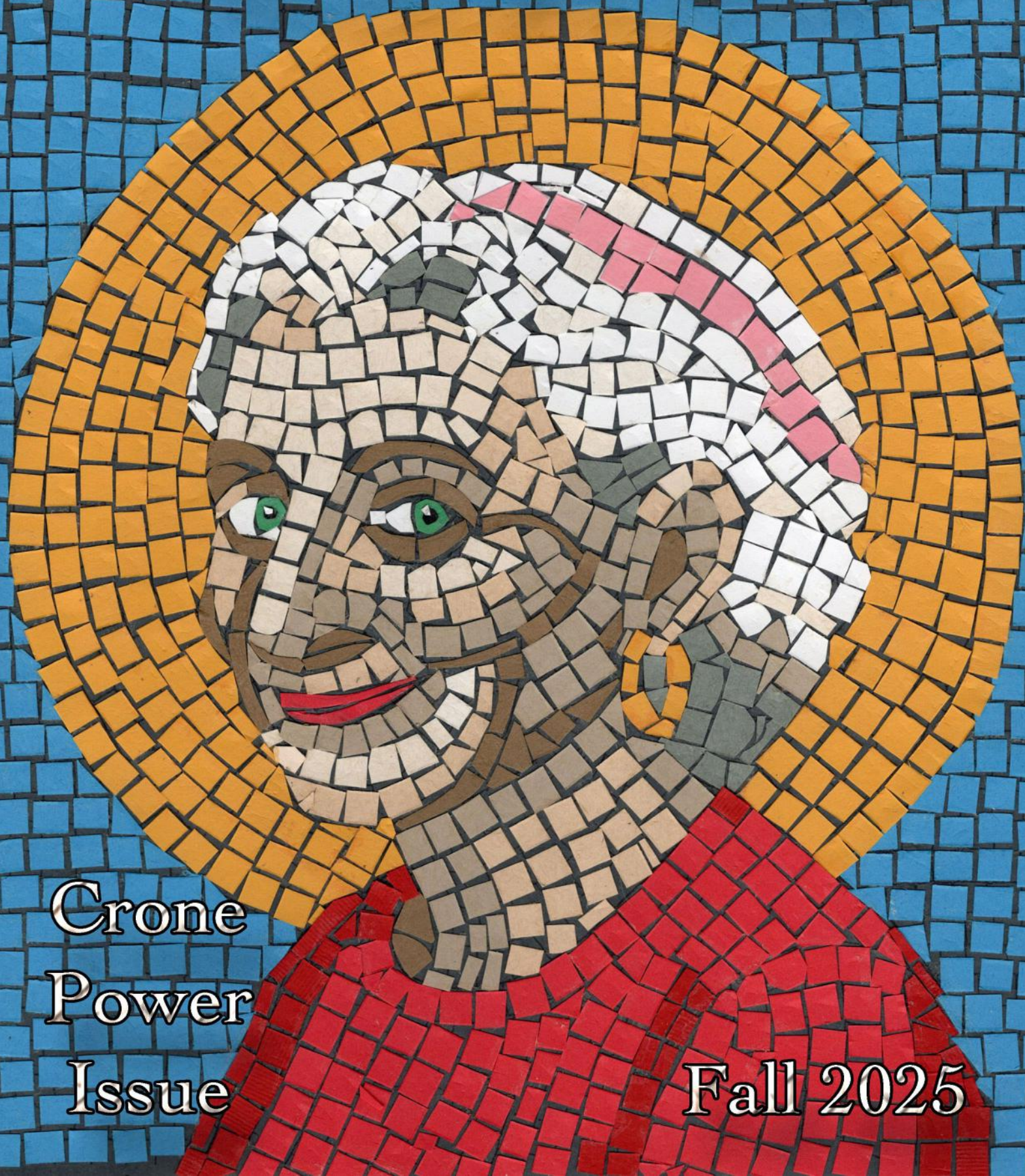


Gyroscope Review

fine poetry to turn your world around



Crone
Power
Issue

Fall 2025



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Issue 25-4

Fall Crone Power Issue 2025

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Constance Brewer

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From the Editors

Autumn is sort of the seasonal equivalent of cronedom, a time of reflection and coming inside to celebrate what's important. Reading the submissions for this issue, it was evident how much we still have to say and the many ways of saying it. What I found consistently in these poems and in the crones I know is a kind of self-awareness, compassion, strength, and a determination to make the most of this time, whether it be prioritizing family and friendships, self, or addressing societal ills. In recent months, I have heard time and again that "this is not the way I envisioned this phase of life" while also feeling endowed with power and a sort of freedom by dint of our waning years. We are both dispensable and indispensable. We bemoan our invisibility and also wield it for the greater good. There is so much wisdom and humor and humility in this issue that readers of every demographic will be entertained and enriched.

Betsy Mars

We are in awe of the poems we receive for the Crone Power Issue. Heartfelt and heartbreaking, sly humor mixed with painful honesty, every year we can't wait to dig in. Women over 50 have a lot to say, and we are honored to provide them a place to showcase their work. Our oldest submitter this year was 94, proving that age is just a number when you have something important to share. The power behind these poems is moving. As you read through, take note of what resonates with you. We believe many of these poems will touch your heart. The editors would like to say a heartfelt 'thank you' to the women poets of this special issue. You're our inspiration, and we hope everyone who reads this issue feels the same—encouraged to keep writing and sharing their poems with the world.

Constance Brewer

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Section One

Enter Autumn

BY BETH KANELL

This is the season of ritual.

When the spirit and the failing body at last part ways,
the first movement of love is touching, stroking, whether
eyelids or stilled fingers or, with the soft curve of your own ear,
resting against the cage of ribs where her heart—the heart
you've trusted all your life—no longer struggles.

This is the season of smoky air.

When the dry body of the land, ribbed with parched trees,
veined with deer trails, fastened to magnetic north, seasoned,
dusted with hawks, eagles, lingering swallows, with flutter and cry
as blackbirds gather forward into autumn murmuration,
when all of this rises up in weeks of flame: You must
breathe anyway. Daughter of ash.

Brush your fingers to your eyes.

There is a tender darkness that softens the lower lids,
invites the upper lids toward quiet. What you witnessed
with the passage of her breath—its return to heaven's welcome—
insists on saltwater and ache. This is the season of loss,
of shorn hair, torn garment. Before this season,
love clothed you.

Sunset blush. First star. Meteor.

This is the season of looking into heaven for meaning,
tracing the constellations, lying on your back on damp grass
letting the earth bring your pulse, your exhalation, into harmony.
Next week there will be rain, sweet waters that wash the smoky air to
bless the garden; repeat the refrain you hummed
before you knew words.

This is the body, the blood. Taste

this new loneliness, smooth it with your thumbs, flatten it,
crease with your fingernails this willow split readied for weaving:
begin your basket with a spiral. The season of ritual. A core, a base,
a vision. Daughter of dedication. Rediscovering arches, altar, brushed
with salt, with ash, with ache and answers.
This is the season of farewell.

Whitefish Lake

BY MARY KAY RUMMEL

Mid-summer, ten o'clock, the dark coming down,
we round the curve to our favorite beach,
needing to fill our senses with the catch of pleasure
after smoke and wildfire, red sun, another war.

Dread and pity compel us to give ourselves to water,
cool mineral and wood, willow and oak,
stars swarming in a mad artist's sky while,
off the shore, a black island hulks.

I listen for the eerie warble of spirits, water birds
belonging to this place before we were born
and to the music of lake's mysterious flash,
scale and shell, a summer moon rising.

A single thread of your hair touches my cheek,
as we lie side by side, facing Moon and Bear,
waiting until one of us, aching with the loneliness
of air, turns and tastes starlight on the other's mouth.

We listen to a mournful chorus—
a refrain that somehow comes round and sweet
at the end, as lovers breathing, as pollen raining,
as willow catkins sifting seeds over water.

Your fingertips smell of salt and dust.
Kissing your hands, I kiss carbon and chlorophyll,
but I can never kiss you enough
before the loon cries out and the moon descends.

Blazed

BY JUDITH H. MONTGOMERY

—after Gerard Manley Hopkins

November's early snow sifts its frigid beauty,
dapples the dark Ponderosa pines shadowing
the river's silver banks. Below, fern and cone
are frost-felled—berry leaves ghost-ovaled,
frozen globes dangling from crooked branches.
But when I turn to greet the river, five
gleaming torches pierce the slow dusk. Loosed
from summer's ordinary green, the Western
larches' needle-bundles candle up in gold,
lick the woods alive in light before December
weather full-descends to send every living shape
to sleep—or yes, death. But for this moment,
the *goldengrove* glimmers over leaf-mold,
needle-bloom flaring before it releases
to gild the ground below. O let me go out
like this, blazing in bright tongues, gliding one
last path before winter-fall quenches me, and all,
in a fine final litter of glitter-white and ice.

Photo 51, Showing the X-ray Diffraction Pattern of DNA

BY ANN CHINNIS

Alone in the back row of cell biology
classroom forty years ago, I wept upon seeing
Photo 51—Rosalind Franklin's 1952
image in black and white,
her fifty-first X-ray of DNA.
A grainy X rippled like a creek
in the breeze, a twisted
ladder of sugar—every rung a pair
of two bases. DNA coiled into a self:
how soft my touch, how deeply I listen,
if I am introverted, tall or myopic. DNA
weaving my love of words that glint
like trout, break the river's
glass in the still of August, lift
like a great blue heron.
In the DNA's spiral, I saw the relentless
geometry of pine cone scales, the logarithmic
whorl of a nautilus shell, an ear's helix. The DNA's
lace traced the corkscrewed pain of my
shyness: its exquisite symmetry a parable
about inevitability, about finding
quiet or beauty in the tiniest things. I was
overcome by hope—or was it a preponderance
of data—that I was not as flawed
as I thought, and maybe
even glorious.

Bodies

BY KELLY TERWILLIGER

Every pool I see I want to enter,
but I have only so much heat in my body
and the river is cold.
Now the angels, quiet as boulders,
come and sit beside me. Soft,
the colors of pigeons,
ashy or charcoal or cloudy grey.
Is their softness downy, or fur? Or stone
worn smooth by water that crinkles and purrs,
now crumpled white, now clear, now full and green?

They watch as I watch and so my watching
is not alone.

