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# Eleven Years Later

By: Maura Aradia Furtado

Tucked behind your low, darkened eyes  
I recognize a guilt too sordid to share  
When inside my fever dreams, you belie  
A raw truth you decided I could not bear

I fruitlessly hoped for sweetened peace of mind  
And you attempted to provide that, you did  
But every time I meet your eyes, I still find  
All of the vile realities you hid

Sour memories I relive in downtime  
Each grueling midnight held captive by thought  
By mistakes I made when the guilt was mine  
Discrediting my pain when clearly distraught

So just as a dog may bark late in the night  
And storms that steal lives hold no ill will  
I cannot resist holding onto my spite  
Even if your remorse is sincerely instilled



# Death

By: James Dowling

My Mother is dead. Cancer grew on the lung, impeded the heart. Stopped it cold. I wasn't there. Left to change and eat some food. They did CPR when my sister was in the ICU room. Said she heard ribs crack. Still died. Mouth open. Hair askew.

In life, hair askew meant she felt undignified. She loved her dignity. In death, she had no dignity. She was drugged at the end. Didn't know you or me or Jesus. Still smiled sometimes when I walked into the room. Looked goofy without her dentures.

Her death was different from my grandfather's. He died in his living room, talking to Buddy Holly. Never knew he was a fan.

I guess death is a surprise party held in your honor.



# There is an Ancient Hidden Secret on the Back of the Rosetta Stone

By: Timothy Tarkelly

Not all language is for the senses  
You see and hear too much

Think of parking lots, teeming with midnight  
A useless void of rectangles. Tell me what

You know from blank spaces  
From the heavy breath that lingers

Between your head and the church's ceiling  
Between your neighbor and his empty fridge



# Star Gazing.

By: Lumina Miller

Condensation over a recessed oval pane  
calls from quiet indigo vastness

upright spines of old novels and a cashmere throw line this cabin,  
a tether to life in another atmosphere

long to walk unfettered and feel tepid air rushing over warm skin—  
not a possibility.

The itch of confinement widens.

Activity on Monday's fungi sample recaptures orbiting thoughts  
with its newness.

The data doesn't disappoint  
but the desire to feel Martian wind in my hair could be my undoing.

# A Crayoned Conversation

By: Joan Penn

*Not being able to speak  
is not the same as not having anything to say.*  
Rosemary Crossley,  
Author & Advocate for Disability Rights

You won't speak to me. I've been unable to reach you.  
But I haven't given up. Look!

I bought this big box of crayons, 48 colors in all,  
and thought perhaps we could create  
a different way to communicate,  
one that sounds something like this:

If you could color your moods,  
what colors would you choose?  
Would red express rage  
and fuchsia confusion?

Or, would you choose a gradation of blues,  
ranging from dark to light, to express feelings of sadness?

Yes, yes, you're right, I'm toying with rhyme,  
thinking playing might free you

to select a shade saturated with significance,  
as if gray might depict the despair you're feeling,  
or white hint at why you stay silent,

or that these miscellaneous greens might mean  
plants, trees, nurturing, or even healing.

I thought that with 48 colors to choose from,  
there might be something you're aching to say.

Would you like me to start the process?  
Should I pick a color?

Gold to symbolize silence?  
Orange to depict a sunset?

Lavender to highlight a star-bright night sky?

Or, would you prefer a more subtle shade?  
Would a soft silver seem more suitable  
to draw you out of your shell?

Yes, the pun was intended.  
I was trying to make you smile.

But I'll share a secret with you.  
I'd select all the colors of the rainbow,  
for the promise that they hold,

or maybe I should stick with purple,  
for its spiritual significance,

as I cling to belief all things are possible,  
and an outburst of color could lead to a breakthrough.

What do you say? Should we give it a go?  
You can just shake your head yes or no.

Should we begin a crayoned conversation?

# MANIFESTO

By: patricia a. heisser métoyer

I

Belief in life - in what is most fragile in life,  
in the end, belief is lost.

Inveterate dreamers, discontent, destined, and troubled objects led to use,  
disregard brought and earned through efforts, unimpressed by wealth and poverty,  
lucidity turned back to childhood.

Lives lived at once; illusion firmly rooted  
- only fleeting.

Everything at hand, material conditions.

The woods, both white and black, will never sleep.

II

Dare to venture far, question distance.

Threat upon threat yields,  
abandoning a terrain conquered.  
Imagination knows no bounds.

In strict accordance with laws of arbitrary utility; incapable of assuming inferior roles,  
abandoned to lusterless fate.

On occasion, lost by slow degrees reason for living, incapable of rising to exceptional love.

Belonging to body and soul,  
imperative necessity demands attention.  
Expansive gestures will be ideas generous and far-reaching.  
In the mind's eye, events, real and imagined,  
are seen as related to a welter of events.

### III

Beloved imagination, an unsparing quality.  
Madness remains one locked up,  
Insane owe incarceration to reprehensible acts.  
Acts of freedom threatened.  
Victims of imagination are induced to pay attention to rules - outside of the species threatened.  
Profound indifference to judge;  
punishments meted out derive consolation from imagination.  
Madness sufficiently endured thought validity does not extend beyond. Hallucinations, illusions, trifling pleasure.  
A realistic attitude demands examination. Monstrous pride; not new complete decay.  
Ridiculous tendencies of spiritualism incompatible with the nobility of thought.

### IV

Inspired positivism, from Saint Thomas Aquinas to Anatole France,  
made up of mediocrity, hate, and dull conceit.  
Gives birth to ridiculous beliefs in life, most fragile in life - real life, belief lost.

Inveterate dreamers, discontent destiny, troubled objects led to use, nonchalance earned through efforts, unimpressed by wealth and poverty, lucidity turned back to childhood.

Lives lived at once; illusion firmly rooted, only fleeting. Everything is at hand, material conditions.

The woods white and black, will never sleep.

## V

Under the reign of logic: Day and age, logical methods applicable to solving problems, logical ends escape pointless.

Experience found increasingly circumscribed.

It paces back and forth in a cage difficult to emerge.

It leans on sentinels of common sense.

The pretense of civilization and progress managed to banish the mind; superstition, fancy; and the forbidden search for truth.

Conformance practiced.

Pure chance parts of the mental world, pretending to be concerned brought back to light forms a means of human exploration.

Imagination is reasserting itself, reclaiming its rights.

## VI

Depths of the mind contained within strange forces, capable of augmenting the surface, waging victorious battles.

Seize them first, inadmissible considerable psychic activity from birth until death,

the sum of moments of a dream,

point of view of time, pure dreaming.

Dreams of sleep, the sum of the moments of reality, plaything of memory,

pleasure in weakly retracing dreams.

Stripping firm hope,

memory arrogates itself from dreams.

Sleep, to surrender to dreamers, surrender eyes wide open; in this realm, conscious rhythm of thought.

Dream last night follows the night before, immemorial. Grant to dreams refuses reality.

Growing old, more than reality perhapsthe dream, difference treat the dream, grow old.

## VII

Mind displayed a strange tendency to lose

its bearings scarcely dares express itself and confines itself.

Idea disturbed it, making it less severe.

Isolated mind solvent spirit to heaven.

The beautiful residue can be

divinity obscurely ascribes all its aberrations.

Angle, that idea which affects likes in eyes,

not precisely linked to dream, binds to lost things were different. Key to minds, kill.

Fly faster, love to heart's content.

