



# Gyroscope Review

fine poetry to turn your world around



Summer 2026



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Summer Issue 2026

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Constance Brewer

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## **From the Editor**

Welcome to the Summer 2026 Issue of Gyroscope Review. We're happy to have you here and hope you enjoy reading all the wonderful poetry in this issue. As usual, we were lucky to get a variety of forms and free verse showcasing unique perspectives. There are a lot of heartfelt emotions in this issue, exploring grief, relationships, and our interactions with nature. Life and death are investigated in all their depth and meanings. Every time I reread the issue (and I do this many times) I find a nuance I hadn't noticed before. That's the great thing about poetry: you can read the same poems at different times in your life and come away with new meanings and insights. I'm sure we all have our favorite poets we come back to time and again to fill the well. Let the Summer 2026 Issue start you on your journey to finding a poem that resonates within. We have our old favorites, but every issue I find new favorites as well. We hope you do the same.

Constance Brewer

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# Section One



**Unfolding Time      Time Unfolding**

BY SUZANNE BRUCE

*after Rita Dove's "Mirror"*

I am  
here sitting  
alone  
surging thoughts unfolding  
with  
dreams arising  
as  
ocean mesmerizing  
spirituality hovers all around

am I  
sitting here  
alone  
unfolding thoughts surging  
with  
arising dreams  
as  
mesmerizing ocean  
around all hovers spirituality

yet  
confusion of mind  
magnetically swirling  
like waves unfolding  
one into another one

yet  
mind of confusion  
swirling magnetically  
unfolding like waves  
one another into one

yet  
sunlight reflecting  
between  
curling waves' crests  
land  
becoming foam  
calm unfolding

yet  
reflecting sunlight  
between  
crests, waves curling  
land  
foam becoming  
unfolding calm

breezes flowing  
sashay softly  
dare I say  
to me  
to let go  
like unfolding  
with faith  
voice a free release  
saying  
I am here  
all that's here  
is now  
unfolding time  
moments into moments

flowing breezes  
softly sashay  
say I dare  
me to  
go, to let  
unfolding like  
faith with  
release, free a voice  
saying  
here am I  
here, that's all  
now is  
time unfolding  
moments into moments

**Suzanne Bruce**

**Bruce Suzanne**

## Golden Hour

BY KIMBERLY HALL

Daylight creeps like honey, & constellations of bees shimmer against the green breeze. Quiet. Mesmerizing. I take my coffee in the garden just to listen to them hum. Carpenter all through the sycamore, masons in their nest. Such early mornings, I am reminded of my mother, who tells anyone who asks that I was a melancholy child. & it's true—spring is early, the candle-bright sun shines over the horizon, & already I have found something to grieve. The winter, gone too soon. The stars that I can no longer see. Stars that have been dead longer than I have been around to see them. I grieve the bees whose colonies have collapsed, & whose hives turned to pyres under pressure—ashes scattered like lightning on katabatic winds. Young fields & ancient forests burned alive. Overhead the atmosphere slips from red to gold & I grieve this hour—this tinder blossom, tenuous meantime not truly an hour but an afterglow, kindling, measurable not by minutes but degrees of separation. My mother's been in Sedona for the past week. She brought her nice camera, sends me pictures every day. Cherry-skinned cypress, juniper cones, hiking trails framing an impossibly-blue sky. Walls beyond walls of pink Permian sandstone—remnants of apocalypse still radiant with heat. It's not so hard to imagine, I think, that our sun will actually grow brighter before it dies. Along the curve of this not-hour, longer at higher latitudes. Over the phone, my mother chats breezily about everything & nothing—breakfast, hatha yoga, what she'd like to do when we're in the same time zone again. I wonder about singularity, & how even the end is relative. I wonder if we should move north. If we would have more time somewhere the sun never got too close—I wonder if disaster could even reach us from less than ten degrees above eye-level. Maybe whatever is coming would stretch & slow under gravity's pull, ever-nearer but never meeting the earth. Maybe it would grow white-hot & luminous as it hurtled itself across the heavens. Vast. Brilliant. Blinding. Maybe it would simply vanish

into the sea. To my left, a morning glory  
opens. A dove coos. My mother's voice  
through the tinny speaker continues to rise  
& fall like a song, or the silver ring of the moon  
beyond the clouds. The coast, not yet drowned.  
Billions of years away, black bodies glisten  
in rippling, unremitting space—& as I sit here,  
now, the bees dance through the trees. Dynamic.  
Unhurried. All of us, learning to live  
with the light we have.

## Threshing Light

BY JIM ZOLA

By morning the barn had already  
begun its slow confession:

dust lifting through the rafters,  
the smell of oil and hay.

Outside, the fields kept their counsel.  
Rows of corn bowed slightly.

Somewhere a tractor coughed,  
then found its voice.

The creek moved under sycamores  
with the patience of old blood.

Light returns each evening  
to sift through broken boards,

looking for what remains.

## Hope is a Whistle

BY MAE FRASER

*—after the painting by Cristina Henley*

When the birdsong in my throat is silent,  
a new bird will come along  
to cannibalize the one stuck inside,  
pull it out by its innards one by one.

When one bird cannot sing,  
another will take its place  
in my sternum until I am  
someone you can build a nest in.

## How to turn into an elephant

BY DANMI LEE

You've heard the stories that they tell. You know the lore, about the Wives that grew their tusks and slipped into their silver skin.

And you can feel it in yourself: lean into the dry-cut crackle of the earth, the wind-whisper through golden grass by your flat feet, it pets your head with heavy heat, your ears with birdsound, large and small, or lionroar, or kintrumpet.

Between the ocean sky and line of land, the buzzing air fills endless space and freedom which you know is yours. Best to get used to all of it: the thornbushes and rustling hay, the shady lush of forest leaves, and damp soil sticking to your step.

Focus on your vastness. Try to escape the world which needs to always be more roaring, richer, crowded and exuberant. Paint yourself grey instead, your favourite shade of smoke. Halve your heartbeat. Don't listen to the chatter of the human zeal.

You will need to build that thick skin anyway. Try to fold yours over to construct the layers and retain your cool. Mud baths are available, if needed in a lavish spa. Don't stop eating, any tree or leaf you come across, and don't omit the bark.

If your tusks are struggling on it still, tug and bend them out a bit. Next: your nose and upper lip. Stretch them out, and elongate, to feel, to reach, to hold, to stir. Pull and grow your ears until they're large enough to want to fly. March on the ground, and shake it.

## Stalactites and Stalagmites

BY DOLO DIAZ

I grew up knowing those words because my mother,  
who never went anywhere,  
went to Madrid on her honeymoon,  
and stopped in Ávila, cradle of Saint Teresa,  
whom she did not think much of.  
But they visited caves there,  
where dripping calcite had done a number.  
Mother had not seen anything like that before or since.  
Even when, on the return journey,  
they veered east and toured the Altamira Caves,  
where she laid eyes on the stunning polychrome bison  
dating from the Paleolithic—a drawing so precious  
the cave was closed to the public soon after.  
I learned of that visit much later, stung with jealousy.  
*Oh yeah*, she said, *that old doodle of clay*.  
But those stalactites and stalagmites,  
she could talk about them forever—  
weeping limestone still glinting in her eyes.  
I wonder whether she was prescient  
about her young marriage,  
or only noticing what was already forming:  
not the blind sacrifice of saints,  
no expectations of ecstasy,  
not the value of history or prehistory.  
Just the slow insistence of water,  
working through drudgery and abrasion,  
shaping something luminous and hidden.

## eulogy for myself (love's last letter)

BY EVERIX MACHAN

lonely in my own body, vacant, my ribcage fastens around my throat like a child's clammy fingers around a sippy cup, hungry for something warm to fill up. if grief is how we know that love was there, i wonder then how to mourn shadowed memory. // once i laughed at billboards shouting, "hell is real," plainly asking, "if you die tonight, heaven or hell?" like it wanted my preference in the matter. i lifted my arms to the stars and my scars lifted up like wings, goldfinch feathers spreading like a nervous system rooting. i walked now-empty parking lots, unearthing memories of strip malls. i waited for lights to illuminate before saying my piece, filling all the way to the balcony, yet attention sickened me more than anything. my fingers carved hearts between your shoulder blades. i could never give blood but tears flowed freer. // and in my old age (which is not very old at all, really, only old enough to *begin* to know better; not old enough to know much at all about how to live), i wonder how to die with dignity when none is given, when none is even offered. this soft-pawed loss is nocturnal, padding up to scratch at my door at four-in-the-morning. is it crueler to glimpse it once again, if briefly—or to drown it in riverwater, to never know again? all i can do is fantasize about driving northern backroads at dusk, passport sitting lonesome on the dash, until the fields are blank grid lines, bending gently under my tires, stretching forever into the distance. like there was never a map at all.

## Telemarketer Tryst

BY ANN WEIL

She sits with her phone, waiting  
for their calls. They always call.  
She always answers, accepts  
the ever-present two-second delay—  
until they know they've hooked a fish.  
She takes the bait like a lonely housewife  
because she is, or at least she was,  
until she wasn't a wife anymore.

She likes the voices from India best,  
with their retroflex consonants  
reminding her of her honeymoon, not to India  
but to the Poconos, where they stayed  
at The Dew Drop Inn run by Vita  
from Bangalore. Vita hugged them  
upon arrival, offered the best room  
with its peek-a-boo view of Lake Naomi.

