



Gyroscope Review

fine poetry to turn your world around

Spring 2023



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Spring Issue 2023

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Constance Brewer

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For further information, visit our website: gyroscopereview.com.

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From the Editor

Welcome to the Spring 2023 Issue of *Gyroscopic Review*. We always look forward to receiving Spring poems, many are full of optimism after poets toil through the long winter season. Thoughts often turn to flowers, birds, blue skies and green grass. (At least here in the northern regions.) Spring is a time of hope, and many of these poems speak to that feeling. Many other poems provide us cautionary tales, warning us to not get too comfortable, because injustice is still out there and needs to be addressed. These pages contain a fine range of poems for every taste. They remind us love, death, and nature are not always what they seem. The Spring Issue poets take us on a journey filled with passions, and a little bit of humor. Enjoy the poetic sunshine.

New in this issue are QR codes that link to images for the ekphrastic poems. We've wanted a good way to let readers enjoy the images the ekphrastic poems talk about and hope the QR codes add to the experience. Hyperlinks are also available in the artwork title. Let us know how it goes.

For those who submit, we ask some questions in the cover letter space for fun. It makes the cover letters interesting to read and personalizes our poets. One of the questions asked was whether the poet preferred fudgy or cakey brownies. Fudgy brownies won the day, 5-1 over cakey. There were even *gasp* some people that didn't like brownies. To each their own dessert. Another question asked—what was something people would do if they won the lottery. We were humbled to find out just how many would share the wealth with those less fortunate, support different causes, and build up their communities. A great number also responded, "Buy a house." Such is the sad state of the world, when obtaining a home depends on winning the lottery. On the bright side, poets continue to tell us about their pets, and we love it. The feline editors get a kick out of the antics of other people's pets and their unique names. So do we. Thanks for brightening our days.

Constance Brewer

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Section One

KILONOVA

by Dick Westheimer

The neutron stars that crashed into each other were around 20 km in diameter but each heavier than the sun.

Albert Sneppen, Astrophysicist (paraphrased in the Washington Post)

How am I to deal with this—that somewhere
in the universe, two stars the size of cities collide

and their union creates something so fearsome inside
that all the light falls in, annihilates, cannot tear

itself from the inescapable gullet of the thing, except:
a ball of blue hues and pale fire profuses, expands

aural, as if released from the dead. And this demands
of me that I see darkness differently, that it's the deep that accepts

light, that even a black hole cannot contain a halo,
and a single star on a coal black night dilutes despair.

And yet, somehow every moment of joy feels so precarious,
like when I lie with my lover, I calculate (as if I could know)

how many such nights remain that I will feel her moss-soft
body fold into mine, until death's infinite gravity exacts its cost.

SUMMONS (AFTER BRENDAN KENNELLY'S "BEGIN")
BY MIRIAM O'NEAL

The birds summon first. Then the light
beyond the window begins to roar
with the traffic noise of sun and mist
that comes on wheels the wind makes.

Every morning the lively arrogance of girls unafraid
of the highest branches in the linden from which they view the sea—
the métier of babies waking with unspeakable ideas—
the way we linger with the beloved who appeared in dreams.

Begin with the owls who know the night
is ending and call each other to sleep.
Gizzards packed with cracked bones,
they cull the last slash of deep night—

their sleep the relief of each oak-leafed,
whiskered vole who loosens its hold on the damp earth
as another iron dawn appears— the horizon a torn red seam,
each star's stitch slipped from the bluing field.

End the search for the mother drenched in forgiveness,
the father who celebrates his children's wings.
Let morning gavel in the oath of one more day,
witness one more happiness insisting on its say.

MY 62ND PASCHAL MOON

BY KATHLEEN CASSEN MICKELSON

Moonlight illuminates the living room
at 6:00 a.m. I'm up to let the dog out.
Instead, I stand bewitched
in bare feet, pajamas, dog looking
at me, waiting.

So many names for this moon:
worm, sugar, eagle, goose,
crow comes back, wind strong,
eyes sore. The first full moon
after the spring equinox, the one
that determines Easter's observance
for those who believe a man
can be resurrected.

I'm drawn to the moon the way
I'm drawn to whatever glows.
Candles, fireflies, stars, smiles,
love. I like to see my way
in soft light where shadows
linger, hold their mystery.

The dog nudges me. She does not
get lost in moonlight or shadow.
She always knows where she is
and sees no reason to name it.

APRIL SNOW

BY MARY MAKOFSKE

The crocuses have closed their blossoms,
a congregation of praying hands saying
Please, no more snow. I'm praying
with them this 6th day of April,
almost a week after Easter. The sun
hasn't risen, or at least not shown
its face, more than a few times
these last weeks. Though two brave
daffodils have opened, they're hanging
their heads. Tulip leaves that struggled up
in March have stalled, as have the birds
who sang a few tentative songs, poked
their heads in birdhouses, then left.
Oh, global warming, also known as
global weirding, take back the polar
vortex sagging down from the Arctic.
Surely you can't keep spring hostage
forever. Surely this snow, growing
thicker and fatter, will melt before lunch.

TOUGH LOVE FROM THE MUSE ON HER DAY OFF
BY GLORIA HEFFERNAN

Calliope pads into the living room
and sits on the couch wearing
fleece pajamas and fuzzy socks.

Not today, she says,
as I sit at my desk expectantly
like a golden retriever waiting for a biscuit.

She sips the tea that usually gets cold in the cup
while she's looking over my shoulder
measuring iambs and conjuring metaphors.

Even I deserve a break now and then, she sighs,
flipping through a self-help book that, at the moment,
interests her more than my poetic output.

This is not how it's supposed to be, I fume,
staring at the blank page and
musing on this change of attitude.

It's time you took responsibility for your own work.
I type her words as if taking dictation.
No, Kiddo, that's not a prompt.

Just walk around the block.
You know what to look for.
The whole world is a poem.

She stretches out on the couch.
I'll still be here when you get back,
but today you're on your own.

MAKING VOICES
BY CLAUDIA MILLS

It's always come naturally to me, the desire
to animate the inanimate. When my boys were little,
I would make their jackets beg to be zipped up,

their lunchboxes plead not to be forgotten.
Finally, when he was twelve or so, my son rebelled
against their tyranny: *No more making voices!*

Adolescence was hard enough without
having the Eggo waffle imploring to be eaten,
the carrot weeping at being left upon the plate.

As if every object – all of them – were Puff
waiting for Little Jackie Paper, or Pooh saying goodbye
to Christopher Robin at the Enchanted Place.

My granddaughter left yesterday, back to her mommy.
We see her so seldom now, my son and I, since the divorce.
And now it's not only me who misses her

but the slippers abandoned in the closet,
the sippy cup lonesome in the cupboard,
the small spoon all by itself in the drawer.

DROUGHT IN A PLACE OF SEASONAL RAIN
BY PATRICIA ZYLIUS

Over the mountains billow towers
of immaculate cumulus showering us
only with gorgeousness.
The reservoir's half full. My garden?
The clanging orange of wild nasturtiums
has crinkled into pale, stringy piles.
No grass greens the front yard. Empty
rain barrels. Last fall's bolting kale —
still a few harvestable leaves —
struggle against fatal wilting.
I trust the old apple's deep roots
but soak the young peach, apricot.
Make sure the bean and collard seedlings
stay damp, parcel to the lettuce, chard
as few gallons as will keep them
growing. Mulch with hay.
I tell my sister how much I'm rationed.
Just go over and pay the fine she says —
she who lives where rain drearies
endless days. But you can't squeeze
water from money. Last winter
I sowed cover crops
though little rain fell. Now,
dug in, that green manure
gives itself to soil. Microbes
do their work as long as moisture
lets them thrive. I'll leave some beds
empty, blanket them with straw and hope
the soil won't completely die. If life
shrivels away? It will feel like slow
and widening murder.
I'm sorry. I turn off the water.
So sorry.

CALIFORNIA DREAMS
BY LENNY LIANNE

Even with windows and doors
shut, where my brother lives,
we still can hear the habitual
baritone choir of helicopters

above the border. A few blocks
away, along the beach, waves,
like refugees, rush forward
and disappear into the landscape.

A sprinkling of men, on the pier,
cast lines over the wooden railing.
Each has faith in the bait and hook,
all set to snatch up small fish.

We focus, for what appears to be
a long time, on surfers farther out,
their exposed heads like buoys
bobbing above the surface,

as they wait for a good wave
and, not quite like Jesus
walking on water, stand up
on boards and coast to shore.

Small clusters of people remain
while the sun is swallowed
by today's ocean, though this
isn't the spectacle they revere.

They want to be graced by
a glimpse of the green flash,
as though they each deserve
one illusive wonder a day.

Here, hope imbues all things,
as it gathers and calibrates
eager dreams of benedictions
being within reach.

