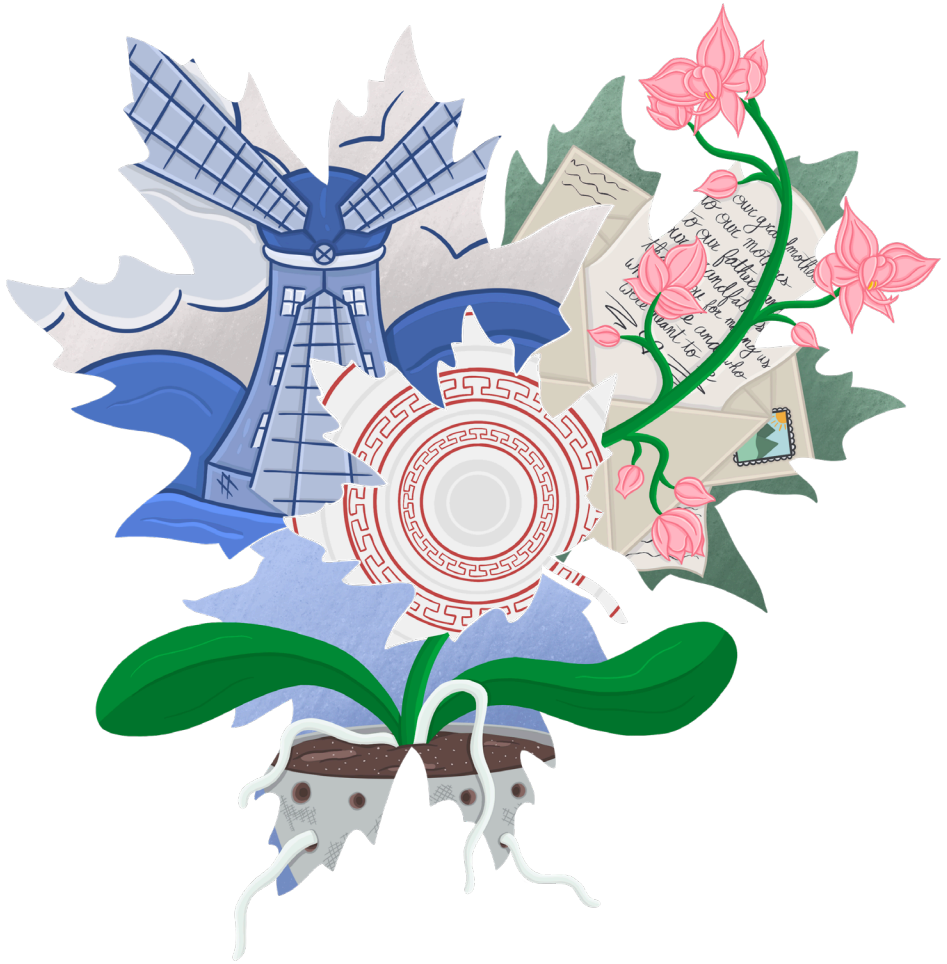


Last Leaves

Issue 4 | Spring 2022

Last Leaves

Issue 4 | Spring 2022



Last Leaves

Issue 4 | Spring 2022

Last Leaves: Issue 4

Copyright © 2022 by Last Leaves Magazine

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any form, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or scanning into any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the author except in the case of brief quotation embodied in critical articles and reviews.

All works published herein are the sole property of the writers/authors.

Edited and compiled by Cailey Thiessen, Kiera Baron, and Maina Chen

Cover design by Kiera Baron

Note from the Editors

As always, it was a joy to work on this issue. We received phenomenal submissions from so many poets around the world, and we are so, so grateful for your continued support and interest in our magazine. This issue, though, was equally difficult for us to work on as we experienced both loss of and fear for our own ancestors. While we don't usually include our own work, we wanted to share this poem penned by editor Cailey Johanna Thiessen about her own grief during the creation of this issue:

The thing about grief is that it follows you

My creative pursuits /stepping from December
into January of the nebulous 2022/
include a novel born one summer
in a scrabble game that Grandma no doubt won,
and a literary magazine, issue four,
under the title:

Ancestors.

Stepping to my computer these days
is a cruel kind of torture. So bad, in fact,
that I'm almost done reading my second book
of the year /a kind of creativity long neglected
but pleasantly received despite it all/

I keep dreaming about phone calls and texts
that my grandparents are dead.

I wake up to read poems with titles like
"Grandma's Pearl Necklace" and
"My Italian Grandfather." So far, only one
of my ancestor submissions has included frybread,
and somehow no mention of the game Sorry.

My own attempts at poetry keep getting lost,
but I wrote another chapter of Equity Blue,

in which she visits the nursing home
and niece Clara reaches through the wheelchair
for a hug.

In this chapter, her grandma hugs back,
a subtle movement that means
things are getting better.

In real life things still feel fuzzy,
but I edit the magazine
and workshop the novel,
all the while remembering the way
/in real life/ Grandma always hugged back.

Cailey lost four grandparents during the time we were reading and reviewing submissions for ANCESTORS. Many of the poems included here became guides through the grieving process; we hope they can help others the way they helped us. Thank you for sharing your words and your stories.

