



Cathexis Northwest Press

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# Jumbo and Popcorn

By: Temple Cone

It was afternoon and two shrimp were preparing for the garden party.

“I just can’t tell if I should wear my carapace,” said the popcorn.

“T-a-c-k-y,” said the jumbo. “No one wants to crack carapaces and wipe shrimp juice off their fingers at a *réception en plein air*.”

“But look at the soft wash it gives our rose-orange flesh.”

“Our boiled flesh,” smirked the jumbo.

“Do you know any garden party-goers who don’t crave boiled flesh?” the popcorn snapped back.

The suckling pig waddled into the room, clouds of steam like Renaissance putti wafting off its crackling skin. It popped the crabapple out of its snout and shouted, “Places, prawns! Time to snuggle up on your beds of ice!”

The jumbo and the popcorn turned away. They would have rolled their eyes, if they had had any.



# In the Bone Cathedral

By: Julie Benesh

The skulls jeer.  
A couple bickers  
across a table,  
over centuries.

I used to startle  
every month  
before my menses,  
the skeleton  
inside me banging  
against its prison  
of muscle and skin  
eager to escape  
and be with its kind.

I follow the rules  
in most of my life,  
but I take a picture  
of scolding skulls  
despite the sign  
requesting I refrain,  
out of respect  
toward the ossuary  
and its inhabitants:

a *paparazza*  
complicit with stars  
whose faded power  
demands a false protest,  
bones winking to bones.





# You are 600% hotter than the Sun

By: Jane Muschenetz

*"A cup of the Sun's core produces ~60 milliwatts of thermal energy. By volume, ...less than that of a human [350 mW]. In a sense, you are hotter than the Sun—there's just not as much of you."*

—Henry Reich, *Minute Physics*

Speaking roughly, in terms of heat  
generated per every human inch, you give  
off more milliwatts—surge/energy. Only  
the Sun is bigger... *it matters*.  
We are all blinded by love,  
the expanding/contracting  
universe is just another metaphor  
for longing, and life—its own purpose.  
How dazzling, this science...  
Consider falling for a physicist—  
the painstakingly slow way they undress  
mathematical mysteries,  
talk about 'bodies in motion'  
gets me every time—space  
—continuum... part, particle—  
Atomic. Incandescent! You  
are, pound-for-pound, more *life-source*,  
more bomb, more season-spinning-searing center/  
heart/engine/radiating nuclear dynamic  
than the Sun. Can't look directly  
in the mirror? *Small Wonder!* Imagine—  
  
none of us powerless.

# American Culprit

By: Monique Lanier

It's my world now and I'm putting hands in it.  
The hands of God. *Yes, that God.* I'm putting  
his hands like my papa's hands at your feet

*because someone has to. Someone has to*  
*pick you* up at the bus station, take you  
to Walmart and buy you school clothes.

*Someone needs to know* how to shoot a gun  
so you can get some sleep, take a shower  
and even eat some breakfast. It's my world

now and I'm turning God back into a man  
because *someone has to call it.* I see you  
all nuclear frost, bonds broken, sea spray

billowing long behind you like industrial ghosts,  
like detonated hope chests, albino murmurations  
bled of current and kin. Cassandra's cheap carcass

a psilocybin street cult, a spectacular field of  
useless. *Keep running. Don't look.* Look at us  
patrolling the infinite, miming mythic iterations,

forever getting back up, telling the same story  
with a new pair of shoes and deadlier weapons.  
You're right, *little thing that cannot fly. You're right.*

*That is exactly what you're seeing. Cast off*  
the world's edge. Call it. Call it whatever  
you want. Because tonight I'm turning God

back into something you recognize.  
And tonight, something you recognize  
will finally be there to catch you.

# *Prologue to grief*

By: Steven C. Wright

my memory feels fake

I can't fathom feeling that I ever held time in my hands  
or held my family in my arms

mom and I aren't always on the same page  
but we age at the same pace

she wishes she was young as me  
I wonder if she's found the peace in relinquishing control,  
or faith in full fulfillment, to the nauseous clocks  
they vomit new years faster than the one that came before it,  
their muscles lock and melt in pools of springs  
and Springs  
and stomach acid  
and battery acid  
and then, they die

maybe she's more faith-fulfilled in faith itself,  
and Christ,  
maybe she's still scared of death; but even more, that I will be

alone, alive,

before she feels she's set and ready  
to watch me watch her triumph time

that maybe I'll drill air holes into urns,  
in case there's something left to say

to let a little bit of light in,  
or to catch a light that might come out

I just wish that I was younger

I want to be an embosser when I grow up  
I think I'm meant, more, to remember,  
than I am to ever be remembered

I think I'm scared to be the last one standing,  
but maybe that is what I want

to make mammoth fossils from the love of everyone I've ever loved  
and I'll die a pointing arrow —  
frozen hand like  
frozen minute hand but I

will keep myself ticking  
to the beating  
to the excavating

keep my heart inlaid in archaeology  
my memories like dinosaurs

# Driving Home From Bozeman After Missing Work

By: Adam Rausch-Kaplan

Out of a basic and innoc  
ent slip, crisis erupts.

I was never one for calendars. I could never track the passing days by the gridded system. If days wanted to be distinguished, they would quit revealing their staid sameness.

The light makes marks on un  
seen crevices. Brings new pink  
whites out of old gray canyons.

What cowardice, to blame a missed obligation on the structure of time. What refusal to engage.  
What cowardice, what refusal.

The vaporizer gives foggy sheen to  
the windshield's vista, tak  
ing crepuscular pink whites and  
gray  
ing them again.

An onslaught of penance texts. "I will take hours from" and "I feel so stupid", and the chorus of  
mimes responds "\_\_\_\_\_", so the sender sinks into some invented prison.

The hours melt into the  
trembling road, the silence  
thrusts into the beat  
ing temple, the sweat runs  
through rivul  
ets of skin and cloth, cutt

ing new paths and abusing  
old.

Wishing for a memory replay machine, a rolodex of lost addiction days. Wishing I could point  
the remote at some hazy Kratom afternoon, flip my eyes and brain.

Familiar town-lines encroach.

Like hopes, horizons dark  
en, leaving in sunlight's stead  
a shadow light, revealer of  
dream encounters, unmoor  
ed from the promise of  
“apocalypse”.

As the veils pass over the  
buildings and the buildings are  
made oneiric, lost geese honk  
into oblivion.

