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# Before the First Cutting

By: Susan Francino

Deep green grass and wild purple lamium so lush that I must shudder and look away, and leave, though I am ever after always there, breathing in the dark, clean air of that moment, but if I were there and also were to stay there, I would break.

Just as you wish to brush your lips against your beloved's ear and say exactly what you mean, as if it were possible (it is not possible) to speak thus and have the word not dissipate—

So also with the blinding mustard blooms in the dim light, which look on as I ask how, how, how can I hold this violet blossom in my hand, as I throw it away, they look on as I continue asking, how can I live in a world that is so perfect yet not mine.

You can't have everything you want in this world. But you can want everything. And you should. Long not only for the treading of elderberries under the pure feet of childhood, but wish also to tread with weightier step in the small recesses of mud alongside since-departed deer hooves. Both crave the fleeting destruction of the dark berries under your tender sole, and earnestly desire the full impress of your well-made boot beside the well-cut hoof of the deer. And which one, and where, is eternal?

All around me I find I hate and love the dark lushness of the uncut grass, the deep virgin blades, at their deepest only now, only in the least possible light their deepest color. Just as you hate beauty, as you hate the smooth neck of your lover, whom you call such but is never yours. So perfect and not mine. I throw away the violet because it is not mine. I almost eat it instead.



# Ogre

By: Linda Wojtowick

Not many people know about it. Even back then-  
You couldn't look it up. There was no lore.  
You had to haunt. You had to go  
without. But it was there. All along.  
In winters and rain. In the summer noons.  
Haywrapped, rubbed clean. Somehow pure.

When I first saw it- just after I got to town and just  
before I left that town for the first time- it was running, over.  
On roofs of houses, of schools and stores. Against the night  
sky. Trilling off main trails and roads into dark. I left that place  
and came back so many times I started naming my trips *coming to call*.  
Like courting a plot. A place to call mine.

It was big. Blue as a lake. A screaming  
thing. An ice thing running. Running out  
to farms. Our loyal dogs dripping  
from its mouth.



# Dark Ages

By: Lina Buividavičiūtė

So much beauty, it takes your breath away,  
yet I talk to myself at night, telling myself  
there's nothing wrong here, that everything  
can be endured, can be washed away in salt water,  
that I'll climb up into some old castle, drink a glass  
or two of Sardinian wine, swim through  
mysterious grottos, and then into freedom; my dark ages  
will end, end without properly having begun.

This is how I speak at night until the first flamingo's cry,  
this is my anger over how my three-year-old son doesn't see  
the beauty, and clouds of wrath approach – he wants  
to go home, he wants to be with his cats, I rise like a storm:  
why don't You want to see the world, why do You need  
that damn trinity – safety-stability-serene mommy.

What do I need? What do I lack? We told everyone how we're travelling  
together, how we want to show our child the world, the mountains and winds  
of Italy, show how we can be there: tossed from our routine onto a new shore.  
But what I really wanted was to show that world to me, so that my dark ages  
would pass, but I never escaped them, believing all that time –  
if I give to You, I take from me.

# DREAD

By: Courtenay Budd

Imprinted on the underside  
of my eyelids  
Indelible images —  
the bleeding child  
aerosol cloud  
sodden love letter awash and drifting  
through the sludge of mud slides and floods.  
While over here we dwell protected  
in cotton-enclosed,  
bubble-wrapped  
lovely artifice.  
Narrowing our eyes, baring our teeth in  
something resembling a smile —  
or a wince  
The push of laughter as  
a highball ice clinks and sweats,  
swimming in single malt  
or piss  
within crystal glasses  
turning  
in the half-light by soft, trembling hands.  
With our signs and statuses  
our most meaningful “work”  
is a contest of empathies.  
But we crave the disaster,  
bring the agony to us by  
our road rage, our  
school board melees.  
Annulling,

dismantling dissembling distending...  
Disintegrate...  
Tear the cotton.  
Crush the package.  
Deliver the letter, now unreadable.  
Come, o Pain.  
It's our turn now.



# Monologue for a Bird

By: Jodi Keene

Predators afraid of rain,  
strange. I do not envy humans —  
glasses and timbered in  
is no just trade  
for open sky. What you have

surrendered — fields  
and trees, balletic  
breezes, for dry nights.  
Rain is a gray area.

I do not envy humans — listing  
so often, losing their way  
home, imprinting on the fog and warp  
of artificial stars. Never wriggling  
free of their heft  
to appreciate meteors.

Do you ever feel  
the itch of whooshing feathers  
unfolding, muscling  
against that chokehold  
round your throat?

# Short Ride in a Fast Machine

By: Dick Altman

*Inspired by an orchestral suite of the same name,  
by John Adams, echoing democracy's essence—  
the embrace, tenuous, of dissonance. Close, but non-  
aligned harmonics, my first-generation composer father  
might have chimed, asked to frame America's spirit in music.*

He heard the nation as a great polyphony of voices,  
of clashing tones, tempers and tempos,  
notes high and low, light and dark,  
chords bitter and sweet, fast and slow.

He heard it in hallelujahs to wheat and corn,  
soybean and rice, iron and steel  
stamping their feet in the heartland,  
in Detroit and other cities of metal.

He heard it in picks, hammers and drills  
of mines in Alaska to California,  
Minnesota to Georgia, the great open pits,  
the sleepless banging, clanging far underground.

He heard it in familiar claxons hustling  
cattle off tracks rivering the Kansas plains,  
in fog horns of tugs heaving barges  
up the mist-cloaked Hudson.

He heard it in the coring out of Texas and New Mexico,  
blading open fissures of rock, probing back  
to prehistoric time, as thirsty camels  
of pump jacks, drink earth's underpinnings dry.

He heard it in contrapuntal collisions of blamed  
and blameless, of who had more and who had less,  
of who welcomed and who denied, who fed  
and who left to hunger.

He heard it in the violin he played as a child,  
when a single string whined, but when all  
played together, discordance sang, he'd say,  
in harmony's comity of collective individuality.

He heard it in an orchestra of three-hundred-million,  
every instrument different, yet playing  
the same three chords, life, liberty,  
happiness, in keys of untold sanguinity.

