

# Gyroscope Review

fine poetry to turn your world around



Summer 2024



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Summer Issue 2024

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Constance Brewer

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## From the Editor

Greetings and welcome to the Summer 2024 Issue. We're looking forward to the Summer Olympics in Paris and watching our favorite sports and competitors. I like equestrian sports and rugby, neither of which usually show up on prime-time TV, but hey, look, there it is at 4 a.m. on some obscure channel. Many of you chimed in on our Cover letter conversation starters about your favorites, and fencing, archery, swimming, and gymnastics were the clear winners. Badminton got no love.

We have another great issue for you, full of fascinating and thought-provoking poems. We find it interesting how poems for the issue seem to come together naturally and flow into an order. It's like the authors tap into a poetic zeitgeist. You never see a poem about a certain topic, then for the next issue, here comes four. It makes reading for each issue fun, and opening each poem is like tearing open a birthday present.

Meanwhile, in my part of the world, it's time for hot days, mountain hikes under cool trees, and evenings spent grilling food with friends. Summer is a great time to take your poetry outside with a cool drink and relax. Let the poets of this issue take you away to other places—including Paris! We hope you enjoy this issue and have a great summer, wherever you are.

Constance Brewer

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# Section One



## SUMMER SNOW

—after “Snowball” by Tara A. Elliott

BY MARC ALAN DI MARTINO

Not much more than a squat ramshackle hut  
daubed with a medley of brash colors:  
Sky Blue, Blood Orange, Spearmint Green.  
Mid-June to September station wagons  
studded the block, sidewalk crowded with feet  
beneath a canopy of lindens. Three rows thick,  
we hollered orders over the jackhammer  
din of the ice-grinder. At the plywood  
countertop, a family of servers pressed  
the necks of syrup pumps as thin streams  
of liquid candy turned the snow to fire,  
an ample dollop of marshmallow fluff  
glowing at the crest of the tall paper cup  
like a white dwarf among sparkling nebulae.

**INEVITABLE**  
BY TESS LECUYER

it was inevitable  
that the sun rose  
and rose for so long

the sunrise colors  
left, having lost their  
audience  
to sax solos on the gazebo,  
last minute shopping  
trips to pick up  
the perfect hat,  
the lure of the sound of  
fresh-squeezed orange  
juice hitting champagne,  
a book,  
a shady bench,  
a banana,  
new cut lawns on slopes  
to roll down,  
a wavelet whispering  
'chase me,'  
a chaise lounge,  
position perfect  
to watch the morning's  
fine, pale eyelash moon  
ease behind the mountains

THE UNICORN ESCAPES  
BY MARIANNE GAMBARO

Sometimes when I'm driving at night I think I see her,  
browsing vegetation where the road and forest meet,  
her single remaining horn illuminated in my headlights.  
But it always turns out to be a trick of shadows.

She's still out there somewhere  
ever since the storm that took down the tree limb  
which took down the fence  
which surrounded the faux savannah  
    (they said was not a cage but was)  
which was supposed to make the elands think  
they were still in Africa, and make visitors think  
the elands were happy. One quick look  
back at her arranged-marriage-mate,  
her half-ton body soared over the broken fence  
and she was gone.

They had named her Mary, a good Christian name  
to make their good Christian visitors comfortable.  
But I think of her as *Bititi*, "strong woman"  
in the language of her homeland.

In TV interviews the zookeeper asked people  
to report sightings, painting dire warnings  
of coyotes and moose in rut  
(although coyotes could certainly find easier prey  
nor was it moose rutting season).

I picture her in the forest befriended  
by a herd of does, playing "auntie" to their fawns.  
Perhaps when autumn comes a statuesque buck  
will approach her, gallantly extend a hoof  
then bow his head with its majestic rack.  
She will return the greeting  
and together they will walk away among the trees  
to begin a brand-new species  
free from bondage by humans.

## ANGELS' FINGERS

BY TRESHIA FAYE HAEFNER

*This is the non-scientific term for crepuscular rays, the shafts of light that shine through the breaks in clouds or trees, creating an ethereal, golden effect.*

The Scrub Jays feel them first,  
then the Bull Trout

and California Killifish, feeding  
on flies at the top of their brooks.

Those fingers of angels reaching  
through branches of Ponderosa, stroking

the slick skin of the water.  
Summer after summer they return,

the hands of these large seraphim, plunging  
through the forest, towards the town.

Eternal, but not imaginative, they love  
what they have loved since the beginning.

Light moving over the water,  
apple trees push through loam

the way they did in images of Eden.  
In the morning, sun darkens the cherries.

At night, crickets leap  
from a bush of oleander.

When the angels' fingers appear  
deer veer into the meadow,

letting sun slide over their spotted hides,  
as if they know these messengers

of another world, casually dipping their hands  
into the grasslands,

pampering the trees until they are as green  
as the skin of a snake. And the people rebuild their houses,

out of materials meant to resist the fire. This new attempt at America,  
This new vision of a permanent Paradise.

THE CROSSING  
BY OISÍN BREEN

When first I crossed the water from the mainland to my island lake, I pulled two dozen pallets  
Behind the boat I use to cross the quarter mile I weekly row to carry my supply of fuel and food.

I tied the pallets tightly, with trilene knots my mother taught me how to make when infant young,  
To keep them close, and spare myself an afternoon of rowing, bidding to catch lost wooden sheep,  
Each asleep and swift swallowing a shared ancestral memory of how it felt to be the heart  
Of a three-mast ship, cannon split, as their treated bark cracked one last time, in memory of the first  
Death of cinders when iron or steel or stone tore through arboreal skin to leave xylem bled,  
And those tall ministers of life beneath the soil, tillers of nitrogen—their domain a field of mulch—  
Ransacked to grow a city's teething bones and a future of tall wild trees shackled in cement.

I rowed the near 440 metres then to a home I would once have found impossible to call my own,  
Where trees replaced city blocks, burnt wood the neon clocks and signs of late night shops,  
And often muddy ditches the stone steps—some 60 in all—I climbed each night when sated,  
My belly full of wine and juice, my thighs sore with muscles stretched, and my lips curled  
In memory of flushes of heat spread through veins in cheeks and the sounds of thought stilled—  
Like paper-crushed then torn apart—to savour that mnemonic bleeding that turns skin into speech.

Yet here I had vowed to build my sanctuary—and asylum, too—here, upon this island,  
Where birds speak with God's voice—not in words, but in movements sharp and smooth,  
Sometimes bitter and sometimes sweet.

And here, I who had become an adept in reading human want in skin and bone,  
I have turned that knowledge to another use. It serves me now when I need to hear your voice  
Through talon tap and slung back beak, through the white-streaked glimmering shapes  
Of stout night foragers, and through the tumbling rattle of infant mice, flailing in the grass.

I moored then my boat in a small jetty built by a man who lived here some 134 years ago, I hear.  
Rot had long begun to spread along its poorly treated wood, and wide ochre stains dripped  
In slow motion from the rusted nails that once held in place the decking boards—just four remain—  
And the structure bucked—a skittishness of wood and steel where I imagine poets walked—  
With each touch, so I was careful when I tied the knot to keep my little ship from drifting.

**FIREFLIES IN TUSCANY**  
BY SARA LETOURNEAU

It's 10:00 p.m. on our last night in San Gimignano,  
and we've eaten enough pork sausage,  
pici with tomato-garlic sauce, and roasted vegetables  
that we could fall asleep. So we skip dessert  
and walk down the agriturismo's sloped back lawn  
as leisurely as the cows who live here.

The world, once beyond the reach of the terrace lights,  
mesmerizes in its darkness:  
the soft blades of grass tinted green-black,  
the pond water glinting silver from the moon,  
the stillness of hills, country roads,  
and distant trees now an undulating sea of shadow.

And yet, everywhere we look, there is light.  
On the horizon, the towers of the centro storico  
could be candle-bathed.  
Clusters of the same yellow glow dot the landscape,  
marking villas and farmhouses.  
And above, the stars, so bright and clear  
that they must be alive.

We stop at the split rail fence  
just before the steep drop into the olive grove,  
and as your arms envelop me from behind,  
I point into the night and say, "Look.  
Don't all the lights above and ahead of us  
look like fireflies?"

And we are silent for a moment,  
gazing at all the beauty one can see in the dark,  
and then you answer, "Wait. Look down" —

And there are the true fireflies,  
hundreds of them in the olive grove below,  
blinking so quickly that they cannot be real.  
They can only be those flashing white Christmas lights,  
putting on a show for tourists who are just about to leave.  
And laughter effervesces out of me  
because there is truth in this unexpected sparkling:

no matter how thickly night cloaks the countryside,  
it will always be threaded with light.

KISSING OSCAR WILDE'S TOMB  
BY TINA POSNER

"A kiss may ruin a human life"  
Oscar Wilde once said,

but what a kiss it was in that dark  
deco bar, so good we carried it

from spinning barstool to afterparty.  
In the bathroom, I blotted an "O"

of lipstick on a single ply sheet,  
and left it floating, for him to see.

We mouthed and bit for a decade  
till our lips cooled. That's when

I headed to Paris alone to wander  
used book stalls. Each morning

I'd crumble *pain au chocolat*  
and sing *bon jour* at the kiosk

for Marlboros then mutely navigate  
the metro with a baguette to-go.

I took myself to Père Lachaise, its old  
stones brushed in moss and cobweb.

My necropolis map soft from folding  
and refolding. A woman traveling

alone is wise to be discreet. Frail  
inside my poppy-print dress

from the flea market, my punching  
weight as slight as an addict's,

burnt off with pacing and grief.  
Coffee-eyed behind dark glasses,

I hopped a fence—shinbone  
high—to see Heloise and Abelard,

lovers punished for the miracle  
of their requiting, now laid

to rest in a white marble gazebo—  
stiff and chastely parallel.

On Earth, the pain begins when  
the whirlwind ends and we fall

from mid-air to hard ground.  
I kept moving as if pursued

in mid-flight from the wreckage  
of my marriage and lost amid

the rot and mourning weeds,  
hurrying past the grave Edith Piaf

with envy for her lack of regret,  
repeating in my rusty college French:

*Je regrette, je ne parle pas...*  
I remember Oscar Wilde once said,

“Each man kills the thing he loves,”  
and now a castrated angel hovers

over his bones. The irony moved me  
to leave a desecration of my own.

I slicked my lips orange-red and  
pressed twin flames into cold stone.



