although we seem to be alone.

We do not spot a single rabbit, groundhog, deer. We do hear crows
before we spot their gypsy caravan across the sky. There is so little

I can call my own. Underfoot: ice, snow, a sudden rivulet
of water broken through, races downhill. *Look*, you point,

that birch bark with its two holes is a mask for ghosts.

I don't ask for one thing more—this frigid air, these footfalls

moving up, our breath—the good world arrived already
--here among the breathing trees.

~for Karen

BEHAVING MYSELF ON NATURE TRAILS

BY LAURA GRACE WELDON

My eight-year-old self
walks with me, unseen
by my companion. This girlself
longs to run down ravines,
feel snowmelt ruffle over her fingers,
touch stones' gleaming secrets
awakened by water. She wants to walk
atop a fallen tree trunk, arms tipping
side to side the way she's seen
hawks balance in the sky.

My companion and I discuss politics.

My girlself wants to kneel by
this patch of moss to
look for tiny footprints
left by elves and fairies.
She wants to climb an oak,
settle onto the first enticing branch,
sit there unnoticed, watching
what a forest does when it believes
itself alone.

My companion and I discuss work.

My girlself looks for hollow trees
and cave-like openings in rocky hills,
imagines a forest home where she'd live
on roots and berries, weave slippers
from reeds, make animal friends.
My girlself skips, scampers, giggles
at her grownself keeping to the path.
So earnest, she laughs, so dull!

My companion and I count our steps,
then leave the forest behind.

METAMORPHOSIS

BY JUDE HOPKINS

I remember it was dark when we arrived at the Tucson motel,
its neon sign blinking "Pool," the second "o" fizzling.

*Pool's closed. It's only March, the clerk told me.
The season hasn't started. But he offered to show us anyway.*

We walked to a metal building with vinyl windows
within which the motel pool, enormous, Olympic, waited.

Full. Waveless. Only the moon's phosphorescence for light.
The water's from last year. It's dirty, my mother said.

She shook her head. And said something about polio.
In response, I filled my lungs with the chlorinated air.

I was a girl from Pennsylvania where March puts fulfillment on ice,
and desire lies banked in snowdrifts. Tucson was balmy at 50 degrees.

The water may have been a brew of sweat and DNA
from last year's tourists and businessmen,

but to me, the pool was summer, the Wild West,
buoyant and, like a lover, waiting.

My bathing suit had been under my clothes since New Mexico.
I can bring in the season all by myself, I thought.

I longed to skim the still surface like a dragonfly,
seaming the liquid with my perfect body,

ready to float, to freestyle and butterfly, to dive deep within,
then slowly rise to the surface, splitting open winter's caul.

HARD C

BY JUDITH TERZI

for Dr. Daphne Stewart

Heels clicking on university linoleum
as we waited behind 1960s desks. Waited
for a chic *Parisienne* who spoke a language
we had barely learned in high school. That
same pulse of hurried step—I hear it this
Wednesday afternoon from the examining
room. And every other Wednesday
afternoon. Same stiletto pump, dramatic
entrée into a room. The doctor exudes energy,
like Mademoiselle's hard Cs: her *cancan*,
cocorico, her *coquette*. Daphne's twirling
in her white coat from patient to patient,
toujours her treat of chic underneath the rigor:
flowery print, pleated skirt, tailored dark
gray sheath. Every day, every week, this
cascade of lexicon she speaks to the afflicted,
as quickly as Mademoiselle. Mellifluous, gentle
flow of data as though chemo were as absolute
as the French subjunctive. As though all you
needed to survive was to memorize
expressions of desire, volition, doubt. Fear.
I fear her verdicts, her silence. Her second
sight. I want her to pronounce the *mot juste*
she never will. How can I hold onto her
before she disappears, swirls away, rushes off
to the next act of the same play? I want to be
chic again, wear black patent leather heels
like I wore to Mademoiselle's French Two.
Drink espresso for the very first time
on Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley. Hear
the creek weave through campus. I want
to lie on the grass. Memorize past participles.

HER DYING

BY MARY HANFORD

On a wire, swallows huddle,
feathers furled.
Heavy with impending storm,
the dark that was once sky
is slowly closing its flaps,
the way black gloved hands hover to clap a fly.
As we feel its approach,
we fret over bedpans, chucks,
pills, butt paste to soothe
that bruised bottom—
Forget the bronze urine, the open back wound,
the body's shutting down.
Hospice—a little Haldol for agitation?
But the agitation's really ours,
like that fist falling through my stomach
which should reach the pit but still
is falling, falling, still falling
as this endless New England rain
pelting gravel roads with muffled clicks
echoing her random heartbeats,
signaling the birds to stir,
flap and fly away.

EXPOSED

BY LISA CHARNOCK

I'm carrying my dead around the kitchen again,
afraid one might drop, clatter
to the floor, draw attention—
not just the already-dead
but the could-be-dead
and the all-but-dead-to-me.

I'm standing between refrigerator and sink,
holding

my mother, so heavy for her frailty
along with her sister, the one who taught me
every flower.

Living inside me

is the lover who died
from a backache

the old friend
whose obit I found online
by chance.

And my ex is still there,
who is alive to our sons,

the Frenchman who never said goodbye,

the other man I've carried for twenty years,

the kind man who didn't know
I carried him like my toddler
on my hip as he finished the kitchen
while my husband was a continent away: the one I trusted
to get the job done.

Now I hear that keening noise again,
it's me—a cry
no one else hears
the *cri du cœur* that starts when I find myself listening hard
for tiny mews, baby-who-wasn't
weightiest of all.

My arms so sore, quivering
with fatigue. If I drop each and every one of them
right here, someone is sure to notice: me holding out my hands,
my wailing dead
shattered around my feet.

ZOOM CONCERT

BY D. DINA FRIEDMAN

Bowing to the screen, my kid scrolls the squares,
for pop-up hearts, emoji-love; they flick
their dyed blond hair to curtain the stubble of sideburns.

It's a smooth move, masking a fidgety disposition. Hands
on Zoom can be hidden, lipstick less garish,
and that orange-splotched dress

like a couch from the 70s, mercifully cut
at the sternum. Their box centers instead
on violin, extension of self since they were seven

and stopped by security looking for guns.
What else did I miss concealed in a shell
meant for one thing but harboring another?

They deliver their anthem, *You must know
your power*, lift the bow in jubilation
while pressing the instrument's edge to the vulnerable

spot where neck meets chin. Just a trace
of grimace on the oval face we share
like Munch's "The Scream," like Grandma Jeanne,

whose fire red lipstick made her look like a clown,
who lost her brain when she couldn't play piano.
That's the side we take after, the *freilach* ancestors,

who treasured their music as if it were water,
strolled trumpets, violins on the streets of the ghetto
and sucked-up the motto: you have to be part of the show.

TINY GRANDMOTHERS

BY CARLA SARETT

In exile, Dante ascended to his Beatrice.
I prefer my version of heaven.
We all do, I suppose.

I can't have too many tiny grandmothers
in mine, a sweet multitude
in heavy coats and velvet hats,

waving, always waving,
in Fort Tryon's shadows, weighed down
by loaves of dark bread and butter.

I search their pocketbooks for silver-
wrapped Hershey's kisses, rolls of cherry
red Lifesavers, they never forget.

Their wrinkled kitchen hands take mine.
We form a perfect circle. We wheel around
again and again and again.

We say the names of every murdered
sister, every murdered daughter.
Those names, they move the sun.

NOVOCAIN, PLEASE

BY CLAIRE KEYES

Open, the dentist says, and injects several doses of Novocain until my jaw feels suitably numb. Today, I'm scheduled for double extractions which involve various steel devices maneuvering for space in my mouth.

Then he peers at me through magnifying loupes he fits over his glasses. *Not a good look*, I want to tell him. I disappear his zombie face by firmly closing my eyes. *Open*, he says, and I obey, my mouth stretched wide. Now who's the zombie?

Once I chose the nitrous oxide and tripped from now into the deep stretches of the universe and back, an expansion worthy of Truth and Beauty holding hands and pledging eternal fealty. So naturally, I chose it again.

Then I slipped into a hell somewhere the other side of a volcanic eruption and I'm in the path of a river of boiling lava. *Novocain, please*, I now say. As many injections as it takes. I want to be numb, swollen, and sane.

BUYING SHOES

BY ROBIN RICHSTONE

I like the ones I can slide in and out of,
barefoot at a moment's notice,
in different heights, in case I'm
feeling tall.
I've walked over half the world
to find the perfect width,
my feet spreading slowly
with the effort of it all,
long past the point
of Cinderella, so tired
of scrubbing floors, wary
of princes who offer something cold
and brittle they found on a midnight stair.
They don't know where it came from.
They don't know where it will go.
The honest salesman kneels at my feet
with a clear straightforward question:
do I want it, yes or no?