A week of bliss before it all blew up,  
and he left for the first time—which  
would not be the last. Funny,  
she didn't miss his voice like she did Vita's,  
with its honey and buttered tones.  
On a good day, the voice on the line—  
the one selling what isn't needed—  
will leave a gift, a lilt that can be tasted. Like Vita's  
fresh-baked roti wrapped in a tea towel  
left at the doorstep of Room #8.

## **The Muse Was a White-Haired Woman**

BY JANETTE SCHAFFER

*—for Judith Sornberger*

She walked into a conference room  
with a stack of poems  
and hair of winter light.  
She held up paintings—  
brushstrokes of iron, mottled leaves,  
Medusa's shield—  
asked me to listen  
to music  
of color and thread.  
I wrote into canvas,  
into a quilting bee  
wings of birds, albino squirrels,  
into the long patience  
of old-growth trees.

## Copper Beech

BY KEREN VISHNY

—for Marion Woodman, *In Memoriam* (1928-2018)

I remember your glory  
feet planted, raspberry tunic swaying  
you strike a match and stand aflame—  
your voice reverberating through my bones  
my mind moved to stillness.

I came half-starved  
with angels, soft-bellied children  
and poets who entered your door  
tongue mute to passion  
heart mistaking tundra  
for absence of pain.  
We came to your hearth by day  
you came to our dreams by night  
soft dew light shimmering  
lighthearted feet relishing each step  
song-filled communion and laughter  
the world made new.

I thought you might leave  
as an oak limb falling  
the way one bough came crashing  
on a cloudless summer morning  
or you might come at night  
and I'd send you off in the privacy of a dream—  
our very last heart to heart.

Instead you left with the Copper Beech  
in the park, ruddy-leafed  
Goddess of Seven Limbs.  
You left bit by bit:  
a trunk cracked  
and we held your arm  
when you wobbled.  
Still, your fiery leaves  
swayed in sunlight  
you sang with the wind  
and we danced among your branches.

When the second limb went  
you no longer called our names  
we kept our distance  
as you retreated into story and verse  
beyond reach of letter or phone

or wires you never mastered  
we talked of what had been  
suspended  
magnetized to a past  
under your wing.

On a quiet Monday morning  
a third limb lay on the green  
bark wrenched open  
ruby leaves shriveling  
cordoned off with barrier tape  
and a caution not to climb.  
Soon a stump with oblong rings,  
spicules not yet softened  
by summer storms.

I turn the corner  
where you once held court  
your afterimage beside me  
like a phantom limb  
I imagine hoisting myself into your arms—  
the breeze catches my wings and lifts.

## A Tale of Two Neighbors

BY JIM TILLEY

*—in memory of Robert Frost*

William, having bought the old house, had it  
demolished, and in its place erected  
modern structures, then instructed his workers  
to dismantle the ancient stone wall  
along the property line, still fully  
intact, not in need of mending at all.  
Not duly consulted, Marcus was instead  
doubly insulted when, in a naked  
land grab, William put up a replacement  
fence across the line. Striving for a meeting  
of the minds as good neighbors would have done,  
Marcus kindly asked to have it moved  
or just removed, but when blindly ignored,  
went out one day, his chainsaw in hand.

## Corporate Creep

BY DREW PISARRA

I  
sign with a meaningful X that's marred by the ink of the company ballpoint.  
I  
wear two disposable gloves that I stole from supplies.  
I  
fold up the note, still fresh from the printer; the company stationery, a kind of disguise.  
I  
fold it six times, per instructions, until it assumes the shape that  
I  
learned how to make from a YouTube video  
I  
watched on the company dime.  
I  
slide my creation into an interoffice envelope that lists past recipients.  
I  
scribble your name below Marilena, who no longer works in HR.  
I  
then wind the red string around the red button and hurry down the hallway to drop this missive  
into a mail slot where it whispers its own descent 15 floors down. The next day,  
I  
swing by your office and see that

You  
have propped my origami heart on the company bookshelf behind your desk.  
You  
claim to have no idea who sent it.  
You  
have no intention to ever find out.

## Doors

BY RIKKI SANTER

The only way to speak  
to the door is to loosen  
what idles behind it

where dreams grow shawls  
under the curdled milk of day  
and outside ivy murmurs

hymns as if they were what the pixies left.  
Around the threshold you may  
find stumble stones and thick

trunks of memory to toggle between diminished  
and restored. And inside secrets may turn  
into carnal appetite then hinge onto

barking wonder. So raise those knocking  
knuckles. What is disjointed  
can become improvised

when you taste what is luminous in the air  
and agree to open to the coming  
of what comes.

## The Fog of Pleasure

BY BRETT THOMPSON

It's neither thick nor white,  
but dark and rich  
like the jellied coxcomb they serve

at our little dim-sum parlor  
where the lights are all fluorescent  
and the red-vested waitresses bow

as they mark off each order  
in glittery *Hello Kitty* notepads  
embossed with silver.

Across the spiraled page  
they scratch their dark pencils,  
a little ledger of our desires.

The book is closed  
unfinished conversations return  
unwinding like smoke

the furnace bill, your aunt's  
latest prognosis, that brilliant  
piazza in old Rome

where the rising sun kissed  
the stone through gaps in the stucco  
that colander of light.

Oh my love  
where have we been  
where are we going

the awful weight  
of middle age  
that presses on our eyes.

Yet, when the waitress returns  
and the crosshatched bamboo  
baskets begin to arrive,

sweet shrimp dumplings  
baked pork buns  
beef noodle rolls drowning in soy

we are explorers again  
lifting the lids gingerly  
like ancient sarcophagi.

Aroma rises with the steam.  
Life is so much goodness.  
We no longer speak. We eat.

## I cook collard greens for New Years dinner

BY ALLISON DOBSCHA

You toil over black-eyed peas  
with bits of pork,  
transform cornbread from the box  
and excavate a jar of sour chow chow from the pantry  
(planted there by summer selves—  
so generous with our plenty).

This alchemy belongs to you—  
product of the Delta, Memphis man—  
but I have come to treasure this small charm  
entrusted to me.

I rinse their silt  
then lay each lobe out flat,  
admire the dendritic veins,  
their branching trees  
their riverbank.  
With butcher's glee, I run my knife  
along the backbone—  
the lovely *snap* of spines—  
and stuff their lengths into the compost bin  
(a gift in turn).

I roll the leaves like wads of dirty cash  
and slice into strips.  
A bitter scent, an alkali  
that bares a truth:  
these frigid nights will end one day

and though there are many ways to be extraordinary  
and I have chosen none,  
I can make tender what was tough  
and conjure up good fortune  
with rich chicken stock and slivered garlic,  
a smoked ham hock  
and patience with this low flame  
under our red pot.

## Coupling

BY MATT JASPER

Widow and widower already  
to the first and last days of this—  
a sort of reconciliation that unbuttons sweaters  
to hang on the couch-back awhile.

We resign our bodies to a glow warm enough  
to banish chill without quite summoning  
heat yet the warmth is deep enough to reach  
everything in its time. How unexpected that  
after years of brushing by unnoticed we'd turn  
to one another again for some  
faint ignition—a fire poured  
into spoonfuls and eaten flame by flame.

Not so much to shudder frame into ecstatic arches  
of back and mopped brow yet the sweet accrual  
of wave after wave sweeping us away from  
acquired infirmities toward whatever  
eternity there is in the playful crossing  
of arms as we button one another up  
and flip for who will light the stove.

## **Nothing of Yours**

BY PHILLIP PERIMAN

I want nothing of yours  
to remember the life we  
had together in plays and  
meals, books, and walks

Please do not offer me  
the Grecian urn you  
bought in Athens the  
one time we were estranged

There is no gift rich enough  
to make up for your dying  
I do not want to remember you as  
a vase, but as the wind returning

# Section Two

## Syntax of the Burning Day

BY DAVID ANSON LEE

By noon, the day forgets how to stop.  
Sentences run on:  
cicadas stitching clauses through the air,  
their rasp a grammar without mercy.

The sun revises everything downward,  
pressing each shadow thin:  
under fence, under porch, under bone.

Even the dog abandons language,  
lies beneath the house  
where dirt remembers cool,  
remembers silence.

I try to speak,  
but words dry in the mouth,  
flake like paint from a long-closed window.

The trees offer no punctuation,  
only a green insistence.

Somewhere, a screen door slams:  
a brief exclamation  
in the body of heat.

By evening, the sky loosens its syntax,  
clouds gathering like unfinished thought.  
A wind arrives:  
not meaning, not relief—

just enough  
to suggest the sentence  
will go on without us.

## Certain poets I read last year versus the Houston rain...

BY MICHAEL J. GALKO

*Bukowski:*

The drops are filling a crushed beer can  
left on the porch rail. Also, one of his shoes  
clumsily slipped off about two blocks away.  
The mood, when remembered,  
is one of sadness.

*Catullus:*

The streets between he and Lesbia  
are flooded with the tears  
of spurned lovers.

*Sappho:*

One last drop  
    swells from your left  
        nipple—stay still!

*HD:*

marble  
does not  
hold rain  
very  
well

*Ferlinghetti:*

It doesn't rain much in San Francisco.

*Kerouac:*

His neck cranes skyward—  
the drops, each one a haiku,  
wet his tongue. Oh Neil!

*Oliver:*

Rain wets the dog's fur  
and I love both more for it.