# There is no Name

By: Maylie McDaniel

Slit the throat and drain the blood

Pickle me in vinegar and formaldehyde

Morticians and their secretive elixirs

Carcinogens for that youthful complexion

I don't get carded often

Got pretty good at stitching myself up

Call me Adam and make me a monster

Your monster

Take responsibility doctor Frankenstein

//

Cutting the thread between us with my teeth

No more ties that bind

//

The lady in the lake beckoning me to drown with her

Shrouded in white like a wedding

I tell her I'm too sick and the blood on my hands too great for white

She doesn't get it

Doesn't hear my reasons

Never wanted a wedding anyways

//

Can't decide how I want to burn

Like a dying star

Quiet and distant and out of energy

Or like a volcano

Loud and destructive and unavoidable

//

I love when buildings break down

Get overtaken by nature

Vines and moss and fungus that choke out concrete

Erosion in the form of Gaia herself taking it all back

I'm jealous of that beauty

//

I want to move past this

I want to feel that burning, beautiful love one has when they're at peace

I need to move past this, to cast all that haunts onto this page

To take this page and burn it away. To let go.

//

One day I will uncover the mirrors

Open the curtains, open every window

One day I will go outside without fear

No gritted teeth or anxiety

One day I will break the ties

//

I'm going to love myself.

I'm going to step out of my skin

Put my mortal body onto the autopsy table

Make an incision, crack open my ribs

Taking apart something weathered and broken down and loving it

Giving each piece its due respect

Cleaning my liver and guts

Scraping the rust off my bones and polishing them

Taking my heart so carefully in my hands, loving it, restoring it

Putting myself back together with care, sewing myself up again, loving the process



# As If

By: Carol Lynn Stevenson Grellas

You were always memorizing life. Holding minutes  
in a three-ring binder, recording thoughts on reel-to-reel  
tapes as if you knew someday, someone would listen,  
maybe even me reading or hearing your words,  
your voice in an empty room as if you're here  
longing for a reply.

You, with your stronghold on figuring things out—  
this life, this death, this something that came from  
nothing, as if existence was talking to you, telling  
you to write it all down. As if Aristotle was awake  
in your dreams, pushing you to theorize your own truth.

There are days I go over your notes as if you're  
sitting beside me, yearning for an intervention, scribbled  
words with lines drawn through that are barely legible.

I wonder if electroshock therapy was a lightning  
bolt that struck your heart as if it overheated your brain  
and became a blitz of God too vital to contain—

until one morning, you fled your being, leaving  
your body lifeless in our home, your ghost asleep  
in a catacomb bed, a room of winter, of waiting for  
a morning that never came, an endless slumber  
that woke a heartache that's never left, a breathless  
hanging gasping for air, *bereft, bereft, bereft*.

Years later, I still remember the blued color  
of your skin, my trying to shake you awake, as if I could  
disrupt your death, and even though your note explained  
your desire to sleep in forever; I'm here waiting  
for you as if what happened to you happened to me,  
too, only I've had to live with it.



# THIRTEENTH

By: Joshua Kulseth

With the iron-ringed capitol dome finished,  
whitewashed and bright with bronzed Liberty  
crowning her, with the dead at Fort Wagner  
sand-swallowed in their seaside graves,  
and with a hundred-thousand blacks  
battle-ready, we moved to make official  
what had been for two years mere  
necessity—

*Resolved: neither slavery nor  
involuntary servitude, except  
as punishment for a crime whereof  
the party shall have been duly convicted  
shall exist within these United States.*

Passed, one-hundred-nineteen to fifty-six:  
we were a nation free, without an asterisk.



# Elvis is in the Home

By: Robert Eugene Rubino

(Los Altos, California, December 2024)

In the nursing home's dining room  
the Elvis impersonator sings Christmas songs  
to a mute audience nibbling feebly  
from unappetizing lunch trays  
a mostly immobile audience  
roughly the age the real Elvis would've been

while down the hall and to the left  
a patient growls and howls obscenities  
in a room where two of his three roommates  
turn up the volume on dueling TV channels  
and a cheerful immigrant aide  
changes the other's diaper.

*Silver bells, silver bells*  
the Elvis impersonator sings  
in a not-too-terrible tenor  
*soon it will be Christmas Day.*



# Nostalgia: Iced Mocha

By: Anita Noelle Green

Intangible marionette strings sewn into me by the claws of guilt pull me back to the place I swore I'd never return: my hometown. Time forgot to visit this place. The air is as stale as Mom's breakfast toast. It's almost as though even the dust has been stilled—like it doesn't dance in the sunlight.

Though, there is one kind reminder. One that seems to have kissed my nose. The faint scent of halcyon floats me to the one pleasant constant found in both past and present: the coffeehouse.

I order the iced mocha, just as you did when we were here together. The cool liquid seems to be smiling at me with a circular tease. It's as if I can see nostalgia licking the brim. I find myself staring at the cup as if it's a long lost friend I've forgotten how to talk to. My fingers hug the sides like a long embrace. The first sip sends my tongue flicking through memories like one might flip through a good book to their favorite page.

My eyes glistening. Your eyes gazing. Girly giggles and chipper chuckles. As a lock of my hair falls across my face you tuck it behind my ear and glide your hand back to your chest like a secret you'll forever lock in your heart.

The moment was more caffeinated than our beverages in front of us. Your lips laced with iced mocha—the taste of young bliss.

It's the taste I miss most of before. Now is more bitter than the plain black coffee everywhere around here seems to be serving. The same coffee everyone seems to be drinking as of late. I understand it, especially now, but I'll stick with the iced mocha.

# Horse + Smoke

By: Elizabeth Cohen

1.

## Horse

Horse, I am going to lead you to water.  
I'll take your harness, walk you down.

All day you have run in the paddock  
with the other horses, using your tail  
that clever way, to brush the flies  
away from one another's eyes.

I've seen, too, how you avoid stumbling  
on the rocky steeps of the BLM,  
the way you round the bend into  
evening's secrets, like you share them.

I have felt the way you waltz over the black ice  
beneath me. Seen you stand in the stiff winds,  
powering snowdrifts like a boss.

You even handle the pops of distant  
shotguns –so much better than my dogs,  
who will hide beneath the bed.  
You'll migrate to a single stub of carrot  
from across the ages.

I've only seen you shy once—  
at the appearance of a rattlesnake.  
And that, horse, is just smart.

All this, I know, must make you thirsty.  
So I want to know if it's true  
what they say, or sheer apocrypha.  
Because truth is something I now see  
can be forced into an underground cave  
with diseased bats, while rumor runs  
untethered and wild on the mesas,  
around and around the racetracks,  
leaping barrels. Doing tricks.

And this one has been going around forever,  
so horse, let's get to the bottom of it.

I'll lead, we will find out.

**2.**

### **Smoke**

I will follow you.  
Not right behind  
the grey wisp  
of your tail  
but back aways

I will go down  
into the Calf Canyon  
and walk among  
the charred corpses  
of the trees

I'll wake up  
to the scent of you  
and find your path

I am your dazed rubber  
necker, horrified spectator  
in your coliseum  
of the forest's death

But mostly, smoke  
I want to know  
If it's true what they say  
that you follow beauty

How around a campfire  
you'll find the prettiest girl  
and move her direction  
with your grizzled nose

It's always bothered me  
that idea, that like a sundial  
you can point into the hours  
find a single beauty, lasso her  
in your ashy breath

So smoke,  
I am going to follow you,  
find out if you really  
do follow beauty

Everyone who ever read  
a book as a child  
knows that Beauty  
was a horse. Maybe you  
are following her, going down  
the gullies, running toward  
her sleek, black freedom  
which is understandable

Maybe you don't like  
the reputation as mountainside's  
murderer, the sad shawl at the funeral.  
Maybe you, like me  
just want to know what will really  
happen if you lead a horse to water  
since you know a thing or two  
on that topic.

