



# Gyroscope Review

fine poetry to turn your world around



Winter 2023 Issue 23-1



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Winter Issue 2023

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Constance Brewer

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From the Editor:

Welcome to 2023! It seems like 2022 passed in a flash. Four more issues of Gyroscope Review in the history books, and onward to a new year and new Winter issue for a long January. As always, we have a stellar lineup of poems for you by both established and new poets. It's funny how subconscious imagery taps diverse poets at the same time. We have many poems coalescing around a similar theme or two. I expect a diversity of poems each issue and was pleasantly surprised (like every issue) by random poets writing about the same topic, but in different, wonderful ways. Some come at the topic slantwise, and others tackle a subject head on. So many ways to tweak our imagination.

It was lovely to have a constant. For the Winter issue, it's fine poetry to curl up with on a cold night, favorite hot beverage by your side, cat in lap. (I'm from a northern, snowy state. Sorry southerners and our down under friends. At least cats are universal.) I keep a pack of little sticky flags by my side when I read poetry magazines, and tag poems I want to go back to again, to savor, to ponder, to enjoy. Maybe it's part of being in a place where snow and cold are a big part of winter that pushes you to take extra time to reflect. Or maybe it's just a poetry reader thing. Either way, we hope you find many tag worthy and contemplative poems in this issue, and enjoy what our poets offer to you, the winter reader anticipating new found warmth.

Constance Brewer

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# Section One

**I LOVE YOU BUT TONIGHT THE SKY IS AN INDIGO THAT DEMANDS MY FULL ATTENTION**  
BY LA FELLEMAN

Replying to his suggestions  
for my betterment  
with verbal nods  
when all the while I am  
in wonderment

analyzing the color of snow at night  
no longer white; not truly blue

measuring the area of the triangle  
geese cut through the sky

weighing the pattern of effort the skier  
wedged up the side of the hill

cataloging the lace doilies embellished  
by leafless tree shadows

## RIPPLES

BY ELLEN AUSTIN-LI

—after Jericho Brown

I'm talking about ripples here. How the river moves even as we stand still.  
The story doesn't make sense when I try to shape it. The harder chapters don't flow—

their shape, the sense of the story, changes with the telling. In the latest chapter,  
I speak of a poem unseen by my first husband, where I say "I loved you" in Hebrew letters.

Say these letters mean "I'm sorry" in a language only he can decipher.  
And years later, after the poem's written, I learn on-line his liver's laced with cancer.

Say he won't live and I've written him amends before it's too late. These layers lace.  
The river spills from the source to the mouth, then opens to the ocean. Once, the winding

river poured words into a book for my aged father. The source, some spirit, opened  
his hands to this gift mere months before his mind unraveled. At an earlier time,

the gift when a former lover found *Firefly*, the tale of my unraveling, mere months in print.  
A drunk's regret. The wreck when I broke him. The river bends. There, the water's peaceful.

The drunk wreckage did not break me. From what was written, I was forgiven. Peace.  
I'm talking about ripples here. The river moves even when we think we're at a standstill.

QUESTIONS FROM JAIL  
BY KIKA DORSEY

Have you seen the shriveled grass near the jail?  
Did you step carefully to avoid the rattlers?  
Did you try to get past the guards to see me?  
How many broken mouths can they carry?  
How can their voices taste like such disdain?  
How did the homeless woman in the cell  
run like a forgotten river in a gutter?  
Will her meth-eaten teeth ever be replaced?  
Do you know that for every person in jail,  
there's a beetle carrying you across drought-ridden land?  
Did you know that for all shining badges  
you have given up your bloody heart,  
have holstered light against the shadow of ashes  
that is you?  
Did you know that you planted yourself  
with the sole of a giant boot  
while in the jail someone vomits  
canned beef and soggy green beans?  
Did you expect someone else to fix the broken well  
or sell you flowers instead of the bouquet of blades  
I hugged to me and called memory and regret  
as I watched *Ellen* on the tiny TV, headphones on,  
orange jumpsuit like a uniform for a war  
I never wanted to fight?  
Would you like to piss in front of a probation officer  
with red stringy hair and a tattoo  
of a winding snake on her arm?  
Did you know baby rattlers are more dangerous  
than adults because they can't control their venom?  
Can you see how young I was in all  
the happening, departing, claiming, and rootlessness  
of the war of growth?  
Will you call that a crime?  
Did you know that dung beetles navigate  
by the Milky Way and not the sun or moon?  
Have you ever seen the sky from a jail cell  
with its bars and outside the boundless expanse  
of a midnight you can call your own?  
Can you see the trail of light,  
the shit-laden beetles,  
the gavel like a clapper of a bell,  
the sweaty neck of a lover,  
the judges of paradise promising to bring you home  
down the long road in hell,



how the air sometimes tastes like baby pine,  
how your roadside blue sky is so hot, so dry,  
how to return home is like that first thirst  
you have ever known,  
the naked skies like a feast?

OPENING OF THE MOUTH AND EYES CEREMONY, SOPHOMORE BIOLOGY, 10<sup>TH</sup> GRADE  
BY MICHAEL CARTER

But first the weighing of the heart  
and if it floats like cottonwood seeds  
on a bare desert breeze, then the ritual reanimation.  
Everything's prepared: organs removed  
and rubbed with spices, pickled in honey,  
layers of linen waxy with embalming oils and  
sacred attention. But always the weighing  
of the heart, but first after school snacks  
provided: goat leg and butchered calf, beef ribs  
all preserved in Pistacia resin, dehydrated  
fruits and grains, a whole sleeve  
of Ritz crackers with individually sliced  
American cheese folded into quarters  
for proper fit. Everything  
in its place. The house hushes  
for the weighing of his heart.  
Lay out the tools to open his eyes  
and mouth: forked blade: splitter  
of the Ka spirit, red jasper serpent,  
adz shape tool, double finger  
blades. It's a methodical process.  
No escape. His body already transported  
waiting to be loosed into the field  
of rushes. Anywhere but here. Who  
will long for him?  
Descended from Gods and ready  
to return to them, leaving behind mere fetish,  
a proximal self for the priest to breath life  
into. They'll pry apart his lips, open  
his eyes force him to breathe again.  
He's not ready  
for the weighing of the heart.  
He's got his license. Getting out  
going to study, hang out in the park, dance  
with his friends in New Wave sunglasses stolenr  
from the supermarket. Waiting, waiting  
waiting for the magic to happen  
for the weight of the heart, for it to lift off,  
lift off and be free of all this.

THE DAY AFTER ROE VS. WADE IS OVERTURNED, I FILL MY FOUNTAIN SODA  
BY JENNIFER R. EDWARDS

while my husband selects a different table by draping his bulky NFL sweatshirt then happily walks back to me at the machines & we approach his table together & it is, after all, like the table I want & it almost seems like we find it together. In his mind we really do, pick things well & together this way, so I nearly sit without acknowledging. Hadn't he seen me at the other table? I considered it clean & sufficiently distant from others & convenient to exits & large enough & simple enough for us. What if I had left my purse or some relic of my presence staring at him? Maybe he would have moved it or I would have had to retrieve it. Sometimes I suck sweetness from simple moments. I'm amazed anyone offers free refills in this burning, thirsty world. I'm sorry/not sorry I expect explanations. He responds, *well* and launches off like this is a congressional debate. I can't hear all the reasons but know he 100% decided on that table despite XYZ. *That one had peanut shells.* (Not many, on the ground, & I could have sat in that spot). If we look hard enough, can't we find fault in everything? Anything is asymmetrical or ugly in certain light & angles, but I'm too old for tricks & filters. *It's not a big deal* (not for you maybe, so let me have what I want). It's a raw deal for the relocated, the ousted, the woman unable to even pick her own freaking spot. Why, exactly, was my table not good enough? He would have let it be *if I had picked the right one*. After getting the food, he tells me which is mine using words like *thicker & little & all the way*. Mine has all the condiments & veggies; his so plain. So why is it mine he describes? We eat & eat. Gluttonous at this table, at all our tables. My burger gets away from me. Some days, it's our life I'm devouring. I'm sick of men saying they're feminists without knowing what that means & making all the decisions & not listening. I forget I need vinegar until he gets up to deliver it. Today tiny packages are too much. They explode awkwardly & everything is acidic & maybe that is the taste I came for. A sign says *please speak with the Manager on Duty*. I can have *questions or comments*. I want this classified as both & filed in my phone under "notes": even non-violent men are violent. The most non-violent man is still a man, always pushing his meat & making up his mind. I don't know how I know this & still marry & keep loving a man & trying to raise another. I keep joking & joining myself to a nonviolent/violent man who loves me & tells me where I should sit & sufficiently reaches things I need & points out broken remnants. If I should choose such a crummy path, why should he go there too? *Do you want more fries?* Meaning, *can I eat these?* *I don't know, anticipating my needs isn't my strong suit* I say, joking about overpacking for vacation earlier. But I anticipate my needs effectively by anticipating additional, unexpected needs, being open to mild chaos. I'm still in love with being in love, have faith in fullness. Oh, cherry-vanilla-orange Coke! Oh, my curious custom-made carbonation; how you fill artificially. How you refuse to choose a flavor. How you hit & hit so well. We speed home singing about how Madonna gets in the groove. What's a warning & what's a promise if the pitch is the same? *Boy, you've got to prove your love to me.*

**IT ISN'T EVER DELICATE TO LIVE**  
BY KARI GUNTER-SEYMOUR

She feels like last night's wine bottle,  
nothing left inside but grainy, bitter bits.  
In a magazine at the Vet's Office,  
she read women over fifty obsess  
about mortality. These days, she thinks  
less about death, than of living too long,  
impoverished, her life a footnote  
in the Baptist church bulletin.  
A woman who rarely cries though  
she might be better for it, awake night  
after night, imagining a life, brittle bones  
jutting her calico fleece. No wonder  
she's talking to the air, walking  
the deer track home alone, jaw clinched,  
a worn leash and empty collar  
clutched dearly to her chest.

