

A woman with dark hair, wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat and a white dress, is shown from the chest up. She is holding a large, yellow autumn leaf in front of her face, partially obscuring it. The background is filled with out-of-focus autumn leaves in shades of yellow, orange, and red. The overall style is painterly and soft.

Gyroscope Review

fine poetry to turn your world around

Fall 2026
Crone Power Issue



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Constance Brewer

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Falling Leaves © Constance Brewer (Pictures courtesy of Pixabay)

From the Editors

Welcome to our Annual edition of the Crone Power Issue. We look forward to this every year, loving to see how the crones will intrigue and amaze us with their poetry. It's always a difficult decision on what to choose. There are so many inspiring poems to sort through. We hope you like our final selection. These poems spoke to us on a deeper level, and as they told their stories, drew us in. There's just something about seeing personal experiences reflected back in the poems. These poems aren't just for the crones among us, they are life experience distilled, and something everyone can learn from. They are a fine example of what poetry can do for the soul, if we only listen.

Constance Brewer

Here I sit typing this well after midnight with my finger splints on (trigger finger), about to lie down on a special pillow that is best for my arthritic neck, chomping on my mouth guard. I accept all of this. I hope I can accept what comes. I want to say that, as usual, I was so inspired by the submissions we received, including some that we didn't have room for. Here, as in life, I am reminded of how much crones are my people. I am proud to be one of you. You are all thoughtful, intelligent, accomplished women and writers. Thank you for engaging me in your conversations and contemplations. I have learned so much. We may not be as physically agile as we once were, but we are flexible and adaptive, strong and soft.

Betsy Mars

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Section One

The Crone Instructs

BY BETH GORDON

Fill her bathtub with tepid water & a colony of tadpoles. Her bed with a field of poppies. Praise the way she makes bread without the help of an oven. Never put your hand near her teeth. Always offer to drive her to the Halloween parade. Accompany her to the hospital to visit her dying ex-lover. When she leaves the room, check his blood pressure. Press your ear to his cold heart. Follow her car to make sure her brake lights are working. Ignore the turn signal: she is not turning down that road. Never offer her salt or mirrors or apples or children's shoes. Laugh at her jokes. The sound of your joy will soothe her to sleep. Stand by the bed while she breathes incantations. Collect her dreams in a jar like fireflies. When lilac bushes perfume the night, text her to say *your children have awakened*.

Ritual for the Waxing Gibbous Moon

BY KRISTAN LAVIETES

one
matchstick untucked
from its paper family bed, co-
sleeping there til the world is ready,
now lit for freckled inheritance, for treachery
overcome, phosphorous toasting like champagne.
remember to let go. remember her third eye dimmed
more every easter until the found egg split keen open
with a zig-zag, with a chirp, with every onomatopoeia
bird song you can think of. that zig-zag a genetic mean-
streak, that chirp an old family ballad of her christmas
eve fever coming down, a watch-your-language-but-
oh-shit-finally hallelujah. in her room, this church
where a matchstick is a rite, lights one candle
glowing dim, or is it? if you hold
an egg up to it, you can see
inside.

Speaking of God

BY CATHERINE ABBEY HODGES

Shreds of mist move
among the alders and incense
cedars—everything muted,

my footsteps the only
distinct sounds, though my
frequencies aren't the fox's nor

the raven's. The same, of course,
can be said of light and color,
of sight. *The ravishing far-near*

said Hadewijch of Antwerp,
speaking of God. As her words come
to me through these roadside woods,

mist turns to heavy drizzle
and sends me home until later,
around four, when the sun will come

dazzling and I'll walk out to find
the ecstatic black-eyed juncos
shaking showers from the alders,

the incense cedars spelling
their name, fragrant and wild.

Leaf-taking

BY VIVIAN FAITH PRESCOTT

Farewell to the wind's breath, lamenting
summer's sigh. Farewell to the summer lush

and blue-berried underbrush. Welcome
the sunset's curvature bowed to our side

of the Bay where in midwinter the orb dips
in the trench between islands.

As the daylight dims it feels as if we are a small
continent floating on a silver sea.

Some days, I resist the urge to turn and stare
into the forest. But there always comes a day

when the shadows' nip begs me to turn from
the sea toward the dusky forest.

Each day now, she's emerging more and more
as the leaves shed their drapery until one day,

there she is—the old mossy stump, a likeness
of an elder woman watching from the treeline.

Hello Old Woman, I say to the stump, that I can
now clearly see. All summer a thimbleberry skirt

surrounded her waist and a full alder-leafed shawl,
hid her gaze. All summer, as I went about

cleaning fish, sweeping the deck, tossing sticks
for my dogs, I'd glance over there, knowing.

We share this—she too regarded the tubular
clouds floating like drift logs across the islands.

and delighted in the reckless waves dancing
atop the wrackline.

Erosion

BY ADELE EVERSLED

Where I grew the sea was green
with lead-heavy secrets dragged under a riptide
letting you learn the smuggler's code
moments before grinding you
between the hungry teeth of the rocks
yet the sand lay smooth as a deep breath

Where I grew the air was pink
with sea thrift calling like sirens off the cliffs
masking the yellow stink of fish
yet the salt-scorched grass
would cut you before you noticed
taking its toll in bloody curses and scars

So we all grew green and pink
and rough and smooth
voices bred on old hymns
words sharpened by survival

That was long ago and over time
I changed shape like a wind-blasted shore
green deepened to sage
pink coarsened to rust
the things I keep
still buried in the littoral cave of me

I no longer remember the old songs
but when the tide calls my name
I answer back with spit and salt
humming along with the waves
as we break
over
and over
again

North Country Sequence

BY ALISON CARB SUSSMAN

I want my bones to go back to earth
and embed themselves in sacred rings of trees.
When I sleep, only I will be able to see
the shy unfolding foliage, and listen
to fat black worms slither beneath the earth.
In the sun's after-rays, trees of all shapes lie
sunk among rocks and dust. I want to summon them
like muses. In living roots, we are huckleberry dark,
you ghosts and I, buried in scattered stones and silence.
I own this ridge and I am its destroyer,
collecting blackberries and pinecones.
Among stone slabs and wood piles, I laze
under the wet grass,
wearing a violet eggshell mask.
These seasoned trees are my realm,
my wild, untapped north country.
Or, am I a breathing corpse in a cradle
beneath an avalanche of newborn stars?

The Past

BY ALISON STONE

To be reborn, break the caul of the past.
Throw off the moth-eaten shawl of the past.

This moment's open doors and empty rooms.
Dusty portraits line the hall of the past.

Hoping for treasure lost along our way,
at night, with tattered nets we trawl the past.

Cow blood in the bed can save a bride's life.
Girls locked like beasts in the stall of the past.

The body aches and refuses. Finger
frozen—a claw. Tired arms haul the past.

In a dream, crows patrol the gold field. Old
lovers and gym teachers crawl from the past.

Our hearts distort like funhouse mirrors. How
honest is what we recall of the past?

Sinead's dead. Brave punk angel, at least
bullies and torment are all in the past.

Stay present, Stone, tied to the mast of love's
ship. Ignore the siren call of the past.

Owling

BY CREE ZADRA

Of course she has a flashlight;
two in fact, batteries newly inserted,
tucked in side and inner pockets.
The goal tonight is to see by the moon.

It hung yellow-orange and heavy
on the horizon until rising to float
high and white in a sea of stars,
barely a wisp of cloud standing
against it. She can see the bark
of trees around her, heavily runneled,
turned to rough silver in the moonlight.

Pause here. Close your eyes. Then blink
them open, breathe softly, call on
your nocturnal self. The forest is alive
around you, a swell of chittering
uneven noises, a dance of scents
in your nose. If you stayed here
you would know it better. You would
translate, eventually, the rustles and calls
of wolves and mink and possums. You could
disappear. But
tonight is for owls: barn, barred,
snowy, great horned, spotted, stygian.

This is one thing that sets the woman apart:
the knowledge of nighttime woods,
bats flying close, crickets playing the
soundtrack, air cooled hours after sundown,
and the discovery of that tufted oval
predator surveying her from a branch,
or the sudden swoop as it dives to
slaughter something warm and squealing,
now caught in claws.

Owl eyes wide as moons,
seeing each foot of its hunting ground,
seeing the intruder come to witness
such ordinary magicks.

Between the Shore and the Deep

BY LAURA DENNY

My consciousness
rises haphazardly,
like a solitary bubble,
up from a forgotten dream
through the salty
wreckage of the night
and reaches the surface.

Through my open window,
a first fall rain rustles in the trees.
You are not here. Moonlight spills
on my pillows and the earth smells
of wet bay leaves, and breathes
a sigh of relief. The moon's sideways
smile pulls on the ocean in me.

I try not to think about you,
only about how my feet
spoon together tenderly.

Above the trees, the moon
says, *Shh*. Or is it the leaves?
I roll over where the sheets are cool,
and cover my head with my pillow,
float somewhere for a long while
between the shore and the deep
like giant sea kelp swaying
back and forth, back and forth—

Fireworks

BY BANG WANG

Death is a reunion plan with a seductive *o* in your mouth
All these years later, you still write to me in your favourite
forest green and amber
Sending me moss letters from your grave
But it is the black dots between each sentence that draw me in

Since you are gone, I watch the fireworks by myself
wrapping my shoulders with my own arms
Didn't we wear everything quilted
on fireworks night and eat marshmallows
white clouds plucked from a black sky?
Memory is the shining sawdust of life

I had my first toffee apple on my first firework night in England
7000 miles away from our homeland
Its tiny broken shards grazed my tongue all night
The last time I was bled by something this sweet
was on a train to London when a stranger told me love is inexhaustible

I wait behind the crowd, a little away from the field
It is so quiet
Until the night sky blossoms
into giant dandelions of scattered stars
I see every life in the form of in-betweenness
I see you disappear and reappear
infinitely

You have become incredibly small now
My love
like a pale blue glimmer lit by giant flowers
inside the tunnel of my dark eyes

Afterlife

BY COLETTE MCHALE WISNEWSKI

she would name the new dog
after her late husband
so when she awoke in darkness
calling out his name
or felt lost in her own home
unable to find even herself
the dog would come running
thinking she only wanted him
and knowing his presence soothed her
he would find her again and again

the name would be a holiness
spoken and received
co-mingling past and present
building a future by naming love
and then daring to add
come sit stay

Anniversary Poem

BY MICHELE SHARPE

We share the mummified skin of the long-married. It wraps
our fat, muscles, and bones in one long bandage. Of course it's only
me who sees the gorgeousness nearby: mating-plumaged bluebirds,
fragrant magnolias, the open sarcophagus under our bed that's armored
in turquoise and gold and ready to receive whoever dies by heart attack
during my monthly orgasm. After each spat about intention, the whole house
levitates above its slab and threatens to leave us unsheltered. I've sliced
this peach for you, my love, so have a seat while all the kids and dogs
we've ever known stand in between this laden table and divorce.