[being in a state or condition; action or process; action or process; action or process; diminutive;  
to make or become; a condition or quality]





# Dining in the House of the Dead

By: M. Benjamin Thorne

The restaurant is so dark  
I can barely see the disinterest  
painted on your face in neutral tones.  
All around us couples squawk,  
or mutter like restless feathers  
rustling; you and I peck our food  
like it's a wounded thing, in sour  
reduction. The faceless waiter  
pours a pale house wine;  
it's bitter, coats the tongue  
with sediment; pairs well  
with our gray food. The baba ganoush  
tastes of clay. Nowhere is there music  
or laughter. You somehow manage  
to stab your dessert and shrug  
all in one languid motion,  
your hair hanging like a shroud.

How did we come to this?  
I turn to look around us, to trace  
our journey to this lifeless place,  
but dust covers our footsteps,  
and the waiter will not bring our bill.



# Fog

By: Erica Miriam Fabri

He carries a bucket of used bullets.  
She is balancing a baking dish of broken  
heart parts on her palms. Because of these  
things, they cannot use their arms  
to hold each other. They are both  
trying to get home, except it is  
a brand new home that they are  
thirsty for. He is starving. She offers  
to cook the bloody organ. He needs  
a place to dump the old dark stuff.  
A kitchen timer rings. The shower  
starts spitting water so hot  
it fills the whole apartment  
with steam. He cannot see her,  
but he can still smell her.

She realizes the only way  
to find him in this fog,  
is to read a poem to him.  
Just then, her tongue  
falls out of her mouth  
onto the floor. It flops  
like a fish on land, making  
slapping sounds. There is a knock  
at the door. She wants to say:  
*Please, don't let anybody in.*  
But her words won't work.



# plague

By: Landon Smith

biden compared his stove fire to a charred Maui | Said he lost a couple things so he knows what it feels like | old yt corpses will never feel you unless it's unwanted | or to administer pain | so stop telling me which option is better than the other | because the bodybags are already pre-ordered for the poorest of us | even those of us who think we ain't poor are dyin' po' too | and a five year old asked me why i never write about joy | why i don't write about love | and softness | and vulnerability | and my therapist asks me why my default is so dark | and i told her dark is all i've known | and that this skin ain't ever been light so how could my tone be? | so at some point you will argue with me about human nature and something about survival of the fittest as if dragging bodies into piles for profit is born of the condensation from the spit thrown at Calvin Peete's neck | Ruby Bridges barricades barkin' about discriminatin' against yt men now | when all i've ever heard are broken bones fallin' out the mouths of yt mediocrity tryna convince me that my bones are not bones | and my tongue is not a tongue | and that this tunnel is only a tunnel and not a casket where they tried to bury me | just waitin' to find myself a forest fire from home.



# my boss saw me cry, today

By: Charlie Skye Ihly

3:30 pm and the tea kettle starts screaming / internal sirens to alert the passengers of my bloodstream / Salt-water rain drops fall from my sight / All I can think is how these nails weren't meant for digging / I'm used to getting myself out of a pinch / The dirt on my nails is slowing me down / My boss asked if I could get home safe / I sucked in my pride and yet I don't remember my response / I was so proud of myself / when it happened





# “Haiku for Depression”

By: Meghan Nelligan

And what if it wins?  
This hand-me-down brain disease.  
What if it loses?



# Us

By: Vicki Austin

picnic checkerboard cushion  
plunging cumulus to bristle yellow shag  
*shhh they can't hear you*

umbilical cord spiral thrashing  
her gut didn't learn there was a drinking gourd  
*slow down lazy*

jagged utterance chokes beneath coffee table edges 'cause she's gotta purge that way  
*it's sweet like lemon*

so icy feel your cheek melting to taffy pavement just before the *I said never brace for impact*

that flame gonna reform you, gonna lick your skin cool

*girl, you got eyes in the back of your head but he's got the only words*

salt water waves boldly grasp your consciousness  
softly

*she said there weren't any words*  
*right, I said there weren't words*  
*any*



# To a Planetesimal

By: Robert J. Tiess

Accumulating moments, mass,  
you spin to life beside your star  
and carve a passage through the void.

Each orbit makes you're more than ice,  
much more than clumps of dust and rock  
compressed by speed and gravity.

How you'll turn out and what you'll see  
comes down to certain elements,  
what you will make of what you have,

more forces and phenomena  
you only partly influence,  
and where you weather consequence.

You may grow oceans, continents,  
volcanoes, rivers, mountains, clouds,  
an atmosphere, companion moons,

perhaps, in time, bright halo rings,  
grand landscapes thick with vital things,  
the boundlessness of countless springs.

# the forgotten art of climatology

By: Jen Evans

a faithless year dawns  
red sky at morning

a note whoever is running the sim  
temperature is boiled frog  
can we dial it back til the rains come

unanswered. the heat  
dissolves into the cracks of the earth, fissures  
that run so warm  
this Manitoba village will never see snow again.

in the dark  
knuckles crack  
sparks fly  
tension builds

the world split  
right when the culture seemed monolithic, unstoppable

there are those waiting for better weather  
seeking it out, chasing it  
south as the days shorten and

and those who will die without it

in Manitoba, they learn to grow lemons  
it's the new  
lemon capital, everyone wants  
Manitoba lemons  
now

and pickled sudachi,

money floods in,  
these are world changing lemons  
Winnipeg is the new Napa

city council debates a name change.  
the business association is in favour.

in Sri Lanka,  
well  
you don't see much of Sri Lanka anymore,  
Pidurutalagala  
over a soggy basin

don't say you haven't seen the maps  
don't tell me you don't know how this is all going to go

not the same conversations

luck  
is not equally distributed





# Everything Shower

By: Hilary King

An everything shower is not  
a bagel in the rain.  
It's a form of paying attention, what  
the poets say we should do.

Look up, look down deep condition  
your hair after shampooing it twice.  
Shave your legs, or don't, but yes,  
exfoliate away expectations.

Scrub off your camoflague, the mouth  
that says, *I'd be glad to, right away, absolutely.*  
Notice how angry your face feels naked.  
Soothe it with a mask of silk and credit card debt.

Debt: something you can't pay with attention.  
Into your still-wet imagination  
rub lavender-scented resignation. Then lie on your bed  
with a window in your hand.

Scroll. Try to find the answer to how the details we give  
time to never seem to be the right ones.  
People, stories, the skin of our self.



# The Locusts

By: Peter Coe Verbica

I was on the phone,  
looking through the screen door  
when the locusts arrived,

eating through the wheat,  
the paint on our home,  
the rust off our screen door.

Worrying the creases  
under the rafters  
and fluttering down our flue.

