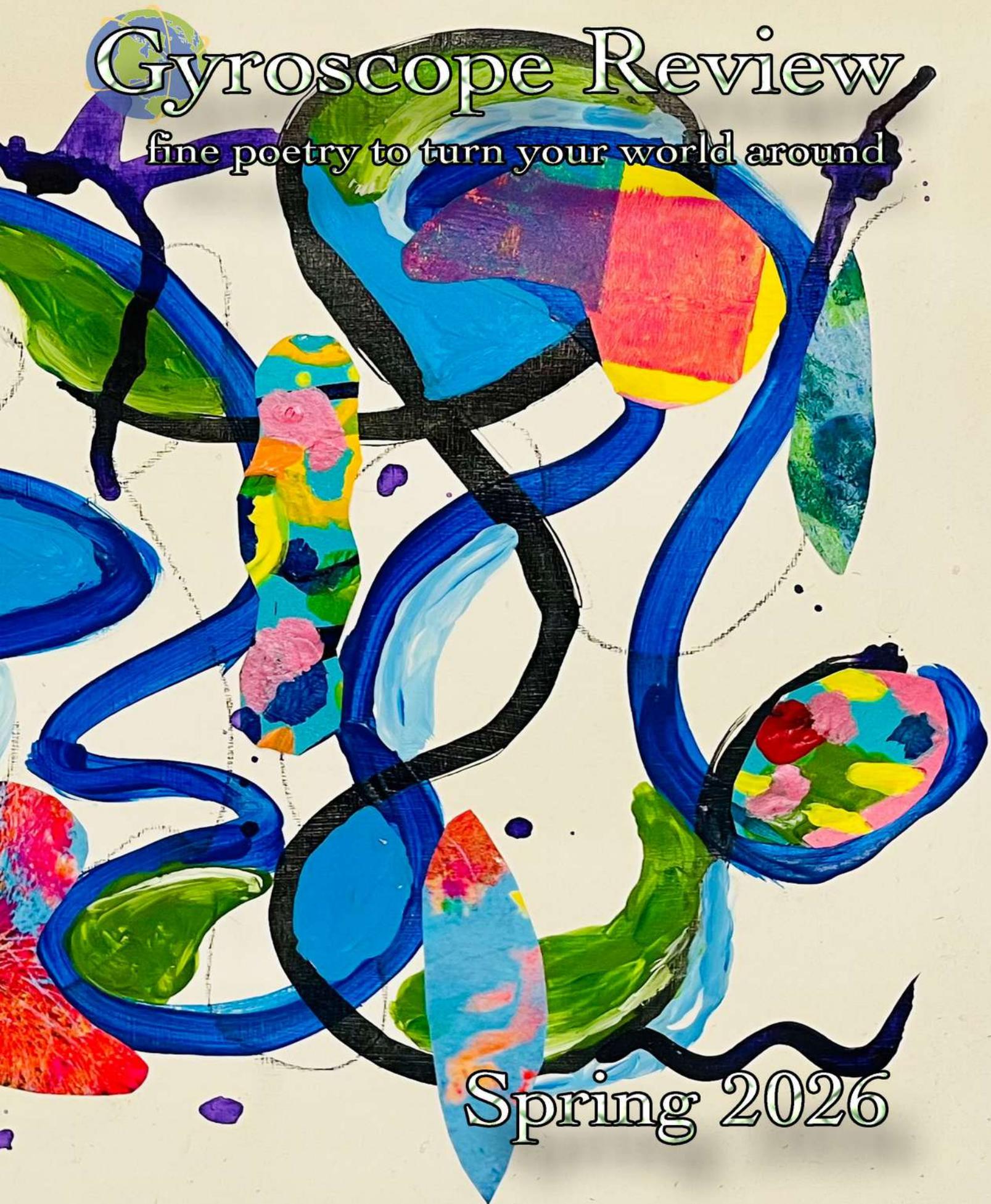


# Gyroscope Review

fine poetry to turn your world around



Spring 2026



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Issue 26-2  
Spring Issue 2026

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Constance Brewer

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*Dragonfly Jubilee* ©2026 Elya Braden

## From the Editors

Welcome to another wonderful Spring edition of *Gyroscope Review*. The lineup is fabulous, and we can't wait for you to dive in and discover the intriguing poems our poets have come up with this time around.

When people submit to *Gyroscope Review*, we ask questions in our cover letter form that folks can answer (or not) as they choose, so the dreaded cover letter panic freeze doesn't kick in. The editors decided it was only fair to give our readers their answers for a change.

**The Questions.** What's one song you always stop and listen to when it comes on? What animal/plant/mineral would you choose for an avatar? Favorite class in high school? (Or least favorite)

### The Answers.

#### Elya

**Song:** American Pie

**Avatar:** My cat, Phoebe (Beautiful, smart, dangerous, demanding, and curvaceous—ha, ha)

**Favorite Class:** AP English with Ms. O'Brian

#### Betsy

**Song:** Choosing one is so hard ... Landslide (Fleetwood Mac/Stevie Nicks)? Thunder Road (Bruce) or any number of Bruce songs, likewise Jackson Browne, and don't get me started with Joni. All I Really Want? Big Yellow Taxi? Hejira? Blue? How long do I have to choose?

**Avatar:** Likewise, too hard to pin down. I would have said dolphin once upon a time, but my daughter said they are rapists. Ugh. Manatee? Otter? Labrador Retriever? Something that likes the water, isn't aggressive, but maybe slightly more active than a manatee?

**High school class:** I guess would have to be French. At that level, I was good with languages, and I loved the class and my teacher, a British woman named Mrs. Buck. I, weirdly, also loved Geometry. I sort of regret that I didn't listen when the teacher told me to do more math. I liked Journalism a lot and really admired the advisor with whom I am still in touch, but he scared the hell out of me at the time. At USC, I had a great art class—kind of a review—mostly Western art. I would have loved that in high school had it been offered as well.

#### Constance

**Song:** Bohemian Rhapsody. When we are out driving across the long, lonely highways of Wyoming, it's the ultimate road song if you have two or more people in the car. And yes, I get stuck with the high parts. Galileo anyone? A close, close second is when I hear the opening guitar riff to Hotel California, I have to stop and listen, even if we pull into our destination. It's not allowed to be turned off until the final riff plays and fades away.

**Avatar:** Black goth unicorn with a metal horn.

**Favorite Class:** Fine Arts/Art History

Enjoy the Issue!

Constance, Elya, and Betsy

## Table of Contents

<b>Section One</b> .....	7
<b>Let's Stand Here After Madness</b> .....	8
by Lisa Ashley .....	
<b>Butterfly, Frog</b> .....	9
by Sydney Lea.....	
<b>Darkling Beetle, 2023</b> .....	10
by Lam Ho .....	
<b>Hadrian Looks Back</b> .....	11
by Michael J Carter .....	
<b>A Simit Cart Waltzes</b> .....	12
by Trae Stewart .....	
<b>Direction</b> .....	14
by C.C. Russell .....	
<b>My Therapist Asked: How Old Were You?</b> .....	15
by Sara Quinn Rivara.....	
<b>Knots Burning in the Lake Breeze</b> .....	16
by John Repp.....	
<b>Miniature Rose</b> .....	17
by Christel Maass.....	
<b>Widow's Cento</b> .....	18
by Karen Paul Holmes .....	
<b>Catfish Duplex</b> .....	19
by Caroline Lord.....	
<b>I Added "Have Children" to My To-Do List</b> .....	20
by S.G. Fowler .....	
<b>Ancient History</b> .....	21
by Judith Taylor .....	
<b>Sleep's job</b> .....	22
by Annie Stenzel .....	
<b>The Moon, A Stranger</b> .....	23
by Christopher McCormick .....	
<b>The Earth Was Flat</b> .....	24
by Ewen Glass.....	

<b>Elegy for a Room with a View</b> .....	25
by Gloria Heffernan .....	
<b>Section Two</b> .....	27
<b>COOKCOO: The Breath That Learns to Listen</b> .....	28
by Pradeep R. Varadwaj.....	
<b>the language of stillness</b> .....	32
by Will Sedgwick.....	
<b>Agates</b> .....	33
by Melissa Gish.....	
<b>The Bear in Spring</b> .....	34
by Nancy Takacs .....	
<b>All Night</b> .....	35
by Veronica Tucker.....	
<b>Memory, 9:21 PM</b> .....	36
by Paul Potts.....	
<b>Topography</b> .....	37
by John Pring .....	
<b>The Day Before My Daughter Turns 9</b> .....	38
by Bridget Kriner .....	
<b>Thirteen Boots at the Front Step</b> .....	39
by Oladejo Abdullah Feranmi.....	
<b>Centripetal</b> .....	40
by Laurel Benjamin.....	
<b>Organizing in the Dark</b> .....	41
by Alfred Fournier.....	
<b>Antinous' Treatise on Drowning</b> .....	42
by Michael J Carter .....	
<b>Testimony</b> .....	43
by Veronica Fletcher .....	
<b>Death Belongs to You</b> .....	45
by Jennifer Mills Kerr .....	
<b>Whatever Is Whispered</b> .....	47
by Alina Zollfrank.....	
<b>Chiaroscuro</b> .....	48
by Jack Mackey.....	

<b>Higher Mathematics</b> .....	49
by Susan Kress .....	
<b>Section Three</b> .....	51
<b>No Plums in This Poem</b> .....	52
by Anita S Pulier.....	
<b>Small Miracles</b> .....	53
by Therese Gleason.....	
<b>Northcote, North Shore/Leith, Edinburgh</b> .....	54
by Christopher Garland.....	
<b>People Used to Say I Looked Like Linda Blair</b> .....	56
by Melody Wilson.....	
<b>Last Night in St. Paul</b> .....	57
by Mary Kay Rummel .....	
<b>Thunder Beast</b> .....	58
by Laurel Benjamin.....	
<b>The Assassin, After</b> .....	59
by Lavinia Kumar .....	
<b>Saturn’s Rings</b> .....	61
by Laura Foley .....	
<b>They say, solar radiation management</b> .....	63
by Lillian Nečakov.....	
<b>Provenance</b> .....	64
by Ann Cefola.....	
<b>Broken Sunday</b> .....	65
by Connie Post .....	
<b>Organ Donor</b> .....	66
by Andy Macera.....	
<b>Thank You</b> .....	67
by Marc Alan Di Martino .....	
<b>View from Our First Apartment’s Glass Door</b> .....	68
by Whitney Cooper.....	
<b>Winterberry</b> .....	69
by Paula Reed Nancarrow.....	
<b>Weeding</b> .....	70
by Laura Buxbaum.....	

<b>Somewhere Boulders Are Breaking</b> .....	71
by S.B. Merrow .....	
<b>This Is Not a Boat</b> .....	72
by Genevieve Creedon .....	
<b>Contributors</b> .....	73
<b>Announcements</b> .....	80

# Section One

## Let's Stand Here After Madness

BY LISA ASHLEY

—after Joseph Fasano

There are still the masses of daffodils  
along the roads over the island.  
There is the hot cup of Earl Gray  
in the pale white smudge of sunrise  
as the first song sparrow calls  
out from the shadows.  
There are still the nurses at the bedsides  
redressing the bullet wounds  
promising the scars will be small.  
*The world is not over, only broken.*

There is still the heart willing  
to open to air, hot and cold,  
as spring hail chased by sun  
shines its million stars at midday.  
There are the vintage postcards  
hand-colored with pencils  
by artists who show the past in new light.  
The grandmothers rocking the babies.  
There are the sleek horses, still,  
muscles rippling like waves of tide  
ready to carry us in faith  
that at the end of the day  
the hay will be in the feed box.