REFLECTIONS

BY DONNA PUCCIANI

Moonlight anoints the well,
a cylinder of dreams. And from the oaks,
burly and brown, emerge
the faces of the dead,
who now outnumber the living.

Visages float like balloons
above the trees, lie still in riverbeds,
a pebbled silence. Eyes shine
like the marbles of childhood games.
Hands reach from the boughs of lindens,
hair feathers the castled forests
with ferns.

Bubbles of breath have left
the lungs of the living,
a vortex of death wearing
nothing but reverie. Open one gate,
then another and another,
where the sighs of ghosts
rise into the turrets of towers,
an architecture of castellated nightmares,
where the body is left behind
and the spirit rises among the rocks.

There comes a time when curiosity
becomes mourning, leading me back
to the well to peer inside, to call out
the name of my grandmother,
to drink from the dipper of memory,
to taste the moss on the stones.

Until one day,
I lean too far over the edge,
to sing my own elegy.

AFTER SHE DIES, MY MIND FLEES TO RIO

BY KYLE POTVIN

For R.B.G.

Restive marmosets sound their staccatos.
Beaches—Ipanema, Copacabana—burn without judgment.
Greet this day again.

Raise your Caipirinha, tongue-tied by *Cachaça*.
Battle of vowels and consonants, sugar
Gravel in your throat.

Rotting fruit remains far away in the marketplace.
Black beans, here, stew for hours, for comfort.
Garlic-greens steam bright.

Root yourself in the intricate footsteps of samba.
Believe me when I say some women are
Greater than heaven.

Redeemer, high on your mountaintop.
Behemoth arms naive with welcome.
Get down! Lightning!

NOTES ON FOUR CLASSIFIED ADS CIRCA 19TH CENTURY

BY MARTINA REISZ NEWBERRY

I

WHEREAS MY WIFE, MARGARET OVERSTAY has eloped from my bed and board unlawfully, and without any just cause: I hereby forewarn all persons from harbouring, or trusting her upon y account, as I pay no debts of her contracting after the day hereof.

CHRISTIAN OVERSTAY. Bucks county, Falls township, July 25, 1789

Margaret packed her sturdy brown boots, her canvas apron, her one good dress and collar, and her large blue mixing bowl.

She wore overalls and a dark flannel shirt and her husband's worn-down slopping boots. She took with her his oak walking stick which he used when gout was upon him

and as a tool for whacking her senseless when he was moody. She hooked up the older horse to a small wagon and left for parts unknown at 2 a.m.

She also took the flintlock pistol with the ivory stock given to her by her stepbrother, Elias Jones, who told her in a note (passed to her on her wedding day by the laundress) which said,

“If what I hear about old Christian Overstay, you’ll need this.” He included an address where he could “always be contacted.”

On July 28, 1789, Elias Jones disappeared from a boat dock on Lake Erie. Neither he nor Margaret Overstay were ever seen again.

II

WHEREAS MY WIFE MARY, without any just cause of complaint hath eloped from my bed and board, all persons are therefore desired not to trust her on y account, as I am determined not to pay any debt she may contract after this date, unless she returns to her good behaviour. All persons are forewarned, at their peril, harbouring her. MICHAEL MCKEEL. December 27th, 1796

After her arm and shoulder and neck had healed from burns she suffered when Michael McKeel threw a bubbling stewpot at her for disagreeing with him in regards to Mr. Thomas Jefferson’s chances of winning the election, she fled his house, carrying only a sewing kit with 3 colors of thread and her Bible. She took up with the Shakers.

In a letter to her cousin Molly, she said that the only thing she could ever believe in again was “Christ’s Second Appearing,” and that the scars from her burns would prevent her from ever seeking again a man’s look of love or lust.

When she was 86, she died in her sleep, her hands in a posture of prayer.

III

ANY PERSON KNOWING WHEREABOUTS of my Jessie Brooks Johnson, my wife (nee-Redman) send her home or her address to me. BISHOP BROOKS JOHNSON 1218 Bank st. Washing D.C. 1834

Jessie Brooks Johnson grew tired of waiting up for her husband, Bishop Brooks, who was in the habit of coming home late with women of ill-repute and various drunken companions

at which times he called on her to wait on them and serve them dinners and turn down beds for them, while she herself slept on sacks of flour in the basement.

In town, she was known to be a quiet, Christian soul who refrained from gossip and never said an unkind word to or about anyone.

She stayed with Bishop Brooks Johnson for 12 years then disappeared from their home leaving a short note explaining that she could no longer watch her “husband’s dalliances with unfortunate and diseased women.”

She took with her \$8.00 in cash and a fileting knife. It is said that, after leaving Bishop Brooks Johnson, she cut off her hair and lived as a man in New Orleans until she died of Cholera.

IV

A WOMAN named Helen Morrison posted one of the first personal ads, in the year 1727, in the Manchester Weekly Journal. In several words, she professed her desire for a nice gentleman.

The message caught the attention of one man, the city mayor, who committed the lady to an asylum for a month. It is not known what the rest of her life was like.

Note: These ads were found from various old newspapers on internet sites featuring old-timey classifieds.

BESS'S LABOR PAINS

BY JAN ZLOTNIK SCHMIDT

How many times can you be reborn?
How many times can you break out of
a trunk, a cabinet, or a watery grave?
All sleek like a seal, hair patted down,
flesh soaked like a scaly fish.
How many times can you emerge
unscathed and whole?

I know the labor of waiting. Always
stomach roiling muscles constricting.
Back stretched to breaking.
Electric burning down my spine.
Toes dug into the ground. Squatting
to peer at the edge of water
ready for a breached birth.

I Inhale. Exhale.
Grip my lips.
Count backwards from 100.
Seconds pass as years.
Gulping down disaster,
I wait. Dizzy from the effort.

I push and push away misfortune.
Remember the secret pick between
his teeth, the one he swallowed
and threw up into his waiting hands
or the one I pried into his mouth
with a push of my tongue.

He's gone down. Again and again
Into a dark womb. In my mind I hear
the rattle of chains or a lock undone
the clicks inside me. Kicks
as he pushes up to the surface.
as my body exhumes its weight.

He is the behemoth inside me.
He is the child I've borne.
He is the result of my labor
strained to almost death.

HEALING THE ACHE

BY TRINA GAYNON

*Sassafras tea is still popular across the **Appalachian** South.
Dick Frymire of Kentucky is one of its great advocates.
He says that not only will **sassafras tea** pick you up,
chewing on a **sassafras** root will calm you down.*

She rests her hand on an old scar,
A slash across her belly, deep
In layers of fat. She tells its story.

*For a cup of tea I ripped
A sassafras tree out of the sky.
The hole it left became the moon,
Your moon, the one I fell through,
Landed on a stony beach, crawled
Into a cave, washed out on rising tides.
My scar is the moon and the wound
A broken branch leaves on a tree trunk.*

Her fingers stretch towards
Proud flesh that covers her calf,
Still red with the fire that made it.

*For a cup of tea, I dried the wood,
Sliced roots and skinned bark,
Listened to the tree weep, dear Mary,
How it wept. I dug through clay and rock
To the hot heart of the land.
Earth quaked and fire spilled out.
My scar is the sun and the wound
Of a charred tree trunk upright.*

Her fingers pat the skin that covers
Her from her face to her feet, wrinkled
From steeping down in the holler.

*For a cup of tea, I summoned
Water that roils and steams
Deep underground to the surface,
Let it pool in low places fertile
With rot of oak leaf and pine needle,
Ancestors and offshoots lost in time,
My wrinkles are stars and electric blue
Webs hovering on the edge of space.*

A GOOD COOK CLEANS AS SHE GOES

BY KAREN PAUL HOLMES

And I repeated this to my daughter because
Mother repeated it to me and perhaps
it goes back to before family bibles, even
to cavewomen, sweating over newfound fire,
sweeping ash with pine branches, scrubbing
guts after hunts.

But is this wisdom, this cleaning? This wiping
of counters, soaking gooey spoons, stowing
spices in their rack, all while stirring
onions to ensure soft translucency —
gold not going to caramel.

Cleaning, cleaning as I go, as I go.
Scrape, scour, breathe searing bleach.
And why extend this tidying to everything?
Buff fingernails. Hone face.
Edit self and friends with a kneaded rubber eraser.
Slide my cutting thoughts into suitable slots
in a wooden block.
Or not, and expect fifty lashes.

