



Gyroscope Review

fine poetry to turn your world around

Spring 2025



Gyroscope Review

fine poetry to turn your world around

Issue 25-2
Spring 2025

Copyright © 2025 Gyroscope Review
Constance Brewer

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage retrieval system, without permission from the editors. For information about permission to reproduce selections from this magazine, contact the editors by email at gyroscopereview@gmail.com.

Submissions: *Gyroscope Review* accepts previously unpublished contemporary poetry submissions through our online submissions system, gyroscopereview.submittable.com/submit. Please read our guidelines before submitting.

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

Editor:

Constance Brewer

Assistant Editors:

Elya Braden

Betsy Mars

Logo design, interior design, layout, copyediting:

Constance Brewer

This issue's cover art:

Apple Blossoms ©2025 photos by Constance Brewer

From the Editor

Spring always lightens my heart with the return of longer days, and more sunlight between the rain (and still snow) clouds. Not to mention my state's hurricane-like gentle 'breezes' roaring spring in. I know for our friends in other parts of the world, it signals the slide into autumn. Both seasons are prime time for reflective poems. We have a wide variety of poems in this issue, but a bunch came in that themed together nicely. It's as if the poets got together on some cosmic wavelength and tumbled into our queue. We love it when that happens.

We're seeing a lot more poems that are an honest and frank look at life in its real unvarnished form. Sometimes they are uncomfortable to read. Isn't that true of good poetry? It shines a flashlight into those areas we usually want to just scurry behind the sofa and under the fridge. I'm reminded of the butterfly and bug collections at Natural History museums, beauty and the not so beautiful pinned in place and exposed for our tough scrutiny. Keep those poems coming.

We also love the nature poems we see, reminding us there is a whole world outside our door to explore and relax in. With my travel curtailed at the moment, I like to sink into a good nature poem and imagine myself in a distant forest, on a tropical beach, or kayaking a slow river. Poetry transports us, and we hope the poems in the Spring Issue take you away to other places, other mindsets, and breezes (gently) more poetic inspiration into your life.

Constance Brewer

Table of Contents

Section One	7
On Our 50th Anniversary, My Husband Asked If We Were Still In Love	8
by Laurie Kuntz.....	
A Love Poem	9
by Tom Barlow	
Swallow	10
by Kindra McDonald.....	
Marriage	11
by Peter Newall	
Canaries	12
by Shalmi Barman.....	
Blame It On My Age	13
by Andy Oram.....	
Romance and Economics	14
by Samuel Lorraine Goldsmith.....	
Everyday Household Lamplighter	16
by Rebekah Chappell.....	
Relics	17
by Karen Greenbaum-Maya	
Orion	18
by Edward Lees.....	
Barometer	19
by Bryn Gribben	
To Love a Man	20
by Eli Slover	
Gold and Silver	21
by Paul Ilechko.....	
A Kind of Revelation	22
by Charles Grosel.....	
The Flower Lady Ghazal	23
by Luisa M. Giulianetti.....	
Living on the sun,	24
by Carolyn Adams.....	

The Inheritors of Forever	25
by George Turner.....	
Section Two	27
Weltschmerz	28
by Roy N. Mason	
To A Little Old Lady At A Checkout Counter	29
by Andy Macera.....	
going to the grocery store	30
by Walter Heineman	
Fitting In	31
by Sharon M. Carter	
Manhattanhenge	32
by Madison Epner.....	
The Descendants	34
by Sanna Jacobs.....	
My Daughter	35
by Alison Stone.....	
Lowcountry, 1850	36
by Margaret Bleichman	
Daphne, Revisited	37
by Luisa M. Giulianetti.....	
I Send my Spruce a Message	38
by Kika Dorsey.....	
The Campsite Rule	39
by Mark MacAllister.....	
On Reading That Loud Music Can Be a Deterrent to Squirrels	40
by Joseph Chelius	
To an oyster shucker	41
by Shalmi Barman.....	
Cahergal Stone Fort, Republic of Ireland	42
by Ellen Austin-Li	
Currituck Sound	43
by Chuck Stringer	
Cloud Gazing	44
by Laura Foley	

For Aelbert Cuyp	45
by James Armstrong.....	
Haiku	46
by Gareth Nurden.....	
Section Three	47
aphorism	48
by Liam Strong.....	
Life, Death, and a Puzzle of Keukenhof Gardens	49
by Colleen S. Harris.....	
5-Inch Carpenter is Crucified by Downscaled Roman Empire	50
by Mal Virich.....	
Currents	51
by Susan Shea.....	
Rendering Red	52
by Genevieve Creedon.....	
Election Season	54
by Robbi Nester	
Cat God	55
by Marc Alan Di Martino.....	
Jill on Valentine’s Day	56
by Bill Richardson.....	
The Tell	57
by Ken Holland	
After The Wake	58
by Jon Woolwine	
Dying Lesson	59
by Lailah Shima.....	
Some Notes on Final Things	60
by Susan Shaw Sailer.....	
When her backdoor flew open	61
by Elaine (Lainey) Schear	
Falling In Love At A Funeral Home	62
by Andy Macera.....	
A Feast of Stars	63
by Wendy McVicker	

Contributors64
Announcements71

Section One

ON OUR 50TH ANNIVERSARY, MY HUSBAND ASKED IF WE WERE STILL IN LOVE
BY LAURIE KUNTZ

After all the bittersweet poetry about aging complaints
and sore knees and things that go awry,
after the slamming of doors,
and then the cautious opening of one,
he asked that question that made me hesitate,
only because I did not, at this moment of anger,
believe he could think of love, but he did,
and I did, and once again, I said yes.

A LOVE POEM
BY TOM BARLOW

I love that we program computers
to tell us jokes. I love how neighborhood
parades are still more important than
Amazon deliveries. I love the way

skateboarders practice their nonchalance
and I love how Ukrainians can knit little hats
for their cats while in a bomb shelter.
I love that people judge their day a success

if they can solve the Wordle and
I love goat yoga and dog yoga and even
weed yoga, when I can stay awake.
I love that Plato would have had to agree

my grandma's peach pie was perfect
and I love the name of pickleball. I love
that a front yard meadow and a clothesline
no longer mean lazy and cheap and I love

that we can only float in a pool when we stop
struggling. I love the way even the poorest
among us can share in the joy of a dog
chasing a stick and I love that the fellow who

built a full-scale biblical ark filed a claim with
his insurance company for water damage.
I love the way my wife and I each pretend
the other needs to have the television turned up

so loud and I love that she still applauds
every time I read a poem at an open mic
that neglects to mention that I love her.

SWALLOW

BY KINDRA McDONALD

We've settled into solitude—
our life as couple
not as parents, we have been practicing
our whole togetherness
for an empty nest
and over a decade together
no itch to move on
we settle into our rituals of untethered
responsibilities, nights
on a swing in the backyard.
My toe taps where your heel lifts
and the momentum takes us quietly
into twilight.
Somedays the energy
we put into choosing just the right peach
seems like the culmination
of our life's work. How we heft
it in our palm, smell the dimpled stem
feel the newly grown fuzz
the give between our fingers
until we've come to know exactly
what will be the sweetest
in our mouths.
To be the juice in one
another's throats.

MARRIAGE

BY PETER NEWALL

A yellow drawing-room.
Agnes, tumbling brown hair, a lilac dress,
plays Chopin,
looks over her shoulder at me, smiles.
Our honeymoon by the sea. A ship, sunk in the harbour
shows its masts above blue-green water.
Summer; sunflowers bend over a wicker gate.
There comes a daughter, then a son. He laughs
as I swing him under a paulownia tree.
The third time, Agnes falls ill, dies.

I return to the countryside
alone, tend grapes in season.
The days draw out long. At night,
reading by candlelight, a scent
of beeswax. Sleep, but
the bed heavy, sunken.

Winter comes again.
Through small square windowpanes
I see white frost
advancing on the house.
I welcome it in.

CANARIES

BY SHALMI BARMAN

As miners excavating in the deepest
quarries closely watch the dangling cage
for minute wingbeat warnings, so we keep
an eye on tiny portents, daily gauge
the fissures spreading through our foundation.
The buried barb at breakfast. Doors we slammed
mid-sentence. Sour stench of evasion
exhaling through the vents. Your shaking hand
crushing a whiskey glass. Before the last
misstep, something must give. We'll turn around,
hearts fluttering. *Not too late*. Die still uncast.
Stumble our way back onto firmer ground,
bewildered with relief. I scan your words
for the telltale quaver of a dying bird.

BLAME IT ON MY AGE

BY ANDY ORAM

In honor of reaching the age where I was eligible for Medicare and senior discounts, I wrote a parody of the 1954 jazz standard Blame It On My Youth, original lyrics by Edward Heyman.