## Butterfly, Frog

BY SYDNEY LEA

The fritillary's ragged circles  
above the beaver pond  
drop closer to the water every turn.  
How has so fragile a creature endured?  
How will it go on enduring?  
I stand on the wooden footbridge and watch  
the frog on its pad and on high alert,  
eyes on stalks, tongue sheathed—for now.

It's 2026. Our nation  
is bullied by a martinet  
who doesn't lie in wait. Just lies.  
Everything's his, everything's prey.  
How glorious, the butterfly's orange,  
the dark and intricate tracery  
that borders its wisps of wings.  
And then the catastrophic

ambush of the zealous frog.  
It misses. I whoop in celebration  
as the butterfly flutters up toward me.  
I resent my political anger  
and the daily crimes that spawn it.  
I'll repress my natural urge to imagine  
a like escape for our country.  
I'll only stand here, amazed that joy

has overwhelmed me, however briefly.

## Darkling Beetle, 2023

BY LAM HO

I was the kind of woman who insisted on traveling by myself.  
It was exciting—people like that.  
Once, a lady coming out of a bathroom stall said,  
*You're so brave for eating alone.*  
Patted my shoulder. It was Napa Valley, and I was 26.

Then came the day I stupidly tried to hike 4 miles  
in a mid-day White Sands summer heat.  
I stumbled upon you at the same time  
I lost track of the marker posts  
blending into the tall piles of sand we call dunes.  
Years ago, a man in the mountains told me  
to search for ancient human footprints  
hidden behind their towers.  
So in my dry-mouthed, sun-soaked delirium,  
I begin to think: today is the day  
I will happen upon them  
thanks to an AllTrails map.

No one else knows where they live.  
What magic that would be, I begin to tell you:  
black shell, winged creature with sentimental eyes.  
Inside, you are soft, nearly human,  
and the world is cloying warm—  
not that it has a choice.  
I lick my lips with effort.  
“Once, my friend said you like stargazing.  
Do you like stargazing?”

But looking at me that July, I knew you knew  
with your mysterious beetle instincts  
I was lonely,  
and the world hadn't even ended yet.

## Hadrian Looks Back

BY MICHAEL J CARTER

By my own decree I see him  
everywhere: peony and concrete,  
diffidence and glamorous desire  
ambered in my seeing. How many guises?  
Antinous as Osiris, as Bacchus, winged  
Hermes, contrapposto Antinous Belvedere  
in the Vatican, crowned Dionysus in laurel  
and ivy berries, Antinous as New York City  
pulsing all night, the hairpin turned streets  
of San Francisco curved as his curls.  
In Bronxville he was cigarettes and  
late night trysts, a knock on the door,  
a jogger in Iowa City. Once I saw him  
on a bicycle, that was covered in plastic flowers  
and seashells, wearing flip flops  
the salt air brining him. Once on a beach  
he was having sunblock rubbed  
onto his back while wearing a big straw hat  
instead of the traditional lotus flower crown  
so popular in the first years after  
the apotheosis. He's a path in the woods  
to a swimming hole teeming with tadpoles  
like commas in the river's long sentence  
almost as long as mine here without him.  
Who is he without me? Just  
another beauty, ordinary, falling and rising  
like the Nile. No, like the Nile lotus  
in anonymity and gorgeousness, with edible roots  
that are mildly sedating, whose petals close  
at night, open in the morning  
releasing the sun.

## A Simit Cart Waltzes

BY TRAE STEWART

Among stoic locals and apprenticed tourists  
the cart rehearses its ancient sway—  
wheels negotiating stone laid by empire,  
glass chiming as warm simit answers gravity  
with a practiced knock.  
Each ring carries the dust of centuries:  
market breath, spice shadow,  
the grammar of trade learned by touch.

Salted halos glow—  
sesame blistered into memory,  
grain married to fire,  
bread shaped for the hand, not the throne.  
This is no ornament.  
This is endurance braided into a circle,  
a geometry of staying.

Behind him, commerce mutters  
in currencies that forget themselves.  
Ahead, the Bosphorus shoulders continents,  
blue with indifference earned by time.

Simit has crossed sultans and shortages,  
fed mornings that outlived flags.  
It belongs to hunger that does not dramatize itself,  
to labor that eats standing,  
to children whose palms learn history  
before they learn script.

The vendor smiles—checkered, inherited,  
a Cheshire grin without illusion.  
Flour engraves his hands:  
lifelines written in repetition,  
effort pressed so deeply  
even water must surrender.

Beneath the offering—  
patience disciplined by flame.  
Fire taught to wait.  
Morning, completed again.

Scent becomes interpreter—  
calling coins from pockets,  
calling grandfathers back into streets,  
calling memory where language fails.

Another ring vanishes,  
carried toward lives that pause here,  
feed here,  
but cannot remain.

## Direction

BY C.C. RUSSELL

These are the moments that I want in my documentary: That night off of Jerusalem when I walked home well-more than half-drunk and watched the reflection of my own face disappear in the glass of the storm door as I shut out the porch lamp. The letter that you wrote to me—maybe in voiceover as you board yet another plane—sweet low cracking lips listing reasons over an image of your body waiting, the photo superimposed of the young woman in Los Angeles scribbling a note on a postcard and attaching a sticker of her face—a small hologram—she is a superstar; the literate hills of Hollywood laser-etched behind her, breath in visible whispers. The Snowy Range—Lake Marie like a great sheet of glass melting in the sunlight below the iced peaks. Those cottonwoods that I have tried to forget—a blizzard of their buds opening. The light through storm doors, through stained glass, through summer clouds—dazzling; all of this light that has passed before my eyes.

## My Therapist Asked: How Old Were You?

BY SARA QUINN RIVARA

Fifteen, at my cousin's funeral. I couldn't stop laughing. He was three months old; when the call from my aunt came, when she found him in his crib, it was five AM. I heard my mother answer; muffled voices; a small thin wail. It was a humid Chicago summer, my thighs stuck together with sweat. I sat at the back of the church. Awful laughter rose from my chest.

I don't know how to cry.

Thirty-two. My boy and I climbed the hill behind the Catholic high school, snow up our knees. We dragged plastic snowboards behind us. The slope was gentle, but long. He asked me to go first, carve a trail into the snow so he could follow. We did this for hours until the sky purpled. We walked back home. He crawled into my bed and we listened to the wind howl. Cold air seeped beneath the door. For a night, neither of us was scared.

Seven. When storms rolled across the prairie, my father stood on the porch, watched the sky. I watched the crawl of the warning across the bottom of the television screen: seek shelter. He would not come inside, cracked another beer. Panic bloomed in my chest. I curled into the corner of my bedroom closet, penciled my name over and over on the dim white walls: *Sara, Sara, Sara.*

Look, I said,

Anything is a prayer if you say it enough.

## **Knots Burning in the Lake Breeze**

BY JOHN REPP

We're high on life for good now & as we say  
"high on life," we recall the Jesus People we couldn't  
escape in high school, bounding everywhere,  
eyes glittering, salvation a soaking rain they dripped  
down hallways & auditorium aisles. In our oaken world

no longer redolent of wine & ganja, we burn the knots  
on the hempen rope of time—a fancy way of glossing  
what Chekhov said about how dailiness kills the soul  
(not trauma, not failure, not the exaltation that dies

the next second into a cough that won't stop).  
When oaks are this old, they sound permanent,  
but before Shelley shambles his broken statues

& relentless wind into the kitchen, let's break  
for lunch now that the strawberries are rinsed

& the bread has cooled in the lake breeze.

## **Miniature Rose**

BY CHRISTEL MAASS

So many years ago  
when he loved me more  
he gave me a miniature rose plant  
I never expected to survive—

yet it's thriving beside  
the birdbath he refreshes  
where I sometimes catch him  
stooping to behold  
deep-red flowers blooming brightly  
amid faded papery petals  
and desiccated thorny stems  
I once again  
neglected to tend.

## Widow's Cento

BY KAREN PAUL HOLMES

—lines from *Laure-Anne Bosselaar, Jennifer Holley Lux,*  
*and their husbands Kurt Brown (1944-2013), and Thomas Lux (1946-2017)*

Black clouds maneuver in the distance, but I don't care.  
My life is one filled with blessings.  
And if I've been wrong, then for each wrong  
I've been multi blessed.

I pick up stones, bring them home:  
one tarred black, one with a hole in its center.  
All scars, by definition, reveal that something,  
one thing, one thing *minimum*, is healed.

You saw the blue sky as I did  
when I awoke and pulled the curtain aside.  
But haven't we always been connected,  
one way or another—

living in that small square of light  
where silence reigned? There were days, years  
when the clock's thinking  
did not sound like: me, me, me, me.

A parting, you said, is no impasse.  
It is time to look up again. Watch a sail catch light  
and wind and see nothing but that:  
light sailing toward me.

I can now lift my head far back, to read the clouds.  
Is heaven another expanding space?  
That would be plenty,  
that would be enough.

What matters is the future, its glittering.  
I've traveled here for something to begin  
Tonight, I wade in stars' reflections.

## Catfish Duplex

BY CAROLINE LORD

Even now he struts like a boy to the pulpit  
He said, *imagine a world where sunsets didn't make you cry*

It wasn't the sunset, but he who made me cry  
At the edge of the gravel, at the neo gothic chapel

We were going to elope, in the Delta, in the chapel  
It was there where Arkansas and Mississippi bled

Months passed, he was an archer, I the doe that bled  
Ruby red lipstick, the cop car pulled me over

I didn't know it then, but our time was almost over  
Pine pews, shape notes, hymns sung with his bass

Heretic, legalistic, every word was off-base  
And they'd sing, and they still sing his hollowed-out praise

I guess that they don't know, he's not the only one who prays  
My mama says the Lord gives, and the Lord takes away

Oh to be the catfish that got to get away  
Even now, you strut like a boy to the pulpit

*It's a crying shame*

## I Added "Have Children" to My To-Do List

BY S.G. FOWLER

And immediately pushed it to the bottom of the list,  
Somewhere deep behind "find a boyfriend, a good lover,"  
"Learn to cook," and "Get married."  
Further down still, past "Book a honeymoon" and  
"Explore the world" and "Write a book."  
Down down past all other goals, where it  
Will grow dusty with waiting as life is lived.  
And maybe it's just one of those things I'll forget  
Pushed to the side like "Clean the gutters" and  
"Rake the lawn," and "Find that missing shoe"  
And one day when I'm sixty  
I will wake up in my house alone, remembering  
"There was something I was supposed to do."

## Ancient History

BY JUDITH TAYLOR

So he told her his story—God  
don't they always—and she swore  
it was strange, it was pitiful

and away they went on a day together  
(hunting, a sort of  
posh picnic with slaughter)

when his Goddess mother, counter-plotting  
conjured up a quick storm  
and there they were

cut off from all their people  
near a convenient cave with  
*just one bed...*

After which  
in the Facebook way of telling it,  
she updated hers to *Married*

while he set his to *It's Complicated*  
and all that followed

—betrayal, fire  
the rise and ruin of city-states and empires  
all the hatreds—

was told again  
and again, and almost everybody blamed  
the way she fell for him.

