



**Cathexis Northwest Press**  
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# Bread & Clay

By: Josiah Patterson Wheatley

Hands smeared  
red under fingernails  
the studio window  
a sigh & sight  
of birds in the background  
scolding.  
Feel the cold heaviness  
of earth, malleable  
tender as meat.

Wet upon the spinning wheel  
by thin hands  
pressed & shaped  
diaspora of clay.  
The trickling light  
feeds the colors, bruised to beige  
into tools for hungry lips.

Across the field hands  
cracked & calloused  
flick the sickle  
shave the flax like hair  
from their heads  
a thousand bundled stalks  
folded braids of gold.  
Kexy chaff remains to feed the crow  
or abandoned to decay.

Firm hands to grind  
to mill, to sift  
knead as if anger  
could be expelled from skin.  
The yeast to feed  
the miracle rise  
& heat to crust, then glow  
under a buttered knife.

# WASTELAND

By: Erika Seshadri

my guest unspools  
his threadbare comfort  
before me  
laid out in imbrication,  
incomplete

dauntless  
we set to work  
filling gaps  
with costume jewels  
and  
thrifted memories  
from a calico dress

once pleased  
with our handiwork  
my guest collects  
his prize

clinging to succor  
of plastic, twine, and cloth  
he returns  
to the wasteland

where he shines





# Stanley Park

By: Alan Hill

Thirty thousand years of human existence  
mutation, progression, of culture  
has led to this

you on a sea wall feeding fries to a Raccoon

to this gnaw of jealousy  
as you look at the firm bodied young  
roller skating, biking  
in their entitlement, vanity, happiness.

If you want to help  
do something sensible, good

stand mid span, on the Lions Gate Bridge  
on the arch of its back  
supernatural float of metal plate  
that staples the city's mouth, gives lips to  
a hard imperial shout

turn your back on us , look out  
into the emptiness, disinterested ocean

do what I cannot, have no courage for

cast words into the void of god for us  
wait for something, anything, to come back.



# Diminuendo

By: Sarah Paley

Do you think much has changed since then?  
The mile markers are still there.  
In photos they look like plain white  
head stones – anonymous – like a battlefield in France.  
The barn is unrecognizable – rehabilitated.  
Chicken coops are long gone they  
were always an eye-sore, a problem.

Jumping from coop to coop  
the jagged edge of the tin roof  
tore your leg from ankle to thigh.  
They wrapped you in newspaper  
as if you were a fish. You lay in the back --  
in the front, behind the wheel -- was it Mr. Loeb?

I didn't know if you'd come back  
for certain. It was an emergency!  
Everyone panicked and ran to and fro.  
I stood stock still under the giant elm  
and watched – like an alien sending out a probe.

Readers, at this point, will want some reassurance.  
Want to know the outcome for better or worse.  
I would too. It's good to feel sure about things --  
you can feel secure like hugging yourself in a flannel robe.

Remember the detritus along the shores of the Mohawk?

Those scary black sacs that look like little men in distress, limbs  
akimbo, screaming for help? Or a water chestnut? Spiky painful orb.

Ouch. Everything was terrifying back then.  
But we all seem to remember it differently or

Maybe, it's just me. I can't seem to get past point A to get to point B.

# Sagittarius A\*

By: Alicia Sometimes

*Event Horizon Telescope, May 12, 2022*

how we always wanted to know  
what was at the center of it all

a sense of generational longing  
only cured by operatic narrative

supermassive black hole shadow  
glowing ring with cavity puncture

from far: brooding, slumberous  
closer: orange-red smouldering

fast spinning silhouette wreath  
devouring infalling surrounds

gas, debris swirling its perimeter  
as stars slingshot around the rim

the interstices between itself  
and those who view back home

an undressing blur of wonder  
four million times that of our sun

synced observatories, collaboration  
how we come together, uncovering

an image, years in lucid construction  
calculations unveiling visions of data

core of our Milky Way hub singing  
as we assemble the aperture of notes

# Deathbed Sheets

By: Lindsay-Rose Dykema

It was just a (series of) misunderstanding(s)  
starting with my saying *let's be mono*--  
a few months later I started flirting with someone  
you labeled it 'emotional affair' but I just figured  
I'd forgotten to add 'for now.'

Is monogamy death or paying taxes?  
(then you should have known it was only for now)  
death, taxes, and the ennui  
of never-ending Sisyphus laundry (you won't be done with it  
until you're lying on your deathbed sheets)  
and the greatest of these is lovers like leaves, lovers like these ones  
meeting needs until one of them leaves  
falling then floating, screaming then streaming  
drifting apart no matter how tightly you squeeze  
but should you sneeze --

My mother used to work nights;  
as a child I deployed a (series of) antic(s), desperate stall tactic(s)  
*If you sneeze when you get there, God bless you*, I once yelled  
as her car pulled away and I waved goodbye.





# High School/Binder

By: Kathryn Hall

With the necessary zip pouch for pencils  
and three-ringed, it balanced on the arm, left,  
the elbow tucked above the hip. No *closed*  
*for today* possibilities except on the walk  
to and from. How steadfast the moss filled  
the letters spelling the names of streets stamped  
in concrete, soft, as one stepped off  
the curb. How thoughtful the green canopy  
above, promising tomorrow, tomorrow,  
leaf, leaf, a bell so unlike the rattle  
and shuffle of slam or bunk. Reading the light  
filled script through the network of branches,  
one learned skin was the same as water,  
water the same as trees and trees as air.