Lashes I use on myself. For a chaotic desk,
sediment obscuring overdue bills.
For scratching at my lover's flaws,
failing to forgive his falls.
For my own feet tripping down the steps.
O, to just stay prone for a while,
never mind the bruises, twisted ankle!

To pull the honeycomb from a jar, lick it,
let stickiness drip-drip
down my wrist, chin, chest. . . onto the stone floor.
To step in it, smear it throughout the house.
Let it draw ants.
Let it thicken, then crystalize.

ALL THE COTTON IN THIS BEDSPREAD CAME FROM THE FABRIC STORE
BY MERRILL OLIVER DOUGLAS

Not from a pink blouse I wore to my old job on Plaza Drive,
not from a nursery blanket, or the much-loved striped dress
streaked with Wango Tango sauce that won't wash out.

The only story stitched in this patchwork
comes from fitting different prints—blue, green,
tan—one near another, finding the slant rhymes.

The pattern came from a page in the L.L. Bean catalog—
Flying Geese. I looked it up, learned that each block
is part wing, part sky. I copied as well as I could.

But the stitching? All mine. By hand, uneven, distinct
as the slant of a scrawled name. And look at these thread-ends
poking here and there, like hairs I missed shaving my legs.

This curl of blood? No needle jab, I bet. Most likely
a stain from when I bit a shred of skin from my thumb,
one more twinge from my rougher edges soaked in for good.

THE SISTERHOOD OF SAINTED EARTH

BY SUSAN CUMMINS MILLER

i.

The airwaves tonight extol bipedal carnivores: velociraptor-swift pack hunters, cornering, attacking with their choirs of deadly clauses. My mind rebels — says, *Ignore the insults*. Says, *Examine all you have been told*. In the gap between nothing known or unknown, listen to the sound of water falling from a whistling spout; read the tea leaves, share stories about grandmothers nibbling on sourgrass and wild mushrooms, rough brown hands in worn-cotton work gloves, silent lines around mouths, eyes moving as they reach out to catch and hold a spear of summer light on the inner branches of a sassafras. Says, *Go forth, knowing there are others of like rebellious mind*. *Go freely, trusting this*: Story, the momentary grace of the written word — of bone light, stone depth and honey sunrise leaking onto desert willow — written words running loose on the journey to knowing.

ii.

Up before a dawn heavy with the sun's rising behind the massive, amorphous obstacles of clouds. Stark wonder bows to exact syllables of awe that echo, slow to find and settle, slipping, stalking, burrowing, waiting for me to open the holy book of blank pages and scratch black marks on the day's blue lines. Stymied, I summon the Sisterhood of Sainted Earth, ordained and dedicated to investigating, building and communicating the sacredness of herstories — past, present and yet to be born. Here, where continent meets sea, mixing energy with thin mystery, we dance under a copper sky. Faint rhythms radiate from rock and sassy water. Mother-sea, First Mother, Mother of All Mothers, Holy One, Crazy One, Nurturer, Source of Melody: Favor me. Hypnotize me, old Grandmother. Surround me. Transform my piquant agonies into allegory, into song.

NOTHING GOLD CAN STAY: A GOLDEN SHOVEL

BY RENÉE M. SCHELL

And if common words hadn't been nature's
choice, which precious word would've been the first

you lost? Not viridian, or other green.
No color. An artist, you always said, is

one who paints it the way she sees it. Gold
on snow, if that's how it appears, or her

child in manganese, burnt umber, the hardest
names to say. You'd fight to keep every hue

on the tip of your tongue, you'd struggle to
keep all words close. But they leaked from the hold:

Palette knife. Self-portrait. Paintbrush. My. Her.
Words splattering around you until early

that cold morning you collapsed in the leaf's
litter and all the other dying things, a

slip-slide of compost. No fragrant flower,
no blossom in deepest January, but

your face fallen in the field, the only
warning a skip, your heart's repaired valve so

vigorous until it tripped and stopped. An
aortic disorder. You lay there an hour

before they found you sprawled, lungs empty, then
watched the final word drift down like a leaf,

brittle; or like the tide as it subsides
dropping its minerals, returning to

the deep. Or, was each word the sea's lobed leaf
of solitude and loss? Believers say, "So

be it," and it's true, that faith, but Eden
was never about truth. I don't care what sank

there. Too hard to care since you've returned to
dust. I will stand, I will hold wayward grief

in my hands, small fistfuls, soft and fine so
I won't believe it used to be flesh. Dawn

was never so soft and fine. Sea water goes
in its own time salted and warm down

my face when your voice or the wind begins to
lift ash from my hand, to sanctify the day:

This one sun. This one hill. Nothing—
that's what we'll be left with. Laughter, green-gold

flecks in your eyes, everything gone. We can
chant, sing, and psalm all we want. You can't stay.

Section Three

SOLO DUPLEX
BY ANNE MYLES

A woman who's been alone for decades
is a single apple rolling in a bowl.

An apple in a hand-turned wooden bowl
resembles nothing but its own held shape

as, resembling nothing, light holds and shapes
the walls, the floor, the body on a bed.

The walls, the floor, body resting on a bed
rock on an inconceivable ocean —

or is it time that rocks us like an ocean?
A blurred page drifts, blown from the metropolis.

Pages drift by. Blown from the metropolis,
imagine horns and distant voices calling.

Distantly, horns sound like voices calling
behold, the woman who's been long alone.

THE MUSEUM OF WHAT I NO LONGER SAY

BY MICHELE SHARPE

Suck it up, for God's sake greets visitors
in the domed foyer, where one can turn right or left
to exhibits regularly refreshed
with new content like *Have you tried yoga?*
and *I know a lie when I hear one.*
Pull out the drawers on this wall to find deliberate
cruelties, finely tuned to their recipients,
like *The person you lie to most is yourself,*
and under the banner reading *Dangerous people*
don't make threats are the stories I told
of sharp cocktail rings and sucker punches
and a dog kept in shadows who was trained to attack,
stories I once held close to my two hearts,
one red and the other a cyanotic blue.
The hearts frame a glass case with responses
to questions my partner asked our dog
instead of me: *Don't worry, dinner's*
almost ready. Yes, I'll be home by two.
At the end of the hall, a toy train's boxcars go round
and round, packed with words behind the engine
If I were you.

THE MESSENGER
BY RUTH MOTA

I clutch my doctor's letter for another disabled placard
as I limp through the parking lot of the hospital
grateful for the extension of my privilege
but feeling old and clumsy in my hobbling.

Walking towards me in the crosswalk
a woman – willowy and stylish
in her black and white wool jacket.
Her Nefertiti neck rises from an up-turned collar.
Tiny circles of gray hair frame her ebony face.

Beauty strikes me.
Then sorrow.
Sorrow for scenes from Charlottesville to Minneapolis,
followed by longing for African friends and my Brazilian family
so far away, and loss that no one in my current circle looks like her.

When we cross paths, she stops
leans her head towards mine.
Her lips brush my ear as she whispers:
“Want to know a secret?” Stunned, I nod.
She says: “I know I'm limping
but when I saw you coming, I thought to myself –
if I look as good as her, I'm all right.”

Our spontaneous embrace lingers
ripples out beyond the cars
like the voices of Mozambicans I once heard
by a river celebrating a loved one's rising soul.
Our touch flows down to woven roots,
roots from where we,
from where all life
sprang and keeps spreading.
Us - one blessed organism.

TALKING TO LONELINESS

BY JOAN MAZZA

You have an annoying way of creeping up on me when I'm feeling immersed in a book or making art. I don't like the way you sneak in, steal my calm and steady satisfaction, or make me wish there was someone here to respond when I ask, *Does this Asian stir-fry need more garlic or fish sauce?*

Late afternoon, when my body says *Rest*, you encourage me to cuddle with cats, but my cats don't like to cuddle, prefer the window seat or a bathroom's cool tile floor. They don't come when called, don't search my face for emotional clues like a dog. I hate your habit of leaving your

saggy baggage where I can trip. You speak with scorn in a brutal voice meant for criminals and trainers. You're an intruder, interloper, busybody. I was doing well alone in this, The Great Pause, content to flit from whim to whim, no one to interfere or tell me they had contempt for me, and for

how I live my life and spend my money. Don't show up without an invitation. Don't call me late at night or when you're drunk. Oh, loneliness, go away and come back with an appropriate partner, someone who hugs and makes me laugh, one who says thank you, who'll replace all the burned out bulbs.