Water, that is.  
How it answers thirst  
How it quenches dry  
how it sizzles out  
flames, one of the ways  
in which you are born.



# Risky Business

By: A. Z. Foreman

The poem that your poem will become  
isn't until you grab your words and dig  
till the soul clangs against the troublesome  
that bangs them into line As small as big  
twangling dimensions cosmic as a string  
threading a defect of the universe  
you think with it will happen out A thing  
sharp as a busted knee or your throat's curse  
chewing death's scent like fruit's rot mixed with time  
shared before blood dried to mnemonic glue  
stuck on the taste of puke, leashed wild in rhyme,  
will terrify to life And it's just You  
dragged to control the mind out of control  
It is the risky business of the soul



# The Seam in the Veil

By: Lauren Geiser

(Italics from Grimm's Complete Fairy Tales, The Brothers Grimm)

I knew it was coming. I began sleeping  
by the open window, hoping it would take me  
in the night.

Then one day,  
beneath my window

*a blood-red flower.*

Taking the *beaten and unbeaten paths*  
toward an unnatural twilight, a north star  
of braided deep-green and amethyst.

*Deeper into the forest, I arrive where it is the darkest.*

With eyes closed, I see by something other  
than light, the thin, sinewy veil. On the other side

*a white figure standing.*

From all sides and from nowhere, metallic  
and reedy in the fog:

*“Who has given you leave to hunt here?”*

The *green wood* surrounding me grows taller, tightens  
around my electric frame, blotting out the path I followed.

My eyes open now, pupils two jade flames meeting

*the figure’s skull with grinning teeth.*

Now, I am holding a *bright knife* that feels like  
my mother’s hand in mine, and  
I do not offer blood for entry.

Reaching forward, I slice the seam of the veil,  
I see the line separating these forest floors and I  
feel nothing as I cross it.

# feeling

By: Hyacinth Harlow

the blood that pumps  
through my veins

is

burnished ichor.

terrible

burden,  
that comprises my vessel.  
that comprises *me*.

and they call me

ruin.

(all i do is  
**ruin.**)

and  
all i am  
is  
*nothing*

caustic,  
choleric –  
child of mars  
fueled by mercurial urge.

(i am  
so tired.)

unable to stop.

the sorrow.  
**the rage.**

...

*(the fear.)*

temper crashing  
in waves of melancholy;  
blackened moods drowning beneath  
the borderline of impulse  
and well-worn hospital blankets.

*(make it stop.  
please.  
make me stop.)*

i speak  
and my voice is silence.  
primordial terror  
like the dark of the woods,  
tangled thorns clogging my throat  
i am spitting up blood and dirt and death  
and still i can do nothing but *lie*

*(makeitstopmakeitstopmakeit)*

a lover once asked me  
what it was like –  
the hollowness,

the ache of *empty*.  
even then, i could not explain.

(...)

(too much.  
i feel too *much*.)

i fear the truth  
of what's inside me.

and, in truth –  
i do not want it.

# Silence Was Not Palpable But Palatable

By: Victoria Spaulding

*“Eclipse is the word, my friend, not clips, for the obscuration of the two great luminaries.”*

*Don Quixote*

Quiet was palatable in our household:  
eaten threadbare. Hardened on a clothesline.

Draped vowels treated before laundered.  
She's comfortable in her idiom.

Our slumbered tongues belittle  
the continuum. I harbor her in prism

colors. She's on mute, passing through  
deadpan. Her name, an invitation lyric

stands vigil. Rewind “Goodnight”  
our cyclical intervention. Admittance?

Don't broach. We're bubble diagrams  
on winter nights with minimal intersection.

As if an elephant beveled by jealousy,  
from a shelf, she side-eye glances at me.



# A Meteor Enters the Atmosphere

By: Edward D. Miller

Please don't explain  
The inexplicable to me, Auntie,  
Though I know you can--  
Let me mollycoddle the mystery.  
Shooting stars after midnight  
In the late summer sky. O my!  
Just train your eyes above  
And you will discover their cascades.  
Just for you. Just for me.  
O the universe giveth but does not taketh away.  
So there.  
Time slides down a playground slide.  
Space spins round a merry-go round.  
This you see. That is invisible.  
The cicadas. The crickets. The bullfrog.  
Clearly a murky soundscape.  
On the moonless car-free carefree night  
Thousands of sparkles bezewel the sky  
But none tell the truth, and none lie.  
From our perspective  
They will dim into dawn.  
O late summer night--  
Please repeat the dreamy mystery now.  
O Auntie please  
Let's watch the panorama again.



# Boogeyman

By: Lina Buividavičiūtė

(Feminist interpretation of Nikolai Gogol's novel "The Viy")

Hurry up, my women, here – a room, here – chalk,  
here – the smell of pine branches. Gather all of you – lame, toothless,  
mindless, one-legged and blind, aborted and those  
who scrubbed their histories, all who cried  
about the Christmas wafer chewed up by the bunny, all who rocked their  
children –lullaby lullaby lullaby – all  
who left everything, who were left, medeas gorgons heras hetaerae  
all of the station waitresses, vendors of holes for just twenty *sous*  
all illiterate landless, tapping fingers on man's fly –  
come all, because it's almost three o'clock, and the rooster hasn't crowed,  
He shuffles. He waddles. And I can't see through my  
fallen eyelids, women, grab some chalk,  
it's time to whitewash this story with vellum, draw a circle three times, it's time  
throw the gauntlet, cast spells, - and she's free, and she's free, and she's free.



# Einstein's Universal

By: Paul Ilechko

Light curved the universe  
pale and infinite  
creeping gold through  
intricacies of ductwork  
illuminating the cement  
and aggregate that held  
this world together  
when we left we assumed it  
would be forever  
our dissatisfaction with the city  
having reached a tipping point  
we had saved our money  
with the idea of escape  
to find a better place  
of warmth and conviviality  
a place to find new friends  
a place to drink until we fell  
until we slept in a bathtub  
but the propaganda machine  
was swift and mobile  
we could not outrun our problems  
trapped within the walls  
of an ever-expanding maze  
that subtly maneuvered us back  
to the place we had recently left  
we recognized the signage  
and heard the warning alarms  
quietly building at first  
until reaching a crescendo  
howling like a wolf across  
the dissolving dark of night.



# Mother

By: Chelsea Logan

I once saw a troop  
of Chinese contortionists,  
muscles twisted around bone  
they'd inhabit only sometimes,  
fine skin a means to balance  
plates and other breakables.  
My memory tells me  
they were women, all taut  
between their leotards  
and hearts. We praised  
the perverse stretch, accustomed  
to sitting on hands as they tore.  
We never deserved  
the gifts their bodies gave  
and gave; what is a woman  
if not a starting point,  
a negotiation the universe makes  
to soothe her many sons.