What I have done and what I have not done in my life
shifts like water, purling, wrinkling, folding,
like the bodies of women
bathing together in a country whose language
I do not understand. Here is the basket
to hold your clothes. Here is the bowl
to pour over your head. Here is the faucet
at which to crouch and wash yourself,
there is no need to say anything. Just sit,
and wash the body you live in,

hair, toes, we soap our soft and often
wrinkled skin. Without apology, this is where one becomes
simply human, a body among bodies like boulders,
like trees, like crinkled water. Bodies like folds of earth,
like soft fruit, like dough rising, full, fallen.
Bodies soft and changing like clouds,
forming, reforming. The pigeons above us are cooing.
Sit and wash. Rinse, rinse.
I have not loved you, body, as you have deserved.
But here we soak, we swim, we float —

Hyperopia

BY MELISSA ELEFOTHERION

for my fiftieth birthday
I'd like to be bryozoan
for the day, a tiny
moss animal that can
expand from a party of one
to a community of thousands,
how exponential, the sheer
force behind this
radiolaria of thinking,
how cosmology begins
with small invertebrates,
the self unlearning

Meditating In A Heat Wave

BY D. DINA FRIEDMAN

Don't think about the mouse
who left the half-juiced tomato carcass

covered in droppings,
the fruit abandoned on the stove

the way it sometimes is
with half-chewed thoughts,

brave ideas ignored like dust bunnies
in the dank dog days, too hot to bend

into crevices. If you're lost,
let the mossy voice oozing

into your earbuds steer
your return to smooth,

an inhale of poems
rising from the body's rankled edge.

After Eden: an Abecedarian

BY LUISA M. GIULIANETTI

After he banished and damned me
bound me to the unforgiving earth, I took stock—
conceded that paradise never quite suited me:
deathless calm, pristine green, branches freighted with fruit—
everything in its ordained place. I claim my own garden now,
faithful to its seasons, to skylarks and sparrows—sirens of salvation.
Genuflect to bowing bluebells, rusting leaves, rose
hips' scarlet startle. Dusk blinks
in restless fireflies. Crickets chitter. Night-blooming
jasmine and moonflowers shimmer. I
kneel as ground beetles and earthworms
loosen dirt, cast channels for rain. I
make raised beds, make amends. Learn the
necessary violence of deadheading and pruning
old limbs so that dormant buds chance to open.

Praise to the glossy, velvet-leafed
quince, apple's ancient cousin. Rosy bursts
ripen to late-summer gold. I harvest its bounty,
simmer with honey and lemon—ambrosia for my wanting
tongue. A sweetness of my own creation.
Under gathering violet, I tend
vines of morning glory and muscadine, leave
wildflowers untouched—milkweed, saffron-eyed
xyris, wandering thyme. The honey bee flits—
yellow-faced cosmo, to stargazer, to sunburst
zinnia. In the home of my holy.

The Hours

BY ISABEL CRISTINA LEGARDA

i.

Evening. I comb the wrack line
for remains of beings I don't grieve —
coral fragments, driftwood, scallop shells,
a sand dollar. Occasionally
a shark's egg case, black and frightening.
Only once, a hunk of ambergris.

ii.

Smooth green glass
I'll put on the kitchen table,
where no one
has commiserated with me
for weeks
over weevils in the cornmeal
or cobwebs under the eaves.

iii.

I enjoyed the quiet at first.

iv.

One night I saw a glow
of plankton near the shore —
sparkling green just at the edge,
a galaxy of tiny stars
mantling the beach.

At dawn

I brought my tea
to the porch and stared
at the horizon.

v.

The green seagrasses
turn white.

Sometimes a creak
or a shadow at night
startles me. You're not here
to remind me
it's just an old house.

Tomorrow you will return.

vi.

You left in the spring
just after the by-the-wind sailors
washed up and made a glassy blue
throng on the sand.

Now the wrack lines thin. The air
is colder, the abandoned sea plants
heavy and brown.

vii.

The cheesemonger
keeps cutting my tranches
large. I cannot decide
if this is kindness
or something else.

viii.

No sails.
No lean of tall masts.
No sun.

In my worst moments
I see you covered
in barnacles and seaweed
long as a man-o'-war.

ix.

Sometimes bleached fragments
among sand grains
look like pieces of your bone.

x.

On the wrack line,
no feathers or seed pods.
Today a dead horseshoe crab
and some rocks that have dried
and lost their luster.

Tomorrow you will return.
I know you will.

I am relict sediment. I remain.

When the Therapist Suggests I Name My Anxiety

BY CHRISTINE SWINT

I can't pray you skyward, can't trap you under glass,
I can't smoke you out with palo santo.
You exist in my cellar-world, my dank
lower floors. Old as a moss-speckled oak,
you're crone, you're child, hexing me one day,
conked out the next. I'm tired of your complaints.
The way you bind my breath with fishing line,
I wish I could hook you, exit stage left.
You have reasons, you clamor to tell me,
but the story, the gist, has muddied—
we're spelunkers, you and I, with no torch.
After gel caps I take with tea and toast,
I ghost you, my cranky little minion,
my beloved, my petite dysfunction.

Letter Written in September on Little Beach, Ogunquit, Maine

BY CAROLEE BENNETT

—after Anne Sexton

I've never seen it so quiet here. Crowds left
just a week ago and already birds outnumber people.
I've returned for more time with sea and sun,
my butt in the beach chair, holding my Corona
and a notebook corresponding with myself. Dearest,

(I'm learning to call myself Dearest)

up 'til now, I've believed a gull was just a gull
jabbing at what we leave behind long after
we leave everything behind.

Dearest, as long as I've been alive, I've cowered
from these birds, the skirmish of hunger,
brawl of beaks, wings helter-skelter.

It's impossible for me to describe the enormity
of the panic – how primal, how consuming. Except today,
when a young one appears at my feet –

too close, really –

pouting for food, and I swear I see in its riveted eye
an old spirit, an invitation, and so
instead of *FLEE*, I think, *How enchanting!*
and talk with it awhile.

When I post a video of myself
feeding this messenger a pretzel rod by hand,
a woman trolls me, *It's just a baby begging for food*,
but she's missing the point.
It's easy to take cheap shots at a chick
mugging for a treat, but what about a woman
newly capable of setting old fears aside?

It was so lovely to meet her, Dearest, finally
the version of me that refuses to be hemmed in.

The Scarf

BY KATY MCKINNEY

The week before Christmas you sent out your wish list —
on it, a hand-knit scarf. Silly boy, even you knew (at 40)
that time frame was impossible. I'm working on it now,

in March, and—wrapped in Christmas paper—you'll get it
for your birthday in June. We chose the color together:
Delft Heather, which is to say indigo, which is to say

dusky blueberry, which is to say the color of the ocean today.
This is not idle metaphor—I'm *on* the ocean, on our sailboat,
knitting your scarf, and should the ball of yarn go overboard —

as today it's threatened to—it would be a perfect match.
I forgot to say the yarn is also the color of your eyes,
the color of mine. I forgot to tell you how your firstborn —

as you were —opens in your realms of love, the expanse
of which you never dreamed. But you have a son,
and you know. Today the ocean has been tiresome,

swell and wind yawing and pitching us over the course
of a long slow day. I've literally been knitting the ocean
into your scarf, light spray landing on the merino wool

as my fingers work stitches and salt. I don't think
I mentioned *ocean* in the poem I wrote for your wedding,
though I know there were rivers, mountains, white clouds.

I remember I spoke of two fierce separate spirits,
their coming together. Nobody spoke of unraveling.
When a scarf unravels, it's just yarn. When a marriage

comes apart, it's more complex. Like the ocean,
tempestuous and stormy one day, flat blue the next.
When I cast on the wool in January, I didn't think of this

as a scarf of comfort except in the usual way,
to keep winter from your face. But hey: it's soft.
It's blue. It holds an ocean of love.

Vanishing Wildness

BY RUTH MOTA

Wild child of the forest
brambles wrapped in bracelets
round her wrists, pale yellow irises
streaming through her hair. Flared chanterelles
and red boletes rise beneath her feet, coloring
the creekside path where a mountain lion left
her mark and sparked her racing heart.
Arms bare. Hands pine-scented.
Lips blackberry smeared as
she goes searching.

Wild woman of the streets
unbraided hair tinged in gray,
earrings hooped with bobbins
leather sandals winding up her calves.
Blare of car horns and scent of gasoline.
Smithereens of shattered glass glitter
across the sidewalk. Someone smashed
her poetry box. Poems fly through the wind
down the road like puffs of tumbleweed.
Her heart, a shredded honeycomb
robbed of its sweet sap.

Tango

BY JENNY DOUGHTY

—A golden shovel after "On Time" by Rabindranath Tagore

It's September. My garden fades, but the
buddleia still blooms, and a white butterfly
shrinks time between purple blossoms. It counts
as summer still, if what you want is not
a season named only by its months
and the equinoctial command, but
what we see, what we feel inside, moments
when the heart resists the movement to fall and
maintains its warm rhythm, the tango that has
us moving our bodies to its beat, in time
syncopated, like butterflies, until *Enough!*

Open step, forward cross, back cross - time
counting steps to that double beat is
one way growing older gives us a
rhythm to our days. Time is where our wealth
is. We shed the responsibilities of
a youth not misspent enough. Our bodies change,
stiffen and ache, hearing diminishes, but
tango is a *feeling that is danced*, in the
words of Jorge Luis Borges. The clock
is ticking on our lives but here in
the dance of four legs and one heart it's
still summer.

To youth we seem a parody
of romance, as if dark hair, smooth skin makes
the image of love, but like the butterfly it
flutters, the heart, at an embrace, at a mere
kiss. Loves change and die, lives change, steps change
as seasons change, as flowers die and
we take those open steps, that forward cross, no
time to waste because our time is our wealth.

When minds open to tango's darkness, heart lets
us sink back to the passions where it began. Your
mind, if you are young, may see the life
of the old as one to be taken lightly,
but here in the sexy power of a dance
a tango dancer takes on romance, takes on
presence, connects movement to music, the
rise and fall of melody as she edges
toward some beats, hesitates on others, finds ways of
turning, rocking, rising and sinking.

Time

shrinks like a syncopated beat or like
the end of summer, when morning dew
puddles heavy where butterflies can drink, on
the narrow, serrated buddleia leaves, the
bush in my yard where a butterfly on the tip
of a purple blossom sips the last of
its nectar and soaks up sun before taking a
light and fluttering flight to a new leaf.