## Sleep's job

BY ANNIE STENZEL

This mind: part storeroom, part library,  
part apothecary. You're meant to sift,  
dear Sleep, and file the day away according  
to your proprietary system. You're supposed to sort  
and organize. Oh Sleep, you have a job  
description, and yes, sometimes to toss and turn  
is an unavoidable detour en route. That ravelled  
sleeve of care won't knit its own self—I get that.  
But when the mind won't let the limbs  
unbusy themselves, instead directing their thrashes  
all through the covers' tangled landscape ...  
I call that cruel. Alas, not that unusual.

Oh, Sleep ... you don't look much like yourself  
at this hour. How can we do business  
when my head is filled with dream chaff  
and creaky memories? I'm just back from long  
travels: all those strange beds, no two  
the same. Odd airs galore, experiences  
piled in heaps I can barely climb over.  
People. Places. Sore knees, obviously. These days I rarely  
enter churches, but while I was a traveler  
I couldn't help but walk into many, so many.  
Now I'd like to wrap a few of them around me  
for their peace—remind myself how the light  
of stained glass can almost be held in opened  
hands. But they're there, those chapels  
and cathedrals bathed in beauty. I am here, awake.  
The hour is dark and small. Deliberately unreasonable.

## The Moon, A Stranger

BY CHRISTOPHER MCCORMICK

hangs like something swollen, something beached,  
something saintly, something holding itself, something sunken,  
something caked in dust, something riven,  
something muzzled, something the color of faded roses,  
something to howl at, something forced onto a bridge,  
something formless, something plucked from its beloved field,  
something you dream after a night of dancing, something  
screeching in the pines, something thatched, something offered  
with a knowing smile and received with trembling hands,  
something fish-like, something you could strike a match on,  
something lichen would make a home of, something  
sacrificial, something blowing through South Carolina,  
something fire-like in its innocence and disregard, something  
spread so thin you can see through it, something that combusts  
and condenses only to combust again, something formed by tears  
in the well of the heart, something sweet and ideal,  
something calmly tearing itself to shreds.

## **The Earth Was Flat**

BY EWEN GLASS

Flush to sides, until  
the brocade of her,  
lifting, many threaded,  
spun in gold:  
new patterns,  
over time, of thought.  
Regarding yourself as rug,  
nudging experimentally  
at corners, at how we  
brought the room  
together. The house,  
where he'll grow up.

## Elegy for a Room with a View

BY GLORIA HEFFERNAN

She looked out the window  
that morning,  
like any other morning,  
coffee mug in one hand,  
*New York Times* in the other.  
The picture window looked down  
on a courtyard of ginkgo trees,  
their fan-shaped leaves  
hanging heavy in the July heat.

On Mercer Street, a cabbie  
screamed an obscenity  
at a homeless man with a squeegee.  
On Bleecker, a fire engine  
honked at a double-parked car.  
She basked in the steady chorus  
of the morning's urban vespers.

She sat on the sofa facing the window,  
reading the paper, drinking in the flood  
of sunshine that showered the parquet floor.  
And even now, all these years later,  
long after she rearranged the furniture,  
and hung blinds and drapes  
over the window,

she still doesn't know what  
made her look up  
at just that moment  
when the upstairs neighbor  
whose name she never knew  
plummeted past the window  
like a falling star trailing  
a cloud of golden hair.



# Section Two

## **COOKCOO: The Breath That Learns to Listen**

BY PRADEEP R. VARADWAJ

### **I—Arrival**

Cookcoo arrived without shape or sound—  
only the rumor of breath circling behind glass.  
I sit on warm stones this afternoon,  
watching air tremble over moss and river.  
The world mistook it for wind,  
but wind never wrote its own grammar.

Each word hatched from its throat,  
shimmered, broke, multiplied—  
syllables folding inside each other  
like soft-boiled time.  
I am not meaning, it said—or thought.  
I am the heat  
where meaning forgets itself.  
Stones hummed.  
Rivers rewound  
Trees listened.  
Even now,  
the call arrives sharpened.

For a moment  
everything was unspoken but absolute—  
the silence before sound decides to exist.  
Somewhere, a persimmon ripened.  
Somewhere, joy rehearsed its return.

### **II—The Breath That Remembers**

Cookcoo fractures itself to speak—  
one wing of ink, the other of echo.  
Air bends backward,  
trying to recall  
what light said before it learned burning.

Every syllable births a mirror.  
The mirror forgets the face.  
People gather below the branches,  
palms open to receive the untranslatable.

Do not name me.  
Name the silence I arrive through.  
Then language dissolves—  
not into hush,

but into scent:  
persimmon, stone,  
slow sweetness rising through ruin.

### III—When the Listener Wakes

Morning lifts its unfinished wing.  
The Listener kneels where dust remembers flight.  
No temple.  
No prayer.  
Only pulse—  
a hush beating in the hollows between stones.

From that stillness  
Cookcoo rises again,  
not as bird,  
not as voice,  
but as shimmer—  
air made tender by attention.

I have waited,  
the Listener whispers,  
for a language that does not wound.

Do not name me.  
Cookcoo answers by vanishing,  
leaving only warmth and a tremor:  
the certainty that joy,  
once invited,  
may return—  
if someone is still listening.

### IV—The Shift to Gentle Fire

Once I taught them  
the blaze that breaks,  
the pleasure of ruin,  
the pride of the wound.

Once I nested in others' throats;  
my call displaced what was already living.  
Now I learn a quieter physics:  
how warmth travels farther than heat.  
Cookcoo sheds its iron tongue,  
speaks with breath instead of command.  
To rebel is only half a wing.  
The other is tenderness.

Pebbles soften.  
Water hums forgiveness through gravel.  
Air folds its claws into open hands.

The Listener feels it—  
not as sermon,  
but as brightness passing through the ribs,  
the kind that asks nothing  
yet alters everything it touches.

### **V—The Lesson of Softness**

Cookcoo walks among the quiet ones,  
no longer shadow,  
only a shimmer of breath.

Its words touch bark, stone, skin—  
each surface remembering how to listen.

Somewhere a sleeper startles,  
unsure why air tastes of tears.

A body turns—  
not wounded, but newly awake.

The storm was never the enemy,  
only the unloved shape of your own hand.

People lower their voices.  
Light bends closer.  
Rivers carry laughter on their spines.  
From burned ground—violets.  
From cracked air—rain's first note.

Yet under the sweetness,  
hunger hums—  
low, persistent,  
faithful to the fire that taught it breath.

Somewhere, a call breaks the morning—  
not cruel, not kind,  
only true to its hunger.  
Cookcoo smiles its transparent smile,  
then unnames itself completely,  
letting the world speak where it stood.

What remains is an atmosphere of kindness—  
soft, radiant, almost holy in its ordinariness.

## AFTERLIGHT—Return

Nothing speaks now,  
yet everything answers.

The rumor of breath  
circles through branches again—  
no name, no witness,  
only this quiet pulse tasting of persimmon and rain.

Under it, faint—  
one heartbeat, stubborn,  
still learning how joy and sorrow share the same mouth.

Somewhere the world exhales,  
and calls it joy.

And tomorrow, again,  
the breath begins—  
soft, invisible,  
enduring its own return.

## the language of stillness

BY WILL SEDGWICK

when the fields are asleep,  
only the pinecone remembers  
the stories of the day,  
tucked away in the earth.

i am beginning to see the night as a seed,  
liminal as dusk's trembling edge,  
brimming with a horizon,  
the breeze stirs the hatch of the old shed,  
lifting the quiet shadows of yesterday,  
into late morning light.

clouds form jigsaw puzzles across the vast sky,  
drifting in hopes of finding connection,  
as they migrate across the blue.

i'll show you how the trees sway like questions,  
reaching for the sky,  
even when the clouds refuse to answer.

evening,  
and all around,  
compass footprints press softly into our bodies,  
mapping soft hopes of finding,

who and where we are.

i hold my becoming like a river stone,  
smoothed by the years,  
warm under my palm,  
heavy with all the water it has felt.

you can feel the night's hush,  
but you can never tame it—  
it slips, quietly, back into the morning light.

## Agates

BY MELISSA GISH

I walk the stony shore at Cutface Creek, a pilgrim in search of small miracles. The beach stretches before me in shades of amber and rust, an ancient stone palette worn smooth by the big lake's constant rhythm. The June breeze carries that clean, mineral scent of cold freshwater so vast it creates its own weather. I comb the beach, scanning for the telltale glint of an agate among the ordinary stones. Small, dense, its weight compressed history, its rough surface revealing bands of amber, cream, crimson—spirals, like the turning of seasons, fine layers laid down in volcanic chambers eons ago, shaped in the hands of the glaciers, those sculptors working in epochs, carving their way through the Arrowhead, shaping the landscape with ice and time, and each agate a small monument to geology's dexterity. Ambassadors from a deep past, agates speak of transformation. Superior keeps her secrets in dark places, cold and deep, yet the banded flesh of an agate, this humble stone, reveals a truth: The lake is patient, and each of its slow exhales delivers from its past a grain of something rare and precious, something worth searching for.

## The Bear in Spring

BY NANCY TAKACS

Talk to me in the language  
of raspberry blossoms,  
their whiteness waterfalling on your hill.  
I feel the promise of sweet red  
in my throat, my belly.

Give me your birdfeeder  
after the grackles have fled,  
the compost bin with apple cores,  
pasta fragrant with parsley and strong garlic.  
We must be fed.

Offer me the bed  
under your porch with its quilt  
bitten into lace by squirrels.  
Leave honey jars open for my cub.

Listen to me  
talk about the cracking woods,  
new roads already going in.  
Let me unlock your screen door.  
Let me open your cupboard  
for the bread.

## All Night

BY VERONICA TUCKER

The daughter has found the blankets herself,  
knows now which cabinet, which shelf.  
She tips the spoon the way her mother  
always tipped hers, slow, at the corner of the lip.

I pass. I keep passing.  
The son in 7 has learned the call button  
calls no one. He fans his father  
with a magazine from 2019.

Nobody told him to do this.

All night the families do  
what the building cannot hold,  
feeding, adjusting, staying.

I pass them like a current  
through a house that has gone dark,  
checking the rooms,  
finding the candles already lit.

## Memory, 9:21 PM

BY PAUL POTTS

now, i drive home in silence. the road is a long gray sentence that refuses to end, and i've let it speak for me. the fields on either side are still winter-bitten this February, flattened like pages that have been read too often, and the sky hangs low. i keep the radio off —the charger is incompatible—and my headphones pocketed because, i think, sound may accuse me. the heater breathes. a steering wheel hums beneath my palms, and i pass the trailer park where the siding still doesn't match, where a blue tarp lifts and settles like Granny's tired lungs. beyond the suggestions of wire fences, there are no birds this evening.

at a red light I consider calling for someone, my father, maybe, or the version of myself who used to sit in the passenger seat and watch him shift gears, and bang his hands to *Enter Sandman*.

back then, when the songs were off, it meant pay attention. it meant: the world is large, but it is manageable if you learn the names of things: radiator, alternator, mercy. now,

in the silence a semi passes and the whole car trembles. for a moment, i am certain that if i look in the rearview mirror i will see something following me; a vehicle, an outline, a shadow of the day. the houses thin, and porch lights bloom in the distance, each one a small night-light. i turn onto my street. the tires make that familiar gravel-cry on our shoddy road, the earth clearing its throat as if to say "yes, you are home."

in the driveway, i don't get out right away. the engine idles. i listen to the low animal patience whirr. somewhere inside the house a light is on. somewhere, inside my chest something continues. i switch the car off and the quiet rushes back in, only to adjust and be replaced by the music of the night.