(YouTube: Short Ride in a Fast Machine)



# ekphrasis in search of a painting

By: Daisy Bassen

Something about Frans Hals has been hanging around  
In my mind like a teenager at a mall, if you remember  
How that was, milling around jointless, the food court,  
Scientifically created scents of butter and civet designed  
To make you buy anything, candle stores brightly lit, wax  
Unflattered, flattened by electric light. You were dropped off,  
Feral, untethered to phone lines, cell carriers, Donne's everywhere  
A pocket where there wasn't good reception, you were free,  
Uneasy. You carried money, dirty coins rouleauxed in a purse  
Cinched like a bladder, a pig's or a trout's, ones folded, a cabbage  
Rose, the touch of your fingers familiar as a john's. Holy fuck,  
Poor Frans Hals, he's been lost. He's wandering around,  
He gave up on the map that misplaced the toilets behind  
The amygdalan anchor store. He wants his oils, umber and senaper,  
Daybreak, when light is closer to silver than anything else.  
He wants his brushes and a pretzel dipped in sugar,  
He wants a burgher and his wife. Her name could be Anneke,  
Like his first wife, the one who died. He'd loved her, he remembers that,  
Her face forgotten. I want to see a painting beneath a painting,  
I want to see what Frans Hals thought of before he began the painting,  
When he was trying to recall how her neck had bent when she prayed.  
I want a moon that has not been stepped upon, a heaven unroved,  
That might be a place for divinity, comfortable for a God  
Or a pantheon thereof, impatient, one a Karen ready  
To call the manager. Oh, Frans Hals, I am sorry, I apologize  
For making you a party to my mischief, my causeless, genuine want.  
For calling forth Anneke only to make her a memory  
Beyond recollection, a ghost of a ghost, abandoned.

# Classification of Demons (Demonology)

By: CS Crow

## **I - Pride**

Oh, sons of the railroad tracks,  
Oh, daughters of the apartment complexes,  
Your ancestors shined so bright in the sky,  
When they came to us,  
To our communities,  
We had no choice  
But to make them crawl upon their bellies.

Mexican Restaurant, Kosher Deli,  
Chinese Buffet, Halal Grocer,  
These places were not built for your enjoyment,  
But for us, the chosen few,  
To enjoy all you have to offer:  
Your food, your names,  
Your faces, your community,  
And yes, even your culture.

There will be no spaces left for you  
That we have not claimed as our own.

Oh, bright and morning star,  
Did you truly want to stand on high with us,  
Knowing there would never be enough  
For us to share, even with ourselves?

You were the wrong color star in the sky,  
You are still the wrong color on the ground.

Jasper, sapphire, agate, and emerald.  
Chalcedony, emerald, onyx, sardius,  
Chrysolite, beryl, topaz,  
Chrysoprase, jacinth, and amethyst  
These precious and beautiful things,  
We skinned you, took your colors,  
And we used them to built the gates  
Of our Promised Land, our Paradise.

It was nothing but pride to think  
We would let you be part of it.

## **II - Gluttony**

Oh, hard working father of the overtime,  
Oh, single mother of the food stamps,  
We have printed flowers upon sackcloth  
That you might be arrayed  
As the lilies of the field.  
You and your children.

We have hired the Lord of Flies  
As a contracted consultant.

To improve productivity,  
We will assign each of you  
A horsefly and a mayfly.

Do not ask the flies how much they will be paid.  
Discussing your wages is grounds for termination.

The horsefly will rest on your neck.  
When you close your eyes,

When you take too deep a breath,  
When your hands are idle,  
You will feel the gentle caress of her jaws.  
We will recoup our lost costs with your blood.

The mayfly will rest upon your hand.  
It will start as an egg each morning  
It will grow to a larvae at noon  
It will lay its eggs at three p.m.,  
And by closing time, its wings will go still.  
When it dies, you must remember,  
This is a part of the natural order.  
You will live, and you will die at work.

You can't afford to go home anyway, can you?

We want to thank you for your hard work.  
There will be a pizza party at 1 p.m.  
Please don't mind the flies.

### **III - Greed**

Oh, fathers of the jailhouse,  
Oh, mothers of the ankle monitor,  
The one thing you and your children share  
Is that you look upon each other's faces  
Through the cells of an Excel Sheet:  
You, a faded photograph.  
Them, a picture on the wall.

You have become a number, a statistic,  
A row and a column, a pair of coordinates.

You do not exist in space, only in time.

A sentence cannot exist without a period.  
But for you, we will use a semicolon;

Damp cigarette stubs. Lukewarm beer. Broken glass.  
These are the things we return to you when you leave.

When you finally find freedom,  
We will refuse to give you work  
Until there is nowhere left to go.

Moldy tiles. Lead pipes. Styrofoam. Cold concrete.  
These are the things that await you when you return.

There is an equation, a format, an outline.  
All of these are just a different kind of script.  
This is just a different kind of cycle.  
Memorize it. You are expected to remember

That your son is six times more likely to go to prison

We hired Mammon as our accountant:  
You are worth \$200,000 a year.  
Your son will be worth even more.

We cannot afford to let either of you go.

#### **IV – Envy**

Oh, son of the school lunch debt,  
Oh, daughter of the frozen chicken nuggets,  
You have eaten your fill

While your mother and your father  
Have gone hungry—

We are so proud of you for this.

When your fingernails bite into your fists,  
We want you to feel there is no way out.  
Find the gun in your father's drawer,  
Put it in your mouth or put it in a school.  
This is the only way we will hear you,  
Note:  
That does not mean we will remember you.

We have paid you what you were owed.

Our mouths open for want of more,  
And when we find nothing to fill us,  
We demand you stand in our maws.

Stand. Don't sit. Chairs will not be provided.

Leviathan, wrapped around the world,  
His hellmouth opened for the last judgment  
Of the sinners, tears roll down his scaled cheeks.

He begs us to save some for him,  
But we have enjoyed the fat  
That covereth the inwards,  
And the caul that is above the liver,  
And the two kidneys,  
And the fat that is upon them,

How can we go back to the grass of the field?  
For God's sake, we're not beasts, are we?

## V – Wrath (Young)

Oh, father of the bastard child,  
Oh, mother of the empty womb,  
There will be no room at the inn;  
There will be no straw in the manger.  
The sheep and the oxen have been moved to the factory farms.  
No star will shine in the east, and when the Wise Men come,  
They will come to raise the Shepherd's rent.  
Both will sit upon the Homeowners Association.

You are on this council, but we do not grant you the rank of master.

Because you are not old enough to understand  
The nuances of making decisions that will affect you  
And your children for generations to come.

You must have a white halo to be an angel.  
You must be an angel to be a member of congress.  
We promise we have your best interests in mind.  
When has an angel ever betrayed you?

After a thorough investigation of our garden,  
We found there were no serpents.

Born in time to see the last of the trees  
Before we cut them down to build our suburbs.  
There are plenty of places to stay, but they are not for sale.

We are the walking dead; you, the bitten and infected.  
The undead hordes, we marched through the cities,  
And we left nothing but ruins for you to inhabit.

You will spend forty years in the wilderness,  
And when Satan comes to tempt you,  
He will find only your bleached bones, free of sin.

The old men stopped planting trees  
In whose shade they would never sit.  
There is enough shade for them.

What? This bite mark? This blood stain?  
We just cut ourselves while shaving.  
It's nothing for you to worry about.

## **VI – Lust**

Oh, daughter that chose to love other daughters,  
Oh, father that chose to become a mother.  
We spent forty years trying to kill you,  
And somehow, you still survived.

You drank the juice of the milkweed stalks in the meadows  
Because our cruelty taught you this hard lesson:  
If you cannot be beautiful and safe,  
Be beautiful and toxic.