THE EARTH WITH ITS RELENTLESS PULL
BY SUSANNA LANG

We shed our days, the shiny mornings when we drank espresso
at a sidewalk table painted blue while parents walked their children
and their dogs to school, and the blur of late nights when the phone
rang or the radio announced the numbers we did not want to hear
and we could not make it all compute. We strip off days like clothes
we've sweated through, brush off hours like flakes of aging skin
or break them off, sharp-edged fragments left on the sand
like evidence a skunk had eaten all four eggs in the nest, last chance
for a species reduced to 70 nesting pairs. Skunks have to eat, too,
and the skunk knows at some cellular level that all our days
are numbered. Unable to see the small opening, my mother asks
for help threading a needle to hem her nightgown, too long now
she's bowed down toward the earth with its relentless pull. But insists
on stitching the hem herself as the children flock to school and parents
walk their dogs home again, as the shorebirds scrape a new nest
and beat the ground with their feet, a dance of starting over,
over and over again despite the skunks, despite the gulls and herons
that will menace once the chicks have hatched, despite the storms
they'll fly through when they leave this beach in the fall, driven
to reach their wintering grounds, driven to return next spring
until the spring they do not come back, the sand left blank and empty.

WHAT WE MEAN TO SAY
BY RUSSELL ROWLAND

I taught the child that treble chirp
of chipmunks. Her practicing did get
their attention. I taught her *Who*
cooks for you, who cooks for you-all:
hard to say *that* like a Barred Owl!

The rising plaint of the White-Throat —
instilled that in her too. She had
to whistle it and got reasonably adept.
I told her she was for the birds.

Still, what have we to say of worth
to feathers and fur: we who cannot tell
where the mates are waiting, or
a hunter lurks; the odds of acorns

above tree line? When she is older,
I should instruct her in silence —
how to listen for song in season,
and spot the singer by standing still;

ways to make an oak aware
you value it, that still leave it standing.

Oh, she knew my love for her,
years before she learned the word.

CHLOE: THE ONE NOT CHOSEN
BY CLAIRE SCOTT

His son the favored one
the disappointing daughter left behind
not chosen for wax wings or azure skies
only pounding grain, stirring porridge, curing olives
only wiping dust from dustless walls
while her father taught her brother to fly
fitting wings to his slim shoulders

Her father a master craftsman,
a convicted murderer, prideful, tyrannical
her hapless brother in his thrall
only one way out and the boy took it
soaring straight toward the sun
feathers like snow falling to the sea

Chloe left behind in Crete
forgotten by gods and myth makers
no famous painting of her in the Louvre
no flying to freedom with her father
Chloe still stirring soup, still washing floors
her head down, her hands rough, but alive
still alive, flameless and featherless

TRUE NORTH
BY SUSAN MOORHEAD

Canvas sewn with whale bone,
black ink written in the margins
of old nautical logs. A wooden mermaid
at the prow, only half human.
A woman in the shape of a ship.

A woman in the shape of a shell,
old carcass dropped by a seagull, picked over,
coral freckles on cream. A glass holding
sand, a vial filled with sea water.

A woman in the shape of a letter,
address faded, words left to guesswork.
A woman in the shape of a song,
the tune changing over time
until it's something other than it was.

A woman in the shape of a traced road
in red pencil on an old map, marking
a journey. A woman in the shape of what
was pinned and collected, the shape
of moth wing and dust.

A woman in the shape of a dance, or a cloud,
of a paper boat on a running stream to elsewhere.
A woman in the shape of elsewhere.

A woman in the shape of a ticket
for the way back to herself
when she's been gone too long.

MADADZIA
BY LANDA WO

Breathing without being heard
in the indifference of the powerful, like ungrateful Gods.
A somber morning, beast under my skin
gnawing at my soul, even making the galaxies of my being explode.

European Black
embittered, resentful, human.
My humanity is a broken line
because not free of the rage of the daily contempt.

There is always an empty seat beside me on the bus.
Ah, Rosa, Rosa Parks my sister, I am keeping your place.
I want to believe that, otherwise I'd have to admit that I'm a monster.

Whenever I visit an apartment, I always find that it's just been rented.
Ah, Karidja, Karidja Touré my sister, it's a glass refused to you
in the woman's café in the 16th arrondissement in Paris.
Black woman, humiliated woman, standing woman.
Emotional scar. Thunder of dead wood.
Fevers of my desire of humanity.

SPECIAL EDUCATION
BY COLETTE PARRIS

I.

I review the flier nestled
in my daughter's glittering
backpack. Shelter-in-place
drill Friday morning, during which
the students will stay away
from all windows to practice for
"weather-related emergencies."
I read it to my partner, a snort
punctuating every third word.
His head judders sideways.

II.

The flier is a gift
of additional ammunition
for the homeschooling argument
I now make daily to my spouse.
Preach, I declared, church lady
style, when "There Are More Black
Homeschoolers Than Ever—
Here's Why" hit my inbox. I want
to give my daughter private
weather lessons, to prepare her
for storms in every purported port.

III.

Clouds will (of course) be on the syllabus;
cirrus, cumulus, stratus. Also strata,
relevant to advanced meteorology.
As in, due to strata, let your pale friends
morph into milky tornadoes on a whim,
but limit yourself to careful, quiet
hysteria. As in, due to strata, employ
an exit strategy when the water rises,
but do not disappear. Your absence
would be absent from the flood
of cable news about a different kind
of girl. As in, due to strata, when you posit
that the air is miasmic, others will look
at you blankly—if they look at you at all.

IV.

I peruse the websites—Ikea,
Target, Wayfair—favoriting
desks and chairs painted
pink and cream, knowing
my husband will come around
eventually. I resolve to conduct
all tutorials in the basement.
Avoiding windows, even
on still and sunny days.

INHERITANCE
BY JOHN M. DAVIS

perhaps we expected too much of our marriage.
to have, to hold, well or ill, rich or poor,
to respect each other,
to produce these fruitful unions,
and to live, say, in conjunction,
a life of concurrence and cooperation.
or perhaps we simply tired of trying
and like old ruins,
took our time falling apart:
disagreements, a few fights, some struggles
and the darkness of days,
merely to amass a pile of broken stones,
and a couple of partial pillars which can only hint
at what stood before — surely something dear.
but what we raised is now razed.
what we paired, despaired.
we escaped through discrepancies
in each other's arguments,
drew conclusions, made choices
and we can no longer see or count the steps
remaining in our lives.
our children see this heap of debris,
touch the veil that hangs over hearth and home,
brood about doom and, like washed-out shadows,
lean into our remains.
but neither of us is moved.
displaced damage of our disabuse,
they may someday examine our past,
take valuable lessons from our lives and thrive
or they may simply find us in themselves,
living in houses built on wreckage and rubble.

INCONGRUOUS

BY LAUREL SZYMKOWIAK

(Mother)

I've locked myself in the root cellar, sit in chilled darkness
on an overturned crate, shoulders pinned to ears. Never change
my clothes. Former friends now wear my dresses. Outside my home
they dig out my rose bushes, climb through my crab apple trees,
peer through my windows, throw sour fruit to their dogs.

I listened to the wisdom of the bees,
wove stories for my sons, young on my lap. I laid my head
on my husband's nakedness. Each night

my son places my dinner on the potato pile,
his eyes focus on his next task—but never me.
Was I once like those women, jumping into others' trees?

(Father)

Once I dreamt in my bed of juices and rubies,
words I can't remember I breathed
to my wife who now sleeps
in another room, frozen in silence.
I laughed at my boys' kudzu demands,
gave with delight, basked in their transitory smiles.
Now one broods past me, and you—
my son, my son, where are you?
This is not what I wanted
at my life's end, desiccated,
my ears long-caked against
your brother's pleas to rise.
Daily my toothless mouth grinds on
the barking laugh of your vanishing
and rumors from traveling salesmen.

(Younger Son)

I walked with one foot in the wild, waiting to escape—
followed some film maker who moved to LA where
educated demons crooked their fingers at my calf brains,
persuaded me to let musicians
weld their notes to staffs with my coins
while I crouched cold
at a bombed-out 3-legged desk
and crayoned thoughts of home.

Tonight the full moon coasts in the desert and I rejoice—
an angel allows my empty pockets to ride in her pickup
with 3 pigs and a suspicious dog. I am alive
and live to crawl through the needle's eye,
back to my mother's lap,
back to the smile on my father's face.

(Older Son)

The kid's dropped in
from nowhere
still smelling
like pig shit, and a clown
dressed as my father leaps—
See? He's returned to us!
We must celebrate!
His nights of weeping forgotten.
I do not forget

I quit school,
hauled shingles in my father's place
while he withered at home.
But I'll celebrate—separate
honey from the bees,
grill steaks with wild garlic,
sweep coffee cups, calculator, & checkbook off the table
and spread yesterdays' newspaper
to hide the cigarette burns of my resentment—
carry my mother to her chair to thaw.

OLD AGE

BY MARY HOLSCHER

These quiet days
my life is an open cup,
an aquamarine ceramic well
with a painted red fish near the lip.
Hand-fired clay on the outside,
color of loam on a damp day.
I pour hot coffee
and the red fish swims away.

ONE HAND

BY MARK J. MITCHELL

She sat on a bench
overlooking the bridge,
waiting for him.

He arrived panting
like a slow dog and sat,
silent, beside her.

Here are answers,
she said handing off a book,
to all the koans you've heard.

A breeze came from the west.
The pages blew wild, flying
away like paper cranes.