# Time Allows

By: Amelia Díaz Ettinger

the marcescens of leaves  
in an early afternoon  
makes for a cup of tea  
to seep bitter on dry lips

they part in acceptance  
nature roams her steady flow  
but where is the resistance  
from leaves, from lips?

why must winter rob green-lush?  
does it steal the pigments for lack  
of warmth or covetousness? Crushes  
the mirth of flowers softly balancing the edge?

why does it render the tenderness of petals  
to be burdened by the coming snow  
already withered, wrinkled  
softly forgotten fearing under edge



# Nailbiter

By: Melissa Ridley Elmes

As a nervy, anxious, maladroit child  
I chewed my fingernails till they bled,  
peeling them away layer by layer, then  
gnawing the cuticles into submission—  
as though all my anxiety resided there, as though  
removing that skin would silence the disquiet within.

*“Leave your poor nails alone,”* my mother said,  
*“or you’ll never have pretty hands.”*  
But Alecia on the bus said I was ugly as roadkill,  
and Angela on the bus said I had a dog’s face,  
so I was pretty sure the appearance of my hands  
didn’t matter all that much, in the long run.

And besides, I’d think in idle moments, diligently  
working my teeth into my ragged nailbed edges,  
undertaking in vain to smooth the jagged, bleeding flesh,  
anyone who loves me for my hands and not my heart  
is shallow; and also, the pain of cutting to the quick  
keeps me here, grounded in the real, which mom said

I need to do, I should be focused in the now, I should  
*Stop dreaming and get my head out of the clouds.*  
*So I chewed, and gnawed, and sucked at the blood*  
*and imagined: what if I could keep pulling off layers*  
*of nail and tugging at cuticles until all that torn matter*  
*came peeling off in my teeth and I swallowed it down*

*inch by inch, the whole dermis, until like a caterpillar  
emerging new-skinned from a chrysalis, like a  
newborn baby shining with afterbirth and hope, like  
Aslan pulling off Eustace's old skin, I auto-cannibalized  
that humiliated, mutilated, bygone me into someone new,  
pretty-faced and perfect-nailed, someone who  
could ride the bus home tranquil and unmolested?*

# The God of Gaps

By: HR Harper

At the base  
of tall redwoods  
I stop thinking  
about thinking.

I wait in the space  
between tall words.

It's October and the late  
afternoon light  
rests on its side  
yet wavers from the wind.

The wind's too much  
for words I have remembered or found.  
The only song now  
is up in the crown.

There's room  
between the song I want to hear  
and what keeps singing up there.

There's a distance  
between the right word  
and me.

Sunlight diagonals  
fall through tall pillars of spongy bark,  
from canopy to duff,  
to mark the link of shadow and light.  
The trees invent the light.  
They invite us to parse it.  
We learn from what is sparse.

There is a Japanese word  
for light like this  
in the forest.  
    I can't remember it.  
    I can't remember enough.  
Proper nouns, then nouns... in that order  
words slow.  
There is darkness between what I knew  
and know.

The light in the forest  
fills in its name,  
*komorebi*.  
Does this not sound like song?  
Did it ever not sound like you  
or me?

Nature needs to abhor a vacuum.  
Without questions, words come  
to the dark room between us.



The autumn wind  
in this redwood forest can rain down  
widowmakers in the gaps  
or fill silence  
with a rush of singing  
or stain a page  
with exactly the right word  
as long as this light lasts  
  
and joins us.



# Still Trying

By: Eugene Marckx

We should have known when he sold his sailboat  
he couldn't live there anymore – afraid he might  
slip off “into the drink” – we should have known

One time on the phone he let slip that he'd fallen  
in the grocery parking lot and needed help to his car  
“Don't you have someone nearby you can call?”  
I was afraid for him – he quit calling then  
except on my birthday – two days late in a slur so bad  
I had to play the voicemail over and over to decipher his words

I called him back but did that *ever* work?  
His voicemail was always full – no memory left  
Our sister in town talked with him daily – but that too stopped  
I drove down and with her sitting in the car  
I knocked in a winter drizzle on his locked door  
then found a window propped open four inches for air  
and his Jack Russell terrier frantic in there to escape  
– licking and scratching my hand – my brother ten feet away  
on the couch with no resurrection left in him  
yet he could still turn the air blue with enough vitriol  
to cover his shame at my arrival

After an hour of pleading with him I got the picture  
He couldn't stand on his feet but he sure wasn't gonna crawl  
What then?  
As I drove away my sister's eyes closed in  
We both could see a forecast of pelting rain  
scourging that swollen river into darkness

But it didn't end quite this way – a friend of his said later  
he tried to quit cold turkey – *no* – the friend pleaded  
knowing his body couldn't take the withdrawal  
Only then could I begin to see how hard he tried –  
the lonely agony of emptying himself of that swollen river and  
dying of it

But that he died trying stays in me now  
and I have a small hope it may be said of me after I'm gone  
– *he died trying* – this brother of mine  
deep down showing the way

# Blackened catfish

By: Rachel R. Baum

*I don't remember* you said,  
the fork in your veined hand trembled  
and I think, we are talking  
about your father, not some stranger.

This is you, picking at fried catfish  
it was what you ordered,  
but not what you wanted  
you always get that confused.

He worked long hours, you told us  
made sacrifices on your behalf  
this is you, gazing up at the pedestal  
where you placed him long ago.