FADE

BY ELLEN AUSTIN-LI

Ginkgoes in autumn surrender their golden fans
in one glorious downpour, but no one composes a poem
about the reek of the female's fruit once it hits the ground,

a decay that stinks of vomit. Where is the beauty in the stench
of rotting fruit? I remember my mother once said
every decade brings a change in your body you learn

to accept. It's a trade-off that my mother and I can now
agree upon. The more my beauty fades, the closer we become.
And I can say it now: I was beautiful. Back then I knew

not to embrace what I couldn't be forgiven for —
this shiny body passed down: I was an auburn-haired,
blue-eyed Electra, a pink peony full-petaled and sweet.

My face, the coin that jingled in my pocket,
that glittered freedom from the good-girl prison,
that I traded to buy tenderness from men I as soon ground

beneath the heel of my shoe, is now like gold leaf worn off
a framed masterpiece. This portrait of myself as a siren,
honey to a cloud of flies, now the icing licked clean off

a cupcake. When I was young, I took this horoscope
I read as gospel: *You are attractive to the opposite
sex.* I used this shell, as my mother suspected, as barter

for self. I am past dealing in perfume, in green.
I have no choice but to let go of what I cling to,
these leaves that fall softly at my feet.

THE CARPENTER NEXT DOOR

BY SARAH PROVOST

When Derek is drunk, he doesn't even try
to use his English. He drapes himself
over the fence between yards, stretches

his arms to me and croons, "my lady, my lady."
I pretend I don't hear him until I can't
resist his blue eyes, the black curls barely tamed

under a bandana. Smiling warily, I creak up
from burying beans or pulling Creeping Charlie.
"My lady," he avows as I approach, and walks

his fingers along the top of the fence. "Yes?
We go." His arms flap like eagle wings. Are we
flying? Escaping? Maybe we'll lift up, circle around

and take off back to, say, Smolensk, where I suspect
he was in some trouble. He is trouble. A perfect
craftsman until payday, then gone.

He shrugs, looks skyward in frustration, holds
his crossed hands to his heart. I have
a son older than he is. Derek reaches

and I give him my grubby
hand. He kisses it, holds it to his cheek,
then wanders off. I shake my head,

go back to beans and weeds, a lady
of a certain age with dirt on my nose.
"My lady," he sings, as he climbs to the upper

deck and picks up his hammer. "My lady."
Too quietly for him to hear, I murmur
Spasibo, Derek. Thanks.

THANK YOU, MENOPAUSE

BY MARY SILWANCE

I am no longer impregnable.

Which is to say,

I can fuck all I want

without

taking my temperature

testing my viscosity

without

fumbling to insert

an object correctly

before being inserted

without

being penetrated by

cooper hormone fishhook

before penetration

without

popping daily doses of

chemical tic tacs

without

being implanted on the arm

so as not to be implanted

without

determining if my rush

of arousal is Sponge worthy

without

worry if a guest overstays

instead of pulling out

without

worry of breakage

from the cheap brand

without

chaffing from the cheap brand

without

worry of sabotage

because erupting freely

feels so much better.

Thank you,
for the pause

maybe now
I can erupt freely

LUCKY STRIKE

BY ANASTASIA VASSOS

Rain this morning
just past the middle knuckle
of Cape Cod's fingered peninsula
the yellow cactus flowers opening
in unexpected humidity.
This is not desert
except for New England sand scattered everywhere.

Half a century ago
I drove into this lidless town
that was not home
and now I ask where beauty lies —

The oak's branches have abandoned
the tree and lie scattered
after the thunderstorm
breaking into ground.

What's empty now is the center of town
so early in Spring but my mind fills
with memory of what it felt like

to own a beat-up car
my arm hanging out the window
cigarette between my index and middle fingers
music streaming from the car radio
like the smoke from my Lucky Strikes.

This is how I age.
One memory at a time, each stanza
of my life written, blurred, erased, revived.
The yellow desert flowers
look lost, out of place, but I don't care.

DEAR BRA,
BY SUSAN VESPOLI

Remember when I wasn't old
enough to be held by you?
Me, flat as a patio,
you, stretchy panel over fried eggs.

You went from trainer to teacup,
from barely A to full B –
silk-lined, poly-filled,
slightly padded clam shells.

When I grew heavy with milk,
you became hoist, bucket lift
on a John Deer tractor,
underthing with an open-and-close

window for my nipples
to stream and douse infant screams.
After my babies, breasts flapped
like fabric Frisbees,

foldable flying discs
you molded into mounds.
You tamped my drooped points
under Band-Aids, pasties.

And when I finally left that marriage,
you perked from bland beige to sleek black,
from granny sag to lace edge, front snap,
packed me to travel with new lover.

And when the pandemic came
and I was only seen at a distance
or from the shoulders up on Zoom,
you retired to my top drawer,

a tired garment. No longer needed.
Thank you for your support, but goodbye
underwire, boulder holder, chest corset.
Hello, jiggle freedom bounce.

RECYCLING IS FOR THE BIRDS

BY BERNADINE LORTIS

My daughter says, *I know*
you're frugal — saving used coffee grounds
and old egg shells for your garden — but what
is it with this bag of dusty fuzz?
A crazy senior craft? It isn't fuzz, I tell her

it's not dusty; it's dryer lint, it's sterile
heated at high temperatures, saved
for pregnant birds returning north
to weave through narrow twigs
their mates retrieve from sodden leaves
and grasses blown from winter winds

to pillow their nests, to add comfort
as tiny eggs hatch in the lilac tree outside
my window while I'm serenaded
by a chorus of birdsong my avian
friends kindly trade in return.

Don't you dare go senile on me! she shouts
and shakes her head, drives away without
waving — her radio blaring to erase
the change she feels she's observed
fearing what she'll discover when
next she visits, but she'll find me

strange as ever, fresh dirt hiding
under my nails and stories of fledglings
as I make coffee and eggs for her breakfast
certain to shove the grounds and shells
behind the toaster before she arrives.

LIKE A DOVECOTE
BY S.B. MERROW

This is the room where I mess with the dead,
a sanctuary for sequined pigeons, among other extinctions —
a whimbrel of iron, doggerel on the walls, and

in one corner, a pile of memories — of waking
on Christmas to find a bike beside my bed, periwinkle
perfect, a bell for my thumb — permission to fly.

It is the room I was born to defile, a concentration
of refuse, unwieldy knives, desires — just the place
to hawk fancy's flights.

In the basement I keep a circus bear — a living furnace,
heart-valves coated with toasts of rust I trust will rise
forever in the arteries of his dungy body.

Last night I had the strangest dream (it's an old song)
that I was he, hungry, on a sparse hillside outside of town.
I took cover in a fallen foundation, the earthiest place

I could find that felt, yet, like a dovecote, a room for nesting
among the feathers — and there I waited for the end
among loose stones strewn. Butterflies lifted from my black fur
like the ghosts of birds.

JUNE 1, 2020: GEORGE FLOYD IN THE NEWS

BY KALI LIGHTFOOT

“What Kalamazoo needs is more police”

-- my father, 1967 race riots

There was a poem I wanted to write this morning—
Minnesota, racism, history, violence, family? —
but instead I went to Whole Foods for the beans
I needed for a turkey and white bean stew.
I had a difficult time finding things, felt
a little sick, wandered a bit, and could not think
clearly about what else my privileged kitchen needs.
I didn't notice the arrows at checkout, and someone
sent me to the back of the line. After checker James
waved me over and entered my Prime card for me,
he asked me to test the bag he had just filled:
is this too heavy? and he made it lighter.
When I turned the wrong way to exit, he smiled
and teased me, and by the time I reached my car
I was crying. I returned my cart, dithered a minute
and walked back in to say *thank you, James,*
for being helpful to me; found the manager and told him
James was really kind to me and I think someone
should know that. I cried again and drove home
to find that a friend had sent me “The End of Poetry”
by Ada Limon. It was the poem I wanted to write.

HOW I BECAME A STEWING CHICKEN

BY ELLIE ALTMAN

Its legs splayed,
the freshly roasted chicken is tender and done.

Its crispy skin falls from the meat
into my washed hands.

Its fat, the lushest cuticle cream,
a balm soothing my seventy-year-old skin,
slippery and glistening,
tempting me to finger-lick over the kitchen sink.

My thoughts move beyond its proud, bosomy body —
bred as a Dolly Parton impersonator —

to my own boyish one, approaching fat-free.
Stringy with its small muscles, tendons, and bones exposed
like a chicken's legs or wings.

With time and a mix of genes, dog-walking, feeding, and aging,
my shins and calf muscles are revealed,
wrapped in tissue-thin skin —
freckled, bruising easily.