Not that that has ever stopped Americans  
From putting something in our mouths.

We painted our faces and our logos in your colors,  
But we refused to participate in your parades.  
Because we called them debauchery.

If we cannot ban you from our libraries,  
We will burn our own books to spite you.

We both know we didn't want them anyway.

We refused to serve you, we refused to feed you.

We let Asmodeus interrupt your weddings  
Because they were not sacred to us.

We demanded you call them unions, instead,  
And you know how we feel about those in this country.

If we could not pin your wings to our corkboards  
Or press them in the pages of our books,  
We would pluck them, scale by scale,  
Because we were so certain  
Something was wrong with you  
We would kill you to find the evidence to support it,  
And we will keep killing you, if you let us.

So, migrate south with the rest of the monarchs.  
Because no matter how much money you spend,  
You know that you are not wanted here.

You will cover the trees like a flood, and it will be red.

## **VII – Sloth**

Oh, son of the autism spectrum,  
Oh, daughter of the disabled parking space,  
We have taken sledgehammers to your ramps;  
We have taken Forbes articles to your prescriptions.

You must remember: what you need to survive,  
We, the chosen people, must bear the cost.

Please, understand:  
We would rather a thousand of you suffer  
Than a single fraud go unpunished.

Prove to us that you need it.

A doctor will touch you with cold hands and cold implements,  
He will test your blood and your sweat,  
He will test your urine and your semen,  
Until you are nothing  
But strands of amino acids in the shape of a human,  
Only then will he tell you that it is all in your head.

The depression and the anxiety.  
The obesity and the chronic pain.

The paralysis, the blindness, the deafness.

Belphegor will come to you, oh children,  
He will offer you wheelchairs and crutches.  
He will offer you painkillers and prescriptions.  
He will offer you universal healthcare and unions.

We who live in the Holy City, the Earthly Paradise,  
Encourage you to resist the temptations of the demons.

Our children,  
Oh, sons and fathers.  
Oh, daughters and mothers.  
Put your faith in us once more.  
We will be the ones who care for you,  
As we always have.

As we always have.

# Annoying

By: Raymond Hoffman

Useless as a glass door. You can peek through. Pigeon-toed. Drained an ocean to fill insecurities. Uncomfortable thoughts ricochet in me. Like an ambush. Giddy when disappointed. I build trenches amongst the tripwires of life. City feels like a tsunami. Manners like a bloated tick. Sipping the veins from any limb around me. As a stranger to a moth, a porch light pulling. Desolate in lost thoughts. Nights awake and bunkering in hotels. Soft in my voice, I hopscotch to hands—falling through like particles of sand. With enough friction to set off an atom bomb. To radiate right through me, and hollow my marrow. Amongst open nerves I can feel something, so I play with the pain. No matter how annoying.

# chant on the folly of a conqueror

By: Alani Rosa Hicks-Bartlett

but lo!  
and lo and lo!

any lionhearted fool with his strange appetites has already sniffed out your particular brand of strength, the strength that you call conviction or desire, and that we all cower from, or try to turn against, calling it “oath,” or “spell,” or “mortal wound.”

but because the sighing, gargantuan god hurling pestilence has set us here, against the cavern of your heart, your thoughts, your eye, the “mortal injury” drags us back again and again from the cliffs, back from the grave, back from dreams of freedom and escape past these churning waters, past that dangerous bend. it drags us back from even the dead, back from the axial expanse, back from the tumult of thundering wings, heralds we know too well.

but lo!  
because dark, divine thoughts have poisonously prodded us forward, here we are, internal, seething, and unquittably bound to your savage heart, to your barbing muscle’s beating chants of expiry and mortal ends, here we are still—unavailable to others, unwilling, always bent on laws and rage and glory.

likewise unavailable, likewise unwilling, always bent on laws and rage and glory, is the olympian flare of your one good eye, likewise flaming, assailing, redirecting. so why does the world remain unseen by you? unhelped by you? what yet remains of your misspent and misdirected fortunes?

the unequal fortunes, we mean, not just your lofty heifers, no. not just the crevasses teeming full of all your avid men, ravenous, dreaming, craving desecration and a thousand gilded stratagems, as their falchion sing weird songs of suppliants woe and embattlement. so why does the world continue to pursue its course, its trembling decline to a ponderous, weighty slumber?

while, made into a terrible, thundering whirlwind of oppositions and fury, you, ablaze and alone

fling yourself towards the death-promising swords and arrows, following all of the dusky,  
different ways *he* fled, having left your arms behind.

there is no stalwart laurel. no hymn. no votive devotions for a god. no pen. none of the baldrick  
prayers or grief-studded envies we might have wanted to quell. it is true, it is true: with our  
unquenchable thirsts, we have scarcely what we want and need.

we have just the fears of those poor fauns there, huddled together for succor or warmth. just the  
fears of those small oiselets, who live and die as food for hawks, the bestial, greater birds with  
surveying eyes, but they too are only morsels for the dumb monarchs as well, with their restless,  
relentless wings that paper the sky before the fatal catch—

but lo! and lo!

why were *you* of all women plucked from the ground,  
like a sickly root of a man, tubercular, tumescent, gleaming?



# A Wilted Lotus

By: Rabia Ashraf

If all men are like you  
then I don't know if I can risk  
one more disappointment as  
they only greet me with harsh words  
and loud slaps as they  
assert their dominance over  
a wilting lotus whose petals no longer  
color themselves with the  
*raang* of Holi and Eid  
but with the grays and blacks of  
the bruises and scars  
on my face and chest

*Raang* = Color



# HOW SHE SLEPT

By: Julie Benesh

like a baby,  
orphaned at 44

like a remote-  
working middle manager  
in end-stage  
capitalism

like a woman with a pain,  
origin unknown, in her knee,  
who worries her fear  
of mildly invasive diagnostic procedures  
will led to ever more invasive  
treatment procedures, or worse,

who dreamed that Fourth Pres Church  
that Gothic goddess around the corner  
but gone ecumenical and charismatic  
offered yoga classes with live music  
and hands-on adjustments,

and of a pose she held  
until she fell like a tree  
turned lumber.

like a human  
river who lost

her I.D.  
to the sea,

temporarily.



# on looking down the cliff

By: Anna Correa

stagnation holds nature's cold hands:  
the waves don't crash in magnificent beauty anymore  
the birds sing unsettling hallelujahs  
the breeze can't carry anything away  
should it be this hard to move a single inch?  
is disturbing stillness the only thing that can persist?  
and god, how there is too much emptiness within me

i spend too much time thinking  
on the way nothingness floats freely on thin air  
on the dust that resides under my bed  
on what the sea shallows and never brings back  
on how fear will consume and destroy me  
on how dullness is everywhere but around you

so baby possess me and replace my hollowness with new, bright meaning  
take it all and cremate it in varanasi —  
and give me a little bit of the holiness that resides within you  
make all of this cry become wonder of the divine

braid our hairs together: never untangle it  
melt the lines that separate me from you  
utter words the moment that they appear in my mind  
create me on your own image  
you can make me a symbolism of anything you want —  
just embrace me in your arms gently (isn't gentleness what we all need?)  
name me something only you can say  
teach me all from the beginning  
hold me by the waist so i can re-learn how to stand  
don't let me fall apart

never leave.  
and i promise to give you my complete devotion



# Yellow Dress

By: Daniel Millar

When you moved out  
there was silence...