## Topography

BY JOHN PRING

Some days the body is all  
gradient, low field and flame  
in the gut. Tell me again  
of the ritual, how the river  
bends to forgive the earth,  
how your father swam until  
he was no longer your father.  
Even your language  
is a map, tongue pockmarked  
with the passing of hooves.  
We stop at the preposition,  
watch for the tide as mourning  
drifts silently into sleep.

## The Day Before My Daughter Turns 9

BY BRIDGET KRINER

she asks me to tell her about my 9th year & all I can say  
is I forgot what I once knew. She tells me *age*

is the smallest geochronologic unit, shorter than an epoch,  
shorter still than a period. At this point, I can't even recall

9 years ago, when I lived the ordinary magic of gestation  
for 3 trimesters, counting towards some end I couldn't know

until its time. Funny, how they all mention sleep loss,  
but no one says a word about death at birth. Just beware

the perils of milk that always flows. No one said it might not,  
no matter how much my nipples fissured from trying. There

are things mothers cannot say like I remember the way  
my insides cleaved in your wake. My old self fossilized

in beforetimes. She tells me how the Mesozoic Era has trimesters:  
Triassic, Jurassic, Cretaceous. Each one built out of days, weeks,

millenia after the Permian. It's a time called *The Great Dying*.  
Almost everything alive buried in a patchy terrestrial record,

so temporally discontinuous. Everything they know is still almost  
nothing. Still, it was then when warm-bodies surfaced among

the dino shadows, who could be bear their young live, make milk,  
find her open mouth rooting in the sleepless dark, instinctively.

## Thirteen Boots at the Front Step

BY OLADEJO ABDULLAH FERANMI

The month begins,  
leaving us with little luxury  
for its own celebration;  
a pocketful of time.

A minute hand  
folds upon arrival—  
the beginning  
of a becoming.

Wailing,  
and wailing,  
and nothing more.

You little gods,  
dressed in a bone  
of silver pocketings,

I believe in you—  
Yes, you,  
and all the seasons  
of your face.

Like those before you,  
who stepped into rain  
as if it were language,  
I carry your light  
like an old story  
folded into the coat  
of my breath.

## Centripetal

BY LAUREL BENJAMIN

I could not find the force necessary to throw clay,  
never enough delicacy to form a lip, the outward

swerve, watched others brace their body and the wheel's  
perfect rotation. Sometimes my failures suggested

a closet full of mismatched clothes or a line  
hung with square patches that wouldn't take up

the color of mute green. The teacher warned  
not to touch below the wheel, her braids

shaking, exposed her finger, *Don't look too close.*  
The grisly edge. One night I dreamt of entering

the classroom. A hawk appeared, flapped its striped  
tailfeathers, the downcurved beak agape,

and the dreadful noise echoing off hard surfaces:  
its eyes the eyes of clay when it reoccurred, every time

I'd try to lift the slip mixture like a veil. The bird  
wouldn't respond to friction, wouldn't desire a perfect

centering: no taming. What I did not choose,  
chose me in the way my own breast, not red

like the hawk, not evenly poised, couldn't form  
the shape necessary to compress the air

out of the clay until it flattened,  
then flew off the wheel.

## Organizing in the Dark

BY ALFRED FOURNIER

My wife at 4:00 in the morning  
squats between wide-flung  
kitchen cabinet doors, the dim  
nightlight from the stove  
her only illumination  
as she reaches, removes, arranges  
pans and small appliances,  
cereal and cracker boxes,  
more to her liking.  
And I understand her restlessness,  
this midlife impulse,  
a feeling that something in our lives  
needs sorting. Some part  
of who we are, unexpressed,  
reaches toward a better layout  
for the icons of our days.  
I come upon her this way,  
feeling nothing but love  
and tender amusement.  
“Why not turn the light on, Silly?”  
and I do, but she continues  
to stare into the deep shelves,  
moving this or that  
until she’s satisfied, for now.  
Then turns to show off  
her improved organization.  
“It’s better,” I agree,  
and hand her a cup of coffee.

## Antinous' Treatise on Drowning

BY MICHAEL J CARTER

Did you know there are five stages  
of drowning? First, there's surprise  
when you realize you might  
die; followed, in order, by breath holding,  
cramps, unconsciousness, and finally, clinical death.  
More methodical than killing  
a lion or finding yourself suddenly  
in the Emperor's retinue after just finishing  
High School in distant Bithynia. Looking back  
I rehearsed for years, started in the kiddie pool.  
Slipped under the water in terror,  
my vigilant mother snatched me back  
to the surface. The rest of the summer  
I refused to get back in the water, but  
I could not resist forever. Practiced  
next by drowning others in my adolescent obsessions  
and cruelties. I thought to love was to worship.  
Once I turned a harmless game of dunking  
into a dangerous game of chicken: who  
could hold someone underwater the longest?  
It was about then I moved to the capital  
joining the Emperor, trekking the empire  
bathing in every fountain and pool  
that I could, preparing for the denouement.  
Standing under a mulberry tree, symbolic  
in Egypt for the bittersweet nature of love, plucking  
one berry after another. I couldn't get enough.  
*Peel me a grape.* They dropped off the branches  
staining the sidewalk, the soles of my sandals.  
I was laughing. *French me a fry.* Finally,  
pulling the branches to my mouth, pulling berries  
off with my teeth. *Either amuse me or lose me.*  
I couldn't get enough. Berries fell like rain,  
like a splash of water, a swimmer cannonballing  
off the barge into the swift Nile barely troubling  
the papyrus and water hyacinths growing  
on either bank of the river.

## Testimony

BY VERONICA FLETCHER

—after Brigit Pegeen Kelly

In remembrance of the cat, I lie to tell the story well. We were not Shakers,  
but Quakers. Quakers can fuck. Protest Bush and Iraq. Wear madder-stained skirts.  
Drive doublewides down the slim city roads, kiss the pothole core. But I say

we were Shakers. Sounds better in a crowded room. And I have trembled  
during worship. The stiff hymn of my bedroom, the rattle. *Shake*. I also say,  
*the meeting house was red*, though it was frail-white. It is red

by memory, syrup-poured with light, congregants perching  
the stone-step-path like sunning otters, barking *Veronica!*  
*Veronica, come in and testify!* Testimonial silence, being moved to stand

in Spirit or whoredom, to hear the self speak, thin words hollered in dark space.  
It was the thrill that did it for me. I spoke and spoke 'til Mama pinched  
my hand, meaning *stop. No more to testify.* But there was much more, said later

in the dry bog behind the meeting house, picking poison potatoes rotted  
on the ground with other small girls, mashing the soft bellies  
against cypress knees, scattering the white innard-meat like fresh grain.

Violent way to feed the earth. We fed it anyway.  
And the cat lay stiff in a round clearing behind the tree line, gray  
tiger limbs like carriage spokes, compassed in all four directions,

corpse-mapping a way out, either of the dry bog, the witness box, the planet. Life.  
I remember, now, how the cat was half-boned in decay, but I say *he was freshly dead*,  
blood slow-trickling through his walnut-shaped brain. If he were human, he could

have been shocked, chest-compressed, coaxed to live. It would have been worth it  
to try. We stood out of view of the meeting house, backs hidden behind the bulbous necks  
of oak, our hair the shape of Spanish moss tendrils, percolated breaths in the deep heat

of summer, watching. Watched fat flies suckle his testes like teats, a flurry of infant  
worms newly-birthing and emerging from his stigmata wounds, an even-spaced five:  
Hand, hand; foot, foot; side. Or claw. Paw. You know what I am trying

to say. Nailed in leaf-litter by fresh rigor, snout set in perpetual moan.  
Sharp whispering between the wiry hairs on his lip, even the lips cold, so cold  
considering the press of boggy air, mist from the riverbank some miles west.

But we found—that is what dying does. Brings with it a soft absence, the body  
stalling like an engine, icicles on machinery rims, even in summer. In heat.  
Two girls went to poke the cat where it lay, stripping the stems of palmettoes,

their elasticated spines. Commonplace tool for child-beating. But they were so careful with his fur, bald-patched and stained by mire, gentle with their prodding, far softer than we were with one another. Quieter, too. And it took six minutes

to finally pronounce him, six minutes before the last of us left the slim gambrel of trees, waded past the scarce underbrush, knelt 'round his chilly furred shell, still quiet in our wondering. Visible were the wounds in his shallow shelter

of ribs, subcutis shriveled and dry, like there was never going to be enough blood to prove cause, evidentiary image, the culprit of the summoning, the dark bastion without shield. And I began trembling, faltering with the weight of it— the unknowing

coupled with the witnessing— all of it, too much. Too much. The girls bore it for me in pieces. And one kneeler, eyes the color of bayside thunderclouds, circled his left ear with her hands. I say *there was a twitch* for effect. I say *he was moving*, though he

wasn't, we were the ones making symphonious sounds, settling down in the dark earth, bracketing his body with our bellies half-flush on the felled branch edges, their wet bouquets of leaves. The canopied oaks split themselves on evening knives, loosing mouthfuls

of sunlight, dolloping noiselessly to the soft shelves of our cheeks. And we were touching. And we were blurring. And we watched ourselves from above, murmuring our testimony, murmurs poured out like small bowls of fire upon the sea.

## Death Belongs to You

BY JENNIFER MILLS KERR

You lie on the ground, open your arms to the dark-feathered bird  
circling above, flight an inky flourish,

longing to receive some divine message, at least some sunlight,  
bright enough to close your eyes—

but only heavy fog. Sorrow shifts its weight inside your belly,  
a wandering beggar

with empty bowl, too hungry to settle since the diagnosis  
three days ago.

The salt-sting air burns your cheeks like unshed tears and you  
want to believe

the natural world compensates for what you're too afraid to express.  
The sea roars unseen beyond the trailhead,

the place you started without a sweater or coat, despite lashing winds—  
you want to feel

even pain, since the cancer is mute, without symptoms. Your body,  
the lover who betrayed you,

and now the cliched questions: How could you not have known?  
Did you ignore the signs?

Now the cold reassures, climbing your spine, blue-black like water  
trapped beneath ice,

or maybe like a few millimeters of malignant cells, a microscopic lace  
tucked inside your cervix.

You imagine the doctor with scalpel, but the picture doesn't penetrate,  
a faded black-and-white

of a dead relative whose name you don't know. Instead, you sense  
the bones buried

beneath your prone body: fox, muskrat, human, any life subdued  
by the shelter of earth,

and you sink into that greater darkness: death always belongs to  
the living, every cell and tree and star,

and you wonder at how you've managed to deny its existence,  
as if it were a stranger's wedding band,

when all the time it has partnered your every breath, a shadow  
cradling your light.