WHEN I RESIGN FROM MY FAITH COMMUNITY MY THERAPIST GIVES ME A QUARTZ  
HEALING BOWL AND TELLS ME IT'S TUNED TO THE HEART CHAKRA  
BY SANDRA FEES

And I wonder how to tune a heart  
how to calibrate its valves,  
incant blood and revive the four  
chambers. Is it possible

to cushion each hollow with its own  
prayer—

rainforests in one  
unravelling galaxies in another  
a symphony of cats  
a language of pollinators?

I strike the frosted bowl, larger  
than my heart, smooth inside

and outside balanced on open  
hands. It has only one

chamber. The soft charisma

of my chest ripens with consolation  
like nectarines in July, perishable

but blooming so pink in the sunlight  
I hardly notice the ancient sound  
pouring itself out into the room

the song  
pouring out of me.

## THE GIFT OF THE GRIOT\*

BY DOROTHY JOHNSON-LAIRD

You have sea songs flowing out of your mouth,  
wise lips,  
fragments of ships,  
fish gold streaming from your tongue.

Ancestor's stories of the coaxing fire, of sparks,  
the way the women stirred them.

This old man in your face with knobbed cane,  
marks out his way on the ground.

The words move in spirals,  
they are not straight.  
They find you in night dreams,  
and float into your head.

The fire's magic, the heat of it,  
a memory skimming your body's surface.  
The old people whisper their stories through you,  
they don't let you forget, run away.

They want you to acknowledge the fire's power.  
They want you to know the old stories,  
better than any book,  
to cling to the feeling of the sounds,  
the heat cast behind them.

They want you to let the stories ripple out of your head,  
snakes caressing soft sand

*\*A griot is a West African historian, storyteller, praise singer, poet, or musician*

## MYTH-FILLED GHAZAL

BY ALISON STONE

Force-fed Yahweh, I preferred the Greek myths.  
Not ichor, wounded goddesses leak myths.

Boulder shouldered for eternity. Rape.  
Betrayal. Liver pecked out. Such bleak myths.

Give Persephone back her sex drive, Eve  
her rib. Write feminist critique of myths.

Kidnapped daughters return. A foolish king  
sprouts donkey ears. Heaven's for the meek. Myths

may comfort but the poor still starve. Awkward  
teen lifeguard stares, the beach jeweled with sleek, myth-

worthy women he would never dare approach. When  
reality's a let-down, we seek myth.

I dream three moon-drenched mountains, a huge bird  
with money-covered wings. In its beak, myths.

Often honesty's best at a slant. Some  
moms hide spinach in brownies. I sneak myths

into my daughter's bedtime tales, hope she  
feels them breathe. Not dusty, antique myths.

We give heroes beauty, strength. Lots of sex.  
Our common, human hungers peek from myths.

Labels are cages. Mean girl. Fatty. Jock.  
Greasy, no one-will-sit-with-him freak. Myths

from middle school stick. Long ago, streams had  
magic and the animals could speak – myths

worth keeping. Stone yearns for stories that feed  
souls, not threadbare prayer shawls and weak myths.



## MIRROR SONNET: THE LOFT LADDER

BY JUDITH TAYLOR

How they loved one another. And that was all that mattered.  
Coming back down the loft ladder, she muttered  
*let it all lie*. Let it stay up there forever  
in the tight space with the spiders and condensation.  
A terrible feeling suddenly overcame her:  
all these things could be given a different construction.  
The photographs showed nothing but smiling faces.  
She could remember terrible blazing arguments  
and yet not one of the albums held the traces:  
happiness chipped away at by presentiments  
that he'd tire of her in the end and go back to his own kind,  
his bitches of friends, who thought she *wouldn't quite do*.  
The invitations and dance-shoes only brought to mind  
after he'd gone, how much she was left to sort through.

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All these things could be given a different construction.  
A terrible feeling suddenly overcame her  
in the tight space with the spiders and condensation  
*- let it all lie. Let it stay up here forever.*  
Coming back down the loft ladder, she muttered  
how they loved one another, and that was all that mattered.

## MY HUSBAND DOESN'T WANT TO READ MY POETRY ANYMORE

BY ROBIN SMITH

& wants to read hers instead. He loves her metaphors, & she doesn't use the word blue or glitter as much as I do. My husband calls me stupid & boring, yells at me for leaving a pair of socks on the floor & calls me an idiot for dumping the clean laundry on the bed. He kisses her when I'm not home & spends nights over at her apartment while I watch reality tv alone on the sofa where I caught him fucking her just the night before. My husband yells at me for spending money on books & flowers & threatens to cut me off. When I argue that it's my money too, he grabs me & throws me into another room against the bookshelf. My poetry and literature anthologies fall heavy bullets around me. I take the gun out of the safe & give it to the UND police department, I hide the sharpest knives in case my beautiful husband gets uglier. I book a trip to the cities & stay at a hotel with 20 floors & an exquisite bar. & I'm on tinder & in 20 minutes flat I have hundreds of men vying for my attention. I choose one who is well-read & looks kind, & together we dance at the Gay 90s while the dance floor fills with bubbles & I'm drinking red bull & vodka. His arms explore every inlet of my back & waist the rivers of my red hair caught in his fist. He kisses me like it's the last day on earth. I follow him to his apartment which overlooks the city & let him slip the thigh highs off. He looks at me as if I have caught the moon in my mouth & we spend the night crashing against the walls & floor. In the morning we are curled up like two kittens in the sunshine & we don't know each other's middle names, but in this moment, tenderness is all I want. I write this exact poem & tuck it behind the coffee maker next to the missing kitchen knives, & my husband reads it a week later on his way to work & howls like a shot werewolf, but I'm already packed & gone.

**RETIRED**  
**BY ANDY MACERA**

Standing in the parking lot, your cooling body already missing the heat of handshakes and hugs, the wild child of your heart curling into a corner, returning to the calm rhythm of reading, you experience the illusion that the building is moving before realizing you are actually starting to slowly drift away. The rope untied. Thrown at your feet. Slipping off into the unknowable wind and waves. You wonder if this is how the long silence begins. What tricks you will need to learn to keep your mind from wandering off into the forbidden places the guardian angel of busyness has kept it from going. Like Charles Schultz dying hours before his last strip was published. Bear Bryant thirty-seven days after his last game. Your own parents nearly ninety. Isn't that all they think about? Perfectly balanced on opposite ends of a see-saw sofa listening to Nelson Riddle records. The seasons exploding one after the other. It's as if you were back in elementary school. The teacher calls your name and you don't know the answer. Everyone staring and waiting. In that silence you catch a glimpse of the complexity, the terror of the world. Of life. That God will not be nearly as helpful as you were led to believe. That you want to fill the room with your voice to keep it from happening. But when you open your mouth the Milky Way rushes in and carries away the words as you grip the chair tighter. The same way you are now desperately clinging to your box. As if it were a seat cushion. A flotation device. Something useful instead of a place to put the little that is left once the rest of you is gone.

ON TURNING 71  
BY JANE RICHARDS

Like a boy awaiting dismissal from the dinner table,  
October winds wiggle and fidget,  
jiggle leaves into rogue flights,  
restless breaths clearing summer's haze revealing  
trees haloed in gold and fire,  
shrubs flamboyant in orange.

Darkness a vise crowding both sides of the day.

Embracing the waning light  
two girls run down the street,  
blond waves streaming,  
shouts urgent.  
Halloween approaches,  
they promise to show up at my door—  
one, a feather of a girl,  
grown bulky in football uniform;  
the other, sweet as a fawn in the grass,  
transformed into a killer bride.

Breezes keen in the trees,  
oracles warning  
of snowfields vast and impassive  
waiting at their edges—  
no hint of what lies beneath  
or beyond.

But today, nothing to do but  
inhale the sweetness of apples past their prime,  
yield to the insistence of the wind.

## I AM AN EMPTY BINGO CARD

BY MARY SPECKER STONE

I am out of luck and full of possibilities.

I am a sweating tourist in the Sistine Chapel, clutching  
my bobble-head Pope.

I am the offspring of a runaway mutt and the bitch next door,  
an orphan who can't help but relieve herself on the green shag.

I am land of lakes, having swallowed Minnesota,  
and I am a cave who inhales campfire smoke for breakfast.

I am ice flung from the blade of a windmill,  
and I am a cow killed by flying ice.

I am the clearance table with marked-down puzzles  
and vinyl totes who whisper *buy me* to passersby.

I am a failed store full of dusty relics. I am the store's  
screen door nailed open so I won't rattle in the wind.

I am a private jet with a hired pilot flying  
through a moonless sky. I am without a destination.

I am the rotted steeple, resting on the church lawn.  
I am the mold growing in the church basement.  
I am the church, abandoned.

I am a tectonic plate to stand on, quick,  
before it shifts again.

I am unwashed hair, thick with oil and sweat and smoke.  
I am burger and fries growing cold on a coffee table.

I am a bee who costs extra to exterminate.

I am first light, hauled out of darkness by four westbound  
locomotives, and I'm an oil-slicked pea pod in the chopsticks  
of a child who squeals when she sees the train.

I am a last letter written in shaky left-hand script  
on grocery store stationery. I lack adequate postage.

I am an apparition, a pre-reality template; no,  
I'm a single good eye, tearing at both corners.