If I should yawn at fads I've seen before
Blame it on my age
If I predict collapse at their encore
Blame it on my age
Hacks with facile VC funding
Grasp at all that's stale
Promise thriving services
It's a tiresome tale

If I will sit through challenging narratives
Blame it on my age
If I can welcome what each speaker gives
Blame it on my age
Please discard each hobbyhorse
Thought contends with thought
Really change the discourse
Matching wish to ought

If crude displays of stolen wealth and glitz
Prompt a gasp of rage
If cads must celebrate their lack of wits
Let me leave the stage
I prefer small plucky folk
Maverick misfits
Celebrating agile wins when
Humbled power quits

If I should question facile inspirations
Blame it on my age
If I must challenge incorrect citations
Listing book and page
If I question everything
Trying to grow more sage
Don't blame it on a phage—
Blame it on my age

Original lyrics: Edward Heyman

Music: Oscar Levant

Blame It On My Youth © Universal Music Publishing Group

ROMANCE AND ECONOMICS
BY SAMUEL LORRAINE GOLDSMITH

I married murder.
I was not the bride
but the officiant.
I wrote the vows.
Do you, murder, promise
to cherish and to hold
your beloved's fleshy larynx
between the talons of your thumb
and forefinger just lightly enough
for them to feel the ice?

I do.

Do you promise to freeze
every vein before it becomes
a lake, every eye before
it becomes a canvass, every
finger before it becomes
an accusation?

I do.

Do you promise to neglect
the wealthy and plague
the poor, to stare past every
crawling babe with a glint
in your ash-marble eye,
to touch its pink nose
with your basalt tongue?

I do.

... and other sweet nothings
of the sort. It mattered
little. If my mannerisms were audible
above the din, murder's smirking
assurances surely died miles
prior to arriving at any ears.

They did.

Not than any attendee yearned for
the words that issued like smoke
—as solemn and as solid—
from murder's mouth
with rodent-stench and paper-sound
as if spoken by carnivorous origami.

Murder might have mumbled
many coos and caws
no cause for alarm:
all would have been utterances of love
for murder is nothing
if not devoted
and is nothing all the same.

I was not the bride
but the blade
dull as a plump toad's foot
sheathed in air thick
with pondwater muck,
Excalibur with an impotent whisper
as mists curled around
the base of the betrothed's finger.

No sound could be heard
above the betrothed's screeches.

I do.

They are.
They are all
dripping with iodine jealousy
for my mad clavicles, a
necklace heavy with marrow
and unbound with the sound from
the gap in my wedding band.

I fell
into the arms of a
being who had seen
more years than loneliness
itself, and, like an infant,
I clawed at its chin
for the cord that would drag its eyes
to me, and, like an infant,
my hands were not my own.

Bring your foot down
atop the frozen surface
of our silent lake, shatter that
blue among gray, and know
darling
that we two acolytes
will be together
until the end of all things.
I now pronounce you wed.

You may now kiss.

EVERYDAY HOUSEHOLD LAMPLIGHTER
BY REBEKAH CHAPPELL

What a person desires in life
is a properly lit lamp.
This isn't as easy as it seems.
There must be a suitable outlet
 an outlet requires a cover, a
 plate to protect the messiness
 from view, and wires and
 screws, electricians and fuses.
There must be electricity
 thanks to Alessandro Volta,
 Benjamin Franklin, early-morning
 breakthroughs, late-night experiments,
 and especially the kite and key.
 Electricity requires shocks, and
 also the electrocution for
 the tenderness of a holiday turkey.
There must be a proper bulb,
 made of Soda-lime glass, produced
 by an array of automation, with fewer
 workers each year, leaving those left to
 scoop synthetic silicone powder into
 a machine, as sweat drips down their
 chest and safety gloves sit to the right.
There must be a satisfactory resting place,
 on the corner of a purposeful table,
 next to pictures of loved ones and
 a relatively comfortable chair, but
 just uncomfortable enough
 to consider tossing it out every time
 you go to a furniture store.
It should be dim. And there should be
a window with the blinds halfway
cracked, so that through the
darkness, you can see the light, not
overpowering, but drawing you home.

RELICS

BY KAREN GREENBAUM-MAYA

At the east end of Florence lies San Miniato, as in minatory, as in miniature. The church is a jewel box of stained glass, mosaic in gold and ruby, gold-embellished all over, really. And right in front of the altar, where you'll have to dodge to receive communion, is San Miniato, shrouded and wizened, a dried apple doll of a man, tiny made tinier. His holy leathery meaty self is there, wrapped up richly, only the sunken eye sockets and a parchment chin, only the spectral hands revealed. Puzzling, when he was martyred by being sundered by a panther.

My friend is unearthing relics of his mother. Her favorite color, purple. People tell him to keep everything. People tell him to purge everything. I tell him to approach it as archeology, to make a succession of shallow passes, to stop when darkness returns. In the garage I unearthed nine fanny packs. My husband had carefully folded and tucked them in a box. Not good enough to wear, too good to throw away. I hunched, I wailed over the pile of his poor shoes, worn down at the back when bending over to tie the laces challenged his balance. And he was too proud to ask for my help. I never know what relic of him is going to pierce me, tear me apart.

Patron saint of safety from flames, safety from wooden stakes. Not St. Florian, patron saint of firefighters, known for being good with people and a problem-solver. Miniato's miracles saved only himself, postponed his death. No one talks about the miracle of the body, apparently reconstituted before being displayed. Now the body lies in fretted stonework, under thick plate glass. When I made pilgrimage, half a century ago, he blocked the aisle, his box of glass like Snow White, ready for your kiss.

ORION

BY EDWARD LEES

How enticing this island must have appeared
to early settlers.
Hope comes quickly when so much
is undiscovered,
when we believe there is someone to save.
You had endless possibilities back then.
I remember picnics at dusk
with champagne and McDonalds.
Once in a tuxedo, just because.
There was an easy bravado when,
in our own particular currency,
we felt there was nothing more
the world could give.
But we too learned the limits
of language and touch.
It became a game of Marco Polo, played over years,
with a growing pool of vestigial selves,
each echoing amongst themselves.
Now we sip drinks above a burnished sea,
our eyes drawn to the singular brightness
of roaming Venus.
The sun bows at her entrance
and the sea silvers as Orion emerges,
as if walking on water,
destined to hunt forever.

BAROMETER

BY BRYN GRIBBEN

To measure the weight
of water in air—
How loveless!

As if a double calculation
is a vaccination against chance,
assigning certainty like homework.

You and I both know
there's nothing to do with weather
but to weather it:

to bring two jackets,
end up wearing none,
best-laid plans and all that.

If we've learned anything
about love, it's this:
there are no ways to measure

what's swirling in its atmosphere,
why waves will crest and crash
unless we both lean in,

grab the deck rail, doused with spray
and look for cloud breaks,
love the sun's sly winks on the water.

Mostly there are no neap tides,
a king tide even less,
but how I love the ebb and swell,

the way we cling to the mast of us,
partially because the deck is burning,
partially because we are.

TO LOVE A MAN
BY ELI SLOVER

Sam says It's like how in the past communication was a slow process. Word of mouth. Letters delivered on foot. Pony Express. Quarter per text message. The words had to matter. Now we're lucky. We can misunderstand each other halfway across the world in an instant. Alex says You know those grade school science classes where the teacher would tell you a lot of things that maybe used to be correct or are simplified versions of the truth—it's like that. It's not that it is wrong all the time. It's that you don't get the whole picture. The truth changes with time. You have to take the harder classes in college to see how much the earlier ones left out. And you sound crazy trying to convince anyone they're wrong. Jin says The Statue of David was entombed in bricks during World War II to prevent bomb damage. Most people don't hear about that because history is supposed to be invincible and unafraid of the dark. No one talks about the delicate, cautious work of tearing down the brick silos after the war was over and history could become art again. No one talks about how they uncovered his face first, or how unchanged his expression seemed. There's so much about the world you wouldn't know if you weren't there.

GOLD AND SILVER

BY PAUL ILECHKO

Gold and silver discs cross paths
mid-rotation two coins dissecting

space everything is always
in motion even our stillness

is in truth a hurtling as we reach
up to pluck the fruits that ripened

during our most recent orbit
we sense the gods who are watching us

providing our stability as we turn
our vision to the only fixed point

we recognize spotting like a ballet
dancer heels lifted from the earth

as we prepare to leap there is
a graveyard all around us and we lay

supine on the soaking grass
observing as the heavens spin above us

lights clicking off and vanishing
one by one until all that remains

is the sound of a gong
the endless swirling echo that fades

but never dies the billions
in golden treasure we must have spent.

