



Gyroscope Review

fine poetry to turn your world around

Winter 2025



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Winter Issue 2025

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Constance Brewer

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From the Editor

I blinked in 2024 and almost missed the year. Now it's January, 2025, and I'm tentatively settling in, not sure whether to be stunned, optimistic, or appalled. I'm even leery of doing a Tarot spread for fear of what it will show me in the future. The one thing I have to look forward to is the great poetry that passes through Gyroscope's doors. If I can't find a way to express myself, other poets sure can. I'm always amazed at the collective zeitgeist that occurs in each issue, allowing the issue to almost shape itself.

Reading through the poems we receive is always an honor. Thank you, poets, for trusting us to handle your work with care. The editors have many rousing discussions about different poems, and we enjoy the excitement the conversations bring. I look forward to what the next round of poetry submissions brings, and what I can learn from them. Optimism, inspiration, thoughtful discourses, and conjecture are always needed. I want to know what poets think of the upcoming year. Together we can get through 2025, one poem at a time.

Constance Brewer, Editor

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Section One

I CONFIRM THE HUBBLE CONSTANT FROM HOME IN OHIO
BY DICK WESTHEIMER

Deb left yesterday. She stays in a cottage
just an hour to the east—*Alone* she types into her phone.

By day, she explores a woodland of beech and old oak.
The creek talks with her on the paths she makes

by walking them. At night, she holds the sky
to her like she would a basket of river glass.

I imagine she runs her fingers through
that collection of lustrous stones,

cups handfuls and flings them
back into space.

*How can I miss you, she texts, when I have
the dark to keep me company?*

I am here and she is out there, receding
into the quiet companionship of her retreat.

This is how I know the universe continues
to expand.

THE VISIT OF ST. ROCH, PATRON SAINT OF DOGS AND PLAGUE VICTIMS
BY DIANE BAKER MASON

We see you coming with your staff and lamp
And by your side, your dog. You are distant yet
A spot on the hillside, with the mountains behind you
Which you have gamely crossed. You are so far off
That you could be a deer, or perhaps a bear
Walking upright like a creature from a fable.

As step by step you near, we spread the word
Tumble from our homes crying out the news.
Our love for you bursts from closed doors
Consuming us as we run your way. For now you've come
All will be well. The sick will heal. The fevers break.
The waters will run pure.

We link arm-in-arm, as you approach
Your dog ahead of you, so close now
That we can see its teeth, its tongue, its golden eyes.
We shiver as it passes, then look to you, and see
How tired you are. Only a fragment of you remains.

We make a bed for you, beside the others
Who are lying in their cots awaiting you, or death.
We fetch broth to pour between your lips. We wait
But you do not speak. We stand aside, as by a crypt
While on the mat beside you, your dog lies crying
Its whimpering the sound of all the sorrow in the world.

When morning comes, you raise your hand
Then lower it to rest upon your dog. We feel
Your blessing rises from you like a mountain wind.
It briefly sings its promise, then it is gone
Soaring out to nowhere like priest-tossed ash.

We coax your dog to its feet, and take it outside
It eats a little, then with a sigh
It lies down at the threshold. Come the next dawn, it is still there
Keeping the faith for us pitiful folk
While we snuff the lantern by its master's head.

SIDE DOOR
BY ALAN PERRY

Where deliveries arrive
mistakenly or with purpose—
the fulfillment of what I need:

water filters for the refrigerator,
organic oatmeal, dog food,
chamomile tea to quiet the noise.

It opens easily to the sounds
of friendly chatter in the doorway,
rehashing the overtime ballgame,

neighbor kids invading the house.
And for casseroles baked
in celebration and in sympathy,

along with the long-forgotten
borrowed rake from three years ago.
This door closes gently with air

compressing its mechanism,
as if there should be no slams,
no finality of a latch and lock,

but simply a screen to welcome
breezes and light, an invitation
to outside beauty. Like the day you

rang the bell, asked for directions,
then later coffee, and finally, a chair.
Your hand on the doorknob wanting

no formality or RSVP through the mail.
Just you with the freshness
of outdoor freedom and your smile

opening like a sunflower
as you stepped through
the only entrance without a key,

and stayed.

THE NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOR JUST LOST HER HUSBAND
BY TAMER SAID MOSTAFA

Nobody will say it aloud, nobody will interrupt the pulse
our morning ancestors garnish the sunlight with.

When she steps outside, a neighbor offers a loaf
of freshly baked sourdough, another hoes the horsetail
and dayflower weeds encroaching from the pavement.

Her face, amorphous like an inferno, banishes them
as they were, unhinged by the hallucinogenic glare.

Most days, there is a relative inside, desperate
to name an eight-letter word for what cannot be reclaimed
through her mind's rambling purgatory or its plodder.

Others, she is left alone to chase each apparition
hiding behind cupboards that vanquish kibble every hour.

One evening, she sings 'Night Fever' in three languages
at our front door, turns a locked doorknob counterclockwise
until her craving grows less cavernous upon the light.

What is it about atrophy, we ask, that reveres us first,
then untethers the equilibrium of where stories begin?

While changing brakes in an open garage, I dislodge
a caliper mounting bracket with too much body weight,
take a torque wrench to the head after it slips the screw.

In the quietude and bruised rubble, maybe death
is the epiphany we want, even after it betrays us.

Close to a new episode, her vocal cords, nicked and half-full
of filament, shout at the machination for the heinous joke
she cannot master any longer, but is willing to believe.

CLOSING DATE

BY JILL PATTON ROBINSON

We moved in that day. A gift of grocery store
prosecco sat waiting on the front porch, hidden
by the hydrangeas so lush that their stalks bowed
over, their puffy heads leaning in toward us as we stood
on the steps for a photo. We spent the evening finding
all the left-behind treasures that weren't calculated
in the mortgage: an antique lamp with a belly full of oil,
a set of seven martini glasses, a cup full of skeleton keys,
a piano that I would clumsily play that first winter.
We admired the doorknobs worn smooth by many hands
and the way that the single-paned windows waved,
ripples in a glassy pond, with dry cinnamon sticks on their sills.
Our boxes cluttered the parlor—our brief married life stacked
against the history of a hundred-year-old house, already broken in
and long settled into its stone foundation. When the bed didn't fit
upstairs, we laid the mattress in the living room and slept there
the first night, our apartment already long behind us.

SMALL NATURIST
BY TIFF HOLLAND

I've always avoided swamps, their sulfur smell, their squalid squish, the fear they, like quicksand, might pull me in. I never learned the difference between frog and toad, batted away the stained glass wings of dragonflies. The possibility of snakes, even non-venomous, terrified me, the possible presence of alligators helped me delineate places I refused to live, but then I had a daughter, a wild thing, who loved the long-legged herons, learned to identify egrets, spoonbills, stilts, never tired of feeding ducks, not the stale white bread I ignorantly saved for them, but rather corn and rice, raw vegetables and fruit, divvied up between us, so I too learned to lean forward, keep a careful balance between solid earth and wetland, my sneakers slipping closer than I'd like to the muddy bubbles of the unknown underneath, the semi-solid surface. I scattered my offerings in a half-circle and stepped back quickly, recognizing The something missing in me that kept me from inching forward as she did, arm extended toward those, she at an earlier age had called "the quackers". Holding both hands out, bravely, to let their yellow bills forage between the lifeline and the heart line of her tiny white palm, fighting the giggle that might send them flapping away.

MONTREAL: SUMMER, 2023

BY GLENN WRIGHT

The cathedral's cool silence collides with the hot bustle in the Place d'Armes. Agitated wasps infest the air, and a tang of smoke sounds a distant alarm in the summer heatwave. Marc-André J Fortier's bronze Englishman holds a pug and sneers at the French basilica. In another corner of the square, his statue of a French-Canadian woman carries a poodle, scowls at the British Bank of Montreal, notes the missing accent mark, hates the theft. The dogs strain toward each other, restrained by their masters' prejudices. People flutter by, dodging the insects, complaining in English and French. A young warrior in a gray, bespoke suit shouts at his phone, ducking and waving off the black and yellow drones: "*Je suis devant la cathédrale. Dépêche-toi!*"

Migrants come to town,
desperate yellowjackets
displaced by wildfires.

A CONSIDERATION OF THE LIMITATIONS
BY CONNIE JOHNSTONE

Such a universe provides no well mapped itinerary. Instead, Melancholia squats at its center, that keeps splintering. — *The Melancholy Universe* by László F. Földényi, translated by John Batki. Harper's. May 2021

We know time is a wave. To see with a purpose has its bloom and falls to seed and returns to be a story like any other. — *Human Memory is Organic* by Peter Gizzi.

one

Someone said our work should be finding replacement words, like a mechanic orders new spark plugs when the old ones stop firing. I am the one who said it. I was wrong.
I am a chronic malcontent.

I liked Plato at our very first meeting when he laid it out,
about the inadequacy of copies, each weaker than the next.

Emerson called language *fossil poetry*. Words, beautiful
truth-telling words, endure, but they get stale. Or worse.
Susceptible, not immune to toxins, misuse.

The fossils: constant erosion, chiseled from
their original rocks.

The lexicon: world unto itself, neither nostalgic nor afraid
of loss.

Ceaseless churn.
Indifferent as dark places in the universe

where we are mesmerized by nebulae exploding into stars
tantalized by what we think we know, believe, have learned

where melancholy squats at the center, groaning, eye-rolling
as we try to freeze the instant an impossible truth is told
and then it is not.

two

I had a dream last night: I was standing on the planet Venus, explaining to a being that I am not
an alien
even though I wear blue jeans and boots
and do not own a spacesuit.

*I dwell amid ruins, I told the dream being,
in the tail of a speeding comet,
and my hair is blown straight back.*

*Sometimes, I do deep dumpster dives, I admit it.
I examine mounds of rubble we call language.
Detritus. A gnarly mess. I need my boots and jeans.*

In the emanating energy, the being was not buying it.
Not rejection, exactly. Pity, maybe. Overall disinterest
coming in, from a future-present-somewhere else.

three

The rubble still was here when I woke up:

*I think therefore I am. Dominion over all the creatures of the earth. The Great Chain of Being. Invisible ghosts
of assumption, loitering. The Hubble Constant continuing its breakup. Think about it: we named a
theory constant.*

No repairs, no restorations, no replacements.
We have the wreck.
We await the next
impermanent revelations.