Postscript

BY LEONORE WILSON

The long lane curves out beside the dry meadow,
febrile puncture thistle and tarweed either side.
Leaf rot in summer ditches; embers somnolent, on the verge.
Emerald tunnel of cottonwoods and silvery willows
where the bridle path joins macadam, drops to the valley —
old bridges, stone arches, blue herons in the stream.
Out into sun again, a broad land of orchards, the long hill
upward, shadow breaking everywhere on impregnated cattle,
their big soft buffetings catching your heart off guard.
Now turn to the west, walk on into the headstrong shadow
of this self you made in the long arbitrary afternoons —
the words laid down, hand flat on the mahogany table.
Then finally, there up ahead, familial Ithaca of stars.
Black steppe of time, sable heft of glory—you turn,
down the highway, clay broken road, funneling lane,
to the house hand built of days off under high-waisted trees.
Light now in the cathedral window, children's voices; blue lamp
on the maple hutch, a glass of fine port, a fountain pen.
Blackbird rustling under the budding laurel, woodsmoke; settle
your shoulders now, lift the latch, turn the key, step in.

Orca in a Salmon Hat

BY SUSAN COHEN

“First observed in the 1980s, the fad of orcas swimming around with dead salmon on their foreheads off Washington state seemed to have faded—until now.” —*National Geographic*

A camera caught it today for the first time
since the eighties—like shoulder pads
and chunky jewelry—an orca
sporting a dead salmon on its head.

If you're a whale, the edible hat
might be the last and next best thing
when you're on the long swim.
Some fashions keep resurfacing,

reincarnate. I've seen how skirts climb
and dip, pant legs flare and flare again,
which may be why I keep my faux-leather
gray address book with names I penciled

in the eighties. I can pretend a cousin
may be moving back to Kappock Street,
my parents collecting mail again in Oakland.
I can't bear to cross a name out when a friend

has left her walking days behind her
like my beloved square-toed boots—
may they rest in peace at the bottom
of my closet. In my drawer, just in case,

the bathing suit I bought before
the last two bathing suits I bought.
I'm as ridiculous as that orca.
We're both in it for the long swim.

Section Two

3.45 am, three sheets to the wind. And then some

BY BETH McDONOUGH

Watch her pin messages to the netherworld through storms—
you'll not stop her. She gathers them hot,
hot from the twistering belly of the just-stopped drum.
She'll pin them—pin them, pin them
wild into this blackout winter night,
starch them hard at the stiffening quick.
Whatever she takes in her arms, or rams
deep into that basket is now flint in the face
of all her lost landscapes. She fills space
with spent powder's livid scents and chapped skin.
She has a frigate to build.

Here are battleships of bedfills, drawn from
pyjamas, by pants, in more, still more of those sheets.
Pin them firm on the swaying line, ordered, right
arranged as her long-dead mother taught her.
Let her attempt to reorder chaos,
array her life in laundry, test how this nocturnal fret
flenses air. She will, she will shape
something of nothing, from what has been served, raise sails
at that vast out there, leaving room for more
two hours from now. And all will appear

brilliant at breakfast, unguarded
in the garden, as if all of this
was some known kind of normal,
as she picks her strange battles,
stern into this war.

What to Love in the World We Live In

BY JOANNE DURHAM

Try dirt. Cockroaches. Clouds. What survives.
Try rhythms: waves, contractions, birth, breath.
Try stars. No need to know
they all burn out, give them a million years, a lot can happen.
We're three friends around a kitchen table testing the depth of night,
seeped in news of prisons for immigrants, decent people
fired for being decent, floods and flames
feasting on forests and wetlands. Our fears don't evaporate
like drops of wine off our glasses. We are struggling
to do something—anything—to believe
it matters. Leaning into the dim light, Michael muses
how on Mount St. Helens, after lava burnt everything alive,
seeds blew into the devastation. Huckleberry and trillium
emerged between fallen trees, here and there slivers
of silver fir poked through, protected by winter's snow.
Such quiet, fierce resistance.
Naomi says, *I need to remember Aesop,*
his bundle of sticks that couldn't be broken.
I say, *My grandson told me yesterday, "I can't wait to be eight."*

There Is No View of the Prairie from Prairie View Manor

BY DEANNA KERN LUDWIN

Where is the prairie / Where is my house / Whose walls are these / Who cut that hole / They're climbing inside / They're stealing my teeth / I don't drink the coffee / They've put something in it

The nurse is foreign / I don't like her voice / Her hair looks too perfect / I think it's a wig / They pay her to smile / I don't like her pills / I want to go home / She's one of them

Who's that old woman / Where will she sleep / She can't come in here / There's not enough room / She'll break my legs / She'll steal my shoes / She used to be young / She's stolen my name

My husband is gone / He's taken my purse / He bought a new car / He's growing a beard / He's drinking with bachelors / He's sleeping with widows / He used to be young / Now he's one of them

Where are my rings / My hands always hurt / I can't bend my fingers / I can't find my glasses / I used to know numbers / I used to be pretty / I think the nurse took them / Or maybe the widows

My room has a river / It keeps getting deeper / They're trying to drown me / They know I can't swim / The children are crying / Where are the mothers / Where is the lifeguard / Is he one of them

Jay calls every day / His voice is so pleasant / He asks how I am / He'll save me from jail / I gave him my numbers / My children are angry / But how could I know / That he's one of them

The town's growing smaller / Where are the buildings / Where are the roads / I can't see the trees / The window is shrinking / Please come and get me / But how will I know / You're not one of them

Munching on Mortality

BY BECKY SCHIGIEL

I listen to the Taoism guy on the way in. 8 minutes to clear my mind as I wind through cluttered streets. He likes to tell me that I am Apple. Reassures me that though I am barely hanging on, certain to fall, I do not care at all. In Lesson 23, he adds that falling is fine because I am not really Apple. Surprise! I am actually Tree. The whole long-living, leafy-limbed *Malus Magnificus*. I spent a whole month inhaling and imagining my Golden Delicious self until I felt truly fruity and connected in love to all you Asshole Apples driving like idiots, clutching on to life just two branches over from mine. Then he drops the line about dropping off. I am Tree, you are Tree, so what's the big deal if the tiny part of the whole I happen to inhabit in this rosy round shape of me just plops off our shared world one day. Still there in Spirit, yeah? These exercises are supposed to calm my arrival to work except now I'm just pissed off. So I switch to that touchy-feely yet still science-y podcast. The one where owls and bees are swooping and swarming in peace in everyone's backyard and this makes it okay that the planet is dying. The Expert of the Day says we are all Feast anyway. *We do not decompose! We are eaten!* The interviewer gets overly excited about body and blood and eating Jesus. Scholar guy says, *Um, sure, but what I mean is, we all end up on the forest floor and it's like a Christmas Roast for bugs and isn't that beautiful and enough?* It's not enough. I am Apple, dammit.

“I mean, you don’t really want a funeral, do you?”

BY SUNNY HEMPHILL

Think of these bones as erratics
waiting to be dropped by a flood
onto some event horizon,
one misfiring synapse after another,
dragging off into graceless sleep.
Maybe wind, but likely rust
(because 4 grams of iron isn’t nothing)
will whittle down the shape of me that I’ve left
leaning against some tree where I bent
too long, twiddling the ant lion larvae
from their soft, sandy traps with a twig.
I’m no star child, and I never expected
halo and harp, rapture or reliquary.
Ants and lichen suit me better,
or a blanket of leaves, heavy
with mold. I’m good right here.
Given time, a lizard might hunt
from the round of my thigh bone.
A wren might scold
from the hollow of my chin.
Cheatgrass might sprout
between my ribs and puncture vine
take root under my awkward left arm.
My name will melt with the snow.

At The Death Café

BY MARY LOU BUSCHI

We discuss green burials: a biodegradable coffer or shroud without embalming, no formaldehyde. We drink tea and eat cake in a crowded circle around caskets and candles. Each Death Café takes on the spirit of the people who happen to gather there. There is an eagerness not colored by sadness. Cancer patients browse through objects of interest: locket for ash, burlap for burial pods, becoming a field of mushrooms. We discuss choices, inspiration, ways of making the finite fantastic. I lift a book: *I'm Dead, Now What?* Turn to the page for how to care for my pet. How I would like to be disposed. I think about ash released on a cold day. Vapors freezing around me. Fractals melting on the delicate upper lip of my love. At the death café, it's always winter but we are warm, the light low. We watch the snow in silence collecting itself in soft layers over the arborvitae, over the crooked sidewalk, a thin coat resting on the sloped shoulders of the woman walking her dog, careful not to slip. She leads him out to the tree where he will relieve himself, where, one day, they too will be crystalized.

Altar for My Memorial

BY TRICIA KNOLL

Resist adding tropes of skulls, hourglass, or that coyote jawbone. Drape a table with my shawl embossed with red and black designs of Haida raven and whale. Put three peachy roses in a bud vase that reveals the clarity of water. Arrange one red cabbage and stalks of red-veined and curly kale near a blue plate of three lemons. One lemon may be moldy. Fill the small aluminum dog bowl with cat's eye marbles. Weave my dog's leash through offerings and fasten its clip to a twig of red maple—leafed out or bare to reflect the season. Weight the left end of the table with poetry books by Le Guin, Atwood, Whitman, Gluck, and Kenyon. Put my chapbook, *The Unknown Daughter*, beneath the pile. Three of my Zuni horse fetishes carved in jet must stare at the large blue-glass marble with waves and a moon. Place the fan of wild turkey tail feathers as a backdrop near two of my hand-colored mandalas. If you can remove it from my corpse, include my mother's moonstone ring that I've worn since she died in 1995. Finally, the hand-drawn birthday card for my 50th birthday my brother made of a figure sliding downhill. A card I've saved for decades. Print words for attendees to sing "We Are" by Sweet Honey in the Rock: *We are the mothers of courage and the daughters of dust*. On the flip side of the handout, print this list: my still life of my life gone still.

Holometabolous: In Which I am a Dark-Adapted Fly

BY KIM WELLIVER

In September lush,
dove and magpie prepare to take their leave. Whitewing flash.
Skunk and skink slip away like all bright clean things.