# Madness

By: Michael Steiner

*after Celtic Twilight by William Butler Yeats*

Where are the Sidhe? I am searching under  
Every broken stone and fallen tree. Every  
Evening as the sun sets, dull and purposed

Footsteps creak above my head. Who is this  
That occupies my rooms? I ascend to bed and  
Close my eyes. No fair-faced Heaven-sent

Messengers grant me visions. Old stories fade,  
More perverse than reflections on rain-soaked  
Streets. Mangled cars and bicycles gaze back

At downturned eyes. My time is up tonight. I wish  
To sit in wait no longer. Who, in truth, should  
Wish to arise from this fertile earth? No great

Mayors to be spoken of in coffee shops and dive  
Bars. My own ancestors stay buried deep inside  
My mind. I cut my roots when I need fresh sap

For a parched throat. Magic sings from the forest  
to enrapture those who walk through with wise and  
Simple hearts. I fear I am the woodsman. No sidhe

Sing for me. I might rest this blunted ax beside  
Some new-felled tree, cross the waters of some  
Foggy stream, lay upon the muddy banks, sink

Into a slumber. I might travel to some salty ocean's  
Shore, bury my head in frothing waves, stumble out  
Three-quarters drowned into some old crumbled

Cave, dance my feet bloody by the light of bonfires  
Burning out, eyes glowing like lightning in a settling  
Sky, a drunken face mad with promise while Camelot

The faery kingdom fades from view: hoarfrost on  
The grass, King Arthur's circle table squared.  
Every humble pearl diver surfacing empty-handed.



# February 19th, 6:54 a.m.

By: Harper Morgan

there was that one morning, the first of the snow storm  
when the sun came up weakly, but not defeated, just  
wrapped heavily against the cold by her own eternal blankets  
admiring the view  
waiting for the kettle to boil.

there was that one morning with the dark shush of ice on the front stoop,  
the glow of fire-lit warmth sighing from the windows and bathing the morning, so gentle,  
not yet quite there, in honey

and outside it was quiet.

and inside it was quiet, but the kind of quiet with which a flower grows, steadily and without fuss.  
and the bakers, already three hours awake, were pulling big, hot trays of bread from the big, hot  
brick oven, and steam was gathering on the glass.  
perfect rounds, crisp with smoke and flour, kneaded and nestled into their baskets like moses. soft,  
spongy, heavy and warm to the touch.

and the coffee, beginning to stir and the sharp, fresh bills into the drawer and the girl  
with sugar dusted on her apron laughing into mouthfuls.

that morning, that winter.

those dark, abundant hours.

when it was just barely morning until it was.

when chairs clattered gently into place and the mugs on top of the espresso machine were already  
warm and the moment, right then. blue horizon. thin light above the houses down the street. my  
hand on the switch. just a second. not yet. take a breath. coffee. bread. sugar. roses. orange.

they wait outside the front door, all cloud breath and mitten hands and yearning for the luxury  
of warmth. for this comfort-drenched welcome. for the flood of blush back into the cheeks.

hover. the click and neon blaze.

open up.



# Hunter

By: Miriam Gerber Lu

Daughter, my daughter,  
I whisper cross-legged on the floor–  
I press the weight of both my palms into my belly  
And– beneath the layers  
of flesh and skin and tendon– feel  
Something  
hard and whole.  
Hard like bone, and as I push,  
it shifts and presses back.

Then I sit, and watch,  
as my skin undulates  
Like snakes, like  
A submarine, surfacing from deep,  
Like a cat beneath a duvet  
Humped and ruched over her spine,  
looking for the edge, for the way out.



# Lipstick Napkins

By: Diane Corson

it only seems strange to me for i had an idea of how it should go  
or how it should be for me to feel good and okay and oh, sure, that  
was what you meant, but you never said anything, nor does anyone  
else ever say anything i want to hear, what is it that i want to hear,  
now that i ask myself that question, for it is only i to whom i speak  
unless you are there and you have not yet spoken of your whereabouts  
(i love that word) and to what it is that we should speak and say  
nothing of what we mean but only what we feel which is nothing i  
ever hear from you, HOW DO YOU FEEL? there, is that loud  
enough to hear through wind and currents that sweep around continents  
and through tall buildings and swoop down around pathways,  
through alleys where others may have jumped or flown from, or dreamt  
of drawing on napkins for transient thoughts wet with whiskey and often  
a lip stain with lines like drawings from her face, the lines that spoke  
before you knew anything when you let the robbers in that night  
when you were bored.

# ORIENTATION

By: Alex Goodson

Hello, lover  
Welcome to my heart!

we're thrilled to have you join our team  
take my hand,  
let me show you around

this is our world-famous Big Red Slingshot Thingamabob  
where tiny little doe-eyed pipsqueaks  
write sweet love letters all day long  
and then fling them at your lips!  
they will look and feel like kisses for you but  
this is secretly what's going on

secretly what's going on in this corner over here  
(*if you'll follow me*)  
is our Super Deluxe Smitten Kitchen Extravaganza!  
it's a 24/7 diner where itty-bitty shrimpies  
flip funny little flapjacks  
while wearing their tall white chef hats  
(*sometimes we get too excited and burn them*)  
this will look like me making you breakfast because  
I have a full heart when you have a full belly

and a full belly is just as important as a hungry mind  
so come take a look inside  
our Not So Little Library Of Everything Everywhere That Ever Happened!  
(*shhhhhh!*)  
where cutie quiet stewards take care of  
my core memories and musings and Ha-Ha Happy Times! and Big Sads!  
this looks like me telling you my stories  
softly, and slowly, in the dark blue quiet we love best

watch your step, now!  
this is the Big Snazzy Super-Slam Smash N' Crash Construction Zone!!!!  
the projected date of completion is never  
(*we're always working on something and we're terribly sorry about the noise*)  
this heart street has potholes, sinkholes, and rabbit holes  
of FancyNice Shame, Awesome Neat-o Abandonment Stuff, and Cool Cool Cool  
Control Issues  
(*among other things!*)

the last stop on our tour today  
is the spot I love most  
it's this Big Beautiful Bay Window of Dreamy Dreams  
where you can see the loveliest little bits and bobs  
in the people and things that fill your long, sweet hours  
in this short, short life

Hello, lover  
When can you start?



# Underneath coconut palms and mango trees,

By: Gabrielle Myers

their fruit flush green, heavy against the tops—  
walk miles and miles alone, not searching  
but watching storefronts shut for the New Year holiday,  
the few people that walk their dogs, walk with friends,  
shake their heads in hangover or run the paved circle around Parque Omar Torrijos.

Whatever loneliness we used to feel, that longing  
has frayed into an urge to move our feet forward,  
see more of the Pacific converge against a city's earthquake crumpled cement,  
taste more ceviche tangy with pepper, passionfruit, lime,  
taste more coconut rice, tripe, and Chorizo stew,  
see more little girls and boys jump, their popsicle-smudged  
fingers outstretched for their parents' hands,  
feel more mud on sidewalk edges,  
how our shoes give into its suck, yield,  
how we can never have enough of block after block,  
building's edges, sky's shock,  
dark rain clouds hovering to our left.

Whatever fears we had about living, about leaving,  
about walking down unfamiliar and potentially dangerous paths,  
have been sucked into sky like water on a hot day,  
dispersed, gone, transformed into something else.  
What will we do with freedom?

# New Balances in the Club

By: A.T. Yano

I'm wearing New Balances in the club, a 2012 cardinal sin.

The dance floor is a stage for: reckless dance circles, shooting a shot, the chance to be seen as  
Better than I am

In the morning, no bra, smudged (raccoon eye)liner, greasy hair, coffee breath nursing.

Where's the care I safeguarded—indignant dragon upon a golden, counterfeit hoard?  
Abandoned.

Like keys down the sewer grate, like my purse left in the parking garage, like my favorite jeans  
Unsuited for woman hips.

Mathematician Michael Frame says grief, like geometry, is self-similar at every order of magnitude—fractals in lightning and mold.

Did we grieve enough when parties cancelled, borders closed, and quarantined FaceTimes disconnected goodbyes?

Mourning my twenties. Did I do enough?

Mourning you, name/place/time. What went wrong? (INSERT POSTMORTEM HERE.)

Because closures are fairytales.

Love is the awareness to return you, name/place/time, to the continuum.