*Addonizio:*

Lover #43  
loved the rain  
more than my thighs.

*Bly (RIP):*

The rain is gone.  
A loon floats on the bayou  
as the last fat drop  
dissipates to dusk  
and a cry builds,  
with fat tears.

## **Clogged Highway Blues**

BY ALISON STONE

If travel shows you who you really are,  
I'm bored, achy, impatient to arrive.  
A low-hanging moon chases our car.  
My version of hell's an endless drive.

I'm bored, achy, impatient to arrive.  
The radio adds static to the news.  
My version of hell's an endless drive.  
Is being elsewhere worth the time we lose?

The radio adds static to bad news,  
death interspersed with stuff to buy.  
Is being elsewhere worth the time we lose?  
Gas fumes grey the tired midday sky.

Death's interspersed with stuff to buy.  
We're running out of things to say.  
Gas fumes grey the tired midday sky.  
Should we assess our marriage? Sing songs? Pray?

We're running out of things to say,  
force ourselves to keep an upbeat mood.  
Should we assess our marriage? Sing songs? Pray?  
If either of us needs to pee, we're screwed.

We force ourselves to keep an upbeat mood.  
A low-hanging moon chases the car.  
Both of us need to pee. We're screwed  
if travel shows us who we really are.

## Tracks

BY JULIE BENESH

Contrary to our subjective perceptions,  
true fate does not wait. It's timeless; its future  
determines our past. I practice sun salutations  
to align my pelvic bones appropriately into my fascia.

Different every time it starts, it always ends  
approximately the same. Savasana is meant for integration;  
absorbing the was and is before leaping to the next world.  
They say at our age whatever will kill us already dwells

within us, best case. But I can't help but think that's fine—  
so many threats rendered irrelevant; it's a sort of comfort.  
Nonetheless, we all suffer from some variety of blindness—  
this grasped me as a child and never let go. Some things

are decided unilaterally. At the same time would we really choose  
the devilry of another's misfortunes? I have been one initiated  
by the uncanny. Sometimes I compose songs between sleep  
and wakefulness or wakefulness and sleep; there's no recording

but I know they exist. Every session of every practice  
is the same and different. Something always hovers  
beyond. Something always accrues within.

## More Weight! or How Lee Gave Jackson the Studio

BY MEGHAN STERLING

A bird calls in the rain. How the chill  
hasn't made its way into the house yet.

How autumn is still a goose that hasn't been  
plucked. How ahead of us is the famine,

our upstairs studio packed shut, blue ice  
clinging to our breath. I am asked how I bear it

before it's here, the long months of swollen hands  
and no space. How the months where my art is made

to fit on a small tabletop, the windows are frozen shut  
and dim as clouds. How I don't forget in the sun.

How I know what is coming fast. I am asked how  
I bear it when my world closes in. Each day a stone

placed on my chest. Each day an inch closer  
to the dark. How I remember my mother at the shop,

my father praying in his study. Rocking. Rocking.  
How I tell whoever will listen that this is all I know.

## The Star Catcher

BY BARBARA KRASNER

I see her, the Catcher, in the corner of my father's bedroom as he tries to grab onto a tissue but can't. She stands ready with a butterfly net and holds the moon captive. She stands on the checkerboard floor of his childhood home in the years before diabetes. His words slur. He sweats. He's in diabetic meltdown. I tell my mother, *Call 911*. When the EMTs arrive, I rattle off the names of my father's medications like names of Russian villages. They take his glucose and ply him with orange juice, which my mother keeps in abundance. I see her, the Catcher, moving toward us. Will she advance on the whites or the blacks? Which fate will my father have? The Catcher chooses black, but I choose white. I say, *Not today*. The EMTs whisk my father away on a gurney to the local hospital. I have played the game. My father soon returns with a glucose meter kit. The Catcher is nowhere to be seen. The checkerboard floor gives way to navy pile carpeting, easing my father's footsteps and his return to us.

## Spheres

BY ELLEN ROMANO

A large aluminum ball, dented just above  
the equator, or just below, my husband  
brought it home from the junkyard one day  
and said it was some kind of buoy.

It was destined for the trash until one of my sons  
named it Spherington, and through ancient  
naming magic, I grew to like it enough to spare it.

s-s-s fierce  
sphere  
Spherington

My husband had the magical gift of naming  
as well. A buoyant buoy, impossible  
to sink, exuberant and optimistic,  
as though he had named it after himself.

Only now when he is seven years gone  
do I begin to question its buoyancy.  
I've been googling for hours all manner  
of buoys and have yet to find its match.

I don't know what to call it anymore,  
something just out of reach, like my husband  
and the never seen whole, imperfect  
sphereness of the earth, spinning  
on a slender tether of gravity.

# Theology of the Starved

BY RAHAT TASNEEM

You served me kindness first,

the kind you'd offer a mangy cur  
that followed you home one night.

Kindness is kindness.  
The dying don't differentiate  
between fresh and salt water.

Choice is a privilege borne of abundance.

I wanted to crack open your ribs  
and carve out a home—greed of the starved.

Ever seen kindness die?

A roadkill split open,  
sticky as disputed borders.  
My mother's youth.  
You at arm's length.

Bereft like the Prophet after *Khadīja's* death, I turned to the *cave*.

In *sujood*, the words get caught in my throat,  
sucker-punched into non-utterance  
by the enormity of my wants.

I do not repent.  
I am faithful to you.

There's no prayer either.  
How do I ask God for  
your thighs between mine,  
your hands in my hair?

Tell me, what can any prayer do—  
that my mouth on yours didn't?

Who knew a little kindness would make me apostate?

I suppose I could wrestle you for a blessing  
one last act of worship.

## The Year I Left Everything

BY KARA KNICKERBOCKER

—after Kelly Grace Thomas

My jobs, both of them. An expensive shampoo bottle still in the shower when I moved out of the apartment. The notion that him atoning for his lies would save anything. Myself in the driveway of my childhood home after we sold it; my name still carved into the bedroom closet door. Scarlet stain on the only pair of high-waisted jeans that still fit. A voicemail, unopened, after a call that was never returned. And yes, the light on in the hallway again, I'm sorry. Boxes of prom photos and concert ticket stubs on the top shelf of the spare room in my mother's new house. An entire island that July, can you imagine? The man, thank God, the man. Flowers, a single penny, and a piece of chocolate at my father's grave. The kitchen candle still burning from the night before. My first Google review for a bake shop. The group chat, almost. Strands of hair in the passenger seat. Maybe the wrong first impression, maybe a good taste in your mouth. A tube of strawberry chapstick in another pair of jeans that ended up in the wash. Religion out of the conversation. The window shade open during takeoff and landing, like I was instructed. Lines that I loved buried in a manuscript I stopped sending out. What if in the rearview, footprints on a freshly mopped floor. All of it, on the table, the door open to whatever comes next—

## Dusting for Fingerprints: A Zuihitsu

BY CARRIE MYERS

My favorite can collector in my neighborhood is a slight Chinese woman: loose clothing, a floppy hat over dyed-black mushroom-cap hair.

The beauty of her bending body, worn away by time and weather, the silver flash of cans in sunlight, the kaleidoscope of bottles. Her determined shuffle out of hunger's jaws.

I imagine her life story: leaving language and livelihood for another country, working double shifts while her children study for their SATs. Perhaps her grown daughter fled to another coast, trailing her mother's dreams, a blessing and burden she'll never escape.

One afternoon at the height of summer, the woman stopped, motioned it was time to pick my tomatoes. I gestured I was going to wait. She pointed again, wanting their seeded hearts not to burst on the sun-hard earth.

Eventually, I went back to my air conditioning, my husband and kids, my white-collar work. The luxury of risking disaster for perfection.

\*

On an evening walk, my husband and I saw a litter of baby skunks tumbling after their mother, scurrying from someone's driveway into the woods, blurring fractals of black and white. One lagged behind, and I wanted to hug it fiercely and also stay far, far away. Its smell, not nearly enough to armor it against a world of cars and foxes.

\*

My work is dusting for the fingerprints of God,  
detecting divine residue in ordinary days.

The dust has a shimmer to it, like mica in a fissured mine.

In the midst of a heat wave, God's fingerprints are on the sprawling blackberry vine, splash and laughter of children in their backyard pools, distant memory of snow. Sun no higher than the baby maple, already flexing its rays, humidity thickening the air like corn starch in a broth.

God's fingerprints are also on the air conditioner, working at last, and the landlord and his cousin, who fixed it.

\*

My mother's father lived on plantation land  
in Kauai in a house whose ceiling crumbled down daily  
leaving hard nodules of termite dust on floors, counters, beds.  
When I visited as a child, I'd wake  
to it pressed against my cheeks,  
tiny grains of decay  
like a toothache outside my body—  
the plantation system collapsing  
on itself as its workers aged,  
as their children and grandchildren became

doctors and cooks, teachers and mechanics,  
came to own land instead of working it.

A system built to rot  
but never quite die.

Billionaires now own entire islands—  
families pushed from beaches, rainforests of wild boar, their taro patches.  
My grandpa's generation is gone, but the termites remain,  
presiding from the roof and eaves  
like ragged, iron-teethed heralds of history,

\*

I blew out my knee a few weeks ago doing nothing but tottering like a drunk person between an ice room and a series of saunas at the Korean Day Spa, teetering between being a single giant goose pimple or liquefying from heat like a human tar pit.