I am an old bird, lithe and gristly,
with scant fat
that makes a chicken delicious,
yet still clucking and darting
about a crowded barnyard,
gossiping with the other hens,
scratching for grubs and pecking at seeds,
no time to waste,
and a body built for soup stock.

MOVING

BY WILLA SCHNEBERG

My head is leaden and my shoes stone.
I own two dwellings. One is lonely and empty.
Its fuchsia and Japanese maple cry.
The other barely knows me, toys with me,
and has hidden my fettling knife and writing book.

Once I could make letters, few or many
into words angels would whisper,
but now, I can only muster,
“wastepaper basket,” “toilet roll.”

I ride up and down with the weary
whose houses also left them.
I know the key is on the 13th floor,
but it’s missing from the panel of buttons
and I have no magic to get me there.

Before, my divan knew solitude.

I recline into her armless back.
The bridge between my waning life, and
my inchoate one is a burnt offering.

Outside the window ash falls.

CHAPTERS

BY GABRIELLA BRAND

I'll try to clean up before I go,
although I don't yet know when I'll be going,
for the sun still hangs in the sky,
a bit pale, diluted now, but still it's the sun I've always known.
Who can tell how long the light will last or when I should start
peeling off possessions, lugging boxes to the curb,
giving away the black silk skirt made out of the Dior scraps
which belonged to that French friend whose aunt once worked for the famous
couturier. She'd sneak cuttings home at night to stitch into new beauty
which I didn't wear often enough, and yet I don't want to leave it
for the grown children to stuff into a plastic bag, cursing the heavy,
dull weight of loss, of my leavings,
of Broadway Playbills kept in order, rusted lids and canning jars,
unwaxed Rossignols.
Let's not even mention the books no one wants
with their crepuscular bindings, their thin pages cracked like egg shells.
I'll try to get rid of them before I go
for I know that no one will ever read
Anna Karenina the way I did, happily ensconced
on a window seat, sixteen years old and home with a head cold,
Mother pouring *tisane* into a cup and handing it to me, while the December
rays eased their way across the floorboards
and the days, though short, were growing longer,
and I still had chapters left to read.

IN THE AUTUMN SEASON

BY JACQUELYN "JACSUN" SHAH

The days go by me, still I stay,
November shrouding the landscape and my life
for me, my inexpressible life
and silence spreading, a foretaste of death.
This landscape, masterpiece of modern terror
tempests, typhoons, and cyclones,
of iron and steel and blood,
only the same thing—the terror
revealing itself, proclaiming itself . . .

No more of that!

Now *I will intervene*—

At night I gather the milk and the moon,
to put some of it in your ear.
And when you fall back into sterile earth,
I summon the landslide.
The earth lifts its harsh head,
a flock of starlings scatter among the vines,
the aspen grove turns blue,
time is this writing that lights up.

Into the sun-hole of the mind
a long arm embossed with gold slides from the treetops
where an image howls.
Everything's color, motion, explosion, light!

This poem laughs in my face, defies me,
merry with the blue sky of the
rain and bird-song,
the last verge of happiness.
The birds perfume the woods,
I shall stretch out in its sweetness.
Yes, this happens in the autumn season.
It is beautiful to have known
I am the plaything of no sensory power:
this is the weapon,
there in myself only.
Ah, the self is interesting.

Cento—lines, in order of appearance, from: Guillaume Apollinaire; O. V. de L. Milosz; Valery Larbaud; Pierre Jean Jouve; Louis Aragon; Robert Desnos; Jacques Prévert; René Daumal; Eugène Guillevic; Henri Michaux; Philippe Soupault; André Frénaud; Yves Bonnefoy; Jacques Dupin; André du Bouchet; Robert Marteau; Michel Deguy; Jacques Roubaud; Jean Daive; Léon-Paul Fargue; Philippe Denis; Blaise Cendrars; Roger Giroux; Marcelin Pleynet; Emmanuel Hocquard; Saint-John Perse; Paul Éluard; André Frénaud; Alain Delabaye; Jules Supervielle; André Breton; René Char, Char; Jean-Paul de Dadelsen

IN THE EMPIRE OF THE INVISIBLE

BY PHYLLIS KLEIN

Where the dead go, where the moon
lives in a private sky of exhales, coyote
shadow-wails. In the commonwealth of death

peoples' ages go back to beginnings
as anniversaries of decease. Like my mother
who went from ninety-eight to one year since

receiving her passport. She didn't want to lose
control, had already traveled from house to condo
to assisted living to skilled nursing care.

She separated from her body, passed through
the nation-state of her dominion over me,
into a tunnel headed out of any town.

Where sun has expired. And if there are stars,
they might flicker as if in a fog, mole-spirits peeking
from their burrows. Since my mother died, I have

rejuvenated. I see rose pinks, lettuce greens, iris
lavenders, hear them growing. My eyes no longer
stalked by dread, my chest opens its lace curtains.

Since she went invisible, I can bear her wrangled shadows,
her bouquets of thorns bloomed with dragon-fired opals.
In the realm of my seventies, I feel a rebirth, even as life

snakes toward departure, my own span of years ruled
by mystery, uncharted. When I close my eyes, I can
see more than blank space, I can see breezes, gravity, orbit.

THE OTHER BODIES

BY TOTI O'BRIEN

Refused to leave. Or they did, but they randomly
suddenly came back. Uncaring of house rules
they sat on the bed, indenting the brocade spread
bunched up pillows, left wet footprints
on the chenille rug.

They had no sense of personal space
and no manners, despised seniority and didn't
respect turns. They were loud or else stubbornly
quiet. Waltzed from room to room like wild mares
laughing so hard, spit sprinkled like foam
from their painted lips.

Their nails were outrageously crimson, or cobalt blue
or else rainbow, when they wore miniskirts
with their hiking boots. Sometimes they were small
wore pink polka dots, tottered in sandals
tilted their neck back at the sky
smelled of spilled milk.

They claimed to have been reborn
re-baptized in deep holy waters
day after day, since the beginning of time.
They claimed they would survive her.

PRIESTESS

BY KATHARYN HOWD MACHAN

In her cranberry silk, in her
shimmering sash, in the tumble
of stars that silver her hair,
this old woman moves through time
with music in her hips.

Owl-in-the-Moon some dreamers
call her, *Cat-with-One-Paw-Raised*.

She hears and smiles and just
keeps dancing, bare feet
on smooth ground. Within
the way she cups her palms
an ancient magic works, a flashing
waterfall of light so clear
and blue it pulls the sky to her
for her to taste and swallow.

Long ago she left for good
the naked girl obsessed with sorrow,
laughs now because she was
that child who reached so hard.

Mountain echo, ocean roar:
she moves wherever her heart
calls her, finds song in every tree.
She'll smile at Death and flick a wrist
toward where he stands, face raised:
*Share the drumbeat with me now
in every breath I am.*

AFTER MY LAST BREATH

BY SUZANNE EDISON

set my body afloat,
let tide beach my remains,
eagle sweets, dinner

for sand fleas. Let me
driftwood, pocked
with insect hieroglyphs

a scroll translated
touch is the kingdom, open to all

as when we lay corkscrewed.

Let gulls marrow
my skeleton, screech
their dissonant chords like a score

for the years the child
was ill. Let crabs hermit
my skull,

scrabble the vault
that once stored Mood Indigo lyrics
next to my lover's joke

that *happiness was a trend.*

When my heart,
spiny urchin, finally unchambers,
crusting

this string of winged vertebrae,
I'll be swept, scaly

and shimmering as a lure.

CONTRIBUTORS

After retiring as director of Adkins Arboretum in 2014, **Ellie Altman** began writing poems. Her first published poem "How to Peel an Egg" appeared in *The Broad River Review*. She is seeking publication of two chapbooks, *Within Walking Distance* and *Thin as Air*. Altman has attended workshops led by poets Sue Ellen Thompson, Meredith Hadaway, Barbara Crooker, Jeff Coomer, and Nancy Mitchell. She will attend the Key West Literary Society's 2022 Poetry Workshop. Altman is a free-verse poet. Her study of dance contributes significantly to her poetry practice of balance, rhyme, rhythm, repetition, flow, and sway.

Lisa Ashley's writing is informed by her work with incarcerated youth, life experiences in rural New York, Montana, and the Pacific Northwest, being a descendant of survivors of the Armenian Genocide and feminist activism. She lives on Bainbridge Island, WA, where she writes, gardens and is a spiritual director. Her poems have been published in *The Tishman Review*, *Amsterdam Quarterly*, *Last Leaves*, *The Journal of Undiscovered Poets*, *Dwelling Literary*, *Blue Heron Review*, with work forthcoming in *The Avalon Literary Review* and *The Healing Muse*. She earned her BA, Journalism, from the University of Montana and her MDiv from Seattle University.