PRAYER FOR JOSHUA JENNIFER ESPINOZA FROM AN ABANDONED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
IN MICHIGAN  
BY LIAM STRONG

i've given most of the rhubarb  
to the neighbors. but here. a starling  
whose leg had been broken was found  
in my mother's gutters. i cleaned them  
out yesterday in 90 degree heat. i'm not  
sure what else to send. you  
can't deliver thoughts or prayers through  
FedEx. i'm not talking about letters. giving a shit  
is considered a prayer these days. living a  
life is a prayer. for every second  
we see light, a microcosm of breath.  
or the other way around. whatever. i used to  
go to my mother's church for vacation  
Bible school to breathe. mostly to be away  
from her. so i could be a girl elsewhere.  
we're both asking each other  
why, Joshua. look. i wasn't allowed to grow  
my hair long enough to tie a ponytail.  
my mother's smoker lungs graveled  
my voice at an early age. so even if  
i walked gay, no other kid could hear it, my  
lilt like strawberries on ice. you know,  
the voices we're supposed to have. what i mean  
when i pray for you is that i want  
to stop haunting others. my other selves. the woman  
inside me. prayer is a transaction. prayer is  
trans because we're not given ourselves  
at birth. prayer is selfish because we could be  
fulfilled at every request but still  
ask for more. god is tired. god is so  
tired they made the church i pissed on  
with my best friends into a Chick-fil-A.  
i don't know what's worse. to be torn down  
& offered belief or built up  
into something that haunts us. there's a reason  
god is a ghost. i would watch you pray  
back to me, little inklings of want  
hovering above the light. i would be  
able to see you & then i wouldn't.  
it's that easy, the prayer. you say a word,  
i imagine it, close it in my palms,  
& then it's gone.

## A SHRUG OF THE SHOULDERS

BY DAVID JAMES

No wrens in sight, no bluebirds.

Five birdhouses and no takers so far.  
It's early, April 21<sup>st</sup>, and it snowed this morning.

I cut the tulips and daffodils yesterday before the freeze came.  
Every year, spring arrives, acting like a petulant tzar  
waving her hands, cursing everything

in her path. Her hormones  
bounce up and down, careening off tree  
trunks, burrowing across fresh lawns.  
Sometimes the sun shows itself for an afternoon, on loan

from the summer, but it's unreliable. We're ready  
for the warm weather, the picnics and lemonade,  
the baseball games, the hammock, that ice cold beer  
in a lounge chair by the pool. Any wise man or woman

will tell you there's a price to be paid  
for good fortune. With all your might, you can try to steer  
your fate into calm waters, but no one

can predict when the winds will change, when the storms will  
rise up, when that next hurricane will lift its ugly head

over the horizon.



**POEM FOR GERRY**

BY JASON IRWIN

The Jays & Wrens sing his legend.  
The furry creatures call him saint, Moonstruck  
Uncle. *He Who Dresses like a Windy Day*,  
while the gnomes cast eyes of caution  
whenever he moves through the tall grass,  
murmuring his strange benedictions—  
his elegies to chokeberry & Bur Oak.  
Each night they watch as he recedes  
like the sun, behind the doors of his domicile.  
Each morning they gather like soporific pilgrims  
waiting for him to come forth.

**MID-JANUARY**  
BY CJ MUCHHALA

double tracks in snow  
converge  
one set  
continues—  
winter enigma

## Section Two

**SOMETHING REALLY IMPORTANT HAPPENED**  
BY HOWARD FAERSTEIN

It came out later that the Lord had revealed  
to the bedding salesman  
that one day he'd pray with a customer.

I had moved West, leaving my matrimonial bed behind,  
& when I entered the Sleep Center to check out mattresses  
this smiling drummer strode right up, hand offered in a shake,  
& said, *You're the one.*

Jesus, I'd heard so much  
about winning America over to Christ  
I told the guy I was a Jew & wanted one  
firm, with some give, my trick back & all,  
that it should be at least a queen  
since maybe I'd find another to love.

That seemed to reach him.  
He told me what the Lord had said  
& asked me to pray with him.  
*I came in to buy a mattress. Is this going to help?*

He assured me it would  
& I got down on my knees  
on the stiff sisal rug.  
It felt good to get off my feet,  
& after awhile I asked for a discount.

*Something really important is going to happen,*  
said the salesman & praise be,  
five minutes later I gave him my credit card,  
bought a combo, mattress & box spring.

## **SURVIVAL SKILLS**

BY SARAH CARLETON

We siphon into the cart vestibule of Costco,  
clutching our check-marked receipts

like they're tickets to an ocean liner  
and wheeling our luggage—cases of spritzer,

bricks of cheese, sacks of pierogies,  
a blender in a box.

All movement stops at the opening  
as more of us crowd in, watching twigs

whip the rain into bales and puddles flash flood  
the cement floor. We shift away from the water

and huddle close, facing the show,  
mute as refugees on the deck of an aircraft carrier,

all sounds drowned out by the jackhammering  
on the skylit ceiling.

When storm spray smacks our faces, we retreat  
back to the warehouse interior, shuffling

to food court tables. No one orders pizza.  
A mom with long hair the color of chocolate chips

gnaws on a cookie from a bakery pack.  
A man ruffles the head of a boy in spiderman jammies,

who grins to display a missing tooth.  
All of us excel at waiting, even the toddler twins

who share a wild look but don't climb from their stroller.  
Our heart rates stay calm because we know

this is not a bombing, and we suspect  
it is not a tornado, and anyway we have best-seller books

and barrels of nut mix and flat-screen TVs and  
barbecue sets and sock bundles to keep us safe,

a numbing warmth of stuff that will buffer us  
even when the red radar blob blows off to another county

and the firetrucks release their sirens and we drive home  
in the sunshine past snapped-in-half trees.

## SELF PORTRAIT AS MOTHER IN CHAPTERS

BY SUSAN VESPOLI

I.

I am arms, a nipple spraying milk, organic veggies  
cooked, mashed and flown on a spoon into a cheerio mouth.  
I am do-it-all with one on my hip, on my lap, on my back,  
in a belly pack. Rocker, coddler, holder at midnight,  
swaddler, bringer of bundle to bed to curl around in sleep.

II.

I am a Cribbage opponent, ride to a therapist, snowboard buyer, homework  
checker, Mama Bear defending a kid's right to dye his hair in polka dots, a teller  
of teachers *it's never okay to push my kid*, never okay to judge him, a wuss,  
bullseye for a panic attack, cancer patient, leaver of husband, vegetarian 12-stepper,  
jogger, sunscreen and broad-brim-hat wearer, Montessori school owner, seller,  
MFA seeker, deep breather, believer in fate. Can't stop saying the word *fuck*.

III.

As a mother of two out of three still alive, I am a Celebration of Life planner,  
writer of obituary, memorial video maker, crier, bad dreamer, sugar shunner,  
peace lily waterer, dog pill giver, lover in a long-distance relationship, poet,  
contact lens wearer, bifocal loser, bicyclist, grandmother, bird noticer, laundress,  
gratitude list maker, griever, griever, breather. Still can't stop saying the word *fuck*.

## SUMMER IS BEING CHOKED OFF

BY JOHN DAVIS

A mouth never catches up with its song  
and a father never catches his daughter's  
side-eye when he's teaching her how to change

a tire. Tonight my socks are claustrophobic  
on my feet. I don't like it when nostrils  
have a mind of their own and flare. It makes me

clench my teeth and want to punch babies.  
It's that bad. Arrest me. Jealousy shouldn't be  
a mystery when you're in prison and your celly

tells you there are no corners in a circle.  
I'm pro-beast, myself. I'm pro-growl. I kind of  
raised my dad; he's so plastic which is why I

can B.S. a paragraph out of one word and never  
need a comma. I confess I am afraid of small  
children on roller skates or when a woman says

*I'm a woman. Be quiet.* I was raised as a spider  
squisher. My childhood seemed like a really long  
YouTube movie, the kind you fast forward through

or delete in favor of *Gladiator Grunge*. If I have to  
go back to work—well okay, but I have three  
extra lives and I know the minds of old men.



## ESCAPE

BY S.C. DONNELLY

She watches their reflections in the dining car window:  
her two children and the stranger who speaks of spiders,

*dozens of them*, that he keeps in glass cases,  
*like dark secrets*, inside an unused refrigerator.

*You beat the air around the tarantula, not the spider  
itself.* Her boys lean into his voice as if they can see

the creatures in the black back of his throat, encouraged  
by his soft tones and gentle manner of tucking a frayed collar

beneath brown tweed lapels. *Direct heat's no good.*  
*It will desiccate them.* His bald head nods repeatedly.

The mother nods too; while out the window, towns,  
veiled fields and farms slip past the clattering train,

far away from her home, the onyx ring, the heavy  
footsteps that can halt a heartbeat, silence

two bickering boys without a word. What do they eat,  
the younger one asks. *Frogs, mice, small birds.*

*Special enzymes liquify the prey—then they suck it in.*  
With each rhythmic clunk of wheels on track

she sees a long hall of doors closing behind her.  
The older one asks, Do they ever escape?

*Oh, heavens, no. Some try, but they never get far.*

## MERCURY TYING HIS SANDALS, 12<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

BY MICHAEL CARTER

—after the sculpture by Jean-Andrea Delorme

Inventor of the lyre, guide to the underworld,  
he's traded in his winged sandals for huaraches,  
bookbag over his shoulder, asymmetrical haircut  
winging over one eye. Despite his famed speed

he's late again for AP English when taking two stairs  
at a time, he lost one of his shoes, stopped  
to put it back on. Why the hurry? He's on his own  
clock, looping the sun every 88 days. Nearly graduation.

Where's he headed? Likely the same circle: God  
of Sleeping Through Class, of Restless Spirit, Irreverence,  
Indifference, of Hysterical Laughter, of sneaking off  
with married men for what he hopes is lovemaking. He stays

just in front of the latest plague, a secret carried like a coin  
through the marketplace. Merchant, mercenary, mercurial. The original meaning  
of repentance is to turn away, to go a different way. Couldn't  
he just turns around head down the stairs, skip class where the teacher

insists on using the long A to pronounce Cleopatra.  
Patron, patronizing, patriot. Where is he headed?  
What is the hurry? To be stilled in milk white marble  
with no decisions to make, just tying his shoes forever.