In my fiftieth year, even pampering myself ends painfully.

How does one stay open, but not too open? Not seesawing from hot to cold, but warm and steady? In my second half of life, I want to shed self-protection, open heart and lungs to whoever the wind blows at me. Offer kinship to any spore of hope. Mother raindrops. Part my lips when the moon ladles out her light.

\*

The next day the tomatoes nearly slid off the vine, so ready to be eaten.

I wish I had picked them in her presence, given her two or three to take home. A token from a daughter on the other side of the continent.

## My Wife and I Find Each Other Interdimensionally

BY MICHAEL DWAYNE SMITH

Done with learning how to fly, I liked learning  
how to swim, to swallow all the water trying  
to drown me. Summer's here, angry, and we

drive through the mouth of a needle-toothed  
rattlesnake, listen to desert cardinals on the radio:  
*what-cheer, what-cheer, what-cheer, what-cheer,*

*pretty-pretty-pretty.* Well, maybe I would like  
to fly, and I tell her so, but she's in the middle  
of a birthday gift, in a yard with our grandson,

and I must sound like a salesman in her ear's  
mucky bottom. I could swim down there, where  
she'd hear me, but I'm a bear behind a wheel

on a road that slithers into the mudhole of time.  
I did drown once, I say to the bear in my head.  
"I was there," he gruffs, "you just want attention,"

and he's right, so I turn right at the Be Yourself  
signal and now she's back, turning the radio sky  
dial to tune in the sound of crickets reflecting off

water, and we notice one another, us becoming  
each other's birthday cakes, floating like smiles  
on the lake I died in all those years ago, kicking

pupfish out of our way, we the delicious wounds,  
wading into it, this wingless truth singing under  
water to a deep, genuine person on the other end.

## What the Water Keeps

BY ALEXANDER POON

My grandmother washed rice in the same chipped bowl  
for forty years, three times always, her palm  
circling the grains until the water ran from milk  
to almost clear. She never let it run all the way.  
That last cloud, she said, is where the taste lives.

I have her bowl now. I do not know the word  
she used for it, only the shape of her mouth  
making the sound, the way her tongue  
touched the back of her teeth and held there.  
When I rinse rice I count to three in English  
and the kitchen stays quiet in a language  
I was supposed to fill.

There is a voicemail I keep but cannot play  
past the first three seconds, her voice  
saying my name the wrong way,  
the way that was actually the right way,  
the way no one says it anymore.

The bowl floats when I leave it in the sink too long,  
tilts, takes on water through the crack  
along its rim, and still it does not sink.  
It rides the gray water like something  
that has decided not to be finished,  
the cloud of starch lifting from its center,  
rising, refusing to be poured away.

**dark mystery**

BY CHUCK STRINGER

buried deep  
in white  
light

color  
in a rainbow's  
curve

set free  
by  
sky's prism

sacred  
to Christian Muslim  
Hindu

shade draped  
in the Virgin's  
veil

burnished  
in The Blue  
Qur'an's vellum

the pigment  
in Shiva's  
face

search for me  
not  
in the wings

but  
head of June's  
bunting

in petals  
of a common blue  
violet

darkened by  
a Passion Sunday  
sun

chant me  
as a last stanza  
in a poem

*indigo*  
*indigo*  
*indigo*

## Blue Poem with a Line from Terry Tempest Williams

BY ELLEN AUSTIN-LI

— Italicized line from *The Hour of Land: A Personal Topography of America's National Parks*

When will I stop writing about you? *Blue is ghost-like.*  
Your periwinkle eyes—or were they more cornflower,

flecked with crystals? Words like ice  
evoke cold, and that could never be you. My sister,

an ever-azure expanse of sky, stretching in every direction.  
My sister, as deep as midnight, as all-encompassing

as the Atlantic. Indigo you, cerulean true.  
*Blue is ghost-like.* Soon, spring birds will begin

nesting, reminding me of the birder you—robins' eggs  
will appear, with their brilliant aqua shells broken

beneath the serviceberry tree. Shrieking blue  
jays will streak to the feeder, bullies beating the finches.

*Blue is ghost-like.* A royal shade sure to startle  
the pines it shoulders. When will I see you again?

The robes of the Virgin Mary stir outside of Holy Cross  
Church up the street, recalling the May Day celebrations

I remember. Do you? Blue was your favorite color. Water  
and sky and mountain-hued. I'm all blue. Waiting.

## The Last Cigarette

BY DAVID I. HUGHES

— *(Marlboro Red, of Course)*

It's not about the nicotine.

It's about the theatre.

The tap-tap on the soft pack.

The flick of the Zippo—a skill you learned  
watching a film noir on VHS.

The first drag: a searing commitment.

You are not a smoker.

You are a cliché in the rain,  
and the cliché is a warm, familiar coat.

The ember is a tiny, dying sun.

The smoke is your soul, made visible,  
then handed to the night air.

Every problem is solved in the space  
between the filter and your lips.

Every truth is simpler in the haze.

It's a terrible idea.

It's a beautiful, terrible idea.

A small, controlled burn  
against the vast, controlled cold.

The stub is crushed under a heel.

The smell lingers on your fingers—  
a ghost of rebellion,  
a promise you made to yourself at 17  
and keep, now and then,  
just to prove you still can.

## Eventually I'll Need New Lungs

BY TYLER JAGT

by June the storm started dressing in my clothes,  
the leaves turning their throats inside out & the wind  
buttoning itself into something even thinner — I feel  
if I hold my breath the warning stalls, if I gasp the  
county will flood — blue-black thunderhead, all  
that spinning. A doctor talked about scarring, fibrosis,  
lung tissue turning to attic insulation, I pulled  
a cattail apart like cotton swabs and inhaled  
that too, let the weather toss its arms out, dizzy, a  
lightning bolt shaped like a bronchi branch, trees  
bow so low the crown of each pine in view, if I count  
my breaths inside them, a metallic aftertaste of sky.  
In a dream I wear a hospital bracelet looped  
around the wrist like a weather charm, and under  
operating lights the surgeons open the cavity cleanly  
and lift my lungs out, but they fog the room over.  
Condensation beads on their masks. Somewhere,  
thunder answers the suction's whine in my chest. A  
surgeon spins them once, wringing out residual rain,  
sets the lungs in a basin like bells waiting for a toll.  
I wake to taste salt and felt it listening through  
my ribs, each breath arrived late and wrong.

# Section Three

## Indefinable

BY MARIA KOORS

(collapsing simile sequence)

1. This desire is a verb wanting to be conjugated into the pronoun of you.

No. This desire is a condition  
with no known nomenclature  
nor index and reference  
on a Wikipedia page.  
More like a case study  
based on the logic of imaginary numbers.

2a. If the heart's skin could grow hair, I would have trichotillomania \*  
when thoughts of you bloom, I pick at them until sore with blushing.

If the heart's atria were a solarium, it would be in an airport  
above the aorta escalators, windows doused in golden light  
silhouetting the backs of grasses, warming the backs of passengers  
awaiting departing flights.

b. I'm adrift as a fashion model forgetting what country she's in,  
her bony shoulders swinging  
like a yanked clothes hanger  
or like the pace of a stoned teenager  
walking home  
then opens the front door, sees the other doors shut  
and enters the forest floor of his bedroom.

c. What city are you nesting in?  
Do you sleep alone in your own scent  
or with someone else  
perhaps a redhead vegetarian who wears leather.

Are you haunted by another  
who damaged you, as it often happens  
to me [competition with a ghost is an unsettled rivalry].

3. There are no instructions for this waiting.

No room, chair, and wrinkled magazines  
[if only I were touched as much].

Time undoes time

\* Let me be more than a footnote, let my name be abbreviated as a watermark running through your journal  
like the O that begins an ode, and the "oh" that begins a moan.  
like an actor on a film set watches the crew  
rig the studio for hours  
for a two-minute scene.

Like the roles an ellipsis plays in syntax:  
from a language exhalation  
to splicing tape, word cutter  
or steppingstones  
toward greater clarity...  
or even grace  
as a line of incense smoke bends  
to write scripture in the air

**4a.** whose serif disappears  
like doubt, like lust.  
Like other monosyllables  
chained to the immensity of themes:  
Love. Loss. Death. Grief.  
are plot points of the story we're all in

**b.** continuing under the natural law of life birthing life:  
like the pregnant listening to a second heartbeat  
and a donated organ inside a new body fingering  
through visceral caverns and cavities;  
reading its cellular histories, the appendices of the appendix.

**5.** Are no words from you an onerous omen:  
doomed as a spell cast when the moon is void of course  
doomed as a couple's carved initials on a state park tree  
split by lightning.

I could turn into a tree like Daphne  
translating what you can't say  
as wind in my polyglossial leaves;  
linking the *Cs* and *Os* of your breath's organic chemistry  
and balancing your living grammar  
as a ligament: adverb a tendon:: adjective  
as the moon punctuates the sea's sentences.

Everything travels in waves  
in the endless flux  
from crest to trough

the zenith deflates to zilch  
as longing slopes into pain

like the lumbago I wake up to—no

6. a kind of marginalia  
that I can't stop comparing notes to others  
who understand rejection:  
like a Muslim in the military  
at base in the religious South,  
like a child of the military  
on the first day of another school  
circles another circle of friends

unsure of what to do

like a recent retiree  
and the athlete retired at thirty.