Ellen Austin-Li's work has appeared in *Artemis*, *Thimble Literary Magazine*, *The Maine Review*, *Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel*, *Rust + Moth*, *Panoply*, and other places. Her first chapbook, *Firefly*, was published by Finishing Line Press (2019); her second chapbook, *Lockdown: Scenes From Early in the Pandemic*, is forthcoming (FLP 2021). A recipient of the Martin B. Bernstein Fellowship in Poetry, she is an MFA candidate at the Solstice Low-Residency Program. Ellen lives with her husband in a newly empty nest in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find her work at www.ellenaustinli.me or follow her on Twitter @EllenAustinLi.

Carol Berg's poems are forthcoming or in *Crab Creek Review* (Poetry Finalist 2017), *DMQ Review*, *Hospital Drive* (Contest Runner-Up 2017), *Sou'wester*, *Spillway*, *Redactions*, *Radar Poetry*, *Verse Wisconsin*. Her chapbooks, *Her Vena Amoris* (Red Bird Chapbooks), and *Self-Portraits in Ides* (Silver Birch Press) are available. Her poems have been nominated for Pushcart Prizes and Best of the Net. She was winner of a scholarship to Poets on the Coast and a recipient of a Finalist Grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

Gabriella Brand's short stories, poems and essays have appeared in over fifty publications. Her most recent work can be found in *Aji*, *Aromatica Poetica*, and the *Comstock Review*. Her travel writing appears in *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Globe and Mail*, and in several anthologies. She is a Pushcart Prize nominee. Gabriella lives near New Haven, CT, where she is a presenter in the OLLI program of the University of Connecticut. She travels widely, mostly on foot.

Wendy Taylor Carlisle lives and writes in the Arkansas Ozarks. She is the author of four books and five chapbooks and is the 2020 winner of the Phillip H. McMath Post-Publication Award for *The Mercy of Traffic*. See other work in *Persimmon Tree*, *Rattle*, *The Atlanta Review* and others. In June Doubleback Books reprinted her 2008 book, *Discount Fireworks* as a free download.

<https://doublebackbooks.wordpress.com/discount-fireworks-by-wendy-t-carlisle/> Her website is www.wendytaylorcarlisle.com.

Lisa Charnock's poetry has appeared in *The Southern Poetry Review*, *Grist*, and *Red Wheelbarrow*, among other publications. Lisa earned her MFA at the Solstice Creative Writing Program, and has studied under Ellen Bass, Danusha Laméris, and many other wonderful poets. She teaches a bimonthly poetry workshop at the Salinas Valley State Prison.

Joanne M. Clarkson's fifth poetry collection, *The Fates* won Bright Hill Press annual contest and was published in 2017. Her poems have been published in such journals as *Nimrod*, *American Journal of Nursing*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Western Humanities Review*. Clarkson has received an Artist Trust Grant and an NEH grant to teach poetry in rural libraries. A registered nurse, she has specialized in home health and Hospice work. See more at www.JoanneClarkson.com.

Mary Crow served 14 years as Poet Laureate of Colorado.

Mary Alice Dixon lives in Charlotte, North Carolina, where she is a long-time hospice volunteer, a former attorney and a retired professor of architectural history. Her recent work is in, or forthcoming from, *Belmont Story Review*, *Broad River Review*, *Capsule Stories*, *Fourth River*, *Kakalak 2020*, *Kakalak 2021*, *Main Street Rag*, *moonShine Review*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Passager's Pandemic Diaries*, *NC Poetry Society's Pinesong: Awards 2021*, *Stonecoast Review*, *That Southern Thing*, and elsewhere. The ghosts of her pets, a cat named Alice B. Toklas, a cat named Thomas Merton, and a dog named Daisy, still keep her company.

Merrill Oliver Douglas is the author of the poetry chapbook *Parking Meters into Mermaids* (Finishing Line Press, 2020). Her poems have appeared in *Baltimore Review*, *Barrow Street*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Cimarron Review*, *Comstock Review* and *The Briar Cliff Review*, among others. She lives near Binghamton, New York.

Suzanne Edison writes often about the intersection of illness, healing, medicine and art. Her recent chapbook, *The Body Lives Its Undoing*, was published by Benaroya Research Institute. Poetry can be found in: *Michigan Quarterly Review*; *JAMA*; *HEAL*; *Persimmon Tree*; *SWWIM*; *Intima: A Journal of Narrative Medicine*; *Naugatuck River Review*; *What Rough Beast*; *The Ekphrastic Review*, and in several anthologies including: *Face to Face: Women Writers on Faith, Mysticism and Awakening* and *The Healing Art of Writing, Volume One*. Suzanne is a Hedgebrook Women Writers Retreat 2019 alum and teaches writing workshops at Richard Hugo House in Seattle.

D. Dina Friedman has published one book of poetry, *Wolf in the Suitcase* (Finishing Line Press) and two young adult novels: *Escaping Into the Night* (Simon and Schuster) and *Playing Dad's Song* (Farrar Straus Giroux). Dina has also published widely in literary journals and received two Pushcart Prize nominations for poetry and fiction. She has an MFA from Lesley University and teaches at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst. Originally from New York City, she currently lives next door to a farm with 500 cows.

Trina Gaynon's poems appear in *Fire and Rain: Eco-poetry of California* and *Mizmor Anthology*, also recently in the journals *Buddhist Poetry Review*, *Essential*, and *45th Parallel*. Her chapbook *An Alphabet of Romance* is available from Finishing Line Press. She currently leads a group of poetry readers at the Senior Studies Institute in Portland and participates in the Ars Poetica community.

Mary Hanford is a retired professor who got her doctorate in middle age and was lucky to land a tenure track job in a small private liberal arts college. Also fortunate to land three Fulbright grants and several GlobalPartner grants which let her travel on others' nickel. She has three books out and is publisher shopping for a current manuscript. Mary Hanford has published many poems and declares that poetry is her first love. She has three children and three grandchildren.

Karen Paul Holmes 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* and *Prairie Schooner*, among others. Holmes founded and hosts a critique group in Atlanta and Writers' Night Out in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Jude Hopkins, a retired college-level instructor, taught English and news writing at various universities in Pennsylvania, New York state and California. She was one of the runners-up in Proximity Magazine's 2018 Personal Essay Contest, judged by Hanif Abdurraqib, and has published essays in *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Belladonna* and *P.S. I Love You*, to name a few. Her poems have been published in *Timber Creek Review* and *California Quarterly*, among other journals. Her publications can be seen on her website: <https://judehopkins.withknown.com/>. She is also in the process of querying agents for a novel with a snarky protagonist.

Melissa Huff feeds her poetry from many sources — the mystery of the natural world, the way humans everywhere connect and the importance of spirit. Her love for reading poetry aloud won her awards in 2019 and 2020 in the BlackBerry Peach Prizes for Poetry: Spoken and Heard, sponsored by the National Federation of State Poetry Societies. Recent publishing credits include *Northern Colorado Writers' Chiarascuro: Anthology of Virtue & Vice*, *Blue Heron Review*, *Persimmon Tree*, and *Snapdragon: A Journal of Art and Healing*. Melissa has been frequently sighted making her way – by car, train or airplane – between Illinois and Colorado.

For most of her life, **Dee Johnson's** writing was constrained by corporate interests and the need to earn a living. She has had several thousand words published in brochures and advertisements. After retirement, she enjoyed a second career as editor of a small custom magazine, a position that gave her opportunities to travel and to explore various ways of looking at the world through essays. She began writing poetry at age 50.

Claire Keyes is the author of two collections of poetry: *The Question of Rapture* (Mayapple Press) and *What Diamonds Can Do* (WordTech). Winner of the Beullah Rose Poetry Prize from Smartish Pace, she is a recipient of a grant in poetry from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and a fellowship from the Wurlitzer Foundation. She is Professor emerita at Salem State University and her poems have been published recently in *Mom Egg Review*, *Turtle Island*, *One Art*, and *Persimmon Tree*. She lives in Marblehead, Massachusetts where she conducts a monthly poetry salon.

Phyllis Klein is a psychotherapist and poet from the San Francisco Bay Area. Her work has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies including *Chiron Review*, *Sweet*, *3Elements*, *I-70*, and the *Minnesota Review* among others. She was a finalist in the Sweet Poetry Contest, 2017, the Carolyn Forché Humanitarian Poetry Contest, 2019, and the Fischer Prize, 2019. She's been nominated for multiple Pushcart Prizes. Her new book, *The Full Moon Herald*, from Grayson Books, is a newspaper of poetry and has won honorable mention in poetry for the Eric Hoffer Book Award, 2021.