Section Two

LINNAEUS SNIFFS AROUND THE CAPITOL, 2019
BY RICHARD HAGUE

"Carolus Linnaeus...proposed seven basic scent classes:
aromatic, fragrant, musky, garlicky, repulsive, nauseous, and goaty."
—*NYTimes* This Day In History: Feb. 22, '83: "Sense of Smell Proves to be Surprisingly Subtle"

Repulsive

At first the press conferences
smelled like smoke-filled back rooms,
crowded and unruly, but effective.
Notebook pages fluttered
like albino eagles.
Pens wrote for miles
about taxes and race and dead rivers.

Now, there is no aroma at all,
save the smell of empty chairs
—which is the smell of funerals—
and far-off down a maze of dim hallways,
cheap coffee burning on a hotplate.

Aromatic

Deceptive, it insinuates itself through
the air conditioners of Congress, rises from the urinals
of the Executive Offices, scents even the
lobbies of the Dept. of Agriculture, where it is
misrepresented as "bees and honey." As with diesel fumes,
some find it pleasant. It carries, however,
dangers of many kinds: suffocation, diminished cognition,
verbal slip-ups, a tendency toward blather. Like the
flowers of Rappacini, though it seems
beautiful, it kills. "Breathe among these beauties,"
then dead: you die.

Fragrant

No, not "flagrant," though
there is much of that,
enough to set off the soul's smoke alarms.
What happens daily smells like alewives
rotting ashore, shoals of minnows
poisoned below the power plant,
dead heifers swelling in a West Virginia meadow.

Dark waters smell so, and the first three circles of hell,
even the moldy ruins of some warehouse
full of a million spoiled American apple pies.

Musky

A sort of sharper moldiness,
not exactly musty but close: just one letter off.
Imagine the smoke as ham burns and burns
in a skillet. This is called filibuster.
Think of the overloaded sump below a flock
of migrants' trailers. This is called governing.
Imagine grandmother locked in her own
fruit cellar, long-rotten peaches
sticky on the shelves. Potatoes with
gouged-out eyes. Imagine crowded down there,
shoulder to shoulder, unwashed caucuses of men
in shabby suits counting stolen ballots
and laughing. This is called Great Again.

Garlicky

Hours later, after the acquittal,
it still lives on the breath of Congress
so that you turn your head away, blinking.
It is like an anti-perfume: *take that, you beautiful republic*.
It is cloven, like the devil's hooves.
It is underground, like that exile, righteousness.
It is overwhelming, scenting everything
like a smashed skunk in the aisles
of the Senate, or the stink of bushfires,
a whole ignited Oregon approaching Pennsylvania Avenue,
storming in on all sides.

Nauseous

Like a bad paraphrase of Amendments to the Constitution,
it sickens the whole populace. Hands with which
to sign last-minute, prophylactic bills suddenly fall off.
Consciences explode like beaten piñatas.
Curb-side drains emit gray clouds of legislation.
Restraints on pollution are waved as the skies
darken with fracking mist. Lungs fill
with radium. The eyes of newborns
glow a neon green, and milk is banned,
along with the mothers who produce it.

Goaty

This is the most characteristic of all: a stink that feeds on anything—pointed lies, dull misinformation, fanged and aggressive stupidity. It chews the cracking bones of the state. Citizens can smell it—bad barnyard, swill with bloated pigs, coops of dead hens. Good ideas lie everywhere under mounds of fresh earth while government undertakers purse their lips and count dollars. Theirs is the most expanding work in the economy. Congratulations are thrown at their feet and become dead rabbits. Seasoned with paper and stale legislation, soups of severed hands simmer on the stoves of Washington, each with a stiff flipped bird—no eagle—in every pot.

STRETCHING TRUTH
BY KEVIN D. LEMASTER

the coconut cream
pie in the fridge

gives me hunger anxiety,
laced with its coin-sized

dollop of mold right in
the middle of the

toasted white strands,
atop the whipped cloud

of cream. it's not mine
to throw away,

so i leave it for someone
else to notice.

amidst all the other forgotten
items, it grows its black-green

web that will soon spread across
the entire expanse of its surface

like nerve endings, temperature
controlled and displayed to anyone

willing to open the door and peer
inside, like stress, like love worn

on the sleeve of a boy, his first crush
gleaming behind that patent golden

hair, flipping and sun-like, or his first
feel of a woman's boobs. How firm

they were and unlike the pie rotting in
the coolness of the fridge,

nothing about them could ever spoil.

FEAST

BY PATRICIA ZYLIUS

When I'm cast out of my body
throngs of microbes will break me down
from the inside out, marble my skin greenish-black.

What music will they make?
I won't hear that soft hiss and fizz
as I dissolve. But I think it will be like brushes
on a snare, or a choir's whispery fugue.

Let me lie on the landscape,
let the gorging hordes
sing and savor, slush and rubble me.
Let mushrooms rise
from what was once my belly.

“I’LL BE OUTSIDE IN THE GARDEN ALL DAY”

BY JEFFREY HASKEY-VALERIUS

and because my mother once had skin cancer,
I unpin my flesh and drape it inside-out over
the line, watch all my hues drip into the grass.
Misdemeanors run chartreuse; felonies, magenta.
Every crimson breakup. Sick-green regrets.
Rehabs and failed careers and suicidal tendencies.
What colors are all the times I could have had more
but was too afraid to try? The phone calls to
my parents I never made because I was ashamed
to admit I’d failed again? My lilies have bloomed
lava orange with strawberry centers. They’re not
as fragrant as I’d hoped, but I snip them to
bring inside anyway. I mow the lawn, grimacing
through the dust storm. Edge the driveway
and blow the remnants into the ephemera.
The rest of the day I spend pulling weeds,
spiky dandelion leaves and stubborn soldiers
marching between cobblestones. At dusk,
I stop to wipe sweat from my face and
look up. Where I once was, I’m gone.
I’ve bled dry. I’m just a patchy film of skin
and sinew, fluttering idly in the breeze.

DEATH, YOU'RE THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM
BY NAFISA A. IQBAL

that no one wants to talk about at parties
and even less so at funerals. I find myself
spiraling into your orbit, your enormous gravitational core but
did you know? Miles and miles of exhumed bones hold up
the cobblestones of Paris. Hallowed grounds to make
hollowed mounds of quarries, carved out arteries
of the city's heart. A few times a year, subterranean
parties flash strobe lights violet over mandible and coccyx.
Death—don't you know?—the big and the small, I love it all.
My mind tangles in tombstone typography and
unsolved murders lovingly replicated in dollhouse dioramas—
bullet holes tiny and nimble as the holes of a thimble
and the crafty killer's fake suicide note duplicated
in miniature with sleek strokes of a single-bristle brush.
Life—don't you see?—some of us live in the gap, the antra,
the negative space formed of breath and caesura. Why don't
you give us some privacy? for Death and I to stomp out our beat.

SWING

BY MATTHEW CHAMBERLIN

Heading home I might just slip
into the old museum

drift across the marble floors
to where the pendulum's dull rhythm

tattooed time at needle's tip,

where plunging swing gave way
to indeterminacy and back again.

Those strokes carved chasms in me—
I'd see across the yawning gulf

to selves of mine on distant rims,

alive in ways I've never yet,
among companions never met.

Eternal in that vacant hall,
entombed between the deathlike strokes

are memories of how it felt
—the icy room, the empty air—

to hold in childlike regard
the solitude I nurtured there.

LES AMOUREUX EN BLEU

BY BARBARA CROOKER

—*Marc Chagall, 1919, oil on paper*

It's blue, oceans of blue, filling the canvas in azure,
blue jay feathers fallen to earth. His blue hair,
demarked in curls. Her eye, in deep blue shadow.
His blue shirt, white collar. Her blue dress, dotted
with squares. Her blue lips, the sideways kiss.
Where are they now, these lovers? Caught up in blue,
they are so young, but this was over one hundred years
ago. Now they are dead or old. Which is why
we love paintings, isn't it? Because here they can live
in love forever. His eyes are closed as he drinks in
her lips. Her gloved hand is tender on his cheek. Yes,
there are slashes and gashes of black, but they only serve
to delineate and define. Death's shadow, that old black
crow, does not appear.

QR Code for link to [*Les Amoureux En Bleu*](#) image and bonus Barbara Crooker poem.



BEFORE THE DANK

BY OLALEKAN DANIEL KEHINDE

I lean on the rickety doorpost holding a lintel;
everything about it says death: the rods rotten
to the core; the bricks fissuring as if lightning
ran through their spines, & paint shelling off in
the pass of time. In the room, leavings of every-
thing grief touched lies unkempt on the floor or
wherever desolation breezes it to rot. The roofs'
spines no longer bear the weight of the asbestos;
they plummet & decay onto the palms of broken
tiles. This place, this base, used to bear life in its
bowels. I had watched flowers blossom at every
corner of it before war came to steal them away:
the flowers, the house, the children, & the parents.

The earth was so innocent of the taste of blood,
bones until bullets severed the family & stuffed
them into the throats of the ground. This place
had a heritage of peace before strife snapped it.
Here sang quietude; lovers vowing their joys,
clustering moans far from the ears of children.
Here was heaven before grenade began to drum
wars into our ears, killing kites, pride and kids.
Like vultures, they chewed our flesh in one bite.
The dogs alive unwebbed our ribcages with their
incisors & left the remains to rest on dank earth.