~*Last Leaves Editors*
Kiera S. Baron, Maina Chen, & Cailey Johanna Thiessen





Content Warning

Some poems in this book contain content that may be sensitive to some readers. Each of these poems will be marked with the above symbol so you'll be able to tell which ones have potentially triggering content. Please read at your own discretion.

At *Last Leaves*, we understand how reading sensitive content can not only affect our daily lives but our mentality and overall state-of-being. Please take care of yourselves, and take breaks reading the content if you need.

Contents

Untitled	xvi
MORNING CHORES	1
Wisdom from the Mother Tongue	3
Dry melanin.	4
What Do You Chinese Teach Your Teenager Son?	5
Heritage and origin	6
Garden	7
Tapestry	8
Family Tree.....	9
Leaves Fall Into Water.....	10
SONS & DAUGHTERS	11
Ancestry.....	12
Origins	13
Gregor Mendel's Law of Individual Assortment.....	14
What Robert Lowell Could Not Know	15
Genetics	16
Corner of Brandon and Magic	17
My Husband's DNA.....	18
Heritage	19
Familiar Reflection	20
Abstract Tribal Art.....	21
Legacy	22
Frozen Time.....	23
Rolling a Piecrust	24
she helped cook.....	25
coconut rice cakes	26
Persimmons.....	27
Making Fry Bread at the New Year's Eve Sobriety Pow Wow.....	28
Digging Potatoes	30

Sanford Avenue	31
ANCESTORS	32
SPIRIT MONEY	33
Orchard.....	34
I BLOW ON SOUP IN HONOR OF MY FATHER.....	35
smell of heaven	36
Bleach and Bananas	37
Crossing.....	38
Where I Walk	39
Whatever Next.....	40
Thacher Island.....	42
The line exists	43
Il Meridionale.....	44
Untitled	45
Valle de Mulini.....	46
Side Walking - Rio de Janeiro	47
the vercors	48
The Vercors Mountain, France	49
Ruins.....	52
on examining trees, soil & time.....	53
Granja	54
The County Fair	55
Two Almond Growers Visit Mesa Verde	56
Night, Seen on a Rothko.....	57
Entropy	59
Black Cow Travels (for D.O.D.)	60
North River, Augusta County, 1903.....	62
Christiana, Delaware, 1922	64
On Rincon Point	65
Sisters	66
Finding Family.....	67

Dear Mary.....	68
Trying to Read Wallace Stevens	69
o Dante	70
o Dante	71
Dear Neil Perry	72
In the Forest.....	74
Woodland Love	75
WHEN SYLVIA PLATH WROTE,	76
“WHO'D WALK IN THIS BLEAK PLACE?”.....	76
Like Mother Like Daughter.....	77
Cat Nap.....	78
On the Rest of Mary Oliver	79
Once upon a time	80
A Long Time Ago There Was and There Wasn't.....	82
On reading Ted Berrigan's Sonnet XIX	83
His poets.....	84
Broken Lines.....	86
At the End, Find the Beginning.....	87
Never meet your heroes	88
The Affect of Tears	89
ANCESTORS	90
Keeping the Peace.....	91
Protest ants.....	92
Dying Young.....	93
Golem	94
Cave of My Sisters.....	95
After getting busted for public drunkenness	96
Like a Pillar of Cloud in the Sinai Desert	97
Kitchen Garden.....	98
Sunday Night at Goodsouls Kitchen	99
Chapel of Bones	100

Two Kinds	101
Dadaí Mór	102
Not All About You	103
What I Have Become	104
The Tattered Troubadour	105
Evictee	106
Ethics Lessons	108
Duplex: Dad's Guitar	109
Chair	110
Ode to an Antique Rocking Chair	111
My Grandmother's Dressing Table	112
Dressmaker	113
Furies	114
Yellowed Gloves	115
Valuables	116
The Story Stone	118
Lady	119
Baci	120
To a Manhattan	122
Dresden Plate	123
Me and Dad	124
RED TIDE AT DUSK	125
A slightly dystopian poem	126
1985 (little brother's watching you)	128
Refusing to Name My Second Son After My Father	129
Adirondack 1	130
Adirondack 2	131
Downsizing	132
Bleeding for You	133
My Husband Finally Cleans Out His Closet	134
Untitled	135

BABYSITTING DANNY	136
Cleveland Art Museum	138
The picture of a young girl speaks	139
Yellowed memories	140
Neoma	141
Starlings as self-portrait.....	142
Wedded	143
HOW THEY LIVE NOW.....	144
Sometimes Your Mother Calls While You're Having Sex.....	146
Retir�	148
My Mother-in-Law Comes to Live with Us.....	149
Thrift.....	150
Easter Sunday, 1940	152
On Grandmother's Lap.....	153
GRANDMOTHER	154
Grass In My Hair	155
Patched 2	156
Patched 3	157
April	158
Kanavu.....	159
Once.....	160
Change.....	161
Forever, Rabbit	162
Anemone Sonnet.....	163
Elephants Remembered.....	164
The Stillness of Evening.....	165
Three Flowers for Cynthia.....	166
Path(s)	168
Sand Verbena	169
Bee Whispering	170
orem boulevard.....	171