<https://phyllispoetry.com>

Charlene Langfur is an organic gardener, an LGBTQ writer, a Syracuse University Graduate Writing Fellow and most recently a series of her poems appeared in *Weber-The Contemporary West* as well as poems in *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Inlandia* and *Inkwell*.

Kali Lightfoot lives in Salem, MA. Her poems and reviews of poetry have appeared in journals and anthologies, been nominated twice for Pushcart, and once for Best of the Net. Her debut poetry collection, *Pelted by Flowers*, was named as a “most anticipated” book for April, 2021 by Lambda Literary, and is available from CavanKerry Press and other venues. Kali earned an MFA at Vermont College of Fine Arts, find her at kali-lightfoot.com.

With background in elementary and adult education, interior design and real estate, **Bernadine Lortis**, now retired, devotes time to writing, gardening and watercolor. She credits love of nature and work ethic to growing up on a farm. Poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction have been published online and in print in *Fridays at Ten*, *Ariel Chart*, *Women Speak*, *Stirring-A Literary Collection*, *Sundress*, *Mused-Bella Online*, *Silver Birch Press*, *Every Writers Resource*, *Cosmo Funnel*, *Poetry Super Highway* and *Flash Fiction for Flash Memory*. She lives in St. Paul, MN, winters in San Miguel de Allende, MX. with her husband of 50 years.

Katharyn Howd Machan, author of 39 collections of poetry (most recently *A Slow Bottle of Wine*, winner of the 2019 Jessie Bryce Niles Chapbook Competition) has lived in Ithaca, New York, since 1975 and has taught Writing at Ithaca College since 1977. After many years of coordinating the Ithaca Community Poets and directing the national Feminist Women’s Writing Workshops, Inc., she was selected to be Tompkins County’s first poet laureate. Her poems have appeared in numerous magazines, anthologies, textbooks, and stage productions, and she has edited three thematic anthologies, most recently a tribute collection celebrating the inspiration of Adrienne Rich.

Joan Mazza worked as a medical microbiologist, psychotherapist, and taught workshops nationally on understanding dreams and nightmares. She is the author of six books, including *Dreaming Your Real Self* (Penguin/Putnam), and her work has appeared in *Italian Americana*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *The Nation*. She lives in rural central Virginia. www.JoanMazza.com

Once upon a time, **S.B. Merrow** was apprenticed to a flute maker, and for years worked with her hands—and her ears—on the instruments of professional musicians. Since returning to her first love, poetry, she has been published in journals such as *Salamander*, *Nimrod International Journal*, *Gyroscope Review*, and *Free State Review*. Her first book, *Unpacking the China*, won the QuillsEdge Press 2016 chapbook competition. In 2020, her collection *Everyone A Bell* was published by Kelsay Books. She lives in Baltimore with her husband, non-fiction author Robert Kanigel.

Tucson writer **Susan Cummins Miller**, a former field geologist, paleontologist, and college instructor, has published six novels and an anthology containing the works of 34 women writers of the American frontier. Her poems appear frequently in journals and anthologies. Two poetry collections, *Making Silent Stones Sing* and *Deciphering the Desert: a book of poems*, are forthcoming from Finishing Line Press. Website: www.susancumminsmiller.com

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

Judith H. Montgomery's poems appear in the *Tahoma Literary Review*, *Bellingham Review*, and *Healing Muse*, among other journals, and in a number of anthologies. Her first collection, *Passion*, received the Oregon Book Award for Poetry. Her fourth book, *Litany for Wound and Bloom*, was a finalist for the Marsh Hawk Prize, and appeared in August 2018 from Uttered Chaos Press. Her prize-winning narrative medicine chapbook, *Mercy*, appeared from Wolf Ridge Press in March 2019.

Katrinka Moore is the author of three books — *Wayfarers*, *Numa*, and *Thief* — and a chapbook, *This is Not a Story*, winner of the New Women's Voices Prize. Recent poems and artwork appear in *Terrain*, *Wild Roof*, *Otoliths*, *Woven Tale*, and *Exposition Review*, which nominated her poem *Meantime* for a Pushcart Prize. With her mentee in the PEN American Prison Writing Program, she was awarded the 2020 L'Engel-Rahman Prize for Mentorship. In "The Grammar of Animacy," the title and italicized words and phrases come from Robin Wall Kimmerer's "Speaking of Nature" in *Orion Magazine*, June 2017.

Ruth Mota lives with her Brazilian husband of 53 years in the Santa Cruz Mountains of California. A retired international health trainer, she now devotes her time to writing and facilitating poetry circles. Her poems have been published in various online and print journals including *Terrapin Books*, *Passager Books*, *High Shelf Press* and *Fourth River*.

Anne Myles is Professor Emerita of English at the University of Northern Iowa. She has a PhD from the University of Chicago and received her MFA from the Vermont College of Fine Arts in July 2021. Her poems have appeared in journals including *North American Review*, *Split Rock Review*, *Green Briar Review*, *Lavender Review*, *Whale Road Review*, *Gyroscope Review*, and *Minerva Rising*. She has been nominated for Best of the Net and for inclusion in Best New Poets. She lives with her dog and cats in Waterloo, Iowa.

Linda Neal lives near the beach with her dog, Mantra. Her poems have appeared in *Calyx*, *Chiron Review*, *Gyroscope Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Tampa Review* and elsewhere. She holds an MFA from Pacific University. She founded and hosted several reading series in the LA area over the years and currently leads a poetry workshop at her local library (Redondo Beach). She has published two collections *Dodge & Burn*, 2014, *Not About Dinosaurs*, 2020, and is at work on a third.

KB Nelson KB Nelson is a Canadian writer who thrives in the intersection of art and science. You can find her poems in a variety of journals including *Tiny Spoon*, *Sonic Boom* and *Sea-To-Sky Review*. She has published one chapbook, *Muse of Natural History*. KB has resided from coast to coast in Canada, in Arizona, and in New Zealand. A graduate of Simon Fraser University's Southbank writing program, she currently lives, writes and hikes the beaches and forests on the unceded territory of the Sechelt First Nation on B.C.'s Sunshine Coast.

Martina Reisz Newberry's most recent book is *Blues For French Roast With Chicory*, available now from Deerbrook Editions. She is the author of *Never Completely Awake* (from Deerbrook Editions), *Where It Goes* (Deerbrook Editions), *Learning By Rote* (Deerbrook Editions) and *Running Like A Woman With Her Hair On Fire Collected Poems* (Red Hen Press). She has been included in *The Sixty Four Best Poets of 2018* (Black Mountain Press/The Halcyone Magazine editorial staff). Newberry has been widely published in literary journals in the U.S. and abroad. She lives in Los Angeles.

Toti O'Brien is the Italian Accordionist with the Irish Last Name. Born in Rome, living in Los Angeles, she is an artist, musician and dancer. She is the author of *Other Maidens* (BlazeVOX, 2020), and *An Alphabet of Birds* (Moonrise Press, 2020).

Kyle Potvin's debut full-length poetry collection is *Loosen* (Hobblebush Books, January 2021). Her chapbook, *Sound Travels on Water*, won the Jean Pedrick Chapbook Award. She is a two-time finalist for the Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award. Her poems have appeared in *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Rattle*, *Ecotone*, *The New York Times*, and others. She is a peer reviewer for *Whale Road Review*. Kyle lives in New Hampshire.

Sarah Provost's poems have appeared in *American Poetry Review*, *Poetry*, *Michigan Poetry Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Hollins Critic* and elsewhere. A collection, *Inland, Thinking of Waves*, was published by Cleveland State University Press. She has also had fellowships at Yaddo, Bread Loaf, and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and a grant from the Massachusetts Council for the Arts.

Donna Pucciani, a Chicago-based writer, has published poetry worldwide in *Shi Chao Poetry*, *Gradya*, *Acumen*, *Poetry Salzburg*, and other journals. Her most recent book of poetry is *EDGES*.

Janisse Ray thinks about nature, community, and society in her work. She has a collection of essays out this fall from Trinity University Press, called *Wild Spectacle*. It is her eighth book. Her latest poetry collection is *Red Lanterns*, out in spring 2021. She lives and works in coastal Georgia.

Robin Richstone is a writer, painter, and gardener whose poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *Borderlands*, *New England Review*, *North American Review*, *Briar Cliff Review*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, and other magazines, many under her previous name, Robin Sheckman. Her chapbook, *The Museum of Fresh Starts*, was published in 2019. Her website is <https://robinrichstone.com>.