**A CONCEIT OF FRUIT AND BIRDS**  
BY KRISTY SNEDDEN

There was a council in me, a consortium, a consolation, by which I mean I consumed a barrel of dragon fruit. This was before I met the bird man who gave me books of poetry that I distributed around my house for the purpose of intellectual vanity. By which I mean Sharon Olds on my vanity cozied up to Yeats because she loved his wrinkled neck. Wright's *Haiku* lay open on the stairs, the pages ready to riffle like wings in a breeze. Stacks of old *Rattles* covered the coffee table, paper so stiff the fan created a slick collection of sounds that competed with the cardinals and chickadees trilling outside. I memorized Seuss until her poems slid from my mouth one page at a time. That's how I recognized the seasons after I gave up on weather patterns. By which I mean I counted seven stanzas to a week, thirty to a month. By then I was devouring a sour orange. I was a sea of stone, a lamentation, a pillar of salt. I lived with bees in my belly. Pages came out sticky with honey and settled in the bathtub. I lay down on a mattress of books, read most of them one page at a time and never finished. To my left, the glass bluebird on the shelf. I moved in slow motion. My appetite for rhyme was off. By which I mean there was no time, and the moon illuminated me into a string of pearls on the water. By which I mean quantum physics or wondering where I would appear next, and how. Inside was a cantaloupe, a compass, a compassion. A parrot with a pen. I thought she could write a bestseller, plumb me out. I confess.

**JERSEY BLUES**  
BY ARLENE WEINER

At the fish market my husband  
is a frequent buyer, known  
for his preference as Mr.  
Head On and Split. The counter men  
may think he's poor from his liking  
for Jersey blues, which some call  
trash fish.

At dinner tonight a bluefish  
shows two faces, joined, in the style  
of totem-pole animals. Its rows  
of tiny teeth fiercely oppose  
the fish's mirror image, itself.

I've stopped eating meat and birds,  
and have qualms about trout  
and Virginia spots: Beautiful,  
especially in life.

I've seen a bluefish run,  
lifeguards at the shore  
warning everyone  
out of the water, the mob  
of blues oncoming, churning,  
furious, like a storm, all teeth.

## CANNED

BY RICHARD HEDDERMAN

In late August, when ripe garden crops  
begin to drop, my wife takes over  
the kitchen, brings out the jars and rubber rings  
and with a maniacal ferocity begins

to seal what's left of our late garden  
and I stand still at my peril lest I wind up  
in a Mason jar where I would pass  
the long winter days on a shelf, pickled,

no virtue left to me but patience,  
the patience of salt, my eyes shut tight  
against the bite of peppercorns and feathery  
webs of dill, while talons of garlic clutch

at my skin and my skeletal system remains  
neatly collapsed in the enduring serenity  
of brine. Then there comes that first warm  
day in April — after months listening closely

for her footfalls on the root cellar steps —  
when I am released back into that old,  
familiar world that has, astonishingly,  
flourished bravely in my absence

just in time to plant what we'll call spring.

ODE TO COMPOST  
BY ROBBIE GAMBLE

A tessellation of eggshells  
gnarled bits of chicken gristle  
or celery splayed in gaunt limp ribs  
liberated from the crisper drawer  
and I could say that I have wasted  
my life through all those leftover  
hours swinging in a hammock  
or bingeing hackneyed miniseries  
or dithering over the letters I haven't  
yet written to distanced friends, but  
the worms, those slithery magicians,  
give them enough warmth and moisture,  
a sheaf of slick-black banana peels  
or the scrapings from those half-baked  
poetry inspirations, and who knows  
what lavish soil might tumble out.

**I DO NOT SAY I LOVE YOU**  
BY LOIS MARIE HARROD

more than the earth,  
for what would that say of me—

burdock  
sticking to my sock,

pollen coating  
my chin?

Haven't I scrubbed  
you from my throat,

plucked you from my skin  
and here you are again—

with your sticky hedge parsley,  
beggar's lice

catchweed bedstraw  
enchanter's nightshade

hiding your houndstongue,  
in the sandbur weed.

Who notices  
the itch but me?

BEARD OF BEES  
BY MERRILL OLIVER DOUGLAS

*Bee bearding is the practice of wearing several thousand honey bees on the face, usually as a sideshow-type demonstration at agricultural shows.*

—Wikipedia

And all this time  
I'd pictured a spiritual discipline:

queen held alone  
in a wire and wood cage  
on the seeker's chin,  
her scent summoning  
thousands of her daughters  
from the comb to convene  
on neck and face

while the seeker gradually  
slows his breathing  
to the crawl of a July creek,  
holds his mouth still in  
not quite a smile, but tilted  
upward at the corners,  
a gesture of apology.

Doing this over and  
over, the seeker learns  
not to flinch at the prickle  
of claws on skin,  
to respect the whine  
of furred bodies  
that drip off his cheeks  
like raw honey  
and circle back.

From time to time  
when one of those  
sisters stings,  
just as instructed

he holds still. Blinks.  
Says *thank you* to the pain.

CARTOGRAPHY BY CHOREOGRAPHY  
BY TERRY TROWBRIDGE

A honeybee mapmaker hangs upside-down  
from the ceiling of the hive.  
Her faceted eyes focus on the drones  
who, on their return, dance their routes  
to the drones on-deck. The mapmaker reflects.

Later, she finds each drone who danced a new dance.  
They demonstrate. She mirrors. They wiggle. She waggles.  
They zig. She buzzes. They step. She waltzes.  
The mapmaker learns each new dance.

Before the solstice, the mapmaker has choreographed an atlas.  
The early flowers have been mapped,  
seedlings and sprouts predicted for next year's strategy.  
The saplings and sprouts for late flowers have sprung,  
the hive can plan the rest of the year.

The mapmaker watches the directions of space:  
sunwise, widdershins, flying and falling.  
She graphs them on the directions of the colony:  
hivewise, flowershins, dawnward, duskway.  
She learns the music of the year's weather,  
and trains bodies to buzz the breezes and gales,  
whip nectar like rain splashes,  
use stingers as thermometers of sun, shadows, leesides.

Pop and lock, petal size. Plié and bow, colour code.  
Hive history tapped on hexagons.  
Steps remembered by honeyed eyes.

SERMON ON BIOLOGY  
BY BRANDY WHITLOCK

*“Man, like other organisms, is so perfectly coordinated that he may easily forget, whether awake or asleep, that he is a colony of cells in action, and that it is the cells which achieve, through him, what he has the illusion of accomplishing himself.” — Albert Claude*

We are right to be frightened. Imagine all it takes for us to live—motion, circulation, digestion, excretion, respiration, synthesis, immunity, synchronization—and consider how easily it all goes awry. We are, after all, porous, fragile clouds of replicating corpuscles, and duplication is inherently perilous. Conceived in new contexts, born to different moments, at unrecoverable coordinates, clones are never quite true copies, and we are so often petrified of what we cannot know or control. Cancer is not contagious, but we struggle to accept that we each produce our own, that no soul is less deserving than the next, that existing can't be quantified, nor justified, nor requited, nor can it be benign. For not one among us has earned this life, and we will always fail to make sense of it, fail to be more than a few scars in spacetime, fail to articulate even one thing more profound than death. It's so exquisite, this dark art of someone silenced, it drives even our angels insane, convincing us that by dying we could feel alive finally—or again. We can concentrate on improving communication, on finding common ground or extending our bounds of tolerance, but life is fundamentally and outrageously unrelenting. Covetous, lusty, brutally gluttonous, it carries the force of all the transmitting and receiving—all the coding and decoding—resounding now throughout all the cells all the world over, the power of all the breaths, in a single second, taken. Let us be awestruck. Friends, let us stay astounded.



SERMON ON GEOLOGY  
BY BRANDY WHITLOCK

*“The crust of the earth with its embedded remains must not be looked at as a well-filled museum, but as a poor collection made at hazard and at rare intervals.”* —Charles Darwin

When we scorn stone for its silence, for being cold and dense and heartless, for forming our crudest tools and our most primitive munitions, anticipating it at the very bottom of all our worst falls, we must forget our first hearths, the flint that initially let us cull fire, the walls of our longest-standing barricades, buildings and memorials, our oldest known roads, worn glass-smooth with use, the means and media for our most durable messages. Nothing deserves our reverence more. True, the rocks will not remember us, won't even stay much longer where we've moved them, and most will be, ultimately, drawn by gravity back into magma, melting like sleet into the sea, but look closely, right now — carefully — where the world has been shaken and split open like a book. There's proof of life stamped erratically into the sediments, its ghostly silhouettes, empty shells and footprints, petrified wood and bone and teeth. If we can exalt all this earth, not just gems and metals and monuments, we can keep extracting records, cobbling together a few more words and phrases, learning what's left of this language as it vanishes beneath our feet. So, rejoice in the benedictions of rolling cool, river-rubbed pebbles over hot skin, beholding shocks of granite etching even more beauty into skies, being baptized with cliffs and monoliths breaching expanses of sunlit beach as blinding as cut diamonds. Miles away, that sand originated in exposed veins of quartz and feldspar that, cracked and ripped by weather and water, crept down mountainsides and tributaries, plummeting into gorges and gullies, tumbling toward coastline and tide and ever-more softness. Blessed are our quick burials in swamp and bog, for they will preserve us best. The corpses of our kindred infuse silt and loam, clay and coal, and so all our ground is hallowed, every land, holy.

THE MAGNIFICENT ALBERTA CLOUDS  
BY JENNIFER EAGLE

those damn Alberta clouds  
I just want to pull the fuckers  
from the sky  
bind them with a string

slap them around  
call them my beautiful sluts

I want to stand at attention  
erect  
with my cloud bitches

and I wish I knew that Salvador Dali  
dude and his trippy floating zoo  
so when I let go of my cloud floozies  
he could send elephants and lions  
too



# Section Two

JEALOUSY AS ARS POETICA

—for Jeff Tigchelaar

BY AMY ASH

My husband likes Jeff's poems  
best. He reads them to us  
over Thursday night lasagna,  
turns the page gently as if folding  
a napkin, smudge of pasta sauce  
forming a heart beneath his hand.

He recites Jeff's poems from memory  
as he's zipping our daughter's pink coat,  
wondering if there's anything  
he can do in this world

not worth documenting. He texts  
Jeff's poems to our friends in Kansas,  
orders the journals they are in, his face  
reflected in a glossy cover under the hallway light  
as he tears the envelope away.

*It's because you don't write poems about me,*  
my husband says. In Jeff's poems, he's sometimes  
talking about baseball, about work,  
a conversation overheard, recorded, reordered

into song. Memorialized and martyred,  
amused muse. He doesn't  
say it to me—not directly, not now,  
but I know he has no interest in this poem.  
He just doesn't like poems about poetry.  
They're for poets, he thinks. He's right,

of course. He always is.

“THE WORDS WE SPEAK BECOME THE HOUSE WE LIVE IN”

—Hafiz

BY LANA HECHTMAN AYERS

The first speech is apology.  
House of fractured glass,  
roof of van Gogh nebula  
that allows in all weather.