EVERYTHING
BY KATHRYN WELD

went into the lake — cast off enamel
teakettle,
green apothecary
bottles, crockery, ashes,

a kitchen stove; and once, someone's
engagement ring.
Although we drank
the water unfiltered, in winter, junk

was skidded out on the ice to wait
for April thaw
when piles vanished
overnight. It was convenient, close.

Responsible people might bury their waste
behind cabins. In pits dug
in glacial till, quilted
in hemlock needles, you'd find bedsprings,

a wood-stove — iron gone to rust.
Some leavings emerge
again, some linger in decay,
some rediscovered by girls

snorkeling in search of treasure —
the propeller for the old
'64 Johnson outboard
motor driveshaft

ejected spinning when a bolt gave out,
then settling somewhere
off a pier in silt
without bottom.

THE DETRITUS OF LIFE
BY CHRISTINA RUOTOLO

I find my mother's purse
among her things
afraid to open it,
for when I do it will be
like opening her mouth.

Secrets spill out:
a crumpled tissue,
tube of frosty pink lipstick,
vial of clear nail polish,
a ring of shiny keys...
keys to doors
I can no longer open.

A smooth-edged library card,
handful of weathered pennies,
worry stone
rubbed smooth,
a tube of cherry lotion —
unsnapping the top
I breathe in her signature scent.

I pull out crumpled receipts,
a half-written check
tracing the curling loops
of her handwriting.

I find a half-empty
water bottle.
Without thinking,
I twist off the cap,
gulping down
the last bits of her.

Her stories gather and swell
inside the leather straps,
the zipper holding in...
then spilling out
her life in sticky piles.

Placing my hand again
inside, I swirl around
hoping to pull her back out
and into the light.

FOSSIL

BY ELIZABETH PORTER

To be rounded smooth as a sea-pebble tumbled in briny waves. To be smaller than a fingernail. To be beholden, soft and gray and curled into forever sleep. Whittled by wind. Encrusted by sparkling sediment and mica. To be preserved, protected, prolonged. To be pick-bone sharpened into precision, a rib carved into stone. To be continued.

DIG SITE

BY JUDITH MIKESCH MCKENZIE

Somewhere, someone whistles, sending between
kiss-pursed lips the sound of footsteps taken
bare through grass, of a soul wandering
high across ridges that do not know

time - the sound a score for the deepness of the
woods, the ridges holding spirits who know
the entire history of fire, of the deep ground
and morning held captive in the

light shining across a gridwork of string and
shallow graves without bones, a three—
dimensional chess board where the
points randomly cross the careful lines

and the firepit a curve unconcerned that it
is in too many grid sections, burrowing
into the ground in areas not staked out
for the brushes and spades to clear.

while the whistler continues, somewhere
in the woods, trodding along, walking with
the ghosts of the grid, its unsung lyric
making captive of the morning

HONEYBEE

BY DAVID B. PRATHER

—*Apis mellifera*

In Egypt, the sun god cried,
and his tears took wing.

I shouldn't be so lachrymose
over clover, but I let it
come to a head in my yard
to make a deity weep.

I'm told honeybees dance
to communicate their journeys,
tell of harrowing obstacles,
speak promises of gold.

When I was a boy,
my father brought home a jar
filled with sticky sweetness,
a piece of honeycomb adrift
in amber. I wondered
how bees avoided being trapped
in their own creation.

I thought of bugs ensnared
in resin, perfectly preserved
for thousands, maybe millions
of years, and how light turned

sepia around them.

The way it turns in autumn,
bittersweet, and still,
wrapped thick around our bodies,

holding us so close it feels
as though we could stay this way
forever, flowers burst open,
wanting to be gathered.

WHEN SPRING CAME
BY MERIE KIRBY

Later tonight we'll hear trumpets, brassy bursts,
ripples, attentive to the way breath moves music
until the thinnest membrane trembles.

Before we are ready to leave, the doorbell rings,
insistently, the way a child rings it for fun, to hear
the same notes over and over.

My husband goes down, opens the door,
shouts for me. There, in that space
between work and art, in the cold air

of the duplex's shared porch,
the downstairs neighbors thrust their still baby
into my arms. Four days old.

She looks into my eyes, sees me. I turn her belly down,
chin tilted, as her father taps her back. His ear presses
phone to shoulder, the 911 operator's voice audible to us both.

Her mom, who rang the bell, stands, hands unstill,
breath hitching, as sirens shrill towards us.
We try to work air into the small body between us.

Finally, the small squeak we hear, the abrupt
heave of ribcage against my palm—a bright sprout
breaking through stiff earth, triumphant as any fanfare.

HUMMINGBIRD

BY GERMAN DARIO

“(And isn’t that how you become tender, vulnerable? The tissue-softening marination of your own mind, the quicksand of mental indulgence?)” —from Her Body and Other Parties by Carmen Maria Machado

A hummingbird visits me as the first sip of coffee jolts my senses and in the afternoons when most of the day's drum has passed. It darts around the patio looking in from different angles. The window keeps the bird and poet distanced by a glass border. This little creature wants to tell me something, needs to tell me something. It does not give up, nor do I, in my puzzled wonderment at its beauty and the strength of its flight. At another session in the room with the kind eyes, attentive ears, and a comfortable flowered couch, there is a hummingbird searching my mind, rummaging through the many traumas for the one that troubles me today. It needs to declare the place and time of the wound that may never heal, but things with name and body must be buried, so I can learn to live without the anxiety making me burn between the many tasks I've given myself. The space between my therapist and myself is a border I erase when I speak. Hope is the day I walk out for the last time. Now, I buy the kindest sugar and the purest water; I boil it in my finest pot and cool it in the morning dew so it is safe. Then I will serve it to my friend outside the window, where I bleed these lines, and it will know, I'm listening.

SPRING SONNET FOR TABBY CAT
BY JULIE PAUL

Serena lies on the bed; she is waiting, again
for me to pay her some attention,
but when I offer my affection, close-up,
purring stops, small paws retreat beneath chin, head turns away.
She wants me gone. Or is it my fleeting touch she dislikes?
She knows my focus scatters, my busy hands
take flight after a quick fix of warm fur, soft as new buds.
Now, despite my to-do list, I give her
my stilled hand, a quiet beast
to press her cheek against; her breath's
as slow as someone praying—offering
thanks for what's already been accepted.
If I keep my fickle self subdued, she'll offer belly soon,
and I'll be here all blessed afternoon.

RUSTLE, RUSTLE
BY PHYLLIS WAX

Even as many cling to the branches,
dry leaves, yellow and browning,
gather in heaps at the back door, and the dogs
of poetry exuberantly rustle through them.
Running and leaping in the October sunshine,
the dogs can't be coaxed close. They only want to play.

Maybe tonight, when we're alone at home,
they'll allow me to scratch their heads
and pull the burrs from their fur.
Maybe then I can lure them
onto the page.

Section Three

IT'S THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE NIGHT I FELL OFF THE BALCONY
BY SAMANTHA MOE

New York City and I was bitter about things, young moon, a crescent undistinguishable from a knife's scales, each shining, empty in some parts, reflecting that apple green light from the shore, your mountain of grief and flowing dress pants, champagne ice cubes those days I was obsessed with flesh, this isn't about longing or love or loss, this is about the lullaby-death the decaying carcass of my once-trust for you, mouth full of nickels and cavities, you're surviving each week just to tell me why I should take my heart out of my chest you want me to abandon livers, deliverance, appetite and jewelry the hue of golden delicious apples, wanna bite your lips until they bleed, want to tell you secrets that will upset you, like how when you accused me of being in love with her I felt it, the fall and then fell into the pool, second floor shenanigans and whatever else you'd call it, these days we wear new makeup eat breakfast in bed, joke about eating out each other's hearts and lungs, leaving skimpy carcasses on the altar and what about that pastor you had a crush on, I'm always dreaming about the fire and your molars, those poison apples from cartoon films, would the honeycrisp do, no, maybe Braeburn and the time the painter came with her hands falling apart and you wouldn't give her bandages, wanted only paintings in the ballroom you wanted women in lace ballgowns, you wanted the seventies to come knocking at the doors of your bedroom, and everyone is so happy to see you, finally you read the novel I couldn't publish, you know her full name and her eye color, you've figured out puzzles but that was before you fell in love with me, vicious and viscous melting whale jaw, yellow sunglasses and there's something wrong with my body for a long time now, you tell her you told her so, you tell her I can't keep track of my feelings let alone the days of the week, the two of you betray the evening, toss my manuscript in the fire, the green light snickers, this isn't about car crashes or longing, like I said this isn't another love poem, one of those listless ballades I know you love, guitar strings to the neck, the party guests are empty zombies eating mint chocolate chip cream and talking shit about spiders, I hate to tell you I lied but I love the way your face gets all screwed up when you admit the truth, you long to push me off the roof.

SLOW LOVE

BY TRESHA FAYE HAEFNER

You stand on the other side of a mysterious lake.
Your legs raw meat of pine, split.

I arch. Birch tree planted on the edge of water,
bird locked in the branch suffering small ballads

to the flowers and maggots, pollen, carried through the air
by scarabs.

You cover the other side of palace gardens now,
between us, the carefully trimmed hedgerows, ruffling

open-mouthed roses, hard bodies of bees pollinating
lavender and tendrils of sweet peas' pink.