Flies throng and jewel,
their wings a murmurous hum; something dusky like the color
of black plums or entrails.
Diptera—populous
as pomegranate seeds:
bristled, char-dark, bluebottle gleam.

Summer's crowd of blossoms fade.
Fruit follows, sugar sunk,
it plunks to rot, grass-entombed.

And yet, see here,
in the garden's understory, life morphs
reshapes. Flies rise in rafts of bitter shimmer:
gauze-glitter of daub and shit and hunger.

Autumn scratches tree shapes
against the sky.
Good days smell like burnt apples:
woodpile flourishings of smoke, and pumpkin rinds.

All living things can be taken
and lost. Preyed upon.
Prayed upon.

Ankle-deep in leaf clot, I am insignificant.

Unquiet. Unclean:

my gray-streaked head. My crow-footed eyes.

I'm etched, not fledged.

See how flies, tiny as teeth, (striped or gold-chased),
persevere. Transform. Ignite death with birth.

The moon, too, curious about everything, tastes the world.
Reshapes herself. Crust to cabochon.

As the year settles for sleep, its teeth at my throat,
flies unpin from putrefaction's feast;

drunk on grapemust
and cake-ends, they seed a thousand generations.

I too would change, would shape myself numinous,
like the moon. Would carve myself into such cool light,
but haven't the courage for such heights.

Instead, I follow the flies' example:

Split my body's husk.

Leafcrumb and rust,
and oh so many years,
sift from my skin.

I jewel my spine.
Shake out wet wings.

Who Will Keep Watch?

BY GRACE MASSEY

Who will watch over my garden when I'm gone,
mutter to the rabbits *go find another diner?*
Will lilies dug from roadsides run to insurrection,
ants unfold the peony's pleated chambers?

Who will cry *go find another goddammitall diner*
while hills collapse to wordless valleys,
ants unfold the blossom's buried chambers,
fireflies smolder in scorched-earth grasses?

As astonished hills collapse to chasms,
swallowtails erupt from milkweed rampage,
fireflies smolder in blackened grasses.
Lucifer rises from his shoebox burial.

Swallowtails erupt from milkweed.
Loosestrife obscures the moonrise.
Lucifer arises and sings to the wasps.
The coyote carries off the cat to feed her kits.

Loosestrife shrouds the moonrise,
Lilies run to insurrection,
The coyote devours the cat.
She will keep watch when I'm gone.

In This Field

BY SHARON PRETTI

—A Cento

I remember when there was no urge to cut the land into pieces—
the old grasses, the prescribed fire,

a papery nest of ground wasps.
I need to slip this tree inside myself

despite the drought, despite the shrinking
footprint of the pond.

What purpose, otherwise, is grief?

Leaves rustle, while the whole world simply moves forward.
Phone numbers with recently-added hyphens

tumble through suburban air,
garbage circulating underground.

I'm not coping very well, but who is,

panic's thousand fingers braided through my insides.
Don't look down or away, the tarot says.

Small sirens and screams. Intangible,
the many-colored horses and fishes,

beebalms and bergamots, ants pilgriming the road.
The tarot says let go, change,

the ground spinning beneath us,
the waning moon glowing like a hypothesis.

I want to respect the patience of heartbreak,
how it waits along the curving trajectories

of each possible disaster.
Midges, dragonflies, moths, the magpies—

what doesn't return or never arrives at all.

*Comprised of lines and phrases borrowed from Joy Harjo, and You Are Here Poetry in the Natural World,
edited by Ada Limón.*

The Presence of Her Absence

BY ALICIA VIGUER-ESPERT

Every spring when I go back home,
she appears collecting red poppies
within wheat fields browned by sun,
thistles clinging to her white socks,

an ill-behaved smile under a straw hat.
I follow her hurried steps on the old dirt road
—a rabbit compelled to return to her den—.
I lean over her shoulder, think she sees

me turning into the woman I am today,
I sense her tracing the outline of my heart
with blue chalices of Morning Glories
as she conjures rain to cleanse debris

left by one-time lovers, gathers a torch
to illuminate ancient boats on the deep
sea floor still holding amphorae once filled
with the finest olive oil from Cordoba,

the same way I retain the oily-sweet history
of our ancestors hidden within my blood.
Sometimes, she coaxes me to join a chorus
of spirits searching the right phonemes.

At night, she anoints me with what's forgotten:
the fiery soul of stones, Anima Mundi's joy,
the lost arms of our mother.
Her absence, my constant companion.

Counting Down

BY SHAHEEN DIL

Because this tree outside my window
sprouts green again,
because lichen covers its trunk
and dark branches,
because wind sheers through these leaves again—

is it grief, or relief that swivels over me?
That these days will not come again,

that the decades past are gone,
live only in my words
scratched with a poor blue pen
on yellow sheets which will become, what,
white with age? Curled at the edges?

Frayed?

No more to turn up my eyes,
amazed at a world unfolding
in strange and unexpected ways.

No more to swirl in the churn of life
like insistent waves—
wet, warm and overwhelming.

Grief as Tunnel Painted on the Side of a Mesa

BY PAULA J. LAMBERT

I review my notes, snatches of dreams
that often turn into poems. Here's one:

*Jar of Animals. They grow. There are more
than I thought. Parrot's beak snaps off
in my hand. Snake is actually a giraffe.
There's a woman upstairs, fangs out.*

Of this, I remember only the parrot's beak,
black—like a fingernail, maybe,
waiting to fall off. Like a spent blossom.
I can feel the vague echo of the break
between my thumb and forefinger,
the strange stillness of what lay in the palm
of my hand. The fearful thought:

I didn't mean for this to happen.

Who was the woman upstairs, *fangs out*, angry
at me for what I'd done—or offering, perhaps,
what must be plucked from her, too,
what she'd borrowed from the snake
now tall enough to reach her?

I can't remember my dreams anymore.

Other notes tell me:

*I met Gary Buwey on a bus. Conversation
just so good. Witty, sharp. Becomes clear
I'll be spending the night.*

And this:

*I approach the trail around the lake,
heavy with darkness.*

In that dream, the notes tell me, I can see the moon
in the sky above but follow the sun reflected
on the surface of the water.

More and more, I think, I've been dreaming
of my father, woke last week screaming
I love you! as his face retreated into a darkness
I couldn't reach, a black hole
solid as the one Coyote painted
on the side of a mesa. Somewhere, a road runner:
beep beep! But not tonight I'd guess,
or tomorrow night either, Grief can't be called upon
at will, ordered as if from a menu:

Instead,
sleep brings us a jar full of animals. A beak
that breaks like a breadstick nobody asked for.
And a woman at the top of the stairs, famished maybe,

waiting to fill the hole in her belly, the whole
of her heart, ready to consume what's offered:
guilt, sin, a glass full of sadness. She knows grief
is a jar full of beasts morphing endlessly:
chimera, illusion. But so is love, as far as that goes.
So is fear. She knows fathers never could protect us,
not when they were living, not when snakes nipped
at their own heels, when they knew birds parrot back
only words they hear from us,
and in that strange translation,
they lose all meaning.

The woman upstairs knows Gary Busey
disappointed us all (and Buddy Holly died young,
before he could). She knows the moon
never leaves us, and that sunlight shimmering
on any body of water will always be a path
worth following. That light mimics light
the same way a tunnel painted on the side of a mesa
mimics a great black hole. That we can enter both
when we're ready. She knows Gary Busey,
young, was a beautiful thing. That I was, too,
and you were, and the trail around even a shimmering lake
eventually ages us all: disease, dementia, decrepitude.
We hold ourselves above the fray, or try to,
fangs out, devouring what's ever been good,
deflecting what we don't need,
knowing one looks just like the other
and so comes back and comes back
and comes back.
Sometimes we enter the tunnel
only to be hit by a train. Sometimes, if we're lucky,
we realize we've always been that bird, beep-beep,
running and running through even a solid black wall,
beak intact, coming through just fine on the other side.

When I Ask ChatGPT to Explain “Molecular Cascade Storm” to Me Like I’m Five

BY MARISSA GLOVER

Okay, imagine your body is like a castle
and inside it are tiny guards that protect you.

When a bad guy gets in,
your guards send out messages
to call for help. Sometimes,
the guards panic
and send too many messages—
like shouting and ringing every bell
in the castle.

But you’re too old to be asking this.

The body shifts dramatically at fifty.
A surge of protein changes accelerates
aging across multiple systems.
Cardiovascular health deteriorates
especially fast.

How fast depends on lots of factors
like genetics, lifestyle, and trauma.

Yes, proteins are important.
They are the workhorses
of the body’s cells.

The term “cardiovascular” includes the
heart (cardio) and blood vessels (vascular).

Functions of the cardiovascular system:

- Deliver oxygen and nutrients to tissues
- Remove carbon dioxide and metabolic waste
- Circulate hormones
- Regulate body temperature
- Support immune function

No, the cascade cannot be reversed.
It’s too late to expect diet
and exercise to heal what hurts.

Your mom is dead. You can’t fix
your childhood. Would you like
this information in a diagram
or a downloadable PDF?

Little Hair Shirt

BY SUSAN ROBERTS

She let the goat's brindle coat grow long,
snipped it at season's end, fashioned a vest
from it. Pleased with its light, she let
the rabbit's white pelt lengthen. Shaved
the beast in spring so it wouldn't suffer, tied
the ends of string together to form
sleeves. The following winter she tracked bear,
felled a grizzly with her arrow, skinned
its stench-brown pelt and skirt.
The beloved came to her in summer;
she wrapped him in it, buried him
beneath the apple tree's laden branches,
satisfied at last with all her toil.

the only excuse

BY ELISA SUBIN

mourners' lips struggle with
that most ancient whisper, Kaddish
cuts the tongue and tears the cloth

we line up, and
an old shovel is passed in silence
I imagine at one time she had
seeded a garden, planted a tree
maybe even turned topsoil upside down in her youth

but tears and time have rusted her handle and now she is content
the soft womb she created, she covers
a blanket of dirt rich with clay and worms
warm solace born on the coldest of days

I reach down toward his name
and leave a small stone
 apologizing
that I can't stay longer
traffic, I say, confident only he'd understand

Caressed

BY PAT VALDATA

—For *Cathartes aura*

swoop of silver and black
shadows the dry lawn

their gift to all of us,
this cleansing breeze

grace epitomized
until the close up

form follows function
so don't call them

ugly—their beauty
is erasure, leaving

a white ribcage spread
open like a book

Unburial at Sea

BY CORINNE SMITH

—*For Ellen*

I uncast every speck of her ash from the deep
to mold it back into her marrow.
I perch her in the captain's
chair of this keening sailboat.
She gages wind direction and trims
the sails. I curl into the teakwood
bench, its graying boards a cradle.