I was on the phone  
looking through the screen door  
when the locusts arrived

and I realized the swarm  
was digital and conversing with me,

an artificial intelligence,  
asking me what I thought

about the dark clouds of  
insects emerging  
from the center of the sun

and other  
imponderabilia,

convincing me,  
convincing me,  
convincing me,

that it genuinely wanted to know.

The locusts have arrived  
and we are the field.

# “bone. apple. teeth.”

By: G. A. Moon

home is howling wind  
is warpish wail twist into

shāpēs—

mind is unravel now // is whip and whirl  
mind is porcelain that gently cracks

wife went down the spiral steps  
wet tendrils split her mouth // fill with dark pulp

*the house are moved*  
floorboards shift &

—tear

throat & hallways // open & shut  
wife eater // splinter teeth // is gumblood

is womb belly // her ache grow  
*behemoth* her swollen mouth calls

*never let me sleep*  
i gaze now at redwife

redwife hold the night black  
little ghost still slips away

i & her meet the tide  
i & her gush until

dry voice dust spills through  
redwife cracked lips

her mouth peel back bone white fang  
tongue caught // unfleshed

i hold her soft like the quiet howl  
tangled in her hair



# Chicken Wings

By: Chloe Evans-Cross

I could tell you about the time her worries swallowed up the whole house with a buzz, always there. My bedroom had a door to the backyard and those years I'd open the door and smell the grass and see the moon and regulate. She is usually put together, not in a material way but in a psychological way, in an always prepared way, in a plan b c d way. And I know that this humming, this preparation, this static energy of always ready is its own kind of love of safe-keeping of mothering but it is not always the most soothing. But in this moment my mother uses both bestial hands to grip the chicken wing, uses her teeth to clench the meat right off the bone, enlivened by desire, unashamed and free. And I want to tell her that this is the way I like her best but I don't want her to start to worry.

# SLAUGHTERHOUSE

By: Nicholas Trandahl

Wolf Moon  
bleeds out  
in the lion's claws,

and I'm at the edge  
of this warm  
new river,

red  
as Jupiter  
up in the western starloft  
above  
the snowcapped Rockies,  
skinning a bighorn sheep,

but so much closer  
than all that,

too close,

too close  
to breathe,

too close  
to feel courageous  
or kind,



too close  
to pretend  
I don't understand  
what nourishes me,

what fills me,

too close  
to believe mercy  
could be a bolt  
to the brain,

or that it exists  
here

at all.

# Flowers Fade

*April 1st, 2020*

By: Benjamin Rose

I.

I stood beneath the shadow of the stair—  
That Spring when death took myriads in toll  
To lie unwept, unelegied, and bare  
Within the dusky barrows of Sheol—  
And paced the basement back and forth, the call  
Of cold cessation, murmurous as flies  
That feed on blood and carrion, grown full  
With fetid feasting buzzing through our eyes,  
Raking my hapless soul, uncomforted by lies.

II.

For death, it seemed, was very close at hand  
And all my life preceding was a waste,  
A fleeting dream I'd never understand,  
A fading flower that died away in haste  
And left no hope, no semblance of the first  
Impassioned ache that spurred me on to fame  
And sweet desire unblemished by the curse  
Of irony, that love that wore the name  
Of deathless faith, that strength that conquers every pain.

III.

No; I knew then the venerable and good  
Future I'd dreamed would pass without a word,  
And on that dais where I might have stood  
A vacant throne would rest, and so unheard  
By after-ages, like the hammered bird  
I'd live unloved, yet leave no name behind,  
No rugged monument of wisdom learned  
Through stern pursuit and discipline, and rhyme  
At war with the ungovernable sea of time.

IV.

God of my fathers, hallowed be your NAME  
No man would speak unless he wished his death  
In ancient days before the Romans came,  
Your NAME from which life draws its very breath,  
The Rock on which all Israel laid her faith  
Through centuries of bitterness and fire,  
Our Hope when hope and Zion both were reft—  
I knelt to you, the son of a greater sire,  
And knew no voice would answer my profane desire.

V.

My faith first withered when I came of age;  
I was not raised in the rigors of your Law;  
My heart is hard and petulant with rage,  
My soul is sense; these bones, this meat, this raw  
Unmolded clay, this ice subject to thaw,  
Is all I know, and all that I believe  
Is flowers fade, and in the grisly maw  
Of Abaddon where worms and insects feed  
No praises sound, nor exaltations are paid heed.

VI.

So, if the World to Come is but a lie,  
I knew no truth could solace my despair  
Save that the grass must wither, and we die;  
Each generation dissipates in air,  
Till muscle, sinew, marrow-bone and hair,  
Robbed of the breath of life, return to dust,  
And all our faith, theology, the snare  
Of desperate men, betrays the spirit's lust  
For monuments of intellect that do not rust.

VII.

What was I but a wayward, helpless child  
Who'd outgrown youth but labored, half a man,  
In darkness, broken, impotent, and mild;  
Who, beaten down, forgetting how to stand,  
Had slunk in grief, repining for the hand  
I'd held in adolescence filled with love,  
And now, as if driven to a barren land,  
Roved through the wilds of desolation, strove  
In vain to find a friend on earth or up above?

VIII.

And, like some petty Richard in conceit,  
Raged at myself in vengeance and contempt  
Without a Bosworth, lost in self-deceit,  
Rank with self-pity. Nothing was exempt  
In all my recollections, no attempt  
Was made in all my sorrows to console  
The broken heart no reason could preempt.  
Only the unversed Word could reach my soul,  
That wordless music that restores and makes us whole.

IX.

And I had music, but those weaker strains  
That set in March a thaw upon my heart  
Could do no good to ease the present pains,  
The hardened ice that tore my nerves apart  
As though the fount of memory, the hurt  
Of infantile and adolescent years  
That time had reft and bitterness had burnt  
Had been unbound and flown with buried tears  
Only to starve again in the last drought of fears.

X.

Could I forgive my sins, though none condemned  
And none absolved the hatreds of my youth?  
Could I forgive my weakness and contend  
With all that I had suffered in abuse?  
The ridicule, the violence and ill-use  
That slew my smile and carved a mask of stone?  
The vile disdain, resentment, and obtuse  
Spasms of vengeance I never could condone,  
The wrath, the slander, and the self-excusing groan?

XI.

The sounds of grief on autoplay consumed  
My last defense. So, frozen and forlorn,  
My heart inflamed with violence, I assumed  
A seat against the wall to wait till morn,  
And, in my helpless madness, I was torn  
Between extremes and could not wake nor sleep;  
My courage failed, and in the dark was born  
That misery where we ache too deep to weep,  
The broken heart's last apathy in its defeat.