Summer Evening Love Song

BY JUDITH SANDERS

When the streetlights flick on,
so do the fireflies. They zigzag
in moist shadows, where night
wells from mulched beds.
They telegraph their love songs,
dots dashed with dark, to cicadas' chirr.

We've fled the hot kitchen
to cool our anger at the news.
It's our millionth walk down
this soothing street—
the houses sealed, cars settled,
shades not yet drawn.

Through lit windows we spy
members of our species,
silhouetted in electric glare.
We wouldn't dream of knocking
with an invitation to flashlight tag
or a troubadour competition.

We skim under a canopy
of sycamores, walled by
hydrangeas, a foliage tunnel
proportional to our size.
No need for us to be flashy:
We've located our mate.

Summer's end will snuff
these amorous torchbearers,
but their kind danced here
before this street carved forest.
They'll court and sparkle
long after the streetlights—
and the news—burn out.

Reasons women may have difficulty with orgasm*

BY THETA PAVIS

No. 8: We do not have enough time during sex

He used to leave in the middle of the night, packing up his slim body like it was foldable. Transport himself away from me. Back across the river. Now he sometimes stays, stretched long as an exclamation mark in my bed. I am, of course, curled like a question mark. I'm not used to him. He talks in his sleep. There is a knowledge in his fingertips, broken shouldered arms and hips. But I cannot take full advantage of his understanding. Because what he hasn't learned is what he's missing. He does not want all of me. I care. But I don't care, because there is more of me than there used to be. The plenty of self. I am not saying that the little knives of lonely loneliness don't stabber stab. There is just less brilliant ache. More song. I enjoy my desire.

No. 9 Some are uncomfortable or self-conscious about their body/appearance

Please praise the holiness of confidences. I'm used to my women friends telling me they don't climax. But V. took the cake. Or all cake and no cream. They were married for ten some years. And she never. Came. Not once. Not once upon a time. Not honeymooned. Not make up sex. Not omygod. When she finally told me, I stopped still on the path we were walking, gapping lamentations at her. There are secrets and then there are secrets. And W. was another one. So happy. Paired off. A hot tub even. Then she told me they never kiss. Oh lack of bliss. The restraint like a yoke worn soft with familiarity.

No. 3 Some do not enjoy sex with their partner

But has anyone studied how many women go to sleep next to men they no longer fuck? Not tonight. Not with the light. Not in the dark. Not for a lark. Not sweet but bliss lacked. So sidetracked. Lust that's been thumbtacked. X said she sometimes just sleeps on the couch.

*From "11 Reasons Women May Have Difficulty With Orgasm," *Psychology Today* article. (Male author. Many bliss-blocked women were interviewed.)

How Many Anniversaries

BY HELEN FINNEY

He watches her take the glint from her eyes
and put it in a jar on the side,

she slides off her face, leaves it hanging on a hook,
those empty eyes, that fixed smile,

tries not to stare as she takes off her clothes
with no hint of knowing her allure, if only she knew.

Now he sits on the bed and stares at his phone,
each alone in this room, the years stacked under their belts.

Such closeness,
such space.

In Praise of a Ruined Body

BY ARMINÉ IKNADOSSIAN

i.

I give back the talons of grief
nails of steel wool I give back

the dusty vinyl records brought over
from the Adriatic I give back

roaming hills and valleys of my throat's
raspy confessions I give back

the edge of a bomb's crater and
mother's voice as I drift off I give back

runny eggs and calloused hands, the lift of
the egret's feet over the Dead Sea.

ii.

Inside my body you will find
a graveyard of averages

the clutch of veins that throb
in my right shin, that broken highway

where did that shattered bone go?
why do I keep biting the inside of my cheek?

iii.

lift the rising dough of my hips
there is still so much feast in my body

Against Ataraxia

BY JUDITH H. MONTGOMERY

Enough of peace and ease. The pond
lily's composed equally of drowned mud
and rising fire. It's not that its petal-nest

drifting over ink-black waters has been
fashioned by an artist's hand, then loosed,
candle-boat to rock beneath tonight's full

fall moon. Admit edge and blood: the gold-
finch feather floating at pond-edge signals
no easy molting. The glinting dragonfly

now hovering over green rushes—swift
predator, snatching dinner out of air.
Enough of ataraxia, of calm and balance.

Yes, the gleaming fist and float of petals
feeds swaying on its long anchor, rope
rises from the squelch of rich dead

detritus sifting and settling, camouflage
for sharp rock. Umbilicus anchoring
the white-wax blossom against storm-

thrash, against baking August drought.
No, enough of hover, of detachment.
Claim both muck and dazzle, binding

the under- and over-world together. The lily
lights her long candle, hauls us thrashing
into daylight's fractured spark and scorch.

She-Buddha

BY FRANCINE VAN DEN BERG

Her maxim now: to be free, and Mother
peels off her flesh and steps out of herself, discards
her womanhood on a Monday morning
for whoever to collect. One tired womb
and two flaccid breasts sucked dry are left
roadside, zipped up neatly in a dark-grey bag
that's tagged: 'Take care of this body. Finders keepers'
then doles out her savings, barefoot under the bridge
to tramps whose toothless cackles form an Ohm
—*For they know fire, and sleet, and wind*, she says—
and burns her shoes in the firepit. From now on

she presses her feet into fat-bottomed earth—
her footprint a map to guide her by; no ego—
just wind when she runs through seasons; in winter
cracking duck eggs with her teeth so a sticky
sun sets warm in her stomach, and in summer nights
she wraps cool stars around her sundial-silhouette.
She: no longer owner of a body that wasn't hers
really, just a planet whose foamy rivers
sprung from sunflower nipples that once fed
three fine sons who grew up just too damn quickly
and a receptacle of orgasms—on Sundays,

sticky seed placed like a hostie on her tongue.
She sees herself shapeless, without a house
where God was every stain on the stair carpet—
the empty attic, three feathers for a heart.
On fickle days, she knows when the sun leaves
its own vanity mirror, tired of its own
reflection; and she, sat there in full lotus
with hands for scales, palms outstretched
and sunbeams like sand slipping through
the abyss between her fingers like an hourglass
dropping every grain of now
into yesteryear, stacking memories.

Section Two

What's that bird?

BY JUDITH SORNBERGER

you asked, pointing to the black, white
and copper stunner shuffling under
your feeder for dropped seeds.
We were drinking Chardonnay at 9AM
and giggling like girls around your kitchen table—
all the usual rules of time shooed away
like pesky squirrels from the feeder tray.
You were dying. But not yet.

At that moment, you were giving
your sisters beauty tips, having us
try on your new favorite lipstick,
giving us microdermabrasion kits
to trick our faces out of growing older.
Asking if we liked your platinum hair
worn newly short and spikey. *Yes*, I said,
and it's a rufous-sided towhee.

I need to get my journal, you said,
jumping up and pulling your oxygen tank
behind you like a queen's train
into the next room. *What was it again?*
Can you spell it for me? I did,
and you wrote it down, like you
might need to find it sometime later.
I never loved you so much
as that morning when you taught us
how to make each moment gorgeous,
how to be alive without relying on a *later*.

The Condition of Pre-prick & Mutuality

BY LAURA MCCULLOUGH

The Brazilian raintree resists wiring,
its trunk too soft, too tender, then
brittle, thorn-riddled, it spreads branches
with abandon, yellow vibrancy beneath
green leaves that close at night in prayer
I can only imagine, as if lit from within.
Tiny ovals shimmer in morning light,
to close at twilight again, folding into
itself as I do sometimes, wanting
to cocoon, curl inward from this world.
It looks so vulnerable & I feel tender
toward it, each dawn, checking it as we
both welcome a new day.

At every new
node, two thorns, first smaller
than a baby's pinky nail, then
long as a baby's finger, hard
& sharp. I don't take
the BRT for granted.

Some snip the thorns,
which I tried on my first tree,
but more came, just like life,
just like all the difficult things
we try to ward off but return
to surprise us, no protection

from life's suffering, & like
morning, searing its light
through temporary despair,
burning fog away, what
to do but surrender?

Skeleton Days

BY ELLEN MCGRATH SMITH

Sartre tells me in very fine print that we must bear down like a hammer on the nail of our existence over and over and over again.

I've forgotten to take my Effexor tonight, but don't yet remember I've forgotten. Instead of sleep I'll be forced to play all the roles in my dreams. This will exhaust me, so much REM reducing me to zombie when I wake. The day will reverse the roles. Every one of its moments will hammer me—I'll know by then what's happening, but still, it's stupendous, jaw-dropping that a drug can have the half-life of a sheer cliff, not days but hours.

Sartre says I can unscrew myself, spit out the sawdust, and move on. Depression's nothing more to him than acute awareness of existence, which, as Sartre in his Buddha aspect holds to be the first noble truth, is suffering. Is joy then nonexistence, or simply a lightening that gives a glimpse of pure being? I've been shuffling through the words of existentialists of late. Last month, de Beauvoir, cigarette smoke rising from the page as if Paris is simply a book one can open.

I'm turning, I'm afraid. Autumn's here in my body, and autumn outside brings it out so stark I know I must look old to my students, brown and white streaked hair and eyes so bright they can't help but mirror the shrill cries of the maple leaves in early November. Early November. Is this where I am now? Meanwhile, in figurative February, my mother tells me offhandedly that her childhood friend died last week, which strikes me as something you should lead with in a conversation.

The fact that she doesn't evokes brittle leaves on frost-sharp dirt dissolving gradually then quickly into the ground they begin to resemble, shading like charcoal into a uniform surface that will, at some point, seem to have always been that way. Or as Sartre puts it, becoming an object against which those who exist gauge their existence.