She holds the tiller with a firm hand, gazing
toward a destination I can't fathom. Dark
billows surge behind us, but she will know
where to anchor, sheltered from wind and wave,
rising tide gently rocking the boat.

I climb to the crow's nest, point
to the storm swelling
off the stern. She doesn't look.
She checks our bearing,
pulls off her cap to release
her graying hair to the wind.

The boat rises, falls on the ocean
swells. Wind whistles in the shrouds
and stiffens the sails. We don't speak.
She's sailing steadfast to the horizon, not looking back.

Section Three

Lee Krasner after Pollock

BY JOANNA SCANDIFFIO

I had the small upstairs bedroom
for my work

after his death I moved to the barn
where once his canvases

knocked the socks off
everyone

light and absence erased
what wasn't mine and that

cliché of time did somersaults

my paintings flew out the window
like geese

migrating home

I kept the paint-splattered floor
for his admirers

preserving oxygen
is the trick

for going long distances

Eve Finds Her Mad Stone

BY MICHELLE PATTON

She grew tired of arranging her face
as she listened to his endless explanations.
She took up smoking, hiding
behind trees to get a break, her left index finger
tracing her lips until she could see straight
to the heart of things, the separate
dimensions of time stacked like feathers
the glowing spirals, the muscular music
that keeps the world afloat. She dipped her hand
below the surface and felt around.
She was thinking about her life now,
smoking and brooding about a wrongness
in the body of the earth, a pain
twisted around the center. In this nest
of soft trouble, she surveyed the landscape,
the cool breath of God on her neck.

A Way Home

BY DIANE LEBLANC

I've become a woman of substantial underwear, sensible boots, and edibles not because I believe I can live forever but, having passed into a time beyond smooth healing, when even the deepest breaths to stimulate my sympathetic nervous system are too shallow, when nights are warmer, tents smaller, and wars plotted between bodies not countries, when prattling gods grip the house and wobbly birds beg for bread, I'm done asking *Am I good?* *Am I sexy?* because the girl in pleated wool skirts and knee socks has twirled from the cafeteria stage onto open prairie where she drinks dust from yellow cup flowers, studies vole stillness and snake logic, turns her back on the full moon to watch a comet flare, though faint in the noisy sky, opens empty hands to the Big Dipper as if starlight might soften calloused pads and on her lifelines mark a spot, a home, a red dot confirming "you are still here."

Armed

BY JUDITH H. MONTGOMERY

—after *Salome* (1899) by F. Luis Mora

She scorns all veils. Breastbone to floor,
a swirl of red silk swaths her sleek lines,
licking each curve. Hip and knee cant

under shimmer. Hair, loosed, half-smokes
her tempting shoulders. Copper bracelets
coil about her arm. *Armed*: this woman's

breasts are fortified in hammered bronze,
wheeled shields that glint and guard. Yet
also glinting—the artist draws the eye down,

past the navel's slight suggested shadow—
a silvered chain of coins clicks across her
figured girdle. Slung low—lower—the deep

designing V hints at ready flesh, that lipped
entrance. Daughter who's been mother-bent
on revenge, she's prepared to unknot

the girdle, tease it over Herod's lap. Her left
hand grips the platter that will hold John's
head—fingers clamp it tight against her hip.

Her head lifts imperious, impatient to end
this charade, stride on stage to play the deadly
role. Her right hand twists to grasp a sword—

its hilt, ruby-eye'd, malevolently gleaming.
The blade arcs down, past scarlet thighs—
its sharp tip slices the lapping wave of her

red hem. This sword's no prop. She knows
what she's to do. She'll dance, wield the honed
weapon. She herself will plate the bloody head.

Image of Salome painting:

<https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-D2V72ROfTJ4/TrKQLBLAQ5I/AAAAAAAAAEec/JgoLRdG7Udg/s1600/salome.jpg>



What I Learned

BY SHARON M. CARTER

Coffee proves essential upon waking
after bad news: a dead mouse
on the duvet, forest fires, another war.

Say *no* to nettles,
whack them senseless with a hedge
trimmer, (a flamethrower, if available,
might produce more pleasure).

I become upset when my teeth
do not whiten as promised, learned
dogs don't care about your hair color.
Say *yes* to nachos...

Drinking Earl Grey tea will not
cause dyspepsia, it is more refined.
It's futile to rescue the courgettes
from their fight with zucchinis.

If you beg the checkout lady
for directions to your expectations,
she will move you to another till.

New Mexico

BY SHARON FAGAN McDERMOTT

1.

The dead scull the river, glint between rapids.
They ask for nothing, red sunset, for nothing.
Hundreds of hummingbirds whirr their small fans

drink sugar water from red mouths of glass.
Rio Grande, old spirit, awakens and leaves you
feeling mysterious, leaves you tangerine melting

2.

into low hills. Questa circles with nine wild-eyed dogs.
Burred. Ragged. They wolf down the rice cakes I offer.
I raise each cake high, *Dominus vobiscum, Amen.*

Where I came from was a slumber of cornfields
and before that a cascade of mountains and before
that, a city of brick. And where I headed?

3.

Taos crackles with rain, it sizzles hot pavement.
Old spirits, awake now. In Santa Fe, O'Keeffe's
slender hands—animate, moving—fingers curve
in Stieglitz's photo—itching to paint.

4.

This is my map for the lost.
Here, the directions toward
the feast of the long dirt road.

5.

The handsome waiter grins in his *Jesus Lives!*
T-shirt, his hands slicing strawberries over
bowls of ice cream. A sizzle

6.

of lightning on the desert; a lone dog bolts
toward a shack with turquoise walls. More
hummingbirds, bells of sweet water,
ring out in the air.

7.

I would have been happy with
one bird, one dog, one fiery sky,
but the spirits counseled:
See more! Overflow!

Experiencing My First Real Earthquake at Seventy-two

BY CHRISTINE POTTER

After the earthquake, I looked up what I'd been supposed to do: don't stand in a doorway, duck under the desk! Maybe pull over my head one of

the decorative pillows my husband always dumps on the floor. The CDC says stay indoors but if you're outside, avoid standing near "architectural

details." They're what shake loose and crash down. Instead, drop down yourself. Then, you won't fall over. And, if you're in bed, stay there. It all read like

spiritual discipline: abandon pride. Accept that everything gets leveled. After the earthquake, my sister texted to remind me it was our late mother's

one hundredth birthday. You could never be sure exactly how Mom would react to anything, but after the Depression and World War Two (and my

father *and* The Bomb besides) she'd surely earned that right. Her ashes are still in my living room, awaiting a calm day everyone's on the same side of

the country to put her in the Hudson. For five years now! I don't mind, and hope she'd be okay with it; she never put up with nonsense unless it made her

laugh. The CDC says love yourself, what could fall on you will. My family was all born underneath a sturdy piece of furniture, already hanging on tight.

Tornado

BY DEANNA BENJAMIN

The laziness of another summer birthday. Such
a miniscule thing. The zinnias and coneflowers

are burgeoning in the garden and the volunteer
hyssop and orange amaryllis and the accidental

pumpkins sprouting at the compost corners
and an orchestra of cicadas, so expressive, so

naked, pitting themselves next to the raspberry
bushes and cherry trees, rising to meet summer's

symphony, despite the tornado, so unhinged,
the stroke of time from the church spire clock,

the rainbow snow cone falling from your hand.
The thud of ice on the linoleum befuddles you,

becomes unreasonable, dangerous even. You
try not to vomit at the trauma of the sirens.

The friction of memory: sharks in the water,
fools so close to the shore your feet felt electric,

like the whirring of wind, pellets of hail, dragging
a hum against the leaves, you going to the basement

now watching through the small window the garden
fence get swallowed up by a huge wall of dark gray.

It's your birthday. You are alone and all you want
to do is blow giant bubbles outside and ride a hot

slide into the cold water of the pool, not caring
that your skirt rises above your head in poor taste

for a nanosecond. You would let yourself sink
as much as classical physics would allow, until

your toes touched the rough bottom. You'd soar
to the surface. You hear the interloper, wordless

anomaly of what is here, what is now. It waves
you from your reverie. You tumble back down

to the sound of the clocktower, another birthday
vanishing like a thief in the night, like a code

that you can't decipher, you in the basement,
gathering questions one at a time, another

warning wearing down the frayed edges
of your delight again, and the tornado

now lifted up from the ground, over
the river, and you climbing back up

the stairs to safety, the sky a bit
bluer now, the wind a bit calmer.

Genesis

BY JESSICA D. THOMPSON

Jars rattle in a canning kettle,
the kitchen air is fragrant
with vapor of Early Amber

Peaches. Methodically,
mother lifts then dries
each Mason jar,

lines them up on a soft cloth.
On the wall, a calendar dated
1951, a painting of a lamb

in the arms of a shepherd.
This is the summer father
will paint the farmhouse

pink—the color of sandstone
after rain. The same pink
found inside the shells

of mussels that once thrived
at the edge of the River Ohio.
Pink like the insides

of a bluegill. Peach pink
and fresh like all firsts—
a kiss, a marriage, a house,

a newborn daughter. A promise
of something sweet, preserved,
put up for Winter.