But my stats are too low; would rather respec my build from Faith to Strength.

Speed-running, breaking mechanics to find shortcuts ending in misery only  
Numbing five-second video loops; droppedphone:bruisednose:wateryeyes.

Hunting for solace in clickbait: “Ten Signs You’re Everything Wrong With You”.

Yoga pants are easy to love because they forgive.

Can I be soft and avoid the landfill like everything else too weak to hold its shape?  
Or must I work harder to stay soft? Malleable and/or supple.  
So, I'll put you, name/place/time, on the high bedroom shelf shadowed by grandfather clock's  
fidgety hands:  
Beloved baby blanket; the naïveté that answers outnumber questions; and six-inch heels rimmed  
with blistered skin.  
To gaze fondly out of reach, behind glass streaked with fingerprints, crying for the moon.  
Sneakers snug on my feet.  
The longing to dance is nonnegotiable.

# Augury, Uncertain (or A Few Moments with an Unwell Rabbit)

By: Amy McCullough

Delicate baby fur rises glacially  
slow breath teetering on not repeating  
eyes halved open to raw fresh  
obscenity of unmasked future  
hind legs splayed in clover maybe  
poison ivy flesh & fur unstitched  
without mercy Neighbor's cat black  
& white fuckery lunges for the fence  
chase interrupted

\*\*\*

Lay a stray towel over your stillness  
carry you to the cool dark beneath  
the porch and wait for Wildlife Rescue  
to retrieve you save you *us*  
in this unimaginable heat imagin-  
ative insects will remap your flesh

Beg pardon for begrudging you  
my cone flowers dappled willows  
cucumber blossoms Also  
pardon for the use of "my"

Try to comfort you with tales of revenge  
exacted and uneasy promise of same  
predictions of future rabbits with razor  
sharp teeth toenails like blades  
a land where pacifists & herbivores reign  
reign reign

Try to not interpret your silence

Try to not weigh the atmosphere  
between *uncertainty* *inevitability*  
extant extinct

Try to answer the unasked:

*Yes we are but puppets  
of genetic mutations intent  
on surviving our uprising  
Yes the Dodos have yet to forgive  
the Dutch their ratty transgressions  
Yes we are all becoming:*

*Plastic*

\*\*\*

Wildlife Rescue arrives glacially  
slowly we peer into the dark  
silence beneath the porch beneath  
blades of grass beneath  
*our nothingness* you have  
disappeared further into the dark  
Or elsewhere beyond reach

# The Doctor's Dilemma

By: Felipe Echeverria-Gutierrez

I'm the doctor of love,  
with my soul bound to a stethoscope of sighs,  
I carry in my hands the cure for lonely hearts,  
and in my chest, a remedy of infinite embraces.

Each beat that echoes in my chest  
is a war drum, a battle already lost,  
for when I hear your name,  
my blood becomes a burning river,  
and my thoughts fall ill, delirious,  
searching for you in every corner of my memory.

Your absence is an ulcer that refuses to heal,  
a fire that smolders in the shadows of my bed,  
where the sheets still hold the echo of your warmth,  
and my pillow, restless and empty,  
wonders when you will return to quell this fever.

I've prescribed kisses  
like pills against this sickness of love,  
and touch as a remedy for the soul,  
but the more I think of you,  
the deeper the thorn of your memory twists within me,  
the more this fever of insatiable love consumes me.

There is no Tylenol in the world that can soothe,  
this burning that consumes me from within,  
nor any antibiotic extinguish the blaze of your memory,  
because your love is the poison that runs through my veins,  
and I, a patient who refuses to be cured.

Each day, each night,  
my illness worsens with the distance,  
and though I seek relief in the embrace of amnesia,  
only in your lips do I find solace from my pain,  
only in your laughter, the antidote to my sorrow.

I'm the doctor who, with trembling hands,  
struggles to save his own heart,  
yet in this battle between life and desire,  
I know that only in your embrace  
will I find the cure for this disease,  
though deep down, I know I do not want to heal,  
for your love is the fever that keeps me alive,  
and the disease from which I never want to escape.

# El Dilema del Doctor

Por: Felipe Echeverria-Gutierrez

Soy el doctor del amor,  
con mi alma atada a un estetoscopio de suspiros,  
lleo en mis manos la cura para corazones solitarios,  
y en mi pecho, un remedio de abrazos infinitos.

Cada latido que resuena en mi pecho  
es un tambor de guerra, una batalla ya perdida,  
porque cuando escucho tu nombre,  
mi sangre se convierte en un río ardiente,  
y mis pensamientos caen enfermos, delirantes,  
buscándote en cada rincón de mi memoria.

Tu ausencia es una úlcera que se niega a sanar,  
un fuego que arde en las sombras de mi cama,  
donde las sábanas aún conservan el eco de tu calor,  
y mi almohada, inquieta y vacía,  
se pregunta cuándo volverás a calmar esta fiebre.

He recetado besos  
como píldoras contra este mal de amor,  
y las caricias como remedio para el alma,  
pero cuanto más pienso en tí,  
más se retuerce la espina de tu recuerdo en mí,  
más me consume esta fiebre de amor insaciable.

No hay paracetamol en el mundo que pueda calmar  
este ardor que me consume desde dentro,  
ni antibiótico que extinga la llama de tu memoria,  
porque tu amor es el veneno que corre por mis venas,  
y yo, un paciente que se niega a sanar.

Cada día, cada noche,  
mi enfermedad empeora con la distancia,  
y aunque busco alivio en el abrazo de la amnesia,  
solo en tus labios encuentro alivio a mi dolor,  
solo en tu risa, el antídoto a mi tristeza.

Soy el doctor que, con manos temblorosas,  
lucha por salvar su propio corazón,  
sin embargo, en esta batalla entre la vida y el deseo,  
sé que solo en tus brazos  
encontraré la cura para este mal,  
aunque muy dentro de mí, sé que no quiero sanar,  
porque tu amor es la fiebre que me mantiene vivo,  
y la enfermedad de la que nunca quiero escapar.



# If Only I Could

By: Briel Brown

The dysgenic impulse strikes  
in the tangle of sweat and tears:  
I crack my nose  
on your pubic bone  
let the blood flow into you.  
You pull my head to your stomach.  
I listen to the tumult.  
You say he'll be sweet when he arrives  
but he'll grow  
into starting little fires.  
I think he'll have your eyes.

# Sun Leopard

By: Dick Altman

## *Northern New Mexico*

First light,  
at seven thousand feet,  
and I glimpse you,  
barely visible,  
threading,  
crouching  
your way,  
spying on me  
through a thicket  
of Juniper.

That I even see you,

your twinges  
of refulgence,  
makes me fear  
you're stalking me,  
yet again.

Your luminous thrusts,  
wending my adobe wall,  
to wind's tempo,  
signal  
in stealth and silence,  
your presence,  
soon hungry glare.

If so,  
to what end?

Joy  
in your tongue's  
raspy thorns,  
recalling how  
you rake me  
at the shore,  
forcing me  
as a child,  
frantic,  
to bury myself  
in the incoming tide.  
Forcing me,  
decades later,  
to excise  
your virulent  
stain.

You may think  
I don't notice,  
but as dawn brightens,  
I feel your claws  
closing in  
at my heels.  
I run from you,  
to seek on the path  
fingers of shade.  
Whenever  
I catch a glint  
of my shadow,  
I can almost taste  
your scalding breath.

Half naked,  
I water  
a stripling Aspen.  
Out of cloudy nowhere,  
as I turn,  
you leap  
on my back,  
claws  
searing blades  
of steel.