Once, a truth blurted out, a recollection  
cat-o-nine-tails wrapped around his fist  
burn marks he seared into you, wounds  
to your body, your young self

And yet, here you are, fearful of hard hot honest words  
kindling that might torch his legacy  
burn your own mythology to ashes  
and now, time is bankrolling your secrets

The clock's hands are as spidery and tremulous as your own  
its just history, so unburden yourself  
show me your heart, where he still lives  
for when we lose you, we lose him too.



# Midway

By: Raymond Byrnes

05:34 04 JUN 42: After long, patterned days of stale gazing at a blank, sunglass-green sea, a U.S. Navy patrol pilot radios his estimated map coordinates for a miles-wide Japanese aircraft-carrier fleet.

Navy dive-bomber, torpedo-plane, and fighter-escort pilots take off and circle into formation high above their carrier, each one aware it could take half his fuel just to find the enemy 150 miles out.

One fighter group, its search futile, heads back to refuel. Without signaling, Mark Kelly swings down over the waves. Behind him, Johnny Talbot barks at Mark to bank around and ditch into the wind.

Soon after, sputtering on empty, others begin to slide in twos and threes onto the sea. Survivors scramble from opened canopies to inflate their tiny rafts and lash pairs together for better rescue visibility.

Meanwhile, a torn torpedo plane returns. Its bloody pilot describes tracer-bullet blizzards, his buddies killed all around him in swarms of agile Zeros, and dense anti-aircraft fire from ships they tried to sink.

Ensign Charles Markland Kelly Jr., Task Force 16 Fighter Squadron 8, still strapped inside his cold, broken cockpit, still trails the USS *Hornet* now 81 years away. Ensign Kelly, MIA, is 25.





# Paralian

By: Clay Hardy

Another sand dollar fell. Cracked, cold, and discarded. Shadowed under boardwalks. Listening to echoes of each footstep creak.

But eventually surrendering. Tumbling along the tides. Soon forgotten and pulled out to sea.

With shadows of gulls soaring above in an orange sunset sky. One last final moment to grasp. And dream of what was left that could still be.



# Charon's Glimpse of Sunlight

By: M. Shayne Bell

I

## *At the Landing*

I watched Persephone descend  
through throngs of dead—  
dressed all in white,  
as if to keep sunlight with her  
in a fabric.

II

## *One Obol*

She would not ride  
a half-filled boat.  
She brought on dead  
who could not pay.  
She let the dead crowd  
near.

III

## *On Styx*

Islands mar that sea;  
rocks; but to a pebble—  
one dead: flood-swept there,  
or overboard and left.  
He grabbed her outstretched hand.  
She pulled him in.

IV  
*Docked Hellside*

She stepped out first,  
waited for the dead.  
They trembled behind her,  
listened for her word.  
Cerberus fanged no soul,  
that day.

V  
*Epilogos*

I snored before upstream:  
but woke to black wine,  
plate of bread, cheese, olives.  
I know who left this.  
I never take her obol.

# Go

By: Mary Paulson

Leave me silent as the tree that crushes me  
in the forest and no one can hear but

wish me well,  
wish me bright  
as a yellow spotted moth.

Leave me to dream myself  
writing in celestial patterns, clear  
as hieroglyphics—

to grieve not,  
forget not, this knot  
like gum in my hair.

Leave me for another day,  
a neon fire burning  
away daytime sky and

let the mercurial evening blues  
arrive again. I'm through whispering

entreaties to the old black beasts  
guarding your heart— leave me  
to my longing, the

honed hunger crouching in my stomach that  
psychology can't cure.

Leave me to the dream in which I pull  
all the teeth out of my head.

Hold me for a moment while we drift  
together through  
abandoned space before you

let go and leave me to drop,  
that dream of a sick fall, accelerating  
nosedive towards the ground.

Leave me to invoke God again, again,  
that he might speak to me through the radio—

the famous silence of God who  
never responds.

# cota trip to a nameless location

By: Lily DeWitt

*l e main st & n high st*

day does a trust fall into night's arms.  
the city's stars are its people.

*l n high st & northwood ave*

the sidewalks love the feet  
that walk on them.  
i too have an obsession  
with being useful.

*l n high st & patterson ave*

the man next to me has tattoos  
wrapping around his legs,  
like how i wrap myself in shadows.  
i want to ask him what it feels like to be art.  
i want to ask him what it feels like to put needle to skin  
in a loving way.  
i want to ask him what he thinks about  
the way the buildings watch over us,  
like proud parents  
but i picked my outfit specifically  
to blend in with the  
plastic of the bus chair.

*l n high st & e dodridge st*

the crossword on my lap  
has me stumped.  
“word to describe the sun or your personality.”  
ten letters.

*ℓ w henderson rd & knightsbridge blvd*  
we pass the place where  
my favorite oak tree usually waits for me,  
with extended arms  
to my dismay i see  
it's been cut  
down.

*ℓ w henderson rd & reed rd*  
i try not to cry.

*ℓ bethel rd & coachman rd*  
we have reached an area of unknown.  
my nose begs to be united  
with the window,  
but i force myself to sit back.  
i swear there are eyes on me,  
but the other passengers  
do not acknowledge my presence.  
i am my own most concerned observer.

*ℓ pickforde dr & gardenia dr*  
i return to the puzzle.  
ten letters.

*ℓ sawmil rd & w case rd*  
i can feel myself getting closer to  
the answer,  
but i'm not quite there.  
i'm never quite where  
i need to be.



*l hard rd & heathermoor dr*

i glance around and see  
a mural on a brick wall  
that looks to have been painted  
with the dust trails of shooting stars  
and tree sap.