Thorny Things on California Cliffs

BY ELAINE MINTZER

We are all looking for something: a view,
a climb, a memory, steps to add to our daily total.
We hike along the edge of the continent,

well, walk really—knees being what they are
after a certain age—trying to memorize everything
before this cliff slips into the sea.

On a bluff overlooking the ocean, Catalina
a dark doorstep on the horizon, I photograph
a patch of cactus in the coastal scrub,

a picture of prickly pear in the chapparal
leaning and crashing like the waves below,
and think about the wildlife they support:

western fence lizards and blue butterflies,
red-tailed hawks soaring in search of cottontails,
and I'm trying to remember the name of the seabird

that sits on rocks in the surge, something
that starts with “p” but not pelican,
and not ptarmigan or peacock. At last, it comes to me:

cormorant. Cormorants roost on shit-slicked crags
and the sky is full of cirrocumulus clouds,
words so delicious, I start thinking about dinner,

maybe something with a sweet, salty sauce
from, you know, what's the name of that restaurant?
Houses on the hill are red-tagged as they slide seaward.

My knees complain. Memory slips.
On the precipice. Hawk above. Beach beneath.
How unpredictable the wind.

Life Is Love's Wildest Destructions We Rebuild Daily

BY LISA HIGGS

is an ice-flecked incessant pecked pane of glass, is a broken clock blinking always the same time, is what has changed between closed eyelids, what has not changed, is missing the race gun's sharp retort, is running a gravel road in flipflops, is having no shoes amid the shards glistening in sunbreaks, is cloudlet against barren branch shiver, is gray comforter across the empty bed, is need to unmet need, presence in a cold scene, is winter's breath half keen, half scream rattling house frames, and utter silence, such yawning absence, everything missing, everything pictured on the back of a milk carton dropped in the bin, is the overlooked cupboard off its hinge, is what you dig for tunneling to China, is the frozen earth under cast iron firebox flaming grave space to allow its hole, is burning wood brushing the air, the dirt that won't brush out of your hair after the burrowed journey, is a there and back trail matted door to door, is not a trace of grime on any floor, dry mop, wet mop, fancy feather duster never used, is the thin-tailed bird, its awkward neck bent to chest, is wind gusts overlapping the expected and unexpected, continuously, the gut clench, jaw ache, feral yowling of coyotes trapped in throat, is the pressure of standing on one foot, tightrope taut as a spine in traction, is immobile balance, any number of accidents, is a wavering, a hiccup, is a second's eternity and a second's passing, is snowless Decembers and sleetful Februarys, is cursive covered papers, a lost understanding, is a growing fist of sharp pencils waiting.

My Mother's Dictionary of Things That Survived

BY D. A. LEE

My mother kept words
that disappeared
before I learned to pronounce them.

She carried them
without paper.

A wooden spoon
darkened by another kitchen.

A photograph
creased at the same corner
for half a century.

A recipe written
in a language my childhood
could not yet read.

When I asked what a word meant,
she rarely translated.

She showed me.

Rain tapping a window.

Rice steaming before dinner.

The careful folding
of cloth too old
to discard.

I believed memory lived
inside the mind.

She knew better.

Memory hides in objects.

It sleeps in drawers.

It waits beneath fabric.

It survives in the hands
of someone old enough
to remember why something mattered.

After she was gone,
I opened her cabinets.

Nothing was labeled.

Nothing needed to be.

The objects had learned
her language.

They were waiting
for mine.

Trying to Remember When I Fell in Love

BY KRISTY NIELSEN

Bare feet moved
from macadam to bristly
lawn by worn-board
garage and acorn tree
that grandma grew when
a breeze lifted
my shirt and my body
thrummed

which moment stays
decades later. Why
that and not what followed
or came before? Where
is the moment
I seek? Memory
encodes like a skipping
stone. Now I taste
blood, now I smell gin.
Ah now I remember

collecting cold stones
with flat sides
on the indifferent winter
shingle, snow drifting
and both of us look up:
that, that instant when

your pockets weighted
with rocks, my face
chapped, we each saw
the other. It was then.

In Praise of Volunteers

BY MARIANNE CELANO

In a frenzy of April weeding I almost snatched you from your fragile purchase on the ground. But recognizing your species, I decided to let you be, even though the light was poor under the azaleas. You were an accident of nature, a forgettable mystery. By the time I transplanted seedlings to the raised beds, you were already entangled in the shrub, your yellow starflowers hidden in the shadows. Steadily you threaded your branches through narrow pockets of air as the pink azalea petals budded, opened, shriveled, and then disappeared. When my other plants surrendered to beetles, you began to produce sweet, marble-sized fruit. The grassy scent of your sepals saturated the yard. By midsummer you had spiderwebbed to neighboring bushes, freckling the dormant azaleas with pops of Christmas red. I ate your flesh raw and dripping, your skin still warm from the sun. Then salted and sprinkled with olive oil. Rubbed on bread for *pan con tomate*. Bedded with roasted New Mex peppers in *quesadillas*. August weekends I finger-lifted your fruits to crush into sauce. Even after the basil withered, you remained, supporting a network of bees and sparrows as your vines draped like lace doilies over a table. As the days grew shorter, we sheathed our sleeves in golden powder to retrieve your glory. Now it is November, and your reach spans ten generous human paces. Our harvesting cannot keep up. Overripe voyagers drop to the ground, ensuring a next generation of rebel volunteers to infiltrate the azalea bank. Such is the value of a rogue garden, underestimated and tucked in the shade, beyond the circle of cultivated friends.

Last Testament of a Crone

BY GINA L. SERMAN

I have done things to my body:
insulted its nerves, broken its bones
marked it with tattoos, with scars
risked it in swift waters, at cliff edges,
hung it by fingertips over empty air,
staggered it with burdens
thrown it from horses
skated it across creaking ice
infected it with lust, married it to men,
torn its throat howling with childbirth

banged its head against a wall
danced with it, sang

crabbed its wrists and feet with work
fed it river water and raw meat
smoked its lungs with dicey stuff
dropped it into swamps
offered it to mosquitoes, to deerflies

and ticks, to teeth and claws,
left it out in rain, in dark, in snow
abraded its joints, wrinkled its skin

worn it slack, infirm, half-deaf,
limping, reeling with vertigo

all of this, and feeling everything
and trembling with senility
it begs, begs constantly for more.

Live Forward, Learn Backwards

BY MARISSA GLOVER

When we survey the miles of snow and ice,
a chill recalls the chances lost to chance —
regret's a frozen house we visit twice.

On first approach, we knock and roll the dice,
with hope a crackling fire or hot romance
delays the many miles of snow and ice.

The second visit we fictionalize
and waste our precious time in backward glance;
regret's a door we try to darken twice.

No one is rich enough to pay the price
the past exacts. We make our feet advance
across the hardened miles of snow and ice.

Retracing our mistakes is ego's vice;
pretending won't protect from happenstance.
Regret's a place we'll never travel twice.

Only a fool attempts a life they've spliced —
alive enough to waltz with ghosts, entranced.
The brave will walk the miles of snow and ice.
Regret's a tree for birds to fly by twice.

What I have known and not known

BY M. ANN REED

I have known 40 below zero winds whipping
snow into tall banks between conifer forests.

I have known Bach's sonorous warming tones
and Matryoshka-dressed women caroling

honey-flamed cordials bringing goose-bumps under
Kiev's gently falling snow and flying swans.

I have known the trip and fall on hard, thick ice,
and then being held in timeless surrender —

a skater losing my vision of perfection,
of forgetting myself altogether,

allowing physics to work its natural
miracles, giving me hundreds of

unserious double flips, each flipping
up, over-and-down around pure joy.

I have known spring walks with my mother
in "parables / Of sun light"* remembering

Kiev's golden onion domes pointing sun's wands
over the disarray below—rubble, burnt-blackened wood,

discarded newspapers, ashes, not taking anything
for granted. And I remember night-blooming

jasmine climbing and spiraling around ancient
Oak trunks dressing them white in Chantilly lace

shaping their stellaring poetry of place!
And when four years old, I was surprised to know

many Mary Poppins time-traveling up, floating
under umbrellas while fierce wind and rain

pummeled sidewalks and rebounded, each aiming
to re-enter castle-clouds, later learning

these Marys were international Mayo
patients whom rude winds had flown, then deposited

on sidewalks far from intended destinations.
What I had not known then, was Dr. Henry

Plummer's solution: iron rails around
the sky-scraping Plummer building whereby, in wind

and rain, all pedestrians could hang tight.
And I had not known of biognosis—how

plants can read us, and we can read them.
Yet, I still do not know, after relating with

a violet's golden eyes, how this flower's light
can mend illness. Perhaps John Adams, the second

US president and botanist had known.
And I do not know how the Golden Silk Orb Weaver

at her Eiffel-Tower center-stage post spins
a web of Paris streets turned night-light gold.

I do not know how her blue sapphire heart set in
gold at her throat marks her soul's Nirvana—

her exodus from the food-chain's trap.
And I know neither how her black white-dotted

body maps her Dream People's path home,
nor how she threads a golden proportioned web

to right all lives at death's door, each moment opening
to infinities giving existence harmony.

That Mice Might Sing

BY ANGIE BLAKE-MOORE

— *A scientist has discovered that high-pitched sounds made by small rodents could actually be melodious songs* — Smithsonian magazine

His front paws held aloft, his tail a stiff arrow, one suitor mouse presents his lady with a song of full moons and fields of grain, nights when not a single owl is awake. Or look through the mouse hole and see the mother there: look through the arch-shaped doorway gnawed in the molding, past the tiny green and lighted Christmas tree placed on a spool of thread. Yes surely, a mama mouse would sing. I believe in the rodent lullaby, a song of stars and cheese. There she is, tucking her mousling into his matchbox bed. She rocks in a dollhouse chair, sets her drink on a thimble table. Her lullaby of cotton and sunbeams, and places to play far from oblivious cats. And isn't it enough, then, to think of the notes squeaking out from behind the baseboards, rising like bubbles, like balloons?

