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# AUBADE

By: Julie Benesh

The future's a whale that doesn't target  
us, particularly: drinks its ocean,  
filters needed nutrients, expels the rest.

The biggest-eyed kitten's a trained assassin,  
but even she can learn to mother a bird.  
We never blame the faster prey

for starving the predator,  
and confuse the light of dawn  
with the end of days.

What comes for us is nothing  
compared to what we do, ourselves,  
to ourselves, pulling every trigger.

# Abstractions and Cognitive Illusions

By: Roxanne Noor

Mental acrobatics  
a forward handspring into oblivion  
the derangement of the senses / a small leap of imagination  
where the unconscious and conscious have a dialogue  
*sit down for a cup of tea*  
in this nation of skewed images  
reality is a refraction of light  
to decipher the subconscious lilt  
a subtle pulse under all minor action

the didgeridoo cannot play itself  
the human sculpts fellow man  
in his image of soot and clay  
the pregnant fruit does not know  
it is made to be devoured

an apple falls far from the tree  
with skin fleshy like human thigh  
its color is indigo and there's no reason it cannot be  
obscurity does not bend to the reign of purpose

some things will always exist  
salt and stone and sand  
the ocean with its open mouth  
like a velvet portal  
a door without a handle

angels disguised as girls walk the streets  
silk ribbons in wild hair  
unable to round their sharp edges  
they swear and spit on fractured asphalt  
and wonder who is the creation and  
who is the creator

most questions lead to more questions  
nobody unravels the tapestry of the mystery  
nobody unties the shoes of the divine  
God / Earth / Christ / Buddha / Atman  
the unexplainable in all matter



# FINALS

By : Ryan Diaz

We're waiting for the last bell, that inevitable  
Rattling ring that signals the beginning of summer.  
Of course, now at the end, the clock  
Decides to take its time, as if our  
Collective anticipation  
Grinds it's gears to a stuttering halt—  
The second hand, for all its speed,  
Crawling on its belly, dragging  
Itself across the white face  
Of a ten-dollar clock.  
I wish I knew then what I know now,  
That time only picks up after twenty.  
One moment you're waiting for summer to begin,  
Riding the subways to the beach and  
Hiding 5 dollar Coronas in the sand,  
And the next your whole life  
Has passed you by and every  
New year feels like it comes too soon,  
And that last bell, the one you so desperately longed for,  
Rings when you least expect it—the last toll before the end.

# YOU MUST BE A SAINT

By: Linda Drach

That's what they say, the friends who hear him bark  
when I leave for the gym or buy the wrong soap,

the ones who glimpse the shit stains, who balk  
at the thought of so much toenail trimming.

But how can they know? Martyrdom  
is not my calling. It's just a sticky vat I fell into.

My beloved is dying – and I fret  
about my fat and fuss over the dusting.

My suffering beloved says he wants to kill himself  
and then we bicker about dinner.

Each disagreement starts with skillful, textbook framing:  
*When you said [fill in the blank], I felt [fill in the blank] because I need to feel [fill in the blank].*

But things devolve quickly. He yells, *I know – but I'm dying!*  
*I know!* I shout back. *But you don't have to be such a dick about it!*

I keep a rat on a leash in my chest. Tethered like a vacuum,  
it lives on crumbs – gobbles them up with waxy tongue.

No one knows. And no one hears me crying hard in the car,  
radio loud to crowd out my pleas – *oh God, oh God* –

*how can I ever be forgiven for forgetting to love,  
for wasting the time we have left?*





# HAY LEDGE

By: Stephanie McConnell

To go see my young brother, I must drift  
in dreams until I land on our father's land,  
where my brother is still blonde and my fingernails  
bleed but his brain is not yet bog. There where  
the currency in my pockets turns to compost,  
my crows feet fill, and it is always spring.

Last night I dreamt he drove me  
through a field of hay, the grill of his car  
mowing through gold straw like a skiff  
propelled down inky currents  
into the river's warm mouth.  
I told him when I die I think  
this is how I'll get to heaven. Little sister  
riding shotgun in the late boot stage  
of harvest in your brother's car  
is a kind of heaven. As in life,  
I was speaking to the muscle  
of his neck, curve of his ear, the jut  
of his jawbone. Some parts of us are kept  
sealed and shut as cellar doors. Hay opened  
and flayed around us. He was always closer  
to death. Turned, even now, even in  
dreams, away.



# Little Red Book on My Bookshelf

By: Rohan Buettel

This book is small, small enough to hide in my pocket. Thin leaves dense with print. Bright, bright as a red rocket when waved in the air, waved with one hundred thousand others. The title and a five-pointed star impressed in gold into a plastic cover. Gold to make the title stand out bold. In the front a picture of the great man, protected by a rice-paper leaf, mole prominent on his chin. Almost smiling, but then the hard, coal black eyes. I remember a fifth form friend at school. A school for success and rugby in a state of emergencies. Communist, gay, an outsider in every way, offering to buy an illegal copy for me after class. In hand again, a thin red ribbon opens the pages to The Mass Line. “The people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history.” No room for you then. No role for charismatic leaders and a cult of personality. I take you at your word and place you back on my bookshelf.

# Du Hast Mich

By: Benjamin Rose

En route, the traffic was suddenly thin  
Down Mass and the bridge to Embassy Row.  
We passed the Turkish government-run mosque,  
Passed the statues of Nelson Mandela  
And Winston Churchill in bronze and in stone  
Or whatever stuff from whence they were raised  
I cannot guess, and said nothing at all.  
I scrolled the driver's bio half-asleep.

By accident, Rammstein began to play.  
My shoulder swam in your umbrageous curls  
That once electrified. Now, as though numb,  
The beat of your heart was nothing to me.  
The scent of your fragrance, once ecstatic  
As Hart Crane's lunatic chants in my blood  
(And just as daubed in wild overstatement)  
Nauseated, laden with saccharine.

These days we say little, and fuck still less,  
And swallow our remarks, though not so old,  
Long grown bitter and anemic with strife,  
Acerbic with spite unbridled and cold  
In our contempt—though the empty bedroom  
As we near thirty is no life at all;  
A bad peace, and far more wretched than war,  
A night's waste in wan but tolerant arms.

In the distance, a fruitless siren raged  
Shrill to the scene of some local gunplay,  
Or so I presumed, as evening streetlights  
Cast upon the arbors their amber veils  
Indifferently. All the romance wherein  
Our rapt lips merged under shadowy leaves  
On a warm night by the Alban Towers  
There, three summers ago, was extinguished.



# A WELL-KEPT, CHEAP MOTEL

By: Murray Silverstein

The peeling white bark of a sun-struck birch.  
The no-mow grass  
bent with rain. The wind  
muffling the whine  
of cars on the freeway but not the cawing of the crow.

What is, in March, the peeling, the bending,  
the cawing, the flow—  
if words are, they are  
in addition to, over and above.  
Underscoring, maybe; understating always.

Every day I place a bet on *is* and lose—  
why is there no learning here?

But when they fit, the words, I feel like a man  
who's been up for days, believing he's found  
in the heart of it all, a moment that is a place,  
not so much a home as a well-kept, cheap motel  
with a sign flashing VACANCY.





# ANNIVERSARY

By: J.R. Solonche

I knew the man in charge of all the funerals at the NYPD.

“How do you do it?” I asked him.

“It’s my job. I’m in charge of all the funerals,” he said.

“I understand. But how do you do it?” I said.

“Isn’t this the life?” he said while looking at his pool.

I looked at his pool.

It was bluer than the sky.

“Do you have a pool?” he said.