A broken heart muscle, not knowing:  
split in half, break up, pulling apart.  
Ripping the shadow away from my body,  
using up all my power...

I'm going across town.  
We don't know each other anymore.  
New apartment with a fire escape.  
I'm sitting on it, arguing with no one.  
I come in and lie down on the bed—

I'm in a suit and you in a yellow dress.  
I'm holding a bouquet of daisies,  
and you're sweet and smiling.  
You are holding my hand.

It's evening in the city below,  
there's purple fog, damp skin.  
Office buildings with gold windows,  
you speaking softly beside me.  
I smoke, and drink leftover coffee.  
I fall asleep in your mouth.

# Homage to Arthur Rimbaud

By: Clif Mason

*I stretched ropes from steeple to steeple; garlands  
from window to window; gold chains from star  
to star, and I dance.*

a fragment in *Illuminations* (trans. John Ashbery)

Are these eyes your eyes? Have they always been this pale blue? Has this mouth, with its cupid-bowed upper lip, always been your mouth? At some hours, you scarcely recognize your face. And who can lay claim to these thoughts? From what port do they arrive? How do they work? Once they pass your lips & are spoken, they live with & in others. Uttered back to you, you might not know them. You are always a mystery to yourself. How much more to others? People walk through their days, mysteries meeting & touching other mysteries.

~

When the horse of teenage you was headstrong, full of fight, & mean as a star burning all night, nuclear bullets shredding even the wildest dreams; when you had reasons for everything but reason, which was like a lost dog, running frantic through yards & down sidewalks in strange neighborhoods; when your continued existence seemed like a crime someone had committed without consulting you & for which no one had ever confessed or atoned; when even the idea of luck rolled up a row of lackluster lucklessness in the indecisive gaming machine you called your decision-making; when you realized you had to take back the control you routinely relinquished to the ten thousand reckless desires that ruled your day every day; when you lived past regret & the net result was a nest of abraded feelings & bruised phantasms lodged between spine & skull; you said, *Stop, you're still the craziest kind of cosmic craftiness, still that wildcard & cask of new words: Break it open & pour.*

~

When your year is the flash flood that never stops & your words & wounds shout the same demands as last week, plus more, demands you fear you may not meet, you stop mid-step on the freezing noonday street. All your fellow pedestrians—fellow pilgrims of the promenade—feel your same loss, same confusion, for some of the same reasons. You invite them to stand beside you at the fire of all the fellow feeling you can offer, and then a little more.

~

What is the night without stars & moon? You already knows everything it wants to hide, & it no longer disturbs you. It holds you, broken—for you are always broken somewhere, somehow—in its arms, & you walk with it to what can only be day. You want the light, but not the light that hurts the eyes, that burns. You want to reach the point where there is more life than death, even if it is an illusion.

~

When you pass from feeling without seeing to seeing without feeling, or without being overcome by feeling; when all your fragments become unfragmented & you know & accept yourself as you are, without wanting or seeking something more, something other you can add to what you are, or, more exactly, that you feel you need to add to what you are.

In your heart, a day is breaking, a day that should not be followed by night. Let that sound ripple out, let it lap at every shore: The night is a serious time, a dangerous time. You know you should not make decisions lightly.

Some things are true one way, but not in reverse. You can say, *There are no monsters but in the human soul*. You can't, or shouldn't say, *There is no human soul but in monsters*.

The night has its comforts, its beauty, but perhaps they are only that it conceals things better left unseen, even if they are seen in your mind. The night does not resist. It relinquishes its stars only to the crawling ascendancy of day, a day that will soon stand & walk, burning, toward the sky's apex, banishing all thought of night for the clear dream only daybreak can bring.



# England, for my sister Catherine

By: Elisabeth Preston-Hsu

We spent end of winter eyeing its staircase  
of branches, our pine's fullness inviting us  
to climb to the top, omelet sandwiches  
made with soft white bread in our pockets.  
Neighbor's garden, rooftops, sky all one color,  
a gray blanket. We sang Christmas carols  
out of season. A retreat of fun and staying warm.  
How easy it was to rule this province of time,  
our throne unyielding even in wind. Doubt  
does not live here, sandwiches steaming  
like the breath of donkeys at the manger.  
These roots grow deeper still. That strength,  
look for it, of our little voices outlasting  
or being outlasted? Look for the trappings  
of royalty. Look for the comet leading us east,  
where the sun wakes. For the life being lived  
and on, the tree branching beyond us, the sap  
on our hands gone.

# STUMP

By: Timothy Geiger

Oh what  
must have  
been and  
where did  
the body  
go?  
Limbs  
chain-sawed  
stacked  
to hearth  
cast ironed  
heat  
trunk sawn  
to board  
and stud.  
Banner  
and flag  
of scatter  
leaf-shake  
surrendered  
to dirt.  
How long  
ago?  
So long  
this stretch  
scratched  
a sky  
neck craned  
look up.  
Oh conifer

fragrance  
lingering  
long after  
the body  
goes.  
This body  
trying  
to collect  
so much  
past tense.  
What's lost  
is lost  
and trying  
to get  
it back  
makes time  
stop  
makes less  
room to  
remember  
space  
is limited.  
So things  
fall down  
to ash  
sawdust  
and rot  
to field  
loam.  
The past  
another  
buried  
box  
roots  
unplumbed  
underground.



# The Kiss

By: Stephen Foster Smith

A kiss happens  
beneath the eaves the boughs  
our wooly heads  
with mouths youthful and rank  
grass collected on the toes of our oxfords  
only after a glass bottle twirled  
on its side in a shaft of light  
us pointing all of us holding our breath  
our fingers shielding our faces  
chanting you you you not me not me not me  
then it was me and him no matter why we were camped  
out back the sermon trapped behind two sounds  
the wailing folk the hum of cool machine air  
but much of youth is spent hiding and proving  
who we are and are not  
I had no shame  
just a nagging like something  
tugging at my hair  
all this with him and his teeth  
a bright white crag of stone cutting  
the black pool of my mouth



# the promise of the all seeing

By: Archiel Valentine

My ex replaced the lights in his apartment  
with red bulbs  
to make it harder to see him  
with night vision goggles

i ask him who the hell  
cares that much about him  
to do that at all

i suggest curtains and he says  
he needs to see them coming—  
they either don't exist or don't care

when i'm thinking about prayer  
something says  
what makes you think god is  
looking at you with night vision goggles

i think about prayer and how it works every time  
how can something work and not be true,  
how can i be so loved  
by nothing at all



# Some Days

By: Melissa Ross

A placid sky, no patterns to track,  
no layers to unfold.