A KIND OF REVELATION

BY CHARLES GROSEL

That it fell on her, the weight of a life, and in summer's fire she went away. That one hot summer without air conditioning she could not get out of bed. That when she did get out of bed, she went away. That her yellow housecoat unraveled at the hem. That it was a button off. That she went away for a month one summer. That her hair was matted and her slippers too. That the ward had air conditioning and helped to bank the fire. That it was not something they talked about, the family. That the family was a husband and children, parents and brothers. That they did for themselves while she was gone, but didn't like to. That they missed her. That why they missed her is the fossil in the rock. That she was a mother and a person, but not at the same time. That she accepted certain things so she could have other things. That she couldn't name them. That hers was a life lived outside itself. That the body she walked in was the shadow of the fire. That the parents failed her, but it wasn't their fault. That the brothers failed her, but it wasn't their fault. That she had no sister. That the husband failed her, but it wasn't his fault. That the children failed her, but it wasn't their fault. That she failed herself, and it was all her fault. That she believed in damnation. That each person played their part. That there are no parts to play. That there is no play, and no parts. That we are all apart. That she went away for a month one summer. That if they do talk about it, they call it *that time*. That one of them is the betrayer who freezes that time in a glacier of words. That the rest would rather that time melt into white water rushing into the formless sea. That it fell on her to pull herself out, to pull them all out. That she knew it would. That she was both jailer and jail breaker. That when the blaze receded, she pulled herself out. That it wasn't a sure thing. That something like this did happen. That he is the betrayer. That he doesn't remember if it was the summer or if the ward had air conditioning. That both things should have been true. That this is not her story. That this is a bank of fog where the glacier meets the sea. That what cannot be known is a kind of revelation. That it might have meant nothing at all. That it might have been chemical. That the tongue of fire did not consume her. That she came home, jailer and jail breaker, speaking in tongues.

THE FLOWER LADY GHAZAL

BY LUISA M. GIULIANETTI

Before first light, she fills buckets with armfuls of bright flowers
hand-picked at the wholesale mart: tulips, paperwhites, cornflowers.

Joy still prickles her fingers as she begins assembling—wild pinks
and purples, glossy Italian Ruscus to offset Black Magic Sunflowers.

Blood red gladiolas open along glossy stems. Sword lilies. Trumpets lavished
on gladiators before battle. No filler greens for these heart-piercing flowers.

Ready for the day's trade: first-date bouquets, funeral wreaths, orchid
garlands. Apricot dahlias for the widow's table. A companionship of flowers.

Mornin' Lady Day. In a tired coat and rhinestone earring, Miss Liv arrives,
opens her yellowing palm to receive two white flowers.

Mystery Gardenias. With hairpins, she secures the blooms to matted curls.
Swirled chiffon. Meringue clouds. Snowflowers.

Got a moon above me. But no one to love me. Lover Man, oh where can you be?
Beneath a shimmering crown, her longing flowers.

LIVING ON THE SUN,
BY CAROLYN ADAMS

you learn the names of fire.
Conflagration, destroyer,
transformer.
The swirling surface
gradations of gold,
many folds of magma.
Living flames
speak your name
in the negative air of
their soft language.

In its rush to the next
void within the perfect sphere
of its containment,
lava licks outward
as far as it can go,
whipping into the atmosphere,
jetting electricity and gases
toward every planetary body
in its reach.

The time will come
when your sun will die,
when it will burst
into space, in colors
unnameable, dust lit
with the memory
of all that force.

Still, this is your home,
even as it dies.
Because the death of a star
means the birth
of some wild new thing,
you stand at the door
of your house, grateful,
your body burning as it splinters,
as it falls.

THE INHERITORS OF FOREVER

BY GEORGE TURNER

“95% of all the stars that will ever exist have already been born.”

—Summation of findings from Sobral *et al*, *The 11 Gyr evolution of star-forming galaxies from HiZELS*

You cannot see it yet, but everything is moving apart. We live at the cusp of twilight—the Universe is an explosion, and we are borne aloft, motes caught in the shockwave. Our stars are cold campfires, cycling in their interminable orbits; when they blow themselves out, the next spark is colder still. Constellations lose their coherence. The Milky Way becomes a dying lightbulb a million light-years across, obscured by the flailing throes of its own gaseous lifeblood. Galactic collisions will be the last lighthouses; matches struck around cupped hands, burning bright against the formless night. Matchboxes, however, are finite. Soon the last stars pinch themselves out, and your descendants are adrift, the last consistent masses in an ever-darkening sky. Scraping wisps of matter from the stretching skin of the universe, they become the Polynesians of the post-future, sailing across the orders of magnitude, clutching at concentrations of energy that grow dimmer with every eon of eons that pass. Constancy is a privilege, solidity a rarity.

Of course, the loop of becoming and unbecoming can only ever spiral to nothing. The pattern of atoms, that once lived and thought as you, will become a cosmic cobweb: nanoscopic islands, scattered across uncountable distance. You will never have an ending.

Section Two

WELTSCHMERZ
BY ROY N. MASON

Leave it to the Germans to coin another fantastic untranslatable word to describe feeling. In the lineage of *schadenfreude*, *doppelganger*, *wanderlust*, and *kindergarten*. My favorite new vocabulary word: *weltschmerz*. A feeling the world will always fail to meet your expectations due to prevalence of pain existing throughout it. Further described as weariness arising from reality of life, a *world-pain*. I used to just say: *I'm a disappointed optimist*. Discovering this is equivalent to hitting three cherries on WebMD. Read a symptom, two, then three. *Oh yeah, that's me*. In a way quite relieving. Previously my favorite vocabulary word was: *respite*.

TO A LITTLE OLD LADY AT A CHECKOUT COUNTER
BY ANDY MACERA

Without your ear horn
you can't hear the redneck right behind you
cursing under his foul breath, each
expletive ending with *old bag*,
or the other customers behind him
who are now ghosts, moaning and groaning,
trapped, unable to move on,
or the great gusts of huffing and puffing blowing
off hats and ruining hair,
or a young mother on a cellphone gossiping loudly,
her child crying and screaming,
wanting to be taken out of the cart,
to go home, where everyone in the long line wants to go,
even the cashier, a terrified teenager
about to confess, the waiting
a form of Chinese water torture,
cold sweat dripping off his forehead
onto his face, helplessly
watching the angry mob grow
while the frail explorers of your feeble fingers
swing dull machetes, slowly
hacking through the overgrown jungle
of your Pluto-size purse,
searching for the mythical treasure
of exact change.

GOING TO THE GROCERY STORE

BY WALTER HEINEMAN

going to the grocery store
every week keeps me ordinary
even if i am not normal.
filling a spontaneously orienting cart
that walks toward the free sample trays.
asking for help while
reading labels for product secrets.
telling the woman living behind the seafood ice
which shrimp i want in my two pounds.
letting someone with less patience
go around me while i choose fresh berries
before they mummify in their small containers.
discussing the costs of things with someone else
with an appetite determined by a fixed income.
waiting in the only checkout line extending deep into aisle three.
the thing that keeps me most ordinary is that i have a fistful of discount coupons
that require sorting while getting disgruntled stares from parents also in line with children
in various states of desire none of which are being satisfied.
the not normal part is before i arrive and after i leave
the crows in the parking lot recognizing my car by its sound
and the local feathers in my Panama hat
have escalated to fouling the windshield of my car
with wet unnaturally white poop splatter designed to defeat my windshield wipers.

i finally realized that the feathers belonged to one of their relatives...
parking lot blood feud
i am marked for death.

FITTING IN

BY SHARON M. CARTER

—*Corfu 1975*

Most order kebabs. A dare—
the roasted sheep's head?
Should I say yes? I do.

The beer-drinking crowd demands—
I begin, pull the unsung *baas*
from its lips, eat the tongue's

defeated bleats, grateful the small
ears press too flat against bony
skull. I falter at brains. One kid says,

eat the eyeballs! They laugh.
I pause, too far along to exit now,
the eyes cataract-blind. Beer bottles

pound a rhythm, the boys' chants
rise above the taverna's roof.
It costs. I think of Buñuel's surrealist

film—a woman's eyeball, razor.
The animal's lenses clink
like bitter pearls onto my plate.

MANHATTANHENGE
BY MADISON EPNER

Your irises slant rightward,
like my head did in childhood, when we meet again.
Your eyes are (the dried-out chocolate
kiss that's been sitting in the back
of my drawer all year,) (hazy like vapor,
rain on my glasses) *tired*, a sensible
response to raising a baby with a man
twice your age.

I feel no jealousy when I enter your new
home, windowless, no room for nonsense, no vents
for fresh air to enter or anything to leave.
It smells like sucralose, baby powder, the putrid
diffuser that sits on the bookshelf, a dusty candle,
and the same air that stifled fifties housewives.
(You are the first woman in your family not to work.)
I hope stability and normalcy can buy a good carbon monoxide detector.

You, with your hair spilling out of a bun and the baby
on your shoulder, tell me there are sacrifices to be made,
as if that should change my mind on the position.
Your softness has shifted from your chest up to your face,
your rhombus jaw now woven into your spine.
You tell me about your runs around the reservoir,
midday, with the sun on your back, heat seeping through
your magenta workout jacket into your bloodstream.

Then it is ten pm and foggy,
and you order me a Lyft away.
You hug me with your other arm. Your back is brittle.
I'd rather take the train, look
through the window of the express
car across the platform, teeming with
(girls holding their bedazzled boots
after standing all night at a concert),
(a construction worker dozing off, one earbud
swinging in tune with the train) *life*.
I, instead, stare at a smog-veiled star
across the open barrier of rolled-down glass.