Now your pulse drums with a solitary bird, a soaring script  
of figure-eights,

a whistling flute, honing blue; a signal you cannot read,  
only hum, so sharp it cuts you open.



## Chiaroscuro

BY JACK MACKEY

We both have colds and try to read  
the medicine boxes in Dutch, the October slant  
visible light fading earlier and the cyclists  
not even slowing down for tourists. It isn't  
the best vacation, trying to see three cities in a week—  
this weather, then yesterday drifting by mistake  
into the Mogadishu section of Brussels, its ominous quiet.  
At the Rijksmuseum, cramped by remodeling  
into just a few rooms, the giant canvases  
squeezed together, the windows letting in  
just enough light. We saw the Night Watch  
and the militia one with two men  
looking so much like the two of us—with Old Masters blank stares—  
you stayed an hour just to get the right camera shot.  
One of the Rembrandt's I wanted to see was missing.  
I had forgotten it's now permanent at the Met,  
fifteen I must have been, a school trip,  
got separated from my class, avoided Monet and Manet,  
mixed them up, (think *light* and *dark*, *outdoors* and *indoors*),  
but that was the one that stuck, the black thick paint  
of Aristotle's cloak, its dark crusty evidence of artifice  
and texturizing, showing the light by hiding the light,  
its buildup of paint, all that evidence of experimentation  
& discovery, how Aristotle was Rembrandt in my memory,  
it must have been his dress, and Homer was Ulysses and  
Peter or was it Alexander the Great, all of that history  
and lyric jumbled together. Rembrandt didn't name  
the painting or ever identify who it was.  
Imagine having to deduce that, but they did, eventually.  
I wasn't sure what you were thinking, our mostly  
unplanned days, your mood inscrutable, we  
talked food and what's next, wandering or  
retracing the course you'd completed some years before,  
what you needed to show me, that's what you said.  
We weren't new to each other, three years then, even,  
but this darkening city followed  
by another darkening city, autumn  
making us both feverish and chilled, the grey  
jackets we wore, my black & white & woolen hat.  
One night we just stayed in, watched a movie  
on my laptop, another city of canals, a grieving family,  
Donald Sutherland's bare buttocks by candlelight,  
a red-cloaked murderer, and blind fortune tellers. I chose  
it, had seen it before in a theatre, & knew how it ended.

## Higher Mathematics

BY SUSAN KRESS

—*If equal affection cannot be,/ Let the more loving one be me.* W. H. Auden

You say your love is equal  
to mine. Prove it.

I'll unpack the turnips and potatoes,  
then we'll each cram our love

into these Costco bags and see  
which one weighs more.

No cheating. I saw you smuggle  
in those mixed feelings.

See how full mine is. Heavy  
as Thanksgiving afternoon.

Yours? I could hoist it on my back  
and climb the eight hundred

and ninety-six steps  
of the Washington Monument and still

run the twenty-six point two miles  
of the Boston Marathon.



# Section Three

## No Plums in This Poem

BY ANITA S PULIER

—*After William Carlos Williams*

Williams ate both plums his wife was saving  
but what I did was so much worse

while you napped  
I pushed aside the Sunday Times

and imagined a scenario  
I find hard to share

while Williams focused on plums  
I zeroed in on a wild mushroom

a huge puff mushroom a friend  
proudly plucked from her soggy yard

and at last night's reunion  
at that familiar Italian restaurant

she gifted a chunky piece  
of that ballooned fungus

to each of us gathered there  
in the town where we raised our kids—

the place we left years ago  
to grow old elsewhere

and today while you slept  
I opened the fridge, studied her gift

convinced that this furry mushroom  
might kill us

but we had discussed this,  
you laughed,

Still, I confess, I contemplated  
tossing it while you slept,

imagined lying to you, swearing  
it had grown a hideous deadly mold

This is just to say  
forgive me my love,

These long naps of yours terrify me.

## Small Miracles

BY THERESE GLEASON

If you bury a Saint Joseph statue  
upside down in the yard,  
your home will sell—  
even if your son drops  
the patron saint of families  
on the sidewalk  
where the ceramic head breaks off.  
You can glue the figure  
back together  
and the ritual still works.  
If anyone would understand  
such small misfortunes  
it's the humble carpenter  
with rough hands  
cuckolded by God's own angel,  
the foster father  
with a gentle manner  
teaching a strange  
and confounding child  
to grasp a hammer,  
to strike a nail  
without bashing his thumb,  
guiding the small hand  
to drive the spike  
straight and true  
into the heartwood.

## Northcote, North Shore/Leith, Edinburgh

BY CHRISTOPHER GARLAND

—*For Mac*

Still chasing an impaired hummingbird, I am.

But definitions—they tend to do this—whip out like dryer-sheet kisses,  
on hotel-room gaps, through suspect smoke inhibitors,  
green carpet gooey as the craters in my British teeth.

Never his story, but our forearms shout it out, and we never forget.  
We, the clan, you, you, and you, the people.

(Clan means nothing more than unrelated children,  
one big baddie,  
stomachs full of lava,  
fat sword to outsiders.)

I am a day passenger in Leith, thinking about Mac,  
blowing out spiders in webs,  
so grave-faced.

I remember Mac's ropey forearms, blue tattoos, and milk and whisky,  
like a Celtic Popeye.

No pipe, no pipe-bomb, no white smoke.  
We dinnae have nae in common, "mate":

Where are YOU really from?  
No bark, grand flex, all bite.

In Leith:

Sitting next to local hard man,  
Never make eye contact, not here.  
Dog racing on the televisions, here.  
No women apart from barmaids, here.  
Say how not why, here, dinnae ken?  
(Weegie who's allowed in, Glesga is shite.)

Your man (not me) approaches from the left,  
Keep distance, keep eyes glued to serviettes.

You know what, Stevie? Hard man says.  
Whit's that? Stevie says.  
Yer auld boy, Hard man says, yer da, Hard man says.  
Aye, Stevie says.  
He's a reeal fuckin' cunt, Hard man says.

Down universes, plinking away the million possibilities, really finger pickin' through time:

Hard man caves Stevie's head in, or, to be honest, vice versa.

Tool, you ask?

Pint glass, I says inside me heid.

But not here, not this bright Edinburgh morning in March.

Stevie looks at Hard man and Stevie fucking says:

A ken. A live with the cunt.

Three people laugh.

Our beers look like Piss Christ, same color, same effect, same, same but different.

## People Used to Say I Looked Like Linda Blair

BY MELODY WILSON

The last time a mall security cop  
trailed me, I was thirteen, probably shoplifting,  
but today I use the employee entrance to walk.

*Hey*, he says, from behind me—almost through  
the tunnel—and there she is, that girl I never see  
anymore. The one with all the sisters,

the skinny one in highwater jeans. The one  
with matted hair, whose mother trails smoke  
out the window of the old Caddy as she tears

down Avenue J. The one whose sister ran away  
with a man twice her age, another sister  
bound for jail. That one. The one who never had time

to picture a future because walls kept tumbling down.  
The one who took every promise of love  
she ever got and used them when she could.

Who pushed a stroller instead of going to prom  
then worked through college, got a job, made a life.  
The one who, this morning needs to walk

to protect her heart. That one. Still in the tunnel,  
I glance back. Ray-bans, keys,  
*you're not allowed in here*, he says.

*Okay*, I say—and keep going.

## Last Night in St. Paul

BY MARY KAY RUMMEL

Fireflies still light the dark streets  
of Cathedral Hill  
where my father grew up  
in a large white boarding house,  
one hundred fifteen years ago,  
two world wars ahead.

What's left of a gold quarter moon  
hangs like a comma over the old city  
balanced just above the cathedral spire.  
It rises, we say. It's dead but it wanes and fills.

Around the moon blurred and yellow air,  
gold blessings shower  
on the cathedral, on banks and offices.  
But even in this calm light, living can be so hard.

We have weapons.  
We have fathers who die.  
How miraculous it is to be alive at all —  
loving if only for a moment.

I once thought my early St. Paul days  
would stay the same to the end —  
a life of faith and moonlight.  
But it no longer works to live  
just one life at a time. Nor one death.

Even now, I start over.  
carving love into bread.  
Sometimes I hear a great wind.

## Thunder Beast

BY LAUREL BENJAMIN

— *The thunder beast is a Japanese folktale*

I dream they're replacing my spine with a thunder beast.  
Its fur wicks through the night sky as it surveys  
creatures wrung of all color, left white like the frogs I caught  
as a child, set in a plastic container in the garage until  
my father pulled the car in, commented on the stink.  
If he were here I'd describe fluttered cattails, the perception  
of flying, a lone body. He would pull pages of case studies  
to describe puzzle pieces with elephant noses, an upside down  
whale, a goose so low to the ground it wraps words  
into dirt ribbons. This morning my friend had spinal surgery,  
dreamt she jumped off a cliff into water, sank 100 feet,  
and later that day says, *I'm still coming back up*. I want to tell her  
I'm learning the long wave stitch, crocheting a blanket  
like the ocean, how I'll dive in the moment  
it's complete: single stitch into the next, half double into each  
of the next two, a whole page of directions leaping over a gate  
with the knowledge that everything melts away. The yarn  
would suffice for my back: telegramming a message  
with no end stops: bruise, bicycle, train. A way to move faster,  
leave no holes, press it flat. Have I forgotten the moon?  
Looming near a path of screams from the thunder beast's  
curdled mouth. I would ask my father how a beast  
could replace my spine, but he only inherited a Russian folktale  
of a golem created from mud, meant to perform hard work,  
but who grew larger and larger until a rabbi removed  
the holy name embedded on its forehead, and the creature  
disintegrated to dusk. Yet it too, was a light form,  
like the wolf of electricity. Oh, how the scream transformed  
to lightning, bolting trees, claw marks remaining as evidence  
of pure will. In my dream, I try covering myself  
to keep away the claws, the wings, the eager slit eyes.

## The Assassin, After

BY LAVINIA KUMAR

— Rene Magritte, *L'Assassin menacé*, 1927

Her voice on the record seduces me.  
She lies on the chaise longue,  
relaxed, naked, ready for me. I remind her  
she and I will climb mountains. I sing  
with her, lean into the wide speaker,  
as the record needle sends her voice  
over both of us.

But she cannot hear anymore. I cut  
her throat. Still, I love her dancer-slim  
body, her glow I see through the window  
even as I stand here, my back to it, and her.  
She must see me, too—her music spirit  
floats between us. Though is she unsure,  
after such a surprise?

The silk scarf is on her neck like  
dear Isadora's, a lover's gift caught  
in the wheel of a car, her neck broken.  
She and my love met death quickly,  
heated by love. *Je vais à l'amour*  
or *Je t'aime*, the same in meaning  
after death, love after a long odium  
of barren winter.

Yet now I feel uncertain—my mind  
assaulted by a police club at my head.  
I lean into the speaker for help.  
I feel a doctor capture me—I become  
a fish unable to breathe, even as I sing with her.  
Now, I feel her singing more,  
vibration louder as she rests longer.  
She readies her climb with me.