I'm anxious as a dog licking its paw raw  
like the shaven spot on the olde friar's head—a *tonsure*—  
a word plucked just for this poem, but I've probably lost you,  
haven't I, reader?

Throw me in the slush pile.  
Shut me up.  
I still can't stop  
    all the while the love in me goes unused  
    like a VHS or cassette tape.

I just sit here, incomplete

as faceless angel paintings on hospital walls  
and faceless angel figurines on the counselor's desk

nondescript

as a ficus plant in a psychiatrist's office  
    collects a debt of tears  
    overdue  
    and overdrawn.

I ache  
like a Christian for Christ's embrace,  
held so close as to inhale the cassia and aloe of his robe

like a fisherman in a folktale drops his knees in the sand  
when his selkie wife transforms  
to her former animal form of a seal  
and returns to her homewaters.

## Underpass

BY PUNYASLOKA MOHAPATRA

The pigeons have found  
a way to live here—  
between concrete  
and the constant correction  
of traffic.  
Every morning  
they lift together,  
a gray thought  
breaking apart.  
I watch from the bus stop  
where the schedule  
fades a little more each season,  
where someone's lost glove  
has remained all winter,  
fingers curled inward  
as if holding  
the last warm thing.  
Above us,  
apartments rise floor by floor.  
Lights switch on.  
Lights switch off.  
Whole lives reduced  
to a pattern  
the evening rehearses.  
A siren passes.  
Then another.  
The city keeps speaking  
in its sleep.  
Some days  
I carry myself through it  
the way a shopping bag  
carries a cracked jar—  
careful,  
expecting nothing,  
listening for the sound.  
The pigeons settle again  
on the ledge beneath the highway.  
Not happy.  
Not unhappy.  
Just alive  
in the wind  
coming off the river,  
which nobody can see  
from here.

## Fluttering

BY JOHN WOJTOWICZ

There are little teeth in the top drawer  
of my nightstand;

a boxer-briefed, raccoon-eyed,  
tooth fairy stashed them there

after almost forgetting  
to do his job. There's also a copper-colored

key squirreled away. If you hold it to the light  
and look through its half-moon,

you'll glimpse the living room  
of that first apartment—Salvation Army

love seat and shabby armchair,  
basic cable TV and roof-leak-bucket.

You might recognize the chubby-cheeked  
goldilocks scuffling around

in a pink tutu and my cowboy boots—  
who now strides around

at 5 foot 6 wearing panda dunks  
and one of my frayed Grateful Dead t-shirts.

As she tries to slip past,  
I tell her she's a cool kid—Noah Kahn humming

in her headphones, Chamber of Secrets  
tucked under her arm, spools of ribbon

in her hands that she plans  
on turning into roses for her teen arts show.

She rolls her eyes. *Note to self:*  
Is it even cool to call someone cool anymore?

She no longer has baby teeth.  
But I do. They keep my wings fluttering.

## The Car

BY ERIKA SPADAVECCHIA

—to Raymond Carver

The silver lincoln of the film photo with my father in his cowboy belt  
The faded honda that drove us to the riches of walmart through the mesquite trees  
The beloved land rover he bought for 28 million lire back home at last  
The blue ford waiting for me after a sleepover with the lost friend  
The lost friend's fiat that smelled of spilled nail polish for a week  
The red vespa this sucker rode on the highway and my skirt unfurled like a bold flag  
The cinquecento that drove me to my first abortion  
The subaru forester at the airport with the geometric carpet floor  
The ford truck outside that same terminal when my hair turned black  
The ford truck I sunk into softly  
The ford truck with the cassette player singing buddy holly it must have been late  
The ford truck buried white outside powell's where we saw a man vanish into the cold  
The ford truck in the parking lot of my first apartment it's freezing I don't want to walk  
The ford truck he lets his new girlfriend drive to work  
The hot prius at the gas station I undressed myself in  
The hot, hot prius that traced the roadkill forever bared like molars  
The nissan I can't drive  
The cars outside my room at night that murmur like hearts  
And I pluck them out one by one

## **In Love with a Bach Aria**

BY ELIZABETH KIRKPATRICK-VRENIOS

I'm listening to a fan belt tune sprocketing round  
and round and round in my blue caddy,

cruising down the street itching to pick up a rough  
second melody with a come-hither stare,

arms on hips, tough one unwrinkling through an F sharp major  
cantilena noodled in a bowl,

coiling just before the cadence, ploughing through  
splinters of accidentals sprinkled like almonds

that puncture the pink-eyed carbuncle.  
Not willing to stay, the melody strained open

the car door, sauntered  
down the street after the raspy frogs

in the bassoons that croon

*Come here, come here  
little grease monkey.  
Come here.*

## Refrigerator Art

BY LISA SLOAN

If it were not for the spring of smoke  
that boings its way up the page—  
straight off the upper left-hand corner—  
or the willowy Max Ernst curve of the chimney  
under its jaunty yellow cloche of scraped-out sun

or the avant-garde of the architecture,  
the isosceles roof cantilevered over the dozen or so  
trapezoid windows set in walls that defy the laws  
of gravity, upright as they remain supporting  
all that negative space—and what to make

of the bird's-eye-view of bonsais planted  
in a tiny vertical row, to the right of the vertical brick  
patchwork path that maintains its girth  
from sidewalk to front step, all perspective lost  
in its rush to reach the front door of the little house at last?

Then there are the giants—  
their shifting eyes and misplaced mouths,  
an enormous dog on a taut green leash, awkward  
as strangers and suspicious-looking, as if bearing the gift  
of a Trojan horse—

but the backward parentheses of their deep smiles  
tell us otherwise, as does the dog-eared paper's pride  
of place centered on the freezer door—symmetrical  
enough under the anchor of *I ♥ Maine*—and I ask you,  
without a magnet, where would home be?

## What the Basement Held

BY XI ANGELA FANG

A mushroom that ate a sneaker's tongue.  
A furnace's iron stomach—pilot light  
blinking like a confused star.  
My father's wrench. The handle: greased,  
a little warmer than the air.  
I picked it up. The wrench remembered his hand.  
My hand is smaller.  
The wrench did not adjust.  
I set it down. The mushroom had moved.  
It was now wearing the sneaker's lace.  
I backed up the stairs.  
The furnace coughed.  
I have not gone down since.  
The mushroom is probably mayor now.

## The Call of the Void

BY HUDSON PLUMB

I'm not afraid of heights,  
but I'm afraid of the edge of heights.

I'm not afraid of falling,  
but I'm afraid of the moment before falling.

It's always like this, the liminal sky  
beckoning me to cross over, to step out and give it a try.

In any building, my favorite floor  
is the top floor, my favorite view is the view from on high.

When navigating stairs my foot sometimes stumbles  
while ascending, but never when descending.

When I watch videos of wirewalkers  
I can't stand looking, but I can't keep *not* looking.

In Pemberton one year, a petite French woman  
strapped herself to my back with the cords of a paraglider

and yelled, "Run as fast as you can to the edge and jump!"  
and I ran full speed right off the edge of a rocky cliff

and then the ground disappeared  
and suddenly everything got very quiet,

and we soared silently drawing circles above a river,  
she whispering in my ear to notice the eagle

dive-bombing and tracking us eye-level to our left,  
until, satisfied, it left,

and then, later, I saw little ant people  
on a field of grass below,

and I wasn't afraid at all  
when the ground came up slowly at first,

and then all at once.  
Smiling down at my face,

the French woman said,  
"Not bad, eh? *L'appel du vide*."\*

\* *L'appel du vide*: (Fr.) lit. "the call of the void"; the inexplicable urge to jump from a high place, though one has no wish to die.

## Pervasive

BY TOM BARLOW

We buy an elegant hour  
from an afternoon of cycling up  
the walls of the Rhône Valley.  
For fifty Euros, rattan chairs  
on the veranda, Chateauneuf-du-Pape

and pâtisseries, this vineyard lazy  
in the haze. Our bicycles rest against  
a stone wall that might have been  
dressed by the Romans. My partner  
carries a brush in her bike bag

to pull her hair out of the sweat  
while I wipe the crust of stone roads  
from my lips with a bandana from  
the Palais des Papes. We play  
the Francophiles and ask our host

Parlez-vous anglaise? pretending  
surprise at her lukewarm response, as if  
the language of money must be spoken  
through clenched teeth. We'd applied  
decals of the maple leaf to our

helmets to suggest we're Canadians,  
for we'd been warned Americans  
have been stained by bellicose bluster  
even in this country where white crosses  
still stand in ranks by the sea. I wonder

if the perfume of the lavender fields  
we have peddled through all morning  
will stay with us long enough to soften  
our reception. I catch my mate tucking  
the cloth serviette into her pocket,

copping a souvenir of this Maison  
like a boorish thief who believed  
himself entitled to this country,  
so to divert our host I ask if war  
has ever assaulted her acres.

She points to the riverbanks  
in the distance where, she says,  
Hannibal won a battle for

the crossing and I wonder if  
there is any land left in this world

we could tour where the soil  
is not richer for the blood spilled on it  
and the bodies tucked beneath.  
For the rest of the afternoon  
we ride through ghosts.