And we are back, years ago, and our arms touch
as you guide me through which calculator buttons
to press. We're partners. I'm in a trance. You ask me for a pad.
I retrieve one from a bubblegum-pink pouch

at the back of my locker. (All of our lockers
have been passed down to kids closer in age
to your baby than to us, now.) I offer you Advil,
the real kind, sweet when mixed
with saliva and menstrual hormones.
(The baby is sweet, inherited spit oozing
out of her boneless jaw.) Your body is preparing.

We get a 100. You hug me. You are warm,
like steam rising out of a jacuzzi
and fuzz on a wool sweater. Your chest
touches mine, excavates the crevices
of my collarbone. One hair of yours clings
to my shirt after you let go. We have left off
at the same page of the same book,
you with your bookmarks and annotations
in pen, me with my dog-eared corners.
You slide yours out like you never read it.

When the light is in my eyes,
the Manhattanhenge sun peeking
through two window panes,
I take a photo. You say I am an excellent sheep.

We walk together and you tell me
that I should write more love poems.
The sun beams at me, people crowd at corners
to take photos, and I take one too. I consider it.
It won't happen again for a while.
Usually, clouds block the light.

THE DESCENDANTS

BY SANNA JACOBS

—after Jill Bialosky

We missed them.
We shook out their heavy tablecloths,
set down their rimmed china
and tarnished silver. We used the large goblets
for wine and small glasses for water.
We found recipes penned on notecards
using too much butter, cursed ourselves
for all we did not write down.
Wiping our mouths
on cloth napkins with wrinkled hems
they would have ironed,
we grimaced at what they'd say
of the children's table manners
and mismatched socks.
We sat despised exes
and second wives at a table
covered with their treasures;
loyalty to the living
being all we had left to give.
We lit candles
in their wobbly candlesticks,
illuminated the light bulb inside
the walnut hutch.
We marveled at how their features
lit the faces of visiting cousins,
how one generation sneezes
like a braying mule, just like the last.
We moved to the couch for pie,
our coffee cups alight in their saucers,
poured milk from the chipped creamer.
We debated into the night, chased
laughing children back upstairs, scrubbed
wine glasses by hand. We held on
to each goodbye while November wind
blew in our open door.

MY DAUGHTER
BY ALISON STONE

Many lies they try to tell my daughter.
Tropes of womanhood to quell my daughter.

My husband and I magicked our bodies.
Six-pound bounty from that spell—my daughter.

Slow down. Make cats purr. Smell the rain. Savor
every night in luck's hotel, my daughter.

Companies sell Goth and Emo collage
kits. That's poseur shit, I tell my daughter.

Hear the ocean, yes. But also listen
for your heart's note in a shell, my daughter.

Demeter vowed, I'll dry every field to
dust to bring you back from hell, my daughter.

Despite love that is canyon-deep, sky-wide,
do I really know her well, my daughter?

Not just alleyways. Pervs hide in schools and
temples. I'm afraid they smell my daughter.

I hope you'll never understand how planes
scare us since the towers fell, my daughter.

If she ghosts you, she's not worth your weeping.
Breathe deep, ride out sorrow's swell, my daughter.

Have I taught her enough? Will false, shiny
friends and handsome cads repel my daughter?

Young Stone's off to college. I pray not to
break down when I say, Farewell, my daughter.

LOWCOUNTRY, 1850

BY MARGARET BLEICHMAN

—with gratitude to the staff of the McLeod Plantation, who insist on telling the history of slavery in the U.S. from the perspective of the enslaved

Sea Island
super soft
filaments
its name
a place to rest

grown on James Island
in thick pluff mud
of dead blue crab
elixir for black
that sucks you in and

In the Gin House, fifteen men
of great wooden rollers
black seed from white fluff
the massive iron gin wheel
and if moonlight
stuff a six-foot bag with
of long-staple cotton
to Queen Victoria for her

'Full hand': a whole person
man, woman, teenage child
two hundred pounds of raw cotton
'Half hand': enslaved child
to walk, old enough to work
to pick one hundred pounds
'Three-quarter hand': the ill or
Plantation ledgers fill with

Enslavers pay premiums for each
collect replacement cost for each
Aetna of Hartford and New York Life
a win-win for Dixie

Sea Island Cotton grows
without care
in an elixir of monstrous

Cotton
extra-long
lustrous as silk
a warm breeze
without a care

by Wappoo Creek
the sulfurous decay
and shrimp
cotton seed
traps your feet

feed the teeth
separate
hand-turn
every daylight hour
all night
four hundred pounds
all of it destined
delicate handkerchiefs

enslaved
each must pick
every day
old enough
forced
each day
injured
prorated families

enslaved life
enslaved death
turn great profits
and Yankee alike

lustrous wealth
trapped
decay

DAPHNE, REVISITED

BY LUISA M. GIULIANETTI

What if you found respite
in a blooming field
of wildflowers.

Or found an oak
under whose canopy
you could pause.

Hid in an abandoned barn.
Or sought a shopkeeper for tea—
your mouth parched from escape.

What if you became lamppost,
spire, streetlight, cobblestone.

Or magicked your dormant
spirit: became laurel.
Foiled the hunter—high
on conquest, open-jawed
relentless. Vanished
from his front sight.

In this version of the myth
you do not call your father-god
for rescue. You root
by the shore
in welcoming earth.
Straighten your spine—
ribs whole and expanding.
Your evergreen arms shade
yellow lady's slipper.

In this version, something rises
from within you.
Shimmering, unbridled
like an infant's laugh
like leaves updrafting wind.
You gloss the air with your name.
You call your daughter,
River.

I SEND MY SPRUCE A MESSAGE
BY KIKA DORSEY

I scribble, all I can do when my vision is cut by darkness in February. My spruce has an ID number of 3369, and I suspect it's the dynamism of the triangular shape of its branches and how they double, become triple, that energy of instability that helps it survive the cold months, like a husky racing through the snowy tundra or the flap-flap-flap of the geese's wings as they land on ice and slide. In Melbourne, 70,000 trees have ID numbers and email addresses originally intended so that people could report problems—dangerous branches, trunks rotten. A consequence was letters to the trees saying how soft their shade, how comforting their stillness. My spruce answers me with silence and dons a fabric of snow. A pair of mourning doves live beneath its canopy. Sometimes they coo and sweep toward the Japanese Lilac, denuded of all green. I'm thinking of the dream where I could not find a parking place in a city all black and white and I needed to find one to fly to the tropics. My car was packed with stuff, too much of it—my red dress, a book about horses, black boots, buttons. There were no trees in the city. When I awoke, I looked out the window and the spruce was composing its missive of silence. The mourning doves were hidden in its branches. I whispered a message of *mirror, wing, descend to me*. The snow was a blanket of light.

THE CAMPSITE RULE
BY MARK MACALLISTER

Vow to tell no one of the wolf scat
scattered around your tent

with your melt-in-the-rain paper
a sharp cedar pencil
ensure that the trees
are laden with thank you notes

keep what water you require for the trip back
spill what remains so it too might return home

scratch your children's names
in the gone-cold ash

tear your best flannel into strips
to line the red squirrels' nests

leave your small shaving mirror
for the ravens to find

they will pass it down
through their iridescent generations

they will discuss it forever

ON READING THAT LOUD MUSIC CAN BE A DETERRENT TO SQUIRRELS
BY JOSEPH CHELIUS

In the attic, I crank up the classic rock station
the way I did WMMR as a teenager,
Bachman Turner Overdrive's "You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet"
segueing into the Rolling Stones' "Tumbling Dice."
It is mid-morning on a Saturday,
and through the terrible din I imagine
I hear them scurrying in the rafters,
interrupted at their chores,
the older ones fretful,
desperate to cover their ears
as they pack their nuts, their bedding,
and head for the trees
with the little ones in tow, asking questions,
while the teens, sullen and uncommunicative,
carrying not so much as a twig,
a pine needle, a piece of bark,
lag to the riff, the pulsating beat.

TO AN OYSTER SHUCKER

BY SHALMI BARMAN

Those hands that grip the callused shells
and twist apart the muscled seam,
that slide a knife into the hinge
where spine and bone meet fleshy cream

to sever, scoop, and separate
the carapace from tender core,
manipulating ice and salt
in briskly bloodless semaphore,

hold me as well. A memory
of limbs splayed loose in winter sun.
The beating surf that sliced our feet.
The fine relief of being undone,

softness ungirded. Brimful bowl
you cradle gently. Swallow whole.

CAHERGAL STONE FORT, REPUBLIC OF IRELAND
BY ELLEN AUSTIN-LI

And the stones stacked in an ancient
interlocking puzzle, the circled walls a ring
fort on the bigger Ring of Kerry. You stand
on the rim and swim as the wind tears your eyes,
the May sun a distant fire on the too-blue Atlantic.
And the other tourists drop away, voices carried
by the gulls, and you are left walking the steps, field-
stones your ancestors' hands dug from the rocky
land. Hard, you go down into the center.
And you, with your old spirits, enter.