That Other Baby

BY TRICIA KNOLL

When my mother said she worried that she got the wrong baby at the hospital, I knew how unfathomable I was to her. She wore gloves to prune the roses; I garden for dirt in my fingernails and yes, I've been torn by thorns. She encouraged me to walk with books on top of my head. She was a good cook; I make do with tofu and kale. She wasn't a feminist except on women's right to vote. I wonder about that other baby. Did she become the beauty queen my mother wanted? Or love golf and watch tedious tournaments on television instead of horse racing? She probably grew up in the Illinois, so she'd know about cicadas, corn, and tornados. Can she do a crossword puzzle, even a hard one, starting at the top lefthand corner and filling in every square in sequence down to the bottom right. An inherited expansive mind for vocabulary and filling in squares? Does she hold her cards close to her chest so no one cheats her? This begs the question of my real mother. Did she define security as love instead of money? I'm guessing her hair never turned gray. I had to get that from somewhere. I hope she wore cowgirl boots, ate dark chocolate, let the family dog have a say at the front door, and didn't die of loneliness.

Rainy Day Love Song

BY BROOKE HERTER JAMES

On the old wooden stool inside
the opened barn doors,
I sit while the donkey stands—
his head pressed against my shoulder,
so close I can count his eyelashes.
His breath pillows through
his huge soft nostrils. Smells
of warm musty hay & I rub my hands
down the velvet of his ears
curling them like a donkey ear taco,
trace the chocolate-brown cross on his back,
cup the roll of his neck, lean into his lean.
Whatever plans we had for the day,
(his amble to the apple tree, my dig in the garden)
we will stay here long into the afternoon,
press into each other, listen to the rain.

This We Have Now

BY ELIZABETH FARRIS

In the middle of the night
a candle is made to become entirely flame.
What was in that candle's light?

In the early morning hour,
light again, and the one who brings light.
An eye is meant to see things,
notice how each particle moves.

I am dust particles in sunlight.

Listen to this, and hear the mystery inside.
Listen to the story told by the reed.
Don't worry about saving these songs,
Spring, and everything outside is growing.

I feel like the ground, astonished.

This cento poem is taken from the first lines of poems that appear in the collection "The Essential Rumi" by Rumi.

My method was to transcribe every first line of the poems into a list and then see which ones related to any others.

Psalm for Al-Lat

BY HASSEN SAKER

—*from Ruins*

how I flung my seeds and vine aground, growling into the bag of outrage. what kind of burdensome meddle or mettle to be perceived. entwined with indigo gradation to supersede night. one must be a woman to supersede. I know the sound staging. place bags of sand over our heads in trenches, puking.

then you, entrancing in that desert. I sipped from your well. words under my feet fell away. your axe flew in the sun, rang through the canyon. we walked together for days. eyes of the mountain lions were on us. we were fearless. your song honed my fury. my years of mumbling struck. clear precision. there was no explosion. they came looking for a boy's stick god. they came to take captives. they came to frame their debate. how they tamper with your biosphere.

now I see why they never mention you. you're the serpent under the mantle, under the skin. claws in the shadows, in the caves. the boulders in the wilderness. the cliff that juts into the sky. the nightshade and you're the shifting. you're what moves the dunes. you're the shining black stone that madmen circle. hidden in plain sight.

your hair brushed my face. you taught me to hold all these things at once. all your voices. hold resources. night fell and sky spun. you weren't hiding; I had to develop the sense to hear your frequency. it was the rhythm of my heart; I found my heart the beat of your battle.

it's you that resonates outward under my steps. future, past. you're the soft side and sharp edge. you murder me and revive me. dark as richest soil. too beautiful for human. the end of the human. you're the end of all knowing and then the end of unknowing. the fever dream and the final hush of darkness awaiting beneath every single dream and the deep kiss that wakes me.

La Malinche

BY MARSHA DE LA O

The air whispers in tongues
and tongues
lodge themselves in me,
words fill my mouth like seeds
each slight as a single pip.

Because my name means *blade of grass*
because my name means *penance*
at the hands of one then another
the gods hurled up by the sea receive me as a gift.

Mute and fierce my listening.

Because my name means
one leaf moves in the wind
I remain attached to the branch
in the forest—
entire lexicons drift from trees.

When the sun enters me
I speak and empires fall.

Kneeling for my overlord as the words I am,
I am she who is raised up by language—
he calls me his *new sword*,
sinks onto me like a child.

Grass grows on the mountain I am the grass
the green wildfire

covered with blades.
Because my name means wound the land lies bleeding.

Section Three

Noah's Wife Writes to Her Sister

BY CHRISTA FAIRBROTHER

After rain for forty days and nights
we're a floating cavern
of silage and slime.
It smells worse than you can imagine.
But what kind of boat sails as a circus
except one that strains its seams
and overworks its bilge.
In the holds, the horses are slinged
to stave off colic, the bull's horns
are shorn so they don't gore anyone,
and the pig's tails have been clipped,
preventing butt nips.
There's nothing free-range about this boat.
They've been saved because BBQ
smells better than oily fleece.
And that's the suffering of the animals
you've heard of. We're carrying sloths
who wear fungus. Something called
an Okapi that looks like two puzzles
mixed. Bandicoots, Quokkas,
so many useless animals
you can't eat, ride, or draft
that all have names. But not me,
I'm hound dog loyal, but without
a name, I do not come when called.
Four hundred years married
to a drunkard breeds indifference.
A man whose chief skill is taking orders
shall have no dominion over me.
I heard HE brought the flood
because HE was still angry
about the whole Eve thing.
It was a big present
and she didn't read the directions,
spoiled the garden
and didn't even write
a thank you note.
HE'S as thin-skinned as a naked mole rat,
little mewling pink things with no fur.
They're crated as snacks for the cats and dogs.
And I know you're asking where were my boys
in all of this. I raised them to have more sense.
The weaving club would say look to their wives
for not training them, but nameless
is blameless in my book.

I taught those boys to roll
up their sleeves, scrub.
They're too excited
to be included in HIS project,
lost all sense.
They pace the decks
straining for land.
I'm too old to be scolding—
we get there when we get there.
But sister, I do look up too.
I'm thankful for the air ferns crowning
the roof, their lonely green,
and beyond, to the clouds,
the sole steep in this flat,
upside down world. The water
reflects thunderheads,
cumulonimbus mountains.
They're the only thing in the sky
I can count on right now.

Testament

BY MARY MCCARTHY

I swear by my mother's warning
her body paid out in generous
measure, child by child,
the loads of laundry hauled
and folded, the chaos held
at bay with broom and mop,
her vigilance untiring,
the eye of the lighthouse
sweeping over the rough
of seas, tsunami's threat,
the men set out to catch
each unwary stumble
of her innocents.

I swear by my grandmother's
strength, her will unbent
by loneliness, her records kept
in ledgers even lines
always adding up
to just enough, her stories
gifts of her own determination,
the gazes that erased all threats
refusing to see or serve them,
her insistence on her worthiness
to expect respect.

I swear by my father's hands,
heavy as mallets pounding
rock to sand, taking care to fit
each broken stone
into its waiting space
making a surface strong enough
to bear our weight,
his anger an engine
of retribution, grinding us up
for mortar, his weariness
a collapse into the nightmare
world of no regrets.

I swear by my sister's
dreams, by the memories
we share, the bruises we wear
beneath our clothes,
the words we keep
unspoken, sharp stones

beneath our tongues,
the tears we leave unshed,
afraid to invite
more punishment
when all we have is more
than anyone could ever
ask for.

Tree House

BY LINDA HILLMAN CHAYES

—after *Larry Lewis*

You have no brother.

No brother who chopped down
a treehouse built by his father.

You never had a brother
who grew skinny
and rangy until
everyone could see his needs
greying like ash on his arms,
feet and cheeks,
could hear glass as it shattered
on his entry.

You carry it around,
the weighted axe the splintered wood
the endless wooden remains
until one day at noon
in full-faced sun
you are the opposite of blinded, you become
the white light on the pine needles,
the clarity of unbroken glass.

Who could love that ghost
of a brother who left you
shoveling uprooted earth?
Who would gift you a life of hammer
and repair, hammer and repair,
who left to buy finer and finer
designer clothes in his California dream
of wisteria and koi ponds,
exchanged an axe
for a pick-up to carry his wind
sails, refused
his father death?



BY MARTHA ELLEN

no name no gender
no shape nor color
no parameters

maybe like a teacher
an abiding friend
a force
a ghost
lifting aloft
soaring overhead

always smiling at birds

when i speak of this
i say “scissors”
in silence ✂

I.

✂ arrives
I am grasping the rail
on my crib “Mommy!”
mommy mommy mommy mommy
✂ hiding in the billowing
curtains on a balmy
summer afternoon
“fly away with me”
✂ says and i do

✂ shows me the song bird
ensnared within the folds
✂ clips a rent
“she’ll survive you’ll see”

II.

hiding in the upstairs closet
huddled upon a stack of shoes
beneath the winter coats

they might not find me
i am three

✂ whispers
“fear not i’m here
you just forgot”

(Scissors cut the crimson floss for the cardinal I embroidered.)

III.

at seven
i come upon
my brother killing baby birds
stolen from the nest
one by one
all lined up

their mother squawking
darting overhead
frantic
ha ha ha ha ha ha
ha ha ha

peep

“shhhh now”

✂ jabs my palm
numb

✂, i love you

(Scissors cut new yellow trousers for Grover, my teddy bear.)

IV.

mom and dad
clipped my wings
put me out
with the trash

✂ sees me
down the alley
two suitcases
✂ says “a frayed knot”
(✂ always makes me laugh)

✂ cuts a bandage
applies a balm

✂ shears away
the insignificant
snips threads that bind
unravels sweaters
repurposes yarn
a warm afghan
to wrap around

new pattern pieces
cut with skill
i stitch into a new path
✂ by my side

V
✂ calls out
from a distance
“i’m taking you away now
let’s go”

we float free
light as air
far above

that shabby apartment
beneath
my brother’s friend
has his way
and laughs

my brother
laughs too
(✂ cries)

(Scissors cut the white taffeta for my prom dress.)

VI
✂ stabilizes
blood pressure
i make it through

✂ cuts the cord

separates me from
my precious baby girl
✂ preparing me
for what lies ahead

Robin tumbles
from the nest

✂ cuts nerves
blunts pain
✂ dries my tears

(Scissors cut the pink flannel for Robin’s baby bunting now folded in the cedar chest under the south windows. Jack the crow salutes as he flies by.)

VII

✂ pierces
the illusion of time
lifts the fog of memory

one morning
in a motel somewhere
(in Washington i think)
no birdsongs
greet the dawn

a stormy vision
i see Peeper
in a cage
silent

✂ says "he might die dear"
i fly away
✂ says "i will still be here
when you return"

(Scissors cut the cotton squares for the patchwork quilt.)