Clouds pulled weather to its place  
imperceptibly and left.

No greetings for Clouds' passengers  
--the Vultures, the Bar-headed Geese.

Even the Crowned Cranes were snubbed.

Don't tell the dreamers any of this,  
let them see fantastic stories when they look up.



# Remembering Rings

By: Emma Cecil

“I switch my rings to remember things,”  
She told me while demonstrating  
The silver is foreign, unwonted  
Pressed against unfamiliar flesh  
Exploring new honeyed territory  
A finger now strangely bare  
Another with a curious weight  
No words or verbal reminders  
Only the tiniest of signifiers  
That something’s slightly amiss  
“It feels different. And when I look down,  
I remember why I wore them this way.”  
The body hyperfixates on routine  
Yearns for the comfort of familiarity  
And the caress of the customary  
Less than a three gram difference  
A single star among the trillions  
But still, the galaxy notices  
And when the body calls to her attention  
The peculiar anomaly in the pattern  
She’ll glance down and think  
“What was I supposed to remember?”

# On maniacally making porn for the guy-I'm-fucking

By: Katie Rhiannon Jones

(after Sheena Patel)

I am pretending to write in my diary  
wearing split knickers & white socks

*dear david*

laptop records lapdog eyes

arched back

pen suck fake

contemplation

a deceptively banal scene

but effective, I believe

curated to titillate

I show my false diary

entry to the camera, to you

I leave nothing to luck

loopy handwriting

*fuck suck muck blah blah blah*

it's all for you, *babe*

except – plot twist

it's all for me

*for I AM THE AUTHOR!!!*

my abstraction carefully deliberated in advance  
my porn contorted body incidental, truly  
marginalia to my manipulative brilliance



# Complaint

By: Kelly Vance

This joint is where the great elm with two branches  
kissed together makes her wooden complaint,  
aching against the wind in creaking battle,

threatening a thunderous sky intent on damage.  
She offers a mewling refusal, if only to say, “I will not  
be felled by every passing whimsy.

I creak, I moan, I sing mighty roots into deep  
water’s hidden wellsprings, and tangle my mind  
along neurons of other limestone-footed sisters.

I breathe life, transform death, connect the cardinal  
elements, officiate the wedding of nature  
and nurture, of shade and light.”

One elm to cry the world song:  
*This is how we bend as not to break.*



# Blue Stingray

By: Mark Dunbar

Researchers say “a sand sculpture created to look like a blue stingray (*Dasyatis chrysonata*) ... could be the earliest known example of humans creating art resembling another species.”

--Smithsonian, April 2024

What alive doesn't wiggle, bloom and shed,  
doesn't sprout and fledge, a reverse kind of  
hunger, born to copy itself and unfold—  
each striped petal, each tail twitch and fin  
burning to launch it all again  
or some such pliable urge—to see  
a face that looks back in. a wing  
unfolding or some other fantastic shape,  
a dreamscape, a fervor, a flux—  
empty space like muteness transposed  
begging for what is unspoken to be announced—  
something beyond sight or believing,  
some unbearable thing—a god without disguise—  
you blue stingray  
exposed  
your wings' symmetry splayed just beyond  
the waves, their power flown,  
congealed into a gate within the stone  
cut to fit your image—a timeless  
shout, a hunger, a lifting of the eyes  
that freezes us where we stand  
as if ever before.

# Rite of Passage

By: Rachel McBride

As soon as the baby  
girl was born,  
her mother anointed  
her head with oil.  
Placed protection  
against--

the eyes of men,  
the mouths of women,  
and the plagues of those  
before her.

The mother taught  
her daughter to confess  
with salt beneath her feet.  
Admit her desires before  
they manifest into goals.  
Broken hearts tempt fate.

When time's finger pointed  
at the door, an assembly  
of familial ghosts sang  
goodbye songs of heritable allure.

*Generational curses latch  
onto the parts of yourself  
you cannot hide.*

The plagues of those before her.

*Guard your heart  
before they start  
rumors of what they find.*

The mouths of women.

*Don't go inside the burning home  
of the man who left you all alone,  
only to start the fire.*

The eyes of men.

With all the knowledge  
of what could happen,  
the girl wondered  
what type of woman  
she could be--

with no salt  
beneath her feet,  
devoid of oil  
to protect her,  
or the choir  
to keep her company.



# Flight Risk

By: DB Jonas

She occupies a mental space  
reserved for disappearances.  
In your mind's eye, she's only  
barely there. In hers, you're  
something that has never been.

Her dark regard's a one-way  
street; this ice-blue reverie's  
her native element. Her talons  
grip the night she gazes out upon,  
an iron grip devoid of sentiment.

Your limping stanzas try to own  
the fierce poetics of her stare,  
to seize the silences you think  
you hear. In silence she's already  
flown, and left your thought alone.



# On Moving Apartments

By: Aman Chishti

He was mine  
before I knew he was mine:  
I loved him before I learned  
his middle name,  
foreign apothecary with  
patient almonds for eyes.

It rose in me like a rush of river—  
forested soap and shoulders,  
ardent unspooling  
for single-payer healthcare,  
for the corgis of the world,  
for ruddy-cheeked children and  
earnest farmhands and  
elderly ladies in their Sunday best  
("They are so cute,"  
he says).

I watch him assemble a fickle frame.  
His hands are symphonies  
of exactitude;  
his brow, beaded and resolute.  
He beckons the sky in his  
architecture,  
quiet in iridescence,  
unaware of the rosy craft  
of his pout.

Light dapples his instruction manual  
and I am undone in tenderness.



# Dr. Pepper

By: Eden Absar

Dr. Pepper fizzes  
over ice—tiny bubbles  
pop: liquid shooting stars.

Your eyes gleam moonlike  
large, and mine thirst to taste you.  
Your grin: contagious.

Reaching for my hand,  
your skin is on fire, a sharp  
inhale, I combust.

The smell of wet earth  
and fire and what outer space  
must feel like: weightless.

Frozen in time, my  
memories of you and me,  
a film reel playing

Nonstop. I wish for  
nothing but your hand in mine  
and for no one to

Exist but us. We  
are constellations, greater  
than ourselves, we burst

With light. Star by star,  
connected and uniquely  
aligned, luminous.