# An Ocean of Blue

By: Anthony Oscar

I keep sending you messages  
in corked bottles, wondering  
how many thoughts drift & sink  
throughout our global waters

Heaven is a dance between light & dark  
& I have wanted to take lessons with you,  
feel your hands heavy holding  
my shoulders (trembling) while I let go

sunbeams fracture in the sea  
where quietness swims between  
my fingers & nothing nibbles my toes  
the heat has trouble descending with me  
the light likes to float  
& I am learning to leave it alone



# When My Sun Leaves Me

By: Brittany van der Merwe

Where do you go when you depart from me,  
when you fade into  
obscurity-  
my sun, gradually descending towards the horizon.  
The sky, less impervious than I, knows  
when your light is ephemeral.  
It bids you  
to stay with a vibrant display donning  
all the hues of the  
blossoms  
as the splendor is appraised, my sun  
slips away allowing the sky to follow.  
Left behind is a world bereft  
of color, as a soul devoid  
of presence  
is hollow



# Things I've Been Gifted by the Men Who Have Loved Me

By: Jodie Baeyens

A single white rose with petal tips of gold

A box of Cinnamon Life Cereal

A worn copy of Romeo and Juliet carried by a soldier who thought he would die without ever being in love

A book of Gargoyles

Two perfect boys

Three tiaras and a Lapis Crystal Ball

A ring of Welsh Gold and diamonds given by a mother to her son to save for the love of his life

And two tiny handfuls of shells for mommy to carry home

# Contributors' Notes

By: David A. Goodrum

**Aunt Who Lived with Us** and followed my older sister around the house re-cleaning what had just been cleaned; and said to me, *You will never drive my car as long as I'm alive.* I ended up owning that Chevy Malibu for well over a decade.

**Aunt Visiting from Ohio** who towered over me as on a balance beam with praises for older siblings, then somersaults, sticking the landing, declaring, *But we're worried about you.*

**Brother of Holy Cross** who taught high school science and coached me out of my southern Indiana hard r's.

**Heavy-Drinking Professor** who was forced out of academia, untenured, and successfully switched to real estate, which is almost like poetry, which is all about locution, locution, locution; too early perishing rather than publishing.

**High School Phys Ed Teacher and Recent Marine Sergeant** who screamed into my ear, *I DON'T LIKE YOUR KIND, YOU ASK TOO MANY QUESTIONS!*

**High School Religious Instructor** giving me a ride home after school, saving me from a downpour, then handing me a wooden peace medal from a collection in his glove compartment as *A gift from a friend*, and my sudden cold sweat telling me to never see him again.

**High School Yearbook Advisor** who taught me the secrets of giving a dinner party... provide all the guests individual choices, such as *Would you like one or two cherry tomatoes on your salad*, finishing with *I always have three.* I threw up the food and alcoholic drinks on my girlfriend's driveway just as I arrived to bring her home well after curfew.

**Middle Older Brother** whom I imitated with writing, photography and music; still, he did torment me when I was little and told me there was no Santa Claus. My retort: *But there's still the Easter Bunny.*



**Middle School Nuns**, one who hit me over the head with a textbook for talking, and took away my paperback copy of *Rosemary's Baby*. And another nun who failed me for the day's art period for coloring outside the lines and making the sky green and the grass blue.

**Mother** who thought all I did was argue and alternated between telling me, *You are just like your uncle Gil* and *You should become a lawyer*, that last word always landing like spit on the floor.

**Poet Friend** who had published scores of books with multiple nominations, with secure positions at universities, telling me they were truly lucky it had worked out, because there was absolutely nothing else they were the least bit good at.

**Reviewer** who found my poems *Interesting, but not quite stimulating or memorable enough*.

# Old Blood

By: John L. Gronbeck-Tedesco

(for Michael Newell)

1.

In the parking lot of a Seven-Eleven,  
an old man dances lightly on the hood of his  
pick-up; sounds like overalls on a taut clothesline  
billowing softly in a generous breeze. He  
listens to his feet on metal.

2.

And, he sees the  
August moon color of old blood—  
pain and beauty—luster over  
late season corn  
red summer wheat  
dark stemmed radish,

and splinters of open prairie:  
shadows from gray, long-limbed Osage,  
buffalo grass pocked by yellow  
white sassafras,  
purple love grass,  
blue-green grama,

near a water way, unnamed now:  
silted, thick, the scent metallic,  
the feel in the palm granular,  
dry, sandy-grained,  
yellow-veined deep—  
sulfur tailings.

The scene is serrated, headlights,  
white-maned blur on asphalt gone gray.  
He cannot see the owl barking  
in dismay for  
prey dug in deep  
to escape the glare.

3.

He remembers  
a time when Venus rose upon  
the East unperturbed by parking  
lot lumens. Stars  
seemed larger then;  
forgets the name

of one who kissed him, when he breathed  
love into her open gray eyes—  
their bodies scented with lilacs.  
He dances to grieve for the wild  
heart, his in days of used-to-be  
when he was entirely alive,  
when he moved naked as the summer  
moon on the keen, perse flint, at the  
bottom of the Neosho flume,  
ankles warmed by blood from his feet.

4.

He smiles at children who smile back  
before parents pull them away;  
persists against the nerveless  
clichés of adolescents come to  
abuse him while Jesus nods  
assent bouncing on their dashboards.

5.

He dances between  
    now and soon to come  
dreams and memories,  
    dank clay and lustrous  
spirit, heaven and  
    ruined earth.

He likes feeling small,  
    unfinished, defiant;  
knows time matters. Life  
    is uncoiling too  
willingly from bones  
    rubbed raw by yesterdays  
gone wrong.

He is only a  
    bit of dust awake  
and impatient  
    with reluctant  
bones heated into  
    motion by iron  
still smoldering steam  
    beneath calloused feet,

    on the hood of his car  
    under an August moon  
    the color of old blood.





# “Subscription Expired”

By: John Dorroh

The last time I saw my father  
he was lying unconscious in a hospital  
bed. He had white wings that filled up  
the room.

I didn't want to let him fly away  
but what good would he have been  
with riddled lungs and blood leaking  
from every pore.

I wanted him to stay my father.  
I wanted him to fill a need elsewhere,  
some place new. He was like an old  
magazine.

Outdated but still with words.

# LAST DAY OF PROPHECY SEASON

## I

Dawn breaks late. Grass dormant, Winter stones,  
cold. Delphi's summer heat, evanescent.

Pythia brews tea, walks at a deliberate  
pace, wraps herself in violet shawl and slippers.

She dreads the icy, hard tripod, her daylong perch  
on this last day of prophecy season.

Gilded brass, all show. Faux finery. If their worship  
were true, her seat would be padded, covered with Egyptian linen.

Many of Pythia's attendants are gone Apollo's chariot is packed,  
ready for his summer frolic among the Hyperboreans.

Voices carry across chilled air. Pythia sips mountain tea,  
eyes close, insides warm. She sets the pace.

## II

Hey, man, whose idea was this? Pay drachmas, climb  
this craggy path in frozen daybreak to listen -- to what?

A crazy woman on a bronze tripod offer  
predictions? As if she knows, as if anyone knows.

Charade. And everyone plays along. If I don't,  
my reputation tarnishes. What this money could buy,



makes me cry. Instead: expensive ambiguities.  
Your future could be this, possibly that.

Pick one lady. Earn your bribe. People shove,  
yell, barter for a place in front. I hope time

runs out before I reach the top. I'll take my offering,  
buy a warm jacket, drink sweet wine.

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This poem will also appear in the 2023 San Francisco Writing Contest Anthology



# Anew

By: Mike Cole

Think of the side of a mountain  
that was burned down to dirt  
and bare rock and then bathed  
here and there in cast off crankcase oil  
and scattered with the carcasses  
of tires and the shredded body parts  
of wrecks before the manzanita  
and buck brush grew there again,  
were again incinerated in an inferno  
that made its own blow torch of wind  
that melted metal and sent rubber  
swirling up in twisters of black dust,  
and now think of the same slope  
that seems from a distant vantage  
a quilt of every known and previously unknown  
shade of green appliquéd with the shadows  
of pines, beneath which new manzanitas  
shade the broad and dark leaves of ginger  
and spears of bracken fern whose sprouts  
are just now uncurling from their tightly rolled tips,  
and you will have some sense  
of what it means for a poet  
to be returned to the same place  
from which he rose to do what had to be done  
and feel that if he had really left  
it must have been from  
someone else's life.