CURRITUCK SOUND
BY CHUCK STRINGER

Only a few diminutive
mews unhide your unseen

skulking. Along each
branch my glass searches

leaf and shadowed
lichen. Seconds pass.

Nothing. Nothing. Nothing
but a ceaseless dance:

branches swayed
by onshore breezes.

Two ospreys glide & sink
beneath an edge

of canopy. In the distance
a flock of fish crows

caw their quacky nasal
caws. I find you, catbird,

following the flight
of a dragonfly

above the live oak's crown
when your gray head

rises against a backdrop
of sky & cloud.

Mimic, I listen to you,
singing.

CLOUD GAZING
BY LAURA FOLEY

I walk the road daily to watch if grazing
cows gaze at clouds the way Ritsos's did,
in Greece. I try to catch them at it, but usually
they just flex their muscled necks to measure me,
flick their ears. Yesterday, as early evening
began to sweep the field with shadows of dusk,
I spied three breaking trail through deep
new snow, lumbering down to a hemlock grove
where a black stream breaks through ice,
among soft white hillocks, to bend their heads,
slake their thirst. A nimbler, younger one,
galloped downhill to join them, leaping
and kicking up a powdery wake, a cloud
of snow all of us turned our eyes to see.

FOR AELBERT CUYP
BY JAMES ARMSTRONG

Perfect cows
pose on the grass
their horns curved
and backs sloped
like the hill
each detail
of hoof and hair
rendered flawlessly
upon canvas.

Meanwhile
a milquetoast milkmaid
utterly ordinary
empties white spray
into a common pail.

Passable ships
pass by
as nondescript birds
fly overhead
into white wisps
impersonating clouds.

But oh
the cows
looming over the landscape
in bovine majesty
the cows
cannot be surpassed.

HAIKU

BY GARETH NURDEN

wading through
the tepid river
winter moon

Section Three

APHORISM

BY LIAM STRONG

somewhere, beside a river, a train yawns. it's a primal kind of sorrow. somewhere
an unreliable narrator is dead, mildew wanting inside their clothes

before snails, slugs, bulldozers. it's me, again, & i'm so myself i have the gall
to say the story isn't about me. meanwhile, the cold is a sweetness. faith

or its siblings, its unknissed cousins. say i'll be anywhere, & i'm there. incredible. meanwhile

i dry heave staples, i shit leaves. i had so much i wanted to say so i left my lungs
in the lazy-susan, next to the canned corn, peaches. the tarp calloused with rainstuff,

my throat a ladder or something, you don't care, the person who wants to die is a person
to not be taken seriously. you're right. i've dumped out all the salt. i've eloped with it.

i pissed the ground i laid on until the rain visited & you couldn't tell anymore.

this could be interpreted as a still life. our tattoos sloughed off when we fucked
last, all twenty-seven of them. belated orchids. sweetheart,

i haven't stopped dying, if i hold the sod close enough to my ear i can hear my mother's
stomach growling, full of post-it notes. i'm reminded to pay the utilities

by the second monday of the month. in our house we kept sand in jars

& jars in closets. you gave my kidneys to a woman you thought was my dealer &
i hope she felt honored. to hold in her hands half-moon raisins, their dusk

wanting a new home to make dark. i shoved the pump in myself, paid for the
damages to the room, turned down the offer for a new name-brand liver. undress

your antlers, dearest, we'll braid our hair into otter tails & never adorn

underwear again. i watched the yearlings collapse like tissues with bluetongue in
the swamp beyond our house. the narrator doesn't have to be trustworthy

for the ending to seem justified. go on, tell it how you will, there are details worth
the dramatics & flair, there are details worth keeping in &

out. somewhere, trees & trees. it's the same wherever you go, the illegible axis of your

mouth, my living body scrawled like anticlimax, disappointment. if you wanted
a different kind of resolution, you should have said so.

LIFE, DEATH, AND A PUZZLE OF KEUKENHOF GARDENS
BY COLLEEN S. HARRIS

We pretend this is not a serious
conversation, as my mother whips
her crochet hook through another

skein, adding to the blanket. *Vodka*
and pills, she says, *straight to sleep,*
no pain. I nod as I tap a puzzle piece,

shifting it this way, that, measuring
which family of pink—fuchsia,
magenta, rose—this piece belongs to.

You have to unplug me, I bargain, *if*
I linger. She nods, turns the page,
translates the chaos of crochet code

into zigzagging blues and greens
knotted to keep her grandchildren
warm. In this body that keeps

no bargains with me, I find myself
grateful for the unending burn in
my bones, the fever that winds

like kudzu through every cell, never
fully wilting, in selfish peace
that I will not have to close her

eyes. I tap a piece into place, edges
meeting, shades of blush melding
to reveal rows of Dutch precision, tulip

gardens. I move on to the next
section, collecting yellows, a cascade
of mustard, butter, canary, gold.

5-INCH CARPENTER IS CRUCIFIED BY DOWNSCALED ROMAN EMPIRE
BY MAL VIRICH

i am built from lumber scraps and wood glue,
painted an off-white, eggshell, it keeps cracking

each cycle of temperature shift, insulation fails
against the shock of coming winter. in my heart,

between arteries, nests a plump robin, raising her
young from blue to red. as they screech, shiver

between each breeze and gale, the creaking
oak tree branches rise from spouting trunk,

leaves serving as blanket-ceiling, as looming
threat. i feel my joints failing, steadily unhinging,

an arboreal gesture, the ache accentuated by rust.
iron oxide is gnawing into my screw stability,

termites and carpenter ants burrow into my skin.
each day, the wind blows clean another splinter,

mine and the hatchlings' waning weakness with
weaning reliance as motivation to bird-mother,

her resolve to continue their feast, worm after
wriggling worm, chewed, digested until palatable

to these hungry youth. they begin their flight,
trials punctuated by an ear-splitting whine,

a knock on bark as i fall prey to downwards
motion. panels split from one another, echoing

broken bones, juveniles leap toward freedom,
then swallowed whole by fifth ranked damage

on the enhanced scale of tornadic danger. mother
is long gone, permitting space for new birds

to follow in her wing-flaps. she lays, comfortable,
splayed on grass, already glued to frosting soil.

the great oak sheds my remains, shattering stakes,
over her body, after it casts each child from heaven.

CURRENTS

BY SUSAN SHEA

After I reported the dangling wire
the power crew wasted no time
showing up at my door ready
to climb a ladder in the gusty dark
prepared to wrangle electricity for me

clear-minded and glad to give
their gleeful reassurance, leaving me
briefly at ease, between emergencies

where I roam the range of inconsistencies
where I tend to live, looking
at the high or low frequencies
that surround me

even their smiles made me wonder
where they learned
their response techniques to mingling

were they taught to offer
full mouth, wide-eyed, laugh line joy
to their fellow human beings
no matter what the cost

or was it in their circuitry
this openness, this flow of generous
mirth connected to a main line

sheathed in a potency
that may need more of my attention

RENDERING RED

BY GENEVIEVE CREEDON

It starts with a color wheel
and innocent fingers slowly
deciphering: *rrrr-*, *rrrre-*, *rreddd*,

a beach ball of primary colors
bopping in waves, a boat's bow
cutting the horizon in fiery dusk.

Then, cheeks are flushed with winter
freshness or fuming anger, overheated
embers sparking from the gastric center.

Decades of my father watching maps
of the country on CNN on November nights,
pleading for red where there is blue,

despite having lived through the red scare
and carrying forward the fierce fear
that his children or grandchildren might become

communists. His scarlet knit sweater
with the big pockets held breath mints
and toothpicks to preserve his gums,

his real teeth, which he kept to the end
of his 96 years. His favorite color
was any shade: burgundy, cardinal,

poppy, vermillion... And every time a siren
sounds, I see him as the black jacketed fire
fighter his mother had hoped he would be,

even though he rarely climbed ladders
or wore anything but a business suit, matching
tie and handkerchief, his shirts often

stained with chianti or pinot noir
he drank nightly at the head of the table,
his flushed fist jabbing the air to insist

that we desist from speaking French,
our mother tongue he never learned
and that somehow therefore always seemed

blue, despite the enduring pink of the tongue,
even when a bite or burn leaves a prick
of blood and the sour-sweet of rubies blooming.

ELECTION SEASON

BY ROBBI NESTER

—*After Crescent Moon (1979), by Andrew Wyeth*

For months, we thought we saw dark omens in the sky.
After September's heat, October's Hunter Moon swelled,
gravid as a pumpkin, almost too close to earth. Now is the time
when the hills turn brown, and honey locust seedpods
rattle in the wind, fields littered with stubble, hay bales
stashed in the barn. Soon, tumbleweeds will release their
purchase on the ground to try their luck across the highway,
though most will end up jammed against the fenceposts.
It's November, night skies full of shifting clouds, the barest
husk of moon, mere paring of the full moon's golden light.
Last month, we had to close the blackout shades just to get
some sleep. Now we soothe ourselves with fires in the grate,
turn the house into a shrine to brightness, window casting
its pale glow onto the thinning lawn.