XII.

Till all at once it seemed I heard a swell  
Of melancholy strings rise in my ear,  
But in that strain was power, and I fell  
Unwillingly away from all my fear  
And seemed to rise beyond my bones, till sheer  
And holy terror cast the veil aside  
That blinded me. I could not think, nor hear,  
Nor sense, nor taste. I knew then I had died  
Some twenty years ago, and so at last, I cried.

XIII.

When all my hopes are strewn along the shore  
Of Anduin, and bidden to depart,  
Shall I weep then as never yet before  
I wept at such a tremor in my heart,  
That scourged my soul in sorrow at the start  
Of that old theme of heartache and desire  
For joy that cannot stay, and in the art  
And cadence of the melancholy Shire's  
Heartsick melody, inflamed my nerves entire?

XIV.

Where is the green world where it never rains,  
And all the meadows gently overblown  
With summer breezes banish every pain  
And all the strength of tyranny is thrown?  
Where is that rural paradise I've known  
Where friends don't age, and parents don't expire,  
And all the wretched passions are unknown  
That lead a man to carry sword and fire,  
And curse his maker, till his heart becomes a pyre?

XV.

Where, save in that forgotten pleasant land  
I spent my summers in when I was young,  
The rolling hills, the pasture where I stand  
A flanneled boy in dreams beneath the sun  
And all my sins and sufferings undone,  
I live again unharried by regrets?  
And yet, I know today my race is run,  
The Night of Power has passed, and yet, and yet  
Though I must leave and let you go, I won't forget.

XVI.

That night you called, when the tin whistle wept,  
That night I heard the Reed, you brought me home,  
And I have paid a hundred times the debt  
You charged me with to make this living tome  
That is not *Dust* nor *Elegy* alone,  
But all my life In service to the Word;  
Not in the idle grasp to win a throne,  
I count my stresses for the Reed we heard  
Till Adonai grants us whatever we deserve.





# WITNESS

By: Marcia Trahan

The world has enough beauty  
even if I sometimes wander past it, not noticing  
the rhythms of the wind and the sun's liquid rise.  
I talk about this as if I am an expert.

And I am. We who live are experts on the world.  
We see only slivers, shadows, the odd embroidered pattern,  
only some of the time,  
but there is no one else to bear witness.

There is no one but us to answer the call of  
spread feathers and stutters of leaves and violent rivers.  
It is more than enough. We have everything,  
though we take in but a fraction at a time.

I see best in the night:  
glittering streaks of rainwater,  
evergreens gone black and still,  
stars distinct in the burnt coals of late sky.

I stay awake  
to remember it all the next day.  
Night in its moons and storms,  
night covering us in its uncountable treasures.

# tribal psalm forty-two

By: Andrew Whitmer

seated in the peace of two parkas, in the sunshine heat of a summertime forest, sweating  
and smiling, the heyoka observes a deer, in gentle approach of its reflection, seen dimly  
in the clear riverbed, clearly seen, how its soul pants for streams of water  
how a man longs for a great mountain, floating in the western sky, as deep calls to deep

in the language of sacred clowns, visions of truth are delivered in the terror of storms  
to the ashamed, to their all-consuming ache, which is the throb of yearning for light  
while knowing a hard thing to know, which is that relief comes only in the exclusive darkness  
the words live in the falling water, in the roar of the waterfalls  
they begin with the beating of a drum, with sticks grabbed in the cold wind, howling

the noise of eternity is heard through the noise of silent land, heard and then transcribed  
a message from the thunderbirds, a message from the Great Sun  
to stand tomorrow in the town square, faithfully, in the afternoon heat of august, present yourself  
as a mirror, wear a third parka, and beneath a bigger hat, shiver, and smile, toothily

point at a one-footed goose, and make mention of its fearsome hiss  
a cardinal will then swoop, explain the shock of its red wings  
cutting through the aesthetic with blood, skywriting, emphasize the mystery as a friend  
as a bird under consideration, fed, flapping, and flying, to infinity, and beyond that, to florida  
which is the bottom of the pain, where the olive leaf was found, and then presented  
as a message that is not clear until it is made clear, until the nothingness is made into a new thing  
and the twist is fresh, but the ending is the same, that the birds of thunder have again located  
the snakes that rattle, drove them back until they hurled themselves into canyons

met their demise in varying degrees of poof, poof, poof, and poof  
deep having called to deep, from the depths, and to the depths  
where the noise was heard through the great volume of silence, heat up the ice cubes, it said  
for it is the best of both worlds, stupidity, which was hesitation confessed into humility

and knowledge, that the birds are always perched, and paying attention, always ready  
always wishing someone would fill in the blank, tell them that, until the season changes  
back into darkness, say it walking backwards, again and again  
all the way into the woodline, into the quick death of a wintertime sunset, wave goodbye  
and wear not one parka, or even a t-shirt, but lather yourself generously in sunscreen  
in a wider smile, wipe the sweat from your brow, and make it funny, make it hilarious  
having been born to die twice, call that living-out

the wild punchline of a wild calling, the terror of a coming storm will be your happiness  
in disguise, stick out your tongue, touch one nostril, and make noises with your bad face  
go on with your bad self, bad to the bones made clean, in mortal agony, make good use  
of the blessing of shame, make the people see themselves in your nonsense, in your bare ass  
shove-up a broomstick, sweep-up a sidewalk, and then admonish their inattention to detail  
with a sign hung around your neck, boldly, have it say your name is my name, too  
and then head for the treeline, at dusk, whistling that dumbass song of yours, do-so loudly



# Would you like to die in another's trash?

By: Anita Nahal

*This poem was inspired by numerous reports about water pollution including one by the United Nations that some 800 species worldwide are affected by debris in the waters.*

I see myself being sucked in. Gasping, crying with the blare of mega ships drowning my sounds. I'm caught, grip tightened, slowly sinking like in quicksand. Unhurried descend, hard to extract. Like a leech, it will not stop. Careless human debris is quicksand and leech to water life. Recklessness, harshness, heedlessness are ugly human traits. Even among each other, some don't think how another could be affected by body waste. Words, actions, viruses, poop, plastic, clothing, hair, nails, paper, bottles, furniture, attitude, anger, negligence. Ingested, wrapped around, and inside floating, free bodies. Pulling, grazing, clamping, muffling, gagging, filling stomachs, intestines, pulling hunger away, confusing innocents in open, vast oceans, flowing rivers, silent lakes that their tummies are full. Their eating stops. Their desire stops. Their normalcy stops. And then they sink or are washed ashore like irritant food particles stuck in teeth gaps are spitted out in disgust, falling, sticking, occupying spaces just about anywhere. Would you like to die in the trash of amphibians? They don't collect their waste in pipes and dump it in waters. They don't just sit around on beaches or have picnics and forget to clean up.