VIII

✂ visits me in dreams

gramma dies

✂ cuts a scene
from paradise
welcome home
gramma
millions and millions
millions and millions
of joyful angels
wings fluttering

my sister dies
there she is
walking on
an uphill footpath
✂ by her side
toward
the illuminated place
she turns to me
and smiles
"you'll be OK"

we'll wait here for you"

(Scissors clipped the ribbon to hold the charm "I love you, sis.")

IX

✂ teaches me to survive

✂ says Act dumb (*oh that's nice you must be a collector & he puts the knife away*)

Back off, Bargain, Beg

✂ says Call for help (*911 he's here he's throwing things at my head & he flees*)

Coax, Deny

✂ says Dominate (*no i will not open the door & he leaves*)

✂ says Don't move a muscle (*i freeze & she thinks she wins*)

Fall mute

✂ says Go limp (*i'm a statue & he doesn't rape me*)

✂ says Hide (*i duck behind a pillar in the dark & he doesn't find me*)

Ignore

✂ says Laugh it off (*this is a joke right & he releases my wrists*)

Lay low

✂ says Lie (*i'm waiting for a friend & he runs off*)

✂ says Play dead (*i pretend i am unconscious & he lifts the pillow from my face*)

✂ says Run (*i sprint & his murder plan fails*)

Sashay away, Scream

✂ says Smile more (*sorry i can't right now i smile & he doesn't force me into his car*)

Surrender

✂ says Talk fast (*do you need help i ask & the thief scurries away*)

Threaten

✂ says Walk away (*see ya later*)

✂ is so proud of me

X

in my recovery

from wounds

self-inflicted

from injuries

by unseen foes

in my despair

✂ shows me

luminous threads

connecting us all

"you are not alone

you never were"

✂ says
“i was i am i will be
always you”

✂ raises the curtain
we made from scraps
forget-me-not meadows
translucent lagoons

i'm

soaring in blue skies

with birds

Snakes

BY MARGARET DIEHL

The renters left.
Snakes in the basement.
I didn't protest
the breaking of the lease
though single again
I needed the money.
In my defense, the four-foot guests
weren't regulars, didn't visit
every year or most,
but when they did,
summer under the mountain,
my shaggy acreage
green and buggy, few cars
on the lonesome road,
I rejoiced.

They stayed to their corner
where a cardboard box
of manuscripts softened
in humid shadows
below the wires
of homemade electrical fixes
opposite the washing machine's
industrial belly. Alone,
midweek, on task—sheets
and towels, underpants—
I'd chat with them. Old
sorrows, delayed ambition.
Their communal sleep
reminded me of youth
California, the blue Pacific,
the perils of polyamory.

Mid-brown, sluggish coils
the diameter of a vacuum hose—
you couldn't call them
pretty. Nor did they possess
any powers but those
I bestowed, unzipping skin
to find a man inside
or something like a man
an angel template, adult
yet innocent, without a past,
flesh damp, the color
of pearl and fog.

I'd teach him the laws
of my nation
as I invented them. *First,*
choose your harm.
I'd wash his face,
brush his hair.

If his blood were cold
I'd warm it in bed
but also in my mother's
speckled enamel milk pan
pour it back into his body
down the holes in his neck
until his toes sizzled.

Our offspring would manifest
on my head, shrilling
like the tea kettle forgotten
when the family moves away
or the renters decamp.

My beauties, hissing dialogue
from my abandoned novels
shocking flashbulb eyes
turning my enemies to stone
Apollos. A woman alone
needs a bit of the classical
adorning riotous September
apples in unmown grasses.

Ghosts

BY JULIE WEISS

Maybe the world is filled with them,
if you're audacious enough
to squeeze through the cracks

in science. Shadows flitting beneath
my cat's paws, how he frenzies
off walls, fur raised, spots hoopla

mid-air. Trinkets which surface
years after sinking to the bottom
of memory. If I had sea-sized

pockets, I'd probably play pranks, too.
Impossible to decipher an insect's
alphabet, yet one inconsolable

September, a bee near my ear
articulated relief in my dead
father's voice, honeyed my grief.

Who quaked the square of earth
under my feet the day I pondered
a dangerous proposition? Who stopped

my car's dizzying spin on a downhill
highway if not the ghosts who once
loved me? I've ridden trains from one

lonely village to another, one village
cemetery to another, a longing
of fingerprints on the window,

blurring my reflection. If I were
a ghost, would I prance among flowers
like dad, or glide alongside a train,

desperate for a path back to the living?
Are the ghosts that inhabit my poems
beacons from beyond, or are we

accidental passengers, barreling through
a tunnel that ends in oblivion?

Prompts

BY ANN CHINNIS

—*After Kelli Agodon after Courtney LeBlanc*

Write a poem about another dead person but don't use the word dead. Write instead about something a dead person taught you, like watching your father bob bloodworms on a salt-water bottom. Write about why you love fishing, even though you hate surprises. Hate them so much you snuck out of your own surprise 40th birthday party. Write about why you love fishing even though you and your father squabbled each time one of you baited a hook. It's OK that he's been dead twenty years and you, at seventy, still don't understand immiscible particles. Some things you can't see without a mirror. Write about the evening you asked your lover if she stole your mother's narcotics. If you write about the gun she pulled from the bedside table, be honest. Write you were relieved that, after a decade, you finally could leave her. If it's raining, write a poem in past tense about how you never noticed her track marks. A poem in which you were a loving partner; just so tired from saving lives in the ER, night after night. In that poem, use the word forgiveness or a synonym for forgiveness at least once. Write a poem containing the word "penarchy"—a term you made up in med school when the department chair touched your stomach in the elevator while you rounded on patients after you answered all his trick questions. Don't waste time writing about your female resident who made you bring her coffee and boxes of Good & Plenty each morning. Write about the river you loved since you were a kid, where you slept after nightshifts, watched sunsets and cried after the death of your patient. Don't use the words nacre or cattail or great blue heron. The rule is: *No cliché's for something that saved you.* Your poetry teacher always assigns the hardest prompt last. *Write how it feels to be maybe two decades from death*—no kids, no nieces, no nephews, one of your three cousins dead at fifty-five after ten years of dementia. If that's too tough at the end of class, write, instead, about an incoming tide. How it erases your footprints.

timeline

BY MARY OISHI

HEADLINE breadline, unemployment line, underline, borderline, battle line,
fine line, straight line, crooked line, realign, beeline, lifeline, landline,
clothesline, bloodline, in line, above the line, below the line,
tow the line, bottom line, dateline, straight line, wavy line,
crooked line, stay between the lines, bright white line,
color line, mason-dixon line, picked out of a line-up,
draw the line, blur the line, lip line, our newest line,
fall fashion line, age line, waistline, panty line,
invisible line, narrow line, thin line, thick line,
yellow line, redline, train line, airline, broken
line, solid line, dotted line, pixilated line,
faded line, get in line, wait in line, go
outside the lines, cross the line, way
out of line, bylines, pickup lines,
what a line! run a line, snort a
line, voting line, grocery line,
line at the bank, sign on the
dotted line, what's my line?
memorize your line, know
your line, deliver your line,
line drawing, line of type,
line out, line item, line of
demarcation, stay inside
the lines, stay behind
the line, line forms
in the rear, buster!
finish line, end
of the line,
flat line

My scammer

BY LAURA BUXBAUM

thinks about me all the time
about my passwords
so breakable, child's
nickname, dog,
birthday, about my
bank account
& how he'd like to suck it
dry. My scammer, my hacker,
my trickster, my darling

fraudster, noodles around
in my email, moves
my cursor like
he's touching my hand.
He buys me
gift
cards.
No one
knows me like that.

My scammer sits
in a warehouse
in Laos
or a bedroom
in Iowa
and gazes at a picture
of me hanging on his wall.
He misses me.

He calls me up. He tells me
he's from Citibank and
he's detected
some unusual activity
on my account. I think
he just wants
to hear my voice.

My Pitch for a Cooking Show

BY VALERIE LOVELAND

This dinner is not the first time my tongue has caused havoc. This time
chaos radiates from the tip
which is so sharp from practicing
staccato flute tonguing techniques.

I am classically trained:
I tape cooking shows with my VCR
but ignore everything they suggest.

I have a grim shriveling mouth
while I read a recipe.

My philosophy of cuisine is *How can I ruin this?*
expressed in bitterness or sourness.

Every recipe on the internet is made with AI now anyway.
It is not possible to be more hated than AI
so I can only endeavor to be the second most hated.

All my apples are venomous and the kind that climb
all the way down the throat with their sticky hands,
they can't be wiggled out of a mouth.

Dudes' tongues want to take a gander at my tongue
but I make them sublimate by eating my cooking. My tongue has been filed
so acutely, it is as pointy as a single chive.

I serve everything in a bottle with a skull and crossbones
printed on the front.

I don't even need to persuade them to eat it.

After Viewing Remedios Varos' *Phenomenon of Weightlessness*

—at the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington D.C.

BY MARCELINE WHITE

balance feels elusive
a floor shifts, then suddenly
in this room where

orreries line shelves
like soldiers (unlike the universe
obedient only to itself)

 off flies the world
chasing the moon, once again full of itself,
its' whiteness dims stars' soft glow as it revolves around the world

in *The Last of Us*, when this Earth
utterly upended by
man becoming monster failed us

 still,
a man moved by the gravity of love,
its' tungsten tether,

treks to an abandoned science museum
with his surrogate daughter,
where she sees orreries rotate, like a gun

barrel its black chambers hold emptiness,
a void floating in bullet-shaped space. The daughter climbs
into a NASA aircraft pod, where in the metal chamber

she imagines she's left this world, become
weightless. I, too, have lost my balance,
come undone by the gravity of this world,

Remedios, do your surroundings sway?

Milan Kundera once said *Anyone whose goal is
'something higher' must expect someday
to suffer vertigo.*" Sometimes I feel I am spinning,

an orrery, I pivot between dimensions: at times,
light as an astronaut in constant free fall—
—other times,

a dying neutron star

radiant on the outside, collapsing inside. A teaspoon
of stardust weighing 1 billion pounds on Earth.