*l standburn rd & hard dr*

i think i know.  
both the sun and i are

*l summer dr & sawmil commons ln*

b l i s t e r i n g.



# Rain in Fort Valley, VA

By: Joshua Sinel

That rain  
Over there  
Coming in  
Will march  
With tiny feet  
In soldier rows  
Clamoring and crowding  
Pushing and rolling  
Knees over knees  
Tiny little diamond feet  
Tap-tap-tapping  
bending blades  
moving along  
singing the secret soldiers' song  
To stop for a moment  
the rock of rocking chairs  
on broken floors  
beyond repair  
the back and forth  
the tit-for-tat  
and all the endless this and that



# I was the table

By: Aubry Snow

Dime store diner girl college town slew of  
drunk idiots babbling 'bout frats and fears and  
*"Can I have another side of feta?"*  
My grin bloomed like the grease on their faces as they ate.  
I'm a glutton for observation.

Black and white tiles alternating, a grimy, deteriorating vestige of the 50s.  
Big neon sign a stamp branded to my eyelids, my ugly moon. 12 hour shift,  
feet cracking, legs fat and swollen.  
I might have liked some roller blades,  
bejeweled with bayonets to flay the creeps.

I was taking an order for a couple once  
a shadow walking past, a hand on my ass.  
The entirety of my right butt cheek.  
Doe-frozen, eyes wide, and reeling  
strained in a hollowed sound scene. I was there

but hollow too, safety sucked from my body.  
Too many men to know, to point the  
fingered gun and say "HIM!"

I sunk like poppies or tulips inside myself  
suppressed a cry, no - a hideous battle screech,  
a tearing, reserved for vultures or tigers or raptors.  
Would you like a milkshake with that, I asked.

I can still hear their coins fall  
One by one like daggers to the place  
where they ate. I was the table.

# Mr. Coffee 12-Cup Programmable Coffeemaker Haibun

By: Graham Murtaugh

My friend has taken to sleeping in his unheated workshop. He dreams among his many planes and gouges and knives. The tools of shaping. He wakes at five-thirty, makes a fire and sits with his breath. His blade-nicked hands run over and over the strange end-grain of his marriage, searching for splits.

The new Mr. Coffee 12-Cup Programmable Coffeemaker gurgles while the Cubs lose quietly in the background. A lit American Spirit cigarette trails incense. Leaned towards the fire, his hands form a soft bowl for prayer. It holds less than it used to. He thinks of his boys. Thinks, how long will this last? How long can I last? Thinks, this is for the best.

He repositions, pressed against another day, against what it means

to find himself  
so full  
of desire.





# Clean

By: Susan L. Leary

I often worried when I got the call, I'd be unprepared.  
But the morning my brother dies, all the good clothes  
in the house are clean. So I tell myself to get on with it.  
& later, standing over my brother, I think whoever  
prepared his body must love what they do. Because he looks  
so clean. Cleaner, even, than when he'd doze on the couch  
midafternoons to Hank Williams or Johnny Cash.  
The fatigue of living wiped from his cheeks. & today,  
as then, the same stillness stretched across his eyes.  
The same tiny shovels for thumbs. & when I find the strength  
to rest a hand atop his, I shake him a little to tell him  
I wore his favorite dress: summery & sand-colored with splotches  
of blue. & while it seems so symbolic, it's all rather simple.  
I wear a blue-patterned dress because my brother loved  
the ocean. & because my brother was lonely & broken,  
he couldn't kick drugs. But I love my brother & the morning  
he dies, all the good clothes in the house are clean.  
So I tell him: *Clean*.



# she's a god or a dream, something to let go of

By: Grayson Thompson

*(thank you Ben Barlow for keeping punk rock alive, being my quarantine preacherman, and for writing "A Part of Me")*

my astigmatism scatters the light of her body across the night sky  
she hits like planets aligning in slow motion  
each graze makes it hard to breathe  
without it, I feel the cold of the infinite stars

I hope you're somewhere in the corners of my consciousness  
softening where the shame lives  
from there I hope you can see I'm stumbling toward you  
knees first  
waiting to collapse  
palms spread like a bible  
spine cracked open praying for you to reach through the inside

I found this poem in a punk rock band  
an acoustic singer, like a preacher, with a voice rugged like bedsheets  
I watched as the people sang back through the distance between them  
change of key  
slows it down

the preacherman said:

*I was falling for a girl who would ask me to come over  
just for a day, while her parents were away  
now all I can do is lay in my room  
fall asleep, dream of you, then wake up and do nothing about*

he lost his voice  
and I swear he was holding back tears  
thinking of a girl  
when he looked down  
and heard the congregation fill in all the things he couldn't say to her

I'm the boy in the sea of drowning voice  
singing back through the window  
behind the guitar strings

close my eyes  
raise my hands

this is the only time I'll let you shoot me

maybe you'll hear my voice  
in the back of some bar  
in some place I've never been

I'm there  
staring at the back of your head  
crying at the halo

# Kazantza'kis, Agonistis'

By: Jim Zaferopolos

Somewhere in Kazantzakis' work—I can't now quite remember where, I read "In climbed the mountain to look upon the face of God; but, when I got to the top, the face I saw there was my own!" [paraphrased]

Weed scraggle in the scree, the dross  
Of life, the man-made slime and rubble  
Of a life-time's discards, O, mine uncle,  
Mountain would have cluttered you,

Had you not mind and fortitude enough  
To overcome the craggy edifice of fear  
To frailty of the human sensibility, to  
Clamber up over the refuse  
That has clogged your feet in clay,  
As you have strained to push the rock  
Of up the slope of natural resistance, as  
Our poor progenitor was cursed by  
Jealous gods forever-more to do.