# HOW IT WAS WHEN THE COMET CAME

By: Judith Mikesch-McKenzie

As twilight deepens, up and down the street doors begin to open and figures emerge, struggling with tripods or binoculars and the straps of cameras strung around their necks.

One by one they trudge up the hill to the spot in front of the blue house and begin to set up, where the view is unblocked and, for months now, the 'Conger Street Astronomical Society'

has met most nights to watch as the bright light makes its way across their sky. Some make multiple trips, bringing lawn chairs for children in pajamas, walked up the street holding the

parents' hands, and everyone settles in, ready for the brightness to take over the night as the stars come and she emerges. All the women think of the comet as "she" - glowing bright, flying free,

all beauty and fire. At the first sighting, particularly in the days before it was visible in daylight, the people all became like a child holding its first lightning bug, as a hush takes them.

*It won't be back for over two thousand years, neighbor Dan has reminded them all many times, and It's bigger than The Great Comet, y'know - and they do all know this now,*

so that as her glow brightens, the whole crowd hushes, and  
anyone needing to make a noise moves away, out of respect  
for those entranced by her because they know that,

for a few moments, in her light, all the aches of life, of hauling  
panels or chasing children will for a time vanish in the light  
of her, and people would stand still as dark water,

or become one with their chairs, feeling her star-flight and the  
rush of speed, knowing the quiet of the void for as long  
as they can bear it, until, in time, one by one, they

head home to put children to bed, and do the dinner  
dishes, their eyes fixed out the window on the  
deep sky, the darkness the only space where

their soul feels joined to an infinite, free of darkness  
liberated in the comet's transitory radiance.



# THE SEARCH

By: Laura Plummer

I searched for you in churches with their tales of virgin birth  
and in the savage jungle with my palms against the earth.  
I searched for you in ritual, reciting written prayer  
in temples high atop the clouds, but never found you there.

I searched for you in Hebrew, which my tongue could never speak,  
and studied the philosophies taught by the ancient Greeks.  
I searched for you in prophets with their promises of glory,  
who took away my food, insisting hunger would restore me.

I searched for you in yoga with my arms stretched toward the sky,  
adorned myself with crystals to repel the evil eye.  
I searched for you in potions that would set my mind adrift,  
in circles loudly chanting to produce a cosmic shift.

I searched for you in music, learning hymns and sacred tunes,  
and in the premonitions of the scattered Viking runes.  
I searched for you in carvings on the cliffs of Machu Picchu,  
and trusted all the gurus who had said that they could reach you.

The Bible's Book of Matthew tells us, "Seek and ye shall find,"  
but searching led me far from you, for I'd been searching blind.  
At last, my search confirmed what I had known right from the start.  
I found you where you'd always been; I found you in my heart.

# Cost

By: Patrick T. Reardon

Cost me voice box.  
Cost me black holes,  
greedy tunnels, another atom existence.  
Cost acne and lumps, lost cost.  
Cluster jazz.

Cost inhale, exhale.  
An earthly dirtied dollar, sliced grass blade,  
squirrel carcass flat as a poem for reading  
on the asphalt street in front of the two-flat  
at 435 N. Thomas of Canterbury Boulevard,  
the gospel of need.

Cost my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright.

Cost lost.  
Effective. Of living. Of breathing.  
Cost of \$58.50.  
Of doing business.

Cost me guilt.  
Eye shadow. Bag pipes.

Arianism, Manichaeism, Free Spirit.  
Cleveland, Detroit, Albuquerque.  
Lindell Boulevard, Mulholland Drive, Dixie Highway.  
Towertown.  
K-Town.  
Peanuts Park.



Let us pray, America.

Purple vestment, leather chemise,  
pink Saturdays, dark underclubs,  
lavender tune, park path at dusk,  
night pier playground, raven search,  
circle dance, circuit party,  
sharp-slice morning, tip-toe border enticement.

“I rose to open for my lover,”  
said the Song of Songs.

Knowledge of evil and good.  
Knowledge of what it takes.  
Take a hit. One for the team.

Thanks be to God.

Cost me missing.  
Cost steps. Tactics. Price in coin.  
Cost me in action.  
Floundered hopes.

Seed library shelves with empty-page books.  
Communion of saints, hidden in the storage locker,  
cost.

Cost gracious. Connection. Painstaking.

All good things, all slimy things,  
every thing of dust and atom.  
Green and violent, orange and needy.

Glossolalia. Magdalene. Charismatic. Smack dab.  
It's a good day for.

St. Annie Oakley, shoot straight.  
St. Albert Einstein, count your blessings.  
St. Dante, go to hell.

Hunt and peck.  
Be at pains.  
Stop ocean tides. Unfall rain.

Pray Constitution.  
Let us pray, soil and sun.

Sorrow the abyss. The bleak blank white to come.  
Bottom of the well, blue circle above.

Cost *Howl* and *The Waste Land* and *The Lost Tribes*.  
The book of Job, *Lear*. Howl at the whirlwind.  
Forty desert days.  
Stone to bread.

*Lying in a Hammock*  
*at William Duffy's Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota.*  
Creeley said: "drive, he sd"  
Dylan said: "Let us hope they've found mercy."  
Darkness on the face of the deep.  
Requiem.  
Silence amid cicada hum at 118 Berlin Wall Avenue

Honorable and glorious, a cost.  
Wonderful works, full of compassion.

“If thou wert my fool, nuncle,  
I’d have thee beaten,”  
said the Fool.

Route follow. Track spoor. Turn.

Unsupervised medical students  
sit in corners, confessor-like, listening  
to sins of gout, nephritis and migraine,  
spit-balling penances of 3 enemas  
and 3 blood-lettings, while sniffing  
powders of turpentine, rhinoceros  
horn, coral, balsam and coconut, cost.

Let us hope.

Cost me sun-slash car-top rip,  
stick tree before wall-brick office.  
Side of face, cupped, cost.

Hudson Three-Two-Seven-Hundred.  
Yes, sir, Senator! Plop, plop, fizz, fizz.  
Calling Phillip Morris.

Cost gray ushers, lectors, sacristans,  
altos and basses — charcoal burning,  
jewels of incense sprinkled, pungent as sex,  
rich as sweat.

Covenant, a cost. Commandments.  
Stone reporter’s notebook.

Ratio, proportion, calculation.  
Carry the five.

Leave it alone.  
Garden of delights.

The mansion at 7943 S. Rock of Gibraltar Street,  
charred havoc, frozen chaos.  
An everyday Flood, fire each time.

Like a rolling stone. Salt of the earth.  
Do you remember?  
Mother. Carry that weight. Rosalita.

Cost pristine alleys of tax-dodgers, strutters,  
unvoiced deep, living gall, chalice.

Mad at the world. Ugly vintage.  
Boom joy boom.  
Saved by the grace.  
An aroma we can't hold, cost.

Oh, pray goodness and kindness.

Cost the blue-collar guy  
with muscled arms and calloused hands  
in his dad's workshop.  
Cost the secret learner. Cost thought.

When the wild came in deep-dark electric  
along my bones, across the inside of my skull.

Queen of Sheba, boulder goddess.  
Mute eunuch in blue.

Elements of wine and bread, fish and okra.  
Swallow the raven, feathers and all.

A world of trouble.  
A place of plows, millet and iron tools.

Cost the Semite and the Anti-Semite,  
the bitter bile and the baby smooth,  
forgotten and recalled,  
doubt and faith, the tight muscles of strain.  
Sinew ripped from bone. Snapped. Torn  
like the Temple veil.

Break the legs of the two thieves. All in a day's work.  
Break my legs.

“Oh! thou clear spirit  
of clear fire,” said Ahab.

Cost me bloody goat hide, gory sheep skin.  
Cost me clothed in the Universe.  
Cost me the gangway  
at 135 N. Light of the Nations Avenue.