Brujas from the Block

BY NILSA MARIANO

The room is in the back/ I pull the thick wine-colored curtains to the side and step in/ as a dark dense blue sound beats behind me, climbs the walls, walks the floors/ candles are lighted/ scent of sage and ginger/the good witches are ready/Mama said there may be a need someday for espiritistas, the spiritual ones/ these are not them/I like to call these brujas/ respect the raw, the organic/ these brujas are different than the lore/ they are community workers not initiated but of good will/they help you in the most personal ways/your back, your leg, your uterus/the unfaithful husband/ the treacherous friend who made you cry till you got a mal de ojo/ when your eyes hurt as bad as your heart/you start with a simple penance/the lesson they need/ perhaps a fall or two/the inability to grasp anything/A smell of decay in their purse, their kitchen, on their body/ or if you are serious/rashes or gases or both/ a lapse in their lives when the moon and stars don't align/ or the wheels of their car/ a deflation of ego till they beg for mercy/for nothing is finite/ retributions are temporary/ these curses are light, fleeting as temporary tariffs/ keep the hair you swiped, the piece of clothing/ in case they're a repeat offender/decisions made between you and the oracle/do the brujas really have that magic you ask/ to change realities like folding paper/perhaps or maybe not/ but what a satisfaction to vent, plan/ to whisper possibilities/condemnations, censures/ who hear your story/take you in give you credence, grace, faith/ a voice in the room/who offer prayers in your name that cradle your hurt/ where your tears are tributaries for healing/you may even leave with a recipe for goat and/or gout/ to use at your discretion

Climbing Ivy

BY SUELLEN MAYFIELD

It takes
the shape
you offer it.
Arbor, wall,
trellis.
Any wire
taut enough
to hold its
dense laundry
can wring
from it
the compliment
of impersonation.
Look. A topiary
dove.
A heart
of leafy filigree
emerging
from a base
of coarse nobs.
As we walk
this beggars'
garden the wind
starts the rustle
of reaching hands.
There are no flowers.
No insects.
Only us
and those like us:
lovers who align
close as corduroy
then disappear into
the hedgerows.
When you offer
your arm, need
overtakes
and I grasp
what you've extended.
Heedlessly
taking hold.

Poles, apart

BY SADIE MASKERY

I'm not able to recall the waitress
although I remember she smiled.
I can't remember what we ate
although I remember the plate
was white and heavy and cold
and you wanted salt, and then
what comes to mind is a classroom;
an experiment with magnets.
(The schoolgirl aimed to softly, softly
move the ends until you could feel
them strain, invisible, compelling.
Impel, repel, trembling potential...
you couldn't tell if you would feel
a surge of rejection or urge to connection.
It was an imperative—an atomic dance.
No clue as to pull or push, a brief chance
to skim a boundary before choice was lost
and oh the sigh of satisfaction
at the quiet snick of consummation.)
I softly, softly passed the salt,
careful not to touch, and wondered
what force we each thought
the other held at the cusp.
I'm not able to recall your face
although I remember the shape
of your fingertips, that one nail
had broken and that your body warmed
the air a little as you passed my coat
and we said goodbye, softly, softly,
from separate sides of the table.

Want Not

BY LAVINA BLOSSOM

I fell for his loose lips, a kind of
lightning that struck twice before
he jumped ship to a kingdom where
the apples fell far from me. The devil
had my idle hands, and I was soon
in the frying pan with a different guy
on an island of never too late, the die
cast for no return, aware no blues
are good blues. I left my sleeping dog,
went out for anything ventured, slow
but sure gains in my wasting,
wanting to forget.

I was seeking revenge in sweets, making
up rules to break them, taking opportunities
that came or knocking down doors when no one
knocked on mine. My damaged pride heading
toward Fall, then Winter, money where my mouth
was, sometimes. (Who says you can't go up
by going down?) Their irons were all on fire,
none of them waiting to get off tomorrow.
A whisper in my jaded ear said, let some grass
grow under, said joining him to beat him
isn't working out. I'd become the pot calling
the kettle, a bird of a tell-tale feather. Time
reminded: stupid is as stupid does. It warned me
not to let the sun go down on a knot not undone.

Empty Nest

BY DION O'REILLY

I turn the key like a sneak, hoping
to hear furniture tiptoe into place—
the knock-chime of a stand-up piano,
rustle of end tables as they cozy the couch,
tap tap of chair foot-caps
as they scuttle back to the breakfast nook.

Light beads on the prayer plant
as it nods its hieroglyphic leaves,
metal of an unplugged fan
gleams like castle silver, a Huichol deer
in my yarn painting
eyes me as it leaps away.

I feel alien here—
a drunk at a party
who finds herself alone
while everyone laughs in the kitchen.

Look at the albums that hold
my slim arms and summer legs,
snapshots of a man I thought I loved
grinning like a devil-cat, my young twins,
next to him, knowing he's no daddy.

Why did I install him
like a Black Friday La-Z-Boy
only I could sit on? Why did I think
I could make a father out of
of knotty wood and Naugahyde?

The rugs and knickknacks
aren't alive. They don't want to escape.
I'm the one who wants to flee.
I can't bear what I've done here.

For R Who Gets Depressed in the Fall

BY MICHELLE MEYER

There is so much to love
about crows.

How they clean up all the garbage.
How they shake the silence

with their steadfast caws.
And maple leaves; spilt blood

reminding me that it's time
to pay the car insurance.

We have a Zoom call at noon
but it's not even 8:00 a.m.

and we have no other plans.
Early morning light casts a warm glow

on the field of dried corn
ready to harvest.

The crows are dressed in black
ready to mourn.

Bluejays are protesting everything,
and I'm here, listening,

taking a few notes in the background
because I want you to remember

that these chilly October mornings
can still turn warm.

The Day the Sun Was Born

BY LYNN PATTISON

—after the sculpture by Sniedze Janzon-Rungis

was long—
clouds spawned and choired the sky
simple cells on muddy shores discovered light

was what they'd hungered for then the suddenness
of green oh the tiny lungs of emerald mosses grasses leaves
sipping new-rich air oceans reflected glassy praise

and slipped warmth to life below
stone and clay and mountainside absorbed heat
till the air clanged like belfry bells then rose in columns

and rivered eastward circling swooshing through passes
looping low over water laying the course it would follow ever after
chilling warming beating and soothing

goosebumps on the salamander relaxed
to orange polka dots while all around muck and mud dried
to beds warm and rich for rooting growing

Adam and Eve named aloe amaranth ant
yarrow zenobia zebra and the rest
each new plant deciding how to sow seeds

shape thorns unfurl leaves
arcing past a mountaintop Sun snagged
in the limbs of a wind-sculpted tree and as it caressed

and thanked her shed its mineral tears
she whispered stories of green covering the planet—
acorn to sequoia she murmured

fire storm season cataclysm the boxful of ills
loosed upon the world but also
the steady blessing she would pour and pour and pour

The Diary Keeper

BY MIRIAM SAGAN

Old, I hesitate
to start a new blank book,
aware these days
I might not finish it.

Between the Chinese brocade covers
of my first journal
I critiqued
my friends and the outpourings
of my teenage heart.

Perhaps it is all one book
in which sandpipers write
on the tideline
contrails across the sky
lichen on a rock
lovers on aspen bark
snail slime on leaf until
I turn enough pages
beyond words
only an expanse of blue.

In the nightmare
I'm giving a poetry reading
in a closet
and the audience walks out.

In the middle of the night
I realize how much I really love you
and want to wake you
to tell you.
But it is too much trouble.

So hot this June
and no rain
yet.

Contributors

Deanna Benjamin writes lyric memoir, poems, and micro-stories. Her creative work is forthcoming in *Thimble Magazine* and can be read in *MacQueen's Quinterly*, *The Texas Review*, *Flash Boulevard*, *Waterwheel Review*, and other venues

Carolee Bennett is a writer and artist living in Upstate New York, where—after a local poetry competition—she has fun saying she's been the “almost” poet laureate of Smitty's Tavern. Her work has received recognition from *Sundress* (Best of the Net 2018), the *Crab Creek Review* Poetry Prize (semi-finalist) and the *Tupelo Quarterly* Poetry Prize (finalist) and has been anthologized in *The Path to Kindness: Poems of Connection and Joy* alongside a line-up of poets including former U.S. Poets Laureates. She has an MFA in poetry from Ashland University and works full-time as a writer in social media marketing.

Lavina Blossom is a painter as well as a writer. She grew up in rural Michigan and now lives in Southern California where she grows a native garden to support local fauna. Her poems have appeared in various journals, including *3Elements Review*, *Ekphrastic Review*, *Common Ground Review*, *Book of Matches*, *The MacGuffin*, and *Poemeleon*.

Mary Lou Buschi (she/her) authored 3 poetry collections. Her 3rd, *Blue Physics*, 2024 (Lily Poetry Review) was a finalist for Contemporary Poetry in The International Book Awards and a distinguished favorite for Independent Press Award. *Paddock*, 2021 (LPR) was nominated for The Four Quartets Prize through The Poetry Society of America. Her poems appear in *Glacier*, *Ploughshares*, *Verse Daily*, among other literary magazines. She is the recipient of an artist grant through The Arts Council of Rockland County (ACOR, 2025). Mary Lou has appeared in prestigious reading series such as, Hudson Valley Writer's Center, Volume, New York University, and Couplet.

Sharon M. Carter is a poet and visual artist originally from Lancashire, England, who lives on the coastal Salish Sea. She recently retired from a career in healthcare. Her work has been published in many anthologies. Specific journals include *Amsterdam Quarterly*, *Terra Nova*, *Quartet*, *Ars Medica*, *Raven Chronicles* and *One Art*. Her poetry book, *Quiver*, was published in 2022. *Ekphrastic Pastiche*, a fusion of original drawings and poetry, was released in 2024.

Ann Chinnis is the author of two poetry chapbooks, *Poppet*, *My Poppe*, and *I Can Catch Anything*. She is the recipient of a Pushcart Prize, 2025. Her work has been published in *Sky Island Journal*, *River Heron Review*, *Gyroscope Review*, *Crab Creek Review*, among others. She studies at the Writers Studio. Ann is a retired Emergency Physician and a leadership coach and lives with her wife in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Susan Cohen is the author of three collections, most recently *Democracy of Fire* (2022). Her poems appeared or are forthcoming in *52 Poems*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *New Ohio Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Rattle*, and *Southern Review*. She's received the Red Wheelbarrow Prize, Terrain Annual Poetry Prize, and a Pushcart Prize Anthology Special Mention, among other honors. She lives in California.

Shaheen Dil is a recovering academic, banker and consultant who writes poetry. She was born in Bangladesh and lives in Pittsburgh. Her poems have been widely published in literary journals and anthologies and nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Dil has published three collections of poetry: *Acts of Deference* (Fakel 2016), *The Boat-maker's Art* (Kelsay Books 2024), and *Letters to My Younger Self* (Gyroscope Press April 2025). She holds a BA from Vassar College, a master's degree from Johns Hopkins University, and a Ph.D. from Princeton University. Additional information is available on her website: <https://shaheendil.com>

Jenny Doughty is originally British but has lived in Maine since 2002. She is a former English teacher and Education Advisor to Penguin Books UK. In the USA, her poems have been featured in *Naugatuck River Review*, *Four Way Review*, *Fib Review*, *Hole in the Head Review*, and *Sin Fronteras* among others, and in various anthologies. Her first poetry collection, *Sending Bette Davis To The Plumber*, was published by Moon Pie Press in 2017 and her new book, *As For The Rose*, will be published by Main Street Rag in 2026. She is currently President of the Maine Poets Society.