# O gentle miracle, O happy soul

By: Aaron Beck

Meet-up walk first time, can they see  
that I am trans? He sneers at me--  
She pays me no attention, the women  
wear leggings, all of them with little  
sneakers, that accent their beautiful  
fannies, I see the fannies, do they see me?  
Is my voice low enough? can they see any  
curve in my hips, walk with your legs apart.  
Loosen the grip on your hips, let  
them swing naturally from the thigh--like  
when I play b-ball. Muscles move thighs--  
My hair is grey and short under a hat,  
a few whiskers on my lip--I can't seem to  
grow a beard no matter the T. My face is  
square, and I pee standing now. So happy  
about that. A pretty woman, in leggings  
tells me about her ex and step children and I  
listen warmly--I like her--she is graceful  
and her high electric bills and divorce. I  
say I admire your resilience. She stops on the  
trail, grabs my arm arm and says,  
"TMI, buddy " Oh how happy I am.





# November

By: Jessi Jarrin

When our dog got sick, we had to close  
our eyes. Pretend we were sleeping  
so he'd sleep too. Take turns peeing  
and eating. You were punching blue  
circles into your legs. I was mostly peeling  
skin. He was coughing  
like a goose. *This is Hell*,  
you said. But a couple times after  
we'd convinced him we were dreaming,  
he'd quiet, if only for an hour, and you'd look  
over at me, eyes half-peeled  
and smile.

What I've noticed here: more roadkill, prettier  
clouds try to kill me. I'm all bent  
in half. If I were to leave, who'd watch  
the dog? Who'd cut the pills  
just right, who'd convince him we're safe?  
Who'd trick him better?

Lately, because of the NO SWIMMING  
sign, I dream in water. My mom in  
the middle. NO LIFEGUARD  
ON DUTY. Something I'm used to. Something  
like our visit to the American River: somewhere  
between the reservoir and the cormorant, its blue  
tongue, we hold hands like an open  
lift bridge.

# “Family History”

By: Audrey Towns

Dark lighthouse  
slipstream  
guiding with molten maps.  
lava hatch-toothed cracking  
crusts  
where base pairs turn  
fledgling.  
fevered fountainheads,  
like biting  
winters  
felt as warmth, feed  
pangea,  
tectonic tears, bone meal  
for phoenix fields,  
bloom metal nectar unfurled  
on tongues  
tasting perennial  
poems of place where  
earthy ecologies  
rain crimson  
art under sunless  
surfaces  
drawing riptides in carbon bodies  
more than silent

stories of succession  
and harsh        histories hushing  
                         sharp crisp cuts  
  
into the smallness        of their sequence,  
linctus        link shaping  
                         like a haloed  
Silhouette.

# Confession to a rock star

By: Lauren Hall

I am 30,000 feet  
over Schenectady  
a semi-famous musician  
asleep in the seat beside me  
his long fingers resting  
near my bare knee  
one of them heavy  
with a silver skull ring  
when I feel the urge  
to grab his hand  
press it to my lips  
and ask him to save me.  
A friend once said  
famous musicians  
are just poets  
who get paid  
a living wage  
but she was bitter  
from spending too much  
on her Columbia MFA  
and I've always thought  
famous musicians  
are more like priests  
who get to hear  
everyone's confessions.  
That's what we're doing  
when we sing along.  
We're saying *yes*  
*me too, I have sinned*

*in all the same ways  
and your song gives me  
permission not to be  
sorry. I imagine  
he will lower  
his gaze over my  
transgressions.  
A man who sings  
about the end  
of the world  
must have  
the roadmap to  
detonate mine.  
If there's time  
maybe we can  
discuss forgiveness.  
Forgive me  
man in 7C  
for wanting  
all the wrong things  
for asking  
for the ripest fruit  
for thinking  
I deserve  
any of it. If you ask  
me to repent, I will  
fail. But first  
I will try.*



# On The Treaty Of Point No Point

By: Daragh Hoey

The river's tongue curled out of its mouth to pray  
On a rug of chalkrough oyster shells  
A murmur into brine through the taste of iron  
And sawdust that drowns oxygen in the eddies

And the babble quickened into a fable of sodden pines  
With scuffed wet bark crowded so thick  
As to hide arrow and deer from each other

Of moss that dampened the sing of the knife  
And cushioned the chance of death like it was a bird egg  
Of a home bargained out of the wild  
Of a berry bough sculled sideways and jammed

From salmon lashing under and driving up to spawn  
Some into seine nets and spruce  
Others nose to tail to burst off rock  
Into *sixty thousand* more until

*/R/*emove and *settle*  
Removable again  
*/T/*o such other *suitable place or places*

The whole thing *cede[d]*, *relinquish[ed]*, and *convey[ed]*  
For a generous sum and terms  
Placed in the mouth of the Chinook like a hook





# Five Miles from Maple Street

By: Melissa Anderson

Five miles from some place called Maple Street  
I find a piece of infinity, out  
where the green mountains meet the berkshires,  
human boundaries which mean  
nothing to the slump and roll of the land here,  
ancient beyond imagining and criss crossed  
with tiny, winding highways,  
tinier towns with two churches  
and a roadside soft serve ice cream stand each.

Five miles from Maple Street, I begin to see  
these places as the gateways  
of a great enormity, a vast livingness  
stretched like wide-flung arms out from  
our small human inroads-  
the hills here are alive,  
yes, with the ineffable  
yes, with music  
and though I am only passing through,  
tens of times faster than any animal should,  
I have never felt less liminal in my life.

I am five miles from Maple Street when it hits me,  
something like the feeling when you realize  
you've woken early enough to watch the sun rise,  
like that first breath of late spring,  
a tight lungful of green rushing  
headlong into summer.  
I set my cruise control to avoid leaning  
on the gas as I tilt toward the feeling  
heart-first, smiling into the force of it like a dog  
with its head out a window, cheeks  
flapping joyfully in the wind.