L'INVITATION AU VOYAGE

BY A. Z. FOREMAN

In any case you're sitting some with me
reading a screen or pages come with me

to blackrock desert water's taste out there
is different in the heaven-fevered air

humbling the throat stand for a moment free
to read the stone and sing clouds' song and be

turned on a planet with the men who wear
a Twitter handle like a *nom de guerre*

and dance the disco of antiquity
prospering as a footnote to the free

opulence of the heart in place of bare
thighs trembling in the sunset by the sea

and look there is a new war on TV
getting high ratings children's angels stare

and burn at drones out of a city square
this too shall pass and here we still will be

like swiveling bones of the old public square
moist dark flowers sprout and climb and climb to glare

of day through cracks where we can almost see
Time hedging its bets on a century

of everything and nothing everywhere
of everything and nothing that we share

and so I leave you at line twenty three

RUNNING THROUGH WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING
BY ELIZABETH EDELGLASS

Buried beech nuts crack underfoot,
or is that gunshot?
Branches knife at bloody shins, skirt
tied up for speed, soon
to be traded for someone else's pants.
Someone dead? Breath frosts,
chest heaves, tears freeze.
The woods are ugly, dark and deep.

Run, Mama said, run! To the woods,
to the boys in the woods. The boys
she'd always said to shun. Boys
with their secret sacs and their tongues
like knives. In their hidden caves
with their guns for hunting
more than food.
For you have promises to keep.

Survive, Mama said. Children, she prayed,
when always before she'd warned against.
Too young, she said when breasts appeared,
too soon. In the woods, age is forgotten,
muscles sharpened and prayers
unanswered, unless guns are shouldered,
Mama's teachings forsaken.
And miles to go before you sleep.

L'dor v'dor, Mama said,
generation to generation.
Meet a boy, make a life,
cross an ocean, learn a language,
study Torah, curse God.
Tell the children.
Warn the grandchildren.
Miles to go before you sleep.

—for Libby (Poland 1933?-Connecticut 2024)
—after Robert Frost

JOB'S WIFE TELLS LOT'S WIFE, WE NEED NAMES
BY SUZANNE EDISON

1. *Bad-ass Sister*, a woman who refuses
to comply is not refuse, is not sinful, is
more than a cow's lick, she's a pillar
2. who long endured. *She-Who-Wants-Children*
alive, whose hands wipe streams
of salt from her grave-digger face,
3. while a bloody undertow robs
her womb again, is also, *She-Who-Looks-
Back-and-Remembers*: the stories, sweats
4. a dew-line through desert and *She-Who-Divines*
A-Future declares wailing grief
is not ugly-choked but full-throated.
5. *She-Who-Pulls* a cart, pulls needles
through hide, cloth, and skin,
who sharpens a blade—hacks, slices
6. any snake in half. *She-Who-Opens*
not just her legs, but her heart, who
packs the tent to leave, who leaves,
7. who refuses to leave. *She-Who-Curses-
The-Unseen-One*, then engraves: *I Am*
in the book of Life— who
8. says, we shall call ourselves: *Enough*

LADIES' PURSES
BY YVONNE ZIPTER

I suppose you could call this army-green
bag I hang over my shoulder most times
when I leave the house a purse, this bag
that contains a pen, a pocket volume

of haiku, and lip balm. My grandmother's
purse—with a clasp that snapped resoundingly
as a sprung mousetrap—held a compact
with mirror and face powder, my adopted

grandmother's, a rosary, and my mother's,
a tube of red lipstick, which she applied,
then blotted on a tissue, those rare
occasions she got an evening out.

I wish I'd had the foresight to save
a tissue with my mother's imprint,
maybe tucked it in the pages of a book,
only to have it slip out, decades later,

and cause me to exclaim with delight. Maybe
I'd periodically brush my fingers over the thin,
vertical lip lines absent of color within the deep,
red outline of my mother's mouth just to feel

her presence—and absence—again. Perhaps
I'd have mounted it on the wall like an art piece—
a parsimonious portrait of my mother. Or kept it
to press against my cheek, the ghost of a ghost.

WHY DO I MOURN
BY MARISSA GLOVER

This morning's news
about the Music Man
has upset me in ways
that make no sense—
as if he stepped out on me,
as if he were my dad or
the father of my children,
as if I ever had a chance.

We click and read lines fed
to us from a slop trough—
scraps of meat mixed
with refuse, Chicken Little's feet
and the carcass of truth.

We dine on demise and lick
our lips like it was burgers and fries,
delighting in downfall, depressed
by death, both-and-all at once

rooting for Wolverine, sad
when he takes off his wedding ring, mad
when reasons are revealed, posting
what we would do, acting
like we're not pretending on some stage, too.

SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN
BY LIVIO FARALLO

the bus leaves him
as it does most days,

he adjusts
very thick glasses

and squints at the last step.

sometimes dentures
fall out when he
wrinkles his nose

but he catches them
or

picks them up and puts them in a shirt pocket.

he

looks around,
shuffling feet
and raises his hand as if to pick cherries from
the air.

i am with my son
at the playground on the same corner

making sure

he doesn't climb too high
or eat wood chips,

wanting him to appreciate
the simplicity of a breeze
or
ivy coloring a brick wall.

and i watch them both
like a tennis match
in the perfect bright neons
of yesterday and tomorrow.

a crow makes a sound like a siren in the night
and they both trip on shoelaces
undone and flapping forever.

KITCHEN OF THIEF ANTS
BY ANNETTE SISSON

*All things come to an end.
No, they go on forever.*
—Ruth Stone, “Train Ride”

A black mound of bodies roils
on a morsel of hash brown. How quickly

ants descend, mandibles breaking down
starch and pulp, stomachs holding

liquid for nests of famished larvae.
I clear the plate from my father’s lap tray,

brush crumbs from his undershirt,
gather them into crumpled paper towels.

He’s managed to swallow most of the meal
but his body is wasting. I place plastic traps

beside the foundation’s cracks, wedge them
into cement rubble. This county is an ocean

of ants, households beating them back
like blades of fire. When my father is buried

in a backwoods churchyard, no hermetic seal
will spare him this last invasion of ants.

They will penetrate ear canal, nostril,
strip muscle and skin. His body will be

colonized like my mother’s years before—
bones unpinning, sinews fading,

seas of undulating insects.

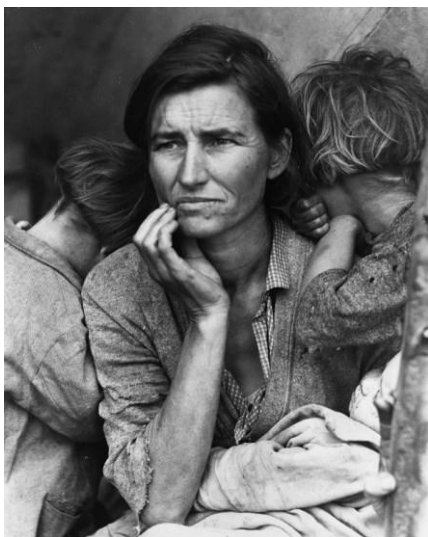
DOROTHEA LANGE'S *MIGRANT MOTHER*, 1936

BY EILEEN PETTYCREW

I watched the mother lay claim
to the picnic table next to ours,
my grandma having set out fried chicken,
potato salad, grape Kool-Aid.
She was tall and raw-boned
like a starving horse,
her children dark-eyed and solemn.

She dumped a sack of potatoes
onto the table, staring at us,
and we stared back, her eyes fierce
and locked on Grandma's,
her mouth one thin line.
I stared across the stretch of grass,
and the mother and the children
stared back and did not look away.

It was 1963, Wasco, California,
Grandma hurrying to pack up our food
and herd us across the park,
me looking back just as
the mother's fierceness left her body
and her children turned away from us,
hiding their faces.



Dorthea Lange, 1936, image courtesy of Library of Congress Online Catalog
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b41800/>

THE PARTING GIFT
BY GEOFFREY HIMES

A glass sculpture of a snow goose
sits on the sill of my kitchen window.
My ex-wife Alex made it and gave it
to me a year before she left.

She signed the statue's clay base
with a heart and a large "A."
My current wife Alice says I can keep it
in the kitchen but not the bedroom.

Sometimes, when Alice is out shopping,
I pick up the bird and hold it in the sun
in hopes that its bending light might allow
a glimpse into eternity, or at least ten years ago,

before this translucent rock,
so hard and so flawless,
replaced something
so tender and so messy.

Section Two

WHEN I SEE THE V.A. HAS STAMPED MY PAPERS WITH *POOR HISTORIAN*,
BY RON RIEKKI

I think of poverty-stricken historians and
impoverished historians and low-paid

historians. I think of the recruiters and
how they would crawl all over my parents'

lawn in hopes that they could zoo me,
how they would call over and over,

leaving messages, the way they salivate
over rural poor and urban poor, and I was

rural poor, and I remember when I went
into the Army recruiter's office and he had me

sit and showed me strange photos of boys
with guns and tropical beaches and maybe

the oddest photo of all, which was just a pile
of money, the final photo, as if enlisting

would make me a millionaire, and they
don't tell you that about a quarter

of all those who enlist end up disabled,
and that disabled vets are twice as likely

to be unemployed as abled vets and that
the bled vets who died are all unemployed

and how we deployed to war zones
if we begged not to, and I actually put in

a chit to go to the front lines and they denied it,
saying, *There are no front lines anymore*,

and ten of us died, and I think of the ghosts
of the dead, if the V.A. stamps their moans

with *Poor Historian*, how the V.A. counselors
don't believe you and fight sleep as we talk

and how when you tell them of being tied
to the fence, they say, dozy, *Oh, hazing*,

as if it's just a walk-in-the-park, as if there is
a sort of casual torture, one where we bond

through blood, through groping, and hoods,
how vomit brings friendship, and the absence

of God is good. When they slaughter
the pronunciation of my last name at the V.A.,

when they spell it with the jumbling of
chaos, I think of the first corpse that I saw

and how the mouth was open in mid-sentence,
as if the last word was a half-moan, and

I remember when I got out and when I got
home, how my body would shake all night

long, and it still does, because I'm owned.
And, yes, I have a history. And, yes, the disabled

are poor. But poor historians should be heard,
not only the rich ones like the Ivy League officers

who pointed and told us to go where the radiation
ate our bodies and the asbestos ate our throats

and the burn bins ate our eyes, I mean, lives,
and they play the National Anthem at the basketball

game and I find I can't stand. Not out of protest,
but out of fight-or-flight-or-freeze, the f-words

of the body, the cataplexy of history, how I write
this poem because the V.A. won't listen to me.

