



# Gyroscope Review

fine poetry to turn your world around

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Fall 2026 Crone Power Issue

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Constance Brewer

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## 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 40<sup>th</sup> 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 & Starboard*. Her work has been published in *Stonecoast Review*, *Sky Island Journal*, *River Heron Review*, *Gyroscope Review*, *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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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 15<sup>th</sup>, 2027, to February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2027. The Issue releases on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 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!



# Gyroscope Review

fine poetry to turn your world around

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