The second speech is question.  
Swaying Schrödinger rope bridge  
that may or may not collapse  
above a black hole of assumption.

The third speech is desire.  
Longing for blue lake and fog,  
worldly wiles of musk,  
the way crows caw at dusk.

Fourth speech is tongue-tied.  
Apple that bobbles into  
your palm bruised,  
battered with ruined sweetness.

The fifth speech is easy song.  
Salmon shapeshifting along  
upstream, lyrical shivering scales,  
and the pale, pale riverboat sky.

The final speech is goodbye.  
Shudder of butterfly wings,  
sigh of fire that alters  
the glint in god’s eyes.

MY NAME IS LAURIE  
BY LAURIE ROSEN

My mother nicknamed me Lau,  
no “r”—Boston accent,  
one extended

e x h a l e

My Hebrew name is אֲסַנַּת,  
(Asnat) belongs to God.

In high school Spanish class  
I was known as Law-rah.

My middle name is Sue,  
an uncle dubbed me Susie.

Some friends affectionately  
refer to me as Weinstein,  
others, Moo (long story).

My kids bellow, *Mom*  
and my husband calls, *Lorie*,  
with a hint of New Jersey.

I can’t hear her laugh,  
or any other words,  
but my mother’s voice

speaking my name,  
still lives  
in my head

*L a a u u*

like one dissolving

s i g h

CHICKEN CACCIATORE  
BY BRIAN KATES

When my mother was a girl, her mother  
would pick some lusty tomatoes from her garden,  
a green pepper, twisted like embracing lovers,  
and a few priapic carrots still smelling of the fecund earth.

She'd dispatch my mother to the grocers with a list  
and Mom would skip home with a plucked chicken,  
some onions, garlic, and fistfuls of fat, white mushrooms,  
the bill tallied in pencil on the brown paper bag.

Her mother would pull up a footstool so Mom could reach  
the stove to stir and taste, leaving the tiny galaxy of  
her fingerprint on the page where Grandma had written  
the recipe in her perfect Palmer Method script.

For generations this meal has been among the  
*gifts received from Thy bounty* at Sunday dinners  
served up with laughter and tears, arguments, bardic  
old-country sagas and chianti.

Now it's the red-sauce whorl of my fingers on that page  
as I prepare our Sunday dinner in the heavy black  
cast-iron skillet that was my grandmother's, my mother's,  
and now mine, stirring, stirring, patient as a prayer wheel.



**BETTER LATE THAN NEVER LOVE LETTER**  
BY ANN CHINNIS

I don't know why it took me so long. Guess it was the ER. The night shifts, the day shifts, the 24-hour shifts. Guess it was finally figuring out I was gay, three decades ago.

There is nothing I can't do when she puts her arms around me, reads the Hallmark card. When my patient from a car crash survives. When the server tops off my wine. My life—a roll of the dice.

If you don't toss them, you can't score a six. But even if you hold your hand still, you can hear the dice rattling, like rats in a trashcan peck at plastic until they are all scratching in unison, and you are humming along.

My wife reminds me that mice don't roll dice, it is our fingers, and what happens if we think our fingers are too gnarly, but they aren't, and we quit playing. She worries that I think I am older than I am. That I worry about death. About not having enough time left in my life to write about the dice.

My friend Ellen, with a brain tumor that is kicking her ass just butt-dialed me again. I call her back. She picks up her phone, says "Crap," and puts the phone down on her sofa in assisted living. I hear the volume of the Eagles play-off game on her TV going up and down, and up and down. She is trying to speak to me through her remote control.

People keep rolling their dice, even when they lose them in the sofa cushions. Truth is, we can't stop playing when we are losing, or we think we are losing, or are about to lose, or have already lost. After we throw a number, we throw another,

then two or three more, and our lot  
becomes integers that we sum  
into an umbrella, hoping we will  
get less wet. I never met any patient  
in the ER who wasn't drenched.

I look out the window and watch you  
on your hands and knees weeding  
the pink blush drift roses  
along our driveway.  
It is pouring. Your head is bent  
under the hood of your yellow raincoat.

You say you like to weed in the rain;  
that a weed's life  
is a crapshoot, so let it go out  
on a high note. I will stand  
at the window as the raindrops  
strike glass, one by one, as random  
as dice, then harder and faster,  
until they all run together, until it seems  
like forever that I have stood here  
watching your river of bright yellow  
and insistent green.

**CRACKS IN EVERYTHING**  
BY LISA ASHLEY

Everything has a rupture:  
sidewalks sprouting dandelions,  
the blue ceramic pot makes room for  
the red geranium's roots to ramble,  
ancient statues in English gardens,  
whole arms lost to gravity.

Hearts are breached every day—

the arrival gate kiss,  
your child's overdose,  
the man sitting on the cardboard  
missing one shoe,  
the delicate white wings  
of the cabbage moth balanced  
on the purple chive blossom.

## MARK ZUCKERBERG KNOWS I HAVE BABY FEVER

BY BETHANY TAP

—On “*Femme de pêcheur venant de baigner ses enfants*” by Virginie Demont-Breton

Why else would I keep scrolling past this painting? How else could my feed get infested with her serene face, her infant’s cute baby-bare bottom making me think, well, five kids wouldn’t be *that* many? I bet *she* has at least five more waiting at home. Fine, Mark, color me intrigued because now I’m Googling the painting instead of washing dishes, one twin on my hip, telling the other to get off the counter again, *no I mean it this time* while outside the older two are dueling with a rake and baseball bat. I shout once, won’t shout again unless someone gets hurt. This painting’s valued at over \$100,000, too low when I consider the splay of her toes on the rocks, the way she tilts to one side, a counterbalance to the toddler, impossibly cherubic in the still-life moment, like every photograph ever taken of my children, a smile and a cheese. Uncaptured: the wail after, the spit-scrubbed face before. Sometimes, you can tell my hand is holding them a little too firmly, pinning them in place. See the muscles of her left arm? She’s doing it too, Mark. *Femme de pêcheur*, fisherman’s woman, *venant de baigner ses enfants*, comes from washing her children. Sounds prettier in French, looks prettier painted, still. Mark, you know I’ll think this, click the link to the reproduction for \$15, what a steal! Except there’s a cry and I slam shut the laptop, stubbing my toe on the way out the door, utterly lacking in *la femme’s* grace, I think, until later, I find a photo captured by my three-year-old showing me, balanced on the top of the stairs, hoisting two of my children like a ballerina priming for a pirouette. Chassé, relevé, maybe I’ll print this, hang it, save myself \$15, Mark, and thank you for reminding me of my beauty and my failures, all the scattered pieces lying just outside the frame.

Link to Image:



Link to Image:

[After the bath. Fisherman's wife after bathing her children \(1881\), by Virginie Demont-Breton.jpg](#)

SELF-PORTRAIT AS CHARON  
BY RACHAEL LYON

At night, we practice listening. It's an exercise my son picked up in Montessori preschool—the toddlers sitting in a circle on a rug, their eyes closed. First, they giggle at the novelty of this practice of stillness, of silence, of sight deprivation. They wiggle and rock and tap and click and whirr, as though their physicality is their only tether to the world once they can no longer see it.

But as they still, the teacher bids them *Listen*. *What are some things you hear?* She further instructs them not to shout out sounds but just to notice each one as they become aware of it. When charged with their work, they grow quiet, strain at sudden silence, arch their necks to raise one ear or another, unclench their closed eyelids. Their breathing slows. Their swaying stops. They settle into receptivity.

When the teacher releases them, says *Good listening*, and asks for a report, they marvel at the new loudness of sounds they never heard until now: ticking clock, engine hum, wind on a window, shrieks of the older kids outside on the playground. One child heard worms crawling in the grass. Another her heartbeat. And more and more sounds are brought like coins and laid as offerings at the teacher's feet: breathing, a palm set on a knee, a tongue licking lips, birdcall, a church bell chime, quick exhale of a laugh through the nose. *I heard Adler says Oscar. Do you mean Adler was making noise?* clarifies the teacher. *No, I heard him next to me. I could hear him there.*

Now, years later we end each bedtime story with listening practice. He fights it at first, not ready to relinquish the sounds of our voices talking, to let go of this day for night, to be alone in his dark room. *I know, I say, but it's time. Let's make our bodies still and quiet, close our eyes, and listen to the sounds.* He rolls over onto his side—away from me—and complies. Some nights, he whispers to his cat or adjusts the covers or pulls down the neck of his pajama top or stretches and contracts his legs or rubs his feet together. But eventually, his breath ferries him to stillness, then to near-sleep, carries his body, limp and breathing deeply over the river

into dreaming. I lie next to him long after he drifts off  
on the current that pulls him to a place I cannot follow.  
All I can do is listen—the sound of him like water  
lapping on some distant shore.

**FAMILY TIME**  
BY REKHIA VALLIAPPAN

We were stick insects at home  
ragged and rail thin, clinging to each other  
our long outstretched limbs interwoven  
to each. One misstep we would snap, re-grow  
'Fiddlesticks!' said father in his armchair  
windows shuttered firm, equipped for dawn  
an unlit cheroot dangling from his lower lip

His eyebrows unfurled. My stick sister and I—  
we saw less of our mother at the stove, long,  
hours at the cradle, crooning baby to hush-hush  
our leafy, green-fringed form trailing compound  
eyes engaged in pretense occupations, till mama  
drowsed us into cataleptic state she called sleep  
for our rest. We played at mimicry then, father

couldn't tell one spiny bright color from our  
other scorpion self, the one whose stomach  
inverted sting-like—our favorite ghost insect  
game. When we swayed, we moved, when  
we walked, we danced, as One when we  
awoke we were our normal selves, our family  
altered. Stepping in our living quarters, each

parting day, stacks of plates in the kitchen sink,  
water overflowing the tub, table upturned, the  
chair ripped, the projector running, the curtains  
moving in the wind, the goldfish missing from  
its round glass bowl, the fence broken, the gate  
unlocked, mama's shattered cry on double display  
for her devil's darning needles—we two

FINGERS AND TOES  
BY RUSSELL ROWLAND

On the Factory Pond Trail we met  
a class of three-to-five-year-olds with teachers;  
they in turn had met mallard ducks,

tree frogs, minnows, and us.

How eagerly the wide-eyed children held up  
fingers, to show how old they were;

and we took good care  
to total them up, the way hairs on our heads  
are tallied as precious in the accounting.

This triggered a recollection:

when I was enrolled in swimming lessons  
at their age, a bigger boy  
ratted me: "Hey Coach, this kid's only five!"