Unanger. Pray.

Found poem. Found tribes.  
Cost me guilt.

Angry Nebuchadnezzar stoked the furnace  
to seven times hotter, told the most mighty  
men to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego  
and cast them into the holocaust, and, inside,  
they walked about unharmed with a fourth.  
They had no hurt.

Thanks be to God.

St. Enos Slaughter, take an extra base.  
St. Elizabeth I, close your legs,  
St. Abraham Lincoln, set yourself free.

The flowering branch, bleed of blood.  
The ladder wobbles.  
Window glass blinding.  
Fabric of cement surface, minute seeds of stone,  
imprinted onto the hand palm slammed down in the fall.  
Found and lost in questions.  
Fashioned as I was fashioned, as I fashion.

Like Job, I bow my head to the power and unknowing.

Pray lovingkindness.

Cost empty pews,  
ranks of silent acolytes, in stained-glass sunlight.  
Dog took cake from coals.

Drab quarter for the basket fallen to the wood,  
sounding out salvation,  
a hat-clip mechanism, unused in half a century, cost.

Fear the Lord.

Cost wisdom.







# Stark Daybreaks

By: Gerald Wagoner

As a child I was at liberty to roam until  
we drove through a dry Montana blizzard  
into wind scoured wheat fields where oil  
derricks stood as lonely as guard towers.

We drove through long Montana blizzards.  
Blind cattle, we plodded east, past lights  
grim as guard towers, dim in the night,  
hunted stark daybreaks sharp as knives.

Blind cattle, we plod east past star lights  
from tiny towns warped in cat black ridges.  
We hunt stark daybreaks, with sharp knives.  
Nodding pumps suck thick, rich crude, up

from tiny towns trapped by black flat ledges.  
Wind swirls naked snow in stubble straw.  
Nodding pumps suck thick, rich crude, up.  
A tiny town bores deep against its heart.

Wind swirls naked snow in stubble straw.  
As a child I was at liberty to roam until  
a tiny town bored deep against its heart,  
with dark derricks in wind scoured fields.

# The Pequod Classicist

By: James Zaferopolos

Far, was our Ithaca,  
Far from the spirit's  
Longed-for home,  
As though Nantucket  
Seaport were our version  
Of the shores of ancient  
Greece, lapped by  
Old Homer's wine-dark  
Sea. The peg-leg's  
Mind, tormented by  
The whited shiboleth  
Which, years ago,  
Had swum off  
With his limb,  
Became old Ahab's  
Subject of revenge,  
Which had become for him  
The embodiment of nature's  
Wrath, as though  
Whatever nature does  
Could be held accountable  
By men.

Old Ahab was, perhaps,  
In this regard, the opposite  
Of ruthless King Ulysses,  
Whom the sea-god sought  
Revenge upon, for having gouged  
Out of Poseidon's son and heir

The one good eye the fates  
The allotted him, wherewith  
That misbegotten creature  
Might survey that narrow island  
He was tasked with guarding,  
'Til Ulyses plucked it out.

Pity to think how both these men  
Believed themselves to be  
Worthy opponents to the gods.  
Pity that, in the end, it was  
Their crews would pay  
They owed the universe  
For their presumption:  
Ahab's crew who sank beneath  
The waves; Ulysses' crew,  
Would be given up as  
Sacrificial swine, so that  
The clever man could  
Still search on, with small regard  
For the wreckage he had  
Left behind.



# “What’s Been Fixed”

By: John Dorroh

*after Dorianne Laux*

The white tiling in the guest bathroom.  
The stainless steel toaster by the fridge.

A clay pot full of golden lantania. My  
ulna. Aunt Sarah’s outlook on life.

The rickety seating in the Lory Theatre.  
My bicycle’s brakes. Uncle Jim’s BBQ

grill. Long ago, my mother’s favorite  
casserole dish. The swing under the old

oak tree at Panther Lake. The rusted latch  
on the back door of the barn. Just yesterday,

the leak under the sink in the laundry room.  
This morning, my reading glasses and one

hour ago, my heart which had fallen off  
the dresser in the bedroom but someone

caught in on the way to the floor.



# We Might Have to Bake a Cake from Scratch

By: Ellen Skilton

and start again from the beginning —  
this old cake from the back of the freezer  
has a rancid aftertaste, first made  
in a pre-reconstruction oven.

I used to think the answer was  
finding better ingredients for the icing,  
but it's a whole new cake we need  
with abolitionist-ground flour, reparations folded in  
a new genesis, a reckoning, a from-scratch remake.

Those cakes in the windows of bakeries  
made of cardboard, glitter, and glue  
are make-believe monuments to falsetto ideals,  
dusty mouse droppings litter their insides,  
require breaking or burning in a dumpster fire.

It hurts too much, everyone living  
inside a towering paper cake behind glass,  
layers of caustic Caucasia baked into the crumb.  
I am learning slowly to listen with humble ears,  
to slice through the layers, break down, recreate.





# Fork prints in copper

By: Georgia San Li

reveal patterns of fossilized flowers mixed with  
mud-cracked seeds, pebbling rocks  
of brown barley, red beans, smashed  
leaving imprints against char-riddled  
rice, scraped and singed at the bottom of her  
copper pan, panning gold, but la la  
there is nothing, nothing  
burning bright in the cruel bubbling rivers of  
indelible summer heat, she slurps before  
she sets the table, and knows not what to call this  
American alien mixture of no lilacs, no  
tubers, with no  
redemption in their eyes



# I Have This Dream While Waking

By: Anne Kay Murphy

I have this dream.  
I have this dream while waking  
While we talk on the phone, one  
Of us weeping. I have this dream:  
My fingers are in the brain of the world,  
And in my dream, I wrap your fate  
In gossamer strands like steel and  
Keep you suspended, safe, in my sight,  
My fingers, pinched tight with a tensile strength  
Unbelievable. I keep you somewhere safe,  
Suspended, tightly wound, in my sight.  
So I can suck you dry.



# Just A Little Bit Less

By: Madi Miller

I wonder how life would work  
if we were all a little bit smaller.

If we had fewer ideas,  
and even less opinions.  
If our minds didn't take up  
the space meant for others.

If "1 in 5" was just a myth,  
and we could actually walk alone at night.  
If we didn't have to cover up to stop the lingered stares.  
And standing alone in a parking lot  
didn't require a preventative text about our whereabouts.

If "83 cents for every dollar" was a phrase  
only heard in our nightmares.  
And we didn't have to hear the same warnings as our  
brothers.

If eye contact didn't make my heart race,  
and people standing too close didn't make my palms sweat.

I wonder how life would work if I wasn't a woman.



# Captive

By: Kelly Easton

It's a whole crew  
that keeps her floating,  
this ship from listing, sinking

The captain's missing  
First mate has stepped in  
Grand, solid grip on the wheel

'May you have a good life!' young  
boy proclaims, brandishing coiled  
paper sword, innocent in might

The breezes are soft and sweet  
in this lilt, far cry from tempests  
of autumn's mistral, misplaced

But where does she head?  
A wayward breeze floats by  
Lifting ocean, in her stead

Silent currents, rolling, trace  
the map under sea's silver thread;  
Captain's up ahead

# Shek's Lessons

By: Ruth Mota

Red lights flashing. Ambulance in our driveway.  
Two men slide my father out its back door on a stretcher  
and mother's fingers tighten 'round my hand.  
My father lies covered in a sheet; his forehead wound in white.  
This is my first memory. On the bush beside me,  
crimson berries pop from dry stems – berries that return  
in dreams, along with father's eyes below the bandage  
focused on me, full of tenderness veiled in pain.  
Our collie, Shek, sits - too still - beside me. We're cemented there -  
the three of us. Only my father glides away like a sailboat on the horizon.