You cross a crowded street in India, touching
tamarind pods in the stalls of strangers. You try to make

eye contact with the seething side of a city.
You are leading a caravan over the desert,

carrying spices and gold, goats milk turning
to yogurt in the stomach-lined bag.

The blond rays of sun bake your imagination, your hands,
tanned and toned as you try to imagine your fingers

inside my nomadic tent. My bird bones fluttering
under the veiny pressure of your careful net.

You are on the edge of a continent, tripping over shoelaces. The path lit
by the shallow breathing light of European lanterns.

Moonlight steps onto water, a watchman sliding
his hands down the belly of night.

In the earliest days of early
Earth, when the land was fresh as the parted mouth of a gazelle

and we had that dazzled look,
like the inside of a mine,

and nightingales flew everywhere, listening
for the sound of a call returned.

Earth a woman,
spinning too fast to catch her breath.

The sky a man
who held her in his darkness,

and listened to her try.

WHEN THE SUN AND MOON APPEAR IN THE SAME SKY
BY DIANA DINVERNO

After JMW Turner's *The Fighting Temeraire Tugged to Her Last Berth to be Broken Up*

The ship, outlined in chalk and white lead,
not a ghost but close,
is so far gone the water struggles
to hold her reflection.

On her final journey, towed by a steam-propelled tug
less than half her size, up the Thames
toward a berth in a ship-breaker's yard,
a small white flag waves.

Everything
begins
and ends.

To think otherwise is *temeraire*—
reckless as my peering into the past
to find the beginning,
wanting to understand the pull,

the perilous leap,
whether brave or foolish,
or both,

that autumn night when my 20-year-old birth mother
briefly climbed onto the raft of a faded, brown-eyed man.
He offered shelter; she, a moment of grace.
The details, virtuous or not,

now reside in the vast,
dark waters.
They reflect nothing.

Yet, this is certain—I was born of recklessness.
I'll end a whisp of smoke.
Until then,
let me be bold,

seize waxing moonlight,
gather the gold-threaded rays,
sail into the churn.

QR Code for link to image of JMW Turner's [*The Fighting Temeraire Tugged to Her Last Berth to be Broken Up*](#)



LOVE IS AN ALLEY CAT
BY DANIEL BRENNAN

Love is an alley cat but that's got nothing to do with the
rib-cage halls painted meat-rack red, or the staircase spellcasting
shades of vertigo, or the bodies that grip their belts and buckles and
unzip their flies and purse their lips as they clamor *me, me, me* in line
in a room that feels lifetimes below the earth,
your breath clinging to every pore like the river's brine to
the piers, but I don't mind because love is an alley cat and
these men, their flesh, is like a crumbled dollar bill
waiting to be discovered along the floor
and I'm sure that a pair of hands will do the trick,
trick the night, night a cap on all our heads and lust an
albatross around our necks, the dreamless bird we've
all become as we wait, wait, wait to rise, rise, rise,
to get pulverized by the bass and bark and sink in the sweat and sublime,
the disco ball our many-faced goddess, the DJ our oracle
on high, your smell still buried deep in my lungs,
waiting to be excavated from its burial site of memory,
so I find the beckoning tongues, yes I know we don't stand
a chance when those gun oiled hands find a bathroom line,
a bathroom stall, a stalling line of nothing at all,
of men I can pretend are you, dark ocean of lips and
tongues and catastrophe and my love
is an alley cat, keeps coming back for more.

SEX APPEAL OF AN EL CAMINO
BY AMANDA HAYDEN

An El Camino is what happens
when a truck makes sweet,
dirty love to a station wagon
while Lynyrd Skynyrd plays on the 8-track
or Led Zeppelin's Kashmir

An El Camino is a coupe, a muscle car
a Chevrolet with rear wheel drive, pick up classified
swivel bucket or notchback bench seats
vinyl striped patterns, you can pick up
just about anyone if you have an El Camino

An El Camino is V-shaped
like the smooth geese heading to Mexico
like its revved big block engine
like the space between my legs
capital "V" capital "EL"

An El Camino is Prince if he were a seductive utility
steel bed, smooth grille, side skirts, carpeted
door panels, stylized suspension upgrade,
woodgrain trim, plush upholstery, Cam shaft,
hydraulic front bumper, copious V6 or V8

An El Camino is four generations
of trial and error, invention and reinvention
utility and impracticality, of ironic self-awareness legacy
a vehicle, when someone demands, *are you a car or are you a truck?*
takes a drag of its cigarette, eyebrows raised, and exhales, *both*.

LAUNDRY DAY
BY CAROL CASEY

Soil is the way of matter.
Earth's inscrutable filing system
works on entropy. Let's face it,
a clean white shirt is a blank page
that everything wants to write upon.
And its fabric welcomes each applicant
like a long-lost friend.

Because we worship purity
the shirt must undergo trial by water.
Innocent, it sinks, but must be purged
in weekly baptism. Corrective
measures are applied to loosen
the cloth's hold on its sins
while being beaten into conformity.

If intractable, there's purgatory—
diminishment, deconstruction—
demoted to servant,
but allowed to have friends.

CRYSTAL BALL

BY JACQUELINE JULES

I have no tea leaves
to predict if years from now
we'll sit in the kitchen
and talk about this
as a scare you survived,
not the beginning
of an end we don't want.

The future is a mirror
draped in black cloth.

Only a funeral
will finish the worry
of what happens next.

So I must pretend I've looked
into a crystal ball and seen you there,
laughing with grandchildren by your side.

LONG WHARF
BY PHYLLIS RITTNER

The tourists squeeze
past me on the spiral staircase
as we climb to the top deck
to view tonight's sunset.

Thirty years ago on a similar ferry,
in a gaggle of chatty secretaries,
all teased perms and black eyeliner,
we sailed past faded clapboard warehouses,
blue and red fishing shacks.

The one-dollar lunch cruise,
our hour-long respite from the clacking
of typewriters and ringing telephones,
we drifted away from our glass skyscraper,
bodies easing into the sea's stillness.

A single vessel in open water
where we sunned ourselves, escaped
into cheap paperbacks, napped, nibbled
sandwiches, whispered
family secrets.

After, we'd linger at the dock,
flirt with the bartender,
gossip, watch the planes roar
overhead,
sprint back to the office, slip
into our cubicles.

Now the evening narration begins.
Pulling away from the harbor,
the warehouses and fishing shacks
replaced with upscale restaurants
and concrete walkways swarming
with diners and sightseers.

The sun dips as cruise-liners
and clucking motorboats weave past.
I lean over the rail, wind whipping
my hair, stinging my eyes,
search for our former edifice,
now dwarfed in the towering skyline.

WINTER FLY

BY BONNIE PROUDFOOT

Sometimes on a sunny day in late winter
I stare at my window, not through it

at dapples of clouds or snow-covered hillsides,
because a fly climbs the windowpane or sill,

trying to find its way outside. I don't know
where it came from, yet here it is, a masked

mote with red eyes, long legs for its size,
hairy body and wings that could be the veins

of a minute leaf or a drawing by Leonardo
come to life. It is a slow fly, a winter fly, one

I could easily catch in my cupped hand.
But then what? The wind-chill is in the teens,

and it needs heat for its tiny legs and wings
to work, but it is drawn to sun and seems

to be pleading its case. The world is beyond me
sometimes, so much feels out of place, brilliant

sun on a frigid day, daffodils straining their way
through crusts of snow, buds swelling to flower,

driven by inscrutable instinct and light, even
when the forecast says more ice and snow.

Small thing, what can I do but let it go?

THE PIANO TEACHER
BY LIZ MARLOW

who guards all the keys, calls
you names for not practicing
enough, says your fingers do not
belong on them, even though they
feel smooth like eggshells on your
fingertips, and you treat them
delicately as such. They are glossy
like the albumen after you tap
your spoon to crack open a hard
boiled one and tear it apart
as it sits in its cup—upright
in perfect posture. Her curio
cabinet is full of porcelain egg
cups, one for each day of the month
with different flowery details.
You imagine her thinking, *I will
devour what was once nestled
under a hen—protected—using
this blue rose cup or maybe
this one with daffodils*, while
you imagine yourself becoming
something harder—a petrified
dinosaur egg or not even an egg
at all—the piano lid, not propped
open properly, ready to slam shut.

DEADHEADING
BY DONNA PUCCIANI

I offer my anonymous gardening services
to all the sleeping houses passed
on my morning walk, planning
my small acts of violence, noticing
just when petunias start to wilt,

day lilies droop like old underwear,
geraniums wither into crushed buttons.
I feel the life draining out of them,
sense the dryness coming on
with a gradual cruelty. And when

they are at last hopelessly undone,
I finish the job by pinching off
their crisp, darkened heads,
which always saddens me
inexplicably. And yet I know

that the emptiness I leave behind
will flower into another joy,
taking its energy from the space
abandoned by the discarded black nub
that used to be flamboyant red.

MY MOTHER'S SUPERSTITIONS
BY CLAUDIA M. REDER

We were educated and superstitious,
adoring black cats, uneasy about walking under ladders,
yet climbing the rickety flight of steps
to hear our tea leaves read.