*"That's all right, let him be."*

On the trail, I assured the little girls and boys  
that not with ten fingers,  
ten toes, could I show them how old I was.

Often I hear the voice of the Summoner say,  
"Coach, this one is seventy-six!"

*"That's all right, let him be."*



**FAVORITE PLACE**  
BY DEBASISH MISHRA

*Tell about your favorite place, asked the teacher,  
a place where you've been and want to go  
again. The talk revolved around holiday spots—  
serenading waterfalls, dense forests, beaches,  
extravagant hotel rooms with opulent walls  
that glowed with picturesque photographs  
of a stag flaunting its nonchalant antlers  
or a lady with an earthen pot on her head,  
temples, mosques, churches and the like until  
a girl with a dull face in a bright red frock  
said in a voice as loud as the buzz of a bee  
The cemetery and the chattering class  
convulsed with laughter. The teacher's face  
flaunted a curve beside his rims.  
The cemetery, he said, is a favorite place  
for the ghosts. And you, I'm afraid,  
don't look like one. Laughter exploded.  
It's my favorite place, the girl repeated,  
and I'm not a ghost either. I spend  
my evenings there and see the smudge  
of the sun turn faint and dark.  
It is quiet and calm, a sweet solace.  
My father lives in its basement.*

## ADVICE FOR FRESH SOULS

BY FRANCESCA TANGRETI

I give it readily here's some: Don't check  
how much Chapstick is left in the tube. It's useless to save  
your strawberries for tomorrow they will rot  
to mush and fuzz / invariably draw bugs. Turn  
your ear to Orpheus's blues cerise and royal robin's  
stolen egg fair thin-cheeked or drowned-  
lip periwinkle / all should be tasted / for acid and salt (Google him  
Orpheus). Kiss  
your gargoyles guardian  
twelve-eyed angels yes toss  
fish heads at your sphinxes plant lemon seeds in schools  
of five. Crack the windows and shake  
your ass to the symphony of construction clouding  
gridblocks Lindy-hop of jackhammer and sky-ash / Newton's cherry  
twitched off the tip  
of a charcoal-licked clove. Pubs with pew—  
jaws'll gnaw straight through  
that SEPTA ticket you pocketed / rats in the  
basement in the crust of the worst  
you've ever felt and now you can't scan to leave  
the station. When touching  
the hair of your friend make  
certain to brush with light fingernails the  
scalp / the soft pale  
skin tucked behind the shell  
of their ear. This one is important: More rice. More still. Bank  
your fear / spend your luck (I've said that  
already it bears repeating). Stick  
your fists and feet in  
the sodden clay of wanting to live / smear it  
into floorboard-gaps and mouse holes and window-seams and  
air vents and baseboards and battery packs and light switches and  
between your backmost teeth and press it all into your pores really  
make it infect everything you touch wanting to live  
(Google exclude results mentioning *Midas*  
or all of this is FUBAR'd) / have I mentioned you  
should pray / start like Orpheus *The screen door*  
*slams* end when you're *pulling out of here*  
*to win* / on  
your knees still with the muck of morning weeping  
out your mouth / start when *Rendimi degno* turns to *Dammi, dammi*  
*tregua nella sua bocca, sotto la sua voce* ends up furled  
a poised dove, the bobbing branch beads of holly dropping  
like bodies (I tend to write falling  
real red) / the prayer won't

fall it's the dove it's the secret  
like the heart / the wind  
will catch it — you knew that already you know  
the wind the blues  
your soul  
the dove—  
tail dive ah, I lost  
you. Let me  
try again

**ANOTHER NIGHT OF GRIEF**  
BY PAT HANAHOE-DOSCH

My skin catches moonlight  
crisscrossed by white moths  
flittering in and out of the glow  
seeking a lit match, a citronella candle.

My bones creak and stutter like trees  
framing my backyard, tall pines sputtering  
with fireflies calling for mates,  
sparkling matches  
striking on and then going dark, on, then dark, on, then dark.  
These are the night watch,  
guiding the dead into our dreams.

My fingers grasp and flex like lilac branches,  
bare now, scratching the deck's fence,  
draped in Gypsy Moth webs, tiny worms  
eating the leaves down to the scratch of bark.

My throat chokes in the scent of mulch recently laid  
across a corn field down the road, and then,  
a skunk waddling through somewhere, silently,  
chasing ghosts into the scent of deep regret.

HOME FROM THE SEA  
BY LINDA PARSONS

He is coming toward me,  
    as he always was,  
        home from a business trip  
or sales convention, home from  
    *making the beans*, he always  
        said of work.  
    What kind of beans  
        and from where,  
magic or otherwise, I never knew.  
    But from the high castle  
        of dreams,  
    my father is walking out  
of the sea, unbent by its force—  
        a force gone from  
            my life since his passing.  
    He wears not the gabardine  
of a young executive,  
    but a sheriff's uniform,  
        come to enforce and shelter,  
to bring peace where peace  
    has lapsed.  
        A child by my side, barely  
            a toddler, runs to him,  
    runs and runs.  
The forever child he wanted,  
    not someone growing up  
        and away,  
    a great wordless desert between them.  
And I think of the painting  
    that hung in his den,  
    mythic white horses  
        leaping out of the surf,  
a force indistinguishable  
    from the foaming white waves.  
                    How his name *Phillip*  
    means lover of horses  
as he walks and walks  
        from the untameable sea.

## COLD SPAGHETTI ON FRIDAY THE 13<sup>TH</sup>

*for Louise Glück*

BY AMANDA RUSSELL

1.

We all had our alibis.

The dog was guarding the backyard from inside the house.

My daughter was eating buttered noodles in the living room.

My husband and I almost had a dinner together, at the dinner table,  
almost did something recognizable in storybooks,  
but in another room

the window

let loose a shatter,

released a scream from deep within our daughter,

sent the dog shaking into a corner.

Afternoon held its breath as we slipped on our shoes

to sweep up the delicate turned dangerous.

Then I read the news of your death on Facebook.

And when I fact-checked this, the fact remained.

Cold. Hard. Heavy as a rock. But there was no rock.

No such explanation for a window to shatter.

2.

I don't even know what a hawthorn tree looks like.

So instead, I imagine something like the mulberry out front

where I placed the monarch butterfly

which October's first chill left in our driveway.

Another pair of bright wings laid to rest, spared the confusion

of leaves losing hue. Leaves that will soon witness

the bold moon eclipse us all into a weird light.

We'll stare down at halfmoon shadows

unable to recognize our own faces.

3.

Each morning since, I bring whatever the yard gives me  
as an offering to the mulberry tree. To leave here a token.

A blue jay's tail feather. A sprig of summer

grass going to seed. A stem of crepe myrtle

sticky with aphids. Minute bouquets of saltmarsh asters

that all season fought with drought spells and stand now,

taller in the cooling air— tossing their shadows

beneath the canopy of a greater shadow.

**“HOW TO APPROACH DEATH WHEN DEATH APPROACHES” FROM VARIATIONS ON THE  
EUCCHARIST (*Fruitless Press, 1550*) by *Mary of Elton*  
BY TOM HOLMES**

Welcome her in. Remove  
her cloak. Hang it on the rack.  
Relieve her scythe. Stand it  
at a slant by her cloak.  
Offer treats or tea.  
Walk her to the kitchen  
to wash her hands of sins  
and regrets. Commence cooking  
Upside-Down Rose Pudding.  
Ask Death to provide penance  
with milk cast with sugar  
and cinnamon bark.  
If Death does, then ask  
about you. And should  
she not oblige, then ask  
her to decide on dates,  
yams, or jam, and which  
atonement on your final  
day should you perform.  
Marry white rose  
petals with rice flour,  
salt, butter, and cream  
of cow. Stir. Then knead.  
Ask her to warm the oven.  
She will offer Hell's  
fires from beyond your  
demise. Should she refuse,  
you'll know heaven's in  
the first bite. Either  
way, flip the pudding down  
side up. You or she  
can bless the treat. And when  
from overeating she falls  
asleep, retrieve her scythe.  
Swing it fast across  
her eyes.  
Bury her upside down.  
Sever her feet. Celebrate.  
Drink and feast. You have more  
time. You may have seconds.

## ONE HUNDRED WAYS TO FALL ASLEEP

BY T. CUTLER

I

An old recipe book said that apples and peanut butter help with bad dreams. You creep downstairs when the moon is waning and try it. We all have trouble on these nights; there are whispers coming from the closet and the windows might show us scary faces if we look at them too hard.

When the dreams keep going, you put a sheet over your head and pretend you are a ghost. It was almost a game. You haunted every room. But the neighbors got scared looking through the windows and called the priest, and the priest came and said a million prayers and threw holy water in every corner and blessed our door frames and the carpets. He never found you.

The dreams did not stop. We try meditation and counting sheep. Sometimes, you can try driving on an empty road. The one behind the gravel factory is beautiful past midnight, and the glow of the dashboard lights up your face. You are very beautiful. You could not ruin this night if you wanted to.

II

Remember you were once in a truck-stop bathroom with nowhere to go. The road outside stretches on for miles in either direction, if you could see it. It is dark and beginning to rain. You are in the bathroom. You are staring at the graffiti scrawled on the pale blue tiles. *"Fuck you." "Eat shit." "Dump your body under the bridge by I-95."* You stare until your eyes go blurry.

The man behind the counter is drunk and nearly asleep. He asks if anyone is coming back for you. You do not remember, but you like it that way. There are places to go and there is no turning back. We count the change in our pockets and buy a roadmap and talk about going somewhere sunny. We race the barking dogs to the end of the street. They cannot sleep either.



MONONGAHELA STREET  
BY M. BENJAMIN THORNE

Four rooms, nine seats, seventeen people:  
fitting us all in was some Einsteinian riddle.  
One body moving dislodged another,  
a constant shifting equilibrium suspended  
in clouds of Ma-Ma's Pall Mall smoke  
so thick nothing cut through but laughter.

At Thanksgivings, after the ossuaries  
left on plates and smiling contented teeth,  
we'd escape out onto the street,  
sneaking drags off stolen  
cigarettes or sips of Miller Light;  
conspiring furtively of sex.

Bored again we'd head indoors,  
search Pop's junk drawer, a black hole full  
of pocketknives, casino chips, an old pistol.  
Hints of our grandfather's former life in Europe  
fighting Nazis but also a racist joke-book,  
proof he fought men and not ideas.

Where my grandparents' small apartment squatted  
there's just asphalt, dotted lines,  
parked cars for the Y. The Downtown  
looks haggard, at dusk, the buildings hug  
themselves tight against encroaching night,  
show their broken teeth, graffiti scars, and rust.

Could we have known our family  
would come undone? The affair,  
the too-soon deaths and drug abuse,  
MAGA rallies, or depression's subtle cutting?  
At times I think kin are simply strangers  
we've known all our lives.