# we look for spring

By: Linn Berkvens

you do not always know what i'm feeling                      i say  
but then, that isn't quite true, is it?

it is horrifying

i know myself and

i do not think i am a good guy

so what about this everlasting  
soft, forgiving love?

it never leaves you

it is what makes you put on your clothes

what makes you fry an egg

when all you can do is scrape your knees  
making bad memories on the bathroom floor

it is there

so we can go to these parties and  
so we can believe that either of us might survive

so we can sit and tell ourselves things  
like

maybe it doesn't matter if i'm lying  
maybe you will know me anyway  
maybe your love will never replace itself.

i don't want to make you my ashtray  
but there are so few things that really

keep you warm otherwise

i just want to keep you from freezing

these burns signal the end

this is the part where we should start hiding  
but peak through the cracks, my dear  
even if we're apart

together

we look for spring



# Munakuyki

By: Kathryn McDanel

Let me nuzzle into the universe of that black knit sweater, the one with little balls of lint and fraying threads you wore when you said *energy never dies*, and later, *we can be our own gods*. The same sweater you wore the day we turned clouds into turtles, dreaming in the grass by Inkilltambo as Inti rays dried our clothes. Your shirt, damp from an afternoon spent on the riverbank, where we drank sweet wine and let maracuya seeds slide over our chin crests, a reward for trespassing through ravines freckled with wildflowers.

Let me swim in the channels of crow's feet next to your wolf eyes as you trill Quechuan and Spanish lyrics from the larynx of your alma. If your soul were a color, it would be yellow citrine, a gemstone almost impossible to find. You warned *it all has to come from within*, but I'm addicted to searching outside for the other lives I could live.

Let me remove the brambles of barbed wire from your heart—I'll wield the only knife you own, a little pocketknife used to cook dinner in your one-bedroom apartment, the apartment where cob-webbed memories hang from the walls, and you cried a shoulder-shaking sob: *everyone always leaves me*.

Let me kiss that dimpled smile forever. If forever could be sliced down by your pocketknife until it's nothing but a sliver of time small enough to be preserved. We could safeguard forever like the foreign herbs and dead jungle snakes stuffed into your partially crushed Inca Kola bottle. You whispered *it's medicine, you'll never understand all of me*, and later: *I don't want to be just an experience to you*.

Let me remember the dusk you foraged my favorite tea, pulling up clumps of muña in Quencho Forest, placing your palm against tree bark, listening to a world I'll never hear. I wanted to hold you that night as the sky turned lilac and lavender above Templo do la Luna, the sacred ruins where you painted me for the first and last time in hues of yellow. It's all experience—I have a locust heart, devouring every moment outside of me.

This project grew from a collaboration between former Oregon Poet Laureate Kim Stafford and the Oregon Society of Translators and Interpreters. Since silence, too, is a statement, we decided to send a poem for peace around the world by translating Kim's poem "A Proclamation for Peace" into as many languages as possible. Though there is much in this world we cannot change, this was something we could do using the tools we had at hand: our words and our knowledge of diverse languages. A book with translations of "A Proclamation for Peace" into 50 languages is forthcoming in 2024 from Little Infinities (Portland, Oregon).

Allison deFreese

# A Proclamation for Peace

By: Kim Stafford

Whereas the world is a house on fire;  
Whereas the nations are filled with shouting;  
Whereas hope seems small, sometimes  
    a single bird on a wire  
    left by migration behind.

Whereas kindness is seldom in the news  
    and peace an abstraction  
    while war is real;

Whereas words are all I have;  
Whereas my life is short;  
Whereas I am afraid;  
Whereas I am free—despite all  
    fire and anger and fear;

Be it therefore resolved a song  
shall be my calling—a song  
not yet made shall be vocation  
and peaceful words the work  
of my remaining days.

\*First published by Red Hen Press

## Ազդարարում հանուն խաղաղության

Մինչ աշխարհը հրդեհված մի տուն է,  
Մինչ ազգերն աղաղակով են լցվել,  
Մինչ հույսը երբեմն չնչին է.  
Զվից ետ մնացած, թվում է,  
Մենակ թռչնակի պես լարին է թառել:  
Մինչ լուրերում բարությունը սակավադեպ է,  
Խաղաղությունը վերացություն է, իսկ  
պատերազմն՝ իրական:  
Մինչ իմ ունեցածը լոկ բառեր են,  
Մինչ կյանքս կարճ է  
Եվ վախն է տիրական:  
Մինչդեռ ես ազատ եմ  
Այս կրակին, զայրույթին ու վախին հակառակ,  
Եղիցի ուրեմն երգն իմ կոչումը՝  
Դեռևս չարարված մի երգի  
Ու խաղաղաբեր բառերի ստեղծումը,  
Մնացյալ օրերիս աշխատանքը համակ:

# ВЪЗВАНИЕ ЗА МИР

Като знам, че светът е къща във пламъци;  
Като знам народите колко крещят;  
Като знам, че надеждата е малка, понякога  
самотно птиче на жицата,  
неотлетяло навреме.

Като знам, че доброто рядко е в новините,  
че мирът е абстракция,  
а войната—реалност.

Като знам, че имам само думи;  
Като знам, че животът ми е кратък;  
Като знам, че съм уплашен;  
Като знам, че съм свободен—въпреки  
огъня, гнева и страха.

Нека, значи, се реши—песен  
да бъде повикът ми—песен  
още несъздадена да бъде ролята,  
а кротки думи—службата  
на дните ми до края.

# Déclaration de paix

Étant donné que le monde est un incendie,  
Que ses pays sont emplis de cris,  
Que l'espoir semble ténu, peut-être  
un oiseau sur un fil  
oublié par ses pairs...  
Étant donné que la compassion fait rarement la une,  
Que la paix est une abstraction  
mais la guerre une dévastation...  
Étant donné que je n'ai que mes mots,  
Que ma vie est brève,  
Que j'ai peur  
mais que je suis libre malgré le feu,  
la colère et l'angoisse...  
Pussions-nous convenir qu'un chant  
sera ma vocation, qu'un chant  
encore muet m'appellera,  
et que je ne vivrai plus  
que pour conter la paix.

# Thak kawsaypaq willakuy

Nina ninapi wasi hina tiqsimuyu kaqtin;  
Qapariykuna nacionkunata wasapaqtin;

Suyakuyqa huch'uylla hina rikch'akuqtin,  
sapa kuti k'anchachiq cable patapi  
saqisqa ch'ulla urpi puñun.

Noticia willakuykunapi pisiña sumaq  
sunqu hinallataq thak mana yuyayniyuq  
kaqtin

Awqanakuy chiqaqña kashan chaypas;  
Simillawanmi kaqtiy;  
Kawsayniy pisilla kaqtin;  
Manchakuqtiy;

Qispiyuq kaqtiy, ninapas, phiñaypas  
hinallataq manchakuy kaqtinpas;

Chaynaya, harawi allinchay  
ruwaysikuyniyimi kanqa, manaraq  
ruwasqa harawi ruwayniy kanqa  
hinallataq tukuy kawsayniypi thak  
rimaykunata llamk'ayniymi kanqa.