On New Year's Eve
platters adorned with
marzipan pigs and Linzer torte,
we'd spoon small amounts
of melted lead into a bowl
of cold water, then divine
the shape and interpret its shadow.

One New Year's she said
her lead shape looked like a coffin.
Mine, a train, or bus.
Her choice of words
didn't surprise. She had
always kept company
with death, some years
courting it more than others.

She is still fleeing Riga,
tucking small valuables
into brown paper bags.
She wears panic as an
impeccable piece of clothing,
familiar with it since a young age.
Her stories like tiny gems
sewn into our dress hems.

TRAVAIL OF A WANDERER
BY PACELLA CHUKWUMA EKE

The commonest thing to do when you've spent
a good slice of your years in exile is to assume.
That's the difference between a refugee and one
who has known the smell of home all his life.

The curtains were born out of new fabrics before the war.

Now, you assume that they are all grown up/ worn out/ faded/
like your little sister's smile. You try to remember your little sister—
Nneka is a woman now.
You hope she didn't let infatuation *slide into her thighs*—
This is what Mama would say if she were around.

Before the war,
Mama's skin was doing a quick multiplication of wrinkles.
You wonder if the dust has made her their own.
You remember the cracked roads,
then assume that civilization has reached home;

that the walls are now mirrors
the road is tiled
the neighbors have sealed their mouths
and your sister still washes carbon dioxide off her lungs.

You plug in the earpiece and pray it reaches your soul.
You also pray that the words sinking into your skin
might destroy the feeling that you're wrong
that Mama is gone Nneka too just as the neighbors
fled into a foreign soil the way you did.

That civilization cannot reach what doesn't exist,
that home was just a phase a wanderer must outgrow.

EATING A POMEGRANATE
BY ALICIA ELKORT

613 pomegranate seeds said to represent the 613 mitzvot in the Torah, and today and yesterday and the day before that, 4 weeks of days so far, all I can think is *thou shalt not kill*. If the little man resorts to chemical warfare, that will change the whole cannoli, he said. As if shooting a woman in the bread line is not horror enough. A fatal shot to the third eye. I'm rubbing pomegranate juice over my face, pretending to bleed. The red is never enough. Too sweet. And the juice that spilled to the floor? I'll read patterns, Rorschachs to decipher. In the end I'll come up with only a shrug, sadness in the one hand, joy in the other. The schoolgirl in white Mary Janes thumbs her middle finger at the camera defying every expectation. 613 expectations. 613 ghosts with no ark to land safely in the promised land. I want to go all feral. I want to Six-Thirteen the power of greed, let my anger raise the innocent dead, excoriate the wicked, rip the shreds outta life looking for the one smooth pearl, but there's 613 laws to follow, free will be damned.

FINDING GOD IN THE TUB
BY ELAINE SORRENTINO

The pink visor and polo uniform
on the cool bathroom floor
reek of burnt coffee
and stale doughnuts.

Warm water soothes my aches
weary fingers work the smooth beads
lips move in silent recitation
Our Father, Hail Mary,

Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious Mysteries,
searching for relief in prayer,
twenty-seven petition days
twenty-seven more for thanksgiving,

the promise of a way out.
No one witnesses this nightly ritual,
just coffee-pourer and God,
I am confident my answer is on its way.

The response arrives in torrents,
high and low-pressure systems collide,
floods decimate our waterfront neighborhood,
we move to temporary shelter,

I re-evaluate my unorthodox
method of praying in the bath;
could I have elicited this violence of nature?
The takeaway: *things could be worse.*

ISLA DE VIEQUES
BY WILL CORDEIRO

At dusk we kayaked up
the inlet's black and brackish
track past mangrove roots.
Low clouds rode in. Soon,

night was dark: no star,
no moon inscribed its mark
of luster on the surface,
smooth at slack tide now.

We entered the lagoon,
swimming to the center
of its inky amnion, and
with each flutter kick

we quickened luminescent
trails behind us—a wake
of fairy-dust—from blooms
of noctiluca, the warm lake

radiant around our laps.
Minnows braided over kelp
which mapped new worlds
below us. Light held us

in its momentary traces.
Bats raptured silhouettes.
We pulsed in births of ooze
across strewn galaxies,

surf's fluid fuse of inner
fire, lapsing. Our faces rose
with water spilling off us,
our bodies glowing still

from skinny-dipping—pivot
riven in the heart when heart-
break takes us, the horizon's arc
giving forth faint chroma,

each dying spark we touched.

CONTRIBUTORS

Nafisa A. Iqbal (she/they) is a Bangladeshi writer and MFA candidate at Columbia University's Creative Writing Program, where she has been awarded the Felipe P. De Alba fellowship. Nafisa's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Rumpus*, *The Puritan*, *Folio Literary*, and Commonwealth Writers' *adda magazine*, among others. In 2020, she was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Short Story Prize 2020 among over 5,000 applicants. In 2022, she was an honorable mention for the Robert and Adele Schiff Award.

Daniel Brennan (he/him) is a queer writer and resident of New York City. He spent much of his youth in the lush Blue Ridge Mountains of Pennsylvania, an early source of ecological inspiration. Brennan hopes to juxtapose the vastness of our rapidly changing natural world with the daunting intimacies the queer body presents. His poems have been published or are forthcoming in *Passengers Journal*, *The Garfield Lake Review*, *ONE ART*, and *Sky Island Journal*, among others. Instagram/Twitter: @DannyJBrennan

Carol Casey lives in Blyth, Ontario with her husband, hundreds of books and a large garden. Her first major, and formative, literary event occurred when her grade 8 teacher read her poems out loud to the class. She has thought of herself as a poet ever since. Her work has been twice nominated for the Pushcart Prize and has appeared in the *Santa Fe Literary Review*, *Dust Poetry*, *antilang*, *Popshot Quarterly*, *Cypress*, and others, including a number of anthologies, most recently, *Byline Legacies* and *Oxygen, Parables of the Pandemic*.

Matthew Chamberlin lives in Virginia, where he also writes. His work can be found in *Typehouse Literary Magazine*, *Jersey Devil Press*, *Apex*, *Phantom Drift*, *A-Minor*, *Gone Lawn*, and other places. He has been nominated for a Pushcart prize.

Will Cordeiro has recent work published or forthcoming in *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Letters Journal*, *Jet Fuel Review*, *thimble*, *Orange Blossom Review*, and *JMWW*. Will is the author of *Trap Street* (Able Muse, 2022) and co-edits *Eggtooth Editions*.

Barbara Crooker is author of twelve chapbooks and nine full-length books of poetry. *Some Glad Morning*, Pitt Poetry Series, University of Pittsburgh Poetry Press, is her latest. Her previous collection, *The Book of Kellls*, won the Best Poetry Book of 2019 Award from Poetry by the Sea. Her other awards include: Grammy Spoken Word Finalist, the WB Yeats Society of New York Award, the Thomas Merton Poetry of the Sacred Award, and three Pennsylvania Council fellowships in literature. Her work appears in literary journals and anthologies, including: *Common Wealth: Contemporary Poets on Pennsylvania*, and *The Bedford Introduction to Literature*.

German Dario (he/him) resides in Tempe, Arizona with his wife, two sons, three dogs, a guinea pig, many plants, and sometimes a fish. Recently published work in *Novus Literary Arts Journal*, *Five South*, *Opossum*, *Gargoyle Magazine*, *Gyroscope Review*, and *San Pedro River Review*. His poem "sanctuary" was short listed in 2021 for the Five South Poetry Prize.

John M. Davis lives in Visalia, California. His work has appeared in numerous literary journals, including, *Comstock Review*, *Descant*, *Bloodroot*, *Gyroscope Review*, and *Reunion: The Dallas Review*. *The Mojave*, a chapbook, was published by the Dallas Community Poets.

Diana Dinverno is the author of *When Truth Comes Home to Roost*, a chapbook published in 2022. She is the recipient of the Michigan Poetry Society's 2019 Margo LaGatutta Memorial Award, the Barbara Sykes Memorial Humor Poem Prize, and the 2022 Chancellor's Prize. A Best of the Net and Pushcart Prize nominee, Diana writes and practices law in Michigan. For more information, visit www.dianadinverno.com

Pacella Chukwuma Eke, NGP Xv, is a Nigerian writer and bathroom singer. She is the author of *Love in its bliss and sins* and a member of the Hilltop Creative Arts Foundation. She is also an editor at the TLJ and has her works published in several literary journals. She writes from Uli, a foreign town in Eastern Nigeria.

Alicia Elkort's first book of poetry, *A Map of Every Undoing* was published in 2022 by Stillhouse Press with George Mason University, after winning their book contest. Alicia's poetry has been nominated several times for the Pushcart, Best of the Net, and the Orison Anthology, and her work appears in numerous journals and anthologies. She reads for *Tinderbox Poetry Journal* and works as a Life Coach in Santa Fe, NM where praise and clouds are part of her everyday experience. For more info or to watch her two video poems: <http://aliciaelkort.mystrikingly.com/>

Richard Hague's work has appeared in *Poetry*, *Smartish Pace*, *Appalachian Journal*, *Northern Appalachian Review*, *Asheville Poetry Review*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Nowhere Magazine*, *Hiram Poetry Review*, *Nimrod*, *Mid-American Review*, *Ohio Magazine*, *Creative Nonfiction*, and dozens of other journals and anthologies. He is author or editor of 20 volumes, the most recent being *Riparian: Poetry, Short Prose, and Photographs Inspired by the Ohio River* (Dos Madres Press, 2019) with Sherry Cook Stanforth, and his essay collection *Earnest Occupations: Teaching, Writing, Gardening, and Other Local Work* (Bottom Dog Press, 2018), listed as "Recommended" by the U.S. Review of Books. He lives in Cincinnati.