Remedios Varo Painting

<https://www.washingtonprintmakers.com/blog/the-uncanny-and-magic-universe-of-remedios-varo-w8mbj>



“Celebrity reveals ‘somewhat traumatic’ birth details”

BY JANET BOWDAN

We do not want to hear them, thank you,
we fish rising to spot the clickbait

haven’t we been traumatized enough
whether having or not having children

expectations battering us towards or away from
choices under threat of losing them and then

no choice? Sending us below the surface—
how long can we hold our breath. Childbirth

is normal unless it isn’t. Once a woman
cornered me to tell her own horrible experience—

I was in the fifth month of my pregnancy,
had already been told to move as little as possible.

I won’t compound the trauma by describing why.
It’s enough that no babies were harmed in this poem,

and I was allowed to stay in the chorus of *The Gondoliers*
choreographed to enter, sit, and sing—

except she had me stuck in this doorway at the cast party,
on a long excruciating hook of story.

I should have pushed her in the canal for the gondoliers to fish out,
covered my ears, sung *la-la-la*.

I Make A List Of Ways I Don't Want To Die

BY LAURA FALSETTI

I wake with dying
in my mouth, lips fat with lingering
sleep, half caught
in hallucination, my bed
adrift in the Amazon

or a beach vacation where waves
annihilate most when I'm most
anxious, roaring
gray and high
against hotel windows. There's a restaurant in Norway

which is partially submerged
in the North Atlantic and if you're lucky
enough to snag a window seat, you might swear
you saw an octopus beckon while
you sip your wine, and the best way to die

they say, is by drowning
because of its peacefulness, also
another way is by the African Goliath beetle.
He's huge and if you ride your motorcycle through Uganda
and he flies into your head, say, by pure accident
he can kill you and by the way,
each day's news is killing me. Or consider

the 80, 90, 100-year-old woman who skydives because
why not? Or the headline
which reads "Man Reportedly Dies"

but I read it as "Man Repeatedly Dies"
while in the checkout line at Metro Market
and everyone is talking about diarrhea
lettuce and I can't think

it could get much worse, the diarrhea
or also the repeatedly dying, and airplanes

of course, or possibly even

at home in hospice care
believing paper napkins are food
and not remembering the word for daughter.

Ode to Menopause

BY ARMINÉ IKNADOSSIAN

A moth flies into my mouth,
tattered thing, feels like laughter
but smells like tears.

Ankles covered in dead leaves,
a crone sits in the crook of a ewe tree.
Frogs among crucifer

and mushrooms with lace dresses.
Some force lifts my body
up into heather and heal.

Lamb's wool and the scent of pomelo,
dog breath and under-bra sweat.
On the inhale, colors rush in:

Sandstone yellow, bronze, and soot.
Coral, amaranth, mulberry.
Byzantine purple, thistle, and sage.

River of tangled brush and myrrh.
Cistern of maple and hush.
I turn into every color: pine and walnut,

russet and fog. My skin flints and rustles
like an elegant storm. I am rainbow
and dove. I am the color of rebirth.

I cradle the dream, suckle it and settle
into the ancient song of volcanic rock.
When I awake, my bed is damp.

I am an odorless poison.
I am a thimble full of bitter.

Crow Arrival

BY RUTH MOTA

Late summer, early supper.
I stir bean soup on the stove
when roof-tapping begins, irregular clicks,
like typewriter keys. I know what this is.
The crows. They've arrived.

Outside my window
my pear tree stands shrouded in feathers.
Beaks hammer into nearly ripened fruit.
I fly out the door, madwoman released
from some belltower, clapping and cawing.

The crows surge in a swirl,
a rising black cloud, mass of murder,
that disperses in sync to land, evenly spaced,
on our telephone wires. A tiered necklace
of ebony beads, silent and still.

Every glass eye fixed forward
imprinting my face like a camera at a traffic light.
Smart as gorillas, one hundred brains
memorizing in massive group think
before they depart, my fate on their wings.

Comice Pear

BY JENNIFER PRATT-WALTER

The skin is gritty, polishing the biting
edges of teeth. A slight bitterness,
like phone calls he never returned,
is the first flavor.

There are small bruises
to pare away. I don't wish to taste any more
violence, even on a pear peel.

But the silky white flesh,
like an infant but in the plant kingdom,
is naked luscious beauty,

plumbed with voluptuous nectar
that spills over my face, words he never
spoke to me, no liquid apologies,

nothing of love's orchards alive
between us. I swallow bellies
and pools of Comice pear, ripe

beyond the hard black star on the bottom
where the petals cleanly dropped away,
in a time when I still believed in a promise.

I kiss the shorn core goodbye.

In the Piedmont

BY ANNE MYLES

Honey light in green leaves curling against blue,
starting to drift. By my stoop, the cat-piss smell
of boxwood. The first week I started college
it was that same scent—sharp, new, hopeful.
So I waited. A crow calls, and again. False fall,
they say. Fool's fall—the change that hasn't yet
truly arrived upon you. For so many years
this time was not an end but the next beginning—
plunging through a daze of sun, yet all awake.
I am waiting for something else, again, here
where winter comes so late and hardly comes.
Here in this in-between place, which reminds me
of everything I started from. If I don't look
too closely. Don't worry the impression
out of its illusions. Don't think about the red
clay soil you can hardly work a spade into,
tobacco drying sheds and pillowy pine straw,
blue mountains rising invisibly to the west.
How the past thrusts in its spade—the old faith
in something about to come. How it gripped me
the first weeks along new highways, that swerve
and lift; I couldn't tell my body from the girl's
body that once felt it. Always green in the woods—
magnolia, camellia, holly, here where it scarcely
turns to winter. Where I imagined some true life
might finally commence—as if surely my words
would summon it. Some late heat. Why not here
where it's all middle, so that you can't quite dig
out time from space? Fool's fall of the honey-
golden muscadines, sweet pulp and bitter seeds.
As if believing it again means it is coming,
as if feeling it again means it is near. Crow cry
that says as it once said, *now, now, now*. So close
the shiny leaves, the girlish light. The acrid
scent of new beginnings. Waiting in a daze as if
my faith must bring it. Where winter comes so late
although it comes.

Contributors

Angie Blake-Moore has been a teacher of 3- and 4-year-olds in Washington, DC for over 30 years. She's had work published in *Potomac Review*, *Green Mountains Review*, *like a field*, *Gnashing Teeth*, *Eunoia Review*, *Feminine Collective*, *Thimble*, and *ONE ART* among others. She had a poem chosen for the Moving Words competition in Arlington, VA where her work was displayed in county buses. She has 2 grown children and lives with her husband and 3 cats. Find her on Instagram at abmpoet

Janet Bowdan, the editor of *Common Ground Review*, has published poems in *APR*, *Sequestrum*, *Lit Shark*, Terrapin's *Color Wheel Anthology*, and elsewhere. Recently retired from 34 years of teaching, she and her husband have hiked in Yellowstone, Zion, Bryce Canyon, Arches, Canyonlands, and the Grand Canyon this year, and she hasn't yet fallen off a ledge, so it's all good.

Laura Buxbaum (she/her) lives and writes in Maine, where she also raises dairy goats, makes music, and runs on local trails. Her poems can be seen or are forthcoming in *Thimble Lit*, *Rat's Ass Review*, *Brawl*, *Verse-Virtual*, *Gyroscope Review*, *Writers Resist*, *Painted Pebble*, *La Rotonde*, and elsewhere. She was a finalist in the Maine Writers and Publishers Alliance 2026 Literary Awards in the Short Works in Poetry Competition. Her chapbook, *Roadkill and Other Encounters*, will be published by Kelsay Books in the fall. She can be found at <https://laurabuxbaum.com> or on social media: <https://www.facebook.com/laura.buxbaum>; <https://www.instagram.com/buxbaumlaura/>

Marianne Celano is a family psychologist in Atlanta and a co-author of four children's books. Her poetry has been published or is forthcoming in *The Lit Nerds*, *Last Leaves*, *WayWords*, and *Families, Systems, and Health*.

Linda Hillman Chayes is the author of two chapbooks, *Not My First Walk on the Moon* and *The Lapse* (both Finishing Line Press). Recent work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Cider Press Review*, *Kestrel*, *SWWIM*, *Bracken*, *Quartet*, *Westchester Review* and others. She practices and publishes as a psychologist/psychoanalyst. She is currently an assistant editor at *Bracken Magazine*.

Ann Chinnis is the recipient of a Pushcart Prize, 2025, and the author of three poetry books- *Poppet*, *My Poppet*, *I Can Catch Anything*, and *Love Song: Port e3 Starboard*. Her work has been published in *Stonecoast Review*, *Sky Island Journal*, *River Heron Review*, *Gyroscope Rreview*, *Crab Creek Review*, among others. She is a retired Emergency Physician, a leadership coach, and lives with her wife in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Marsha de la O's latest book, *Creature*, came out from Pitt Poetry Series in 2024. Her previous book, *Every Ravening Thing*, also from Pitt, came out in 2019. *Antidote for Night*, won the 2015 Isabella Gardner Award and was published by BOA Editions. Her first book, *Black Hope*, was awarded the New Issues Press Poetry Prize and was published by New Issues Press. She holds an MFA in Poetry from Vermont College and has published extensively in journals and anthologies, including two poems in *The New Yorker* and a poem selected by Tracy K. Smith for *The Slowdown*.

Laura Denny is a retired kindergarten teacher who lives in the Santa Cruz Mountains of California. She is a docent for Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park. Her poetry has appeared in *One Art*, *January House Literary Journal*, *Does it Have Pockets*, *Pictura Journal*, *Sunlight Press*, *Book of Matches*, and elsewhere.

Margaret Diehl has published two chapbooks of poems *Exit Seraphim*, by Ravenna Press (2023) *it all stayed open* (Red Glass Books, 2011), two novels and a memoir (*Men*, 1989, *Me and You*, 1990 and *The Boy on the Green Bicycle*, 1999, all from Soho Press) as well as poems, short stories, and essays in literary journals, including *Kestrel*, *The Chattahoochee Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *AMP*, *Cloudbank*, *Main Street Rag*, *The Adirondack Review*, *Sequestrum*, and *Gargoyle*. She lives in New York City. She has a third chapbook, *The Mother Country*, coming out from Ravenna Press in 2027.

Martha Ellen is a retired child protection social worker living on the Oregon coast. She has an MFA from Portland State university. Her poems and prose are published in various journals and online forums. She writes to process the events of her life.