## Did you hear they brought back the Dire Wolf?

BY ERIN CARLYLE

A woman asks me as I walk by. She's sitting on a rock  
in the woods holding a red flower in her hand she is  
a symbol, or a poem, a sonnet, maybe even one you know—  
full bloom, menstrual cycle, or even death. The woman  
asks again: *Did you hear they brought*  
*back the dire wolf into a world like this?* I look  
in her eyes—river green—and she says more: *what*  
*about its white fur—full of winter and how long*  
*has it been gone from the crunch of snow under paw?*  
*Is it too hot here? Will we let it roam through these woods—eat*  
*rabbits, eat women?* These are good questions, but I say nothing,  
take in the smell of her—old earth turned and ready for planting.  
She repeats herself: *Will we let it eat a woman? The earth?*



## The Sun (XIX): Gypsy Rider

BY M. M. ADJARIAN

Sunflowers sway tall  
& easy in the garden just outside the  
the plain brick house topped by a metal roof,  
the one you crawled into & called a temporary shell  
but grew into your fortress, court & kingdom. Raucous in  
in their golden joy and just as unapologetic, they spread rough  
greenery in your garden elegant with lavender & herbs, all well-  
behaved in shiny tubs piled high with perfect store-bought soil. Gray  
& black striped gypsies riding in on southern winds or in the beaks  
of hungry birds, their seeds found you, called you kin, then sank their  
roots into the prairie clay & fought the elements to grow. You thought  
them weeds but kept them all the same: for luck, you said & watched  
them as they claimed the outskirts of your house one spring & every  
spring thereafter. The omens in this house you love but can't quite  
call your home are good, better than the ones you've known — so  
good that all you want to do is watch the sunflowers, big heads  
bobbing, bend & bow a cheerful minuet to charm a sky-king  
who bestows with equal ease the gift of light & curse of  
heat & drought. Perhaps their dance is the dance  
of your own memory as the fruit who fell  
farthest from a tangled family tree &  
still found the sun.

*Image based on Pamela Coleman-Smith's 1909 rendering of the tarot Sun card*

## Swallowtails

BY IVY ROSE SHERRARD

Since the Fall, I haven't learned much,  
though it could be said  
I had the best view  
of Adam  
choking on apples in my kitchen  
(damaged goods).

See? It is not enough, to be fed.  
I am keen to have a garden —  
to have an apron full of strawberries and mint,  
to be hot and sweet behind the knees,

dip my hands into the earth,  
grip the nether regions  
of dandelions  
(naughty little suns).

Did you know, there are endless altars  
inside one ripe tomato?  
I have seen the holy women pray there,  
holding the dawn to its promise,  
whose tears have been folded into manna and mended sweaters.

Did you know, there are secret congregations  
held by swallowtails?  
I have seen powdery sermons mid-flight —  
beat the wing, beat the wing —  
joy.

## How to Dispose of a Body

BY PAUL ILECHKO

I hear that your body can be left  
to decompose nowadays to fertilize  
the land that once fed you  
and for some reason that makes me  
think of wetlands of the tall grasses  
and the birds that live among them  
the walking trees of southern Florida  
and as I think of the salts that enrich  
the earth the carbon and potassium  
the phosphorus and calcium  
I realize that Bach is playing  
on the radio one of the early  
fugues from the Feinberg recording  
of the 1950s architecture and joy  
intertwined as a helix atop the deep  
structure of counterpoint  
and I rush to tell you that this is what  
I want you to do with my body  
no pollution no ugly jar  
of ashes sitting on a basement shelf.

## Along West Rocky Branch

BY JANE WISEMAN

And here the yellow pines stand tall,  
bare, brushing and clacking against  
each other, as the little river winds silk,  
at hot midday a sullen scarf. Close overhead,  
cumulus of dogwood sighs down the banks.

Our bare legs flashing white and tan and dark,  
we sprint along or lag alongside. Snatches  
of shouts and laughter, lower murmur  
of voices cut in and out among the trees.  
Always, underneath, the chuckle of the stream.  
It runs the rocks, and in the shallows over gravel.

Later, twilight, candles nestle in paper boats  
(some prophetic rite we'd heard about), and  
with our hands we shelter the flames. The wind  
rises to ruffle the water. Beneath the overhang  
of branches, glimmers of light swerve out  
and into the curve of current. Our breath catching,  
we watch. Some of our boats go dark, and under.  
Others waft into the deepening dusk and  
out of sight. Later still,

the moon sallies over the tree line to scribble  
the cryptic substrate of sandbars, and on  
the slippery slates of the shore. Our eyes  
shine, our faces strange. The wind whips away  
our words; shreds of cloud scud up and over  
the silver coinage of the light. We will stay here  
forever, we will live here forever  
beneath the benediction of onrushing night.

## Catalina Island Camp

BY JUSTINE PECHUZAL

a nursery of stars hang from Orion's belt.  
my friend handed me binoculars, a compromise

between the moons of Jupiter. *you have to*  
*see!* she said. *babies!* she'd already given us

so many keys—the bins where worms spun soil,  
mandarin oranges cloistered among waxy leaves,

sun-dried seaweed snapping underfoot, plumes of  
kelp foresting towards sun, fish muttering about

the damp. There were coiled yellow buds, the trail  
to an emerald, daily hummingbird fly-bys. Dusk

sweeping the horizon primrose pink, the way cold  
saltwater shakes you *be alive be alive!* a wind

chime of forks, the soft reality of a chicken held  
to your chest, to know the unseen, allow it, sing it,

seeing to become unseen, noting the conflict in  
foxes jumping fences, brush pile eyesores, the

drying time of paint—phosphorescence—all of it—  
the nature of problems, problems of nature, the

nature of us and us in nature—movement generating  
pinpricks of light, miniature electrodes magnificent,

somewhere in the deep, somewhere in the dark,  
children dig in wet sand towards the impossible.

## Willamette August, Five Island

BY MARC JANSSEN

Water intentions  
It all moves water gravel  
An osprey in flight

The currents of the Willamette are a lovely middle-aged woman's hair, long and luxurious brushing bare shoulders, generous complicated and mysterious. Shifting benevolently or imperiously, in storm, sometimes with a bell-like laugh, a laugh that communicates more than one thing, it says it knows something, has seen a thing or two. Charismatic in its chaos.

One continuous  
Island peaked by willows  
A swallow in flight

A steady upstream breeze toys with those leaves, shaking hello, goodbye, hello goodbye hello... Winking at the water-shine, then facing the sky with its all-seeing eye and modest clouds. River scent and chlorophyll and oxygen, roots and rocks, stone and slime. An island is one thing at a time but eventually, like a thought of stars and moon, it becomes all things or at least all the things it needs to be.

Water's intention  
Build and break, reduce, reform,  
A heron in flight

## **Bilingual**

BY MARION BROWN

Crows complain as we creep up the street.  
Playing pickup, they trash talk a raptor,  
insinuating themselves into this poem  
like messengers

from the Underworld. A hawk must be hiding  
in the graveyard-green cedar where crows  
issue insults.  
Folding my wings, I do not address them.

## Contributors

**M. M. Adjarian** has published her creative work in such journals as the *Baltimore Review*, *South 85*, *Grub Street*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Eclectica*, *Crack the Spine*, *Across the Margin*, *Common Ground*, *Stirring*, *Midway Journal*, *Little Patuxent Review*, *Prime Number Magazine*, and the *North Dakota Quarterly*. Currently, she is revising a memoir and working on her first book of poetry. She lives in Austin.

A 2026 Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award recipient, **Ellen Austin-Li's** poetry collection, *Incidental Pollen*, is the runner-up to Madville Publishing's Arthur Smith Poetry Prize. Finishing Line Press published her chapbooks *Firefly* and *Lockdown: Scenes From Early in the Pandemic*. Sundress Academy of the Arts supported her with a 2024 residency. A Best of the Net and Pushcart Prize nominee, Ellen's work appears in many places, including *SWIMM*, *Salamander*, *The Maine Review*, *Lily Poetry Review*, and *One Art*. Ellen holds an MFA in Poetry from Solstice. She lives in Cincinnati, OH, where she hosts Poetry at Artifact. <https://ellenaustinli.me/>

**Tom Barlow** is a Pushcart-nominated American writer of novels, short stories and poetry, whose work has appeared in many journals, including *One Art*, *Ekphrastic Review*, *Voicemail Poetry*, *Hobart*, *Tenemos*, *Redivider*, *The New York Quarterly*, and many more. He is the recipient of an Individual Excellence Award from the Ohio Arts Council. See [Tombarlowauthor.com](http://Tombarlowauthor.com)

**Julie Benesh** is author of the poetry collection *Initial Conditions* and the poetry chapbook *About Time*. She earned an MFA from Warren Wilson College and received an Illinois Arts Council Grant. She currently lives in western North Carolina and holds a PhD in human and organizational systems. She works as a professor and management consultant.

**Marion Brown's** chapbooks, *Tasted* and *The Morning After Summer*, were published by Finishing Line Press. *Tide Table*, a full-length collection, will be published next year by Broadstone Books. Her poems have appeared in journals including *Guesthouse*, *Gyroscope Review*, *Liber*, *Kestrel*, *The Night Heron Barks*, and *On the Seawall*. Links to many of the poems may be found at [marionbrownpoet.com](http://marionbrownpoet.com) Marion Brown lives in Yonkers, NY and Seattle, WA.