Jeffrey Haskey-Valerius is a queer, Best of the Net-nominated poet and writer whose work has appeared in *Eastern Iowa Review*, *Iron Horse*, *Northern New England Review*, *Chiron Review*, and elsewhere. He tweets @jeffreyvalerius and is online at jeffreyhaskey-valerius.com.

Amanda Hayden is Poet Laureate for Sinclair College and Professor of Humanities, Philosophy, and Religions (emphasis in Indigenous, Eastern, and Environmental Studies), receiving several pedagogy awards, including the SOCHE Award (2017) and the League for Innovation Teaching Excellence Award (2020). Her chapter, *Saunter Like Muir: Experience Projects in Environmental Ethics* was recently published by Routledge (2022) in *Eco pedagogies: Practical Approaches to Experiential Learning*. She also published *Windy Chicken Farm Animal Rescue*. She lives with her family on a small farm with three dogs, two cats, two goats, seven pigs, many chickens, and a duck named Dorothy.

Gloria Heffernan's *Exploring Poetry of Presence* (Back Porch Productions) won the 2021 CNY Book Award for Nonfiction. She received the 2023 Naugatuck River Review Narrative Poetry Prize. She is the author of the poetry collection, *What the Gratitude List Said to the Bucket List*, (New York Quarterly Books), and three chapbooks including *Peregrinatio: Poems for Antarctica* (Kelsay Books) which was a finalist for the 2021 Grayson Books Chapbook Prize. A Pushcart and Best of the Net nominee, her work has appeared in over 100 publications including the anthology *Poetry of Presence* (vol. 2) and *Without a Doubt: Poems Illuminating Faith*.

Mary Holscher is a retired psychologist in Seattle, Washington who enjoys the leisure to write poems, exchange daily writing and drawing with friends, and read stacks of books from the public library. Her first short memoir, “Unwed Mother, 1970” was anthologized in *Single Mother’s Companion* (Seal Press, 1994). In recent years, she’s been mentored in poetry by her dear friend, Dianne Stepp. Her poems explore ageing and the sexual, social justice and spiritual hungers that have shaped her generation. This is her first published poem.

Jacqueline Jules is the author of *Manna in the Morning* (Kelsay Books, 2021) and *Itzhak Perlman’s Broken String*, winner of the 2016 Helen Kay Chapbook Prize from Evening Street Press. Her poetry has appeared in over 100 publications including *Cider Press Review*, *The Sunlight Press*, *Gyroscope Review*, and *One Art*. She is also the author of a poetry book for young people, *Tag Your Dreams: Poems of Play and Persistence*. (Albert Whitman, 2020) Visit www.jacquelinejules.com

Olalekan Daniel Kehinde (he/him), NGP XII, is an Afro-being, essayist and poet. Daniel is an award-winning writer. His poems have appeared in *PIN* anthologies, *BPPC* anthologies, *The Peace Exhibit Journal*, *African Writers Magazine*, *Inkspired anthology*, *Woven Poetry*, *The Shallow Tales Review*, *IbadanArt*, *Upwrite Magazine*, *Poetry Column NND*, *SprinNG*, *Agbowó*, *miniskirt magazine* and lots more. He currently studies English and Literature Education as an undergraduate in the University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria. He is on Instagram and Twitter as @dapenmustgrow

Merie Kirby grew up in California and now lives in North Dakota. She teaches at the University of North Dakota. She is the author of two chapbooks, *The Dog Runs On* and *The Thumbelina Poems*. Her poems have been published in *Mom Egg Review*, *Whale Road Review*, *SWWIM*, *FERAL*, *Strange Horizons*, and other journals. You can find her online at www.meriekirby.com.

Landa wo is an author from Angola, Cabinda and France. He writes fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and reviews, often in some hybrid form. You can find his words in *Bellingham Review*, *Colorado Review*, *Contemporary Verse 2*, *Columbia Journal*, *Cyphers*, *Fiction International*, *Grain Magazine*, *Black Warrior Review* online, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Nashville Review*, *Missouri Review*, *Raleigh Review*, *Rattle*, *Salt Hill*, *Scrivener Creative Review*, *The Common* and other journals and anthologies. Landa wo is politically engaged and his work deal with prominent issues of social justice, discrimination and cultural strife. On Twitter @wo_landa . On Instagram @landa.wo

Susanna Lang’s most recent chapbook, *Like This*, is available from Unsolicited Books. Her e-chapbook, *Among Other Stones: Conversations with Yves Bonnefoy* (Mudlark: An Electronic Journal of Poetry & Poetics), and her translation of *Baalbek* by Nohad Salameh (Atelier du Grand Tétras), were both published in 2021. Her third full-length collection of poems, *Travel Notes from the River Styx*, was published in 2017 by Terrapin Books. Poems, translations and reviews have appeared or are forthcoming in such publications as *The Common*, *december magazine*, *Asymptote*, *American Life in Poetry*, *Rhino Reviews*, *Calyx*, and *The Slowdown*. More information available at www.susannalang.com.

Kevin D. LeMaster's poems have been found at *SheilaNaGig* online, *Flying Island Literary Review*, *Triggerfish Critical Review*, *Route 7 Review*, *West Trade Review*, *Main Street Rag*, and others. He has work forthcoming in *Inflectionist Review*, *Hive Avenue Literary Journal*, *Barely South Review* and *Mantis*. Kevin is the co-editor of the upcoming anthology *Poetry by Chance* and the judge of the Golden Die Contest that supplied the poems for the anthology. He has been nominated for a Pushcart twice and once for a Best of Net.

Lenny Lianne is the author of a new poetry collection, *Sunshine Has Its Limits* (Kelsey Books). She holds an MFA from George Mason University and has taught various forms of poetry in workshops on both coasts. She lives in Arizona with her husband and their dog.

Mary Makofske's latest books are *The Gambler's Daughter* (chapbook, The Orchard Street Press, 2022); *World Enough, and Time* (Kelsay, 2017); and *Traction* (Ashland Poetry, 2011), winner of the Richard Snyder Prize. Her poems have appeared in 60 journals including *Gyroscope Review*, *Poetry East*, *American Journal of Poetry*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Talking River Review*, *Comstock Review*, *Earth's Daughters*, and *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, and in 20 anthologies. She has received the Atlanta Review Poetry Prize and the New Millennium Writings Poetry Prize. www.marymakofske.com

Kathleen Cassen Mickelson (she/her) runs One Minnesota Crone, a place to celebrate the creativity of women over 50, and was a founding editor of *Gyroscope Review*, which she co-edited until 2020. Her work has appeared in journals in the US, UK, and Canada, and her chapbook, *How We Learned to Shut Our Own Mouths* (Gyroscope Press 2021), is available through Amazon. Find out more at oneminnesotacrone.com.

Judith Mikesch McKenzie has traveled much of the world, but is always drawn to the Rocky Mountains as one place that feeds her soul. She loves change - new places, new people, new challenges, but writing is her home. A teacher, writer, actor, and producer, she currently lives in Oregon with her family and two cats. Her poems have been published in *Halcyone Literary Review*, *Plainsongs Magazine*, *Scribblerus*, *Cathexis Northwest Press*, *Meat for Tea Valley Review*, and several others. She is a wee bit of an Irish curmudgeon, but her friends seem to like that about her.

Claudia Mills is the author of over 60 books for young readers, including most recently the middle-grade verse novel *The Lost Language* (Holiday House 2021), named a Notable Verse Novel of the Year by the National Council of Teachers of English. She is also a faculty member in the graduate programs in children's literature at Hollins University. Claudia lives in Boulder, Colorado.

Mark J. Mitchell's most recent collection is *Something to Be* from Pski's Porch. A historical novel will be out soon. He's fond of baseball, Miles Davis and Dante. He lives in San Francisco with his wife, the activist, Joan Juster where he makes his living pointing out pretty things. A meager online presence can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/MarkJMitchellwriter/> A primitive web site now exists: <https://mark-j-mitchell.square.site/> I sometimes tweet @Mark J Mitchell_Writer

Sam Moe is the recipient of a 2023 St. Joe Community Foundation Poetry Fellowship from Longleaf Writers Conference. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming from *Whale Road Review*, *The Indianapolis Review*, *Sundog Lit*, and others. Her poetry book *Heart Weeds* is out from Alien Buddha Press and her chapbook *Grief Birds* is forthcoming from Bullshit Lit in April '23. Her full-length *Cicatrizing the Daughters* is forthcoming from FlowerSong Press.

Susan Moorhead writes poetry and stories in New York. Her work has appeared in many journals and anthologies. She's received four Pushcart prize nominations for fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Her poetry collections are *The Night Ghost*, and *Carry Darkness, Carry Light*. Daytimes find her working as a librarian where she is happy to be surrounded by books.