Arrows molten,  
penetrating  
the thin air,  
piercing my skin,  
skin once fair and kind,  
but no match  
for you,  
unyielding,  
inescapable,  
leopard of light.

# Hell's Kitchen

By: Sadie Watson

I.

It's the end of June and fireflies are alight.  
It's muggy and hazy and suddenly flushed.  
Your obliging face is reflected in the black of the laptop  
before it turns on and brings you me,  
my too careful nonchalance like a panoply  
and cotton sundresses like irony.

II.

It's the middle of August and it's inferno.  
Swallowing conflagration like ice water,  
you cum for me so eagerly, greedy.  
Name changes and precarious blowjobs,  
we craft and find a spot withdrawn,  
a bleeding x on liminal scroll.

III.

It's the beginning of October.  
We're trying on masks and dropping them.  
Candy corn and cooling, stale popcorn  
balls in neglected cubbies.  
You wear my shirts, ironed and tucked,  
or at least that's what you say.

IV.

It's the beginning of December, midnight blue  
and cold. You wish me well like a client  
and I chisel ice into a vanity.  
Then you give me a fever and ache, leave me  
behind to mend. I rise from the sweaty  
bedclothes like a hawk, watching.

V.

It's the 14th of February and late.  
You're the long hoped for ping,  
and I fall awake again.  
It's a flash of creamsicle in the gray,  
red leather jackets and parrots perched  
on my shoulder to watch the disappearance.

VI.

It's the beginning of June, daylight seeping  
later and later. Faltering steps, strange  
and yet familiar instructions, all indicating  
a place we've been before. Can we stay?  
I want your sugarcane and glossy dreams  
instead of dreary mermaids in the drowning.

# shapes we don't know

By: Allegra Wilson

My mouth is for picking flowers,  
though I tried to be a stag with branched antlers,

though I am  
tiger beetle now.

I know I said my body was forever,  
when it was blown back home. Wind forced

its way down mountain passes.  
We are continental plates drift

without earthquake or volcano. A field

of mines exploded.  
Adam and God on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel,



# Night's Mirror

By: Yvonne Morris

Terraces of passion—scant  
refusal, my body once formed  
hanging gardens. Invisible  
rivulets of generations cried  
for a map indicating where the best  
bands played and beauty danced,  
my sweet onion. We clung  
to space, pacified storm clouds.  
Then kaleidoscopic colors persuaded  
mourning black. Insomnia winked  
behind all shades. A sack of cobras  
became a grateful plate of dust.  
Here, howling gales refrain.  
Fingers climb winter's glass.



# Intimate Exchange between the Covers

By: Dawn Levitt

Only you and I exist in this space,  
exchanging intimate confidences  
inside the container of this poem.  
I whisper secrets of indigo hue  
within the four corners of the blank page,  
printer paper walls of our rendezvous,  
a confessional booth holding our truth.  
Which is confessor and which is the priest,  
privy to private thoughts to shock a crowd?  
Does my verse absolve you of all your sins,  
lifting the burden of your grief, your loss,  
with whispers direct from my soul to yours?  
Alone within the confines of this page –  
two lovers buried in the same casket.



# The Sacred Way

By: James Lilliefors

The stars are lanterns this evening, excess  
is everywhere. It is the nature of the universe  
to expand, *olam*, world without end, forever  
and ever. These lives must have consequences,  
but who can know what they are? Millions of choices;  
how many will ever lead to greatness? We walked  
the Sacred Way at Delphi this morning,  
pathway to the ancient oracle. The road was steep,  
the views stunning, endless. A civilization was found  
up here, buried under centuries of landslides,  
a temple where kings and philosophers arrived  
to ask questions of the oracle. We carried excess light  
to the temple, fearful of coming darkness,  
and the oracle told us to leave it, showing us our size  
and significance. In the vast excess of silence,  
the oracle's absence becomes suggestion tonight:  
The art of living is knowing what to leave.  
The way to greatness is to become smaller.



# Nantucket

By: Ervin Brown

oh!  
time passes  
like sea glass in the swells.

untalented,  
I went to the talent show to learn.

skinned rabbits cranked out of a hat,  
a dance of rust gliding over tar feathers.

they performed while I wept by the garden,  
watering the petals with my sorrow.

the sky goldens—  
clouds in strokes over phthalo blue.

sunlight breaks the little magic,  
scatters reflections across the water.



# Giving Wings To The Earthly

By: Isabel Hoin

involves passing the torch of death  
onto these near-earthly beings.

There is no such thing  
as a barrier between  
life and death.

Here— it is a floating-  
state— an in-between  
state of two worlds;

a peaceful transfer of the soul.

It is the exact feeling  
we look for  
all our living lives.

It is finally here,  
in this moment,  
when we return  
to our beginnings

with our end selves.  
It is truly a dear  
and intimate moment  
to reflect on all  
the years lived.

And, now, we are able  
to float in silence.



# i was there when you killed yourself

By: Matthew Cooper

the boy who dropped his bottle  
could not reach the ground  
so we sit  
and debate

it's broken  
it's not broken

until we rise  
and across my palms  
you lay your robes  
i stand witness  
to weathered  
skin and the call of the eyes  
as you leap  
for the soft and brilliant sun



# Every Word Matters

By: Paul R. Davis

Beginnings should emerge like syllables  
or heartbeats, perhaps a neuron stirring to life.

Some say it should be as exciting as birth,  
some yawn and thrust their hands into their pockets.

Digging without much enthusiasm, you may  
find a consonant or two and hang them  
in a closet next to a winter coat until  
the next celebration. Out in the ocean's depth,  
a word is floating under moonlight that  
no one sees, under stars that fish commune with.  
After the storms of autumn, elemental alphabets  
wash up on the shore of a million tongues.  
Like the memories of friends,  
evenings settle into a broth of ennui  
and sunlight and streetlights bow  
graciously while children take  
one last bite of the apple of the day.

Who will speak after sundown?  
The lovers, the lonely,  
the detectives questioning?  
Who speaks of the candy dish,  
of the last flowers of autumn,  
*les amants* strolling in the woods?

More than an accompaniment  
to breathing when passersby  
exhale unread pages.

Hesitancy unveils an open book,  
the first word sticks  
to your tongue,  
but no one is there with you  
to share wonder.

So you close your mouth  
like rolling the stone back  
to deny the resurrection of

a gurgling gift.  
Like drops of rain,  
the first words stumble  
over the wide eyes  
peering at sunshine,  
the ears capture them,  
animal boredom stares  
at trees listening intently.

Slanted crowds are blind  
of wonder with empty  
dictionaries, unprinted,  
but not deaf, filling atmospheres .

Speak of sunlight while  
earth is shrouded in darkness,  
speak of love when teeth are bared,  
let words put on their finery  
and walk majestically.

Whether straight or twisted,  
with crow's cawing or  
the somber meadow moo,  
humanity echoes eons of

sonic evolution, like some  
Slathering of tongues against  
a laughing wind.

Suddenly a head turns, stops  
to look at someone silent,  
is unaware of a swelling  
neurotransmission,  
and a stream is unleashed,  
Flows. Everyone is a  
recipient, everyone Is  
giving and there are  
junctions and intersections.

Greetings, inquiries,  
exclamations are menus  
of conversation.  
Will these words be  
remembered in the faintest  
of goodbyes, pressed  
between pages of  
necessary and useless information?

Let us not forget the mouths,  
the tongues, facial expressions,  
floriography of sound.  
We will unleash a steady torrent,  
stand beneath the rainy lexicon,  
speak without end.  
Every word matters.