Straining my very soul, I say, help me,  
Dear Uncle, to reprise your noble effort  
In. my life; give me a hand to rise,  
By my long-loving aim deep regard  
For you, as, having failed to emulate  
Your deed and thought a hundred times  
And more, I may remain, still, duty-bound,  
Condemned, to achieve the peak from which  
My trusting spirit might alight into the  
Holy void, which, lost at birth, I may,  
With you, forever more regain.

But, as I reach your summit,  
I must slip each time,  
And let the rock roll  
To the piedmont, and

I have to start again,  
Lugubriously,  
To push  
That rock  
Up-hill once more.

Uncle, I never shall give up  
The struggle to ascend.  
For, every time  
I push the rock over

Your cragged face,  
I do believe that  
I have reached one  
Incremental  
Inch closer  
To you.

I leave a pebble chipped from  
My flint-hewn soul  
The sudden spark that  
Sets a conflagration  
To consume what you  
Believe to be  
The substance of  
Your massive mind and  
Thought which from  
The ashes rises like  
A fledgling, and

Compels me with  
A father's love to  
Put you on my back, and to  
Begin the  
Slow ascent again.





# AN OH WELL STAR II: Little one/ What love

By: Valyntina Grenier

It's a good thing I'm no Van Gogh  
Here for an hour  
here unhinged

some neighbor's friend  
fresh can snap  
dust burst

stark  
yellow  
hollow

orphan day snaked  
through cornsilk  
coiled in corn flour

we spin us  
in the dust devil of  
spirits we love

*we how old we  
and ankle yet  
hour till hour(s)  
ours our ours*

The feeling second I inhale  
vapor I want to embrace her  
get right to her hummingbird zoom

our hearts catching take plunder  
there's no time to wrench  
freedom from fear

quake with our liberty  
with this world ache

we'll embrace here

I know I know it's hard for the hive  
the drive to thrive the vibe too anxious  
to practice keys or strum guitar  
my education wasn't  
waisted on me

how cold  
what times  
a spider

inches at a cat  
saunters we are  
wonders winter's/  
Walter's daughters  
on a crag spinning to  
stop over We can't turn  
some frozen night back  
we can only be like this  
midnight mild bi pedal stargazing along

You know you know how  
our mortal earth splayed  
the early-morning-all-day-

late-night-centuries w/ a lathe  
arteries cartography injected  
die spinning

stopping in oblivion  
like any living being  
or inventing and deciphering to fast

for a radical proof to cure the night  
with hesitation we *all perish*  
we're all some thing

the brim of a generation  
conceived and bred we make our  
damned world Now

have some stew  
try again with this  
roof toil wasp's nest

A world too and quiet  
this link scanning across my wow

what magic humanity  
has to sing to carry

to cry following gravity  
drips upon my lip

a leaf of pigment from my frail  
quill not a grid or heavy heart

stolen lighter forgotten visage  
shards or fibers from a girl

her reflection or hair void of this  
whirl

How lucky to live  
to hear a donkey bray

in proximity the word settles  
on a census or some

war-torn echoing evil refrain  
rape used as a weapon in Ukraine

mirroring refraction rarefacting  
this nesting dove screeching away

If haft hast if heft  
a swallow floats down  
with love for this fig bush

I help to grow for the world  
pulmonary rush  
exhale to make art

a hollow stalk  
to blow across  
or through bamboo

hot wind and music  
desert oasis shake  
laugh hello golden wasp

at rest in the breeze  
a mellow moment  
bling of ease

bells swing  
swell this still point  
what wonders turning cease

to weep under the stream  
of negligence to be free

What do these bones want to say

snarl a jokeless rasp insect instant  
stroke of quiet stokes the west  
wind fuels my fear for water

the last hollow well we'll fill  
with regular strangled Moan

restart the motor  
*you well* you rifle our life sit  
back adjust your tie

defame any other for *exactly* what it is you are up to  
*People died*  
for your lies

To Rio so as like  
to dance

masked so as not  
to die

yet stay in  
to kill

this virus  
fear in place

here safe  
this croaking

lizard  
mouse rustling

rabbit  
I am an idiot

a pulsing heart  
We swell

make away stay inside  
celebrate

our two faces  
face to face

# Straight Up

By: Russell Sebring

let us not dwell on guilt or the daily massacre on which it feeds men love revolution for the revolt not the utopia of their realization an extraction that dares speak names conceived as a bounded whole an automatic vault their approximation existing only on a pristine scale sacrifice and cruelty the illegible reproduction (x marks the spot) of a motherless gangbanger it seems the desire to profit is stronger than horror or disgust far from the slaughter there are two uses for the mouth an affirmation wherein the low implicates the high in its own fall stratifications for a schizophrenic ideal made up of facing mirrors and asymmetrical cave-ins the crossfire ricocheting between beholder and blindness scant assemblages made of rags skewered with nails nevertheless a bidding war harbors impurities open to structural analysis the semblance of a vanished people reconstituted from its scattered remains within the unconscious the child is being beaten hushed to the point of disappearing a short burst of three to four shots breaks apart and flows together mediated rhythms of repetition experienced and missed two blocks down a disciple decides who will live or die it is enough to turn meaning inside out like a glove to invert full and empty





# Potiphar's Wife

By: Lina Buividavičiūtė

Translated from Lithuanian to English by Irma Šlekyte.