**Suzanne Bruce**, Fairfield, CA Poet Laureate Emerita, devotes her time to writing, believing that connection extends beyond our daily lives and hoping her words will resonate with others. She is a member of the Ina Coolbrith Circle, Solano County Library Foundation, and Benicia Literary Arts. Her work has won several prizes and is published in numerous journals including *International Literary Quarterly*, *Copperfield Review*, *Suisun Valley Review*, *Poeming Pigeon* and *California Quarterly*. Her books, *Voices Beyond the Canvas*, (2007) and *Her Visions Her Voices* (2015) are ekphrastic works with artist Janet Manalo. [www.SuzanneBrucePoet.com](http://www.SuzanneBrucePoet.com)

**Erin Carlyle** is a poet from Atlanta, GA. She has a PhD in Creative Writing from Georgia State University and is the Program Support Coordinator for the poetry program, Poetry@Tech at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Her work can be found in journals such as *Tupelo Quarterly*, *Arts and Letters*, *Jet Fuel*, and *Prairie Schooner*. Her second collection, *Girl at the End of the World*, is out now with Driftwood Press.

**Dolo Diaz** is a scientist / poet with roots in Spain, currently residing in California. Her work has appeared in *ONE ART*, *The Summerset Review*, *Third Wednesday*, *Sheila-Na-Gig*, among others. Website: [dolodiaz.com](http://dolodiaz.com)

**Allison Dobscha** is a writer and multimedia storyteller from Portland, Oregon. Her works of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry are inspired by spirits of the Pacific Northwest. Her undergraduate years were spent at Macalester College in Minnesota, and she received a Masters in Multimedia Journalism from the University of Oregon.

New Hampshire native and hopeless romantic **Mae Fraser** (any pronouns) is a tea drinker moonlighting as a poet. They received their BA in English from Salem State University. Their poetry has most recently been published with *PHIL Lit*, *Juste Milieu Zine*, among others, with more forthcoming. Find them online @maeflowerreads

**Xi Angela Fang** is studying Law and Environmental Science at the University of Auckland. She has published through Clerestory Press, is an avid writer who has won fiction and non-fiction competitions.

**Michael J. Galko** is a scientist and poet who lives and works in Houston, TX. He was a finalist in the 2020 Naugatuck River Review and the 2022 Bellevue Literary Review poetry contests. Recent poems have appeared or will appear in *Spillway Magazine*, *Atlanta Review*, *Silk Road Review*, and *Plainsongs*.

**Kimberly Hall** (she/her) is a queer and neurodivergent poet based in Southeast Texas. She holds degrees in psychology and behavioral science. Her first collection of poetry, *Honey Locust*, was published in December 2024 by hotpoet inc.

**David I. Hughes** is a UK-based writer in West Cornwall working across poetry, fiction, and hybrid forms. His debut novel, *The Listener*, was published in 2025. He was a semi-finalist in the 2026 Lit Fox Poetry Book Prize and shortlisted for the Poetry Kit International Prize. His short fiction was placed 3rd in the 2026 Flash 500 Short Story Prize, and two of his stories are included in the 2026 Hermitage Press annual anthology. His work also appears in journals including *Aspier*, *Metaphrastics*, *Shadowplay*, *Ink*, *Sweat & Tears*, and *149 Review*.

**Paul Ilechko** is the author of *Post Moby* (Sheila-Na-Gig, 2026) and *Fragmentation and Volta* (Gnashing Teeth, 2025). His work has also appeared in many journals, including *The Bennington Review*, *Bear Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Permafrost*, and *Laurel Review*. He reads for *Marrow Magazine*.

**Tyler Jagt** is from Ontario, Canada, and presently lives in Georgia. He teaches at Mercer University.

What is there left to say about **Marc Janssen**, other than he should eat more vegetables? Maybe his verse can be found scattered around the world in places like *Pinyon*, *Orbis*, *Pure Slush*, *Cirque Journal*, *Two Thirds North*, and *Poetry Salzburg*, also in his book *November Reconsidered* and his recent book collaboration *A Resurrection of Trees*. Janssen coordinates the Salem Poetry Project—a weekly reading, the occasionally occurring Salem Poetry Festival, and keeps getting nominated for Oregon Poet Laureate. For more information, visit [marcjanssenpoet.com](http://marcjanssenpoet.com)

**Matt Jasper** has had poems, stories, and art in magazines such as *Grand Street*, *Fine Madness*, *Cafe Review*, *Rollerderby*, *Meat For Tea*, and *Heavy Feather Journal*. He is working on a book called *The Water of Learning to Drink*. Susan M. Shultz described his last book (as blurbed by Franz Wright and Pagan Kennedy, and Donald Revell) as “documentary surrealism.”

**Ms Kirkpatrick-Vrenios** resides in Mendocino, CA. Nominated for four Pushcart Prizes and twice for Best of Net, her poetry has been featured in many journals and anthologies. Her prize-winning chapbook, *Special Delivery* was published by Yellow Chair Press in 2016; her second chapbook, *Empty the Ocean with a Thimble*, by Word Tech Communications. Her third, *A Concerto for an Empty Frame* released in 2023 by Kelsay Books. A Professor Emerita from American University, she has performed as a singing artist across Europe and the United States.

**Kara Knickerbocker** is the author of the chapbooks *The Shedding Before the Swell*, (dancing girl press) and *Next to Everything that is Breakable* (Finishing Line Press). Her poetry and essays have appeared in or are forthcoming from: *Poet Lore*, *HOBART*, *SWWIM*, *Portland Review*, and the anthologies *Pennsylvania’s Best Emerging Poets*, *Crack the Spine*, and more. Her work has received support from Martha’s Vineyard Institute of Creative Writing, Murphy Writing at Stockton University, and the Gullkistan Center in Iceland. A Pushcart and Best of the Net nominee, she writes with the Madwomen in the Attic at Carlow University. [www.karaknickerbocker.com](http://www.karaknickerbocker.com)

**Maria Koors** (she/her) is a poet based in Birmingham, Alabama. Her poetry has recently appeared or is forthcoming in *Pensive: A Global Journal of Spirituality & the Arts*, *Saint Katherine Review*, *Whale Road Review*, and *Willows Wept Review*. She has received support from Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference. She thinks you’re amazing.

**Barbara Krasner** is a New Jersey-based poet with an MFA from the Vermont College of Fine Arts. Recent publications include *Poems of the Winter Palace* (Bottlecap Press), *The Night Watch* (Kelsay Books), *Insomnia: Poems after Lee Krasner* (dancing girl press), *The Wanderers* (Shanti Arts), and the forthcoming *Memory Collector* (Kelsay Books) and *The Appropriation of Brueghel* (Shanti Arts).

**Danmi Lee** writes out of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and was born in Germany to South Korean parents. Her poetry has appeared in *Lunar Journal*, *Livina Press*, and *Variety Pack*, and examines the human experience of space, exploring the intimate emotions and relationships that emerge within everyday environments.

**David Anson Lee** is a physician, philosopher, poet, and lifelong observer of the intersections between medicine, memory, and language. Born on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota and now living in Texas, he holds degrees in philosophy and medical science from Boston University and trained in ophthalmology at the Mayo Clinic. His poetry has appeared in numerous literary journals, including *Right Hand Pointing*, *Eunoia Review*, and *Ink Sweat & Tears*. His work explores themes of illness, resilience, and the quiet dignity of everyday human experience.

**Everix Machan** (he/him) is a queer, transgender, and autistic undergraduate poet and theatre maker from Wisconsin. His poetry is published or forthcoming in *The Gentian*, *The Sandy River Review*, *The Branches*, *ONE ART*, and *The Rebis*, among others. When not writing, he is often researching, reading, and finding excuses to perform.

**Punyasloka Mohapatra** is a poet whose work has appeared in *The Madrid Review*, *Merion West*, and elsewhere. His poetry explores memory, place, and the complexities of contemporary life. He lives in India.

**Carrie Myers** is a writer, spiritual director, and PhD in English and American Literature. California-born, with roots in Hawaii, Japan, and the Philippines, she currently lives in NYC with her family, two bunnies, and a goldendoodle puppy. Her poems have been published in *Feminist Spaces* and *Last Syllable*, and nominated for Best of the Net.

**Justine Pechuzal** is a writer, artist and educator living in Seward, Alaska. Wilderness is her muse and creative work the means to explore. She is also strongly influenced by the experience of raising two small humans. Her poetry has appeared in *Forum Magazine*, *Cirque Journal*, and other publications. She holds an MA in Art Education and a BA in Creative Writing & Art History from the University of Arizona.

**Phillip Periman** was born in 1938 in Memphis, Texas. He received a BA in history from Yale University and an M.D. from Washington University School of Medicine. His poetry has been published by the Black Mountain Press in their anthology, *The Sixty-Four*, (Best Poets of 2018), *Unstamatic*, *Burningword Literary Journal*, *LitterateurRW*, *Amarillo Bay* (who gave him a Pushcart nomination), and *The Adirondack Review*. Five of his poems were included in *Pandemic Poems*, published by The High Plains Poetry Project (2021). His manuscript, *Dying: the first six years*, was a semi-finalist for Passenger's 2024 Henry Morgenthau III First Book Poetry Prize.

**Drew Pizarra** is the author of three books of poetry: *Infinity Standing Up*, *Periodic Boyfriends*, and *Fassbinder: His Movies, My Poems*.

**Hudson Plumb** is the author of *The Art of Undoing*, published by Finishing Line Press in 2026 and named a Finalist in the 2026 International Book Awards, Poetry: Narrative category. He is an International Merit Award winner in the Atlanta Review 2025 International Poetry Competition. His recent work appears in *The Thieving Magpie*, *Humana Obscura*, *RHINO Poetry* (2024 Founders' Prize), *The Courtship of Winds*, and *Kaleidoscope Magazine*, *Exploring the Experience of Disability Through Literature and the Fine Arts*.