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/andrew-wyeth/crescent-moon>



CAT GOD

BY MARC ALAN DI MARTINO

Two best friends are doing an art project.
They call it “Cat God” and populate it
with felines of every color: pirate cats,
cats drunk on liquor and “Sweet Rose Cocktail”,
cats giving the finger, devilish cats
with pointy tails, cat aliens, cyclopic
cats with one eye bulging from their brows,
beaked bird-cats, salamander cats, Buddha cats
basking in their wisdom, fish-cats floating
in an aquarium, Fruit Stripe gum cats,
disembodied cat heads, karate cats,
one great green cat god sitting on its throne
of throw pillows. This is the human mind
at age thirteen: a whirligig, a mousetrap
for zaniness. I envy them this state
of grace, this flourishing, because I know
what they merely suspect—that the adult world
has little room for cat gods or the brains
that hatch them, opting for divinities
that spy and punish. We've now implanted
a wireless chip into a patient's brain—
‘Telepathy’, it’s called—and directly beneath
the headline lurks Elon, his shifty cyborg eye
reminiscent of that god of the Hebrews
I flirted with once, then fled with all my heart
and all my might. I observe my daughter
and her friend indulging in our species’
most venerable pastime—inventing gods
in its own image. Seems like such harmless fun.

JILL ON VALENTINE'S DAY

BY BILL RICHARDSON

A quiet February clear and wrapped in ice.
In this country pub all brown and beige,
there's no crowd, no company,
no blare of slot machines and no TV.
And Jill, the owner's cat, leaps to my lap.
With a deft jump and a soft landing,
the unbidden visitor, warm and black,
performs the routine,
and when I least expect, she's up and on me.
Unfolding in a sweet space of contentment,
she basks on human form, the territory all hers,
her deep purr aired with no misgivings,
not knowing failure or rejection.
The sudden weight strangely light is like romance.
She'll snooze and charm you for a while,
and when she feels inclined she's gone,
opening and gently closing doors.

THE TELL

BY KEN HOLLAND

When a neighbor starts his car
in dawn's predawn hour, he awakes
not only myself, but a mourning dove as well,
whose song, while sad, is more tentative still.

As would anyone's be when in the dark
we hear a knock at the door, and wonder
even more what the news will be, who it is
who's taken ill, and must I be the one
they need to tell.

AFTER THE WAKE
BY JON WOOLWINE

By some accounts, this will be the warmest winter
ever recorded. Dad shades his eyes,
says the shrubs need snow, that weight

protects their roots from chill. Says last week's sleet
dripped straight through, right past the good
dirt, where it should have frozen. Spring wants

a deep well of ice to flood the roots. His voice
bows my head and I slow my steps to his. These sentences
are the most I've heard him say in years.

When I was young, I looked up to silence.
Arms crossed, his eyes dragged tornados across the sky
while we huddled in the bathtub, braced against pillows,

yelling for him to come back inside.
I pause at the pier, waiting
for a call or gust of wings to soften our silence.

What was Grandpa like when you were young?
He squints his eyes, summoning a pine needle
onto the thawed surface of the pond.

Your Grandpa worked nights at the mine
seven days a week—he wasn't the type for stories.
I lean into the wood railing as the geese

follow each other past chunks of ice,
wings tucked to their sides, one
by one into the wake.

DYING LESSON
BY LAILAH SHIMA

In early March we begin
to thaw. A paste-covered page of sky,

heavy with scent of water, settles in puddles.
On Lake Monona, footprint-cratered

snowpack yields to little lucent lakes
that float on ice and coax it to soften

the way my father softened
after his diagnosis.

You always think it's the other guy
he muttered, shaking

his head, eyes lucid
at last. Then — *I love you*, he began

telling everyone, as if he'd known
how, all along, as if seeing

he was out of time unleashed
what flows underneath,

what cannot *not* be.

SOME NOTES ON FINAL THINGS

BY SUSAN SHAW SAILER

Bradford pear leaves red at tip
and sides, in between, green.

In two weeks they'll fall.
Death, you hard hat,

you bronco buster, you
muleteer, shandy-legged son

you deep necessity—
come. Wrestle me.

I'm no angel
mud body, wasp nest

tissue of my life and lies.
Where is yesterday—did it slip

sideways, get lost? I'm looking
under rocks, see worms squirm

watch small crabs sidle away.
You're no Jacob. You've got

the odds, I'm hardly even.

WHEN HER BACKDOOR FLEW OPEN
BY ELAINE (LAINÉY) SCHEAR

it was because newly buried
in a thawing spring grave
she had hidden keys within
her thin white shroud and
now lay, as she'd wished,
below earth's cool moist ground,
transpiring into nature's hold
as she had dreamed it in life
on her back porch, short of sight
and breath, her face uplifted
above a necklace of tubes
toward the birches, grateful
for the blush of sun and breeze
on her cheek. She'd known
what she wanted, how and where
to rest, but not too soon.
She was only ninety-three.
First, she'd play the moon awhile,
beckon her drifting familiars
to her shore. Grandchildren, cats,
daughters, divorces...a galaxy.
No need for locks or keys,
nothing of value, she'd say,
only this.

FALLING IN LOVE AT A FUNERAL HOME
BY ANDY MACERA

I couldn't stop staring at you the same way
I kept staring at *Wheatfield with Crows*
at the National Gallery of Art,
and after noticing how the phototropic
heads of the sympathy flowers
and the men in the memorial slideshow
turned to follow you whenever you walked past,
Frank Lloyd Wright took a sledgehammer
to Fallingwater and Taschen canceled
the publication of *Gisele*, and Jesus broke up
the band and went back to hanging
drywall when you stirred the warm pool of
your body and pulled the widow in
to be healed by its moving water, and
Adagio for Strings reminded me of
the Elephant Man finally lying down
in a bed, and I envied the dead,
even if it meant being among the damned
in Van Eyck's *The Last Judgment*,
watching you lean over the coffin, wrapping
him in the soft shroud of your shadow,
whispering the valentine of *nothing ever dies*
in your peppermint starlight breath.

A FEAST OF STARS
BY WENDY MCVICKER

A fan folds the air
with its paddles
like wooden spoons—

or oars
pulling a boat
through my dreams.

Pictures in a long lost
storybook, three children
in a golden boat, flying,

and the black night pouring
with stars.

We, too, rocked
through darkness, marveling
at the fugitive

light, wishing
the stars into lanterns
pointing the way—

learning only later
that starlight
can travel toward us

from a deep abyss, the nothingness
where once a flaming
body spun.

Three children sailed
in a wooden shoe, and golden
nets flew out behind them,

as if the stars
could be caught,
reeled in—

swallowed whole.

CONTRIBUTORS

Carolyn Adams' poetry and art have appeared in *Steam Ticket*, *Cimarron Review*, *Evening Street Review*, *The Inflectionist Review*, and *Blue Line Magazine*, among others. She is the editor and publisher of the Oregon Poetry Calendar. Having authored four chapbooks, her full-length volume, *Going Out to Gather*, has been published by Fernwood Press. Her poetry has been nominated multiple times for both Best of the Net and a Pushcart prize.

James Armstrong has shucked oysters, been a hedge fund correspondent, taught classes in Renaissance dance, and provided back-up vocals in a Greenwich Village cabaret. He currently lives in a tiny apartment in the Bronx with way too many books.

Ellen Austin-Li's poetry collection, *Incidental Pollen*—a 2023 Trio Award finalist, 2024 Wisconsin Poetry Series semi-finalist, and runner-up to the 2023 Arthur Smith Poetry Prize—is forthcoming from Madville Publishing. Finishing Line Press published her chapbooks *Firefly* and *Lockdown: Scenes from Early in the Pandemic*. Her poetry appears in many journals & anthologies. She's a Best of the Net and Pushcart Prize nominee and holds an MFA from the Solstice program. SAFTA supported her work with a 2024 writing residency. She curates Poetry Night at Sitwell's in Cincinnati, where she lives in an empty nest with her husband. Find her @ www.ellenaustinli.me

Tom Barlow is an American writer whose work has appeared in many journals including *Trampoline*, *Ekphrastic Review*, *Voicemail Poetry*, *Hobart*, *Tenemos*, *Redivider*, *The North Dakota Quarterly*, *The New York Quarterly*, *The Modern Poetry Quarterly*, and many more. See tombarlowauthor.com

Shalmi Barman, originally from Calcutta, India, is at present a PhD candidate in English at the University of Virginia where she is writing a dissertation on class and labor in Victorian fiction. Her poetry has been, or will be, featured in *Rat's Ass Review*, *SnakeSkin*, *The Crank*, and *Blue Unicorn*.

Margaret Bleichman is an emerging poet, queer activist and educator with writing in *Kitchen Table Quarterly*, *Fifth Wheel*, *Fauxmoir*, *The Dewdrop*, and *Between Us*. Their poetry has won awards in two Joe Gouveia Outermost Poetry contests. It is inspired by their lived experience as a first-generation American with refugee parents. Bleichman investigates connections between experiences of people in different diasporic communities and also writes in response to encounters with social and political complexities in our current world. A software engineer and professor, they helped establish historic same-sex partner employee health benefits and many STEM programs to engage underrepresented students.