BOOK REVIEW: THE BOOK OF RANDOM NUMBERS*

BY JOHN DELANEY

is a black book weighing about three pounds.

Hundreds of thousands of numbers,
drafted for its pages, have fallen in
formation arbitrarily.

They show civilian contempt
for a drill soldier's orders.
Undisciplined, they march out of step.

Here is a record of the cellmates
that society has pooled in one place,
like a mental ward or Guantánamo,
so that a safer, more lawful life
might result from their sequestration.
We must be thankful for this book:

it fills the gaps left by reason.
Read it forward, backward, even
diagonally—point of view
makes no difference. Unedited,
it sounds like code. Listen to an excerpt:
“. . . 64109 17486 . . .”

It is a Gallup poll of a million
Americans, asked to rate their prospects
from zero to nine; its findings are proof
of the crowd's democratic mean.
The book is destined to be selected
as a Book-of-the-Month-Club alternate:

required reading for counterculture
courses, leisure skimming for the middle
class. It belongs on the coffee table,
next to an arrangement of daffodils.
It is a lottery's *I Ching*,
a bible of chance, the unbroken stream

of messages tapped out by aliens.
It conveys a universal theme
in a style that is avant-garde;
it is both a classic and a fad.
Roll call, inventory, register, list,
it numbs the mind like infinity.

Catalog it under criticism.

*See Rand Corporation's *A Million Random Digits with 100,000 Normal Deviates* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1955).

HOW TO READ SHAKESPEARE
BY JOANNA SCANDIFFIO

like the Buddha watching clouds float

remember all the lovers all queens and kings are interchangeable

history repeats in the mating season blood is blood all the soliloquies

a digression that can be skipped if you don't speed read

the theme is simple: time passes like a summer's mistress so why aren't you drinking

the plot: boy meets girl girl becomes boy who meets boy who longs for girl

rhyme scheme: trouble doubles

remember if you read one play you can quote all the plays

secondary theme: nothing is simple not even drinking

plot device: all is won by loss

pay attention to the evening sun Desdemona's handkerchief Cleopatra's fragrance

the weight of Ophelia's dress the morning star all the pearls that were his eyes the weather

best to read Shakes while eating an apple for the crunch the combustion

the coming and going of Peaseblossom Cobweb Flute and Snug did I say Brutus

Helena Hermia Horatio I could go on and on like Polonius, looking for Romeo

but here's the fun: you get to be Buddha under the tree watching lovers disappear

kings reappear three witches by your side the cockatiel crowing

DRAMA SCHOOL: AN OPERA OF THE HALLS
BY RICHARD HAGUE

After Forty Years Among Them: Cast & Curriculum in Five Bells
With Overture of Morning Announcements

Good Morning

Today is a “B” Day, and Mass will be celebrated during all lunch periods.

If you bring a canned good, you will receive a plenary indulgence worth forty days off in Purgatory. Yes, you heard that right, Miss Kiss and Mister Hickey, and the rest of you: forty days off. Lucky dogs.

Boys volleyball and girls bowling have games tonight. Girls at 4:30, Boys at 7:30. Wear your school colors and get a free weenie under the stands during the first and second frames or quarters.

There will be no meeting of the LGBTQ Alliance today, or any day. According to the Archdiocese, such meetings are *verboten*. Staff and Faculty: this means you, too. Dismissal with no appeal.

Detention will be held in Room 666 at 2:50. It’s gonna be crowded, so —hah! get your demerits now.

Have a blessed day.

ring

First Bell

All the little dramas of sweaty hand-holding,
all the little dramas of hair-dos and expensive pedicures,
dramas of high-fives and knuckle-bumps,
dramas male/female, female/female, male/male,
dramas of chastity and lust,
little dramas of toilets and pocket money,
little dramas of valedictorians and salutatorians,

Little dramas of SATs and ACTs and OMGs,
little dramas of fanny packs and purses, love notes and emails,
little dramas of sexting and online grades,
staircase teary break-up dramas and emptied locker dramas,
all the little dramas of girl-fights and boy-fights,
little dramas of booty-shaking and muscle flexing,
all the little dramas of Cheetos, Cheezits, macaroni and cheese,
the little dramas of pencils and potties,
the little dramas of permission and denial,

All the little dramas of arrogance and submission,
the little dramas of As and Bs and Cs,
the little dramas of calculators and Kleenex,

the little dramas of principals and teachers,
the little dramas of chaplains and nurses, fire drills and pep
rallies,
the little dramas of inter-office memos and purchase orders,
all the little dramas of retention and detention,
all the little dramas of vectors and geography,
all the little dramas of cousins and bedbugs and cockroaches,

The little dramas of dyslexia and the high dramas of
Shakespeare,
the little dramas of retreats and of intramurals,
the little dramas of coaches and bench-sitters,
the little dramas of swimming and ping pong,
the little dramas of periods, commas, and dashes,
the little dramas of periods and missed periods,
the little dramas of consequences,
the little dramas of time-tables and denominators,
the little dramas of spandex and tattoos,
the little dramas of protest and acquiescence,
the little dramas of bobble-headed flour babies,
the little dramas of now and then.

ring

Second Bell

All the little dramas of *mañana* and *whatever*,
the little dramas of "Wait!" and "Like"
the little dramas of summer school,
the little dramas of lavatories and school paper offices,
the little dramas of community service in the ghetto,
the little dramas of community service in Appalachia,
as yet untried dramas of community service in wealthy
suburbs
("let us show you some poverty, if you please"),
the little dramas of trips to Rome and London,
the little dramas of jetlag and passports,
the little dramas of flunk and pass,

The little dramas of mom and dad,
the little dramas of socks and ties,
the little dramas of late for school,
the little dramas of sweaters and black tights,
the little dramas of lunch,
the little drama of prom week,
the little drama of the prom,
the little drama of dancing and not dancing,
the little dramas of sweat and eyeshadow,
the little after-prom motel dramas,

the little dramas of wine and beer and jello shots,

The little dramas of running and punching and spitting,
the little dramas of sex and no sex,
the little dramas of lipstick and tampons,
the little dramas of acne and prime numbers,
the little dramas of hungry and extra credit,
permission slips and valentines,
the little dramas of burn-out and cutting class
and Latin conjugations.

ring

Third Bell

The little dramas of haiku,
the little dramas of chapters,
the little dramas of excuses and no excuses,
the little dramas of ear lobes,
the little dramas of Dramamine,
the little dramas of water,
the little dramas of combs,
the little dramas of body odor,
the little dramas of tardiness,
the little dramas of all the little dramas,

Little droop pants dramas,
little lingo dramas,
little dramas of negroes, niggahs,
cuzzes and brahs,
little honky dramas,
little preppy dramas,
little dramas of monthlies and the grannies,
little dramas of sleep deprivation,
little dramas of migraines,
little libidinous dramas,
little litigious dramas,
little licentious dramas,
little dramas of shuck and jive and chatter,

Little lisping dramas,
little dramas of uptalk,
little dramas of peroxide,
little dramas of ashy skin and skin cream,
little dramas of mouthwash.

ring

Fourth Bell

Old guy dramas,
white guy dramas,
little secret dramas of cutting,
little horrid dramas of piercing,
little thrown-out-of-the-house dramas,
little sleep-in-the-car dramas,
little coed camping at Red River Gorge dramas,

Kitty dramas,
iguana dramas,
puppy dramas,
drowned guinea pig dramas,
three-legged dog dramas,

Little dramas of actors and actresses,
little dramas of stand-ins and walk-ons,
hams, hacks, jive-cats, thugs, hoodlums, goths,
emos, freaks, punks, jocks,
all the cuties,
all the not-so-cuties,
all the smarties,
all the smooth-talkers,
all the sweet ones,
all the little criminals,
all the early exits from class,
all the wordy tardy entrances to classes,
all the sad soliloquies of missing homework,
all the hapless doomed duets,
all the closing announcement dramas,
all the end-day curtain-calls,
all the bus stop crowds and feel-ups,
all the “please pardon this interruption”
interruption dramas.

ring

Fifth Bell

All the encores,
all the boos and all the hurrahs,
all the hubbub of the hoi-polloi,
all the brown-nosing,
all the prima donna dramas,
all the groundling dramas,
all the tragic hero dramas,
all the backstage fainting dramas,
all the dropped line dramas,

all the ad lib dramas,
all the little little little
dramas—all the little dramas,
all of them,

(bell *ring*
ring
ring
ring)

Ho! Halt the little dramas
for a night and

(they bow and smile, the entire bawdy student body) then:

Exeunt omnes

omnes todos omnes

exeunt

—all the little dramas.

SANPUKA

BY JEAN MIKHAIL

A Japanese face reader, Kansei,
once told my son his eyes
were sanpuka, meaning his eye
whites show below the iris. Some say
face reading is a pseudoscience,
a practice mistakenly believed
to be true. I see now how
bottom lids cup the white.
Snow descends into a skating rink.
A million expressions alight,
his face spinning over ice.
Dispiriting years accumulate.
He grabs my hand mid-skate,
and captures me in his gaze,
disguising himself behind a smile.
His pupils are the untested
black ice I fall through, every time.
Sometimes, mothers must tiptoe
around a room, but I almost
always wake him up by accident.
He startles so easily, this boy
with his expressive eyes. He stares
into the face reader's face, and is
unable to look past her
eyelined eyes, heavily defined,
her lips the kind
lined with grace and wisdom.
He groans a little in embarrassment
when she pushes back his hair.
The creak of his breath, the ice—
you know how it sounds,
the way a young boy's voice
drops down an octave, deepening
after it breaks. When the face reader
shares with him his fortune, she locks
her eyes with his, her fingers
dovetail to his face. She slides
his soul forth like a drawer
to see what he keeps inside.
She turns his eyes into hard
wooden knobs and handles
each one of his dreams.
Then, she places them back.
She has made up her mind,
made him believe he is cursed.
Let me repeat what she said:

you will have a tragic life.
Then she made him pay.