Standing here on Monongahela Street  
I let these thoughts cover me  
and hear the sound of trains,  
see the plumes of coal-smoke slowly settle  
on the tracks like woolen blankets.

SCRANTON CORRESPONDENCE  
BY GEORGE STEELE

I wanted to pass by the harvest fields,  
give up the gleaning from old books and thoughts.  
Time for liquor and the shafts of friendship,  
a cousin's set of photos  
and his newly minted book of meditations.  
Goldenrod shivers in October — stirred depths —  
like the breath of blasphemy,  
jaundice in the wind from Lake Ontario.  
Eli's taught them all —  
Aquinas, Bonaventure, Augustine —  
but I think it's Boethius,  
thief of heaven's fire,  
that mattered to him most.  
And to his father, brother of my father,  
who left so much in the sands of Anzio  
that words about the war  
never came back home with him.  
Under the last century's dying elms,  
he embraced what he could find of silence  
on the loading docks of Spartan Mills,  
punching a clock for thirty years  
so one son could wander in theology  
and one more could learn to heal:  
"Only he who draws the knife gets Isaac."  
Now I feel another blade  
of lightning in the sky,  
cloud cover rolling from the north.  
The gravel on my footpath just off Highway 64  
is all there is  
of that first riven stone,  
from which the hungry eagles soared.



# Section Three

STANDING BY A WINDOW  
BY NICHOLAS GENTILE

Standing by a window kissed by winter's frost  
I etch the words "I love you."  
Soon the words fade with the  
rise of the morning sun.  
Tonight, by the window, I will sit with you  
and find my voice.

THE HODJA OF SAN ANTONIO  
*—dream-dancing with Rumi*  
BY MARCIA L. HURLLOW

The evening of orange light and music vibrates just under my skin. Alone, I still see him churning with his eyes closed solo on the dance floor of the bar, dark, lean, intense as a lover lost in the beat of the Texas blues band. I watch him snap off thorns from a long-stemmed rose, plant it in my tonic water, then spin away.

And now, why would he dance me through the tables, ecstatically twirling me under his arm like some good old boy at a hoe down, faster with every turn? His long hands hold me as if I were delicate. He steers me away from Billy Bob and Suzie Q, sensing my unsteady balance, then guides me as he predicts where I will fall in a daze.

Bewildered at the ease of his devotion, I try to focus on his moonish face. It fissions with laughter. He whirls me again, and with the music he chants Konya, Meviana, Allah.

**A BEETHOVEN POEM**  
BY ROBERT WEXELBLATT

In a Bad Mood

His head's been aching in B-minor.  
Carters are quarrelling down on M $\ddot{o}$ lker Bastel.  
Sultry air, rotting pears, stupid barons,  
French officers strutting down the Graben.  
Frustration courses through his left hand;  
the fingers of the right scamper but  
never more than an octave above middle C.  
He batters his new Broadwood  
*forte* not *piano*, more drum than harp.  
He's already demolished four instruments.  
Half-a-dozen false endings build  
power equal to a Napoleonic assault.  
Against the brick wall of the world  
he hurls syncopations, fractured motifs,  
cracks conventions and, with a grimace,  
whips his wrath to indignant beauty.  
Robbed of his liberal hopes and perfect pitch,  
his liver's bad, digestion worse,  
the soup too salty, and the penny lost.

In a Profound Mood

He knows it's coming nearer, feels it  
during long Vienna nights. He writes  
as if to greet it a music of the future.  
The caesuras between notes are  
poignant; chords deepen as they linger.  
The inward soliloquies in the late sonatas,  
confabulations of the last quartets, lug  
us to feelings we didn't know could be had,  
conduct us through the doorway of  
a house far grander than Pasqualati's,  
through the gate of a city too high to be  
seen even from the Hofburg's domes.  
What his soul hears, we'll hear only with our ears.  
Music fashioned from silence, lost love, spent sound,  
drape a soft blanket over anguish, resignation.  
Piercing deeper, ever more sublime, rarefied,  
his harmonies of restrained might make  
mortality itself nearly tolerable. Nearly.

## In a Good Mood

A C-major day, neither flat nor sharp,  
fine weather for November. The jolly rondo  
slipped out smoothly, faster than he could  
write it down, an easy birth, variations  
tumbled over one another like the  
Hoffmanns' new kittens. At dinner, there  
had been bread soup, his favorite,  
prepared by the faithful Sali who  
possesses the requisite purity of heart.  
Later, he'd be joining Seyfert for  
two or three glasses of Spätburgunder.  
Good old Ignaz! He laughs out loud recalling  
the prank he'd played on the fellow,  
asking him to turn the pages at the premiere  
of the new concerto when they all were blank.  
What a cadenza he invented that night!  
Afterwards, at zum Weissen Schwann,  
everybody had howled at the joke.  
Ignaz, making an unforgettable face,  
grudgingly allowing that it was droll.  
Now, for a change, his stomach is at peace.  
Wanting a lungful of cold, fresh air,  
he walks to the window, throws back the  
shutters, and leans far out into the dusk.  
A dozen boys are sprinting jubilantly down  
the Schreyvogelgasse, galloping home to  
tasty dinners, grumpy fathers, forgiving mothers.



## KENSPECKLE<sup>1</sup>

BY JONATHAN YUNGKANS

Yellow buds shaped like acorns dot dark-green weeds on a lawn. Speckles when men don't lift the toilet seat before they pee. Men. Rhymes with *Ken*, as in the Ken doll, a reverse Adam-and-Eve for Barbie—blonde, beautiful, plastic. "Plastics," Mr. Maguire said to Ben in *The Graduate*, about Ben's potential future. The weeds stretched and I watched them grow. Teardrop-shaped rounded leaves. Long runners like the twine Dad got from Homeowner's Emporium, before it disappeared and Home Depot rose and peanut-brown jute twine was replaced with ghost-white plastic. "There's a great future in Plastics," Mr. Maguire said, low in tone and volume but insistent, getting his face close to Ben's to emphasize his point. "Think about it." Pinpoint of an idea. Pinpoints, no matter how close I get, how well I aim, dotting the toilet rim. Sometimes vivid yellow of those buds which caught my eye. Sometimes minion yellow of the Ken doll's hair. *Ken*. Rhymes with *men*, who say they want to get to the heart of a matter but never lift the lid, spray around the seat edge for someone else to clean. Ken was beach shorts, surfboards, the Malibu dream house, not mud and combat fatigues like G.I. Joe. One way Dad had for me to man-up was to put me on lawn duty. Those weeds I'd watched became ropes, choking his power mower into stalling. I'd have to turn the machine on its side to clear the blade. Remember to turn it onto the left side, or my hands would smell like gasoline leaked from the tank, no matter how much I washed my hands afterwards. Barbie got sick of wiping the toilet seat after Ken had finished. Ran off with Joe, who lifted the seat and wiped the rim with toilet paper before he flushed to keep things military fresh. And I never saw anything but a spotless rim after Dad had left the bathroom, former Marine drill instructor that he was. Dad always wanted me to hurtle when mowing the lawn, like the namesake of the mower, Toro, charging toward the matador in a bullfight. Something I should finish immaculately in record time, fast as him. He practically ran. I mowed half an acre at a time. Especially in the summer, I felt like melting plastic. Sunny drips remind me of wrinkles, stubborn aches, leaking onto my pants, leaking into my coffin once I'm six feet under. Ken watched from the balcony as Barbie and Joe drove off. I lift the seat before. Wipe the rim after.

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<sup>1</sup> Kenspeckle (adj): According to dictionary.com, this word means, "Conspicuous; easily seen or recognized." It was Word of the Day on that site on December 15, 2023.

DEVI,  
BY DAVID COLODNEY

where are you when your late-night texts light up my phone like amber caution warnings? Or during those drunken calls through tears after the bars close when you ask me if you're *too ratchet* or if you talk *too much shit* as if I'm some guru, an expert on everything, yet I respond with nothing, syllables as blank as sand. You: iPhone like a mirror, painting red liquid lipstick & dabbing makeup to hide the Bangladeshi skin-tone you hate even though you're as American as a TV commercial & me: aging dawdler, wrestler of words. I don't care we're of two different eras, two different worlds. I think I'm on meds now because of the ramshackle visions that tumble in my head like Tik-Toks until the next time I see you, never knowing when that will be... until I get your *let's lunch at 2 DM* at 1:45(-ish) & tsunami sweat flows from my pores until it floods our Wynwood conclave of coffeehouses & boutiques. I arrive first like I always do, grab a wobbly round sidewalk table at Pink Paloma. At 3:30 you arrive smiling like the skyline but before I can say *hi* you proclaim you're queer. The server arrives with our coffee & we stare at the menus like they were the terms & conditions of an Apple app update.

storm clouds gather steam  
telling me read the fine print  
& please don't click send

MONDEGREEN WITH BACKING VOCALS  
BY THOMAS RILEY

The second song I wrote for him sounded wrong. I couldn't say what I wanted to say. *He misheard the first song you wrote.* He did. I wrote new lyrics to correct the old ones. *He understood those better.* I did not. I wanted him to understand the first song. I wanted him to hear love. *Though you never really said love.* I can't say love; it's unpoetic. I can't say love, so I said duvet. I can't say love, so I said jackal. *You said jackal and he heard jackal.* Are metaphors so wrong? I gave him a beast to show him carnality. *You showed him a beast and he saw himself eating a carcass. He preferred the duvet.* I thought he would like something complicated. No one mishears the duvet. *No one mishears love.* I said love in the second song. It sounded incorrect. *Love sounded incorrect?* Love sounds like anything. Jackal sounds like me. He was standing so close when I sang the first song. How hard could it have been to hear me?