Sharon M. Carter is a poet and visual artist originally from Lancashire, England who lives on the Olympic Peninsula in the Pacific Northwest. She recently retired from a career in healthcare. Her work has been published in many journals, including *Terra Nova*, *The Madrona Project*, *Pontoon*, *Ars Medica*, and *One Art*. Her poetry book, *Quiver*, was published in 2022. *Ekphrastic Pastiche*, a poetry/drawing fusion was released last year. www.sharonmcarter.com

Rebekah Chappell is an undergraduate student at the University of South Alabama, majoring in English with a concentration in creative writing, with anticipated graduation in Spring 2026. She has recently received the Steve and Angelia Stokes Undergraduate Fiction Scholarship for her writing. This year, she has had the honor of serving as a prose editor and first reader of *Oracle*, a national journal based out of this department. She is also serving as the treasurer for the Ninth Muse Creative Writing Club.

Joseph Chelius is the author of two collections of poems with WordTech Communications: *The Art of Acquiescence* (2014) and *Crossing State Lines* (2020). His new collection, *Playing Fields*, is forthcoming with Kelsay Press in 2025. Joe's work has appeared in *Cider Press Review*, *Commonweal*, *Poet Lore*, *Poetry East*, *Rattle*, and other journals.

Genevieve Creedon is a scholar, poet, and essayist. Her writing focuses on relationships—real and imagined—and the ways in which they open up elsewhere. She has lived in Connecticut, New York, Maine, Michigan, New Jersey, and most recently, Indiana. Her work appears in *About Place*, *Cider Press Review*, *Common Ground Review*, and *Narrative Northeast*, among others.

Marc Alan Di Martino's books include *Day Lasts Forever: Selected Poems of Mario dell'Arco* (World Poetry, 2024—translator), *Love Poem with Pomegranate* (Ghost City, 2023), *Still Life with City* (Pski's Porch, 2022) and *Unburial* (Kelsay, 2019). His poems and translations appear in *Rattle*, *iamb*, *Palette Poetry*, and many other journals and anthologies. His work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Currently a reader for *Baltimore Review*, he lives in Italy.

Kika Dorsey is an author in Boulder, Colorado. She has a PhD in Comparative Literature and her books include the poetry collections *Beside Herself*, *Rust*, *Coming Up for Air*, *Occupied: Vienna is a Broken Man*, and *Daughter of Hunger*, which won the Colorado Authors' League Award for best poetry collection, the novel *As Joan Approaches Infinity* and her recent collection of poetry, *Good Ash*. Currently, she is a lecturer at the University of Colorado in literature and creative writing. In her free time, she swims miles in pools and runs and hikes in the open space of Colorado's mountains and plains.

Madison Epner is a senior in the Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins. Her prose has been published in *Wilder Things* magazine, and her plays have been produced through CreateHER NYC, the JHU Theatre Arts Playshop, and Witness Theater. Her favorite author is Virginia Woolf, and coincidentally, she currently works as the stage manager for JHU Theatre Arts' production of Edward Albee's "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?"

Laura Foley has won a *Narrative Magazine* Poetry Prize, The Common Good Books Poetry Prize, *The Poetry Box* Editor's Choice Chapbook Award, the Bisexual Book Award, *Atlanta Review's* Grand Prize, and others. Her work has been widely published in such journals as *Alaska Quarterly*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *American Life in Poetry*, and included in numerous anthologies such as *How to Love the World*, and *Poetry of Presence*. She holds graduate degrees in Comparative Literature from Columbia University.

Luisa M. Giulianetti is a Bay Area writer. Her debut collection, *Agrodolce*, (Bordighera Press) was released in 2023. Her work appears in *Brilliant Corners*, *CALYX*, *Rattle*, *River Heron Review*, and *Voices in Italian Americana*. Luisa teaches and directs programs at UC Berkeley. She enjoys cooking, hiking, and exploring the expansive beauty of the place she calls home.

Samuel Lorraine Goldsmith (he/him) is a former musician who lives in Richmond, California. He writes so as to become a river, not a lake. His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in **82 Review*, *Gone Lawn*, *Streetcake Magazine*, and others.

Karen Greenbaum-Maya is a retired clinical psychologist, former German major, restaurant reviewer, and three-time Pushcart and Best of the Net nominee. Her work has appeared in many journals. Kattywompus Press publishes her first three chapbooks, *Burrowing Song* (2013), *Eggs Satori* (2014) and *Kafka's Cat* (2019). Kelsay Books published *The Book of Knots and their Untying* (2016). Bamboo Dart Press published *The Beautiful Leaves*, a collection of poetry about her late husband's illness, death, and her grief, in 2023. She co-curates Fourth Saturdays, a poetry series in Claremont, California.

Bryn Gribben is a poet and essayist who left academia to explore antiques. Her essay "Cabin" was nominated for a 2019 Pushcart Prize, and she was a finalist both for the 2021 Creative Nonfiction Porch Prize, and the Peseroff Prize in poetry. Bryn's first book, a musical memoir, *Amplified Heart: An Emotional Discography*, was published by Otherwords Press in 2022. She lives in Seattle with two cats and a love song of a husband.

An editor, writer, and poet, **Charles Grosel** grew up in the suburbs of Cleveland, Ohio. After stints on both the West and East Coasts, he now lives in Arizona with his wife and their Chiweenie. He studied English literature at Yale University and fiction writing at the University of California, Davis, where he was a Regent's Fellow. Grosel has published stories in journals such as *Western Humanities Review*, *Fiction Southeast*, *Water-Stone*, and *The MacGuffin*, as well as poems in *The Threepenny Review*, *Nimrod*, *Cream City Review*, and *Harpur Palate*. His chapbook of poems is *The Sound of Rain Without Water*.

Colleen S. Harris earned her MFA in Writing from Spalding University. A three-time Pushcart Prize nominee, her poetry collections include *The Light Becomes Us* (Main Street Rag, forthcoming), *Babylon Songs* (First Bite Press, forthcoming), *These Terrible Sacraments* (Bellowing Ark, 2010; Doubleback, 2019), *The Kentucky Vein* (Punkin House, 2011), *God in My Throat: The Lilith Poems* (Bellowing Ark, 2009), and chapbooks *That Reckless Sound* and *Some Assembly Required* (Pork Belly Press, 2014).

Walter Heineman is from Houston Texas. He has many interests including history, art, literature, music, dreams, myths, fairytales, ritual, symbolism, depth psychology, science, guitar, architecture, electronics, geology, chess, perception and consciousness. Walter has done extensive travel both nationally and internationally.

Ken Holland has had work widely published in such journals as *Rattle*, *Atlanta Review*, *Southwest Review*, and *Tar River Poetry*. He was awarded first place in the 2022 New Ohio Review poetry contest and was a finalist in the 2024 Concrete Wolf chapbook competition and the 2022 Lascaux Prize in Poetry. His book length manuscript, *Summer of the Gods*, was a semi-finalist in the 2022 Able Muse book competition as well as Word Work's 2022 Washington Prize. He's been nominated three times for the Pushcart Prize and lives in the mid-Hudson Valley of New York. Visit his website: www.kenhollandpoet.com

Paul Hechko is a British American poet and occasional songwriter who lives with his partner in Lambertville, NJ. His work has appeared in many journals, including *The Bennington Review*, *The Night Heron Barks*, *Atlanta Review*, *Permafrost*, and *Pirene's Fountain*. His book *Fragmentation and Volta* was published in 2025 by Gnashing Teeth Publishing. His next book, *Post Moby*, will be out in 2026.

Sanna Jacobs is a poet from Philadelphia. She is a student at The Writers Studio. Her work has appeared in *Migrants and Stowaways: An Anthology of Journeys* (Knoxville Writers Guild) and *Prompted*, an anthology from PS Press. She was a semi-finalist for the Emily Dickinson Award Anthology.

Laurie Kuntz is a four-time Pushcart Prize nominee and two-time Best of the Net Nominee. In 2024, she won a Pushcart Prize. She published six books of poetry. Her latest, *That Infinite Roar*, was published by Gyroscope Press. Her themes come from working with Southeast Asian refugees, living as an expatriate in Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, and Brazil, and raising a husband and son.

Edward Lees is an American who lives in London. During the day he works to help the environment and in the evenings he writes poetry. His works have been accepted in various journals including *Southern Humanities Review*, *The Common Dispatches*, *Moonpark Review*, *Potomac Review*, and *Anthropocene Poetry Journal*. He has been nominated for Best of the Net.

Recently retired after a 40-year career focused on the conservation of wildlands and wildlife, **Mark MacAllister** manages to write every day while remaining an active member of his local emergency response team, of a red wolf conservation organization, and of a Wisconsin-based writers' cooperative. His poems are published in a variety of journals, and his chapbook *Quiet Men And Their Coyotes* is available from Concrete Wolf Press.