HANDWRITING
BY YVONNE ZIPTER

In the fourth grade, the billowing belly of a *D*
appeared on my report card—the closest
I'd ever come to raising the *F* flag of failure.

And it was for handwriting. I took that *D*
to mean *dope*, *dummy*, *deficient*, the demon
that haunted me through the remainder

of grade school, the curse of cursive
whose simpy curlicues clung together
as if incapable of standing on their own,

vestige of a more fraught age when neighbor
depended on neighbor, letters flowing together
as naturally as rivulets into a stream. Except

in my halting hand. Printing came as a declaration
of independence, each letter standing proudly
on its own, no expectation of holding another's

hand like lovebirds unable to contain themselves.
A lone wolf in a pack of words, no loop or line
contorting its shape to accommodate another.

Proximate yet solitary, as if it might wander
off on its own but chooses not to, each crisp
letter a soloist in the jazz ensemble of a word.

KISSING MIRRORS
BY TAMARA KREUTZ

In junior high, I practiced kissing
on mirrors, my reflection's cold
lips fogged by my warm breath,
as I'd twist my face back and forth,
touch my tongue to the glass-girl's
tongue, hands spread like wings
on either side of both our faces.
I'd take kissing tours of the whole
house—every bathroom, bedroom,
and evening-darkened windows.
I'd wipe away the smudges
of passion. And though my woman's
body was only half-sprouted,
with jutting hips, arms too long
for my frame, and though my face
wore a mask of shame—shining
with oil and my forehead swollen
with cystic acne—and though
I would wait until newly adult,
before I'd really be kissed by warm
lips and with the desire my pre-teen
self had offered my own reflection,
I kept up the practice, for over
two years, murmuring between
half-caught breaths what I most
wanted another human to breathe
into my ear—that I was pretty,
that someone would always be there
to love me. One day I pressed my angular
body breast to breast, against my full-
length reflection on a three-way
dressing-room mirror, and I kissed
myself deeper and deeper and into infinity.

LIGHT FINGERS
BY PEIHE FENG

All these could have been different—I never meant to be
unhappy; never meant to admit that I almost die of jealousy
when the girl sitting behind me laughs shrilly and professes
her love for some boy-group idol for the whole classroom
to hear; never meant to speak again of the dream
where there is another in my body
with candlelight as fingers groping my interiors
and a wet scarlet lip that encircles the bottom of my heart
suckling milk at the other side of my left breast.

I've tried so hard to make sense of this being that once
I dreamed of being pregnant, lower belly swelled
by something clearly misplaced. A vacuum? A
metal apparatus inserted to take pictures of my insides
still hot from the steam that sterilized it.

I remember the yearning to touch
what is within my flesh and bone, as if by sheer will power
I can grow tentacles to reach down inside and thumb
its feverish eyelids, as lovingly as the laughing girl caresses
her idol's face in the pictures. I asked: *what is it, Mother? Who is it
that has done this? How could it happen to one
who has never been looked at twice, never felt such weight
pressed against her exterior, never loved?* (and blushed
unconvincingly at this statement).

I wonder if this is how being the Holy Mother feels like:
a perpetual state of dreamy wondering, the vague notion of an unknown being
swimming in her head as it solidifies in her womb. An itch
unable to scratch, a wound

in the dark. There are numerous queens
in ancient China impregnated by dreams
and gave birth to emperors who thought themselves gods.
There is that lady who dreamed of the sun falling upon her,
scorching her breasts so she lactated blood, squeezing into her body
so her son may enter the world all golden and shining
and the whole room, still reeking of pain, knelt
in awe of this kingly miracle. But the burning presence
in my body cannot be born: I know
because there is no room for miracles within my flesh. Its
heart will heat and consume but never beat, its fingers
will never curl into fists and pound on its mother's wall.

Just fingers: small and hot like candleflames, unfurled
like a distorted flower, groping, begging
me to set it free.

MELTDOWN DISGUISED AS HEART ATTACK
BY HALLIE FOGARTY

I'm in the ER in my pretty blue
dress, big shoes propped up and hairy
legs ungainly. I drove myself
here, which runs in the family,
and don't really need to be here at all,
which doesn't run in the family.
I sit in the bed with my IV in
thinking about the copay, thinking
about how I'll have to walk out in full
health and broad daylight, under the eyes
of the nurses and actually deserving patients.
While I'm here, the beeps and hums comfort me.
I can let myself be taken care of when
it's dire. As I leave, the car next to me has
a *FUCK BIDEN* bumper sticker on it and I can
safely assume it belongs to the man who was
yelling about being *this* close to pissing himself
instead of just pressing the call button.

G

BY LUCY DALE

At nineteen, I tattooed
the letter G on my right
arm. I don't know why.

Maybe to honor my cat,
a chubby tabby with
a scratchy tongue

and obsession with plastic
bags. I watch a new
needle scrape against

my skin in July. I don't
know why. Maybe to
make sure that girls

behind registers would
know I am cool—It
worked, I traded blushed

smiles with all others
who knew the secret code.
I awkwardly sit in a leather

chair, in a room where even
the walls were tattooed—
the 6'8" cane-thin man

sets up his instruments
like a child lining up their
Match-Box cars, I think

about how he could nail
me down, the steampunk
rock shoving into both ears.

It's normal to consider
this. I go back to the man
and the cigarette-Clorox

smelling room every time
I add a new sketch
to my porcelain skin.

I don't know why. Maybe
to ease my mom's worry,
maybe to be sure all

of my tattoos look uniform,
maybe I don't want
multiple people to mark

my blood—maybe I trust
him. I slowly peel off the saran
wrap bandage four days too early.

HERE'S WHERE THE STORY ENDS

BY AMY FORSTADT

You're almost 16 already, learning
to drive. I'm nervous,
pressing the imaginary brake
on the passenger side floor but we don't
slow down. It helps
that you like The Sundays, same as me
all those years ago. We listen

to Harriet Wheeler's voice, me and you
and the ghost of my adolescence
sprawled in the backseat. I'm both
those people at once. I'm all of the people
I've been. You're still just you. I can't

bear it, almost. The sun
dappling the windshield, shadows
on the sidewalk, a woman crossing
the street with her little dog. I want

to grab this day, this drive, hold it
in my hand like
a little souvenir of these last few years
together. It's done already

as we pull into the driveway.
You're behind the wheel,
you've got the keys, the gas,
all those roads ahead. I'm overrun
with metaphors. So
the facts:

You are leaving.
I am staying.
Songs last until they're over.

PANTOUM WITH EXES
BY ALISON STONE

What did Lucifer feel, falling?
When love ends, the world transforms—
Heaven receding, emptiness ahead.
Each break-up, my heart played the same film.

When love ends, the world transforms—
affection twisted into malice.
Each break-up, my heart played the same film.
Romance fizzling out is almost expected.

Affection twisted into malice,
the once-beloved seen as ordinary, vile, plain.
Romance fizzling out is almost expected,
but we have no label for when friends divorce.

The once-beloved seen as ordinary, vile, plain.
Girl I rubbed pricked fingers with, vowed *sisters*.
We have no label for when friends divorce.
Even the birds warble *betrayal*.

Girl I rubbed pricked fingers with, vowed *sisters*,
dumped me for someone dull but rich.
Even the birds warble *betrayal*,
banishment. Love's light is a scalding memory.

She dumped me for someone dull but rich.
Heaven receding, emptiness ahead.
Banishment. Love's light a scalding memory,
what did Lucifer feel, falling?

HARD OF HEARING

—for my father

BY JOHN DORSEY

like you
anger has become
my default setting
you scream
when i reach for a banana
before you've eaten anything
or stop to hold the door
for other people at a diner
yelling about immigrants
at the border
i scream on the inside
lamenting the relationship
we'll never have
brief calm moments
that quickly
flung their rage at the sun
pale skin
& freckles
that have never been able
to connect with anything
missing pieces
of conversations
neither of us
wants to hear
the end coming.

伤寒 THE WOUND

BY CELA XIE

I

开 I caress the edge
刀 of my open side

铭 white as wax
月 magnolia

名 my father's name
威 for me, taken from

尔 a realm green and
丝 cold, where the skin

愁 was rare. Jennifer
情 is smooth and fair.

II

靖 The torn veins
脉 stir like petals

环 in a well. I watch
假 the ripples slither.

面 There, floating, is
腥 my father's mask,

漆 lacquer shining
映 beneath the skin.

鬼 From the mouth,
影 my face smiles.

III

红 I strip my fingers
旗 to the red

领 reaching for jewels
赤 past black moss.

子 I was born
皙 a scarlet son.

化 Now I am white
为 as he washed me,

珍 lost as a pearl
瓷 in his dark hands.

IV

晶 My pulse glimmers
洞 through bad flesh.

滴 I watch it move
水 like candlelight.

钟 I dreamed of carving
拆 the skin from his face,

骨 baring clean wood
揭 beneath red paint.

瘤 The last door home
紫 was sinking in.

V

潜 I move through the ruin
墟 of my skeleton.

寻 I cannot be saved;
道 I am not his faith.

德 I want a mouth
良 to slice him with.

药 If I could destroy him
为 like Christ,

獠 I could cure him.
戈 He is the doctor.

WHERE DO THE DEAD GO?

BY JULIE WEISS

I pour cereal into my daughter's bowl
because where else to still a question
like that than under chocolate flakes?