Adele Evershed is a Welsh writer now based on the American East Coast. A Pushcart Prize nominee and Touchstone Award winner for Individual Poem, she serves as a co-editor for *Thin Skin Journal*. Her published works include the poetry collection *Turbulence in Small Spaces* (Finishing Line Press), three novellas-in-flash (*Wannabe*, *Schooled*, and *A History of Hand Thrown Walls*), and the award-winning short story collection *Suffer/Rage* (Dark Myth Publications). Her writing has appeared in *Poetry Wales*, *Modern Haiku*, *Flashflood*, *Atrium*, and *Literary Mama*. Her haiku collection *They Fck You Up, Your Mam and Dad** will be published in September by Cuttlefish Books.

Christa Fairbrother, MA, has had poetry in *Bellingham Review*, *Crannog*, *Epiphany*, *Pleiades*, and *Salamander*, among others. Currently, she's Gulfport, Florida's poet laureate and a poetry editor at *Phylum Press*. She's been a finalist for the Leslie McGrath Poetry Prize, the Wilder Prize, and was nominated for a Pushcart Prize twice. Her work has been supported with residencies from the Sundress Academy for the Arts and the Bethany Arts Community. She loves tea and avocados. Connect with her at www.christafairbrotherwrites.com, on IG @christafairbrotherwrites, or BlueSky @christafairbrother.

Laura Falsetti is a poet and retired dentist with work in *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *Lunch Ticket*, *Cider Press Review*, and other journals. She lives in western Washington with four amazing cats.

Elizabeth Farris earned an MA in Creative Writing from Victoria University of Wellington New Zealand. Her work appears in *Barstow and Grand*, *Wild Roof Journal*, *Turbine 15*, *Flash Frontier*, *Tamarin Literary Journal*, and elsewhere. A dual US/New Zealand citizen, she makes her home in Wisconsin.

With an MA in Fine Art, **Helen Finney** spent her adult life working as a fine artist in South Wales. Having been unexpectedly stuck in Thailand during the pandemic, she turned to her second love—writing. After six years, she is now back in Wales and has embraced writing fully. Her work has been published in *Ink*, *Sweat and Tears*, *Poetry Wales*, *Dreich Mag*, *Morecambe Poetry Festival Anthology I, II and III*, *Gyroscope Review*, and elsewhere. Her fifth collection was released this summer.

A Best of the Net finalist, **Marissa Glover** lives in Florida, where she's busy swatting bugs and dodging storms. Her work has been featured in journals and anthologies around the world. Marissa's poetry collections are published by Mercer University Press: *Let Go of the Hands You Hold* (2021) and *Box Office Gospel* (2023). Her third book of poetry, *Some Intangible Mercy*, will be released by MUP in early 2027. Follow Marissa on socials at [_MarissaGlover_](#).

Beth Gordon is a poet, mother and grandmother in Asheville, NC. She is the author of five chapbooks, most recently *The First Day* (Belle Point Press); and one full-length collection, *This Small Machine of Prayer* (Kelsay Books). Her second full-length collection, *Alchemist or Arsonist*, is forthcoming from Acre Books in 2027. Beth is Managing Editor of *Feral: A Journal of Poetry and Art*, Assistant Editor of Animal Heart Press, and Grandma of Femme Salve Books. Instagram, Threads and BlueSky @bethgordonpoet

Lisa Higgs has published three chapbooks, most recently *Earthen Bound* (Red Bird). A recipient of a 2022 Minnesota State Arts Board grant, her poetry has been published in *ZYZZYVA*, *Third Coast*, *Rhino*, *Sugar House Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, and *WaterStone Review*, among others. Her reviews and interviews can be found online at the *Poetry Foundation*, *Kenyon Review*, *Adroit Journal*, *Full Stop*, and *Colorado Review*. Higgs currently serves as associate editor for *RockPaperPoem*.

Catherine Abbey Hodges is the author of four books of poetry, most recently *Empty Me Full* (Gunpowder Press, 2024), and two chapbooks. Her first full-length collection, *Instead of Sadness*, won the 2015 Barry Spacks Poetry Prize; recent poems appear in *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Plume*, *SALT*, *Plant-Human Quarterly*, *RockPaperPoem*, *Gyroscope Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, and *CALYX* among other venues. She's a staff reader for *SWWIM* and an advisory editor for *Anacapa Review*. English Professor Emeritus at Porterville College, Catherine writes, teaches privately, and collaborates with musician Rob Hodges on ancestral Yokuts land.

Born in Beirut, Lebanon, **Arminé Iknadossian** immigrated to the United States in 1978 to escape the civil war. She is the author of *All That Wasted Fruit* (Main Street Rag Press). She earned an MFA from Antioch University, where she was awarded a fellowship from Summer Poetry in Idyllwild. After teaching English for 20 years, Iknadossian wrote *United States of Love & Other Poems* (2015). During her tenure as a teacher, The Los Angeles Writing Project awarded Iknadossian a fellowship for their summer residency. She has been published in the *Alabama Literary Review*, *Margi*, *Pearl*, *Rhino*, *Third Wednesday*, and other publications.
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Brooke Herter James is the author of four poetry chapbooks, a children's picture book, and a poetry/prose/photography collection. Her poems have appeared in various journals and anthologies, including *Rattle*, *One Art* and *Bloodroot Literary*. She is the winner of the 2024 Fish Poetry Prize. She lives with her husband in a small village in the green mountains of Vermont.

Tricia Knoll's *The Unknown Daughter* was a finalist in the 2025 New England Poetry Club chapbook contest. "Boundaries" was a finalist in the 2025 Charles Simic Award of Hole in the Head Review. *Wild Apples* (Fernwood Press) details downsizing and moving 3,000 miles from Oregon to Vermont. Fernwood Press will publish *Gathering Marbles*, poetry on aging as a woman in 2027. After 18 years of writing free verse published in nine books and many journals, she now writes prose poetry. Knoll is a Contributing Editor of *Verve Virtual*. Website: triciaknoll.com

Kristan LaVietes is a Seattle poet. Her work has appeared in *Pearl*, *Nerve Cowboy*, *Door is a Jar*, and *Triggerfish Critical Review*. She holds an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Cal State, Long Beach.

D. A. Lee is a physician, poet, and lifelong student of the intersections between the human body, memory, and language. A retired ophthalmologist and clinical professor, she writes poetry exploring medicine, aging, ancestry, science, and the landscapes that shape identity. Born on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota and raised in Indiana, she draws on experiences across cultures, generations, and disciplines. Her work has appeared in numerous literary journals and anthologies, and she continues to explore how stories, objects, and the natural world preserve what time cannot erase.

Valerie Loveland is the author of five books, including *The Mailbox is a Miniature Version of the House*, and *(unsolved mysteries theme song)*. She likes silent movies, audio poetry, and collage. She works as an optician and lives in the New Jersey suburbs of Philadelphia.

Mary McCarthy is a retired Registered Nurse who has always been a writer. Her work has appeared in many journals and anthologies, including *The Ekphrastic World*, edited by Lorette Luzajic, *The Plague Papers*, edited by Robbi Nester, *The Memory Palace*, edited by Lorette Luzajic and Clare MacQueen, and issues of *Gyroscope Review*, *3rd Wednesday*, *Caustic Frolic*, *the Storyteller Review*, *Earth's Daughters*, *MacQueen's Quinterly*, and *Verse Virtual*. Her collection *How to Become Invisible*, that chronicles a bipolar journey, is available from Kelsay Books, Amazon, and the author.

Laura McCullough is a poet and professor of English whose work engages questions of trauma, memory, our relationship with the natural world, and repair through narrative and stewardship. She holds a doctorate in Medical and Health Humanities and is a three-time recipient of fellowships from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. She is the author of *Women & Other Hostages* (2021), *The Wild Night Dress* (2017), *Jersey Mercy* (2015), and *Panic* (2011), winner of the Kinereth Gensler Award, among others. Her forthcoming collection, *The Resurrection Jar*, will be published by University of Wisconsin, Cornerstone Press in 2027. www.lmccullough.org Insta @lauramccullough11

Elaine Mintzer lives in Los Angeles. Her work has been published in journals. She has written poetry for and performed (reading only) with Ballet Randolph in Miami; written a poem for NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness); and recently had a poem, "E=mc2" appear in *Scientific American*. Elaine's first collection, *Natural Selections* was published in 2005 by Bombshelter Press. Her second book, *Drink from the River*, was released by Moon Tide Press in August 2026.

Judith H. Montgomery's poems appear in *Poet Lore*, *Cider Press Review*, and *Epiphany*, among other journals, as well as in a number of anthologies. She's the author of two full-length poetry books and four chapbooks. Her first collection, *Passion*, received the Oregon Book Award for Poetry. Her prize-winning narrative medicine chapbook, *Mercy* (2019), was followed by *The Ferry Keeper*, which received the 2024 Grayson Books Chapbook Prize.

Ruth Mota currently lives in Santa Cruz, California, after spending a decade in Brazil and working as an international health trainer during the peak of the AIDS epidemic. Now she writes poetry. Over 70 of her poems have been published in journals. Her chapbook *Kitchen Table Midwife of the Dispossessed* was published this year by Finishing Line Press. Her collection *Sing Vanquished, Sing Victorious* is to be released in 2027.

Anne Myles is the author of *Late Epistle*, winner of Sappho's Prize in Poetry (Headmistress Press, 2023) and *What Woman That Was: Poems for Mary Dyer* (Final Thursday Press, 2022). Her work has appeared in journals including *North American Review*, *On the Seawall*, *Whale Road Review*, and *Psaltery & Lyre*, and has been nominated for multiple Pushcart awards. She is Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Northern Iowa and holds an MFA from the Vermont College of Fine Arts. Originally from New York, she lives in Greensboro with her greyhound and cats. Learn more at annemyles.com

Kristy Nielsen has published in many literary journals, most recently *The Cimarron Review*. She is co-writer of a screenplay based on her fiction; the resulting feature film, "A Measure of the Sin," won several prizes at Indie Film Festivals. She is the mother of identical twins and lives with blindness.

Mary Oishi, Albuquerque Poet Laureate (2020-2022) is the author of four poetry collections, most recently *Sidewalk Cruiseship* (University of New Mexico Press, 2024), and Editor of the 2023 New Mexico/Arizona Book Award-winning anthology: *One Albuquerque, One Hundred Poets*. She is currently working on a bilingual poetry collection and a memoir as a Japanese American child raised by a Mennonite and his Appalachian wife whose parents met in the KKK. Oishi is retired from a career in public radio, both on-air and as a development professional. Her work has been published in seventeen countries and eight languages.