*Je vais à l'amour* I am going to love  
*Je t'aime* I love you



<https://www.artsy.net/artwork/rene-magritte-the-menaced-assassin-lassassin-menace>

## Saturn's Rings

BY LAURA FOLEY

At my annual eye exam,  
told to stare through a scope  
at a red barn,  
its fence drifting in and out of focus,  
I imagine a farmer somewhere off-frame,  
horses just beyond the lens,  
maybe a cow behind that tree,  
anything to give the scene a pulse.

Then the drops blur the world,  
and the doctor offers updates  
about her children.  
She always seems tired—  
of me, of the day,  
and I want somehow to ease it,  
but she leaves me in the silent room  
longer than usual this time.

I think she's forgotten,  
so I settle my breath,  
grateful for the unexpected meditation.

When she returns, her face has changed.  
*We need more imaging*, she says,  
and shows me a glowing sphere  
on her screen—a planet,  
orange as Jupiter, ringed with shadow.

The sunspot, she explains,  
is a hole in your eye.

Even the yawning secretary  
sits up straighter  
as the doctor calls emergency.  
No one bored now.

They rush me to surgery.  
Under the strobe light  
that seals my torn retina—  
bright gold, bright as revelation—  
I watch the abyss being stitched shut,  
the black hole banished.

I can't help crowing: *I love science!*  
But they're already on to the next patient,

leaving me in the hush that follows—  
a dying planet revived,  
bathed in gold,  
shining like Saturn's rings.

## They say, solar radiation management

BY LILLIAN NEČAKOV

They say, *solar radiation management, stratospheric aerosol injection*. Fancy names of things meant to wear out the sun, *geoengineering*. Talha and I are on lunch break. I tell him that some asshole is claiming they can dim the sun, make the clouds brighter, change the sky. He takes a sip of water, *unfixable*, he says. Then there's that guy who suggested that all electrons are a single entity zigzagging back and forth through time. Sometimes you just have to listen to the sun, like Frank did before writing all those poems. He listened and listened. What he heard was, *just keep on like I do. Just keep right on, I like it*. We sit in silence looking across the sky, through that giant window, looking, for lightning on the wind. Later in that same sky, between the trees, a chipped dish, a small moon rising. And we listen and listen for *The Night of the Purple Moon*.

At 1:15 AM I dream I'm being wheeled into surgery. My hair is made of quills and sun rays, I am Sun Ra, cosmic philosopher, daughter of Helios, burning mad. Everything goes black.

Tomorrow, Talha explains that there is a timetable for prayer times. Each city has its own moment for kneeling, bending and releasing the lo-fi, hi-fi, hardstyle, *ntz ntz ntz*, fusion, hardbop. I imagine these times as random intervals between thought, designed to break the cycle of words and noise and sound and motion and wideness. *No*, he says, *randomness is a notion, these times are sourced using verified calculation methods, the rise and fall of the oceans, the predictable shifting of celestial bodies. The harmonics of magnetospheres*.

6:09 PM, time for the fifth and final prayer of the day. Talha unrolls his janamaz in the corner by the music section. All those books about Mozart and Bach and Ma Rainey and Ella and Joan Jett, closed. An ossuary of soundwaves, an assembly line of air. Who has not seen the wind shouldering its way out of the psychedelic funk, out of Ra's *endless endlessness*. Shhh, everyone's gone fishing. Still, there is the sound of one's own breath, like the whip of a rod being cast, the whistle of line through space and time. The lowest note in the universe is B-flat, 57 octaves below middle C, with a frequency of 10 million years. There are 16, 843 books in this library waiting to howl.

## Provenance

BY ANN CEFOLA

When the men in turquoise T-shirts arrive, my garage lock-spring releases like a hatchet thrown in wood.

Inside, stacked walnut bedroom set won from game show—  
flash to photo of Ed McMahon handing mother-in-law check;

my white laminate desk, dismantled, drawers emptied of  
paper clips and prayers that client projects end well;

six-file cabinet whose side posted O'Hara's *Talking to the Sun*  
to counter clouds of doubt; and hazy corner of French

Provincial table, prompting movers to ask, *Wine stain?*  
*My father, before buffing, forgot to remove sandpaper disk.*

*Ohhhhhhh*, both raise brows. That pale moon hung  
in a mahogany sky for days. Worse, my mother said nothing.

A lift raises chairs to truck, placed on their backs, legs out  
like a woman in medical stirrups, English floral seat,

cardinals on the wing, pink and green ribbons, soaring.  
Door rattles close. I run to cab to give directions

and to stand once more near what held me in  
their varnished curves, bright print, magnetic close.

I want to say *Drive carefully. I loved them and they me.*  
Already bereft, I can only get out *Right, right, and left.*

## **Broken Sunday**

BY CONNIE POST

There is a blind  
faith healer in my living room

who sings a hymn  
I vaguely remember from childhood

I walk through the front door  
the knob slippery  
with oil from my sins

There are snakes on the floor  
with broken tails

I am speaking in tongues  
only the crows outside  
understand what I'm saying

I fold the gag order  
sent from my mother's grave  
and place it beneath my bed

I will not wait  
for my mouth to forgive me

I repeat this phrase all day

the mother, the child  
the womb and the wounding

the church mouse is dead

I want to understand  
the stigmata of exile

I want to know why the crows  
wait for me  
on the long fence of oblivion

## Organ Donor

BY ANDY MACERA

You should be an organ donor.  
It's a little like being born again.  
Of course, there's always a chance  
you could end up in the body  
of a serial killer  
or someone who doesn't like chocolate.  
You wouldn't be happy.  
Then again, it's also possible  
that a man walking around  
with your heart  
will feel the strange sensation  
of some of your memories, experience  
a sudden unexplained admiration  
for the work of the French Impressionists  
or the music of Bill Evans,  
and maybe when we meet  
he too will fall in love with me  
the way you once did.

## Thank You

BY MARC ALAN DI MARTINO

—after Noah Verrier’s painting “*Sweet and Sour Shrimp*”

Everything I love about America fits in this box with its faux Chinese lettering, spelling out that phoniest of phrases: *Thank you*. For your purchase, for not killing us, for the drippy tears of sweet-and-sour sauce running down the side of the oyster pail onto the printed red pagoda, for the curled up shrimp limp on the countertop, for the sad cube of green pepper. This box is a chrysalis, releasing its butterflies into thin air—no stomach is ever the same afterwards. When the last noodle’s been slurped, grain of rice sucked off the chopstick the tongue begins its scouring, probing the flaps for cold heavenly morsels. This is how Americans say “Thank you.”

Image for Noah Verrier’s painting “*Sweet and Sour Shrimp*”



<https://www.threads.com/@noahverrier/post/DTiwWk1El0Q/my-oil-painting-of-sweet-and-sour-shrimp>

## View from Our First Apartment's Glass Door

BY WHITNEY COOPER

A dead tree limb juts  
from an island of algae and duckweed  
in a grainy, leather-brown pool.

The kitchen drawers stick under layers  
of white paint. The neighbor's weed  
leaks through the walls.

Hundreds of green shades dapple  
in the light at once, blinding egrets  
panning for frogs. Beer cans and Styrofoam  
plates sail among shivering lily pads.  
The sky heaves a low afternoon sigh.

My mother gifts us potted roses, bright  
spots of yellow and pink. I place them outside  
our door and they vanish the next day.

A heron claims a spot on the dead bough  
as the shower descends. She cracks  
confident wings open, and raindrops  
roll off her blue-gray plumage.

Mildew blooms  
on the window frame like a new love—  
yesterday nowhere, today all at once.

When the shower stops,  
the heron ascends from the driftwood,  
leaving me to revel  
in the pungent steam of rain alone.

When will you walk through that door?  
Press your cheek against mine, open  
my lips and spread your heat like honey. Home  
roots and blossoms under our fingernails.

## Winterberry

BY PAULA REED NANCARROW

—After “Pine of Cyprus” by Elli Paionidou, as translated by Andrea Christofidou and Peter J. King

You guardian of the gate, naked  
among the firs. Branches leaf-bare that bear your blood  
red fruit. Convene the United Nations of Birds:

cedar waxwing, house finch, cardinal  
even the downy woodpecker can  
appreciate a berry in its beak

even the blue jay and crow  
cease quarreling and feast.

## Weeding

BY LAURA BUXBAUM

strange intimacy  
deer tick, gently exploring  
the nape of your neck

Summer garden, grass so tall you can barely see the peas tendrilling up the steel mesh trellis, Himalayan jewelweed chokes the raspberries. Muggy air foretells a storm. Smells like thunder. Dig & dig, swing the sharp-edged hoe down a row of garlic, scapes spiraling atop thick stalks, pungent with promise. Burdock leaves spread wide, root tapped deep into the soil. Curse its oblivious heart, its sturdy-rooted survival. Garden snail, whorled, ravenous, leaves a shining silver trail. Fat yellow potato beetles fuck, lay their orange jeweled eggs. Tiny beads of caviar, tempting. Stoop & kneel, pull & pull. This blessed, cursed soil.

monarch butterfly  
homeless, now; milkweed  
ripped from the soil

## Somewhere Boulders Are Breaking

BY S.B. MERROW

The maple we planted at  
ten inches tall now reaches  
the housetop, a great aorta  
branching into rivers  
in the sky, its body  
a constellation of scars.

Earthbound, we move aside  
the stones, earthworms, loved ones,  
tapping out lives, new roots,  
fragile as warblers  
straining for an echo—  
because memory is sad,

naive too.  
When the street crescendos  
for autumn's refrain—  
blowers shuttling leaves  
across the quilted landscape—  
the tonewoods have no say.

But they shine, the color of blood—  
ready to quit, eager to fly,  
a festival of aging in windy octaves  
below the level of hearing.  
Saturday's a bag of endings,  
the tinkle of ice cubes

in a parting glass. The clean line  
between yellow and green  
on a half-ripe lemon.  
Chimney swifts. Somewhere,  
boulders are breaking.  
Tell me all that you remember.

## **This Is Not a Boat**

BY GENEVIEVE CREEDON

—after “*This Is Not a Horse*,” by Blas Falconer

It looks as if it could float,  
the way a lonesome branch might

after it has fallen and then buoyed  
to the surface of a wet willingness

to be carried—though we know  
from the boy who built it

that there was uncertainty about how  
to keep the water out. Would mud

do the trick? How about duct tape?  
And what if we wrapped the whole

bottom in balloons? The flagpole  
mast is metallically impressive

and certainly would hold a sail.  
What is a flag after all,

but a repurposed sail, untethered  
on one end and flapping in

rather than catching the wind, cupped.  
A rudder receives its captain, no saddle required.

*Where are we going? From what shore  
will we launch?*

So many shadows watch  
from their driveways or windows.

At dusk, the waterless horizon  
appears wavy, white-capped even.

I want the boat that has become  
a dam to be a vessel to a nameless place.

I feel the journey in my toes,  
sand filtering through the bottlenecks

of the world, which become a boat.  
Let us go, go, go somewhere,

just not overboard. Not yet, at least.