# In Order of Appearance

Maura Aradia Furtado, a New Jersey native, became enamored with the art of poetry at a young age and hasn't slowed down since. Previously published in *The Word's Faire*, her dedication to the craft is unwavering.

James Dowling is a wannabe writer living on Long Island. He is currently a BFA student in Creative Writing at Stony Brook University and a highway maintenance worker. Has been previously published in the *Gandy Dancer* and *Sandpiper Review*.

Timothy Tarkelly's work has appeared in *Flyover Country*, *The Daily Drunk*, the *Red Lemon Review*, and others. He's authored several collections of poetry including *The You We Know and Love* (Spartan Press) and *A Horse Called Victory* (Kelsey Books). When he's not writing, he teaches in Southeast Kansas.

Lumina has a BA in English from the University of Iowa. She enjoys the blue light of the early morning and the prospect of possibility. Her work has been published by literary magazines Black Mountain Press, Unleash Lit, The Write Launch, and Drunk Monkeys.

@luminamillerpoet Instagram

Joan Penn lives in NYC and has a professional background in theater, photography and public relations. Her work has appeared online and in print in Griffel, High Shelf Press, *The Rose in the World*, MacQueen's Quarterly, Half and One, *The Closed Eye Open*, and in three Moonstone Arts Press anthologies. She was the 3rd place winner in the 2022 Wingless Dreamer contest for the anthology, "Evening, Wine and Poetry," and a poem and interview are included in "Nature's Embrace," published by Written Tales in August 2023. That's about it for the moment.

patricia a. heisser métoyer is completing an International MFA in creative writing and holds a PhD in Clinical Psychology. She is an award-winning essayist and recipient of The Los Angeles Review of Books Publishing Fellowship and The American Film Institute Fellowship. She is a Ms. Magazine Feminist Scholar. patricia has published writing on multiple platforms. She is currently seeking representation for her first book of cross-genre narrative fiction and nonfiction on African American and African Diaspora Literature and Art. She is a member of the Author's Guild, the American Psychological Association.

Maylie McDaniel is a writer, artist, and poet based in Portland, Oregon. She is currently an editor for the *Pointed Circle* magazine as published through Portland Community College.

Carol Lynn Stevenson Grellas is a graduate of Vermont College of Fine Arts with an MFA in Writing program. She is a thirteen-time Pushcart Prize nominee and a seven-time Best of the Net nominee. In 2012, she won the Red Ochre Chapbook Contest with her manuscript, *Before I Go to Sleep*. In 2018, her book *In the Making of Goodbyes* was nominated for The CLMP Firecracker Award in Poetry. In 2019, her chapbook *An Ode to Hope in the Midst of Pandemonium* was a finalist in the Eric Hoffer Book Awards. In 2021, Her collection, *Alice in Ruby Slippers*, was short-listed for the Eric Hoffer Grand Prize and awarded an honorable mention in the Poetry category. Her work can be found online and in print and has been featured in *Mezzo Cammin*, *Verse Daily*, and many more journals. She is a former editor-in-chief for the *Tule Review* and *The Orchards Poetry Journal* and a former member of the Board of Directors for Women's Wisdom Art, an organization in Sacramento that supports women's wellness through creativity in all forms. Her latest collections of poetry, *Handful of Stallions at Twilight* (Finishing Line Press) and *A Shared and Sacred Space* (Kelsay Books), are newly released this summer.

Joshua Kulseth earned his B.A. in English from Clemson University, his M.F.A. in poetry from Hunter College, and his Ph.D. in poetry from Texas Tech University. His poems have appeared and are forthcoming in *Tar River Poetry*, *The Emerson Review*, *The Potomac Review*, *The Windhover*, *The South Carolina Review* and others. His poetry manuscript, *Leaving Troy*, was shortlisted for the *Cider Press Review*

Publication Competition, and is currently under contract with Finishing Line Press. He is an Assistant Professor of English and Creative Writing at Franciscan University of Steubenville.

Robert Eugene Rubino has published three collections, and his prose and poetry has appeared in various online and print journals. His old enough to remember the Cuban Missile Crisis and smart enough to solve the New York Times crossword puzzle on Mondays (other days not so much).

Anita Noelle Green (she/her) is a transgender woman. She has a BA in Sociology. Some of her interests include playing video games, tabletop role playing games and camping.

Elizabeth Cohen is an award-winning poet and writer, the author or *The Family on Beartown Road*, a memoir; *The Hypothetical Girl*, a collection of short stories, and five books of poetry, most recently *Mermaids of Albuquerque*. Her work has been recently published in *Blue Mesa*, *San Antonio Review*, *Cagibi*, *Smokelong Quarterly*, and *The Coachella Review*. Former editor of *Saranac Review* and Associate Professor of English at SUNY Plattsburgh, these days she lives and writes in New Mexico where she lives with her dog, Layla.

A. Z. Foreman is a literary translator, poet and language-acquisition addict currently working on a doctorate in Near Eastern Languages at the Ohio State University. His work has appeared in sundry publications including *ANMLY*, *The Los Angeles Review*, *Mantis*, *Metamorphoses*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Lunch Ticket*, the *Penguin Book of Russian Poetry*, *Asymptote*, *Ilanot Review* and elsewhere including two people's tattoos. Most importantly, if you have a dog he'd love to pet it.

Lauren Geiser is an attorney and poet based in Los Angeles, CA (though she grew up in rural Pennsylvania). She has a BA in English from Case Western Reserve University, where she studied poetry under Sarah Gridley. Since then, she has workshopped under Rick Bursky in LA, and recently completed the PocketMFA Program (Fall 2024 Cohort in Poetry), where she was mentored by Kristina Marie Darling. When she is not working or writing, you will find her hiking, practicing hot yoga, reading fantasy novels, or attempting to learn Finnish.

Hyacinth Harlow is an up-and-coming gothic horror & psychological realism writer from Colorado. His work is geared towards examining the facets of human fear, trauma and connection through a lens that attempts to highlight often marginalized perspectives.

Victoria Spaulding holds a BS from UC Davis and a BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and she has attended Taos Writers and Napa Valley Writers' Conferences. Born (Sanchez) in Oxnard, California to immigrated parents, Victoria has de Cervantes Saavedra ancestors on her father's side. She is working on a chapbook that is in conversation with *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra.

Edward D. Miller teaches film, media, and performance at the City University of New York. He has published two chapbooks of poetry: *The Rock in the Middle of the Road* and *The Moment and the Sequence*. He lives with his husband and their Chihuahua.

Lina Buividavičiūtė is a poet and literary critic. This poem is translated from Lithuanian by Ada Valaitis.

Paul Illechko is a British American poet and occasional songwriter who lives with his partner in Lambertville, NJ. His work has appeared in many journals, including *The Bennington Review*, *The Night Heron Barks*, *Atlanta Review*, *Permafrost*, and *Pirene's Fountain*. His first book is scheduled for 2025 publication by *Gnashing Teeth Publishing*.

Chelsea Logan is a writer living in Nashville, TN. Her poetry has most recently appeared in *The Dead Mule School*, *MockingHeart Review*, *The Blue Nib*, and several anthologies.

Michael Steiner is a poet studying Creative Writing at Fresno State. He is particularly interested in the participation of written and spoken word in mystic traditions and the potential for art to access universal human experience. He has poems forthcoming in *hais*: a literary journal and the *San Joaquin Review*.

Harper Morgan is a queer emerging poet based in Portland, OR. Their work has been previously published by The Almagre Review, T.R.O.U. Magazine, Royal Rose Magazine, Elephants Never, Ayaskala, Lavender Lime Literary, Milk Press, and is forthcoming from Porkbelly Press.