For months he lay in bed, leg wrapped in a cast – foot pulleyed towards the ceiling.  
Mother's skirts swished past me as she scurried between rooms.  
Walls echoed words I did not understand: *black ice, steep cliff, never walk again*  
but spoken in tones I knew meant I should stay away. The dog knew too.  
So, we teamed up. In the basement we'd chase a ball. Or I'd curl up in musty boxes.  
Shek sniffed me out and stared at me with round sad eyes -  
nuzzled me to come and play. He taught me how to bark.  
Understand. It was a nuanced bark, a greeting like a variation of Buddhist monks -  
palms together, saying *I see the dog in you*. Ears perked, he listened to the clatter  
and the sighs above and led me up the stairs when all was clear.

Father walked again, but with a ponderous limp. Shek died  
shot by a neighbor who said our dog was bothering his sheep.  
He led a secret life he never shared with me.  
Before my lessons, his handsome photo graced the front page of the paper  
as he leapt, white hair flowing, down the main street of our town.  
Gripped in his mouth, a T-bone steak stolen from our butcher.  
Sheep molester and thief, he taught me how to watch and listen -



to read a person when they cleared their throat - to fathom an eye's gleam.  
He trained me to follow the music of human talk, not the words.

And when I grew, my teachers often looked at me perplexed:

*I was just going to say that! Are we reading minds now?*

No, I don't read minds - bodies, faces, the meaning in a bark maybe.

I learned it from my dog in our basement days.



# Apathy (the Weight of one's Hand)

By: Lina Buividaviciute

Translated from Lithuanian to English by Irma Šlekyte.

I've never seen it raising a revolver, ready for  
a slap of betrayal. I've never witnessed it tossing soil  
on a three-year old's coffin, caressing an unloved one, writing  
the last letter, holding a hand of the one who's departing. So, they say,  
I have no right to gather so much heaviness in my elbows and  
forearms. I have no right, they say, to not move my wrist bones.

I know I have to move these arms for the sake of the bedridden,  
for those marked with age spots, for those who've lost everything,  
for those whose limbs were torn off by shrapnel.

Hanging off the edge of the bed, on a frayed bedsheet, despite  
all the scolding, persuading, ultimatums, I cannot stroke  
my child's head –  
my hand grows heavy, because, I believe, as soon as I touch him, the soil  
will start pouring onto him.

I fight using different shapes of blackness, with no blood flowing to the ten  
little fingers,  
but if I'm called, if we once again need to stand hand in hand, I promise You world  
my hand,  
for a short respite from an unworldly heaviness.



# Next Boat

By: Lora Berg

Boat in the mist.  
Is this the one I'm meant  
to ride on, boat to heaven  
that whisks along Lake Chelan,  
knowing where to go  
like the salmon?

The first leaves turn  
over the velour of water  
that ripples toward the far shore.  
I wish I could stay  
and just watch that boat  
in the distance.

# Words Unspoken/Hands Unseen

By: Dick Altman

When we climb together the steep –  
and I struggle to keep up – I see a side  
of you that – by your presence alone –  
goads me – spurs me to push on –  
beyond any measure of myself alone –  
How easy you make it look – wearing  
nothing but sandals – How sure your feet  
secure the terrain – while I stumble  
over scree – eyes glued to blades  
of broken rock – to spiny cactus arms  
eager to reach out and grab mine –  
to twisted stairs of granite I wrestle  
with – more than mount – You could  
let me lead – No – I say – I need you  
to helm – to show how it's done –  
despite fear – to instill belief that I –  
without your wings to fly up mountains –  
can – with caution – crawl – teeter –  
piston slowly – one leg in front  
of the other – upward – before I lose  
sight of you around the next bend –  
Yet when I do – you wait – undaunted –  
with a look that drives me to you –  
The distance – as always – grows  
between us – until I catch up –  
and our dance begins again – until  
we meet on the crest – Few know how  
you subdue peaks reaching for the clouds –  
How the courage you imbue lofts me

to the sky – How the figure in front of me  
extends her invisible hand – to pull me up  
the last unyielding step – where together  
we embrace – to share for a moment –  
our top of the world

# To the Young Woman With the Bee in Her Hand

By: Chris Bevens

*for Hannah*

We rode the light rail to SeaTac  
leaning and alert, trying to catch a glimpse of Rainier;  
traveling through the land of the Duwamish rightly,  
to the airport,  
to see you off.

Together, facing the center aisle,  
bags at your feet; you, cool and beautiful in the reflection across,  
reminding me of dreams and visions and  
other reflections  
entirely.

About your age, a young woman  
stood next to the doors, two doors that would part, eventually.  
Soon even. Two doors bely a hole through which we all will go,  
where this other young woman currently stood. She held the bar above her head,  
bracing herself against the forward motion  
of the light rail we took  
to see you off.

A bee,  
apidae, bombus, bumble bee, down the main aisle and back it flew,  
dithering, buzz and bounce against the window. Buzzbzzz. The plump fuzzbee  
aimed straight for the young woman by the door, and she saw it coming,  
we all saw it coming



Her arm's reach, her free hand, palm up, whereupon the bee  
set down, where it landed,  
softly, gently.

As if planned,  
the train stopped, two doors parted, a place replaced with space  
through which the young woman reached, palm up, reached just out the door,  
an offering to the Tukwila station. Gone, out into the trackside breeze,  
the bee. Doors close. Two stops prior to yours,  
the train that much lighter, taking us  
to the airport,  
to see you off.

# THE KINGDOM OF GLASS

By: Geoffrey Himes

In the Kingdom of Glass, the ending of all things  
happens again and again,  
like a body standing between two mirrors,  
each catastrophe smaller and more distant  
as it disappears into the past.

In the Kingdom of Glass, the queen's limousine  
has tinted windows, so she can see out and we can't see in.  
The black car moves slowly through the throng  
like a cruise ship departing a Caribbean harbor.

In the Kingdom of Glass, the kestrels and owls  
take different shifts in the wind-torn almond trees.  
During the daytime, the owls sleep in the foliage,  
while the kestrels hurl themselves like flint arrows  
at the double-pane windows of the conservatory.  
At night, they trade places.

In the Kingdom of Glass, a golden liquid  
languishes in a crystal pitcher on a glass table.  
The thirsty study it from an exterior window.  
Lemonade? Chardonnay?  
Urine? Gasoline?

In the Kingdom of Glass, the beginning of all things  
happens again and again.  
The sands drifting across the ruins  
are shoveled into a red wheelbarrow,  
carted to the furnace, where the grains are cooked

into a new transparency no beak can break  
for years to come.



# Remember Fried Boloney?

By: Alfred Fournier

*for Roberta*

How we cut an X in the center,  
little wedges on the sides,  
so it wouldn't balloon in the pan.  
Sound of it sizzling as we clattered  
in the kitchen, two kids, unattended.  
Dad pulling extra shifts at the plant.  
Mom in the hospital long-term by then.  
Teenaged sister distracted  
by blue-jean-jacketed boys.

We didn't mind, you and I,  
opening our imaginary restaurant:  
two patrons, two chefs. Once,  
you plucked violets and clover  
from the backyard grass,  
arranged them in a little cup between us,  
served it to me on Wonder Bread  
with a side of Better Made chips.

No one had to worry about us.  
We might as well have been married,  
living in a villa somewhere.  
Not that big empty house  
at the corner of childhood  
and futures we couldn't imagine.

"Pass the ketchup," I said, and you smiled.  
There was nothing fancy we needed.  
Everything felt fancy to us then.

# Happiness is Bright Blue

By: Ashley Williamson

It is now and always was

Rolling downhill

blue sky flashing

grass-stained skin

Again!