Not even scientists or philosophers
have the answers, their pockets hold
the same rocks, shells, and random

thingamajigs as ours, but I give her
binoculars anyway, tilt her face upward—
maybe she'll glimpse a dimple in the sky's

shaggy cheek. As a child, I discovered
dolphins, horses, turtles, bears, rabbits,
entire bird colonies in clouds, so why not

a grandfather who'd loved her
over Zoom? The world is full of beliefs,
theories, fables, also known as small

mercies, when you're a parent. *Fifty*
is the new twenty, I say, breakdancing
my voice as if vying for Olympic gold

in persuasion, but she's deep
in my scalp, tracing a path through gray.
At her age, I couldn't imagine a troubled

sleep without the long hug to follow,
either. She used to plunge her hands
in the sugar bowl, drop grains on cookies

like eternal rain. Now, she weighs absence
by the spoonful, her eyes burning
around the edges. She tells my father

about the jellyfish that can live forever
and his picture moves just enough.

HIS FOLDER

BY JUAN PABLO MOBILI

For Jorge Enrique, my father

As insufferable as I am about my obsession
with the distinct texture of paper
and the beauty of where they are gathered,

the “legal size” photocopies of your poems,
remain in your battered yellow folder,
the cord that held it tightly no longer firm.

As tempted as you, as Mother complained,
to *save every damn thing*, the yellow folder
disappears and surfaces again—like a log

a river is never done devouring, and the poems
you typed in your exhausted Olivetti
are the hardest to read—time unleashed

its anger particularly on them—but the ones
you wrote by hand remain stubborn,
strutting your impeccable calligraphy.

I’m grateful I inherited your care
for what others might call
inconsequential, a candle

burning that honors your existence,
in a temple few visit, in which
you and I are monks.

A POEM ABOUT MAKING EGG CREAM

BY AMALIE KWASSMAN

Daddy always brought the dinner table up first. It was wooden and round, and it could be made bigger. It was as if guests were coming over, though they never did. What do people do at a dinner table, this sitting down, this place where mother is not hushing bodies into bleeding, her hands cannot cook when they are eternally grieving.

Grandmother had no tables, just kitchen counters. Because kitchen counters had a way of forcing people into loving and were best for making egg creams. If you are going to make egg cream, my grandmother said to do it right. Do it right. Put the chocolate in first. Then milk. Seltzer. If your mother gets quiet, if she ever gets quiet, take the squares of silence and put them in your pocket. You'll need them later, then swear and hear the spoon clinking.

Next, make music with your thighs. I interpret this to mean the men folding up the sky. It was two-fourths chocolate, one-fourth milk, and a little seltzer.

And then, I swore. Then, I used math to remember I was beautiful. If the ratio of how many times I've been told I'm beautiful to how many times I've looked in the mirror and cursed myself is less than what is multiplied by the men smiling on the street and those who give me their number, then I'm pretty. Officially pretty. In that magazine, if "a guy likes you, do this" way, he arrives in a sedan, four-wheel drive, or a slightly marked-up red vehicle. But not a truck.

All the men I fall in love with drive trucks. When I'm with them, something in me is clenched like the fury of fist every night. Something in me wants him there. I never wanted him there. Though I liked his truck. His truck drew in dreams closer to me. I poured backlaughter into my lungs in the front seat. Let hope be put on that ill-fitting sweater.

These men are so noisy with pulse that I forget the clinking of the spoon and my father's tables. We eat dinners on the dashboards, the dressers, the disaster of a restaurant. The years we leave in the oven.

Put your heartbreak to a steam, let it come to a boil, Grandmother said. Drop in your mother, and if you don't have your father, just his underwear, the kitchen chairs, prune juice, and the broken refrigerator. You've been planted here to march. So, march to the place where grandmother sat, making death seem less like something brought in with the broken window screen.

Contrary to popular belief, we do not turn to dust when we die. We turn to milk—craters of chocolate in our grandmother's egg creams. Grandma, give me your one good lung to take from. Let me live, please. Please let me live off egg cream.

RING SAW

BY MARY SPECKER STONE

Of course the hospital has this practical gadget,
its bird-like beak, curved like a thrasher's.
The technician gently lifts my mother's
edematous hand from the sheet—
she's awake, but doesn't speak—
and holds it, palm up, as he eases
the flesh-guard between stuck band
and gnarled finger, now an hourglass,
constricted by the wedding ring she's
always worn, even after late-life divorce.
His little saw whirrs, cuts. He pries the ring
open, offers me the mangled thing. *Thank you,*
the only words I can manage. *I want to go home,*
she says, but these days, she says this all the time.

Section Three

SPRIG: A LOVE POEM

BY ALEXIS RHONE FANCHER

It's your avatar—that prickly sprig of thistle. You think it suits you. Hard-scrabbled, barb-wired. You could have it tattooed on your bulging bicep, or across your chest, like a warning. I see how closely its stem resembles your limbs, slender, muscular, hairy. Like the two of you are long lost twins. Someone's done a number on you, turned your trusting nature stoic, prickly, convinced you to arm yourself against love. You pretend you're thistle, and you hide inside that prickly façade, like that's the depth of you. But I've seen how you look at me when you think I'm not looking, your blue eyes soft-focused, dreamy. Look, I get it. There are no guarantees. Only me, loving you. And you, reaching for me in the dark.

FEATHER FELONY
BY NANCY MCCABE

Turns out it's a felony
to remove a feather from the ground
so let's just say you never picked up
that red-tailed hawk feather that drifted
lightly on the wind to settle in your hay field
on one of my ambivalent days
when I considered taking flight.

Let's just say you never offered me
that feather, nor did I drive with it beside me
on the passenger seat while I pondered the nature
of love, while your tractor traced paths
on my tracker app—the shape of a cartoon bird,
an origami swan, and a jet plane emitting curls
of clouds as if you could lift beyond ordinary gravity
but chose not to as you raked and bailed, earthbound.

Since I prefer to avoid a criminal record
let's say those upward-reaching filaments,
that lithe, light passenger, was just a metaphor
for love, how wings only stay aloft
without flapping by flying into a wind that slows them,
a resistance that shapes them, how despite the danger
we can be lured into plucking such gifts
from where they fall.

L.A. NOCTURNE

BY CANDICE M. KELSEY

The week ended today,
the week that would never end.

Saturday is on the branch,
distant outline of a bird
or delicate soul.

Sunday is damselfly promise,
its nymphal wing flutter
filmy and net veined.

Seven o'clock sundown.
Children sprawl and splash
in the neighbor's pool.

I hear my street's construction
stop, hold its tongue,

familiar-voiced laborers quiet
hammers and saws. Slam
pick-up truck doors,

stress and windows down,
crank up Mega 96.3 KXOL—

*Las ganas de superarme,
por las noches me perturban—
lyrics like that.*

*Y de repente nos vamos de rumba
porque hoy se puede hacer
lo que me gusta.*

Scents dance from ovens;
apartment 4B's challah, braided
and baked, is cooling.

Under the sunset's shawl
I listen to the Dodgers
on iHeart radio; Ohtani aims
toward our shared ether.

*The desire to improve myself
at night disturbs me.*

It is the weekend
as it had been last weekend.
I am both rider and horse,

today I can do what I like.

Saturday hops down the branch,
its wings volant, its beak
full of damselflies.

THE SULPHUR MATCH

John Singer Sargent, 1882

BY GEORGE FRANKLIN

I have no business being here, but neither does Sargent,
Sketching somewhere from across the room. The woman
With the red scarf leans back in her chair, her fingers

Touching the wall lightly, her chair resting on its hind legs.
Tonight, she wears her best shoes and tucks them up
Onto the crossbar of the chair. A wine bottle has rolled,

Empty, onto its side. How long did Sargent stare
At her and the man next to her? He lights a cigarette
With a sulphur match and wears a fur-collared cloak,

A black hat. At this moment, she is beautiful, but we
Don't know that the man sees more than a conquest,
That he sees what Sargent sees. The moment

May not last longer than the match.



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<https://www.wikiart.org/en/john-singer-sargent/the-sulphur-match-1882>

FELTING

LAUREL BENJAMIN

I was told to let in the fibers,
and whatever dragon emerged from the Atlantic
crossing, fingers like stone meat, bleeding
clementines gone sour like something rotten
in the hold, as glass broken then ground,
as a baited trap for the hand,
I would bring.

I was told to bring insipient
webs but felt was all I could manage,
the forgiving almost stiff hairs
escaping, thick braids unleashed
to batter the monster, reminder of the river
left behind (fish found easily)
I would bring.

I was told to leach chartreuse
from lichen fingers where no vessel could harbor,
pilgrims seeking answers turned away,
instead nurses, maids, fishmongers, rabbis
and warriors as dragonflies bottled then released,
as dandelions trailing fluff,
I would bring.

I was told, do not conceal the harbor,
do not scissor, do not bind or splint, do not wash
with soapy water, do not hook together
early, do not seascape,
and whatever tufts emerged
pulled gently,
I would bring.

I was told to scrunch up cotton
with a clawed motion and whatever released
the trapped coursing and let in
the paper-thin, the suckled
breast, the forgotten, the weighted,
the knife, the prey, the thieves, the angels
from another continent, the complainers,
the lost seagull with millinery straw
in its beak,
I would bring.

TWO NOTES

—a pair of *Golden Shovels* using lines from *Holy Sonnet 10*

BY CHUCK STRINGER

John, I'm almost done. I've made arrangements for my ashes, and the rest of my belongings (including my silver chain), to be sent to you, care of Ken & Alejandro's address. I know they're angry. I never answered their calls. Tell them I'm sorry, and not to make a fuss. What's left of my bones can sit in the basement, go out with the trash, for all I care. Tell them, and I really mean this, what they tried to do for me touched my reckless soul's pain. And John, know this: all I send I send with love, guaranteed delivery.

Rich, received your promised package—came yesterday, just before one. The doorbell rang, I jumped, tied closed the robe you gave me. The short walk to the door was the longest I've ever made. Small box. I can't sleep since it came. I lie in bed thinking of the good days, and oh how the past is present in the things you sent. That red t-shirt I bought you in Rio. We didn't last. But know I now wear your chain. Whisper *Rich* when I wake. Smile when I read the words on your urn: *You are loved, loved eternally.*

ARS POETICA
BY JEN ASHBURN

"Art is drawn on the cave of my body."
—Ama Codjoe

If art is drawn on the cave of the body, I want to see it.