Too late to be a conscientious objector, he's registered  
for the draft. God of War, late for class, ready to turn back,  
repent, reverse course, climb back into bed, sleep  
until the final bell rings.

KOAN FOR EARLY SPRING  
BY CAROL ALEXANDER

How snow salts a holly bush  
while birds solidify their chatter  
the bush neither more nor less  
after the rout

a rust-belly squirrel appears  
hawk mapping thaw  
by parched tufts

tipping point where good  
becomes harm  
are you fattening prey  
for the stronger thing

is the pale sun a headstone  
are you jealous of the place  
your future body lies

gloom piercing a hole  
in ice from which an odd plenty

and light elastic now  
haloing trees slipping east to west  
you pray the lesser can feed  
on snow not bones

in green's long abeyance  
as you stare out from the raptor's eyes  
scourging this exhausted plot  
of ground...

OLD MARRIED COUPLE CUTTING WATERMELON  
BY LAURIE KUNTZ

There are some things  
we just don't do well together.  
I am not your tennis partner.  
There are some mountains you climb alone.  
I cannot sing while you tune your guitar.  
But, we have learned the rhythm of  
a couple with a cleaver.

We both know how to check for ripeness.  
A lawn green skin with a yellow sun  
bursting at its center.  
An ear to the rind,  
checking for the sea caught in a shell sound.

At home, we prepare the counter  
find a balance so the orb does not roll,  
fill containers with a ruby red squares  
that will quench our aging thirst.

One July day, while you napped  
the temperature grew thick  
as a watermelon skin.  
Alone in the kitchen, I tackled the green ball  
with a serrated edge,  
found the sweet spot on the counter  
to conquer the roll, sliced the fruit  
in halves and quarters until tins were glowing  
with squares looking like polished gems.

What I thought was a job for two,  
I could do by myself—  
handle a knife, square a slice, dispose of rinds,  
fill a bowl that only I would gorge from,  
a selfish appetite quenched.

Alone, in the kitchen,  
I picked the ripest pieces,  
but the juices did not burst,  
nor run over my tongue  
with the same coupled sweetness.

## EUREKA

BY KAREN GREENBAUM-MAYA

Damn,  
that woman showcasing on NPR can sing,  
and she misses her man's love.  
Belting Burt Bacharach's jaunty grief,  
she says her little prayer.

Her son calls her *a warrior butterfly*.  
He knows: so much, so much she suffered.  
Sometimes she suffered in the garden.  
Sometimes at the piano, sometimes in bed.

But her late husband always communicated with her,  
by voicemail  
by the slant of the sun  
by receipts falling out of books.  
She was never alone.  
*Just let me know you're all right,*  
she implored, she insisted,  
and damn, he let her know. So handy.

So I try it out, why not?  
*Could you just let me know you're all right?*  
And sure enough, at that precise instant,  
I stumble over the cats' canned food,  
Chicken and Spinach for Gravy Lovers.  
I sop it up with my fleece slipper,  
scatter chunks all over the rag rug  
we bought in a fragrant funky shop in Eureka  
on our honeymoon  
up and down the California coast.

FANDANGO HALL MATCHBOOK AS A NON-FUNGIBLE TOKEN  
BY CAL FREEMAN

Manilla timecard in the slot to stamp  
the hour and minute it ostensibly began —

that kitchen where Nancy dangled a cigarette  
in her lips above a vat of soup,

precarious simmer. The Fandango Hall  
matchbook advertised smoke-eaters,

signature fried chicken, plenty of well light [sic]  
parking, and a festive atmosphere that kept

the Iron Mustangs Motorcycle Club  
coming back for their annual party.

It's impossible to explain how gratifying it was  
to show up first the morning after

cabarets and gather blunt roaches  
from tin ashtrays on the tables,

to unroll them and pour the shake  
into a Ziploc bag from which you'd smoke

for days. You might return then  
to your Buick Century in the parking lot

and listen to "Pigs on the Wing"  
or Jim Carroll reading from "The Narrows"

while waiting for Gil Garza, Ben Brown,  
Jonathan Chapel, the Jenner Brothers. Knowing the day

would be stretched out the way dawn  
gets stretched in a blur of exhaust fumes,

you'd have wasted every lovely sentiment  
that rattled in your head by nine.

Seagulls would linger there  
to scavenge chicken bones, butts, wet napkins

smeared with grease. They exercised  
such indiscriminate hungers. What would you be

setting up for in that empty hall? Retirement,  
nuptials, some other rite with a puzzling diagram

of oval tables? One morning you retrieved  
the numbered ping pong balls from the riser

and laughed about the plastic trolls, those amulets  
the old women had forgotten at Bingo

the night before, their neon hair standing  
against the wicked fates.

TEEN PANTOUM  
BY ALISON STONE

I felt awkward everywhere,  
my life unspooling like a film  
where midnight offered, *Reinvent yourself*.  
Frank 'N Furter pursed bright purple lips.

In the unspooling film,  
(not a woman but dressed like a slutty one)  
Frank 'N Furter pursed bright purple lips.  
We sang along to every word.

Not a woman yet but dressed like a slutty one,  
I obeyed when Joey urged, *Hey ho, let's go*.  
We sang along to every word.  
Sex was unfun, not what I expected.

I obeyed when Joey urged, *Hey ho, let's go*.  
The boys were selfish or clumsy.  
Sex was unfun, but expected.  
It made you seem cooler.

Boys got selfish or clumsy  
as the night ended, but they claimed us,  
which made us seem cooler.  
What we took into our bodies!

As the night ended, boys claimed us  
with penises and false promises,  
which we took into our bodies.  
We woke cotton-mouthed, tired

of penises and false promises.  
*It's alright for some, innit?*  
Waking cotton-mouthed and tired,  
my British boyfriend spat class rage.

*It's alright for some, innit?*  
As a limo rolled its privilege by,  
my British boyfriend spat. Class, rage,  
where did I fit in?

A limo rolled its privilege by.  
I wasn't rich like the ruling girls at school,  
(Where did I fit in?)  
nor working class like my nightclub friends.



I wasn't rich like the ruling girls at school.  
Midnight offered, *Reinvent yourself*,  
but I couldn't swagger like my nightclub friends.  
Felt awkward everywhere.

## MAMA'S BOY VILLANELLE

BY VICTORIA LAU

Found poetry from Psycho (1960)

A boy's best friend is his mother.  
A mama's boy 'till death do you part.  
Behind the closed cellar door: your rotting lover.

Mother won't let you love another.  
Remember what she did to your first sweetheart?  
A boy's best friend is his mother.

Mother knows best: how to smother.  
Eyeing her when the shower was just about to start.  
Behind the closed cellar door: your rotting lover.

Mother told you to kill your significant other.  
The birds you gutted: your taxidermy collection: your art.  
A boy's best friend is his mother.

Blood gushing: your secrets down the gutter.  
Her belly slit open: the last beat of her heart.  
Behind the closed cellar door: your rotting lover.

*Mother! Oh, God, Mother!*

Mommy's sweet little boy: you played your part.  
A boy's best friend is his mother.  
Behind the closed cellar door: your rotting lover.

## CALL AND RESPONSE

BY MELISSA HUFF

—a Golden Shovel, based on two lines from Mary Oliver’s “Starlings in Winter”:  
*“I want to be improbable beautiful and afraid of nothing, as though I had wings.”*

This ocean of life calls my name and I  
must answer with full voice. I want  
its every dawn to find me dancing to  
the rhythm of its waves, though it may be  
their undertow engulfs me. For joy—so improbable—  
will surface, bathing the shores of this sea—so beautiful,  
so redolent with fragrant glory, yet often cruel and  
always ephemeral. There is no time to be afraid,  
to clutch at safety and miss the chance of  
diving into shadows, climbing to the light, nothing  
held back. My heart wades in even as  
the tide’s muscled grip seizes me, even though  
it drags me into deep waters. When strength is spent, I  
will lift my face to the horizon and—grateful to have had  
this voyage—take to the sky with salt-studded wings.

THE WIND BLOWS WHERE IT LISTS  
BY DAVID GRUBIN

Scattering Dick's ashes  
in the channel off Throgs Neck,  
a blue-sky day, air warm, sun high  
his beloved sloop steady as she goes,

the grit of his flesh and bones  
his grey remains  
slip through my fingers  
to coat the waves  
and disappear behind us,  
borne by the breeze  
toward the distant horizon

when the sails catch  
a random gust,  
the boat veers windward  
and the ashy grains

rasp my face  
sting my eyes  
and on my tongue  
I taste his burnt embers.

And I want to shout out,  
"Stop the boat. Stop the boat."  
But it's the wind,  
the wind that's doing it.

## WHERE'S THE COMPLAINT DEPARTMENT?

BY SUZANNE LUMMIS

—*For Lisa Steinberg, 6, Gabrielle Fernandez, 8, and others*

I've got mixed emotions re. this universe,  
elements I can't conceive of or explain —  
things too terrible to be set down in verse.

Sure, there's beauty — nebula, stars, of course —  
but what realm permits this sort of pain?  
I've got mixed emotions re. this universe.

Of course, it's not the stars, humans are the curse,  
but space contains us — it really is to blame  
for deaths too terrible to be relayed in verse.

If I could heal wounds, I'd be a nurse  
not poet, a shrink if I could make men sane.  
I've got some issues with this universe.

I want to throw time into reverse,  
bring back Gabriel and Lisa, whole again...  
I could cry a million names into this verse.