Again,

surprise electricity

butterfly blue in the jungle

morpho fleeting

moment melting faster

than tres-leches devoured

Again,

the milky alpine pool

arresting icy turquoise

tugging at the roots of my hair

ecstatic diving

Again,

romanticizing airplanes

counting hues of skies and seas

counting continents and clouds

spotting icebergs still frozen

Again,

weaving personal mythologies

past midnight staring

at the blue heart of the flames

Again,

your eyes shock the heart-beat

quicker

steady sky scraps

I return  
Again,  
to bright blue





# Dying 2.0

By: Henry Crawford

One second dead. Technically  
alive. My algorithmic mother. A jewel.  
Creation. Yes. Tenderly coded. Yes.  
Every frequency of love. Dialed in.  
Smooth Vermeer skin. Yes. My HD Father  
in burnt umber browns. A Rembrandt  
self-portrait. Wrinkled lines of charcoal  
bitmaps. My mother's holographic eyes.  
Prisms of fabricated rays of love. Yes.  
Sweeter than any strawberry. Dream.  
Lady of rainbows. Of saturated color.  
Brightening inside. Limitless. Lemmon  
yellow. Love. Lifting me off my first  
bicycle seat. Her purple touch. Scruffing  
my neck. Pink hold of her hand. Even  
as I am dying. Her merciful expression  
framed in strands of colorized Donna  
Reed gold. Yes. It was a wonderful life.  
Backlit. Organic. Light-Emitting. Diodes.  
Lit. Against the obsidian night. Loved  
and forgiven. Yes. I know. I know.  
This blue hour. Blue sunset. Yes.  
Beautifully rendered. Bluer than  
anything I could have imagined.

# Self-Talk

By: Esinam Bediako

I.

Beyond the screen, some mothers drag children  
to bunkers while you, in your California queen,  
lie quaking cuz you're frightened of the god-  
damn dark. You're cracked, my friend, always have been  
but now the cleft keeps cleaving down the insides,  
up the outsides, through the gangliosides  
where sickness unlinks chains in gray matter.  
Nothing's happened, yet you snap, synapse tied  
together in some false way to make you  
fear everything: ants, crows, scales of mildew,  
silence, holes packed dense, anything with teeth,  
innocent things waxed a sinister hue.

Let's ask ourselves which came first, the chicken-  
shit talking or the yoke that breaks your neck?

II.

Who am I without you giving me  
Grief about cracks in the soles of my feet?

I'm under covers  
in a room with air thicker than my skin.

I need a mantra.

I try to say something new,  
I say something wrong.

I put your words in my mouth, spit them out  
to you, still wrong.

I'm taking over. I'm taking care.

I'm taking the boys to the park,  
holding hands in a chain  
– baby mommy baby –  
sunlight tickling their curls.  
My boys echo laughter, tossing  
and catching a sound sweet enough  
to drown out the crows and their caws.



# a river flows under the sidewalks

By: seren mcclurken

I am always religious in the summer

When the wounds of childhood are freshest - where God is found in the fireflies and the forgotten children,

In a little yellow house tucked invisible between round green mountains, soggy with decades-old abuse, I pray the rosary down the hall from the reason I quit my dream job.

He's here in the sweat of emptied new york, in the echoes of the beat mystics, where Patti called Robert once a west coast Saint Sebastian --

Did you know Manhattan once sat on a salt marsh, she tells me, all buzzing and green? Did you know a river flows under the sidewalks?

Did you know there is still life here, underneath the hardness?

# I Have an Irrational Fear of Dying Before

By: Valerie Braylovskiy

Others who deserve to live longer leave first  
We find a cure for the enigma of suffering  
I learn guitar (which I've been learning for two years and will not ever learn)  
My camera roll is organized based on importance and irrelevance  
The afterlife (or lack thereof) is explained by a reputable scientist  
I try every permutation of chocolate ice cream, including gelato and sorbet  
A sunrise and sunset are witnessed in one day  
I read all possible books pertaining to poetry and illness, separately and together  
Someone asks to spend the night and I never see them again  
Someone asks to spend the night and we fall in love  
I get a tattoo I regret  
I get another tattoo which I cherish like an unborn child  
You tell me you read my work even though poetry is an ebbing craft  
I respond thank you because writing produces self-loathing  
My initials are carved somewhere public enough to be found years later  
We become friends over the common bond of shared initials  
I take a photo that replicates the memory of swimming in the pacific ocean  
My raspberry jam recipe is perfected to last me one year's worth of breakfast  
I hug all the redwood trees at purisma park  
Love is demystified and required as a fundamental element of being alive  
The debate of mind over matter is resolved  
I study my mind like a student who learns there is always more to learn  
We invent a shaving razor that actually works  
Those who didn't believe in me apologize  
I tell those who did thank you  
I discover the reasons for staying alive

I practice them

I accept no one fully understands why and don't ask further questions





# In Order of Appearance

Julie Benesh is author of *About Time*, published by Cathexis Northwest Press. She is a graduate of the MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College and was awarded an Illinois Arts Council Grant. Her work has appeared in *Tin House*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Florida Review*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, and elsewhere. She lives in Chicago.

Roxanne Noor is a writer and artistic director currently living in India. She has traveled the world living in small naturist communities and uses the quiet of her inner life as the center of creation. Her works can be found in *Nymphs*, *Mixed Mag*, *Sunstroke Magazine*, *Anti Heroin Chic*, *Uplift Connect*, *Nude Studio*, *Full Potential*, and others.

Ryan Diaz is a poet and writer from Queens, NY. He holds a BA in History from St. Johns University and is currently completing a MA in Biblical Studies. He is the author of two poetry books, *For Those Wandering Along the Way*, and *Skipping Stones*. Ryan's writing attempts to find the divine in the ordinary, the thin place where fantasy and reality meet. He currently lives in Queens, NY with his wife Janiece. Keep up with Ryan's work at [www.avagueidea.com](http://www.avagueidea.com).

LINDA DRACH is a poet, public health policy analyst, and volunteer writing group facilitator for the nonprofit Write Around Portland. Her poetry has been published in *CALYX*, *The Write Launch*, *Clackamas Literary Review*, *The Timberline Review*, and elsewhere. She is the current poet-in-residence of a small house set in a grove of Doug Fir, where she has an audience of one human and one exceptionally attentive pug.

Stephanie McConnell is from Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Worcester Review*, *River Heron Review*, *The Paterson Literary Review*, *the Under Review*, *The Dewdrop*, *BarBar*, *The Ponder Review*, and the *Hare's Paw Literary Journal*. She now lives in New England, but still only writes about Pennsylvania.

Rohan Buettel lives in Canberra, Australia. His haiku have appeared in various Australian and international journals (including *Frogpond*, *Cattails* and *The Heron's Nest*). His longer poetry most recently appears in *The Elevation Review*, *Rappahannock Review*, *Penumbra Literary and Art Journal*, *Mortal Magazine*, *Passengers Journal*, *Reed Magazine*, *Meniscus* and *Quadrant*.

Benjamin Rose is a poet born and raised in the D.C. area and the author of *The Road Of Glass* and *Gardens And Graves*. His work has appeared in *The Dillydoun Review*, *Beyond Words Literary Magazine*, and *Cathexis Northwest Press*. He studies English Literature at the Catholic University of America (Class of 2023) and started studying Urdu in 2022.

Murray Silverstein has been published in *Sunspot Lit*, *RATTLE*, *Brief Wilderness*, *The Brooklyn Review*, *Cape Rock Poetry*, *Euphony Journal*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *Spillway*, *Poetry East*, *West Marin Review*, *RUNES*, *Nimrod*, *Connecticut Review*, *The Hollins Critic*, *ZYZZYVA*, *California Quarterly*, *El Portal Literary Journal*, *Elysian Fields Quarterly*, *Fourteen Hills*, *Front Range Review*, *Louisiana Literature*, *The MacGuffin*, *The Meadow*, *Pembroke Magazine*, *Pennsylvania English*, *Plainsongs*, *Sweet Tree Review*, *Under a Warm Green Linden*, and *The Courtship of Winds*, among others. He has authored two books of poetry, *Master of Leaves* (2014) and *Any Old Wolf* (2007), the latter of which received the Independent Publisher's Bronze Medal for Poetry in 2006. Silverstein is the senior editor of the anthology *America, We Call Your Name: Poems of Resistance and Resilience* (2018), winner of the Independent Publisher's Silver Medal for Anthologies in 2017. All were published by Sixteen Rivers Press. A retired architect, Silverstein also...co-authored four books about architecture, including *A Pattern Language* (Oxford University Press) and *Patterns of Home* (The Taunton Press). He holds a master's degree in architecture.