Not as a bandit ransacking tombs of bone and gold.
Not as a tourist with a \$10 ticket and fancy camera.
Not as a lover craving secrets, or a priest entering a hollowed shrine.

The wreckage in me would crawl
through the narrowest chamber
just to glimpse what's true and beautiful.

The cave of my body
 is the cave of my mother's body
 is the cave of her mother's body
is the cave... is the cave...

I feel my mother's body as bas-relief
in an ever-concentric womb.

We all have etched in us something profound.
Maybe it's art, but I like to imagine music—
cosmic vibrations that scrimshaw something in me

that's mine, and not mine.
A mythic awareness (I will not say holy)—
Something eternal.

HOPE SWIRLS: A GOLDEN SHOVEL

BY LAURA DANIELS

*“Hope” is the thing with feathers— / That perches in the soul— /
And sings the tune without the words— / And never stops—at all—
—Emily Dickinson*

My heart yearns to swirl around hope
to capture it, seal it in a jar so it is
kept freshly shelved, available when the
day darkens with despair, the monster thing

escapes, shuttering sun’s light with
dusky shadowed, wilted, dry feathers
clouding over a cleared portal that
blocks out confidence that perches

like a troubled undisciplined child in
the corner, punished harshly by the
disciplinarian who controls the soul
because faith cannot be trusted and

must be thwarted before optimism sings
its break-free song, its lyrics open the
shackles, splinters them, allows the tune
to chant hopefulness, clearly without

needing discourse or discussion, only the
melody is necessary to hum unspoken words
left undeclared, hidden but heartfelt, and
unforsaken, beseeching hope but never

hopeless—because my entrusted belief stops
before the soulless establishment once worshipped at
allowing hope to happen, centering me before all

A POEM IS A DIAMOND HEIST

after Karen Rigby

BY ALFRED FOURNIER

A crack beneath the black vault door.
A secret heavier than an elephant
lounging in a hammock with James Wright.
Don't tell me you've been here before.
That much is obvious.
A poem is groundhog day.
Familiar. Surprising. Inevitable.
A poem is a breath held at the top of Kingda Ka,
released on the downward plunge.
It is a small yellow bird
carried into the depths of the mine.
It is a financial disaster.
A fictional history made up on the spot
that convinces you to change your life.
It is a crime committed in full sight
of the corrupt Supreme Court Justice.
Slip him a grand to look the other way.
Hurry up. I'm waiting in the getaway car,
my right foot horny for the gas pedal.
Climb in with sirens blaring.
The poem accelerates, becomes a jet.
Looking down, you realize
the bank, the street, the world
have always been this small.
Pull it glittering from the bag.
This thing must weight 5 pounds.
As usual, I can hardly believe
we got away with it.

Note: The title is a line from Karen Rigby's poem, "*Why My Poems Arrive Wearing Black Gloves*"

MY DOG AS PAUSE
BY KARLA HUSTON

First you must pause to stroke the velvet
of his cheeks, his silky ears, the wagging comma
of his tail that's all wiggle and shake
like it's daring you to stop.

The feathers on the backs of his legs
and belly are hashtags. The waves
on his back look like tides of tildes.
His claws are commas, too—sharp
when he doesn't want you to stop
running your fingers across his back.

What a thrill he is, no need to pause.
If you stop stroking him, he'll sit on your feet
like an ellipse waiting
for something else to happen.

A LIGHT GROWING BRIGHTER AND BRIGHTER
BY JEREMY ROSENBERG

I lift my head above the water and the world
reveals itself in a cacophony of smells:
Master on the shore, the conifer trees cloaked
in snow, engine exhaust, propellant powder, you.

And you are still alive. Barely. As I swim
to shore, you move a little in my mouth and I
tighten my grip. You move. I tighten. Very simple.
In the east, the sun is sitting just on top of

the horizon, and the clouds—what few there are—
look almost edible with their soft yellow sheen
(I think I'll call them lemon curds). Mornings like this,
I sometimes feel as though the whole world were my plaything.

At last, I reach the shore and drop you in the snow
at Master's feet; you're not moving. I then step back
a little way and shake my fur dry. Master, tapping
the butt plate of his Blaser propped against his side,

looks you over. A moment passes. I don't think
I've heard the woods this quiet in my life. Then Master
picks up both you—though I suppose you're not you any
longer—and his gun and walks back to the truck.

With Master gone, I lie down on my chest and gaze
upon the lake; it's a backgammon board of shadows.
Out of the north, a slight wind has started to blow
and little ripples float over the water's surface.

I hear the truck's tailgate being unlatched and lowered.
The smell of cigarette smoke brushes over me.
Looking up, I watch as the conifer trees
begin to sway. These trees. This snow. That smell. This—This.

HOW LONG WILL YOU BE SWIMMING?

BY LISA BELLAMY

When I swim in our river, I am seaworthy, a dolphin again. My beloved calls out,
how long will you be swimming; I am not sure what to say.

I really, really like to swim, but see the sun is high—

I will swim for 20 minutes, or until the cows come home.

I speak, of course, in metaphor. I refer him to the Doxology—

I swim as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.

I will swim until I pick my post-financial collapse career.

I swim in the mindstream. I will swim until I see my brother swimming
next to me, saying. *I did not intend to die before I was born*;

or, until I can tell the bees our Republic survived; or, until Pleiadeans,
observing Homo Sapiens from their spacecraft, flash All-Clear,
lift-off, back to hyper-space. Reportedly, they have concerns.

I will swim until I can say, with neither hesitation nor resentment,
without crossing my fingers behind my back, may *all* beings be happy
and free from fear. I will swim until the next solar eclipse;

or, until I open my eyes under water, realize upstream is also downstream;

or, until I let the current carry me out to my Great Lake—where I live,
move, and have my being—the lake where I was born; or,

until I notice my mother watching from the riverbank, and I shout,
put out your cigarette, jump in, the water's warm. Until I teach her to swim.

DESCENDING
BY RICHARD WEST

Descending into the dark awaiting deep,
the muffled sense of sound is overcome by what I see:
perspective moves and mind takes flight to soar in ocean skies

above the sea-floor far beneath.
But here where mundane brightness of the world gives way
to the pale and luminous wonder of the sea, another world unfolds—

or *enfolds*, for, hanging weightless in the amniotic space
of sea's blue womb, there is a primal genesis of sorts, a return
of what is now to what once was.

And for an hour I am one with reefs and slopes where alien forms abound:
where living colors grow as coral heads or swim as fish
in underwater carnivals of fluorescent yellows, reds, and tangerines;

where stealthy rays and silver barracudas glide with Moorish idols,
damsels, angelfish, and tang. And I would gladly stay here,
in this water world, for days, but finite air betrays desire and

slowly, slowly, up I climb through fractal layers of silent light—
till once again I am rebirthed into that world of noise and weight,
where buoyancy is just a mental state and not a state of being.

Summer Haiku

orpiment
the north wind sways sunflowers
between light and shadow

last sunlight
the beaks of ibises glinting
over the Cape Fear

dusk scud
a fire burning
in a distant place

summer solstice
the parallel universe
of chicory blossoms

a doe scratches
at a ragged cicatrix
drought time

infinite greens the blue nevertheless

islands of the Susquehanna
bathing in reflected light
a fish crow

tornado warning
cicada cry fills
a green sky

slanting sunlight
disappearing down a wormhole
daylilies

SALT WIND RIPPLES ON AN INNER LAKE*
BY JONATHAN YUNGKANS

corroding a steel railroad bridge
across whose browning span
I've ripped out track
angled in and welded a girder to block it

afraid
of what people aboard the next train
might think they see
beyond trees' yellow leaves

what skeletons
they might find in a pile of rusting keys
thinking
there's gold where there's oxidized steel

not stopping to listen
when Miles Davis plays "I Fall in Love Too Easily"
like a tree feeling the wind pass
not wanting it to leave

not realizing that's the treasure
the chill in the breeze
in the music
where three driftwood tree limbs form a doorway

opening onto a scrap of hardwood floor
shaped like a raft
two blue Adirondack chairs
and an unobstructed view of water

*Title is a monoku by Cherie Hunter Day, reprinted in *Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years*, edited by Jim Kacian, Philip Rowland and Allan Burns

WASHED UP
BY CONNIE SOPER

Untethered, they ride the swell
of winter storms,

deposited with a sandy thud
along the wrack line.

Buoys striped orange, chartreuse, marine
blue in a florescence faded by time

and salt-weather. Battered and dented,
nicked and scraped—

costing only a walk
along the long strand of shore.

They huddle in yards all over this cold
coastal town, brighten the drizzle. A plethora

of floats, slipped from nets, coughed
up by the elements.

They dangle from fences
like distressed ornaments, strung

along lattice, hooked to porches.
So many, it's as if

the houses themselves could rise above
the highest tide to sail away from their pilings

unmoored—drifting into watery wilderness
like a grand flotilla escaping

the harbor, beyond the breakers—
lost, then found again.

CONTRIBUTORS

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Laurel Benjamin is active with the Bay Area Women's Poetry Salon, curates Ekphrastic Writers, and is a reader for *Common Ground Review*. Current and upcoming publications: *Lily Poetry Review*, *Cider Press Review*, *Taos Journal of Poetry*, *Gone Lawn*, *Nixes Mate*, *Pirene's Fountain*. *Cider Press Review* Book Award finalist and Pushcart Prize nominee, Laurel holds an MFA from Mills College. She invented a secret language with her brother. Find her at: <https://www.laurelbenjamin.com>

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Laura Daniels (she/her) is a multi-genre writer. Founder of the Facebook blog The Fringe 999 and editor of The Fringe 999 Poetry Forum. Curated recently in *New Jersey Bards Anthology*, *Silver Birch Press*, *Journal of New Jersey Poets*, *Smarty Pants Magazine for Kids*, and featured poet on Poetry for Mental Health. Her book *Gentle Grasp* (Kelsay Books) is available on Amazon. Her poems grow from a love of wandering and New Jersey, where she lives with her partner in Mt Arlington and works in the community garden. She can be reached at <https://lauradanielswriter.wordpress.com> and @thefringe999.