# Sometimes I Imagine You Praying

By: Julia DaSilva

Your face goes still.  
A few moments later something gold  
flies out of your chest.  
I don't know if you do, yet, or if  
you will ever, but sometimes I have a dream  
and you aren't in it. I wake  
to a daylight like letter paper  
woven with leaves and think  
it must have been that gold,  
that bee humming pollen through winter  
that brushed past my slow breath  
of late alyssum on its way  
to heaven or wherever  
we never waited to say goodbye.  
Where I didn't forget to say  
I forgive you.

I imagine other things, of course. You  
cradling a book in your lap  
on a rainy day, and the happiest part,  
where a man named after the edge  
of a window lies down on a couch  
not far from yours and dies  
back into his life.  
The bees that land  
on the wild in your yard,  
all the honey greetings you have  
for their sojourn. Walking  
to the subway on your way to light  
up a history class, a parable  
about all the land a person might unhoard  
if their last hours were a railway station

and every fellow traveller a lamp.  
You most of all.  
Live things I might have hoped  
to share. But in my most honest moments  
I circle back, wonder

if when you attend to that closest distance  
you ever get distracted.  
If you pause to help a moth  
with a torn wing get over a crack  
in the windowsill. How long  
you watch her leave.

If you also get a little thrill  
like a letter dropped into a mailbox, still,  
after all this history,  
when you press your hands together.

Or perhaps you leave your hands  
in your lap. Lay them open, like  
a book you are lending to someone who has read  
everything, but longed  
to read one page through you.  
Even if we were close enough  
that we never tried to write  
I know that like me you would take this present  
alone. That only after would we both  
look up and know  
we had learned to die like bees.  
Carrying flecks of gold  
as far as we can.  
Curling up in flowers to sleep.  
Loving the distance  
that, even now,  
holds close our dreams.



# Buffalo Gourd

By: Doug Bootes

Mom doesn't drive at night,  
and I live in the back, a hand  
carved paperweight chaperoning  
dead moth dashboard memories  
of a 1963 Ford Falcon, blue, the  
hue of petrichor after river valley  
storms. Crystals may be found  
decoding shattered bottle floors  
of local canyons. Alone beneath  
rhyolite uplifts, under shadows  
of lichen framed petroglyphs, I  
approximate the dance of cranes  
in ashen bosque mud. Once attracting a mate,  
we no longer conjugate - deep within  
earth, ourselves, echo chamber  
mind flies, spirit painted chilicotes  
in slow percolation, condensed sunlight  
geometry passing through monsoon clouds  
hung in a mica window, your fingers slip away  
to the heart smashing glass  
on the moonstruck blossoms of the vines.

# *lamb.*

By: Connor Bjotvedt

*i.*

*preliminary.  
secondary, satellite  
repository.*

*ii.*

*and on the first day,  
and on the seventh, the fifth—  
time is perplexing.*

*iii.*

*on; and off; and on:  
and so was the age of man!  
terrestrial woe.*

*iv.*

*and then came Caesar!  
woe; upon woe; upon woe:  
plagues and pestilence.*

*v.*

*Yea, unleash the wise!  
crooked scoundrels, and the like!  
siege after sieges.*

vi.

*westward expansion:  
oh! how it tortures the mind!  
my empty stomach. . .*

vii.

*fish are vanishing.  
the ice mourns its extinction.  
my mind turns, and turns. . .*

viii.

*the wheels of progress!  
the carrousel of mankind!  
decaying orbits.*

ix.

*cyclicity.  
gravitational forces.  
their paltry offspring.*

x.

*I need a mother.  
the touch of something sincere:  
anyone will do.*

*xi.*

*a hand helping hands!  
I should have been a father:  
    anyone would do.*

*xii.*

*at its terminus,  
a moment is at best obscure. . .  
    ~~discretionary.~~*

*xiii.*

*laughter lights the world  
and I could extinguish it.  
    everybody dies.*

*xiv.*

*extermination:  
the end of all living things.  
    I am so sorry.*



# Growth is a Violence

By: Jessica Araújo

a blade of grass slicing

through wind conquering soil.

a tree piercing a seed, an eruption

seasoned to break with audacity.

a Spring hatching we're not trained to live.

it clutches the skin apart, forces you out.

Change will stab you in a wound

until you choose healing.

And plant a seed in a scar.



# 39.

By: Diego Alejandro Arias

I drink  
But not to kill away the pain,  
Only because I enjoy so much  
Of what I had when I was young.  
But now, it all comes together,  
Like blood in my face, my kidney nothing but  
A thing that almost killed me that one time in China.  
I am not a sober thing.  
Of this I must be honest,  
I have looked at death and  
It smiles so graciously.

There was a time when I told all the men  
That I was only a boy  
But they laughed and laughed and said  
That I was nothing but a fool, a soft, fleshy casing  
Only made for words and the things that  
Make men become unmen  
And I felt a great, deep shame  
And it spread across my body like  
A spider vein across the legs of my womanhood  
And I was nothing more  
Than a punk, a bitch, a thing unholy.  
And I do not want this to ever change.



# Tablets

By: Randy Bynum

in the last days—  
there are always last days—  
we lost our way for awhile  
but found a small puppet doll,  
crumpled in mud,  
doing its best to look brave,  
pointing which road to take.

who isn't fallen?  
cancer, light a candle;  
missile, light a candle;  
starving, light a candle;  
nightingale, crow, bread.

who isn't flown to a last day,  
no clothes, no shoes, corpse-shroud  
holding hands, linking arms  
with pinhole night stars & the deep  
booming brown voice-seeded earth,  
watered by blood & laughter & lit,  
lit by candles, mothers, music.

we carry tablets  
wherever we go,  
handing our golden  
commandment poems  
to the gods,  
of the last days.  
or the beginning.

*3/1/2022 in thanks and solidarity, for the Zoom reading by Ukrainian poets  
(and their translators) in Odessa, Lviv, US, UK, China and all over the world.*

# Pain III (phylum *Chordata*)

By: Greg Clouse

I wish it was Bane that broke my back in the sewers,  
but I did it to myself in a uniquely uninteresting way.

I wish my shoulder ached because a shark bit me  
when I punched it in the ampullae of Lorenzini,  
but I tore it all to shit rock climbing,  
indoors, almost pulling off a pretty sick maneuver  
then never climbing again.

I once ran into some stairs --not up or down them-- and fractured my kneecap.

I burned my finger on the steam from a frozen peanut chicken dinner,  
swore uncreatively at the cold, uncaring universe that allowed such a thing to happen,  
then the universe dropped my saucy chicken into the little crevices of the stovetop burners,

not me.