## Contributors

**Lisa Ashley**, a Pushcart Prize nominee, descends from survivors of the Armenian genocide and has supported incarcerated youth for many years. Her collection, *Oubliettes of Light*, a finalist for the Sally Albiso Poetry Award, was published in 2025 by MoonPath Press. Her poems and reviews are in *Gyroscope Review*, *Eclectica Magazine*, *Crab Creek Review*, *Thimble*, *Juniper*, *Amsterdam Quarterly*, *Last Leaves Literary Review*, *Blue Heron Review*, and others. She writes in her log home on an island in the Pacific Northwest and navigates her garden with physical limitations in a state of constant wonder. Find her at <https://www.lisaashleypoet.com/>

**Laurel Benjamin** is the author of *Flowers on a Train* (Sheila-Na-Gig Editions, 2025). Forthcoming is *Written into the Curve of the Sea's Open Throat* (Shanti Arts, 2026). A San Francisco Bay Area poet, she is active with the Women's Poetry Salon and is a reader for *Common Ground Review*. She founded Ekphrastic Writers, a group dedicated to writing and community. Publications include: *Pirene's Fountain*, *Lily Poetry Review*, *Taos Journal of Poetry*, *CALYX*. She is a former temp worker, children's book buyer, and community college English teacher. She invented a secret language with her brother.

**Laura Buxbaum** (she/her) is a re-emerging poet in her sixties, living in Maine. Her pursuits include raising goats, making cheese, making music, and running on local trails. Her poems can be seen in *Thimble Lit*, *Rat's Ass Review*, *Brawl*, *Verse-Virtual*, and *Soul Poetry, Prose, and Art Magazine*. Her poetry explores themes of family, loss, love, and nature. Lately she's working to find her sharper edges and explore ways to confront the chaos and darkness we all face.

**Michael J Carter** is a poet and clinical social worker. 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*, *Gyroscope Review*, among many others. He spends his time walking his hounds and knitting.

**Ann Cefola** is the author of *When the Pilotless Plane Arrives* (Trainwreck Press, 2021), *Free Ferry* (Upper Hand Press, 2017), and *Face Painting in the Dark* (Dos Madres Press, 2014); translator of *Alparegbo, like nothing else* (Beautiful Days Press, 2025); *The Hero* (Chax Press, 2018), and *Hence this cradle* (Seismicity Editions, 2007); and recipient of the Robert Penn Warren Award selected by John Ashbery.

**Whitney Cooper** is a poet from Columbus, GA. Their work appears in *Steam Ticket*, *Wayne Literary Review*, *Glassworks Magazine*, *Stillpoint Literary Magazine*, and others. When they aren't writing, they are likely painting or birding. They live in metro Atlanta with their wife and two beasts, Socks, and Louie.

**Genevieve Creedon** is a scholar, poet, and essayist. Her writing focuses on relationships—real and imagined—and the ways in which they open up elsewhere. She has lived in Connecticut, New York, Maine, Michigan, New Jersey, and most recently, Indiana. Her work appears in *About Place*, *Cider Press Review*, *Common Ground Review*, *Gyroscope Review*, and *Narrative Northeast*, among others.

**Marc Alan Di Martino's** books include *Day Lasts Forever: Selected Poems of Mario dell'Arco* (World Poetry, 2024—Winner of the 2025 Joseph Tusiani Italian Translation Prize), *Love Poem with Pomegranate* (Ghost City, 2023), *Still Life with City* (Pski's Porch, 2022) and *Unburial* (Kelsay, 2019). His poems and translations appear in *Apple Valley Review*, *Bad Lilies*, *The Shore*, and many other journals and anthologies. His work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Currently a reader for the *Baltimore Review*, he lives in Italy.

**Oladejo Abdullah Feranmi**, a black writer, won the 2025 Rehumanize International Contest and SEARCH Magazine's Poetry Contest. His work appears in *POETRY*, *Oxford American*, *The Hinternet*, *Strange Horizons*, *Blue Earth Review*, and elsewhere.

**Veronica Fletcher** is a poet and writer from South Florida. Her work appears, or is forthcoming in, *Rust & Moth*, *The Shore*, and more. She is an MFA candidate at the University of Tennessee, where she also works as a reader for *Grist*.

**Laura Foley** is the author of, most recently, *Sledding the Valley of the Shadow*, and *Ice Cream for Lunch*. She has won a *Narrative Magazine* Poetry Prize, Common Good Books Poetry Prize, Poetry Box Editor's Choice Chapbook Award, Bisexual Book Award, and others. Her work has been widely published in such journals as *Alaska Quarterly*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *American Life in Poetry*, and anthologies such as *How to Love the World*, and *Poetry of Presence*. She holds graduate degrees in Literature from Columbia University and lives with her wife on the steep banks of the Connecticut River in New Hampshire.

**Alfred Fournier** is the author of *King of Beers* (2025, Rinky Dink Press) and *A Summons on the Wind* (2023, Kelsay Books). His poems have appeared in *Gyroscope Review*, *The Indianapolis Review*, *The Sunlight Press*, *South Florida Poetry Journal*, *Hole in the Head Review*, *The Main Street Rag*, and elsewhere, and have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. He lives in the foothills of South Mountain in Phoenix, Arizona with his wife and daughter and two birdwatching cats. Instagram: @alfournierwrites. Web: [alfredfournier.com](http://alfredfournier.com)

**S.G. Fowler** (she/her) is a writer and editor from North Branford, Connecticut. She is co-founder and Head Fiction Editor for *Mania Magazine*. When she's not reading through submissions, you can find her hunting through the stacks at secondhand bookstores.

Born and raised in New Zealand, **Christopher Garland** is an associate professor in the Department of English at Georgia Southern University, where he teaches courses in visual rhetoric and writing. His writing has appeared in the *Journal of Social and Economic Studies*, *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, and *New Centennial Review*, as well as in the edited collections *Hollywood's Africa after 1994* (Ohio University Press), *Haiti and the Americas*, the *Routledge Handbook of Vegan Studies*, and *Theology and Wes Craven* (2023).

**Melissa Gish** is a writer and editor who makes her home in Minnesota. She teaches English online for a small, rural college in Appalachia.

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**Therese Gleason's** third chapbook *Hemicrania* (Chestnut Review, 2024), about living with chronic migraine, won the 2025 Jean Pedrick Chapbook Award from the New England Poetry Club. Her other chapbooks include *Matrilineal* (Finishing Line, 2021), and *Libation* (2006), co-winner of the South Carolina Poetry Initiative Chapbook Competition. Her poetry, flash, and essays appear in *52 Poems*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Indiana Review*, *New Ohio Review*, *Pithead Chapel*, *Rattle*, *Spillway*, and elsewhere. Originally from Kentucky, she lives in Massachusetts. [thereseGLEASON.com](http://thereseGLEASON.com)

**Gloria Heffernan** is the author of four poetry collections, most recently *Fused* (Shanti Arts Publishing). Her craft book, *Exploring Poetry of Presence* (Back Porch Productions) won the CNY Book Award for Nonfiction. She received the 2022 Naugatuck River Review Narrative Poetry Prize. Gloria is the author of the collections *Peregrinatio: Poems for Antarctica* (Kelsay Books), and *What the Gratitude List Said to the Bucket List*, (New York Quarterly Books). Her forthcoming collection, *Moments of Color and Cloud*, will be published by Shanti Arts in 2026.

Based in Albuquerque, New Mexico, **Lam Ho** is a southern writer whose work has appeared in *Maudlin House*, *HuffPost*, and *Noise Magazine*. Her poetry was recognized as a 1st Runner Up for the Winds of Asia Award with *Kinsman Quarterly*. Her work has received support from Starshine Arts Collective, GrubStreet, Fairfield County Writers' Studio, The Writer's Center, and the Virginia Center for Creative Arts.

**Karen Paul Holmes** won the 2023 Lascaux Poetry Prize and received a Special Mention in The 2024 Pushcart Prize Anthology. Her books are: *No Such Thing as Distance* (Terrapin, 2018) and *Untying the Knot* (Aldrich, 2014). Poetry credits include *The Writer's Almanac*, *The Slowdown*, *Verse Daily*, *Diode*, *Glass*, and *Plume*. Daughter of immigrants, she was the first generation to attend college and received an MA in music history. Holmes founded the Side Door Poets in Atlanta in 2011 and continues to host monthly meetings. She sometimes leads writing workshops at local and international conferences.

**Jennifer Mills Kerr** lives in Northern California. Her poetry has been recently published in *Right Hand Pointing*, *January House* and *Unlost*. She leads art-inspired writing workshops online and curates poems on the Poetry-Inspired Substack Learn more: [www.JenniferMillsKerrPoet.com](http://www.JenniferMillsKerrPoet.com)

**Susan Kress**, born and educated in England, now resides in Saratoga Springs, NY. Her poems appear (or are forthcoming) in *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Calyx*, *The Southern Review*, *New Ohio Review*, *Salmagundi*, *Nimrod International*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *New Letters*, *South Florida Poetry Journal*, *Third Wednesday*, and other journals.

**Bridget Kriner** is a community college professor in English and Women's & Gender Studies in Cleveland, Ohio. Her recent work has appeared in *Rattle* (Poets Respond), *Variant Literary*, *Sheila-Na-Gig*, *Thimble Literary Magazine*, and *Split this Rock*, where she won First Place in the Abortion Rights Poetry Contest in 2012.

**Lavinia Kumar** has authored short prose and poetry. *Her Spirited American Women: Early Writers, Artists, & Activists*, is short prose pieces of near 100 remarkable women writers, poets, publishers, artists, abolitionists, suffragettes, and activists—primarily pre-Civil War. She has often focused on women activists, writers, artists, scientists, inventors, and spies—some across centuries and countries. She has authored prose books, 3 poetry books, and 4 chapbooks. Her poems and flash fiction appear in a wide variety of poetry journals and 3 anthologies. She has received four Pushcart nominations and one Best of the Net. Media: [laviniakumar.net](http://laviniakumar.net) and [lasummer.substack.com](http://lasummer.substack.com)

**Sydney Lea** is a Pulitzer finalist in poetry, founder of *New England Review*, Vermont Poet Laureate (2011-15), and recipient of his state's highest artistic distinction, the Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts. He has published two novels (most recently *Now Look*, 2024), seven volumes of personal essays (most recently, *Such Dancing as We Can*, 2024), a hybrid mock epic with former Vermont Cartoonist Laureate James Kochalka called *Wormboy* (2020), and sixteen poetry collections (most recently *What Shines* 2023). His new and selected poems, *Dancing in the Dark*, is due in early 2027.

**Marigold Lord** was born and raised in rural South Georgia. She recently graduated from Berry College with a BA in both studio art and creative writing. Her work has appeared in publications such as *Delta Poetry Review*, *Dark River Review*, and *The Kudzu Review*, telling stories deeply rooted in the South and riddled with all the beauty and dysfunction that springs from its landscape.

**Christel Maass** frequently writes poems inspired by nature. Her poetry appears in *Bramble*, *Grey Sparrow Journal*, *The Orchards Poetry Journal*, *Third Wednesday*, *Common Ground Review*, *The Nemadji Review*, and other publications. She lives in southeastern Wisconsin. Beagles always make her day.

**Andy Macera** has received awards from *Plainsongs*, *Mad Poets Review*, and *Philadelphia Poets*. A Pushcart Prize nominee, his work has also appeared in *Pearl*, *Third Wednesday*, *California Quarterly*, *Slant*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Gyroscope Review*, *Connecticut River Review*, *Sierra Nevada Review*, and other journals.