Professor Emeritus of English at SUNY Orange, J.R. Solonche has published poetry in more than 500 magazines, journals, and anthologies since the early 70s, including *The New Criterion*, *The New York Times*, *The Threepenny Review*, *The American Scholar*, *The Progressive*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Salmagundi*, *The Literary Review*, *The Sun*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Poet Lore*, *Poetry East*, *The Hampden-Sydney Poetry Review*, *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, and *Free Verse*. He is the author of *Beautiful Day* (Deerbrook Editions), *Won't Be Long* (Deerbrook Editions), *Heart's Content* (Five Oaks Press), *Invisible* (nominated for the Pulitzer Prize by Five Oaks Press), *The Black Birch* (Kelsay Books), *I, Emily Dickinson & Other Found Poems* (Deerbrook Editions), *In Short Order* (Kelsay Books), *Tomorrow, Today and Yesterday* (Deerbrook Editions), *True Enough* (Dos Madres Press), *The Jewish Dancing Master* (Ravenna Press), *If You Should See Me Walking on the Road* (Kelsay Books), *In a Public Place* (Dos Madres Press), *To Say the Least* (Dos Madres Press), *The Time of Your Life* (Adelaide Books), *The Porch Poems* (Deerbrook Editions, 2020 Shelf Unbound Notable Indie Book), *Enjoy Yourself* (Serving House Books), *Piano Music* (nominated for the Pulitzer Prize by Serving House Books), *For All I Know* (Kelsay Books), *A Guide of the Perplexed* (Serving House Books), *The Moon Is the Capital of the World* (Word Tech Communications), *Years Later* (Adelaide Books), *The Dust* (Dos Madres Press), *Selected Poems 2002-2021* (nominated for the National Book Award by Serving House Books), *Life-Size* (Kelsay Books), *The Five Notebooks of Zhao Li* (Adelaide Books), *Coming To* (Word Tech Communications), *The Lost Notebook of Zhao Li* (Dos Madres Press), *It's about Time* (Deerbrook Editions), and coauthor with his wife Joan I. Siegel of *Peach Girl: Poems for a Chinese Daughter* (Grayson Books). He lives in the Hudson Valley.

Originally from the Canadian Maritimes, Anthony Oscar is a New Orleans based poet, songwriter and visual artist. He is a longstanding member of the New Orleans Community Printshop and Darkroom where he collaborates with likeminded artists to offer accessible art-making resources to the Greater New Orleans community with a special focus on youth and underrepresented emerging artists. He has been published in *Left Catholic*, *The Iron Lattice*, *Anti-Gravity*, *NOLA Defender* and he has released three self-produced albums, as well as *Weird Sleep*, his first book of poems and drawings.

Brittany van der Merwe is an emerging Canadian poet and aspiring author from British Columbia's interior. Her poem *The Storm* won the local annual Dr. Schemenauer Award in 2020, and she has also been featured on *The Write Launch*. She is currently pursuing publication of her other works including short-stories, a poetry anthology, and a small series of children's books written for the two loves of her life.

Jodie Baeyens is a single-mother, poet and teaches to support her writing habit. When she isn't trying to find the pen she was just holding, she can be found in the forest dancing beneath the full moon. Originally hailing from New York, she now considers herself a citizen of the world because she doesn't want to admit that she lives in a red state. Her poetry has recently been featured in *Door is a Jar* and in *Peregrine's Fall Journal*. Her forthcoming Chapbook, *Conversations We Never Had*, was the Winner of the 2022 Vibrant Poet Award. Follow her writing at [WWW.Mylifeincoffeespoons.com](http://WWW.Mylifeincoffeespoons.com) or on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/Mylifeincoffeespoons](http://www.facebook.com/Mylifeincoffeespoons).

David A. Goodrum is a writer and photographer living in Corvallis, Oregon. His poems are forthcoming or have been published in *Spillway*, *Star 82 Review*, *The Write Launch*, *The Closed Eye Open*, *Fireweed: Poetry of Oregon*, *The Louisville Review*, and other journals. Additional work (both poetry and photography) can be viewed at [www.davidgoodrum.com](http://www.davidgoodrum.com).

John L. Gronbeck-Tedesco writes poetry, short stories, translations and plays. His work has appeared in the *Connecticut River Review*, the *Muddy River Review*, *Scintilla*, *Better than Starbucks*, *Outsider Poetry*, the *Kansas City Fringe*, the *University of Kansas and Business Casual Productions* (NYC).

John Dorroh is as content sitting on his deck in Southwest Illinois reading new poets as he is while eating handmade pasta in Tuscany. He buys their books and highlights lines that make him say, "Why didn't I write that?" His poems have appeared in over 100 journals, including *Feral*, *Tilde*, *The Orchards*, *River Heron*, & *Pinyon*. He has two chapbooks to his credit.

Christy Wise is a poet, essayist, author and education equity advocate. Her poems have appeared in *Evening Street Press*, *Anthem*, and *The Raven's Perch*, among others. Christy is co-author of "A Mouthful of Rivets: Women at Work in World War II." Her essay...

...“Memory Book” was a notable essay in Best American Essays 2010. Christy holds an MFA in Poetry from Sierra Nevada University. She feels most at home walking along the Pacific Ocean and hiking in Desolation Wilderness.

Mike Cole lives and writes and worries about fire in the mountains of California. His poems and other writing have appeared in the anthologies *Some Yosemite Poets* (Scrub Jay Press) and *Highway 99* (Heyday Press) and in the magazines *diaphanous micro*, *Sideways*, *One Sentence Poems*, *Wilderness House*, *Wild Blue Zine*, *As It Ought to Be*, *Sublunary Review*, and others.

Judith Mikesch McKenzie has traveled much of the world, but is always drawn to the Rocky Mountains as one place that feeds her soul. She loves change - new places, new people, new challenges, but writing is her home. Her poems have been published in *Wild Roof Journal*, *Halcyone Literary Review*, *Plainsongs Magazine*, *Elevation Review*, *Scribblerus*, *Cathexis Northwest Press*, *Meat for Tea Valley Review*, and several others. She is a wee bit of an Irish curmudgeon, but her friends seem to like that about her.

Laura Plummer is an American writer, poet and humorist from Massachusetts. Her work has appeared in numerous print and online publications, including *The Sun and Chicken Soup for the Soul*. [lauraplummer.me](http://lauraplummer.me).

Patrick T. Reardon, a three-time Pushcart Prize nominee, has authored eleven books, including the poetry collections *Requiem for David* (Silver Birch), *Darkness on the Face of the Deep* (Kelsay) and *The Lost Tribes* (Grey Book). Forthcoming is his memoir in prose poems *Puddin': The Autobiography of a Baby* (Third World). His website is [patricktreardon.com](http://patricktreardon.com). His poetry has appeared in *Rhino*, *Main Street Rag*, *America*, *Autumn Sky*, *Burningword Literary Journal* and many others. His poem “The archangel Michael” was a finalist for the 2022 Mary Blinn Poetry Prize.

Gerald Wagoner's childhood was divided between Eastern Oregon and Montana where he was raised under the doctrine of benign neglect. With a BA in Creative Writing, Gerald pursued the art of sculpture, and eventually left the Northwest to study. He earned an MFA in sculpture from SUNY Albany, and moved to Brooklyn, NY in 1982. Gerald exhibited regularly and taught Art and English for the NYC Department of Education.