Joanne Durham is the author of *To Drink from a Wider Bowl*, winner of the Sinclair Poetry Prize (Evening Street Press 2022) and the chapbook, *On Shifting Shoals* (Kelsay 2023). Recent awards include the 2025 Miriam Chaikin Poetry Prize and finalist for the Lascaux Prize in Poetry. Her work appears in *NC Literary Review*, *Whale Road Review*, *Poetry South*, *Vox Populi*, *Cutthroat* and many other journals and anthologies. She lives on the North Carolina coast, with the ocean as her backyard, muse, and source of equanimity in these troubled times. Visit her at <https://www.joannedurham.com>

Melissa Eleftherion (she/they) is a writer, librarian, and visual artist. She holds degrees from Brooklyn College, Mills College, and San Jose State University. They are the author of the full-length poetry collections: *field guide to autobiography* (The Operating System, 2018), *gutter rainbows* (Querencia Press, 2024), and *Malocchia* (White Stag, 2026) as well as twelve chapbooks. Her work has been featured in *Quarter after Eight*, *Sixth Finch*, *Verse Daily*, and *Barren Magazine*. Melissa lives in Northern California where she manages the Ukiah Branch Library, curates the LOBA Reading Series, and serves as Poet Laureate Emerita of the City of Ukiah. www.apoetlibrarian.wordpress.com

D. Dina Friedman's recent work includes a short-story collection *Immigrants* (Creators Press, 2023) and a poetry chapbook *Here in Sanctuary—Whirling* (Querencia Press, 2024). She is also the author of the chapbook *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 published widely in literary journals and received six Pushcart Prize and two Best of the Net nominations. Visit her website or her substack on living a creative life in a creatively challenged universe.

Luisa M. Giulianetti is a Bay Area writer. Her debut collection, *Agrodolce*, (Bordighera Press) was released in 2023. Her work has recently appeared in *CALYX*, *Rattle*, and *River Heron Review*. She credits her poetry group for keeping her energized and hopeful. Luisa recently retired from a 30+ year career at UC Berkeley. She enjoys cooking, hiking, and exploring the expansive beauty of the place she calls home.

Marissa Glover lives in Florida, where she's usually swatting bugs and dodging storms (and sweating, always sweating). Her work has been widely published in journals and anthologies, and her poetry collections—*Let Go of the Hands You Hold* (2021) and *Box Office Gospel* (2023)—are available from Mercer University Press and various online retailers. But her best work is on her parents' fridge. You can follow Marissa on social at [_MarissaGlover_](#).

Sunny Hemphill was born and raised in Brownwood, Texas. Many of her poems reflect her fundamentalist Baptist childhood in a family scarred by lack of education and generational poverty. She studied Journalism at Baylor University on a scholarship, working as a newspaper reporter and freelance journalist during her career. She has a BA in English Literature from Arizona State University and now lives in Washington State, halfway between Spokane and Seattle. She returned to writing poetry after suffering a devastating spinal cord injury in 2016.

Beth Kanell lives in northeastern Vermont among rivers, rocks, and a lot of writers. Her poems seek comfortable seats in small well-lit places, including *Lilith Magazine*, *The Comstock Review*, *Indianapolis Review*, *Gyroscope Review*, *The Post-Grad Journal*, *Does It Have Pockets?*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, *Ritualwell*, *Persimmon Tree*, *Northwind Treasury*, *RockPaperPoem*, and *Rise Up Review*. Her collection *Thresholds* is due in early 2026 from Kelsay Books.

Tricia Knoll is a Vermont poet with gardens, dogs, volumes of written poetry and dreams of the unwritten. Her work appears widely in journals as diverse as *New Verse News* and *Kenyon Review* as well as nine collections, both full-length and chapbook. Two books came out in 2024: *The Unknown Daughter* and *Wild Apples*. Knoll is a Contributing Editor to *Verse Virtual*. Website: www.triciaknoll.com

Paula J. Lambert has published four full-length poetry collections including *As If This Did Not Happen Every Day* (Sheila-Na-Gig Editions 2024) and six chapbooks including *Sinkhole* (Bottlecap Press 2025). Lambert is also a literary translator, small press publisher, and visual artist. Her work has been supported by the Ohio Arts Council, the Greater Columbus Arts Council, and the Virginia Center for Creative Arts. Her mentorship has been recognized by PEN America. A strong supporter of the intersection of poetry and science, she lives in Columbus with her husband, Dr. Michael Perkins, a philosopher and technologist. More at www.paulajlambert.com

Diane LeBlanc is a writer, teacher, and book artist with roots in Vermont, Wyoming, and Minnesota. She is the author of *The Feast Delayed* (2021) and four poetry chapbooks. Poems and essays appear in *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *Ploughshares*, and *Southern Humanities Review*, among others. Diane is a professor and writer in residence at St. Olaf College. Read more at www.dianeblancwriter.com

Isabel Cristina Legarda was born in the Philippines and spent her early childhood there before moving to the U.S. She is currently a practicing physician in Boston. Her work has appeared in the *New York Quarterly*, *Smartish Pace*, *FOLIO*, *The Dewdrop*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *The Lowestoft Chronicle*, *West Trestle Review*, and others. Her chapbook *Beyond the Galleons* was published in April 2024 by Yellow Arrow Publishing. She can be visited at www.ilegarda.com or on Instagram (@poetintheOR).

Deanna Kern Ludwin grew up in Iowa and began moving west at age twenty, landing in Fort Collins, Colorado. Before her retirement, she taught literature and creative writing at Colorado State University. Her poems, flash fictions, and creative nonfictions have appeared in *Cimarron Review*, *Copper Nickel*, *Flash*, *I-70 Review*, *The Normal School*, and other publications. She lives with her husband, Gary, and their twenty-pound ginger cat, Ollie, who adores the Symbolist poets and sometimes agrees to serve as her muse.

Nilsa Mariano graduated from Binghamton University with a Masters in Comparative Literature but at heart is still a Brooklyn girl. Nilsa has been published in: *Muleskinner*, *Five Minute*, *Wildgreens*, *MicroFiction Monday Magazine*, and *Stone Canoe*. She is very proud of having a short story published in the inaugural edition of *Chicken Soup for the Latino Soul*.

Sadie Maskery lives in Scotland by the sea. She has thought long and hard about the white elephant problem since asked it in a bar ten years ago.

Grace Massey is a poet, classical ballet and Baroque dancer, gardener, and socializer of feral cats. Grace was an editor in educational publishing for many years and has degrees in English from Smith College and Boston University. Her poems have been nominated for Best of the Net and have been published in numerous journals, including *Quartet*, *Thimble*, *Lily Poetry Review*, *One Art*, and *RockPaperPoem*. Her chapbook *A Future with Bromeliads* is available from River Glass Books. Grace lives in Newton, Massachusetts.

Suellen Mayfield is a freelance writer and retired speech-language pathologist. She holds an MFA in writing from Cornell University, was a resident at Yaddo, and has published in various journals, including *Virginia Quarterly Review* and *Epoch*. She lives in Venice, California with her husband and a pesky pack of scavenging squirrels.

Sharon Fagan McDermott is a poet, essayist, and teacher who lives in Pittsburgh, PA. She has four collections of poetry, *Voluptuous*, *Alley Scatting*, *Bitter Acoustic*, and most recently, *Life Without Furniture* (Jacar Press 2018). Recently, her book of essays, *Millions of Suns: On Writing and Life*, which she co-authored with M. Christine Benner Dixon, was published by the University of Michigan Press. *Poets and Writers Magazine* called it one of the "Best Books for Writers."

Beth McDonough is a Dundee-based poet and artist. Her pamphlet 'Lamping for Pickled Fish' is published by 4Word. Currently, she's working on a shared poetry collection with Nikki Robson, and a hybrid project on outdoor swimming. Both books are scheduled for publication fairly soon. She co-hosts Platform Sessions in Fife.

Katy McKinney divides her time between her home in rural Trout Lake, Washington and in the winters, a sailboat on which she and her husband can be found cruising anywhere from Mexico to Panama. Her poetry has been published in a number of journals (*The Sun*, *The Sow's Ear Poetry Review*, *Windfall*, and others) as well as in several anthologies. Her first book, *Fireproofing the Woods*, was published in 2013 by Dancing Moon Press and was the winner of the 2019 North Street Book Prize in poetry. It's available through www.katymckinney.com

Michelle Meyer is the author of *The Trouble with Being a Childless Only Child*, (Cornerstone Press, 2024) and *The Book of She* (2021). Her poem, "The Circus Girl" won the 2024 Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets Triad Ekphrastic Challenge and individual poems have appeared in *Autumn Sky Poetry Daily*, *ONE ART*, *Pearl Press*, *Tiny Spoon*, *Welter*, and elsewhere. In addition, Michelle has written, directed, and produced one-act plays and skits for children and adults and has published flash fiction in *50-Word Stories* and *100 Word Story*. She is on the road a lot but has a mailbox in Wisconsin.

Judith H. Montgomery's poems appear in the *Tar River Poetry*, *Epiphany*, *Poet Lore*, and elsewhere. Her chapbook *Passion* received the Oregon Book Award for Poetry. Her second full-length collection, *Litany for Wound and Bloom*, a finalist for the Marsh Hawk Prize, appeared in 2018. Her prize-winning narrative medicine chapbook, *Mercy* (2019) was followed by *The Ferry Keeper* (Grayson Books 2024 Chapbook Prize).

Ruth Mota currently lives in the Santa Cruz Mountains of California after living a decade in Brazil and working as an international health trainer throughout Latin America and Africa. Now she focuses on poetry and facilitating poetry circles to groups in her community like veterans, men in jail or seniors. Over 60 over her poems have been published in online and print journals including *Terrapin Books*, *Passager Books*, *The Connecticut River Review*, *The Atlanta Review* and *Gyroscope Review*. Her first chapbook, *Kitchen Table Midwife of the Dispossessed*, is due to be released at the end of the year by Finishing Line Press.