PORTRAIT OF THE QUEER BOY IN PAIN

—after *Natalie Linb Bolderston*

BY ERINOLA E. DARANIJO

ìbèrè Ifẹ [caring pain]

Your màamá scrapes her èmí (tongue) / on eran ẹja / so you can eat / the fleshiest ikin  
Cobbler in the square / hammering newness / into leather soles  
Wet haze / of the locker room / he pulls the splinter out / from your bench-bruised palm  
In white fields / of tear gas / a figure hands you / a bottle of water / a piece of themselves  
Rice on the altar / ancient taste / of reverence / growing colder

ìbèrè ibinú [bitter pain]

Your màamá's kidney stones / dead calcium / refusing to dissolve  
Tarmac torn / to shredded petals / gunfire running / legs rolled / into a carpet of red  
Leaving his room / the lamp overheated / his bàbá tells you / to never touch his son again  
A rubber bullet / commands itself / with purpose / into a reporter's right eye  
Your grandmother arched / over her bed / her husband's bones / urned in her arms

ìbèrè àbẹ̀rẹ̀ [remorseful pain]

Dreams of other lives / folded and shelved / to make room for you  
The next morning / commuters on bicycles stare / at the new absence / of bodies  
Slamming down the phone / after you hear his voice beg / your name  
Immigrating / into another language / where hurt is easy / to pronounce  
Grasping at photos / knowing / they will never be enough

ìbèrè ọkan [heartache]

Gold pendant / hugging your chest / listening to the pulse / you inherited / from every death  
A màamá kneels in the square / holding the face / snatched away / by soldiers  
After two shots / you leave the party early / a face that looked / too much like his  
In the empire / of history / forgetting is always easier / than remembering  
Feeding your grandmother / fish congee / for the first / and only time

## ODE TO THE SIX-SECOND KISS

BY SUSAN VESPOLI

Lips—the most exposed erogenous zone. Join them  
for six seconds, the book said, vermillion border, Cupid's bow,

every time you leave your lover and come back together again.  
Not a quick peck or polite tap, no tightly puckered smack  
but a long, lush swirl of a kiss stirred by a tongue.

Lips, the most exposed erogenous zone. *Want to try it?*  
I asked, not a big fan of past kisses, the perfunctory

press of a doorbell to come in, but the stand-alone  
high voltage sunburnt kiss, his. In parking lots,

driveways, front porches, O swoon, soft pillow  
lips, a most exposed erogenous zone,

long, lush swirl of a kiss stirred by his tongue,  
aria of goosebumps, pricked nipples, ping  
of illuminated brain. O oxytocin, O dopamine,

O flushed cheeks, I stop the world for you  
and lean in to taste bliss.

MÉNAGE A TROIS (AFTER "THE ROAD NOT TAKEN" BY ROBERT FROST)  
BY ALEXIS RHONE FANCHIER

Two lovers converged in an unmade bed,  
I watched them through their sliding door,  
Willed myself a participant, stripped  
Naked, pressed my flesh against the glass,  
Hoped they would see me, invite me in.

She was fair, slender, her breasts the size  
Of pomegranates, her limbs, long, her  
Sex, a tempting, luscious knoll, and  
He, mahogany, glistening with sweat,  
Tonguing the Eden where her thighs met.

She nuzzled his pulsing throat while he  
Pleasured himself, looked up, and saw me,  
Watching, in *disbaille*. Three in a bed?  
There'd be hell to pay. But I was young,  
Bent on pleasure. No one got in my way.

I'll look back at my life some day, trace  
The path from that night until now.  
Three lovers converged in a bed, and I—  
I chose the woman, ditched the guy, and  
That has made all the difference.

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44272/the-road-not-taken>

## BANQUET

BY WENDY TAYLOR CARLISLE

What I used to call hunger, you now call  
thirst, that tickle that jammed me into too small  
high heels and set me down in my favorite tavern —  
not too dingy, not too extravagant —

at the bar, if I was that kind of thirsty,  
at a table if I wanted to watch,  
an at-the-back-of-my-throat-itch,  
the need to fast-swallow two Margaritas —

that kind of thirst, as well —  
and a handful of bar nuts, before hunger settled  
into scanning for what was possible in the dark —  
not too whitebread, not too Mr. Goodbar —

the craving that would toss those stilettos  
into a corner before it cartwheeled into bed.

**ARS POETICA AT MOONLIGHT**  
BY NATHALIE KUROIWA-LEWIS

Today the forecast is hot with possibility of snow,  
the Arctic on my lips. I have kissed the Stranger,  
the one dressed in a clean black suit and red fedora hat.  
We are in a dark, crowded bar, silence everywhere,  
snow falling like raspberry fires. He plays the electric guitar,  
his fingers moving the strings, as if brandishing some unseen cape,  
and all your wild bulls are summoned.



## IMMERSION

BY JENNA WYSONG FILBRUN

*In a cave archaeologists believe  
could have been inhabited by John the Baptist,  
28 steps lead from the opening  
down to the immersion pool.\**

The pains of the day  
are bedded down  
under the covers  
and pillows of rest.  
The dog lies  
with his side  
pressed against  
the length of me,  
pressed against  
the length of you,  
pressed against  
the other dog,  
sprawled over  
all of us.

I may not be  
entirely canine,  
but I am learning  
how to breathe  
with the whole,  
how to pile  
my beating heart  
on the warmth  
of us, then heave  
our sides together  
toward sleep.  
In other words,  
here I am  
praying.

*\*Laub, Karin. 2004. "Cave linked to John the Baptist." <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna5724145>*

WITH RESPECT TO THE FACILITATOR, WE DECLINE TO DISCUSS THIS AGAIN

—For Ed Trujillo

BY JUDITH MIKESCH-MCKENZIE

The branches of the plum tree are  
a dark web against  
the glow of the moon,  
the beauty and futility of it like

your face, sitting in the folding chair,  
your dark eyes a trap for any  
who dared to meet them, when,  
after moments steeped in struggle  
and silence, chatter from other  
pairs in the workshop  
swirling around us, you say

“How long are we going to have to keep  
doing this shit?”

the depth of your sigh a petition for clemency,  
for parole from the witness stand of  
testimony against social wrongs,  
a request to simply be still and shine.

All the things I learned from you were preparations  
for beauty, for how to look up and see  
that the contrast of light and dark is  
the essence of salvation

like the waitress who quietly paid our bill for  
breakfast the day after the funeral, and  
how, giving me the note, her hand a  
brief blessing on my shoulder, she turned  
away, as wordless  
as these branches

and how we sat in folding chairs, silent, the  
voices of others a cacophony around  
us until the timer sounded, when  
the whole room stood up, and we stood for  
long moments in the circle of our  
silence, as though our  
shadows were the dark beauty of  
bare branches, backlit

by a bright full moon.

**GHOST-DOG WALK WITH SADIE IN SEARCH OF WHAT TO SAVE**  
BY MICHAEL BROCKLEY

I step over the threshold from the House of Broken Angels as Sadie summons the Buddha in the attic. Without her, I hid behind beautiful forevers. And crossed a hundred mountains to avoid the country where the past begins. "Someone always robs the poor," she says. "Those who burn books burn people too." I drifted too long through the afterland in search of snow. Composed coyote songs while America devoured its heart. Now all the roads I travel with my shadow dog cross the Devil's Highway, a strange paradise with grief keepers and 99 gods. The wind no longer cares where I am from. Sadie lies down among a fandango of butterflies. Says, "You inherited forever wars while those you threw away were diamonds. You should know *ru* can mean a stream of tears or blood in French and cradle or lullaby among the *Kinh*." We have not walked far. Still I treat my spirit dog with the peanut butter morsels she loves but never begs for. We pass martyrs, ghost brides, and fox wives. Signs that precede the end of the world. "Begin with a dream," she says, "that honors the world and all it holds. America can never be the heart as long as silence is the mother tongue." Sadie leaves me one last koan before she fades away. "It takes nine folds to make a paper swan. Don't expect anyone to believe anything you say."

**Credits for Cento: Ghost-Dog Walk with Sadie in Search of What to Save**

*What We Remember Will Be Saved*, Stephanie Saldaña

*The House of Broken Angels*, Luis Alberto Urrea

*The Buddha in the Attic*, Julie Otsuka

*Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*, Katherine Boo

*Across a Hundred Mountains*, Reyna Grande

*In the Country*, Mia Alvar

*Where the Past Begins*, Amy Tan

*Someone Always Robs the Poor*, Carl MacDougall

*Where They Burn Books, They Also Burn People*, Marcos Antonio Hernandez

*Afterland: Poems*, Mai Der Vang

*In Search of Snow*, Luis Alberto Urrea

*Coyote Songs*, Gabino Iglesias

*America Is in the Heart*, Carlos Bulosan  
*The Devil's Highway: A True Story*, Luis Alberto Urrea  
*What Strange Paradise*, Omar El-Akkad  
*The Grief Keeper*, Alexandra Villasante  
*God 99*, Hassan Blasim  
*The Wind Knows My Name*, Isabel Allende  
*Fandango for Butterflies (and Coyotes)* Andrea Thome  
*Inheriting the War: Poetry and Prose by Descendants of Vietnam Veterans*, Lauren McClung, Editor  
*Those We Throw Away Are Diamonds: A Refugee's Search for a Home*, Jenna Krajeski and Mondiant Dogan  
*Ru*, Kim Thuy  
*Martyr*, Kaveh Akbar  
*Ghost Bride*, Yangsze Choo  
*Fox Wife*, Yangsze Choo  
*Signs Preceding the End of the World*, Yuri, Herrera  
*Behold the Dreamers*, Imbolo Mbue  
*The World and All that It Holds*, Aleksander Hemon  
*America Is Not the Heart*, Elaine Castillo  
*Silence Is My Mother Tongue*, Sulaiman Addonia  
*Nine Folds Make a Paper Swan*, Ruth Gilligan  
*I Don't Expect Anyone to Believe Me*, Juan Pablo Villalobos

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Amy Ash** is the author of *The Open Mouth of the Wave*, winner of the Cider Press Review Book Award and Etchings Press Whirling Prize. Recent work can be found or is forthcoming in *Rogue Agent*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *River Heron Review*, and *SWWIM Every Day*. She is Associate Professor and Director of Creative Writing at Indiana State University. She lives in Terre Haute, IN with her husband, daughter, and their adorable little terror of a dog, Cricket.

**Lisa Ashley**, a 2021 Pushcart Prize nominee, descends from survivors of the Armenian genocide and has supported incarcerated youth for many years. She writes from her log home on an island in the Pacific Northwest and navigates her garden and wooded lot with physical limitations in a state of constant wonder. Her poems have appeared, or will soon appear, in *Gyroscope Review*, *Willows Wept Review*, *Thimble*, *Juniper*, *Amsterdam Quarterly*, *Last Leaves Literary Review*, *The Healing Muse*, *Young Ravens Review*, *Blue Heron Review*, and others. She is working on her first manuscript.

**Lana Hechtman Ayers**, MFA, architect of the ‘Severed Sonnet’ form has shepherded over a hundred poetry volumes into print in her role as managing editor for three small presses. Her work appears in *Escape Into Life*, *Rattle*, *The London Reader*, *Peregrine*, *The MacGuffin*, and elsewhere. Lana’s ninth collection, *The Autobiography of Rain*, is forthcoming from Fernwood Press. She lives in a coastal town famous for its barking sea lions. Her favorite color is the swirl of van Gogh’s *The Starry Night*. Say hello at [LanaAyers.com](http://LanaAyers.com)

Irish poet, doctoral candidate, and journalist, **Oisín Breen**, a multiple Best of the Net nominee and Erbacce Prize finalist, is published in 123 journals in 22 countries, including in *Agenda*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Books Ireland*, *Door is a Jar*, *Northbern Gravy*, *Quadrant*, *Southword*, and *The Taboma Literary Review*. Breen has two collections, the widely reviewed and highly praised *Lilies on the Deathbed of Étaín*, a Scotsman poetry book-of-the-year, 2023, (Downingfield), and his well-received debut, *Flowers, All Sorts, in Blossom, Figs, Berries, and Fruits Forgotten* (Dreich, 2020). Breen’s third collection, *The Kerygma*, is slated for 2025 (Salmon Poetry).