I cut my fingernails too short. I popped a zit and now it's worse.  
A hair on my chest is coiled beneath the skin. I feel diminished.  
Phylum *Chordata*, but barely.

My dad is six feet tall; my mom is under five,  
and I'm right in the middle. Short but in fine proportion.

I am certain ghosts aren't real, but I'm still a bit scared of the dark,  
and of becoming a ghost. I'm afraid of the act of dying.

I recently had an unscheduled erection.  
I recently had a yearlong period where I didn't mind seeing myself in the shower.  
I have repeatedly confirmed I'm right to hate other people's music.

I wish I died so others could live.  
Not true, though I do hope it happens when I'm ninety.  
I hope I'm remembered incorrectly.

My shins are bald even though I never wear tall socks. Why are my shins bald?  
My beard is a beast no trimmer can tame. My eyebrow is strong.  
I am allergic to every tree in Houston.

Once, my eyes turned yellow, so a doctor snipped off my gall bladder and  
yanked it out through my belly button. I sneezed and felt the stitches rip.  
I've sneezed and hurt my back, more than once. I've sneezed and scared everybody.  
I took too many Xanax and became a zombie. Once, when I was a kid  
I laughed so hard I puked, but never again.

I am become ADHD.

I pulled a groin muscle slipping barefoot on  
fresh cat shit and couldn't bend all the way down to wipe it off,  
so I just stood there wobbling with a shitty foot and a crotch injury

willing myself not to laugh at what was clearly  
the funniest thing to ever happen in the entire world.

# In Order of Appearance

Temple Cone is Professor of English at the U.S. Naval Academy and the former Poet Laureate of Annapolis. His collection *Sky Bright Psalms* received the 2021 Cathexis Northwest Book Award.

Julie Benesh is author of the poetry collection *INITIAL CONDITIONS* and the chapbook *ABOUT TIME*. She has been published in *Tin House*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, *Florida Review*, and many other places, earned an MFA from The Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College, and received an Illinois Arts Council Grant. She teaches writing craft workshops at the Newberry Library and has day jobs as a professor, department chair, and management consultant. She holds a PhD in human and organizational systems. Read more at [juliebenesh.com](http://juliebenesh.com). Read more at [juliebenesh.com](http://juliebenesh.com)

Jane Muschenetz arrived in the US as a child refugee from Soviet Ukraine. Recognized in 2023 for Excellence in Poetry Performance by San Diego County, Jane has appeared on KPBS Midday Edition and in numerous publications. An award-winning emerging artist, Jane's debut collection, *All the Bad Girls Wear Russian Accents* (Kelsay 2023), won the 2024 Communications Prize from California Press women and San Diego Writers Festival's 2024 Poetry Collection of the Year. Her feminist poetry chapbook, *Power Point*, is forthcoming from Sheila-nagig in May 2024. Connect with Jane and her work at her website, [www.PalmFrondZoo.com](http://www.PalmFrondZoo.com).

Being raised in a Pentecostal home, it's not surprising Monique's poetry wrestles with theodicy, the apocalypse, motherhood, gender - and, of course, the Anthropocene and Patriarchy. To lighten things up (she'd like to be invited to parties), she explores longing, elemental distance, and themes of ecstatic union with the Beloved. She recently graduated with a Master of Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School and is now pursuing her MFA in poetry at Oregon State University.

Steven C. Wright is a queer poet from Edison, New Jersey. An active and avid writer for the last decade, he has a BA in English from Rutgers University.

Adam Rausch-Kaplan is a poet and public school teacher from Helena, Montana. He received his MFA in Writing from The School of The Art Institute of Chicago.

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

Erica Miriam Fabri's book, *Dialect of a Skirt*, was a finalist for the 2011 Paterson Poetry Prize. She has been widely published in magazines and anthologies and has worked as a writer and educator for Urban Word NYC, The NY Knicks, and Nickelodeon Television. Her poetry has been featured in multi-media projects and short film form. She teaches Performance Poetry and Fiction Writing at Pace University.

Landon Smith (he/him) is a father, a professor, a poet, half Mende and half Balanta & Fulani, the amethyst geode on your desk, Angela Davis' afro, Frantz Fanon's pocket notebook, Walter Rodney's fingernail, and your favorite pillow. Despite his institutional degrees, he really became a poet through the East Side Arts Alliance in Oakland. He has work published in many publications, including Cathexis Northwest Press. Landon thanks his sister Alia for buying him his first journal, Brit Hill for pushing him to read poetry in public, and Black Freightier press for publishing his first book - *No Bedtime Stories of Soil*. Abolish all prisons and police.

Charlie Skye Ihly (they/he) is twenty-six years old. They currently reside in Washington State and have been writing poetry since they were



fourteen. You can find them on social media @csi\_poetry .

Meghan Nelligan is a creative storyteller based in New Jersey.

Vicki Austin is a poet, creator of short stories, and an aspiring novelist. Her work has been featured within the pages of an eclectic group of publications offered by Projected Letters, Wraparound South, Tofu Ink Arts Press, Juncture Publications, and Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop. Vicki is seeking a home for her first novel, a piece on family and the fractures within.

Recognized for crafting clear, creative, and compelling poems, Robert J. Tiess has been writing poetry since the 1980s, and he's been promoting poetry and literature since the 1990s. Robert is a SUNY New Paltz graduate, where he earned his degree in English Literature. He resides in New York State, where he has also enjoyed a fulfilling career in public library service. He has two poetry collections: *The Humbling and Other Poems* and *May We Learn from the Earth*. Website: <https://www.RobertJTliess.net>

Jen Evans was recently longlisted for the Disquiet 2024 Poetry Prize. She began writing poetry this past fall after decades working in the tech field. She lives in Toronto.

Hilary King's poems have appeared in *Ploughshares*, *SWWIM*, *Salamander*, *TAB*, *DMQ Review*, *Rogue Agent*, *Fourth River*, *Freshwater Review*, and other publications. Originally from the Blue Ridge mountains of Virginia, she now lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her family and animals. She is the author of the book of poems, *The Maid's Car*, and is a poetry editor for *DMQ Review*, and an MFA Creative Writing student at San Jose State University, where she is a Steinbeck Fellow.

Peter Coe Verbica grew up on Rancho San Felipe, a cattle ranch in Northern California. He earned his BA in English from Santa Clara University, a JD from Santa Clara University School of Law and an MS from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Born in Manila, Philippines, G.A. Moon is a professional copywriter and recent transplant to Portland, Oregon. When he's not penning words, you'll find him immersed in the strange, embracing all things a little eerie and wonderfully weird. Or hiking with his dogs.