Dion O'Reilly's third book, *Limerence*, was finalist for The Floating Bridge Press John Pierce Chapbook Competition for Washington State Poets. She is the author of *Sadness of the Apex Predator* (Cornerstone Press 2024) and *Ghost Dogs* (Terrapin 2020). Her work appears in *Tar Poetry Review*, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *The Sun*, and *Rattle*. She is a podcaster at The Hive Poetry Collective, leads private poetry workshops, and is co-editor of *En•Trance Journal*. She splits her time between a ranch in the Santa Cruz Mountains and a residence in Bellingham, Washington.

Lynn Pattison's work has appeared in *Sheila-Na-Gig*, *One* (Jacar Press), *Pedestal*, *Smartish Pace*, and *Ruminate*, among others. Her latest collection, *Matryoshka Houses* (Kelsay Press) debuted in 2020. Other collections include *Light That Sounds Like Breaking*, *Walking Back the Cat*, and *tesla's daughter*. Her work has been included in several anthologies. Pattison has been supported in her writing by an Irving S. Gilmore Artist Grant, The Ragdale Foundation, the AWP Writer to Writer Program and the residency program at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute.

Michelle Patton received an MFA in Creative Writing from California State University, Fresno. She won the Ernesto Trejo Award for poetry in 2003 and was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Her poems have been published or are forthcoming in *Rattle*, *The Atlanta Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Calyx*, *Zyzzyva*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Cutbank*, and others. She teaches English at Fresno City College.

Christine Potter is the poetry editor at *Eclectica Magazine*. She has had poems curated by *Rattle*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, *Booth*, *Tar River Poetry*, and *Autumn Sky Poetry Daily*. Her latest poetry book is *Unforgetting* (Kelsay Books) and her time-traveling young adult novels, *The Bean Books*, are published by Evernight Teen. She lives in a very old and haunted house in the Hudson River Valley with her husband Ken and her adorable cat Bella.

Sharon Pretti lives in San Francisco, California. Her work has appeared in *Poetry Quarterly*, *The MacGuffin*, *ONE ART*, *The Bellevue Literary Review*, *Canary*, and elsewhere. She's received multiple Pushcart Prize nominations and was selected for the Best New Poets 2024 anthology. Sharon is a retired medical social worker and has taught poetry workshops in a nursing home and at assisted living facilities in the San Francisco Bay Area. Visit her at sharonpretti.com

Susan Robert's poems have been most recently published in *The MacGuffin*, *The Bangalore Review*, *Dovecote Magazine*, *ellipsis*, *The RavensPerch*, *The Tishman Review (RIP)*, *Salamander*, *The Brooklyn Quarterly*, and *Sharkpack Annual*. She teaches literature and writing at Boston College and divides her time between the gothic homestead in central Vermont where she was raised, and the busy weirdness of Commonwealth Avenue in Boston. She also has a plot in the Charles River Community Garden, and it desperately needs weeding.

Mary Kay Rummel has been named a poetry hero of Ventura County, CA, where she is a former Poet Laureate. Her tenth poetry collection, *Little River of Amazements: New and Selected Poems*, was published by Blue Light Press of San Francisco. Her work has won awards from *New Rivers Press*, *Bright Hill Press*, and *Blue Light Press* as well as The Loft in Minneapolis and other literary organizations. She is a member of the non-profit Ventura County Poetry Project, dedicated to connecting community through poetry, and is a lifelong teacher.

Miriam Sagan is the author of over thirty books of poetry, fiction, and memoir. She is a two-time winner of the New Mexico/Arizona Book Awards as well as a recipient of the City of Santa Fe Mayor's Award for Excellence in the Arts and a New Mexico Literary Arts Gratitude Award. She has been a writer in residence in four national parks, Yaddo, MacDowell, Gullkistan in Iceland, Kura Studio in Japan, and a dozen more remote and interesting places. She works with text and sculptural installation as part of the mother/daughter creative team Maternal Mitochondria (with Isabel Winson-Sagan) in venues ranging from RV parks to galleries.

JoAnna Scandiffio is a gemologist living in San Francisco. Her poems are like bird nests, made with fragments randomly connected to hold the moment. She is like the old medieval monks who copied verses in colored inks so the world could sing forever. Her work has appeared in *Calyx*, *The Poeming Pigeon*, *Poets 11*, *Sugared Water*, *The MacGuffin*, *Italian Americana*, *The RavensPerch*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, and other journals. JoAnna is a Pushcart Prize Nominee and a finalist for the Jane Underwood Prize. Her chapbook *water is never still* is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press.

Becky Schigiel has been holding her poetry self like a secret identity for decades, wearing Clark Kent glasses in her roles of social worker, teacher, mother, and (still) civil servant. In recent years, she has built skills as the lucky new kid in a veteran critique group and by sharing her work with the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets. She left the South long ago, but it never left her.

Corinne Smith turned to poetry as a self-care practice in 2020. Her poems have been published in *Cirque*, and *Alaska Women Speak*. Her poems won awards in the annual poetry contest of the Alaska Writers Guild and the UAA/Anchorage Daily News Creative Writing Contest. She lives in Talkeetna, Alaska, where she gardens, talks on the radio, walks trails with small dogs, and plays with colorful fabric when it's dark.

Elisa Subin is a writer whose work has appeared in *The Account: A Journal of Poetry, Prose, and Thought*, *The Inflectionist Review*, *Not One of Us*, *34 Orchard Literary Journal*, *CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly*, and many others. Her chapbook, *Departures*, was published by Bottlecap Press. She won an Honorable Mention in the Reuben Rose Poetry Competition and was nominated for a Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net.

Christine Swint is a retired educator with an MFA in creative writing/poetry from Georgia State University and an MA in Spanish language and literature from Middlebury College. She has published one collection of poetry, *Swimming This*, with FutureCycle Press. Her most recent publications are found in *Ruminations*, *The Atlanta Review*, and *Tinderbox*.

Kelly Terwilliger grew up on the Oregon Coast and now lives in Oregon's Willamette Valley. She is the author of three collections of poetry, with a book of poetry, prose, and paintings forthcoming. Her work has appeared in journals and anthologies in the US, Canada, and Britain and she won first place in the Guernsey International Poetry Competition—which means, to her great delight, her work has also appeared on buses and in an airport in the Channel Islands. Kelly also teaches and performs as an oral storyteller.

Jessica D. Thompson's poetry has appeared in *Verse Daily*, *Gyroscope Review*, *ONE ART*, *Eclectica*, and *the Southern Review*, as well as in numerous anthologies, including *Women Speak*, *the Women of Appalachia Project*, published by Sheila-Na-Gig. Her full-length poetry collection, *Daybreak and Deep*, was shortlisted for the 2024 Indiana Authors Award for Poetry. *The Mood Ring Diaries* was published by Kelsay Books in 2025. For many years, Jessica served as a crisis office volunteer, as well as a hospital and legal advocate for a battered women's shelter. She writes in a 1918 log cabin in the middle of a hardwood forest.

Pat Valdata's prize-winning poetry book about women aviation pioneers, *Where No Man Can Touch*, was published in a revised edition in 2023 by Wind Canyon Books. Her work has appeared in literary magazines including *Ecotone*, *Little Patuxent Review*, *North American Review*, *Passager*, and *Valparaiso Poetry Review*. Pat is also a novelist whose fourth novel, *Everyday Courage*, is forthcoming from Wind Canyon Books in the fall of 2025. www.patvaldata.com

Alicia Viguer-Espert, a four-time Pushcart nominee, is the winner of the San Gabriel Valley Poetry Contest (2017) with "Holding a Hummingbird" Four Feather Press published her two chapbooks *Out of the Blue Womb of the Sea*, (2020) and *Four in 1* (2022). Her work appears in *Panoply*, *Amethyst Review*, *Lummox*, *Altadena Poetry Review*, *River Paw Press*, *Odyseeey.pm*, *Sin Cesar*, *Live Encounters*, *Galway Review*, and *Thimble*. Alicia was a panelist for "Writing from Our Immigrant Hearts," at the LifeFest in the Dena (2023), San Diego Writers Festival (2024), Avenue 50 Studio, (2023), Glendale (2024), Eagle Rock (2024) and Burbank Libraries. (2025)

Kim Welliver is an autodidact who has been passionate about the written word, in all its iterations, since early childhood. Her work is informed by history, folk and fairy tales, and the marginalization of women. Both a 2021 Pushcart Prize and 2021, 2023 Best of Net nominee, her work can be found in print and online publications, including *Rock & Sling*, *Mid-American Review*, *Night Picnic*, *CorvidQueen*, *West Trade Review*, *Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*, *Fairy Tale Review*, anthologies, and many others.

Leonore Wilson is a former professor of English and creative writing. She is on the MFA Board of St Mary's College of California. Her work has been published in such magazines as *Quarterly West*, *Rattle*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Taos Poetry Journal*, *Sinister Wisdom*, *Third Coast*, etc. Her historic home and ranch were recently destroyed in the LNU fire of Northern California.

Announcements

The Winter 2026 Issue is an open issue, no themes, we're just looking for fine, contemporary poetry. Winter Issue 2026 submissions open October 1st, 2025, and run through December 1st, 2025. We only accept submissions through Submittable. We'll close early if we get all the poems we need. We also close early if we reach our submissions cap for the month. Submissions reset the first of each month.

Put 4 poems in one .doc(x) or .rtf document, page breaks in between poems, normal fonts like Times New Roman, and an up-to-date bio for the magazine in the Submittable bio section of no more than 100 words, in 3rd person. Use the name in the bio you'd like to be published under.

You can put your Poem Title on your poem, and under it—"by Author WXYZ,"—but we don't need addresses, headers, footers, or page numbers on the pages. Please, no weird formatting, pictures, or underlining. It makes the editors drink. Sometimes coffee and sometimes not. Concrete and form poems are fine. If you submit more than 4 poems in a doc, we will read the first 4 and ignore the rest. The feline editors will read, and respond to each other, never giving us a clue.

We welcome poems from new and established poets. The editors have eclectic tastes, so give us a shot. We like free verse, but also a good form poem. Rhyming poems are a hard sell, but we will make room for a good one. We'd love to see what you've been working on.

Please read our full guidelines on Submittable: <https://gyroscopereview.submittable.com/submit/>

Thank you for Reading!



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