After a time, his master's wife looked at Joseph with longing and said, "Lie with me." *The Bible, the Book of Genesis*

I cling onto Your robe, boldly tear the seams apart,

rip up my pride to pieces with my teeth,

though You arrived at our home a slave.

You said You're acting in his name, the one who never abandons,

gives strength to resist the forbidden bodily orifices.

My desire entangles my veins, the thin blood

mixes with the thick, the red and the blue –

nothing matters any more, I rub away the imprint

of the ring. I'm a young gazelle, awaiting the nimblest

of the herd. I always get what I crave for, in this abode

with curtains of the most precious purple

even the flicker of the flame abides by me.

Never hide behind his name, the ninth commandment –  
I'm just a wilting fussy mimosa, who's never been  
rejected before, not even out of fear. You played  
the most sensitive strings without ever touching the zither of my body.  
I cling onto Your robe, I'm a she-wolf in heat, I tear  
apart my loneliness, my boredom, my slow decline, I bite  
at Your righteous heart, I devour Your liver. We'll rot  
in the cells of our pride, our bones will never rest together.

Everything I betray to the crowd afterwards will be out of despair.

# In November. And the clouds will gather

By: Lina Buividavičiūtė

Translated from Lithuanian to English by Irma Šlekyte.

The world, deep in sleep, a window and an overcast  
glance, there's no one to wake me up, the darkness slowly  
engulfs the light of day, it's difficult to discern what  
time it is, everything recedes somehow: the fog, the window pane,  
I need stronger glasses, increasingly expressive rituals.

I don't want to get up in the morning, I growl and build tents  
from bedsheets like a child; it is but an echo, I can't rekindle  
the joyful game. The broth is tasteless, no one chases  
the shadows out of the corners; now I think to myself  
I've been living such a lukewarm life, it's not even November yet.

The forest and the trees, the fading bedding, the winter berries  
and birds still not yet red, I plod down the empty roadsides,

soaked in the freezing Autumn rain, the raindrops on my short eyelashes ——

I try to repeat, to answer aloud, I hoot my laughter

at the entrance of the hall of death, having to rebuild my vitality from ashes,

I need blood and milk, but my veins are barren.

I must lean my heavy head back, get drunk with dampness,

kiss the silent passer-by in the city, worship nudity, celebrate

All Saints, compose a litany on hunger,

survive this month.

# Interlude

By: William Ross

The minutes of this night  
grow fat and sluggish,  
leaving a thin trail of wetness  
in the tangled garden –  
a tear climbing the face  
to fall back into the eye.

A song sucked out of the air  
is pulled into the radio  
and the dead risen from sleep  
discover they are still dead  
and, even worse, alone.

Between heartbeats there is  
a moment of not beating,  
when the eye, in total darkness,  
still sees but sees nothing.  
A waste of the senses  
which long to touch and hold,  
taste and give voice.



# Lost Time

By: Bradley Nordell

Who are we but words  
Bleached torn jeans poets  
Addicts washed up along a shore  
Old hippies counting crows  
Seashell remembrances  
Dust bowls and days of old  
Lost time in empty romances.

Worlds swept by lonely street light cities  
Bled under wooden bridge creaking  
Instruments out of tune and daylight  
Fading before noon. Those green skies  
Before the thunder and twisters  
Before the olden days. We wonder  
As lost time takes our youth away  
Sitting in the dusk of truth counting  
Stars of no more.

Cosmic strings that play at nothing  
Gifts opened by no one  
Jokes cackling at mad mutterings  
Lenses peering beyond infinity  
Mirrors a heart's true form  
Withered and waiting  
Silently debating the ways  
of moonlit curses.

Do you hear it cawing?  
Lost time brings mourning  
To the one that misses you  
To the one that write poetry  
In hopes to bring back  
The fading hands of the clock  
In hopes to resurrect the dead  
From the verse.

Lost time  
O! Lost time  
Entropy unwinds  
Empty waves crashing  
Amongst the light house  
Clock guiding mariners  
Of soul, into the harbors  
A wander's remorse.

And do you not see,  
I miss you as the twilight beckons  
And I sleep, dreaming  
of those days we played  
in the cornfields and prairies  
dreaming of those moments  
as we watched the flicking  
emerald light of fireflies in  
a darkened July night.



# In the Spirit

By: Ed McManis

Sometimes I see  
her ghosts  
before she does.

She's always  
looking for light,  
the outline

of miracles,  
a familiar hand  
on our shoulders.

I don't believe  
in what  
I can't kill.

Division is my religion.

Sometimes I have  
to lie, tell her that  
earthy, graveyard

smell is from  
my side  
of the bed,

is my new after  
shave. Sometimes I  
tell her

we're the only  
living ones  
in the room.



# In Order of Appearance

Born and raised in Montana, Josiah Patterson Wheatley has been a published writer, guardian ad litem, special education teacher, and late night bus bouncer. He possesses a BA in English from Montana State University and is pursuing an MA in Creative Writing from California State University, Sacramento. Outside of Montana, he has put down roots in many places, including the Czech Republic, Florida, and most recently in California. He is a casual poet and personal essayist, whose work explores a wide field, from an appreciation of nature and science to a healthy curiosity of the supernatural.

Erika Seshadri lives on an animal rescue ranch with her family. When not caring for tame critters or feral children, she can be found writing.