Some believe a pure Goodness at the source  
will wash away the hurt like gentle rain.  
Or can only we can revise this universe?  
Till then, let the broken ones be cradled in a verse.

TRIGGER WARNING  
BY ALISON HURWITZ

Sudden- that clutch inside a closing throat  
familiar as five-fingered throttle and as deadly:  
just the slightest brush against that memory blocks

your breath. How to translate gut-punch panic, bring its  
stratospheric tritone down so anyone can hear? Code in pulse,  
a jagged scrap of shriek, blood a strange contraction that betrayed you.

Tell it in adrenalin, your pounding bongo heart, stomach  
made of maggots squirming wordless in the dark. These are  
your warnings: scrawling over skin, pictographs in shadow play.

Leave your artifacts: torn shirt, heart a skittered rodent  
rushing anywhere to hide. You keep on writing hindsight,  
hope that someone else will look over their own

shoulder, will find the exit glowing phosphorescent  
as a sightless fish; hope that someone else will turn  
around, run before the trigger brings them down.

REASSURING MY NINE-YEAR-OLD THAT HIS LIFE IS NOT IN DANGER AFTER UVALDE  
BY ELIZABETH SCHMERMUND

He was newly nine, missing incisors, glasses oily  
with still-small fingerprints, newly minted oldest-of-  
three. He still fights with his three-year-old sister,  
and I remind him: You're nine. You're *nine*.

He's nine. We told him before dinner, before the long  
light lowered itself, before the darkness signaling  
bedtime set in. We told him before the news tumbled  
into him as he wheeled through childhood,  
kicking across late-season soccer fields.

Before we told him I screamed into the backyard,  
the cracked chalk crayons scattered,  
not picked up days after days. The spread of summer  
before us—those long nights with the cicadas calling  
for their mates—the wailing. Mothers calling  
for their children, waiting, waiting.  
They were nine. They were ten. They were eleven.

Some nights I find his body curled next to mine, not too  
old yet for cuddles, although sometimes so.

*Mommy*, he says.

*What if a man with guns comes to my school.*

I search for my own belief, I warn my face against tears.

*This world*, I want to begin.

He's nine. He's nine. Oh god, he's only nine.

## **BUNKER**

BY KATIE KALISZ

Today, the children dug a ten-foot-deep hole,  
a space big enough that they can all fit  
inside. They shovel the dirt into their wagon,  
haul it away to make a bike jump, using  
everything they dismantle. Are they already  
better at saving their lives than I am? I have  
molded my life to keep them alive, waking  
in the night to nurse them through stomach flu  
and pneumonia, ear aches, itching allergic  
reactions, fevered dreams. Why didn't I think  
to hide them underground, where bulbs survive  
the winter, where snakes and moles and worms  
shelter in place? Why didn't I think to build them  
a bunker beneath this troubled world we nurture.





## Section Three

VERMICULTURE  
BY KE MORASH

I once fished with my father  
side by side, facing the bay.  
There were ripples and the sun  
glinted, but didn't scorch.  
He took a worm from the bucket  
put it on the hook because I couldn't.  
He asked about my friends, he knew  
their names. He asked if my heart  
had mended yet. I cast perfectly.  
This did not happen.  
We were both clumsy  
and unwilling.

He once sat side by side  
fishing with his father, smoke curling  
from carved pipes, upturned faces  
into the hazy stars, my grandfather's fingers  
tapping a Bluegrass rhythm on his rod,  
touching my father's knee when Dad spoke  
of my mother. My father traced the trail  
of a sea worm in the mud with the tip of his toe.  
This is a manufactured image.  
They did not have the vocabulary,  
or time.

My daughter and I sit  
chairs angled to each other  
and also away, to the sea.  
She casts, because I never learned,  
passes it to me to hold.  
Sky and water are indecipherable.  
She asks me about her grandfather  
if I sat like this with him and instead  
I say we are stardust that the worms  
swallow, molecules ground up and  
reshaped, shat out, enriched. We are fertiliser.  
I ask her to remind me of the name  
of the person she loves.  
This may occur. It has not yet.

They sat side by side, my father and daughter.  
I watched from the bank.  
She didn't know how to cast  
so he taught her, gracefully.

The water was glass, reflecting  
the clouds, the stars, the infinite,  
one little head and one big, grey.  
I heard on the breeze the names  
of her friends, and he nodded. Her feet  
dug into the sand and their faces turned  
up to the sun. He showed her how to put the bait  
on the hook.  
This is true.

I'M GLAD YOU LIKE DIM SUM  
BY LISA PARK

We need to teach you Chinese  
because it doesn't matter  
    that you say  
the country you were born in  
    was New Jersey,  
someone is going to yell at you  
on the street someday  
and tell you to go back.  
    Yes all the way back  
to Jersey you go!  
    And where should they go?

So you may as well learn  
the language they think you know,  
    refined over six thousand years,  
and hear the slight bump  
    in grandma's voice  
that transforms bread, *Bao*,  
    into carry,  
beauty, *Mei*,  
    and doubled back,  
    into little sister.

Your Mei Mei  
asks me why our hair is black  
instead of yellow  
    like in all the fairytales.  
Let me just say that you are both  
    the most beautiful bread  
    I have carried.

I'm glad you like dim sum  
    the *ba gao*  
    *Shiu mai*  
    and sweet sesame balls.  
Love and pride all wrapped up in  
    tougher-than-it-looks skin.  
It's okay you don't like the chicken feet.  
Maybe if you weren't actually  
    from Jersey  
you would understand how to eat them  
    because I don't.

## FAUCI'S DONE

BY SHARON LEE SNOW

Dr. Fauci looks refreshed, like he's given  
up on us and moved on to the sexy next  
disease—like he's fucking had it  
with telling us to keep  
our masks on, wash  
our hands. Social distance, you stupid  
fuckers. Get your shots. He knows  
better by now. Sometimes in battle  
you have to save yourself. I  
remember when he was first  
hopeful, with the spark of crusade  
in his eye. Claiming to be worried  
on yet another long-haul  
Covid day. Is he tired of being  
the face of a disaster, our image  
seared with fleas on rats, filthy ages without  
baths or sun. His name spewed  
like toxic waste. Like God, would  
you blame him for cutting  
the lines and leaving us in silent  
contemplation? Yet here he is, suited  
up again. No longer imploring us,  
but Covid-lite. Every night  
huddled with the TV, masked  
from the world, waiting for his voice,  
the voice we knew for a short  
time, better than our father's.

DEAR DISAPPOINTMENT  
BY LISA ZIMMERMAN

How foolish of me to be lulled  
by your absence, brief as mercy  
in the hurricane's eye, holding wreck  
and death in its dilated pupil.  
I admit my trouble in wanting less,  
accepting what I've been given,  
I who often kneel under the weight  
of abundance, my gratitude a garment I wear  
so lightly, your thin sharp wind blows it behind me  
until I see only your hunger, your open mouth.

**GUAM POEM 2**  
BY SCOTT FERRY

along the road and under the roots the oxisol bears red like a birth and the sudden rain like  
the flood of birth / at my son's naptime i am also taken under the betelnut and flame trees  
taken through a layer of black water through viscous breaths into the red earth / i wish to  
swim in the iron clay like a butterfly fish but my arms stunt incapable of answering my  
prayers / my son flips up to the surface a chromium blue in his gills my wife a coral with  
dreaming eels my wife the whole of the earth opening here / when i wake they are still under  
the spell of the treesnakes but my wife shakes loose tucks the banana leaves around the boy  
anoints his skull with oxidized spit my white skin is claywraapt bloodied with salt my nails  
scabbed with the recent dig



IN MY UNIVERSE  
BY LAURIE ROSEN

we can speak to the dead,  
but not all at once, that would be chaos—  
every year an opportunity arises to meet one person  
or pet we lost: a best friend, a parent, a child, a childhood dog.

We cook their favorite foods, gather  
photo albums and a list of stories. We say, “I love you,  
I’m sorry, look at your granddaughter, see how she’s grown.”

We hug, nuzzle, kiss them hard, talk through regrets,  
finally get the last word, give them the chance to apologize

or hurt us all over again.

## SECRET LIFE

BY ALFRED FOURNIER

My mother knew many secrets she wouldn't tell.  
She carried them in soft folds around her eyes.  
Not even God could guess the meaning of her glance.

When I was five I insisted I could walk to school alone,  
that I knew the way. I was so stubborn she relented  
but followed in her car to see I got there safe.

Robert Bly says that sometimes an angel's wings are too wide  
to fit through the door. I overheard her praying once,  
a whispered drone through a crack in longing.

Sometimes I confuse my mother with the Virgin Mary,  
but I believe a part of her was wolf-wild, feverish and bright,  
bared teeth gleaming under a sliver of moon.

When she died, even the silence missed her.

That empty room after they hauled the hospital bed away  
never breathed a word about her absence, but clasped  
her secrets tight in curtain folds long after I'd grown.

**TODAY IS HER BIRTHDAY**  
BY STEPHANIE KENDRICK

They don't make cars like they used to—  
no metal ashtray nestled behind the e-brake,  
or in the center of the backseat floorboard.

An hour from me, my mother on her couch  
naps away chemo-induced nausea.

On Route 7, an empty tobacco barn slumps heavy—  
creosote-stained pine holds a semblance  
of structure.

There are no repurposed Folger cans  
tucked under my front porch swing, no more  
6-minute breaks on the hour of a 9 to 5,  
no more giving the soda can a good sniff test  
before taking a swig.

My hair used to catch her smoke. It lingered  
within each strawberry-blond strand—  
me, none-the-wiser until a peer crinkled  
her nose, reminded me where I came from.

As miles between my Ford and her couch  
burn shorter, I roll the window half-way down—  
let my hair tornado toward the clouds, exhale

as if I were the one preparing to blow out  
her candles.