After retiring as curator of historic maps at Princeton University Library, **John Delaney** moved out to Port Townsend, WA, and has traveled widely, preferring remote, natural settings. Since that transition, he's published *Waypoints* (2017), a collection of place poems, *Twenty Questions* (2019), a chapbook, *Delicate Arch* (2022), poems and photographs of national parks and monuments, and *Galápagos* (2023), a collaborative chapbook of his son Andrew's photographs and his poems. *Nile*, a chapbook of poems and photographs about Egypt, appeared in May 2024.

John Dorsey is the former Poet Laureate of Belle, MO. He is the author of several collections of poetry, including *Which Way to the River: Selected Poems: 2016-2020* (OAC Books, 2020), *Sundown at the Redneck Carnival*, (Spartan Press, 2022), and *Pocatello Wildflower*, (Crisis Chronicles Press, 2023). He may be reached at archerevans@yahoo.com

Elizabeth Edelglass is a fiction writer turned poet during pandemic isolation. Her short fiction has won numerous prizes. Her newborn poetry has appeared in more than twenty journals and was shortlisted for the Fish Prize. Her poem "On My Kitchen Counter" appeared in *Gyroscope Review* Summer 2023.

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Poet/photographer **Alexis Rhone Fancher** is published in *Best American Poetry*, *Rattle*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Spillway*, *Plume*, *Diode*, *The Pedestal Magazine*, *Duende*, *Vox Populi*, *Fjords*, *New York Quarterly*, and elsewhere. She's authored ten poetry collections, most recently, *Triggered*, (MacQueens) and *Brazen*. (NYQ). A coffee table book of over 100 of Alexis' photographs of Southern California poets will be published by Moon Tide Press in 2025. She calls the Mojave Desert home. www.alexisrhonefancher.com

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Hallie Fogarty is a poet and artist from Kentucky. She received her MFA in poetry from Miami University, where she was awarded the 2024 Jordan-Goodman Graduate Award for Poetry. Her work has been published in *Pegasus*, *Poetry South*, *Barzakh Magazine*, and elsewhere.

A. Z. Foreman is a literary translator, poet and language-acquisition addict currently working on a doctorate in Near Eastern Languages at the Ohio State University. His translations from Arabic, Chinese, Latin, Occitan, Ukrainian, Russian, Irish and Yiddish have appeared in sundry publications including *Metamorphoses*, *Blue Unicorn*, *ANMLY* and the *Penguin Book of Russian Poetry*. He also writes his own poetry when it's really necessary. Most importantly, if you have a dog, he'd love to pet it.

Amy Forstadt's poetry and fiction have appeared or are upcoming in *Eunoia Review*, *Lips Poetry Magazine*, *Heavy Feather Review*, *Black Coffee Review*, and *Your Impossible Voice*, among others. Additional writing credits include Disney Online Originals, Nickelodeon, The Hub, and Animal Planet. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband, son, and one-and-a-half cats.

Alfred Fournier is a writer and community volunteer from Phoenix, Arizona. He is the author of *A Summons on the Wind* (2023, Kelsay Books). His poems have appeared in *Gyroscope Review*, *The Sunlight Press*, *Third Wednesday*, *the Main Street Rag* and elsewhere. He lives in the foothills of South Mountain with his remarkable wife and daughter and two birdwatching cats. www.alfredfournier.com

George Franklin is the author of seven poetry collections, including his recent: *What the Angel Saw*, *What the Saint Refused* from Sheila-Na-Gig Editions. Individual poems have been published in *Solstice*, *SoFloPoJo*, *Rattle*, *Cagibi*, *New Ohio Review*, *The Comstock Review*, *One Art*, and *Cultural Daily*. He practices law in Miami, is a translations editor for *Cagibi* and a guest editor for *Sheila-Na-Gig*, teaches poetry workshops in prisons, and co-translated, along with the author, Ximena Gómez's *Último día/Last Day*. In 2023, he won the Yeats Poetry Prize, and his work has been featured on the public radio podcast *The Slowdown*.

Marissa Glover lives and writes in Florida, where she's busy swatting bugs and dodging storms. Her poetry collections *Let Go of the Hands You Hold* and *Box Office Gospel* are published by Mercer University Press. You can follow Marissa on social media at [_MarissaGlover_](#).

Richard Hague is a native of Steubenville, Ohio, where his mother may have attended high school with Dino Crocetti (aka Dean Martin) and where Hague himself, also while in high school, dated the niece of the gangster Tito Carinci, a graduate of the same university Hague attended (Xavier in Cincinnati). While at Xavier, Hague did not have lunch with Andy Warhol, who visited campus several times in the Sixties. Carinci and Warhol apparently did not know one another.

Geoffrey Himes's poetry has been published by *Best American Poetry*, *Pacific Poetry*, *January Review*, *Survivion*, *Pandemics*, *Innisfree Poetry Journal*, *Giantology*, *December*, *the Delaware Poetry Review*, *Salt Lick*, *the Loch Raven Review*, and other publications. His poems are included in the print anthologies *Speaking for Everyone*, *Singing in the Dark*, *The Ground Under Our Feet* and *Poet Trees: Poetry Hiding in Plain Sight*. His song lyrics have been set to music by Si Kahn, Walter Egan, Billy Kemp, Fred Koller and others. His book on Bruce Springsteen, *Born in the U.S.A.*, was published by Continuum Books in 2005.

Tiff Holland writes poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. They have published two chapbooks of poems: *Bone In a Tin Funnel* and *Betty Superman*. *Betty Superman* eventually became the 5th Annual Rose Metal Press flash fiction winner and then the cornerstone novella-in-flash for the collection *My Very End of the Universe*. In 2020 Tiff Holland published their first full-length poetry manuscript *My Mother's Transvestites*.

Wisconsin Poet Laureate 2017-2018, **Karla Huston** (www.karlahuston.com) is the author of eight chapbooks of poems. A second full collection of poems, *Ripple, Scar, and Story*, was published by Kelsay Books in 2022. Her poems, reviews and interviews have appeared in many regional and national journals. Huston taught Creative Writing at The Mill: A Place for Writers for 10 years.

Poetry writing found **Connie Johnstone** in 2021; poems appear or are forthcoming in *Ginosko*, *Scarred Tree: Poetry of Moral Injury*, *Orchards Poetry Journal*, *Ravenous: le terroir du Montolie'*, *Amethyst Review*, *Loss Anthology 9*, *Calendula Review*, *Voices 24*, *Spoon Knife Anthology*, *Tule Review*, and elsewhere. *The River of Perpetual Departure*, a chapbook, forthcoming from Kelsay Books 2025. She wrote a novel, *The Legend of Olivia Cosmos Montevideo* (Atlantic Monthly Press); edited an anthology, *I've Always Meant to Tell You* (Pocket Books); was professor of English/creative writing, American River College; hospice chaplain, Kaiser Permanente, specializing in Narrative Therapy. Degrees: MFA Bennington, MTS Harvard Divinity School.

Carella Keil is a writer and digital artist, published in numerous literary journals including *Columbia Journal*, *Chestnut Review*, and *Crannóg*. She is a Pushcart Prize Nominated writer, Best of the Net Nominee and the 2023 *Door is a Jar* Writing Award Winner in Nonfiction. Her photography has featured on the covers of *Glassworks Magazine*, *Nightingale and Sparrow*, *In Parentheses*, *Blue Earth Review*, *Colors: The Magazine*, *Frost Meadow Review*, *Straylight Magazine* and *Cosmic Daffodil*.

Candice M. Kelsey (she/her) is a writer and educator living in Los Angeles and Georgia. Often anchored in the seemingly quotidian, her work explores the intersections of place, body, and belonging; she has been featured in *SWWIM*, *The Laurel Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Passengers Journal*, and *About Place* among others. Candice mentors an incarcerated writer through PEN America and reads for *The Los Angeles Review*. Her comfort-character is Jessica Fletcher. Please find her @Feed_Me_Poetry and <https://www.candicemkelseypoet.com/>

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Diane Baker Mason is a Toronto writer, poet, and playwright. A retired lawyer, she is the author of Canadian bestseller *Last Summer At Barebones* (McArthur & Co., 2001), as well as the recipient of multiple awards for prose and poetry. Her work has appeared in literary and commercial publications around the world, including *Prairie Fire*, *Acta Victoriana*, *Chatelaine*, *Modern Woman*, *Star*, and *Story*.

Nancy McCabe is the author of nine books, most recently the comic novel *The Pamela Papers: A Mostly E-pistolary Story of Academic Pandemic Pandemonium* (Outpost 19, 2024), the ya novel *Vaulting through Time* (CamCat 2023), and the memoir *Can This Marriage Be Saved?* (Missouri 2020). Her work has appeared in *Gyroscope Review*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Gulf Coast*, *Salon*, and *Newsweek*, received a Pushcart, and been listed ten times as notable in Best American anthologies.

Jean Mikhail lives in Athens, Ohio, where she first arrived to study Creative Writing. She has published in *One Art*, *Sheila Na Gig Online*, *The Northern Appalachian Review*, *Eucalyptus Lit*, *Pudding Magazine*, and other journals and anthologies. She was recently nominated for Best of the Net, by *Eucalyptus Lit*.

Juan Pablo Mobili was born in Buenos Aires, and adopted by New York. His poems appeared in *Tupelo Quarterly*, *Hanging Loose Magazine*, *South Florida Poetry Journal* and *Louisville Review*, among others, as well as international publications such as *Impspired* (UK), *Hong Kong Review* (Hong Kong, SAR), and *The Wild Word* (Germany). His work received several nominations for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net, his chapbook, *Contraband*, was published in 2022, and he is currently finishing the manuscript for his next book of poems. Most recently he has been appointed the Poet Laureate of Rockland County, New York.