**Michael Brockley** is a retired school psychologist who lives in Muncie, Indiana. His poems have appeared in *samfiftyfour*, *The Rye Whiskey Review*, and *Punk Noir Magazine*. Poems are forthcoming in *Ryder Magazine*, *The Prose Poem*, and *Of Rust and Glass*.

**Wendy Taylor Carlisle** lives and writes in the Arkansas Ozarks. In 2023, Belle Point Press reissued her first book, *Reading Berryman to the Dog*, and a chapbook-length selection of her work appears in *Wild Muse: Ozarks Nature Poetry* (Cornerpost Press, 2023.) Find her work in *pacificREVIEW*, *Atlanta Review*, *the Perch*, *Tab*, *Rattle*, and elsewhere. Her URL is [www.wendytaylorcarlisle.com](http://www.wendytaylorcarlisle.com)

**Ann Chinnis** has been an Emergency Physician for 40 years, as well as a healthcare leadership coach. She studies in The Writers Studio Master Class under Philip Schultz. Her poetry has been published or is forthcoming in *The Speckled Trout Review*, *Crab Creek Review*, *Sky Island Journal*, *Sheila-Na-Gig*, and *Nostos*, among others. Her debut chapbook *Poppet, My Poppet* was recently published by Finishing Line Press and her second, *I Can Catch Anything* is forthcoming next spring. Ann lives with her wife in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

**David Colodney** is a poet living in Boynton Beach, Florida. He is the author of the chapbook, *Mimeograph*, and his poetry has appeared in multiple journals. A two-time Pushcart nominee, David has written for the Miami Herald and the Tampa Tribune and currently serves as an associate editor of *South Florida Poetry Journal*.

**T. Cutler** attends Trinity College majoring in English Language and Literature. She hails from East Coast soil - the metamorphic stuff and continental margins, not the sandy parts. She has previously been published in *Rainy Day Cornell*, *Third Wednesday*, and *The Vernacular*. She loves large bowls of apples, crosswords, the Blue Ridge Mountains, and David Foster Wallace.

**Erinola E. Daranijo** (he/him) is a Nigerian writer. He is the Editor-in-Chief of *Akéwí Magazine*, and the author of the micro-chapbooks, *An Epiphany of Roses* (Konya Shamsrumi Press) and *Every Path Leads to the Sea* (Ghost City Press). He splits his time between the 'cities' of Ibadan, Lagos, and Cape Town. Say hi on X (formerly Twitter) at @Layworks.

**Marc Alan Di Martino** is the author of *Love Poem with Pomegranate* (Ghost City Press, 2023), *Still Life with City* (Pski's Porch, 2022), and *Unburial* (Kelsay, 2019). His poems and translations appear in *Autumn Sky*, *Pulsebeat*, *Sheila-Na-Gig*, and many other journals and anthologies. His work has been nominated for both the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. His translation *Day Lasts Forever: Selected Poems of Mario dell'Arco* will be published by World Poetry Books in 2024. Currently a reader for *The Baltimore Review*, he lives in Italy.

**Merrill Oliver Douglas's** first full length collection, *Persephone Heads For the Gate*, won the 2022 Gerald Cable Book Award from Silverfish Review Press. It will be published in 2024. She is also the author of the poetry chapbook *Parking Meters into Mermaids* (Finishing Line Press, 2020). Her poems have appeared in *The Baltimore Review*, *Barrow Street*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Stone Canoe*, *Little Patuxent Review*, and *Whale Road Review*, among others. She lives near Binghamton, New York.

**Jennifer Eagle** became fascinated with poetry at the age of fourteen when a book of e.e. cummings' fell off a library shelf. Her poetry has appeared in *Secrets from the Orange Couch*, *The Rat Creek Press*, and *Words for Wellness Contest*. Jennifer was accepted into Sage Hill, a notable writing retreat in Saskatchewan, in 2018, where she won a Robert Kroetsch bursary for her poetry. She's currently completed one manuscript of poetry and is writing a second. She readily admits she might end up like Emily Dickinson if she doesn't start submitting her poetry to be published.

**Alexis Rhone Fancher** is published in *Best American Poetry*, *Rattle*, *Hobart*, *Verse Daily*, *Plume*, *Tinderbox*, *Cleaver*, *Diode*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Spillway*, *Nashville Review*, *Poetry East*, *Gargoyle*, and elsewhere. She's authored ten poetry collections, most recently, *Triggered, 2023* (MacQueen's Publishing); *Brazen, 2023* (NYQ Books); and *Duets, (2022)* an illustrated, ekphrastic chapbook collaboration with poet Cynthia Atkins, published by Harbor Editions. Alexis's photographs are featured worldwide including the covers of *The Pedestal Magazine*, *Witness*, *Heyday*, *Pithead Chapel*, and *The Mas Tequila Review*. A multiple Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominee, you can find her at: [www.alexisrhonefancher.com](http://www.alexisrhonefancher.com)

**Jenna Wysong Filbrun** is the author of the poetry collection, *Away* (Finishing Line Press, 2023). Her poems have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net and have appeared in publications such as *Blue Heron Review*, *Deep Wild*, *EcoTheo Review*, *ONE ART*, *Wild Roof Journal*, and others. She loves to spend time at home and in the wild with her husband, Mike, and their dogs, Oliver and Lewis.

**Marianne Gamaro's** poems and essays have been published in print and online journals including *Mudfish*, *CALYX*, *Oberon Poetry Magazine*, *Smithsonian*, and *The Naugatuck River Review*. Her chapbook, *Do NOT Stop for Hitchhikers*, was published by Finishing Line Press. Her career as a journalist is often reflected in the narrative style of her poetry. A committed humane volunteer, she does enrichment with stray and injured cats at her regional animal shelter, socializing them and preparing them for adoption. She lives, writes, and gardens in verdant Western Massachusetts, with her photographer-husband and two feline muses. <https://margampoetry.wordpress.com/>

**Robbie Gamble** (he/him) is the author of *A Can of Pinto Beans* (Lily Poetry Review Press, 2022). His poems have appeared in *Post Road*, *Whale Road Review*, *RHINO*, *Salamander*, and *The Sun*. He divides his time between Boston and Vermont.

**Nicholas Gentile** was born and raised in Yonkers, NY. He owned and operated a Hallmark Card and Gift Store in Miami, Fl. for many years and is now retired and living in York, SC. His poems (Haiku, Tanka, Gembun, Cherita and free verse) have been published in several magazines.

**Tresha Faye Haefner's** poetry appears, or is forthcoming in several journals and magazines, most notably *Blood Lotus*, *Blue Mesa Review*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *Five South*, *Hunger Mountain*, *Mid-America Review*, *Pirene's Fountain*, *Poet Lore*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Radar*, *Rattle*, *TinderBox*, and *Up the Staircase Quarterly*. Her work has garnered several accolades, including the 2011 Robert and Adele Schiff Poetry Prize, and a 2012, 2020, and 2021 nomination for a Pushcart. Her first manuscript, *Pleasures of the Bear* was a finalist for prizes from both Moon City Press and Glass Lyre Press. It was published by Pine Row Press under the title *When the Moon Had Antlers* in 2023. Find her at [www.thepoetrysalon.com](http://www.thepoetrysalon.com)

**Pat Hanahoe-Dosch's** poems have been published in *The Paterson Literary Review*, *Rattle*, *The Atticus Review*, *Panoplyzine*, *Confrontation*, *Rust + Moth*, *American Literary Review*, *Apple Valley Review*, *The Red River Review*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Apt*, *Thimble*, among many others. Her books of poems, *The Wrack Line*, and *Fleeing Back*, can be found on Amazon.com or the FutureCycle Press website. Her short stories have been published in *Drunk Monkeys*, *The Peacock Journal*, *In Posse Review*, *Sisyphus*, *Manzano Mountain Review*, and the *Schuylkill Valley Journal*, among others. Check out her website at <https://pahanaho.wixsite.com/pathanahoedosch> and Twitter @PHanahoeDosch

**Lois Marie Harrod's** 18th collection *Spat* was published by Finishing Line Press, 2021 and her chapbook *Woman by Blue Lyra*, 2020. Dodge poet, life-long educator and writer, she is published in literary journals and online ezines from *American Poetry Review* to *Zone 5*. She currently teaches college level courses in literature at The Center for Modern Aging, Princeton. More info and links to her online work [www.loismarieharrod.org](http://www.loismarieharrod.org)

**Richard Hedderman** is a multi-Pushcart Prize nominated poet whose most recent book of poems is *Choosing a Stone* (Finishing Line Press.) His work has appeared in dozens of literary journals both in the U.S. and abroad, and his poems have been collected in several anthologies including *In a Fine Frenzy: Poets Respond to Shakespeare* (University of Iowa Press.) He's been a Guest Poet at the Library of Congress and was formerly the Writer-in-Residence at the Milwaukee Public Museum, and is on the faculty of AllWriters creative writing studio. He lives in Milwaukee.

For twenty-two years, **Tom Holmes** was the founding editor and curator of *Redactions: Poetry & Poetics*. The final issue is due out in the summer of 2024. He teaches at Nashville State Community College (Clarksville). Blog, The Line Break: [www.thelinebreak.wordpress.com/](http://www.thelinebreak.wordpress.com/) Twitter: @TheLineBreak

**Marcia L. Hurlow's** poems have recently appeared in *The Baltimore Review*, *After Happy Hours*, *The Louisville Review*, *Kairos*, *Coneflower Review*, *Nimrod*, *Relief* and *I-70 Review*, among others. Her chapbook *Dog Physics* is forthcoming from Main Street Rag. She and her husband, linguist Greg Stump, live in Kansas with their 110-pound lapdog, Lucky.

**Brian Kates** has received many awards for exemplary journalism, including a Pulitzer Prize and George Polk Award. His non-fiction book, *The Murder of a Shopping Bag Lady*, a saga of modern American homelessness, was a finalist for Mystery Writers of America's Edgar Allan Poe Award. His poetry has appeared in *Paterson Literary Review*, *Banyan Review*, *Third Wednesday*, and elsewhere. He lives with his wife in a house in the woods of the lower Hudson Valley.