Mary Kay Rummel's ninth poetry book, *Nocturnes: Between Flesh and Stone*, was recently published by Blue Light Press of San Francisco. Her first book, *This Body She's Entered*, won a Minnesota Voices Award from New Rivers Press. *The Lifeline Trembles* won the Blue Light Award from Blue Light Press and *Love in the End* was a chapbook award winner from Bright Hill Press. She is co-editor of *Psalms of Cinder & Silt, poems about experiences with fires in California* (Solo Novo Press). She is a Poet Laureate emerita of Ventura County, CA and divides her time between Minneapolis and Ventura.

Carla Sarett's recent poems appear in *Blue Unicorn*, *Prole*, *Trampoline*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Journal of Compressed Creative Arts* and elsewhere; her essays have been nominated for Best American Essays and the Pushcart. She awaits publication of her debut novel, *A Closet Feminist* (Unsolicited Press) in early 2022. Carla lives in San Francisco.

Renée M. Schell's debut collection, *Overtones*, is forthcoming from Tourane Poetry Press. Her poetry appears in *Catamaran Literary Reader*, *Literary Mama*, *Naugatuck River Review*, and other journals. In 2015 she was lead editor for the anthology (*AFTER*)*life: Poems and Stories of the Dead*. She holds a Ph.D. from Stanford University and teaches second grade in a diverse classroom in San Jose, CA.

Jan Zlotnik Schmidt's work has been published in many journals including the *The Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Cream City Review*, and *Kansas Quarterly*. Her work also has been nominated for the Pushcart Press Prize. Two volumes of poetry were published by the Edwin Mellen Press (*We Speak in Tongues*, 1991; *She had this memory*, 2000) and another, *Foraging for Light* recently was published by Finishing Line Press. (2019).

Willa Schneberg's first poem was published in *The Village Voice* when she was in her early 20's. She was a fellow at Yaddo and MacDowell. She has authored five collections. *In the Margins of the World* was awarded the Oregon Book Award. She worked for the UN in Cambodia from 1992-1993. *Storytelling in Cambodia* was inspired by that time. Willa curates an annual reading of Oregon "Jewish Voices," now in its 22nd year. She is a psychotherapist in private practice in Portland, Oregon, and a ceramic sculptor. A current series is entitled *Bookish*.

Jacquelyn "Jacsun" Shah—A.B. English, Rutgers University; M.A. English, Drew University; M.F.A., Ph.D. English literature/creative writing—poetry, University of Houston. Grants: University of Houston, Houston Arts Alliance. Publications—chapbook: *small fry* (Finishing Line Press 2017); full-length book: *What to Do with Red* (Lit Fest Press 2018); poems in various journals, such as *Rhino*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Gyroscope Review*, *The Woven Tale Press*, *Plath Profiles*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Panoply*; *Literal Latté* (Food Verse Contest, winner 2018).

Michele Sharpe, a poet and essayist, is also a high school dropout, hepatitis C survivor, adoptee, and former trial attorney. Her essays appear in venues including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *Poets & Writers*. Poems are recently published or forthcoming in *Sweet*, *The Mom Egg Review*, *Rogue Agent*, and *Salamander*. She lives in North Florida.

Originally from Egypt, **Mary Silwance** mothers three daughters in Kansas City. She is an herbalism apprentice and farmhand whose work has appeared in numerous publications. Mary serves on the editorial team of *Kansas City Voices* and recently self-published three chapbooks. Mary Silwance explores environmental issues from the intersection of justice and spirituality both at <http://tonicwild.blogspot.com/> and in workshops. Mary is a recent recipient of the Bread Loaf-Rona Jaffe Foundation Scholarship for environmental non-fiction.

Mary Specker Stone is a writer, poet, teacher, mother, and spiritual director whose work has been published in *The Healing Art of Writing* (University of California Press, 2011), *Paradise Review*, and *Gila River Review*. As the grandmother who didn't buy her grandchildren a horse, she's consigned to simple play in nature and with words, and can boast that her youngest grandchild's almost-first words were "double, double." Mary, who lives in Scottsdale, AZ, has an MA in Rhetoric from Northern Arizona University and is a member of the Community of Writers in Phoenix, AZ.

Alison Stone has published seven full-length collections, *Zombies at the Disco* (Jacar Press, 2020), *Caught in the Myth* (NYQ Books, 2019), *Dazzle* (Jacar Press, 2017), *Masterplan*, a book of 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*, and many other journals and anthologies. She is also a painter and the creator of The Stone Tarot. A licensed psychotherapist, she has private practices in NYC and Nyack. www.stonepoetry.org www.stonetarot.com. YouTube – Alison Stone Poetry.

Dawn Terpstra is from Iowa where she leads a communications team. Her poetry appears in current and forthcoming publications, *Main Street Rag*, *Ekphrastic Review*, *The Night Heron Barks*, *Briar Cliff Review*, *San Pedro River Review*, *SWWIM*, and *Eastern Iowa Review*. Her work was selected as Honorable Mention in the *Midwest Review's* 2021 Great Midwest Poetry Contest. Her chapbook, *Songs from the Summer Kitchen*, is forthcoming in September from Finishing Line Press.

Author of *Museum of Rearranged Objects* (Kelsay) as well as of five chapbooks, including *Casbah* and *If You Spot Your Brother Floating By* (Kattywompus), **Judith Terzi's** poems have appeared most recently in *Atlanta Review*, *Lunch Ticket*, *Moria*, and *Spillway*. Her poetry has been read on BBC Radio 3 and has received Pushcart and Best of the Net nominations. She is a former educator who taught high school French for many years as well as English at California State University, Los Angeles, and in Algiers, Algeria.

The poems of **Anastasia Vassos** appear in *RHINO*, *SWWIM*, *Rust+Moth*, *Thrush Poetry Journal*, *Comstock Review* and elsewhere. Her poems have received honorable mention from Marge Piercy in the Joe Gouveia Outermost Poetry Contest. She is the author of *Nike Adjusting Her Sandal* (Nixes Mate, 2021). Her chapbook *The Lesser-Known Riddle of the Sphinx* was named a finalist in Two Sylvias Press Chapbook Prize. A Best of the Net finalist, she was also nominated for the Best New Poets 2021 anthology. She reads for Lily Poetry Review, speaks three languages, and is a long-distance cyclist. She lives in Boston.

Susan Vespoli writes poetry and essays from Phoenix, Arizona. Her poems appear in *Rattle*, *Nasty Women Poets*, *Mom Egg Review*, *dancing girl press*, and other cool spots. She has two upcoming books, one being published by Finishing Line Press, the other, a chapbook by Kelsay Books. For more, check out her website at <https://susanvespoli.com/>.

Laura Grace Weldon has published three poetry collections: *Portals* (Middle Creek 2021), *Blackbird* (Grayson 2019), and *Tending* (Aldrich 2013). She was 2019's Ohio Poet of the Year. Laura edits books and teaches writing classes. Her background includes teaching nonviolence, leading abuse survivor support groups, and writing collaborative poetry with nursing home residents. Connect with her at lauragraceweldon.com

Susan Zimmerman's chapbook, *Nothing is Lost*, was published by Caitlin Press in 1980. Her poems have been published in periodicals such as *Room*, *Fiddlehead*, *The Ontario Review*, *Fireweed*, *Matrix*, and *Calyx*, and in the anthologies *Landscape*, *Writing Right*, and *The Third Taboo*.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The **Winter 2022 Issue** is an open issue with no theme, just fine, contemporary poetry. We welcome all poets, whether emerging or established. We welcome all types of poems. Rhyming poetry is a hard sell, unless done well but we're willing to look at almost everything. No racist, sexist, anti-LGBTQA+ or any other -ist poems. We're not the magazine for that. Check our FAQ page and guidelines for more details. As always, read previous issues, they're available for free on our website or buy a hard copy off Amazon.

Submissions open Oct 1, 2021 and run through December 1, 2021. We will close early if we get all the poems we need, so submit early. We also close to submissions early for the month if we reach our submissions cap. Put 4 poems in one .doc(x) or .rtf document, page breaks in between poems, please, and a bio for the magazine if selected. Do not submit poems individually. Only submit once. If you submit more than 4 poems in a doc., we will read the first 4 and ignore the rest. Please use the name you'd like to be published under.

I know it sounds like a lot of rules (and there's even more in the guidelines) but the rules help us be more efficient at both reading and producing the issue. Have mercy on our overworked editors. They create each issue for the love of poetry.

Please read our full guidelines on Submittable:

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