Tamer Said Mostafa (he/him/his) is a therapist, poet, and storyteller from Stockton, California. His work has appeared in literary journals and magazines such as *Guernica*, *Confrontation*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Freezeray* among others. Tamer is a Best of the Net and Pushcart nominee, and a graduate of the Creative Writing program at University of California, Davis.

Alan Perry is a poet and editor whose debut chapbook, *Clerk of the Dead*, was a finalist in the Cathy Smith Bowers Poetry Competition, and was published by Main Street Rag Press (2020). His poems have appeared in *Taboma Literary Review*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Third Wednesday*, *San Pedro River Review*, *ONE ART*, *Gyroscope Review*, and elsewhere. He is a founder and Co-Managing Editor of *RockPaperPoem*, a Senior Poetry Editor for *Typehouse Magazine*, and a Best of the Net nominee. Alan and his wife live in suburban Minneapolis, MN and Tucson, AZ. More at: <https://AlanPerryPoetry.com>

Eileen Pettycrew's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *ONE ART*, *New Ohio Review*, *CALYX Journal*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *MacQueen's Quinterly*, *Cave Wall Press*, *SWWIM Every Day*, and other journals. In 2022 she was one of two runners-up for the Prime Number Magazine Award for Poetry from Press 53, and a finalist for both the NORward Prize for Poetry from New Ohio Review, and the New Letters Award for Poetry. A Pushcart Prize nominee, Eileen lives in Portland, Oregon.

Ron Riecki has been awarded a 2014 Michigan Notable Book, 2015 The Best Small Fictions, 2016 Shenandoah Fiction Prize, 2016 IPPY Award, 2019 Red Rock Film Fest Award, 2019 Best of the Net finalist, 2019 Très Court International Film Festival Audience Award and Grand Prix, 2020 Dracula Film Festival Vladutz Trophy, 2020 Rhysling Anthology inclusion, and 2022 Pushcart Prize.

Jill Patton Robinson is a writer from the little river town of Tunkhannock, Pennsylvania. Her work has appeared in *The Scop*, *The Delta Epsilon Sigma Journal*, and on public buses through the Luzerne County Poetry in Transit program. An avid runner and hiker, she will be spending this winter training for her next adventures and dreaming of warmer days ahead.

Jeremy Rosenberg is a poet, pianist, and composer who has lived his entire life on the United States' East Coast. Jeremy received a Bachelor of Music degree from the Boston Conservatory and a Master of Music degree from the University of Maryland. In terms of work history, Jeremy spent several years in the field of arts administration and currently works in the retail industry. He writes both free verse and formal poetry and has set several poems to music. When he's not engaged in musical and literary pursuits, Jeremy enjoys exercising and watching classic movies. This is his second publication.

JoAnna Scandiffio is a gemologist living in San Francisco. Her poems are like bird nests, made with fragments randomly connected to hold the moment. She is like the old medieval monks who copied verses in colored inks so the world could sing forever. Her work has appeared in *Calyx*, *The Poeming Pigeon*, *Poets 11*, *Sugared Water*, *The MacGuffin*, *Italian American*, *The RavensPerch*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, and other journals.

Annette Sisson's poems appear in *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Rust e3 Moth*, *Citron Review*, *Cumberland River Review*, and many other journals. Her second book, *Winter Sharp with Apples*, was published by Terrapin Books 10/1/24. Her first book, *Small Fish in High Branches*, was published by Glass Lyre Press (5/22). She has won or placed in many contests, and in the past six years, ten of her poems have been nominated for The Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net.

Connie Soper is a poet from Portland, Oregon. She likes to visit small towns, hike, and walk along Oregon's public beaches. Many of her poems are inspired these experiences as well as other travels, and have appeared in *Gyroscope Review*, *Catamaran*, *Cider Press Review*, *Sky Island Journal*, *One Art*, and elsewhere. Her first full-length book of poetry, *A Story Interrupted*, was issued by Airlie Press in 2022.

Joshua St. Claire is an accountant from a small town in Pennsylvania. His poetry has been published in *Lana Turner*, *Sugar House Review*, *Two Thirds North*, and *Allium*, among others. His haiku have appeared in several annual anthologies. He is the winner of *Rattle: Poets Respond*, the Gerald Brady Memorial Senryu Award, and the Trailblazer Award. He firmly believes that the interrobang should be added to the standard keyboard.

Alison Stone is the author of nine full-length collections, *Informed* (NYQ Books, 2024), *To See What Rises* (CW Books, 2023), *Zombies at the Disco* (Jacar Press, 2020), *Caught in the Myth* (NYQ Books, 2019), *Dazzle* (Jacar Press, 2017), *Masterplan*, a book of collaborative poems with Eric Greinke (Presa Press, 2018), *Ordinary Magic*, (NYQ Books, 2016), *Dangerous Enough* (Presa Press 2014), and *They Sing at Midnight*, which won the 2003 Many Mountains Moving Poetry Award. She is the creator of The Stone Tarot. A licensed psychotherapist, she has private practices in NYC and Nyack. <https://alisonstone.info/> Youtube and Tik Tok – Alison Stone Poetry.

Mary Specker Stone is the author of the recently published chapbook, *Valentine's Dinner at Wren & Wolf* (Finishing Line Press). Her poems have appeared in *Mom Egg Review*, *RockPaperPoem*, *Image Journal*, *Gyroscope Review*, *The Healing Art of Writing*, and *New Verse News*. With an M.A. in English and a background as both biomedical writer and writing instructor, Mary lives in the Phoenix area, where she leads poetry salons and serves as a spiritual companion.

Chuck Stringer lives with his wife Susan by Fowlers Fork, a creek in Boone County, Kentucky along which he walks and writes and 'keeps' creek (works with the City of Florence, Kentucky to keep it clear of trash and debris). His poems have been published in *Anthropocene: Poems About Environment*, *For a Better World*, *Literary Accents*, *Riparian*, and other journals. His first chapbook, *By Fowlers Fork*, was published by Finishing Line Press in August of 2024.

Julie Weiss is the author of *The Places We Empty*, and two chapbooks, *The Jolt*, and *Breath Ablaze: Twenty-One Love Poems in Homage to Adrienne Rich, Volumes I and II*. Her second collection, *Rooming with Elephants*, is forthcoming in 2025 with Kelsay Books. "Poem Written in the Eight Seconds I Lost Sight of My Children" was selected as a 2023 finalist for Best of the Net. She won *Sheila-Na-Gig's* editor's choice award for "Cumbre Vieja" in 2022. Her work appears in *Chestnut Review*, *Gyroscope Review*, *ONE ART*, *Sky Island Journal*, and others. You can find her at <https://www.julieweisspoet.com/>

"Richard West" was Regents' Professor of Classics in a large public university for a number of years. He has published numerous books, and many articles and poems under his own name or various pen names. He now lives with his wife Anna in the beautiful American Desert Southwest, where he enjoys cooking and trying to add flavor to his poems.

Dick Westheimer lives in rural southwest Ohio with his wife and writing companion, Debbie. He is winner of the 2023 Joy Harjo Poetry Prize and a Rattle Poetry Prize finalist. His poems have appeared or upcoming in *Only Poems*, *Whale Road Review*, *Rattle*, *Abandon Journal*, and *Minyan*. His chapbook, *A Sword in Both Hands, Poems Responding to Russia's War on Ukraine*, is published by SheilaNaGig. More at www.dickwestheimer.com

Glenn Wright is a retired teacher living in Anchorage, Alaska with his wife, Dorothy, and their dog, Bethany. He writes poems to challenge what bothers him, to ponder what puzzles him, and to celebrate what delights him. His work has recently appeared in *Rumen*, *Muse*, *Amethyst Review*, *Literary Hatchet*, and other journals.

Cela Xie is a person of twenty-five years who has accomplished nothing in particular, except writing for almost two decades. In that time, he has written one thousand, three hundred and seventy-eight poems, forty-three short stories, and one draft of a memoir. He is currently pursuing an MFA at North Carolina State University. His poetry has been published by *The Pierian* and *poetryfest*, and a collection of twelve poems is forthcoming from *betweenthehighway* press in December 2024.

Jonathan Yungkans continues typing at odd hours of the night as he prepares for a wet California winter, even as he hears owls and is visited more frequently by skunks, racoons and coyotes. For him, coffee remains more of a blood type than a beverage. His work has appeared in *Book of Matches*, *MacQueen's Quinterly*, *Synkroniciti* and other publications.

Yvonne Zipter is the author of the poetry collections *The Wordless Lullaby of Crickets*, *Kissing the Long Face of the Greyhound*, *The Patience of Metal* (a Lambda Literary Award Finalist), and *Like Some Bookie God*. Her published poems are currently being sold individually in two vending machines in Chicago to raise money for the nonprofit organization Arts Alive Chicago. She is also the author of the historical novel *Infraction* and the nonfiction books *Diamonds Are a Dyke's Best Friend* and *Ransacking the Closet*. She is retired from the University of Chicago Press, where she was a manuscript editor.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Guess what? It's our tenth anniversary! Hard to believe we've been reading great poetry for the past ten years. If you have an anniversary poem—happy, sad, or contrary— we'd love to see it. Otherwise, there is not a theme, we're just looking for fine, contemporary poetry for the Spring 2025 Issue. We're always interested in political poems about the state of the world. (No rants please.) Ekphrastic poems are welcome, we can QR code link to the artwork or use it on the page if it's in the public domain. Nature poetry is always welcome. Other than that, send us the work *you* love and want to see out in the world.

Spring Issue 2025 submissions open January 15th, 2025, and run through March 1, 2025, with the issue releasing on April 1st, 2025. 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, use easy to read fonts like Times New Roman 12 pt, and an up-to-date bio of no more than 100 words in the Submittable bio section. You can have your Poem Title and under it put "by Author WXYZ, but we don't need page numbers, headers or footers on the page. Use the name in your bio you'd like to be published under.

If you submit more than 4 poems in a doc, we will read the first 4 and ignore the rest. We welcome poems from both new and established poets. We have eclectic tastes, so give us a shot. We do like form poems if they are well done. We'd love to see what you've been working on. Check out past issues at <https://www.gyroscopereview.com>

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

Thank you for Reading!



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