## ARTS AND CRAFTS

BY C.M. RIVERS

A carpenter watches the point being sawed,  
the seamstress trains her eye upon the needle.  
The monk rests his awareness on the hinge  
from which the door of breath opens and closes.

Only quality of mind changes as the artist  
interprets the language of living a life,  
the craftsman conversing with earthly conditions;  
the viewer and the view.

Now comes a rush of cosmic wind:  
the blink of an eye that is your life,  
with its work and its weather,  
rhythms and revelations.

It's sort of like knitting:  
your life the thread, the world  
a vast material, the needle of time  
pulling you intricately through.

Or maybe the needle is life itself,  
all ruinous sin and saintly ambition,  
artistry and order, craftsmanship and chaos:  
the Road up and over the Mountain.

It's sort of like weaving, but the hands  
are invisible and not always kind.  
It's sort of like watching a wheel go around:  
this living, this loving, this mind.

LETTER FROM THIS MORNING'S BURDOCK PLANT  
BY BETH KANELL

Come a little closer, said the burdock plant,  
investigate the spiked orbs of my completion:

how my purple flowers swelled, then browned,  
prickly eruptions intentional and prepared

for the swish of your garbed leg brushing close  
(I touch you back, I cling, enamored, barbed)

or an accidental brush against my cheek, my quick  
release of needled seeds onto your glove. I love

to travel anywhere: on the leg of a passing deer,  
caught in her stiff hairs, or warm under a partridge wing

so why not you and I? In the next field, or all the way  
down the ridge to where you tend your gardens, let me

drop from your prying fingers. Linger a moment  
unready to release. Land, out of sight, in damp grass,

where tomorrow's rain will wash me down to soil.  
I don't need much: a scrap of ground the size of your palm

and I'll be rooting before you know it. You were just the same  
back when you looked for love in each new face. Hopeful;

grasping at kind words; reading horoscopes. When you found  
freedom, you snagged it with your teeth. With your fingers.

## BLACKBERRY LILIES

BY BILL GRIFFIN

*for Jeff and Jodi*

Each blooms for just one morning,  
petals open-palm welcome, next day  
their spotted orange curled pale. I poached them  
from the roadside in Kentucky forty years ago  
driving home from Berea—I knew Mother  
would treasure them by her porch  
where the mountain sun at noon  
might find them; did we even have  
these colors in West Virginia?

Hard frost, snowdeep, still each Spring  
they blossomed, spread. And me? I didn't care  
much for living, gone feral, fallen  
from the garden, but when your sister pulled me up  
I dug a clump for her, planted  
it here beside our sun room, morning face  
of our home together. Look now, so many,  
almost August and still a dozen buds ready  
to smile. Enough to share.

Take this pot, earth and rhizomes,  
find a warm spot you'll pass by every day.  
This fall the heads will dry and open, black seeds  
like fat berries on stiff stems all winter long.  
Just when you think your world's gone dead  
something reminds you where roots live.

**CARPENTER'S LAMENT**  
BY LEE POTTS

The sea assumes everything  
is a gift, your final dry  
breath, the nails  
rusting in your rotting  
pocket. You shared  
the sea's tidal desire  
to reshape anything  
it's given. Grey green currents  
rasping at knots and grain, inviting  
shipworms to bore  
into heartwood. Sea soaking  
in again like it does  
when it journeys disguised  
as clear and saltless rain  
and the trees  
are still alive. It knows wood  
better than your hands  
and hammer did  
but each finished piece  
the sea gives back and leaves  
on the beach is just a toy  
it tired of. You once made  
a fire of them and circled it  
with friends and dance.  
The infused salt made  
the wood smoke  
into an incense that was sweet.  
The sea takes everything  
as a gift and every callus  
your body ever made  
it washed away.

## A BEACH OF PLAIN ROCKS

BY SANDRA KACHER

Because dense and gray black, they swallow light  
because glacier-scrubbed, disk-shaped and smooth,  
because no rough to snag the gulls' white feathers,  
because they lie like tombstones on the beach,  
call from time's grave  
tell the one story of advance and retreat,  
because millions of years

Because a child cradles one on his open palm,  
covers it with the bedspread of his other hand,  
because its fine-grained surface eases fear,  
speaks of rest and surrender

Because it is not quite oblivion  
but something close  
and still skips one, two, three  
over the water.



HEAVEN DID NOT SEEM TO BE MY HOME  
BY ELLEN WHITE ROOK

Morning goldenrod luminescence fades  
until the midday sun has the look of washed-out melon  
like the cantaloupe textured polyester dress  
my mother sewed for my confirmation at Holy Names  
of Jesus, where I knelt, unripe fruit  
from the neck down, above, red-cheeked  
and crinkle-eyed from not laughing  
as the Knights of Columbus marched  
unsmiling in scarlet-lined black capes,  
satin sashes, and ostrich feathered hats,  
come to witness as we were made soldiers of Christ  
and renamed for our patron saint.

I chose

*Catherine*, not for the mystic or the martyr,  
but after Wuthering Heights  
so when the bishop gently smacked  
my cheek, I received the sacrament of love's vast  
desolation and ruin, which I retake  
each morning when windows blaze with glory  
that deserves a god.

Blaze blind-gold

with reflected sun, and beneath  
the platted suburb's asphalt shingle roofs,  
discarded passions press hot palms  
against cool glass, replay misheard dialogues,  
seek oracles in contrails.

TRAIN APPROACHING KANKAKEE  
BY GEOFF COLLINS

Oaks speak their language of dry leaves  
in jumbled cliques on the ancient sea floor.

Why else would they keep them so long?  
Even now, trembling on twig-ends with winter

nearly over, secrets hushed and whispered  
between them. The black-coated mourners

broken by minor keys, hearts half rent by  
phrygians, send up their silent voices

and trudge back to the road without hearing.  
The preacher beside the grave looks away

as the family heads for an exit. Coats of  
wool pulled tight around them, collars

tugged up against the wind, they hear chaff  
rustling on nubby stalks, voices murmuring

behind them. But when they turn to look,  
no one is there. Crows are watching

from fenceposts, combines crawl in the  
distance, gravestones sink into loam.

The oaks reach out with bony arms  
as if to embrace us. There is a train

approaching Kankakee today  
blowing its holy trumpet, calling us home.

## AFTERLIFE FOR ATHEISTS

BY DEVON BORKOWSKI

It's the bright red ringed in blue  
The deep pitch  
The whirl of stars  
A nebula the size of my thumb on a phone screen  
Sore like a popped blister  
Like a cut inside of my cheek  
That my teeth can't help but bother

It's NASA's new release  
Pictures from their latest telescopic wonder  
Galaxies swirling through my phone gallery  
In never before seen high definition

Any you never will see them  
Because you left in March  
Left like a *cardiac arrest*  
Left like *he's been sick for so long*  
Left like camera roll full of stars  
That I can't send to anyone

It's all astronauts and deep sea divers  
Memory— the only ghost you believed in  
I've started reading about electrical currents  
I've started reading about particle acceleration  
I don't understand half of it  
But neither did you  
I'm hungry for a connection

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Carol Alexander's** recent collection is *Fever and Bone* (Dos Madres Press, 2021). Her work appears in anthologies and journals such as *About Place Journal*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Caesura*, *The Common*, *Cumberland River Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Free State Review*, *Matter*, *Mobius*, *One*, *Pif*, *Potomac Review*, *Ruminate*, *San Pedro River Review*, *South Florida Poetry Journal*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Stonecoast Review*, *Sweet Tree Review*, *Terrain.org*, *Third Wednesday*, *Verdad*, and *The Westchester Review*. New work is forthcoming in *Delmarva Review* and *RHINO*. With Stephen Massimilla, Alexander is co-editor of *Stronger Than Fear: Poems of Empowerment, Compassion, and Social Justice* (Cave Moon Press, 2022).

**Ellen Austin-Li's** work has appeared in *Artemis*, *Thimble Literary Magazine*, *The Maine Review*, *Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel*, *Rust + Moth*, and other places. Her two chapbooks were published by Finishing Line Press—*Firefly* (2019) and *Lockdown: Scenes From Early in the Pandemic* (2021). She is a Best of the Net nominee. A recipient of the Martin B. Bernstein Fellowship, she earned an MFA in Poetry at the Solstice Low-Residency Program. Ellen lives with her husband in a newly empty nest in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find more of her work at [www.ellenaustinli.me](http://www.ellenaustinli.me).

**Devon Borkowski** is a writer, painter, and actor from the New Jersey Pine Barrens, who recently graduated from Rutgers University with a BFA in visual arts. Previously Devon has published poetry with *The Dillydoun Review*, *The Closed Eye Open*, and *Rockvale Review*. Her short stories have appeared in *Room Magazine*, and the anthology *My Wedding Date: Tales from the Tables*.

**Sarah Carleton** writes poetry, edits fiction, plays the banjo, and knits obsessively in Tampa, Florida. Her poems have appeared in numerous publications, including *Nimrod*, *Gyroscope Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Pirene's Fountain*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, and *New Ohio Review*. Her first collection, *Notes from the Girl Cave*, was published in 2020 by Kelsay Books.

**Michael J Carter** is a poet and psychotherapist who lives in Vermont. A graduate of Sarah Lawrence College he holds an MFA from Vermont College and an MSW from Smith. Poems of his have appeared in such journals as *Boulevard*, *Ploughshares*, *MomEgg Review*, *Western Humanities Review* among many others.

**Geoff Collins** writes early mornings and late evenings because that's when there's time. When he's able, he gathers up some work and sends it out. As a result, his fiction and poetry have appeared or forthcoming in *Blue Earth Review*, *Gateway Review*, *Interim*, *Lakeshore Review*, *Ponder Review*, *Stone Highway*, *Waterstone Review*, *Petrichor*, and others. He lives with his family in a small town in Wisconsin.