Miriam O'Neal's poems have appeared in *Lily Poetry Review*, *The Galway Review*, *Waxed Lemon*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Blackbird Journal*, and elsewhere. She earned an MFA from the Bennington Writing Seminars a long time ago. Her collections include *We Start With What We're Given* (Kelsay Books, 2018), *The Body Dialogues* (Lily Poetry Review Books, 2020), and *The Half-Said Things* (Nixes Mate Books, 2022). She lives in Plymouth, MA and tries to be a useful literary citizen. www.miriamoneal.com

Colette Parris is a Caribbean-American attorney whose poetry and prose can be found in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *The Healing Muse*, *Scoundrel Time*, *LEON Literary Review*, *Cleaver*, *MoonPark Review*, and elsewhere. Three of her stories have been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She lives in New York. Read more at coletteparris.com.

Julie Paul is the author of three short story collections and the poetry collection, *The Rules of the Kingdom*. She lives in Victoria, BC, Canada, where, when not writing or working as a massage therapist, she plays with paint and pencils and makes a lot of sourdough bread.

Elizabeth Porter lives, writes, and teaches middle school in south-central Pennsylvania. She has been an educator since 2020 and a word-builder since she could write. Elizabeth finds inspiration from the natural world, myths, and the surprising joys of spending most of her waking hours in a middle school.

David B. Prather is the author of *We Were Birds* (Main Street Rag Publishing, 2019), and his second collection, *Bending Light with Bare Hands*, will be published by Fernwood Press. He studied acting at the National Shakespeare Conservatory, and he studied writing at Warren Wilson College.

Bonnie Proudfoot's 2020 novel, *Goshen Road* (OU Swallow Press) was selected for WNBA's Great Group Reads, Long-listed for the PEN/ Hemingway award, and awarded the 2022 WCONA Book of the Year. Her debut chapbook of poems *Household Gods*, (Sheila-Na-Gig) was published in September 2022. She has published fiction, essays, and poetry in a variety of journals and anthologies, including *Gyroscope Review*, *Kestrel*, *the New Ohio Review*, *Pine Mountain Sand and Gravel*, and *the Gettysburg Review*. She lives outside of Athens, Ohio, and teaches part-time at West Virginia University.

Donna Pucciani, a Chicago-based writer, has published poetry worldwide in *Shi Chao Poetry*, *Poetry Salzburg*, *ParisLitUp*, *Mediterranean Poetry*, *Meniscus*, *Agenda* and other journals. Her seventh and latest book of poetry is *EDGES*.

Claudia M. Reder is the author of *How to Disappear*, a poetic memoir, (Blue Light Press, 2019). *Uncertain Earth* (Finishing Line Press), and *My Father & Miro* (Bright Hill Press). *How to Disappear* was awarded first prize in the Pinnacle and Feathered Quill awards. She was awarded the Charlotte Newberger Poetry Prize from Lilith Magazine, and two literary fellowships from the Pennsylvania Arts Council. She recently retired from teaching at California State University at Channel Islands. Her poetry ms. *Appointment with Worry* was a finalist for the Inlandia Institute Hillary Gravendyk Prize. You can find more information at: <https://www.claudiareder.com/> <https://yetzirahpoets.org/jewish-poets-database/>

Phyllis Rittner writes poetry, flash fiction and creative non-fiction. Her work can be found in *Burnt Breakfast*, *Dragonfly Arts Magazine*, *Roi Faineant Press*, *Paper Dragon*, *Versification*, *Sparks of Calliope* and others. She is the winner of the Grub Street Free Press Fiction Contest and a member of The Charles River Writing Collective.

Seven-time Pushcart Prize nominee **Russell Rowland** writes from New Hampshire's Lakes Region, where he has judged high-school Poetry Out Loud competitions. His work appears in *Except for Love: New England Poets Inspired by Donald Hall* (Encircle Publications), and *Covid Spring, Vol. 2* (Hobblebush Books). His latest poetry book, *Wooden Nutmegs*, is available from Encircle Publications.

Christina Ruotolo is the Editor of *Her Magazine* and Regional Events Director for APG Media. She is an award-winning poet, published author, teaches creative writing and works part-time at Barnes & Noble. Ruotolo was shortlisted for the 2019 James Applewhite Poetry award and runner-up for the Heart of the Pamlico Poet Laureate award in 2021. Ruotolo is the author of the Poetry Book- *The Butterfly Net*, creator and co-author of the nonfiction book, *The Day The Earth Moved Haiti*. She has a BA in English, communications and an MA in creative nonfiction from East Carolina University.

Claire Scott is an award winning poet who has received multiple Pushcart Prize nominations. Her work has appeared in *the Atlanta Review*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *New Ohio Review*, and *Healing Muse* among others. Claire is the author of *Waiting to be Called* and *Until I Couldn't*. She is the co-author of *Unfolding in Light: A Sisters' Journey in Photography and Poetry*.

Elaine Sorrentino, Communications Director by day, poet by night, has been published in *Minerva Rising*, *Willawaw Journal*, *Glass: A Journal of Poetry*, *Ekphrastic Review*, *Writing in a Women's Voice*, *Global Poemic*, *ONE ART: a journal of poetry*, *Agape Review*, *Haiku Universe*, *Sparks of Calliope*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Your Daily Poem*, *Panoplyzine*, *Etched Onyx Magazine*, and at wildamorris.blogspot.com. She was featured on a poetry podcast at Onyx Publications.

Laurel Szymkowiak has work published in several journals, including *Voices from the Attic*, *The Del Sol Review*, *US 1 Worksheets*, *Pretty Owl*, and *Gyroscope Review*. She is a Western Pennsylvania poet and a regular participant in Madwomen in the Attic writing workshops.

Social issues are a major focus of Milwaukee poet **Phyllis Wax**, but she is also inspired by nature and human nature. She has read in coffee houses, bars, libraries and on the radio. Among the anthologies and journals in which her poetry has appeared are: *Feral*, *The Widows' Handbook*, *Writers Resist*, *Jerry Jazz Musician*, *Out of Line*, *Spillway*, *Peacock Journal*, *Surreal Poetics*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *New Verse News*, *Portside*, *Your Daily Poem*. She has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize, as well as the Best of the Net and Bettering American Poetry anthologies. Reach her at: poetwax38@gmail.com

Kathryn Weld's debut full length collection, *Afterimage*, is forthcoming from Pine Row Press (Fall 2023). Her chapbook is *Waking Light* (Kattywompus Press, 2019). Her poetry has appeared in *The Cortland Review*, *SER*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Blueline*, *The Stone Canoe*, *NOON: The Journal of the Small Poem*, *The Maine Review*, *Midwest Quarterly*, and more. Her prose appears in *The American Book Review*, *Connotations Press*, *The Critical Flame* and elsewhere. She is Professor of Mathematics at Manhattan College. In her free time, she loves hiking the desert canyons.

Dick Westheimer has—with his wife and writing companion Debbie—lived in rural southwest Ohio for over 40 years. He is a Rattle poetry prize finalist. His most recent poems have appeared or are upcoming in *Whale Road Review*, *Minyan*, *Gyroscope Review*, *The Banyan Review*, *Ritual Well*, and *Cutthroat*. His debut chapbook, *A Sword in Both Hands*, *Poems Responding to Russia's War on Ukraine*, is published by Sheila Na Gig Books. More at www.dickwestheimer.com

Patricia Zylius is the author of the chapbook *Once a Vibrant Field*. Her poems have appeared in *California Quarterly*, *SWWIM*, *Plant-Human Quarterly*, *Catamaran Literary Reader*, *The Journal of Radical Wonder*, *Crosswinds*, *Body*, *Passager*, *Sequestrum*, *Book of Matches*, *Juniper*, *Ellipsis*, *Natural Bridge*, and other journals, and on the Women's Voices for Change website. Her poems are also included in *Welcome to the Resistance: Poetry as Protest*, *In Plain Air*, *Women Artists Datebook*, and *The Yes Book*. She lives in Santa Cruz with her husband.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

For April, National Poetry Month, we have a treat for you. Origin Stories. 30 days of Gyroscope Review poets showing off a poem and talking about the origin of the poem. Read, watch, and/or listen to poets describing how their poem came about and what inspired them. A fascinating experience. We're not as different as we think in what moves us. (Watch for the Extended Edition of Origin Stories in May, because poets cannot be contained for a mere month.)

Summer Submissions open April 1, 2023, and run through June 1, 2023. We will close early if we get all the poems we need, so submit early. We also close to submissions early for the month if we reach our submissions cap. Put 4 poems in one .doc(x) or .rtf document, page breaks in between poems, normal fonts like Times New Roman, and an up-to-date bio for the magazine in the Submittable bio section. Please use the name in your bio you'd like to be published under. Do not submit poems individually. Only submit once. No weird formatting. It makes the editors drink heavily, and not always coffee. If you submit more than 4 poems in a doc, we will read the first 4 and ignore the rest, breaking their poemy little hearts and causing the feline overlords to chortle.

We welcome poems that are seasonal, topical, or out of left field. We have eclectic tastes, so give us a shot. We'd love to see what you've been working on.

Please read our full guidelines on Submittable:
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