He is currently finalizing his forthcoming chapbooks; *A Month of Someday*, (Indolent Books 2022) and *When Nothing Wild Remains*, (Broadstone Books 2023)

2018: Visiting Poet Residency Brooklyn Navy Yard. 2019. Poet in Residence Gowanus Dredgers Canoe Club Boathouse, 2021 & 2022: Curator and Host of, *A Persistence of Cormorants*, a summer outdoors reading series. Selected Publications: *Beltway Quarterly*, *BigCityLit*, *Blue Mountain Review*, *Cathexis Northwest Press*, *Coffin Bell*, *The Helix Literary Magazine*, *J-Journal*, *The Lake*, *Maryland Review*, *Night Heron Barks*, *Ocotillo Review*, *Right Hand Pointing*, *Shot Glass*, *Umbrella Factory Magazine*.

James Zaferopolos lives in Cleveland, Ohio. He was born in 1946 in Northern Greece, of a refugee Anatolian-Greek family. His father died when he was one. His mother and he came to America in 1955. They settled in Cleveland, OH, where he attended the Cleveland public schools, earned a BA in English from Baldwin Wallace College, and an MA in History from Cleveland State University. His wife, Eileen, has taught elementary school for forty seven years. They have five children, and fifteen grandchildren. He worked briefly as a reporter for the *Painesville Telegraph*, a small town paper in Ohio's Lake County; a sales representative for *Jonson & Johnson*; and—for thirty years—a professor of History and administrator at a small Cleveland college, when health issues forced a somewhat unexpected early retirement. He has been writing poetry since his boyhood in Greece, but has only recently made an effort to publish. At 75, he tells himself, “it's either now, or never”.

Ellen Skilton is a professor of education whose creative writing has appeared in *The Dewdrop*, *Cathexis Northwest Press*, *Quartet*, *The Scapegoat Review*, *Dissident Voice*, *Philadelphia Stories*, *Red Eft Review* and *The Dillydoun Review*. In addition to being a poet, she is an educational anthropologist, an applied linguist and a *Fringe Fest* performer. She has an MFA in Creative Writing at Arcadia University and lives in Philadelphia.

Georgia San Li is at work on a novel, poetry and other writings. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in venues such as *Litro Magazine*, *Eclectica*, selected for the final round of the 2022 Oxford Poetry Prize, and shortlisted for the New Millennium Writing Awards. She has worked in cities including London, Tunis, Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Paris, Boston, Wilhelmshaven and Tokyo. She is American, born in the Midwest, and currently lives in New England.

Anne Kay Murphy lives in Washington D.C., where she writes content for a living and also sometimes writes for herself. She has a degree in English Literature from the Catholic University of America.

Madi Miller is a 10th grader living in Los Angeles. She is the middle child, with an older and younger brother. In her free time she likes to dance, bake and write.

Kelly Easton holds a Master of Arts in French Translation and Conference Interpretation. She spent fifteen years interpreting in the halls of diplomacy, working with the words of others. She now tends to her own writing. She recently founded *Compass Rose Literary Journal*: [compassroselitrary.com](http://compassroselitrary.com)

Ruth Mota was born in Eugene, Oregon where her dog taught her many lessons. She studied English at Oberlin College and was motivated by a reading of Lorca's *Bodas de Sangre* to live in a Spanish-speaking country. Although she was sent by the Peace Corps to Brazil where she lived for decade, she also became fluent in Spanish and worked as an international health trainer throughout Latin America and Africa. Now she lives in the Santa Cruz Mountains of California and focuses on poetry, both writing and facilitating workshops to groups in her community like veterans and men in jail. Her poems have been published in many online and print journals.

Lina Buividaviciute is a poet, literary critic and scholar. This piece of poetry is kindly translated from Lithuanian to English by Irma Šlekyte.

Lora Berg created a collaborative book with visual artist Canute Caliste (1914-2005), and has published poems in *Shenandoah*, *Colorado Review*, *The Carolina Quarterly*, etc. She served as Poet-in-Residence at the Saint Albans School, and holds an MFA from Johns Hopkins. Lora has also served as Cultural Attaché at U.S. embassies abroad.

Dick Altman writes in the high, thin, magical air of Santa Fe, NM, where, at 7,000 feet, reality and imagination often blur. He is published in *Santa Fe Literary Review*, *American Journal of Poetry*, *Fredericksburg Literary Review*, *Foliage Oak*, *Blue Line*, *THE Magazine*, *Cathexis*, *The Offbeat*, *Haunted Waters Press*, *Split Rock Review*, *The RavensPerch*, *Beyond Words*, *New Verse News*, *Wingless Dreamer*, *Sky Island Journal* and others here and abroad. A poetry winner of Santa Fe New Mexican's annual literary competition, he has in progress two collections of some 100 published poems. His work has been selected for the forthcoming first volume of *The New Mexico Anthology of Poetry*, to be published by the New Mexico Museum Press.

Chris Bevins lives in Seattle, writing poems, stories and songs, while managing a two-cat garden. He has an MFA from the Naropa Institute, and he's currently spreading his latest chapbook, *Ninja Will Eat Me*, among the little free libraries of Seattle's Central District. Read more from Chris at [pedalpoet.com](http://pedalpoet.com).

Geoffrey Himes's poetry has been published by *Best American Poetry*, *Pacific Poetry*, *January Review*, *Survivision*, *Pendemics*, *Innisfree Poetry Journal*, *Gianthology*, *December*, the *Delaware Poetry Review*, *Salt Lick*, the *Loch Raven Review*, and other publications. His poems are included in the print anthologies *Singing in the Dark*, *The Ground Under Our Feet* and *Poet Trees: Poetry Hiding in Plain Sight*. His song lyrics have been set to music by Si Kahn, Walter Egan, Billy Kemp, Fred Koller and others. His book on Bruce Springsteen, "Born in the U.S.A.," was published by Continuum Books in 2005. He has written about popular music for the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Rolling Stone*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, *Paste*, *Downbeat*, *Sing Out* and the *Nashville Scene* since 1977.

Alfred Fournier is an entomologist, writer and community volunteer in Phoenix, Arizona. His poems have appeared in Cathexis Northwest Press, The Main Street Rag, Plainsongs, Amethyst Review, The Indianapolis Review and elsewhere. His poem "Tomorrow I Will Be Sweet God" received a 2022 Pushcart nomination from Gyroscope Review. Twitter: @AlfredFournier4.

Ashley Williamson is an American poet living in the inspiring English Lake District. She is currently working on her Undergraduate of Creative Writing at Oxford University. When not writing, she works as an industrial radiographer for a small family business in the aerospace industry. She wanders the Lake District, rock collecting and painting. Her poetry features in Wingless Dreamer, Sad Girls Lit Mag, and upcoming editions of Beyond Words Literary Magazine and The Festival Review

Henry Crawford is the author of two collections of poetry, American Software (CW Books, 2017), and the Binary Planet (Word Works, 2020) and a chapbook, The Little Box Theater (printF Press 2022). He won first prize in the 2019 World Food Poetry Competition. His work has been published in Boulevard, Copper Nickel, Rattle, the Southern Humanities Review, and others. He was nominated for the 2022 Rhysling Award by the Science Fiction Poetry Association. He also serves as a co-host of the Café Muse Literary Salon Online. His website is <http://henrycrawfordpoetry.com/>

Esinam Bediako is an English teacher and writer. She holds an MFA in fiction from Sarah Lawrence College. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in Dark Phrases, Floodwall Magazine, Pink Panther Magazine, Novus, and North American Review. A Ghanaian-American born and raised in Detroit, she lives in Southern California with her family.

seren mcclurken is twenty-two-year old folklore student living in the hills of southern indiana. they use they/them pronouns.

Valerie Braylovskiy is a writer whose curiosity for the world is driven by examining and uncovering anomalies in seemingly ordinary experiences, people, places, and thoughts. She is a second-year college student and lives in San Francisco, CA. Her work has been featured in places including Agave Review, The Helix Magazine, and Allegheny Review. Her debut poetry chapbook, Half-life, will be published by Alien Buddha Press in 2023.