**Alexander Poon** (he/him) is a poet from Edison, New Jersey. His work explores family history, cultural inheritance, memory, and the quiet distances that language and time can create between generations. His work has appeared in *American High School Poets: Winter 2026* and has received recognition from the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.

**Ellen Romano** has published work in *Lascaux Review*, *december magazine*, *The Deadlands*, and other publications. She is putting together a chapbook with the placeholder title, *My Mother Spins in Her Grave*.

**Rikki Santer's** poetry collection, *Resurrection Letter*, was grand prize short-listed for the Eric Hoffer Book Award, and *Shepherd's Hour* won the Paul Nemser Book Prize from Lily Poetry Review Books. In 2023, she was named Ohio Poet of the Year and currently serves as Artist-in-Residence at the Fran Ryan Center in Columbus, Ohio, and is a member of the teaching artist roster of the Ohio Arts Council. Her fifteenth poetry collection, *Could Be*, was published this spring by Sheila-Na-Gig Press. Please contact her through her website, <https://rikkisanter.com>

**Janette Schafer** is a poet, playwright, photographer, and performance artist based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Her work explores themes of the human body, resilience, and transformation. She is the author of three poetry collections, and her writing has appeared in journals, performances, and collaborative art projects. A four-time heart attack survivor, she writes at the intersection of medical crisis and creative rebirth, using poetry as a pathway to reclaim the self and rewrite personal narrative.

**Ivy Rose Sherrard** is a writer from the Pacific Northwest, now based in the U.K. Her work is rooted in memory, girlhood, and the sacred through quiet intimacies and embodied experience.

**Michael Dwayne Smith** lives near a ghost town in the Mojave Desert with his family and rescued horses. He's authored four poetry collections, most recently *Shaking Music from the Angry Air* (Sheila-Na-Gig Editions, 2025), which has been nominated for the Rilke Prize. His work haunts many literary houses, including *ONE ART*, *The Cortland Review*, *Gargoyle*, *Third Wednesday*, *Phantom Kangaroo*, *Star 82 Review*, and *Heavy Feather Review*. He has served as editor-in-chief for *Mojave River Press & Review* (on hiatus), *Cease Cows Literary Magazine*, and *Mosaic Art & Literary Journal*, as well as a judge for the Dogfish Head Poetry Prize in book-length collections.

**Lisa Sloan** lives and writes in Charleston, SC. She is a member of the Long Table Poets, whose high standards and constant encouragement make her strive to be better. Her work has won awards from the Poetry Society of South Carolina and has been published in the *Ekphrastic Review*, *Quartet*, and *Collaborature*. She published a chapbook, *BODIES*, with Bottlecap Press in 2023.

**Erika Spadavecchia** (she/her) is a writer, translator, and cartomancer from Rome, Italy. She lives in New Jersey with her cat, Cannoli, and is working on a novel that keeps her awake at night.

**Meghan Sterling** is a writer and working mother. She has been published in *Taboma Literary Review*, *Los Angeles Review*, *Colorado Review*, *Rhino Poetry* and many others. Her 7th collection, *Sick Letters from the Loved* (Harbor Editions) is forthcoming in 2026. Poet laureate of Gardiner, Maine, read her work at [meghansterling.com](http://meghansterling.com)

**Alison Stone's** nine collections include *Informed* (NYQ Books, 2024), *To See What Rises* (CW Books, 2023) *Zombies at the Disco* (Jacar Press, 2020), *Caught in the Myth* (NYQ Books, 2019), *Ordinary Magic*, (NYQ Books, 2016), *Dangerous Enough* (Presa Press 2014), and *They Sing at Midnight*, which won the 2003 Many Mountains Moving Award. She won *Poetry's* Frederick Bock Prize, *New York Quarterly's* Madeline Sadin Award, and *The Lyric's* Lyric Prize. She is also a visual artist and the creator of The Stone Tarot.

As described on his Facebook page, **Chuck Stringer** strives to be a loving “partner, parent, grandparent, creek keeper, poet, and friend.” He resides with wife, Susan, and gray tabby Kissa in a Northern Kentucky home near Fowlers Fork, a creek he walks almost daily. His poems have appeared in numerous journals, and his chapbook, *By Fowlers Fork*, was published by Finishing Line Press in August 2024. He recently enjoyed being interviewed by Katerina Stoykova on the Accents Publishing Blog (<https://www.accents-publishing.com/blog/2025/10/23/accents-podcast-interview-with-chuck-stringer/>)

**Rahat Tasneem** is an Indian-origin poet based in France. Her work moves between diaspora and political consciousness, often finding politics in the domestic. Her poem, “Family Tongue,” was recognized with a commendable mention in the 2020 Wingword Poetry Prize.

**Brett Thompson** has been writing poetry since his graduate days at the University of New Hampshire where he earned an MA in English Writing with a concentration in poetry. He has been published in various journals, including *Plainsongs*, *Tilde*, *District Lit*, *The Literary Nest*, and the *Peregrine Journal*. He teaches and lives in New Hampshire with his wife and two young daughters.

**Jim Tilley** has published four full-length collections of poetry and a novel with Red Hen Press. His short memoir, *The Elegant Solution*, was published as a Ploughshares Solo. Five of his poems have been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. His most recent poetry collection, *Ripples in the Fabric of the Universe: New & Selected Poems*, was published in June 2024. His forthcoming collection, *When Godot Arrived*, will be published in August 2026. Website: [jimtilleypoetry.com](http://jimtilleypoetry.com)

**Keren Vishny** is a physician, psychotherapist, and poet. Her work as a psychotherapist draws on dreams, poetry, and embodied imagination. Her poetry arises from personal experience and her work accompanying others. She is currently developing a manuscript, *Returning to the River of Dreams*, which explores dreams as a doorway into presence and relationship. She splits her time between Illinois and Northern California.

**Ann Weil's** poetry appears in *Best New Poets 2024*, *Pedestal Magazine*, *RHINO*, *Chestnut Review*, *5Elements Review*, and elsewhere. Author of *Lifecycle of a Beautiful Woman* (Yellow Arrow, 2023) and *Blue Dog Road Trip* (Gnashing Teeth, 2024), Weil is a former special education teacher, current kettle corn lover, and four-time Pushcart nominee who lives in Michigan and California. To read more of her work, visit [www.annweilpoetry.com](http://www.annweilpoetry.com)

**Jane Wiseman** splits her time between the rural Sandia Mountains of New Mexico and very urban south Minneapolis. She has 1.3k followers on Bluesky. Poetry web site: <https://utopiary.wordpress.com> Speculative fiction web site: <https://fantastes.com> Her chapbook *Morning of the World* was just published. Her chapbook *The Bee Telephone*, won the Jonathan Holden Prize. Her poetry has appeared in *The Headlight Review*, *Euphony*, *Main St. Rag*, and other journals.

**John Wojtowicz** grew up working on his family's azalea and rhododendron nursery and still lives in the backwoods of South Jersey. He teaches social work at Rowan College of South Jersey. He's been featured on Rowan University's Writer's Roundtable on 89.7 WGLS-FM and *Painted Bride Quarterly's* Slush Pile Podcast. Publications include *Rattle*, *New Ohio Review*, *Waxing & Waning*, *Gigantic Sequins*, and *Sonora Review*. His chapbook, *No Lightsabers in the Kitchen*, was the winner of the 2025 Poetry Box Chapbook contest. He enjoys monitoring bluebird boxes, flipping horseshoe crabs, and rolling around in the yard. Find out more at: [www.johnwojtowicz.com](http://www.johnwojtowicz.com)

**Jim Zola** is a poet and photo artist living in North Carolina.

## Announcements

Our 2026 Fall Issue is our special edition, the Fall Crone Power Issue. This issue only accepts submissions from female-identifying poets over the age of fifty (50). We're honoring our older but still incredible female poets with an issue of their own. Send us your favorite poems, the ones you want the world to read. You have insights, and we want to put them out for everyone to read and share. Politics, relationships, life and death, your favorite meal, that annoying bird that sings at 5:00 am. each morning. We want it all.

Crone Power Submissions open July 1st, 2026, and run through September 1st, 2026. We will close early 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; use page breaks between poems, normal fonts like Times New Roman; and an up-to-date bio for the magazine in the Submittable bio section of not over 100 words. Use the name in the bio you'd like to be published under.

You can put your Poem Title and under it "by Author WXYZ," but we don't need addresses, headers, or page numbers on the pages. Please, no weird formatting or underlining. It makes the editors drink. Sometimes coffee, sometimes not. Concrete and form poems are fine. If you submit more than 4 poems in a document, we will read the first 4 and ignore the rest, causing the fifth poem to burst into tears and throw itself to the floor in a tantrum. No one needs that.

We welcome poems from new and established poets. The editors have eclectic tastes, so give us a shot. Rhyming poems are a hard sell, but we still make room for a good one. Nature poems are always welcome. Political poems are also welcome, but no rants, please. We'd love to see what you've been creating.

Please read our full guidelines on Submittable: <https://gyroscopereview.submittable.com/submit/>  
Thank you for Reading! See you Oct. 1st for the release of the Fall Crone Power Issue. Updates to our new Submission dates for 2027 will be available then.



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