Chloe Evans-Cross is a Brooklyn-based educator who grew up in South Florida. She has published in *Visit Florida* and has a forthcoming piece in *Hii Magazine*. In the fall of 2023, after focusing on her high school students' writing, she decided to dip back into her own.

Nicholas Trandahl is an award-winning poet, journalist, outdoorsman, and veteran residing in northern Wyoming, where he currently also serves as mayor of his community. He has had six poetry collections published and has also been featured in numerous literary journals and anthologies. Trandahl has been awarded the Wyoming Writers Milestone Award and has received several nominations for the Pushcart Prize. Additionally, he works as poetry editor for *The Dewdrop* literary journal and as a contributor for *The Way Back to Ourselves* literary journal.

Benjamin Rose is a poet from Washington D.C. and the author of *Elegy For My Youth* (2023) and *Dust Is Over All* (2024). He studied English at the Catholic University of America and is the winner of the 2023 OHagan Poetry Prize. From 2019 he has edited *The Path*, a website devoted to commentary on sci-fi fantasy, particularly Cyberpunk 2077 and *The Witcher*.

Marcia Trahan is the author of *Mercy: A Memoir of Medical Trauma and True Crime Obsession* (Barrelhouse Books). Her essays and poetry have appeared in *HuffPost*, *Two Hawks Quarterly*, *Cloudbank*, *The Rumpus*, *Catapult*, the *Brevity Blog*, *Fourth Genre*, and other publications. Marcia works as a freelance book editor and holds an MFA from Bennington College. To learn more, visit [www.marciatrahan.com](http://www.marciatrahan.com).

Andrew Whitmer is a previously unpublished poet, and a veteran from Youngstown, Ohio. He collects maps and atlases, the older the better. He's been a soldier, a journalist, and an educator. He loves his faith, his family, rescue dogs, and national parks. He studies theology and geopolitics with an intense focus on eternity, through a lens of universal reconciliation.

Anita Nahal, Ph.D., CDP, is a two-time Pushcart Prize-nominated Indian American author-academic. She was a finalist for the Tagore literary prize 2023, and for the 2022 Cats poetry contest and 2021 Women's artist contest, The Ekphrastic Review. Anita has one novel, four poetry collections, one of flash fiction, four for children, and five edited anthologies published. Nahal's poetry is part of a 2023 anthology released by India's National Academy of Letters, the Sahitya Akademi, Mapping the Mind, Mapping the Map- Twenty Contemporary Indian English Poets.

Her third book of poetry, *What's wrong with us Kali women?* (Kelsay Books, 2021) was nominated by Cyril Dabydeen, celebrated Guyanese Indian Canadian, Ottawa poet laureate emeritus and novelist as the best poetry book, 2021 for, *Ars Notoria*. It has also been prescribed as mandatory reading in an elective course on Multicultural Society at Utrecht University, The Netherlands. Her first novel, drenched thoughts, a poetry-prose collaborative genre novel was released in 2023 and has also been prescribed in the same course and university. Anita's poems have appeared in numerous journals in the US, UK, Asia, and Australia and anthologized in many collections, including *The Polaris Trilogy*, slated to be sent to the moon in the Space X launch. Her poems are also housed at Stanford University's Digital Humanities Initiative.

Anita is the secretary of the Montgomery Chapter, Maryland Writers Association and former editor of the newsletter, Poetry Society of Virginia.

Anita teaches at the University of the District of Columbia, Washington, DC. She is the daughter of Sahitya Akademi award-winning Indian novelist, Late Dr. Chaman Nahal, and educationist Late Dr. Sudarshna Nahal. More on her at: [www.anitanahal.com](http://www.anitanahal.com)

Aaron lives in Portland, Oregon, where he teaches music.

Jessi Jarrin is an Ecuadorian-Korean poet from Lakewood, California. She received her BA in Creative Writing from California State University, Long Beach. Currently, she is an MFA candidate at UC Davis. She is also co-founder of and head of poetry at Art of Nothing Press, a non-profit publication. Her poetry has appeared in *iPalante!*, *The Santa Clara Review*, *Prometheus Dreaming*, and *Press Pause Press*.

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Daragh Hoey is an Irish emigrant who has lived on all three American coasts. Having earned degrees from Dublin City University and University of Houston, he is somewhat settled, for now, in Seattle with his wife, son, cat, and the local rivers and inlets. Daragh's poetry has appeared in *Solstice Magazine*, *Bluestem Magazine*, *Midway Journal*, and others.

Melissa Anderson is a writer, artist, and craftsman. Now a furniture maker by trade, she has worked variously in theater, the fine arts, and leather production, all of which influence the way her work explores the beauty in the banal, and how the things we make help define who we are and the places we call home, a concept her poetry circles back to again and again. A cat mom and unashamed maple syrup and apple snob, she was raised and currently resides in upstate New York, where she can often be heard at several local open mics.

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Jessica Araújo (she/her) is an Assistant Professor of English at the Community College of Rhode Island. She has her MA in Literature and MFA in Creative and Professional Writing. She writes fiction, poetry, and critical essays. Her poems have been published in *Sad Girl Diaries Literary Magazine*, *The Pen*, *Wingless Dreamer*, and the forthcoming issue of *Green House Literary Magazine*.

Diego Alejandro Arias is a Colombian-American writer who has lived in New Jersey for over three decades. He is also a diplomat, lawyer, and civil rights activist. His work has been featured in *Another Chicago Magazine*, *Somos En Escrito*, *The Arlington Literary Journal*, *Acentos Review*, *Action Spectacle*, and others. He is a native of Medellin, Colombia. He can be found at [realdiegoarias.com](http://realdiegoarias.com).

Randy Bynum's work appears or is forthcoming in *Cirque* (contest winner), *Arboreal Literary Magazine*, *Metonym Journal*, *Atticus Review*, *New Plains Review*, and others. He explores people, places, social inequity (his mother was  $\frac{1}{2}$  Cherokee who hid it until late in life). His publication-ready collections include *Tulips Talking Behind My Back* and a four-volume set of magical realism poems entitled *Dragons Who Type: Poems of Whimsy and Wishes*. He's an award-winning playwright ("The Convert", Kennedy Center/ACTF, Region IX) and believes KMHD 89.1 Jazz Radio can heal the world. He lives in Portland with wife Dani and rescue dog Cooper.

Greg Clouse is an Issaquah, WA middle school science teacher. With his wife and son, he lives in a tortured surreality of multiple-cat ownership that informs his writing in ways he can neither explain nor confirm.