Andy Macera has received awards from *Plainsongs*, *Mad Poets Review* and *Philadelphia Poets*. His work has also appeared in *Pearl*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Third Wednesday*, *California Quarterly*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *Slant*, *Philadelphia Stories*, *Straight Forward*, *Connecticut River Review*, *Old Red Kimono*, *Sierra Nevada Review*, *Mudfish*, *Passager*, and other journals. He lives in West Chester, PA.

Striving to make each day count, **Roy N. Mason** documents his experiences, observations and lessons-learned in personal essays and poetry. In his free time, Roy can be found trying to synchronize the clocks in his kitchen. Roy's work has been curated in *The New York Times: Tiny Love Stories*, and several journals.

Kindra McDonald is the author of the collections *Teaching a Wild Thing*, *Fossils*, and *In the Meat Years*, and the chapbooks *Elements and Briars*, and *Concealed Weapons*. She was the recipient of the 2020 Haunted Waters Press Poetry Award and nominated for Bettering American Poetry and a Pushcart Prize. She received her MFA from Queens University of Charlotte. A poet-artist working in mixed-media and found poetry, she's a Teaching Artist at The Muse Writers Center in Norfolk, VA. She served as the Poetry Society of Virginia Southeastern region Vice President from 2019-2022. You can find her in the woods or at www.kindramcdonald.com

Wendy McVicker, 2020-2022 poet laureate of Athens, Ohio, is a longtime Ohio Arts Council teaching artist. She lives and writes within the curves of the Hocking River in southeastern Ohio. Her most recent chapbook, *Alone in the Burning*, was released from Sheila-Na-Gig Editions in late 2024. Her poems have appeared in *Gyroscope Review*, as well as in *Sheila-Na-Gig online*, *Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel*, and *Northern Appalachian Review*, and in numerous *Women Speak* and other anthologies. She loves collaborating with other artists and performs with instrumentalist Emily Prince under the name “another language altogether” whenever she gets the chance.

Robbi Nester is a retired college educator and author of 5 books of poetry, the most recent one being *About to Disappear*, forthcoming from Shanti Arts Books. Robbi is the curator and host of two Zoom reading series, Verse-Virtual Monthly Reading and Words With You, part of The Poetry Salon. Learn more at her website: <http://www.robbinester.net>

Peter Newall was born in Sydney, Australia, where he worked in a Navy dockyard, as a lawyer and as a musician. He has since lived in Japan, in Germany and now in Odesa, Ukraine, where he fronts a local R'n'B band. He has been published in England, America, Europe, Hong Kong, and Australia.

Born in Wales in 1988, **Gareth Nurden** has been writing poetry since his teenage years and has focused recent years focusing on Haiku and Senryu and has had over seventy pieces published in over twelve countries and over thirty journals worldwide.

Andy Oram is a writer and editor in the computer field. His editorial projects have ranged from a legal guide covering intellectual property to a graphic novel about teenage hackers. Print publications where his writings have appeared include *The Economist*, *the Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, and *Vanguardia Dossier*. He has lived in the Boston, Massachusetts area for 50 years. His poems have appeared in more than 60 journals and anthologies.

Bill Richardson is Emeritus Professor in Spanish at the University of Galway, Ireland. Poems of his have been published in numerous poetry magazines, including *Amethyst Review*, *The Stony Thursday Book*, *Orbis*, *The Orchards*, *The High Window*, *Skylight 47* and *Book XI-A Journal of Literary Philosophy*, as well as in collections such as *Creative Ireland's Chasing Shadows* and the *Fish Anthology 2020*.

Susan Shaw Sailer has published three books of poems—*The Distance Beyond Sight*, *The God of Roundabouts*, *Ship of Light*, and two chapbooks, *Bulletins from a War Zone* and *COAL*. Sailer lives in Morgantown, West Virginia, and is a member of the Madwomen in the Attic program of Carlow University and also of Pauletta Hansel's From Draft to Craft class.

Susan Shea is a retired school psychologist who grew up in Brooklyn, New York and now lives in a forest in Pennsylvania. In the past two years, she has at last been able to be a poet. In that time, her poems have been published in or are forthcoming in *Chiron Review*, *Invisible City*, *Ekstasis*, *MacQueen's Quinterly*, *The Write Launch*, *The Gentian*, and more than 150 others. Within the last few months one of her poems was nominated for Best of the Net by *Cosmic Daffodil*, and three poems were nominated for a Pushcart Prize by *Umbrella Factory Magazine*.

Elaine (Lainey) Schear's poetry appears in a variety of publications including *The Bellevue Literary Review*, *Poetry East*, *Raven's Perch*, *JJournal*, *The Decadent Review*, *Mudfish*, *Blueline*, *East Iowa Review*, *Banyan Literary Review*, *The Boston Globe*, and others - Among them her chapbook *Nine Hours from Oswego*, and *Between Us*, published by the Z Street Writers, who meet, workshop their drafts, and study other writers of poetry and prose. She is the founder of a non-profit foundation supporting academic opportunities for talented, low-income public high school students in the Cambridge, Massachusetts area. Reach her at lainey.schear@gmail.com

Lailah Shima is a death doula who writes and walks among the lakes of Madison, Wisconsin. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *CALYX*, *Sky Island Journal*, *ONE ART*, and *Anti-Heroine Chic*, as well as in *The Path to Kindness: Poems of Connection and Joy* (ed. James Crews). She is an MFA candidate at Pacific University.

Eli Slover serves as a poetry reader for *West Trade Review*. Their poetry appears in *Frost Meadow Review*, *Lily Poetry Review*, *MAYDAY Magazine*, *Remington Review*, and elsewhere.

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), Her poems have appeared in *The Paris Review*, *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *Barrow Street*, *Poet Lore*, and many other journals and anthologies. She is also a painter and the creator of The Stone Tarot. A licensed psychotherapist, she has private practices in NYC and Nyack. <https://alisonstone.info/> Youtube and TikTok — Alison Stone Poetry.

Confirmed river rat, **Chuck Stringer**, who had the good fortune to grow up boating on the Kennebec, Clinch, and Tennessee—now lives with his wife Susan and gray tabby Kissa near the Ohio in Boone County, Kentucky. He enjoys writing in the community gathered around Cincinnati-based poets Pauletta Hansel, Sherry Cook Stanforth, and Richard Hague. His poems have been published in numerous journals, and his first chapbook of poems, *By Fowlers Fork*, was published in August 2024 (Finishing Line Press).

Liam Strong (they/them) is a queer neurodivergent cripple punk writer who has earned their BA in writing from University of Wisconsin-Superior. They are the author of the chapbook *Everyone's Left the Hometown Show* (Bottlecap Press, 2023), and assistant poetry editor for *Kitchen Table Quarterly*. You can find their poetry and essays in *Vagabond City*, and *new words* {press}, among several others. They are most likely gardening and listening to Bitter Truth somewhere in Northern Michigan. Find them on Instagram/Twitter: @beanbie666. <https://linktr.ee/liamstrong666>

George Turner is a writer and poet, originally from New Zealand, currently completing a BA in Creative Writing at the University of Gloucestershire, England. His poetry has been read at the Cheltenham Poetry Festival and published in the poetry webzine, *Ink, Sweat & Tears*. George is a lover of science fiction and speculative fiction, and counts Arthur C. Clarke, Stephen Baxter, and Greg Egan among his many inspirations. He is currently working on a collection of ecopoetry.

Mal Virich is a queer, non-binary, autistic, and disabled poet who tends to ruminate on identity, trauma, and the profound impacts of interpersonal relationships. Their debut chapbook, *a vivid dreaming*, released in 2024 from Bottlecap Press. Mal's poems have also been published by *Dipity*, and *new words* {press}, among others. They are also a student of creative writing, Spanish, and Chican@/Latin@ studies.

Jon Woolwine (he/him) is a Chicago-based writer studying poetry through the Poetry Center of Chicago. He is an active volunteer gardener for the native prairie initiatives throughout the city and helps run a monthly poetry workshop with a handful of friends. His first published poems are forthcoming in *River Heron*, and *The Passionfruit Review*.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

No themes for the Summer 2025 Issue, we're just looking for fine, contemporary poetry. If you're wondering what we publish, back issue PDFs are available to read on the website. We're always interested in poems about the state of the world as poets see it. 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, as are poems about things that move you. Annoy you. Entrance you. Other than that, send us the work you love and want to see out in the world.

April 1st is also the start of National Poetry Month, and *Gyroscope Review* will be featuring a Poem Renaissance, a new poem each day that has been previously published and looking for new views. This feature will run through May 20th. Stop by for a new poem each day and find undiscovered gems from the past from different poetry magazines.

Summer Issue 2025 submissions open April 1st, 2025, and run through June 1st, 2025, with the issue releasing on July 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 in Submittable put an up-to-date bio of no more than 100 words in the Submittable bio section. We don't need headers, footers, or page numbering. 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.gyroskopereview.com>

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

Thank you for Reading!



Gyroscope Review

fine poetry to turn your world around

gyroscopereview.com