**John Davis** is a polio survivor and the author of *Gigs and The Reservist*. His work has appeared recently in *DMQ Review*, *Iron Horse Literary Review* and *Terrain.org*. He lives on an island in the Salish Sea.

**S.C. Donnelly** is a poet and writing tutor in Boston. Despite being a New Englander for much of her adult life, she is a native of Chicago and remains a loyal White Sox fan. She is also a novice fly fisherman, and she loves spending time with her family and her dog, Ginny.

**Kika Dorsey** is a poet and fiction writer in Boulder, Colorado. She has a PhD in Comparative Literature, and her books include the chapbook *Beside Herself* and three full-length collections: *Rust*, *Coming Up for Air*, and *Occupied: Vienna is a Broken Man*, and *Daughter of Hunger*, which won the Colorado Authors' League Award for best poetry collection.

**Jennifer R. Edwards** (*Unsymmetrical Body*, Finishing Line Press, 2022) won the 2022 New England Poetry Club Amy Lowell Prize. Her poems have received Pushcart nomination, support from Palm Beach Poetry Festival and Colgate Writers Conference, and appear in many anthologies and literary magazines including *Mom Egg Review*, *Literary Mama*, *Snapdragon*, and *Terrain*. She's a speech-language pathologist in Concord, NH, residing with her family and pug. Twitter @Jennife00420145, Instagram Jenedwards8 <https://linktr.ee/JenEdwards>

**Howie Faerstein's** latest collection is *Out of Order* (Main Street Press). His full-length books, *Dreaming of the Rain in Brooklyn* and *Googootz* are available from Press 53. Recent poetry and reviews can be found in *On the Seawall*, *Nixes Mate*, *Banyan Review*, *Rattle, upstreet*, *Verse Daily*, *Hole in the Head Review* and *Connotation*. Co-poetry editor for *CutThroat*, he lives in Florence, MA. <https://howiefaerstein.com>

**Sandra Fees** has been published in *SWWIM*, *Nimrod*, *River Heron Review*, *Harbor Review*, *Witness* and elsewhere and has work forthcoming in *Crab Creek Review*, *Moon City Review* and other journals. The author of the chapbook, *The Temporary Vase of Hands*, she lives in southeastern Pennsylvania.

Currently, **LA Felleman** is a financial analyst at the University of Iowa. Before that, she was a seminary professor. Prior to that, she was a pastor. She credits the Free Generative Writing Workshops, the Midwest Writing Center, and workshops offered through Iowa City Poetry with her growth as a poet. To give back to the writing community, she organizes a writers open mic at the public library (or via Zoom during pandemics) and serves on the advisory council of Iowa City Poetry. She is the author of the chapbook, *The Length of a Clenched Fist*, from Finishing Line Press.

**Scott Ferry** helps our Veterans heal as a RN in the Seattle area. His most recent book, *The Long Blade of Days Ahead*, is now available from Inspired Press. More of his work can be found at [ferrypoetry.com](http://ferrypoetry.com).

**Alfred Fournier** is an entomologist, writer and community volunteer in Phoenix, Arizona. He lives with his wife, daughter, and three sometimes harmonious cats. His poems have appeared in *Gyroscope Review*, *The Main Street Rag*, *Amethyst Review*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *The Indianapolis Review*, and elsewhere. New work forthcoming at *Blue Unicorn* and *Ponder Review*. Yes, I'm still on Twitter: @AlfredFournier4.

**Cal Freeman** is the author of the books *Fight Songs* (Eyewear, 2017) and *Poolside at the Dearborn Inn* (R&R Press, 2022). His writing has appeared in many journals including *One, The Oxford American, The Poetry Review, River Styx, Southword, Passages North, and Hippocampus*. He lives in Dearborn, MI and teaches at Oakland University. He also serves as music editor of *The Museum of Americana: A Literary Review* and as Writer-In-Residence with InsideOut Literary Arts Detroit.

**Karen Greenbaum-Maya** is a retired clinical psychologist, former German major, restaurant reviewer, and two-time Pushcart and Best of the Net nominee. Her work has appeared in *Comstock Poetry Review, B O D Y, Rappahannock Poetry Review, CHEST, and Spillway*. Kattywompus Press publishes her chapbooks *Burrowing Song, Eggs Satori, and, Kafka's Cat*. Kelsay Books publishes *The Book of Knots and their Untying. The Beautiful Leaves*, a collection of poems about her late husband, is forthcoming from Bamboo Dart Press in 2023. She co-curates Fourth Saturdays, a poetry series in Claremont, California. Her first complete sentence was, "Look at the moon!"

**Bill Griffin** is a naturalist and retired family doctor who lives in rural North Carolina. His poetry has appeared in *NC Literary Review, Tar River Poetry, Southern Poetry Review* and elsewhere. Bill has published six collections including *Snake Den Ridge, a Bestiary* (March Street Press 2008), illustrated by Linda French Griffin, and *Riverstory: Treestory* (Orchard Street Press 2018). Bill features Southern poets, nature photography, and microessays at his blog: <http://Griffin.Poetry.com>.

**David Grubin** is a director, writer, producer, and cinematographer who has won every award in the field of documentary television, including two Alfred I. Dupont awards, three George Foster Peabody prizes, five Writer's Guild prizes, and ten Emmys. Formerly chairman of the board of directors of The Film Forum, he is currently a member of the Society of American Historians and sits on the board at Poets House. Grubin has received a Guggenheim Fellowship and an honorary doctorate from his alma mater, Hamilton College. He has taught at Columbia University's Graduate Film Program and lectured on filmmaking across the country.

**Kari Gunter-Seymour** is a ninth generation Appalachian, Poet Laureate of Ohio and an Academy of American Poets Laureate Fellow. Her poetry collections include *Alone in the House of My Heart* (Ohio University Swallow Press, 2022) and *A Place So Deep Inside America It Can't Be Seen* (Sheila Na Gig Editions, 2020), winner of the 2020 Ohio Poet of the Year Award. Her work has been featured on *Verse Daily, World Literature Today, The New York Times*, and *Poem-a-Day*. [www.karigunterseymourpoet.com](http://www.karigunterseymourpoet.com)

**Melissa Huff** feeds her poetry from the power and mystery of the natural world and the ways in which body, nature and spirit intertwine. An advocate of the power of reading poetry aloud, she twice won awards in the BlackBerry Peach Prizes for Poetry: Spoken and Heard, sponsored by the National Federation of State Poetry Societies. Recent publishing credits include *Snapdragon: A Journal of Art and Healing, Encore: Prize Poems 2022* (NFSPS), *Persimmon Tree* and *Blue Heron Review*. Melissa has been frequently sighted making her way between Illinois and Colorado.

**Alison Hurwitz** has work published/upcoming in *Tiferet Journal*, *Writing in a Woman's Voice*, *Anti-Heroic Chic*, *Book of Matches*, *The Shore*, *Amethyst Review*; *Rust and Moth*, *Thimble Magazine*, *Academy of the Heart & Mind*, *SWWIM Every Day*, *River Heron Review*, *The Jewish Writing Project*, *Speckled Trout Review*, and *Carmina Magazine*. Alison writes gratefully in North Carolina. When not writing, she officiates weddings and memorial services, walks in the woods with her family and rescue dog, and dances in her kitchen. [alisonhurwitz.com](http://alisonhurwitz.com)

**Jason Irwin** is the author of the three full-length poetry collections, most recently *The History of Our Vagrancies* (Main Street Rag, 2020). He was a 2022 Zoeglossia Fellow and has also had nonfiction published in various journals including the *Santa Ana Review*, & *The Catholic Worker*. He lives in Pittsburgh, PA USA. [www.jasonirwin.blogspot.com](http://www.jasonirwin.blogspot.com)

**David James** has published thirteen books and has had over thirty one-act plays produced around the U.S.

**Dorothy Johnson-Laird** is a poet and social worker who lives in New York City. She received an MFA in creative writing from Sarah Lawrence College. Dorothy also has a passion for African music. She has published music journalism with [www.afropop.org](http://www.afropop.org) and [www.worldmusiccentral.org](http://www.worldmusiccentral.org). Recent poems published by *BeZine*, *Pomona Valley Review*, and *Fresh Words Magazine*, among others. More of Dorothy's poetry can be found at: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100083698660157>

**Sandra Kacher** comes to writing poetry after years of hearing about the inner lives of her hundreds of therapy clients. She brings an ear for music and a heart for beauty to poetry that she hopes shares the ways she is moved by nature, human life and all the flotsam that catches her eye. She considers herself a nature poet and trees to be some of her best friends. She is also shaped by intimations of mortality and most of her work bows to impermanence. Her debut collection, *First Confession*, will be published in 2023 by Kelsay Press

**Katie Kalisz** is a Professor in the English Department at Grand Rapids Community College, where she teaches composition and creative writing. *Quiet Woman*, her first book, was a finalist for the Main Street Rag Poetry Book Award. Her poems have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net, and have appeared in *The Westchester Review*, *The Michigan Poet*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, and *Unbroken Journal*, among others. She lives in Michigan with her husband and their three children.

**Beth Kanell** lives in northeastern Vermont. Her novels include *This Ardent Flame* and *The Long Shadow* (SPUR Award winner); her short fiction shows up in *Lilith* and elsewhere. Find her memoirs on Medium, her reviews at the New York Journal of Books, her poems in small well-lit places.

**Stephanie Kendrick** is the 2023/2024 Athens, OH Poet Laureate. She wrote *In Any of These Towns* (Sheila-Na-Gig editions, 2022) and is the editor of local poetry newsletter, Periodical Poetry. She received a Masters in Social Sciences from Ohio University and just can't sit still. She has been published in several amazing journals including *Gyroscope Review*, *Still: The Journal*, *Poets Reading the News*, *Pudding Magazine*, *Lunch Bucket Brigade*, *Sheila-Na-Gig online*, and elsewhere. See what she's up to and read her poetry at [stephthepoet.org](http://stephthepoet.org).