Theta Pavis is a poet, editor and educator living in Jersey City, NJ. Her first chapbook, *The Red Strobe*, was published in 2025 (Finishing Line Press). Her writing has appeared in *The Journal of New Jersey Poets*, *Lilith*, *By the WAYE*, *The Red Wheelbarrow*, *Mom Egg Review*, *Spillwords Press*, *Bainbridge Island Press*, and many others. She's received residencies from Arts by The People and the Bethany Arts Center. A former reporter, she's taught journalism at UCLA, the University of the Arts, Saint Peter's University, New Jersey City University, and Rutgers-Newark. www.thetapavis.com

Jennifer Pratt-Walter (she/her) is a Crone who finds awe in the simple daily miracles of life. Jennifer is a professional harpist, poet, and self-taught photographer, and runs a small farm. She has had poetry and photography published in a number of print and online journals, including *VoiceCatcher*, *Calyx*, *SageWoman* and *Palette*. Jennifer has three grown children and a husband, and lives in Vancouver, WA.

Vivian Faith Prescott (she/her) is a Bi writer, born and raised on a small island, Wrangell, Kaachxana.áak'w, in Southeast Alaska. She lives and writes in Lingít Aaní at her family's fishcamp. She's the author of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction books. She's a member of the Pacific Sámi Searvi, an Indigenous Sami diaspora group, and a founding member of Community Roots, the first LGBTQIA+ group on the island. She mentors Alaskan writers in two writers' groups: Blue Canoe Writers and Drumlin Poets.

M. Ann Reed is an international private teacher and award-winning poet who co-authored with Mabel Tow, *Strange Kindness*, initially published by U of A, now curated by Rowman & Littlefield. She authored the chapbook, *making oxygen*, published by FLP 2020, the chapbook *ekphrastics & eccentricities*, published by Kelsay Books, July 2023, and the full-length book of poems, *be for she she for he*, published by Kelsay Books, February 2025.

Hassen Saker is an experimental poet and interdisciplinary creator, working with texts, audio, photography, film, new media, performance, and actions. Her written works have been published in various journals, anthologies, and small presses. Her published collections of poetry include *Salem* (belladonna* books, 2005); *Sky Journal* (Dusie Press, 2014); and *Consolation Snacks* (Furniture Press, 2017). Her poetry film shorts include *terra lingua: three aspects* (2013); *Sky Journal* (2014); and *Beasts: Rivers* (2023). Saker's multimedia & art/poetry film installations have been featured online, over radio, in public art spaces & galleries. <http://www.hassensaker.com/>

Judith Sanders published two poetry collections, *In Deep* and *The Universe with Borcht*. Her book of essays, *Roughing It in Paradise*, is forthcoming in Fall 2027. Her work appears in numerous publications, including *Pleiades*, *The American Scholar*, *Jewish Fiction*, *Modern Language Studies*, *Vox Populi*, and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Her poems won the Hart Crane and Wergle Flomp Humor prizes. Her prose was nominated for a Pushcart Prize and selected as a Longreads "Top 5." She earned a B.A. from Yale, an M.A. in writing from Boston University, and a Ph.D. in English from Tufts. More information is at www.JudithSandersWriter.com

Gina L. Serman Born in Massachusetts in 1947, lived in Dartmouth until age 21, moved to Toronto and worked with anti-war groups and cooperatives. Gina helped develop an Artists' Co-Op Gallery and was on the Rochdale College governing council. She returned to the U.S., became a project coordinator for rocket scientists, and graduated from the University of San Francisco. At age 12 Gina wrote a sea chantey for Kathleen Ryan Comiskey Roberts' *Secrets of Old Dartmouth*. Since then she has participated in writing and poetry workshops led by Maxine Hong Kingston, Dion O'Reilly, and (currently) Jessica Cohn.

Michele Sharpe, a poet and essayist, is also a high school dropout, hepatitis C survivor, adopted person, and former trial attorney. She's written essays for publications including *Witness*, *Yes! Magazine*, *The New York Times*, and *Poets & Writers*. Her poems can be found in *Sweet*, *Poet Lore*, *Rogue Agent*, *Salamander*, and elsewhere. She's working on her second memoir. More at <http://michelesharpe.com>

Ellen McGrath Smith teaches at the University of Pittsburgh and in the Carlow University Madwomen in the Attic program. Her poetry has appeared in *The Georgia Review*, *The New York Times*, *The American Poetry Review*, *Talking Writing*, *Los Angeles Review*, and other journals and anthologies. Books include *Scatter, Feed* (Seven Kitchens 2014) and *Nobody's Jackknife* (West End Press 2015). Her chapbook *Lie Low, Goaded Lamb* was published in January 2023 by Seven Kitchens Press as part of its Keystone Series.

Judith Sornberger's five full-length poetry collections include, most recently, *Sorority of Stillness: A Gallery of Women in Art* (Shanti Arts 2025) Her seven chapbooks include (most recently) *The Book of Muses* Finishing Line Press, 2023). Her poems received four Pushcart nominations. Sornberger is a professor emerita of Mansfield University of Pennsylvania where she taught creative writing and founded the Women's Studies Program. She lives on the side of a mountain in the northern Appalachians among bobcats, deer, and black bears.

Alison Stone is the author of nine full-length collections, *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), *Dazzle* (Jacar Press, 2017), *Masterplan*, a book of collaborative poems with Eric Greinke (Presa Press, 2018), *Ordinary Magic*, (NYQ Books, 2016), *Dangerous Enough* (Presa Press 2014), and *They Sing at Midnight*, which won the 2003 Many Mountains Moving Poetry Award; as well as three chapbooks. She is also a painter and the creator of The Stone Tarot. A licensed psychotherapist, she has private practices in NYC and Nyack. <https://alisonstone.info/> Youtube and TikTok — Alison Stone Poetry.

Alison Carb Sussman is the author of *Black Wool Cape* (Unsolicited Press, 2022) and *On the Edge* (Finishing Line Press, 2013), a poetry collection and a poetry chapbook. Her second poetry chapbook, *The Sun King*, and a debut novella-in-stories, *The Book of Soldiers*, are due out from Unsolicited Press in 2027. Alison won the Abroad Writers' Conference/Finishing Line Press Authors Poetry Contest in 2015. Her work has appeared in *Atlanta Review*, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, *Gargoyle*, *The New York Times*, *Rattle*, *Southword*, and elsewhere. Her poems have also been printed in the anthologies *Bearing Witness*, 2025, and *Keystone Poetry: Contemporary Poets on Pennsylvania*, 2025.

Francine van den Berg is a multilingual teacher and writer, based in London. She has an MA (D*) in Creative Writing. She is the winner of the 2021 Lancaster University Creative Writing Student Prize. Her work has appeared in *Morphrog*, *Sentinel Literary Quarterly* and *Carmina* magazine and been shortlisted for the Winchester Prize (2023) Bridport Prize (2021), the HG Wells Competition (2020) and the Hammond House Competition (2020) and was longlisted for the Plough Prize (2023) and Mslexia Poetry Pamphlet Competition (2023). She is currently writing her first poetry collection.

Raised under dictatorship, **Bang Wang** has had ten books published in China and France. Her honours include Best Feature Drama at the NYIFF in New York in 2011 for her film script. Top ten Chinese fiction books of 2022 by *Asia Weekly*, Book of the Year by One Way Street. She began writing in English in 2021 and won the Escalator 2022 programme, an annual talent development scheme run by the NCW. She was one of four writers of colour to receive the 2024 Curtis Brown Breakthrough Writers' Scholarship, and the recipient of the Faber Academy Scholarship in 2025.

Julie Weiss (she/her) is the author of *The Places We Empty*, and two chapbooks, *The Jolt*, and *Breath Ablaze: Twenty-One Love Poems in Homage to Adrienne Rich, Volumes I and II*. Her second collection, *Rooming with Elephants*, was published in 2025. "Poem Written in the Eight Seconds I Lost Sight of My Children" was a finalist for Best of the Net. She won Sheila-Na-Gig's editor's choice award for "Cumbre Vieja" and was a finalist for the Saguaro Prize. She has new poems forthcoming in *DMQ Review* and *ONE ART*. She lives in Spain with her wife and children.

Marceline White is a Baltimore-based writer and activist whose writing has appeared or is forthcoming in *Pangyrus*, *Consequence*, *SWWIM*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *trampset*, *yolk*, *Prime Number*, *The Orchard Review*, *The Indianapolis Review*, *Atticus Review*, and others. She has received fellowships from Aspen Words, the Key West Literary Seminar, and an AWP Writer-to-Writer mentorship. Twice nominated for the Pushcart Prize and three times for Best of the Net, when not writing, Marceline can be found serving her three cats and telling her son to text her when he arrives at the EDM show. Read more at www.marcelinewhitewrites.com

Colette McHale Wisnewski lives in rural Monee, Illinois. Her work has appeared in *Gyroscope Review*, *Humana Obscura*, and *Canary Literary Review*, among others. She has a background in journalism and social outreach programs.

Cree Zadra lives in St. Paul, Minnesota, after many childhood moves as a military brat. Her creative work is often confessional, and she is interested in storytelling as a building block of core beliefs and personality development, from traditional fairy tales to the archetypes and lessons embodied in family history and personal memory.

Announcements

Our big announcement for the end of the year is that we are changing our reading periods. We are combining our Winter and Spring issues and going to a 3-issue year. The new reading periods will be as follows:

READING PERIODS for 2027

Winter/Spring Issue: January 15—February 15

Releases April 1st

Summer Issue: April 15—May 15

Releases July 1

Fall Crone Power Issue: July 15—Aug 15

Releases October 1

Note that the reading period is now just **4 weeks** long. Please get your submissions in early so you don't miss out.

Our Winter/Spring Issue is an open call, no themes, just looking for fine contemporary poetry. The submission period will run from January 15th, 2027, to February 15th, 2027. The Issue releases on April 1st, 2027. We will close early if we get all the poems we need, so submit early. We also close 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 more than 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 get the vapors. 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 a fit and flail dramatically. No one wants 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 make room for an excellent one. Nature poems are always welcome. A good form poem is always welcome. 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!



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fine poetry to turn your world around

gyroscopereview.com