Miriam Gerber Lu is a 2020 Yale graduate in Psychology. She lives with her husband in the Bay Area.

Diane Corson's poetry is in the collection of Oregon Poetry at the University of Oregon Library. She has been published in the 2003 Poetry Anthology, Theory Magazine, Terratory Journal, the North Coast Squid, Cirque Journal, 2017, Cirque Journal, 2018, and Terra Incognita, and Pif Magazine, 2020, and was the featured artist and poet of the Triggerfish Critical Journal, January 2022. Diane Corson has written and designed three chapbooks: Poor Tree, 2013, elemental, 2016, and There Being: Interiority, 2018. She has an art and design degree from Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana, where she lived a fairly primitive life for thirty years before she moved to the Pacific Northwest. She was a board member for Oregon Poetry Association for three years and is active in Portland poetry as she holds a salon in her home.

Alex Goodson is a writer and poet who lives in Brooklyn with her dog, Bucatini. Her short story "The Art Show" appeared in the literary magazine Beyond Queer Words. She is a two-time Emmy winning writer and producer for Good Morning America. She loves Joni Mitchell, 50/50 martinis, cooking, Tetris, and billiards.

Gabrielle is a writer, professor, and chef. Her memoir, Hive-Mind, published in 2015, details her time of love, awakening, and tragic loss on an organic farm in the Sacramento Valley. Her first poetry book, Too Many Seeds, was published in 2021 by Finishing Line Press. Her second poetry book, Break Self: Feed, will be published this summer by Finishing Line (2024). Her third poetry book, Points in the Network, is forthcoming from Finishing Line. Her poetry has been published in the Atlanta Review, The Evergreen Review, The Adirondack Review, San Francisco Public Press, Fourteen Hills, pacificREVIEW, Connecticut River Review, Catamaran, MacQueen's, Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review, and is forthcoming from The American Poetry Review. Gabrielle is the Farm-to-Fork columnist for Inside Sacramento magazine. Access links to her memoir, poetry book, farm-to-fork articles, published works, interviews, YouTube cooking channel, and seasonal recipe blog through her website: [www.gabriellemeyers.com](http://www.gabriellemeyers.com)

A.T. Yano is a concept artist and writer. A graduate of Oregon State University and Pratt Institute, her short fiction has been featured in The Gravity of the Thing (2025 Pusheart nominee), Suburbia Journal, Bridge Eight Press, and more.

Amy McCullough is a former public interest attorney who spent years trying to dismantle systemic barriers attendant to poverty in the USA. After two decades in the Pacific Northwest, she recently relocated to Rhode Island, but still considers PNW home. She draws inspiration for her writing from her travels, the Pacific Coast, and her new back porch near Narragansett Bay.

Dr. Echeverria-Gutierrez is a medicine-pediatrics physician at Marshfield Clinic in Wisconsin and an accomplished poet. Born in Quito, Ecuador, Dr. Echeverria-Gutierrez crafts evocative works that delve into the profound themes of love, loss, and resilience, drawing inspiration from a rich tapestry of personal experience and cultural heritage. His notable literary contributions include Echoes of the Untimed Heart (ACP Narrative Medicine Booklet, 2024), Sphenoid's Wings (Cathexis Northwest, 2023), and Ninfas de Ojos Aquosos (Prometheus Dreaming, 2019), each showcasing his ability to weave deeply personal narratives with universal human emotions. Balancing his demanding medical career with his passion for literature, Dr. Echeverria-Gutierrez continues to inspire and connect with a diverse audience through his powerful and reflective poetry.

Briel Brown is a poet who uses the form as a means of time travel. She is from Sacramento, California and is quite fond of the city.

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, Foliate Oak, Landing Zone, Cathexis Northwest Press, Humana Obscura, Haunted Waters Press, Split Rock Review, The Ravens Perch, Beyond Words, New Verse News, Wingless

Dreamer, Blueline, Sky Island Journal and others here and abroad. His work also appears in the first edition of The New Mexico Anthology of Poetry, published by the New Mexico Museum Press. Pusheart Prize nominee and poetry winner of Santa Fe New Mexican's annual literary competition, he has authored some 250 poems, published on four continents.

Sadie Watson is an emerging poet from Greenville, SC. After graduating with a degree in English, she worked in a library for years before earning her MLIS and promptly quitting six months after. She writes confessional poems, many about her connections formed in adult chatrooms.

Allegra Wilson is a mother, organizer, queer person, and writer. She has read and written poetry from an early age, and has work published or forthcoming in Bear Review, The Inflectionist Review, Action, Spectacle, and BRAWL. She lives in Northern California with her family.

Yvonne Morris is the author of two chapbooks of poetry: Busy Being Eve (Bass Clef Books) and Mother Was a Sweater Girl (The Heartland Review Press). She has been published in a variety of print and online journals, including The Main Street Rag, The Santa Clara Review, Cathexis Northwest Press, The Galway Review, and elsewhere.

Dawn is a two-time heart transplant recipient and a freelance writer, poet, and essayist who recently completed her memoir about growing up with congenital heart disease and receiving two heart transplants.

My work has most recently appeared in Open Secrets, Insider Magazine, Blue Villa, Remington Review, Alchemy Spoon, and Epistemic Literary. Find me at [www.dawnlevittauthor.com](http://www.dawnlevittauthor.com) or Twitter/X @2HeartCore4U.

James Lilliefors is a poet, journalist, and novelist, whose writing has appeared in Door Is A Jar, The Hooghly Review, Ploughshares, Salvation South, The Washington Post, Third Wednesday, Roi Fainéant, and elsewhere. His first collection of poetry will be published by Finishing Line Press next year.

Ervin Brown is originally from New York. His prose and poetry have appeared in Wild Roof Journal, Ink Sweat & Tears, Beyond Words Literary Magazine, and Cathexis Northwest Press (Sep-Oct 2023), among others. He was a top finalist for the Wingless Dreamer 2024 Night Worship Prize and has an MFA in Writing from the University of New Hampshire.

Isabel Hoin (she/her) is an emerging poet and student at Old Dominion University where she is a Perry Morgan fellow in their MFA program. She works at The Muse Writers Center in Norfolk, VA, teaching people of all ages the art of poetry. Her work is already in or is forthcoming in Wild Roof Journal, Chariot Press, The Fool's World, Loud Coffee Press, and others. She is a Lancaster, PA native and misses the corn fields daily.

Matthew Cooper (they/he) is a queer entrepreneur, writer, and advocate. They Co-Founded EarnUp, a mission-driven technology company that helps millions of consumers improve their financial lives and manage over \$500 billion in loans. As a storyteller, Matthew brings a raw vulnerability to the struggles of overworking, addiction, sexuality, and mental health. Their personal stories are featured in The Wall Street Journal, CNBC, Quartz, and The Advocate, among others. They are also featured in podcasts, including Stigma and Barefoot Innovation. Connect with Matthew's journey on Substack, LinkedIn, Instagram, or Twitter.

Paul R. Davis lives in Central New York with his wife, parrots and cats. He worked as a faceless bureaucrat in an obscure Federal agency until he came to his senses and devoted his time to better pursuits. His work has been published in The Comstock Review, The Externalist, Centrifugal Eye, The Good Men Project, PoetryRepairs, Halcyon, Oddball Magazine, Moon Magazine, Carcinogenic Poetry, Red Fez, Third Wednesday, With Painted Words, Tipton Poetry Journal, Cathexis Northwest Press, Chiron Review and others. A simple inhalation and exhalation is life, and life itself is art. His poetic philosophy is: the joy of expression; the necessity of communication.