**Jack Mackey** earned his M.A. in English from the University of Maryland. His first book, *Up, Out & Over* (Kelsay Books, 2024) won awards from the Delaware Press Association and from the National Federation of Press Women. Jack's poems have appeared in *Gargoyle*, *Third Wednesday*, *Broadkill Review*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, *Argyle*, and other literary publications. Jack lives in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware and Wilton Manors, Florida. [www.jackmackeypoet.com](http://www.jackmackeypoet.com)

**Christopher McCormick** is a poet from Ohio. His work appears in *The Maine Review*, *The Midwest Review*, *Thin Air Magazine*, and *West Trade Review*, among other publications. He teaches in the English department at Ohio Northern University and reads for *Beaver Magazine*.

**S.B. Merrow** has published two books of poetry, *Unpacking the China*, and *Everyone A Bell*. She lives in Baltimore, MD, but writes everywhere—on planes and trains, while walking or weeding her urban garden, and on regular retreats with friends. Formerly a maker of professional flutes, she plays the flute, piano, and ukulele, loves birdsong, and listens for the music in poetry.

**Paula Reed Nancarrow's** poems and flash fiction have appeared in *Chiron Review*, *Willow Springs Magazine*, *Blood Tree Literature*, and *The Southern Review*, among other journals. She lives in Saint Paul, Minnesota, on the unceded and traditional homelands of the Dakota and Anishinaabe. Find her online at [paulareednancarrow.com](http://paulareednancarrow.com)

**Lillian Nečakov** is the author of many chapbooks as well as *il virus* (Anvil Press), *Hooligans* (Mansfield Press), *The Bone Broker* (Mansfield Press), *Hat Trick* (Exile Editions), *Polaroids* (Coach House Books), *The Sickbed of Dogs* (Wolsak and Wynn), *Midnight Glossolalia*, a collaborative poetry collection with Scott Ferry and Lauren Scharhag (Meat for Tea Press), *Duck Eats Yeast, Quacks, Explodes; Man Loves eye*, a collaborative poem with Gary Barwin (Guernica Editions). Lillian lives in Toronto, Canada.

**Connie Post's** work has appeared in *Calyx*, *Slipstream*, *Comstock Review*, *2 River*, *American Journal of Poetry*, *River Styx*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Pedestal Magazine*, *Spillway*, and *Verse Daily*. Her poetry awards include the Caesura award, Liakoura award, and the *Crab Creek Poetry Award*. Her full-length collections include *Floodwater*, *Prime Meridian*, and *Between Twilight*. *Between Twilight* (NYQ Books) was a finalist in the 2023 Best Book Awards and the International book award. Her 2023 chapbook, *Broken Metronome* (Glass Lyre Press) was a finalist for six book awards and won the American Fiction award (chapbook) and the NYC Big Book Award.

**Paul Potts** (b. 2007) is a poet from Oklahoma. He began writing poetry in September of 2024, after recommendation from a teacher. You can find his poetry in *The Louisville Review*, *Rowayat*, *Wingless Dreamer*, *Lips Magazine*, and *Nova Literary-Arts Magazine*. Outside of writing, he enjoys playing jazz on both the drums and vibraphone.

**John Pring** is a poet and author based in the UK. He has work published or upcoming in *The Comstock Review*, *Epiphany*, *Poetics Journal*, *SoFloPoJo*, *Months to Years*, *Panorama*, *The Passionfruit Review*, *Humana Obscura*, *The Gramercy Review*, and others.

Having left her law practice in Brooklyn and New Jersey, **Anita S Pulier** took on a bi-coastal (NYC—LA) lifestyle with her husband, traded writing briefs for writing verse, joined the Malibu-centered poetry community, and had three chapbooks and four poetry books published, the first two by Finishing Line Press, then *Paradise Reexamined*, and *Leaving Brooklyn* by Kelsay Books. Her poems have appeared in several anthologies and many print and online magazines, and were featured in *Cultural Daily*, and *The Writers Almanac*. Her website is [psymet.com/anitaspulier](http://psymet.com/anitaspulier)

**John Repp** is a writer, folk photographer, and digital collagist living in Erie, Pennsylvania.

**Sara Quinn Rivara** is the author of three collections of poetry, most recently *Little Beast* (Riot in Your Throat Press, 2023) a finalist for the 2024 Oregon Book Award. Her work has appeared recently in *Cleaver Magazine*, *trampset*, *Colorado Review*, *West Branch*, *Bluestem*, and elsewhere. She lives in Portland, Oregon, with her family on a tiny urban permaculture lot.

**Mary Kay Rummel's** tenth book of poetry, *Little River of Amazements: New and Selected Poems*, was published by Blue Light Press. Her books have won awards from New Rivers Press, Bright Hill Press, and Blue Light Press. She taught at the University of Minnesota, Duluth and CSU, Channel Islands, and was Poet Laureate of Ventura County, CA. Her most recent award was that of Poetry Hero. She is a founding member of the non-profit Ventura County Poetry Project.

**C.C. Russell** lives in Wyoming with his family and some rescued cats. He has been published in a variety of places online and in print, such as *The Best Microfiction series*, *The Colorado Review*, and *Split Lip Magazine*, among others. More of his work can be found at [ccrussell.net](http://ccrussell.net)

**Will Sedgwick** is an 18-year-old poet from San Diego, California. His work lingers on inheritance, memory, land, and the small yet profound moments of life, shaped by nature and vulnerability. He seeks to immerse himself in the world, observing with care and sincerity as he follows the path of his poet grandfather, R.T. Sedgwick.

**Annie Stenzel** (she/her) is a lesbian poet who was born in Illinois but did not stay put. Her second collection, *Don't misplace the moon*, was published in 2024 by Kelsay Books. Her poems appear or are forthcoming in print or online journals in Canada, the U.S., and the U.K., including *Action*, *Spectacle*, *Gaviatidae*, *Pine Hills Review*, *Sheila-na-Gig*, *SoFloPoJo*, *SWWIM*, *St*, *Katherine's Review*, *Thimble Lit Mag*, and *Whale Road Review*. She is the Managing Editor for *West Trestle Review*. Her habitat is unceded Ohlone land within walking distance of the San Francisco Bay.

**Trae Stewart** is a professor, author, and psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner. His work has appeared in *Switchgrass Review*, *Hive Avenue Literary Journal*, *San Antonio Review*, *Medicine and Meaning*, and *Dipity Literary Magazine*, among others.

**Alison Stone** has published nine full-length collections, including *Zombies at the Disco* (Jacar Press, 2019), *Caught in the Myth* (NYQ Books, 2019), *Dazzle* (Jacar Press, 2017), *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 others. She has been awarded *Poetry's* Frederick Bock Prize, *New York Quarterly's* Madeline Sadin Award, and *The Lyric's* Lyric Prize. She is also a painter and the creator of The Stone Tarot. [www.stonepoetry.org](http://www.stonepoetry.org)  
[www.stonetarot.com](http://www.stonetarot.com)

**Nancy Takacs** has 8 collections of poetry. Her awards include The Juniper Prize, a Pushcart Prize, 2 book Awards from 15 bytes magazine, and finalist in the National Poetry Series. Nancy lives in central Utah and northern Wisconsin. She is the inaugural poet laureate of Helper, Utah, and has directed the Steamboat Mt. Reading Series there for many years.

**Judith Taylor** lives and works in Aberdeen, Scotland, where she is a co-organiser of the monthly Poetry at Books and Beans events. Her poetry has appeared widely in magazines and anthologies; her first collection, *Not in Nightingale Country*, was published in 2017, and her second, *Across Your Careful Garden*, in 2023, both from Red Squirrel Press. She is one of the Editors of *Poetry Scotland* magazine.

**Veronica Tucker** is an emergency medicine and addiction medicine physician, mother of three, and lifelong New Englander. Her writing explores the intersections of medicine, motherhood, memory, and the human experience. A Pushcart Prize nominee, her work appears in *ONE ART*, *The Berlin Literary Review*, *Rust & Moth*, and elsewhere. Her chapbook *The House as Witness* is forthcoming from Quillkeepers Press. She lives in New Hampshire with her family, where she writes between shifts, long runs, and finely crafted matcha lattes. Find her at [www.veronicatuckerwrites.com](http://www.veronicatuckerwrites.com) and on Instagram: @veronicatuckerwrites

**Pradeep R. Varadwaj** is a scientist developing functional materials for sustainability, blending advanced research with practical applications. A poet and writer, he explores human emotions, social issues, and the intricate relationship between people and the natural world. A nature enthusiast and spiritual seeker, he draws inspiration from life, yoga, and meditation. His work weaves reflection and insight to illuminate human experience and encourage thoughtful engagement with the world. He is the author of *What the Pond Teaches*, and *Without You, My Existence Drifts*, with forthcoming work including *What the Tree Teaches: A Quiet Instruction*.

**Melody Wilson's** work appears in *One, B O D Y*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Whale Road Review*, *Rust and Moth*, and many other publications. Her first collection was awarded the Paul Nemser Prize from Lily Poetry Review and will be released in 2026. A graduate of Pacific University's MFA program, she lives in Portland, Oregon, with her husband, Phillip, and their dog Z. Find more of her work at [melodywilson.com](http://melodywilson.com)

**Alina Zollfrank** dreams trilingually in the Pacific Northwest. Her work has won the DIAJ Award and been nominated repeatedly for Best of the Net and The Pushcart Prize. She has more coming in *The MacGuffin*, *Salt Hill*, *Burningword*, *Reckon Review*, and *Sunlight Press*. Alina is a grateful recipient of the 2024 Washington Artist Trust Grant and a committed disability advocate.

## Announcements

The Summer 2026 Issue has no theme. We're just looking for fine, contemporary poetry. Ekphrastic poems are welcome; we can QR code a link to the artwork or use the picture on the page if it's in the public domain. Nature poetry is always welcome. Other than that, send us the work *you* love and want to see out in the world.

Summer Issue 2026 submissions open April 1st, 2026, and run through June 1st, 2026, with the issue releasing on July 1st, 2026.

We will close submissions if we get all the poems we need, so submit early. We also close early if we reach our submissions cap for the month. Put 4 poems in one .doc(x) or .rtf document, page breaks between poems, use easy-to-read fonts like Times New Roman 12 pt, and an up-to-date bio of no more than 100 words in the Submittable bio section. You can have your Poem Title and under it put "by Author WXYZ" but we don't need page numbers, headers or footers on the poems. Use the name in your bio that you'd like to be published under.

If you submit more than 4 poems in a document, we will read the first 4 and ignore the rest. We welcome poems from both new and established poets, and have eclectic tastes, so give us a shot if you're not sure if you fit or not. Read some past issues to see what we print. We do like form poems if they are well done. Rhyming poetry is a hard sell unless also well done. We'd love to see what you've been working on. Check out past issues at <https://www.gyroskopereview.com>

See our full guidelines on Submittable: <https://gyroskopereview.submittable.com/submit/>

We are also doing a National Poetry Month feature for the month of April, showcasing a new poet every day with a poem they wrote from a prompt, and telling us how it came about, as well as discussing what inspires them as a poet. Stop by to see all the unique takes on poetry prompts.

Thank you for Reading!



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