**Nathalie Kuroiwa-Lewis** is a Professor of English at Saint Martin's University, a private, Benedictine liberal arts university located in the Pacific Northwest. She is published in periodicals such as *The Book Of Matches*, *The Madrona Project*, *Cirque*, among others. She is also a board member of the Olympia Poetry Network and lives in Olympia, Washington.

**Tess Lecuyer** has been writing and publishing and performing poetry for decades. She is a veteran of years of random open mic locations including grocery stores, cafes, hallways, sidewalks, parks and bars. She likes to write in classic forms then cheat until the poem is good. She has more than 3 poems about cheese.

**Sara Letourneau** is a poet, book editor, writing coach, writing workshop instructor, and open mic cofounder/cohost who lives in Massachusetts. Her debut collection, *Wild Gardens*, will be published by Kelsay Books in late summer 2024. Her poetry has won the Beals Prize for Poetry and the Blue Institute's 2020 Words on Water Contest. Recent and forthcoming work can be found in *Amethyst Review*, *Didcot Writers*, *Nixes Mate Review*, *Portrait of New England*, *Remington Review*, *Rituals*, and *Silver Birch Press*, among others. Visit Sara online at <https://heartofthestyeditorial.com/>, on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/heartofthestyeditorial/>, and on Instagram at @sara\_heartofthesty

**Rachael Lyon** is a poet, essayist, and translator. Her chapbook, *The Normal Heart and How It Works*, chronicles her experience with a congenital heart defect. She received a Fulbright grant to Vienna, Austria, to translate poetry from German. Her most recent translation project, *a tree full of pearl-gray doves* (ein baum voll perlgrauer tauben), is a book-length collection of contemporary poetry by Irmgard Löschner. Lyon's poems have appeared in *The Southern Review*, *The Hopkins Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *Zone 3*, and elsewhere. Her latest essay appeared in *The Baltimore Review*. She lives in Pennsylvania with her husband, son, and dog.

**Judith Mikesch-McKenzie** is a teacher, writer, actor and producer living in the U.S. Pacific Northwest. She has traveled widely but is always drawn to the Rocky Mountains as one place that feeds her soul. Writing is her home. She has recently placed/published in two short-story contests, and her poems have been published in *Pine Row Press*, *Halcyone Literary Review*, *Plainsongs Magazine*, *Closed Eye Open*, *Wild Roof Journal*, *Cathexis Northwest Press*, *Meat for Tea Valley Review*, and over 30 others. She is a wee bit of an Irish curmudgeon, but her friends seem to like that about her.



**Debasish Mishra**, PhD, from India, is the recipient of the 2019 Bharat Award for Literature and the 2017 Reuel International Best Upcoming Poet Prize. His recent poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Penn Review*, *Prism Review*, *Consequence Forum*, and elsewhere. His first book *Lost in Obscurity and Other Stories* was published by Book Street Publications, India, in 2022.

Poet, playwright, essayist, and editor, **Linda Parsons** is the poetry editor for *Madville Publishing* and the copy editor for *Chapter 16*, the literary website of Humanities Tennessee. She is published in such journals as *The Georgia Review*, *Iowa Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Terrain*, *The Chattahoochee Review*, *The Baltimore Review*, *Shenandoah*, and *American Life in Poetry*. Her sixth collection, *Valediction*, contains poems and prose. Five of her plays have been produced by Flying Anvil Theatre in Knoxville, Tennessee.

**Tina Posner** has published poems in *Ocean State Review*, *EcoTheo Review*, *Autofocus*, *Switchgrass Review*, *Ashes to Stardust* (Sybaritic Press, 2023), and *Resist Much, Obey Little* (Spuyten Duyvil, 2017). She has published over a dozen books of nonfiction and poetry for classroom use. An NYC expat, she lives in Austin, TX.

**Thomas Riley** is a poetry student at the University of Pittsburgh where they edit columns for the school newspaper. They are an emerging poet who loves to write about gender, intimacy, and maybe a guy they saw on the bus.

**Laurie Rosen** is a lifelong New Englander. Her poetry has appeared in *Peregrine*, *Gyroscope Review*, *Zig Zag Lit Mag*, *New Verse News*, *Oddball Magazine*, *The Inquisitive Eater: a journal of The New School*, *One Art*, *Please See Me*, and elsewhere. Laurie won first place in poetry at the 2023 Marblehead, MA Festival of the Arts.

**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, *Magnificat*, is available from Encircle Publications.

**Amanda Russell** (she/her/hers) is a guest editor at *The Comstock Review* and a stay-at-home mom. Her poems have been curated by *Grand Journal*, *Lily Poetry Review*, and *Euphony*. Her second poetry chapbook, *Processing*, is forthcoming from Main Street Rag. To learn about her, please visit <https://poetrussell.wordpress.com>

**Kristy Snedden** is a trauma psychotherapist and pet worshipper. Her work was awarded an Honorable Mention in the 90th Annual Writer's Digest Writing Competition and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She is a recipient of the "Emerging Woman Poet" prize, 2023, from Small Orange Press. Her poetry appears in various on-line and print journals and anthologies, including *storySouth*, *Contemporary Verse 2*, and *Door is a Jar*. She serves as Book Review Editor for *Anti-Heroic Chic*. When not working or hiking in the foothills of Appalachia, she loves listening to her husband and their dogs tell tall tales.

**George Steele** is a Navy veteran and retired English teacher. He received his B.A. from UNC-Chapel Hill and his MA from The College of William and Mary. He taught in public high schools in Virginia Beach, Va. and in Pittsford, N.Y. He and his wife Edie have two sons, Benjamin and Richard. George has had several poems published in various magazines over the years, including *Plainsongs*, *The Tribeca Poetry Review*, *Sunstone*, and *Quiddity*.

**Francesca Tangreti** is a graduate of Rutgers University, where she won the Faculty Choice Award for essay. She loves to yap and writes because she needs some way to make space in her skull for remembering to, like, do laundry. She has been published by *the winnow*, *Red Ogre Review*, *300 Days of Sun*, *giallo*, *Zeniada magazine*, and others.

**Bethany Tap** is a queer writer living in Grand Rapids, Michigan with her wife and four kids. Recent publications include poems in *Emerge Literary Journal*, *Yellow Arrow Journal*, and fiction in *The MacGuffin*, and *Flash Frontier*. More of her work can be found at [bethanytap.com](http://bethanytap.com)

**M. Benjamin Thorne** is an Associate Professor of Modern European History at Wingate University. Possessed of a lifelong love of history and poetry, he is interested in exploring the synergy between the two. His poems appear or are forthcoming in *Autumn Sky Poetry*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *Sky Island Journal*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, *Cathexis Northwest*, and *The Westchester Review*. He lives and sometimes sleeps in Charlotte, NC.

**Terry Trowbridge** is grateful to the Ontario Arts Council for funding poetry during the polycrisis.

**Rekha Valliappan's** poems, prose-poems and haiku have been featured in various journals and anthologies including *Ann Arbor Review*, *The Wild Word*, *The Pangolin Review*, *Nixes Mate Review*, *Lotblorien Poetry Journal*, *Spillwords*, and elsewhere. Her prose-poem "The Ghostly Luna" was named Poem of the Week by readers of Red Fez. Her poem "Sakura" was nominated for the Pushcart Prize by Liquid Imagination. She also writes short stories, flash fiction and creative nonfiction.

**Susan Vespoli** writes from Phoenix, AZ and believes in the power of writing to stay sane. Her poems have been published in cool spots such as *Gyroscope Review*, *Rattle*, *Gleam*, *NVN*, and *Nasty Women Poets: An Unapologetic Anthology of Subversive Verse*. She is the author of three books, *Blame It on the Serpent* (Finishing Line Press), *Cactus as Bad Boy* (Kelsay Books), and *One of Them Was Mine* (Kelsay Books). <https://susanvespoli.com/>

**Arlene Weiner** lives in Pittsburgh, where she is active in community poetry groups. She has been a den mother, a Shakespeare scholar, a cardiology technician, part of a group developing computer-based education, and an editor. Her poems have been published in such journals as *The Louisville Review*, *Pleiades*, and *Poet Lore*, online, and in anthologies; and read on Garrison Keillor's *The Writer's Almanac*. Arlene was awarded a MacDowell fellowship. She also writes plays. Ragged Sky Press has published three collections of her poetry: *Escape Velocity* (2006), *City Bird* (2016), and *More* (2022).

**Robert Wexelblatt** is a professor of humanities at Boston University's College of General Studies. He has published twelve collections of short stories; two books of essays; two short novels; three books of poems; stories, essays, and poems in a variety of journals, and a novel awarded the Indie Book Awards first prize for fiction.

**Brandy Whitlock** is a librarian and educator living in Baltimore, Maryland. Her poems have appeared in literary magazines like *New Orleans Review*, *Calyx*, *Salt Hill*, *The Baltimore Review*, *The Tusculum Review*, and *Denver Quarterly*.

**Jonathan Yungkans** listens to the pouring Southern California rain in the wee hours of what some call morning and others some mild form of insanity and types while watching a large skunk meander under the foundation of a century-old house. He is thankful when his writing is less noxious than that jittery creature on the other side of those floorboards. During what some choose to call normal hours, he works as an in-home health-care provider, fueled by copious amounts of coffee while finding time for the occasional deep breath. His poems have appeared in *Gleam*, *MacQueen's Quinterly*, *Synkroniciti*, and other publications.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Our 2024 Fall Issue is our special edition, the Crone Power Issue. This issue only accepts submissions from female identifying poets over the age of fifty (50). We're honoring our older (but still awesome) female poets with an issue of their very own. Send us your honest poems, the ones about the heartache and glory of being an older female, dealing with life, the universe, and everything. Let us tell your stories.

Crone Power Submissions open July 1, 2024, and run through September 1, 2024. We will close early if we get all the poems we need, so submit early. We also close early if we reach our submissions cap for the month. Put 4 poems in one .doc(x) or .rtf document, 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 of no 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 drink too much coffee. Concrete and form poems are fine. If you submit more than 4 poems in a doc, we will read the first 4 and ignore the rest, giving the fifth poem a complex. We welcome poems from new and established poets. The editors have eclectic tastes, so give us a shot. Rhyming poems are a hard sell, but we still make room for a good one. We'd love to see what you've been creating.

Please read our full guidelines on Submittable:  
<https://gyroscopereview.submittable.com/submit/>

Thank you for Reading! See you Oct 1<sup>st</sup> for the release of the Fall Crone Power Issue. We return to regular, open to everybody submissions on October 1<sup>st</sup> for the Winter 2025 Issue.



# Gyroscope Review

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