Translated into Quechua (Cusco-Collao) by Guipsy Alata Ramos

# அமதையின் முரசு

உலகம் எனும் இல் எரிய,  
தசேங்கள் கைக்  
கூரல்களில் நிறைய,  
உறுதி சிறுத்து, வலசை  
விட்டுச் சன்ற  
ஒற்றைத் தனிப்  
பறவையாய் நிற்க.  
இரக்கம் அரி பொருளாக,  
அமதை கருத்தொன்றையாக,  
பேர் மட்டும் நிதர்சனமாக  
எஞ்சிய இச் சிறு வாழ்வில்  
அஞ்சிய என்னுள்  
எஞ்சியது  
வறொஞ் சொற்கள்.  
இவ் வரெரி, சினம், அச்சம்  
கடந்து நான்  
சுதந்திரமானவன். எனவே,  
இதுவரை இயற்ற படாத  
பாடல் ஒன்றை என  
வினை எனக்  
கொள்கிறேன்,  
அமதையின் சொற்களை  
எஞ்சிய என் நாட்களின்  
பணி என.

# A Friedensproklamation

Leitln—Auf da Wöt, do brennt da Huat.  
Leitln—De Schrei, de gengan bis ins Bluat!  
Leitln—De Hoffnung, de is winzig klaa,  
wia a Vogerl am Drohtseul,  
vagesn vom Schwoam und gonz alaa.  
Leitln—In de Schlogzeun zagn's des Guate nie,  
nua Kriag und imma de Pandemie.  
De Bombn, de san echt—ka Friedn, imma nua Gefecht.  
Leitln—I kå eich nua des Woat mitgeb'n;  
Leitln—weu vü zu kuaz is es, des Lebn.  
Leitln—Monchmoi wiad ma ångst und bång;  
Leitln—frei bin i—trotz ollem Zwång!  
Deshoib sei beschlossn, dass a afochs Liad,  
soi ma genga gånz bis ins Gmiat.  
Und da Rest vo meinem Lebn  
sei dem Liadl hingegeb'n!

Translated into Upper Austrian (a dialect of the Central Bavarian language family)  
by Carola F. Berger

# In Order of Appearance

Susan Francino is a PhD student in Liturgical Studies at the University of Notre Dame. She holds an MFA in Poetry from Seattle Pacific University.

Linda Wojtowick hails from Montana and has lived in Portland, Oregon for over 20 years. She is co-creator and writer of the podcast *The Ghosts on This Road*, and can also be heard on the fiction podcasts *Knifepoint Horror*, *Tag Till We're Dead*, and *Campfire Radio Theater*. She is a two-time Pushcart Prize nominee and her poetry collection *"The Hosted"* is available on Amazon.

Lina Buividavičiūtė is a poet and literary critic. This poem is translated from Lithuanian by Rimas Uzgiris.

Courtenay Budd has enjoyed a 30-year career as a classical soprano appearing in opera, symphony, and chamber music performances across the country. She has sung on the stages of Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Alice Tully Hall, the National Cathedral, Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Guggenheim Museum, 92nd St. 'Y, Bargemusic, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Spoleto USA, Le Poisson Rouge, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and on numerous recordings. The Boston Globe named her "superhero soprano" after she recorded David Del Tredici's epic "Child Alice" with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project. She teaches voice at Vassar College is an active volunteer for Braver Angels. Courtenay is committed to the slow and difficult work toward better dialogue in the relentless search for our common humanity. Her passion for bridge-building inspires her writing. With the support and guidance of Janisse Ray, she is working on a memoir and launching her Substack newsletter, "Second Flush."

Jodi Keene is a Manhattan-based poet with an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts. From her Massachusetts roots, her travels have led her to such places as the shores of Florida and the stunning panoramas of New Hampshire, landscapes that serve as backdrops to the intimate stories she tells through her poetry. Jodi's work, rich with the spirit of her migrations and the exploration of human connections, captures subtleties of everyday life.

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*, *Blueline*, *The Offbeat*, *Cathexis Northwest Press*, *Humana Obscura*, *Haunted Waters Press*, *Split Rock Review*, *The Ravens Perch*, *Beyond Words*, *New Verse News*, *Plants & Poetry Journal*, *Wingless Dreamer*, *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. Pushcart Prize nominee and poetry winner of Santa Fe New Mexican's annual literary competition, he has in progress two collections of some 150 published poems.

Daisy Bassen is a poet and community child psychiatrist who graduated from Princeton University's Creative Writing Program and completed her medical training at The University of Rochester and Brown. Her work has been published in *Salamander*, *McSweeney's*, *Smartish Pace*, *Crab Creek Review*, *Little Patuxent Review*, *New York Quarterly*, and [PANK] among other journals. She was the winner of the So to Speak 2019 Poetry Contest, the 2019 ILDS White Mice Contest, the 2020 Beullah Rose Poetry Prize, and the 2022 Erskine J Poetry Prize. She was nominated for the 2019, 2021, and 2022 Best of the Net Anthology and for a 2019, 2020, and 2022 Pushcart Prize. She is a reader for *The Ocean State Review* and *The Maine Review*. Born and raised in New York, she lives in Rhode Island with her family.

CS Crow is three crows that gained sentience after eating a magic bean. They spend their days writing poetry on a stolen laptop, looking for shiny objects, and plotting to rob the neighborhood squirrel feeders.

Raymond Hoffman has a background in political science and Southeast Asian Studies. Poetry writing has been used by him as a coping mechanism for bipolar disorder for over a decade now, with previous publishing in *Humans of the World* online literary blog, *Beyond Words*

literary magazine, Stardust Review, and Sad Girls Club literary blog

Alani Rosa Hicks-Bartlett is a writer and translator who finds herself increasingly in a nudistertian mode. Some of her recent poems and translations have appeared in ANMLY, The Antonym, Cagibi, Piccioletta Barca, carte blanche, The Stillwater Review, and Mantis: A Journal of Poetry, Criticism, and Translation. She is currently working on a collection of villanelles, a series of translations of love poetry from Portuguese and Medieval French, and the complete works of the Italian writer Amalia Guglielminetti. Follow her on twitter or instagram at @alanirosa

Rabia Ashraf is a Pakistani-American Muslim who hopes to use her pen and paper as a weapon to fight hate and confront controversial issues in society. As a writer, she hopes to be the voice for the voiceless and dreams of inspiring young readers similar to the way her role models influenced her.

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

Anna Correa is an Brazilian immigrant based on Orlando, FL. She studies computer science and is an editor for her local school magazine. She has been featured at Phoenix Magazine, The Word's Faire, and Wingless Dreamer Publisher. More of her work can be found at anna-correa-archive.com.

Daniel Millar has written poetry most of his life in one form or other, worked in restaurants/bars, lived in New York, and San Francisco, he currently lives in Richmond, California, and loves it.

A Pushcart and Best of the Net nominee, Clif Mason is the He is the author of one full-length collection, Knocking the Stars Senseless (Stephen F. Austin State University Press), and three chapbooks: The Book of Night & Waking (winner of the Cathexis Northwest Press Chapbook Prize), Self-Portraits in Which I Do Not Appear (Finishing Line Press), and From the Dead Before (Lone Willow Press). His poems have appeared at Rattle, Orbis International Literary Journal (in the UK), Southern Poetry Review, and Poet Lore. A former Fulbright Fellow to Rwanda, Africa, he lives with his wife, a visual artist, on the edge of a forest in Bellevue, Nebraska.