**Laurie Kuntz** is a twice nominated Pushcart Prize nominee and a Best of the Net nominee. Her 5th poetry collection: *Talking Me off the Roof* is available from Kelsay Books. Visit her at: <https://lauriekuntz.myportfolio.com>

**Victoria Lau** is currently working on her MFA degree at Lindenwood University. She was the 3rd place poetry winner for the Random House Creative Writing Competition in 2013. Her poems have been published in *Rogue Agent*, *The Orchard's Poetry Journal* and *The Olivetree Review*. She was the 1st place winner for the Nancy Dean Medieval Prize in 2020. She is a poetry reader for *GASHER Journal* and a marketing coordinators for *The Adroit Journal*. She has taught poetry at Sadie Nash Summer Institute and is writing assistant at the Borough of Manhattan Community College Writing Center and an English adjunct lecturer at Queens College.

**Suzanne Lummis** poems have appeared in three Knopf *Everyman's Library Pocket Poets* anthologies, in noted literary journals around the U.S. and in *The New Yorker*. Her most recent book, *Open 24 Hours*, won the Blue Lynx Prize and was published by Lynx House Press. Her reviews and critical essays have been published in Los Angeles Review of Books, the Los Angeles Times, Another Chicago Magazine, and are forthcoming in *Verseville* and elsewhere. Her defining essay, "The Poem Noir—Too Dark to be Depressed," appeared in the now defunct *Malpais Review*.

**Andy Macera** has received awards from *Plainsongs*, *Mad Poets Review* and *Philadelphia Poets*. His work has also appeared in *Pearl*, *California Quarterly*, *Connecticut River Review*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *Philadelphia Stories*, *Straight Forward*, *Sierra Nevada Review*, *Old Red Kimono*, *Passager* and other journals.

**KE Morash** is a playwright and poet from Nova Scotia, now living in the UK. Her writing has received prizes and been published in *Atrium*, *Apex Poetry*, *Spelt, Ink*, *Sweat & Tears*, *Songs of Love & Strength*; *Live Canon Anthology* 2019 and 2018; *Room*; *Understorey*; *Literary Mama*; and *Sentinel Literary Quarterly*, amongst others.

**CJ Muchhala's** work can be found in *Never Forgotten: 100 Poets Remember 9/11*, as well as other anthologies, print and on-line journals including *Mobius: The Journal of Social Change*, and in art/poetry exhibits. Her work has been nominated for the Best of the Net and twice for the Pushcart Prize.

**Lisa Park** is an adolescent medicine/pediatrics physician, and previous college health director. She continues to work for adolescents through advocacy to reduce gun violence.

A Pushcart nominee, **Sharon Lee Snow** earned an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of South Florida in Tampa. Her award-winning short stories, creative nonfiction, and poetry have been published *Griffel*, *Glassworks*, *The Concrete Desert Review*, *Underwood*, *South 85*, *Typehouse*, *Gulf Stream*, *Bridge Eight*, *Finding the Birds*, and other journals. She works as a university instructor. Connect with her on Twitter and Instagram @sharonleesnow and her website [www.sharonleesnow.com](http://www.sharonleesnow.com)



**Lee Potts**, author of the chapbook *And Drought Will Follow* (Frosted Fire, 2021), is poetry editor at *Barren Magazine* and a 2022 Best of the Net nominee. His work has appeared in *The Night Heron Barks*, *Rust + Moth*, *Whale Road Review*, *UCity Review*, *Firmament*, *Moist Poetry Journal*, and elsewhere. He lives just outside of Philadelphia. He's @LeePottsPoet on Twitter.

**Jane Richards** is a retired piano teacher with an intense interest in writing and nature. She finds inspiration from hiking, kayaking, and nature study. Her prose and poetry can be found in *after hours: a journal of Chicago writing and art*, *Willow Review*, *Snowy Egret*, and *Bird Watchers Digest*. She holds a masters degree in creative writing from Columbia College, Chicago.

**C.M. Rivers** grew up reading books by the wood-stove on rainy days in Oregon. His work has appeared in literary magazines and journals across the U.S.. His poetry collection *How to Carry Soup* (Homebound Publications) is available anywhere books are sold. Find more of his writing at cmrivers.com, or visit his poetry podcast "Why Am I Telling You This?"

A lifelong New Englander, **Laurie Rosen's** poetry has appeared in *The Muddy River Poetry Review*; *The London Reader*; *Oddball Magazine*; *Zig-Zag Lit Mag*; *New Verse News*; *Gyroscope Review*; *Wilderness House Literary Review*; *Soul-Lit* and elsewhere.

**Elizabeth Schmermund** is a professor and a writer. She teaches literature at SUNY Old Westbury and has had her work published in venues including *The Independent*, *Months to Years*, and *Le Roi Faineant*.

**Robin Jewel Smith** is a queer poet pursuing her PhD in lyric poetry at the University of North Dakota. She has been published in a number of lit mags and edits two of her own.

**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. Her poems have appeared in *The Paris Review*, *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *Barrow Street*, *Poet Lore*, and many other journals and anthologies. A licensed psychotherapist, she has private practices in NYC and Nyack. [www.stonepoetry.org](http://www.stonepoetry.org) [www.stonetarot.com](http://www.stonetarot.com) YouTube and TikTok – Alison Stone Poetry.

Phoenix-based **Mary Specker Stone** facilitates monthly poetry salons and serves as a spiritual director for artists, writers, and people in recovery. Mary has taught college, written grants, raised children, and worked as a biomedical writer. Her poetry has been published in *Gyroscope Review*, *New Verse News*, *Image* (forthcoming), and *The Healing Art of Writing*, vol. 1, among others.

**Liam Strong** (they/them) is a queer neurodivergent cottagecore straight edge punk writer who has earned their BA in Writing from University of Wisconsin-Superior. Their poetry has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and a Best of the Net Award. You can find their poetry

and essays in *Vagabond City Poetry*, *Impossible Archetype*, and *Emerald City*. They are most likely gardening and listening to Turnstile somewhere in Northern Michigan.

**Judith Taylor** was born and brought up in Perthshire, Scotland. She now lives in Aberdeen, where she works in IT and is one of the organisers of the monthly 'Poetry at Books and Beans' events, and an editor of *Poetry Scotland* magazine. Her first full-length collection, *Not in Nightingale Country*, was published in 2017 by Red Squirrel Press, and she is currently working on a second.

**Susan Vespoli** lives in Phoenix, Arizona, where she relies on the power of writing to stay sane. Her poems have been published in *Gyroscope Review*, *Rattle*, *Mom Egg Review*, *Nasty Women Poets: An Unapologetic Anthology of Subversive Verse*, and other cool spots. She is the author of two books, *Blame It on the Serpent* (Finishing Line Press, 2022) and *Cactus as Bad Boy* (Kelsay Books, July 2022).

**Ellen White Rook** is a poet and teacher of contemplative arts residing in Albany, NY and South Portland, Maine. She offers writing workshops and leads Sit, Walk, Write retreats that merge meditation, movement, and writing. She also teaches ikebana, Japanese flower arranging. Ellen is a graduate of the Master of Fine Arts program at Lindenwood University. Her work has been published in *New Verse News*, *Red Rock Review*, *Black Fork Review*, *New Note Poetry*, *Trolley Literary Journal*, and more. In 2021, two of her poems were nominated for Pushcart Prize. Read more of her work at [ellenwhiterook.com](http://ellenwhiterook.com).

**Lisa Zimmerman's** poetry collections include *How the Garden Looks from Here* (Violet Reed Haas Poetry Award winner) *The Light at the Edge of Everything* (Anhinga Press) and *Sainted* (Main Street Rag). Her poetry and fiction have appeared in *Redbook*, *The Sun*, *SWWIM Every Day*, *Cave Wall*, *Poet Lore*, *Hamilton Stone Review*, and many other journals. Her poems have been nominated for Best of the Net, five times for the Pushcart Prize, and included in the 2020 *Best Small Fictions* anthology. She's a professor of English at the University of Northern Colorado and lives with her family in Fort Collins, Colorado.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

The **Spring 2023 Issue** is our 8<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Issue!

Acht, kahdeksan, huit, acht,, Átta, ocht, otto, Åtte, osiem, oito, opt, ocho, åtta, with, sekiz, tám, תשס"ח, अष्ट, yim, ثمانية, agt, nane, Sibhozo, eziyishiyagalombili, ewalu, e waru, valu,

Don't get behind the Eight ball. Submit. We'd love to see some 8 themed poems or forms, but no worries. This is an open issue with no theme, just fine, contemporary poetry. We welcome all poets, whether emerging or established. 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 as PDFs on our website or buy a hard copy off Amazon or Book Depository or Biblio.

For April, National Poetry Month, we will be doing another special poet promo on our website. Keep your eye on your email for an invite. Have the favorite poem you've written at the ready. We want to know all about it and your inspirations.

Spring Submissions open January 15, 2023 and run through March 1, 2023. 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 an up-to-date bio for the magazine in the Submittable bio section. No weird formatting. It makes the editors bang their heads on nearby surfaces and doesn't amuse our feline overlords. (Well, our headbanging amuses them, but—cats.) 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, breaking their poemy little hearts. Please use the name in your bio you'd like to be published under.

We welcome poems that are seasonal, topical, or out of left field. We have eclectic tastes, so give us a shot. We'd love to see what you've created over the winter.

Please read our full guidelines on Submittable:

<https://gyroscopereview.submittable.com/submit/>

Thank you for Reading!



# Gyroscope Review

fine poetry to turn your world around

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