Alan Hill was born in the UK and immigrated to Canada in 2005. He is the former Poet Laureate of the City of New Westminster, BC (2017-2020), former president of the Royal City Literary Arts Society (RCLAS), and was the editor and curator of *A Poetry of Place: Journeys Across New Westminster*, published in partnership with New Westminster Arts Services. His writing has been published internationally and his poetry has appeared in *Event*, *CV2*, *Canadian Literature*, *The Antigoni Review*, *subTerrain*, *Poetry is Dead*, among others. He works in the field of community development and immigrant settlement and lives in New Westminster, BC. His book *In the Blood* was published by Caitlin Press in 2022.

Sarah Paley is a writer who lives in NYC. Her poems have been published in *Agni*, *Raritan*, *Barrow Street*, *Phantom Drift* and other journals. Her prose writing (humor and essays) can be found in *THE NEW YORKER*. This poem is written in a form invented by the late great poet Robert Harris. The form is called *The Diminuendo* and the rules are as follows: The last word of the first stanza determines the number of lines in that stanza. The word then “diminishes” and continues to determine the length of all future stanzas.

Alicia Sometimes is an Australian poet, multi-media artist and broadcaster. She has performed her spoken word and poetry at many venues, festivals and events around the world. She is director and co-writer of two science-poetry planetarium shows. Her poems have been published in *Best Australian Science Writing*, *Best Australian Poems*, *The Age*, *Griffith Review*, *Meanjin* and many more. In 2021 she completed the Boyd Garret residency for the City of Melbourne and a Virtual Writer in Residency for Manchester City of Literature and Manchester Literature Festival. Alicia's *TedxUQ* talk, 2019 was on combining art with science.

Lindsay-Rose Dykema, MD (she/her/hers) graduated from the University of Michigan Medical School in 2005 and completed her residency training at Columbia University. She is a queer psychiatrist, prison/police abolitionist, and founder of *Uncaged Minds*, a mental health and wellness resource for low-resourced Detroiters with neurodivergent conditions and marginalized identities. Her work has been published in leftist and mental health journals, poetry anthologies, and *Slate Magazine*. She lives in Detroit.

Kathryn Hall grew up in Oregon and has always loved rain—and the solitude given by the enormous forests always in reach. Her poems have appeared in many places, including the *New England Review*, *Sycamore Review*, and *Rattle*.

Amelia Díaz Ettinger is a Latinx BIPOC poet and writer. Amelia's poetry and short stories have been published in anthologies, literary magazines, and periodicals. She has two poetry collections and a chapbook published. She has an MS in Biology and MFA in creative writing. Her literary work is a marriage of science and her experience as an immigrant. Presently, she resides in Eastern Oregon.

Melissa Ridley Elmes is a Virginia native currently living in Missouri in an apartment that delightfully approximates a hobbit hole. Her poetry and fiction have appeared in Black Fox, Poetry South, Haven, Star\*Line, Eye to the Telescope, In Parentheses, and various other print and web venues. Her poetry has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Dwarf Star and Rhysling awards for speculative poetry, and her first collection of poems, *Arthurian Things*, was published by Dark Myth Publications in 2020 and nominated for the 2022 Elgin award.

HR Harper lives in the redwoods above Santa Cruz CA. A gay son of a fundamentalist minister and now a student of Dzogchen meditation, he writes to understand human consciousness in the natural world humans seem to be destroying. He began publishing in 2021. Some of his recently published poems may be found at: <https://brusheswiththedarklaw.blogspot.com/>

Eugene Marcx: I spent my employed life working in a large bakery and raising five children in a marriage slowly failing. My fiction comes from uncomfortable questions arising in the aftermath. I'm a storyteller and a poet, and I finished a novel, "Broken Charlie," about the wholesale clear-cutting of Western forests. In 2018 two of my poems appeared in *Terrain.org*. Another is in a new anthology from Empty Bowl Press, "I Sing the Salmon Home."

Rachel R. Baum is the editor of *Funeral and Memorial Service Readings Poems and Tributes* (McFarland, 1999) and author of the long-running blog *BARK! Confessions of a Dog Trainer*. Her poetry has appeared in *Journal of Expressive Writing*, *OneArt*, *Poetica Review*, *Crosswinds*, and *The Raven's Perch*, among others. She chaired the committee that selected the first Poet Laureate of Saratoga Springs, New York.

Raymond Byrnes is widely published in print and on-line journals and his work has been featured as Editor's Choice in at least six, including *Typishly*, *Third Wednesday*, and *The Writer's Almanac*. He lives in Virginia.

Clay Hardy is a fiction writer based in Portland, Oregon. His work has been previously published by Grattan Street Press.

When not drinking coffee or cheering for the Portland Trail Blazers & Timbers, Clay is usually hanging out with Porter, his Golden Retriever. You can find him on twitter: @\_ClayHardy and on IG: @clay\_is\_writing

M. Shayne Bell

Mary Paulson's writing has appeared in multiple publications, most recently in *DASH Literary Journal*, *The Pomegranate London*, *Amethyst Review*, *Sparks of The Pomegranate London*, *Vita Brevis' ANTHOLOGY IV*, *Hare's Paw* and *VAINÉ Magazine*. Her debut chapbook, *Paint the Window Open* was published by Kelsay Publishing in 2021. She lives in Naples, Florida.

Lily DeWitt is a student at the Ohio State University, studying political science, history, and creative writing.

Joshua has had stories published in *Quarterly West*, *Sequoia*, the anthology *American Fiction*, and the anthology *Writers at Work*. His most recent work, "Horse Sense" appears in the Summer 2022 issue of *The Bangalore Review*. He was awarded 3rd Prize by Judge Wallace Stegner in *American Fiction #4* and was awarded 1st and 2nd Prize by Judge Bob Shacochis in the *Writers at Work* Competition. His novel, *Half Moon Racing Club* was named a semi-finalist in last year's James Jones First Novel Fellowship Contest, among the top 30 out of 737 submissions. Joshua received his MFA from the Writing Division at Columbia University.