Find Elisabeth Preston-Hsu's work in the Bellevue Literary Review, Chicago Quarterly Review, CALYX, The Sun, MacQueen's Quinterly, North American Review, and elsewhere. She's a physician in Atlanta, Georgia. Follow her on Instagram @writers.eatery.

Timothy Geiger is the author of the poetry collections "Weatherbox," (winner of the 2019 Vern Rutsala Poetry Prize from Cloudbank Books), "The Curse of Pheromones," and "Blue Light Factory". His newest collection, "In a Field of Hallowed Be," is forthcoming in September 2024 from Terrapin Books. He runs a small farm in Northwest Ohio and teaches Creative Writing, Poetry and Book Arts at the University of Toledo.

Stephen Foster Smith's work has appeared in NECTAR POETRY, Vagabond City Lit, and 805 Lit + Art. His piece, "Molasses Men Dance Wildly Under Flamingo Suns," was a creative nonfiction finalist for the Best of the Net anthology. He has work upcoming in Obsidian Lit. He currently lives in Atlanta, GA.

Archie Valentine is from Vermont and writes about having a body. He lives with his best friends and his cats. His work can be found other places under a different name, as well as molecule, a tiny lit mag.

Melissa is an artist and writer. Her work appeared years ago in the then "Taproot Literary Review". She never stopped writing, but has recently begun sharing her work again. Select poems appear in the Spring 2023 issue of "New Plains Review".

Emma Cecil is a twenty year old aspiring editor/publisher with several years of experience working at multiple independent bookstores in her home of North Carolina. She's currently pursuing a degree in English with a minor in creative writing at St. Mary's College of Maryland.

Katie Rhiannon Jones lives near the sea in Swansea with J and her two dogs, Roxy and Sappho. She spends much of her time making up songs featuring these beautiful creatures. If you pass by the house in which she lives, a window might be open and you might hear her singing one of these songs - join in and share the joy!

Kelly Vance earned her MFA from Eastern Kentucky University, where she received the Emerging Writers Award for poetry in 2021. In selecting Vance for this award, Jen Currin wrote, "Vance's voice is at turns humorous, tender, elegiac." In addition to writing poetry, Kelly has a passion for encouraging young poets and is the Chair of Kentucky State Poetry Society's Annual Student Poetry Contest (2019-2023). In 2019, she completed the Conscious Feminine Leadership Academy affiliated with Women Writing for (a) Change, Cincinnati, and incorporates many conscious leadership concepts into her writing, mentorship, and professional work as a psychiatrist. Her work appears in SWIMM Every Day, Waterwheel Review, Cathexis Northwest Press, among others.

Mark Dunbar is a former teacher and writer originally from Columbus, Ohio, and now living outside Chicago. He attended Kenyon College where he was the recipient of the American Academy of Poets Award. His work has appeared in the Corvus Review, the Tipton Poetry Journal and Blue Unicorn, among others.

Rachel McBride spent six years as an airborne Russian linguist with the United States Army. She currently works in immigration advocacy. Rachel received her MFA in Writing from Lindenwood University. She is the published author of two travel guidebooks. She currently lives in Kansas with her loving husband. When she isn't writing, Rachel enjoys practicing yoga, gardening, and spending time with her dog, Winston and her cat, Cleopatra.

DB Jonas is an orchardist living in the mountains of northern New Mexico. His work has appeared in numerous journals throughout the US, the UK, Ireland, Europe and Israel. His first collection, Tarantula Season and Other Poems was released in 2023 and is available for purchase on Amazon. His new collection, Flight Risk, is scheduled for release in 2025.

Aman Chishti is a Pakistani-American medical student at the University of Missouri. She has published poetry in local literary magazines such as Capital Psychiatry and Bellerive and has two publications forthcoming in the Rising Phoenix Review. Following medical school, she intends to pursue a career in child and adolescent psychiatry and continue her lifelong devotion to the written word.

Eden Absar is a teacher and poet living in Houston, Texas. The primary muses of her work are her mother, her husband Rafi, and her wonderful baby Ruby Noor.

Poet Linn Berkvens (@linnpmb) is 23 years old and lives alone in a little studio apartment in Amsterdam, trying constantly to string sentences together in a meaningful manner best they can. They have been writing for their whole life, and over the years have found a couple of venues to get published, such as Beyond Words and Writer's Block. They often depict themes of growing up, struggling with mental health and social interaction, and romance, be it toxic or pure.

Kathryn McDanel is currently living in Peru. Her work has been featured in Oakland Arts Review, Atlas Obscura, High Shelf Press, and other literary journals.

Kim Stafford is a writer who teaches and travels to raise the human spirit. He founded the North-west Writing Institute at Lewis & Clark College and is the author of a dozen books of poetry and prose. He served as Oregon Poet Laureate 2018-2020, and has taught writing in Scotland, Italy, Mexico, and Bhutan.

Allison A. deFreese is a translator, poet, and conference chair for the Oregon Society of Translators and Interpreters (OSTI). Her work appears in the Bangalore Review, Eunoia Review, and Cathexis Northwest Press.

Vardan Aslanyan, PhD/DD, is a deacon, translator, and Thoreauvian. He is a post-doc researcher at the University of Halle-Wittenberg in Germany.

Gabriela Manova is a Bulgarian writer, translator, and editor, working between English and Bulgarian. Her debut poetry collection “Навици” / “Habits” was published in 2020. Her poems, articles, and translations have been featured in several print and digital editions. In 2023, she was a resident translator at the National Centre for Writing in Norwich, UK.

Rumen Pavlov is a Bulgarian translator, poet, and musician. His first poetry collection in Bulgarian, “Отвор” / “An Opening” (2020), received a national award for best debut book in 2021. Rumen translates from and to English and has translated mainly American poets into Bulgarian. Along with translating and writing in Bulgarian, he also writes poetry in English.

Swiss-born Anne-Charlotte Giovangrandi is an English-to-French freelance translator specializing in patient-facing medical documents, and in marketing materials. She is based in the heart of Silicon Valley.

Guipsy Alata Ramos is a Quechua language interpreter and translator, and a lawyer by profession. Her work involves activities related to linguistic rights, intercultural justice, the rights of indigenous or native peoples, interculturality, and public administration. She currently works as a specialist in Promoting Intercultural Focus through the Peruvian Ministry of Culture’s General Board of Intercultural Citizenship.

Prabu Muruganantham grew up in a small farming village in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu. He immigrated to Portland, Oregon in 2014. Prabu serves on the board of Portland-based prison arts non-profit Open Hearts Open Minds and is a documentary filmmaker. This is his first translation.

Carola F. Berger is an ATA-certified German<> English/English <>German patent and science translator with a PhD in physics and a master’s degree in engineering physics. She grew up in a small town in Upper Austria but has been living in the US for most of her adult life. This translation is an attempt at rediscovering her roots.