Aubry Snow is a data analyst at a large tech company. She has a Bachelor's degree in Advertising and a Master of Science degree in Analytics. She resides in the mountains of Colorado with her partner and two cats. This is her first published work.

Graham Murtaugh is a licensed mental health counselor and unlicensed poet writing from the ancestral lands of the Puyallup people in what is now Tacoma, WA. His work has appeared in *Abandoned Mine*, *BOOTH*, *Gold Man Review*, *The Oregonian* and various anthologies. He has released an illustrated chapbook, *There Is No Safety* (Self-Titled Press, 2013).

Susan L. Leary has work appearing or forthcoming in such places as *Indiana Review*, *Superstition Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *On The Seawall*, *Tahoma Literary Review*, *DMQ Review*, and *Cherry Tree*. She is the author of *A Buffet Table Fit for Queens* (Small Harbor Publishing, 2023), winner of the Washburn Prize; *Contraband Paradise* (Main Street Rag, 2021); and *This Girl, Your Disciple* (Finishing Line Press, 2019), finalist for *The Heartland Review Press Chapbook Prize* and semi-finalist for the *Elyse Wolf Prize*. Recently, she was shortlisted for the *Arthur Smith Poetry Prize*, judged by Charlotte Pence; a finalist for the *16th Mudfish Poetry Prize*, judged by Marie Howe; and a finalist for the *Joy Bale Boone Poetry Prize*, judged by Bernard Clay. She holds an MFA from the University of Miami, where she also teaches Writing Studies. Visit her at [www.susanlleary.com](http://www.susanlleary.com) or on Twitter: @susanlleary.

Grayson is a Black, queer transgender writer boi, a poet, moonlighting as a therapist. He has been featured in *Carnival Literary Magazine*, *Backbone Press*, *Belletrist Magazine*, *Cathexis Northwest Press*, and *High Shelf Press*. A Florida cowboy with a West Coast heart, he chooses madness: of the wild, of the truth, of love, and of dreaming. He hopes you can find some in his poems.

Jim Zaferopolos is the immigrant son of an Asia Minor Greek refugee family who was born in 1946 in the North Aegean seaport city of Kavała. His father died during the Greek Civil War which followed on the heels of World War II. His mother and he immigrated to America in 1955, where he's resided ever since. He has taught college history at the now-defunct Myers University—a small downtown-Cleveland school for thirty years. He is married to a retired elementary school teacher. They have children (married, all of them) and are their doting grandparents of a trove of grandkids (to the number of 16 (one great-great on the way)). Jim has been writing poetry throughout his life, but only recently has found the courage to begin their publication.

Valyntina is a multi-genre eco artist living with her wife in Tucson, AZ. She works with paint, ink, Neon, encaustic medium, recycled or repurposed materials and words. She is the author of three poetry chapbooks, the tête-bêche, *Fever Dream/ Take Heart* (Cathexis Northwest Press 2020) and *In Our Now* (Finishing Line Press 2022). You'll find her work in, *Beyond Queer Words*, *Genre: Urban Arts*, *Impermanent Earth*, *The Journal*, *Lana Turner*, *The Night Heron Barks*, *Querencia*, *Ran Off with the Star Bassoon*, *Sunspot*, and *The Wardrobe*. Find her at [valyntinagrenier.com](http://valyntinagrenier.com) or Insta @valyntinagrenier.

Russell Sebring is the author of several books of poetry, a novelist, journalist, and professional photographer. He lives near Cinderella's Castle and Hogsmeade in Orlando, Florida.

Lina Buividavičiūtė was born on May 14, 1986. She is a poet and literary critic. Her poetry is published in "Matter", "Masters", "Proverse poetry prize" contests anthologies, "Beyond words", "The limit experience", "Cathexis northwest press" magazines and Versopolis poetry platform. Upcoming publications will appear in "New millennium writings", "Beyond words", "Beyond queer words" and "Poetry online" magazines. This poem is translated from Lithuanian to English by Irma Šlekyte.

William Ross is an emerging writer and designer who wrote the Introduction to Epistles to the Torontonians (Oak Knoll Press). His poetry has appeared in Bluepepper. He lives in Toronto on land that was the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississauga of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, Chippewa, Haudenosaune and Wendat peoples.

Born in Omaha, NE, Bradley is a scientist, fiction writer, and poet. His writings are published in Scribe, Assemblage, Sci-Fi Shorts: Anthology Vol.1, The Embrace of Dawn, and Reservoir Road Literary Review. His first book, The Second Sky and Other Stories, will be out in 2023. He works as a physicist for a space solar cell company. He is the editor of Consilience Journal, a peer-reviewed science-poetry journal, a nature photographer, a birder, and a TEDx Speaker. Bradley lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with his dog Eiseley and two cats, Nova and Tesla.

Ed McManis is a writer, editor, erstwhile Head of School, and father. His work has appeared in more than 50 publications, including The Blue Road Reader, California Quarterly, Cathexis Northwest, Narrative, Lascaux Review, etc. He, along with his wife, Linda, have published esteemed author Joanne Greenberg's (I Never Promised You a Rose Garden) latest novel, Jubilee Year. Little known trivia fact: he holds the outdoor free-throw record at Camp Santa Maria: 67 in a row.