Names	172
memento mori.....	173
learn to pray	174
GURI I RËNDË NË VEND TË VET.....	175
Dear Mother	176
My Grandma Sits, 1966.....	178
There's Not One of Our Husbands We'd Want	179
The Moths.....	180
MY MOTHER'S REAL PEARLS.....	182
Zeus Declining	183
The Wet Nurse Who Fed the Flesh of the God.....	184
Doctor's Orders:.....	185
Why I work the ER on Saturday Nights.....	186
Triolets for Two Brain Injuries	188
Showering With My Mother.....	189
Shadow Person	190
Effects.....	192
Woodlake	193
Her Stolen Voice	194
Tribal African Art.....	195
The monkey's eyes can see death.....	196
Anne.....	197
When Mother Became an Ancestor.....	198
Place Holder.....	200
Storing.....	201
<i>Zhongqiu</i> (Mid Autumn)	202
Death Two Ways	203
Seven Nights of Mourning.....	204
MOURNING CHORES.....	206
Matriline.....	207
Contributor Bios	209

*To our grandmothers, to our mothers
to our fathers, and our grandfathers
thank you for making us who we are
and who we're meant to be.*



Untitled
Cathy Leavitt

MORNING CHORES

Enna Horn

I ran out of shampoo that afternoon.
the bottle turned over, squeezed like
never before, empty of golden liquid,
extra soft-moisture for coarse hair,
vain as it is to want to look nice instead of
ensuring your hard work is paying off.
ran to the cabinet to get another bottle,
echoing steps in the hollow bathroom,
need to check this off and move on.
daring to glance at the packaging, gloss
slick against my fingertips, striking oil.

Blended is better. Slogans are short sentences,
sentencing you to a simple label, and this one
insists that blended is better. Talking about the
ingredients: honey, shea butter, herbs, organic,
this is what you feed your hair and if
you feed your hair, you feed your spirit, and if
you feed your spirit, maybe you will want to
get up earlier and work harder —

the golden undertones pressed against
my arm, Midas's touch mingles with the
olive oil Foggia gifted me, but redness
bleeds through both sides of the pores.
Mother-spilled T'arbrisht, choking on a red flag;
Father-given Cherokee blood from a clan mother
who forsook her name until her deathbed so that
i could somehow reclaim it (stamp of approval?)
blended is better. Put that in your short, snappy bio
at the top of your page-shrine, reduce yourself
to a simple label; shake your blood up in its
body-bottle
and let it spill out so others can agree,
blended is
better

Warriors march through my veins. My father
glows red with too much sun, we become ultisol
after a hard rain. To say anything in Tsalagi you
have to be willing to take a long time to say it, many
syllables for one concept; (not simple)
many parts for a single person.
Hard to form a snappy sentence. (We
Approve your blood, it qualifies, a stamp)

Compared to gold, my skin is canyon dirt.
People say dirt like a four-letter word,
but dirt and water are blood of the earth.
Besides, you cannot scrub your skin from your bones;
bodies are not oranges to be peeled apart for love.

I sit on the bathroom floor,
A shampoo bottle cold in my hand.
Missing women paint handprints
Stoic and silent across my mouth,
Taking up space; rooms are crowded,
I am crowded by ghosts, ancestors
Lounging through my dreams and
Lurking beneath my skin, rooms are
Hot and crowded with hungry ghosts.
Evening settles. I think of Elisi, who
Rotted on the Trail of Tears and from
Evened-out gravesites, flowers grew

all of this is only worth something if you
prove it (stamp of approval) if you empty
yourself out where everyone can watch,
squeezing out the last drop of olive-red-self
smearing it across the table, signing papers
and then, the body bottle is thrown in the trash —

i throw the empty shampoo bottle in the trash.
check this off and move on.

Wisdom from the Mother Tongue

Elizabeth Edelglass

—*After a Yiddish proverb*

Be not sweet lest you be swallowed —
food my mother fed me with the gefilte fish

and geshtunkineh herring made by her mother,
who silently combed through fish bones in a hot kitchen

through two world wars and one Great Depression,
not to mention the other depression — lower-case d,

as if unimportant — after too many childbirths,
just swallow your soul and get on with your chores,
and try to steer clear of the belly of the whale.

Dry melanin.

Okpeta, Gideon Iching

It's surprising how I'll grow to dead in the age later!
I should give the skin some refreshing moments;
Or should I Just live a life awaiting wrinkles on the face?
Wisdom is buried in my brains, and grey melanin on my
black hairs; I say nothing outside what natural experience
has taught me.
Is it wisdom? I knew it the day I was birthed: I nibbled mom's
Breast and watched her hands closely for reprisal;
I was an old man the moment I was birthed, cos I am the reincarnate
Of Grandpa.
Everyday passing day reminds me of how close I am to a
Bed six feet below; I shiver with cracking lips and wither
With dry Wrinkles, cos I knew all of me the day I became a fetus
And later developed into a Sapient in inverted six months.
As the clock ticks "ti-ti," it amazes me how I become wiser;
Wisdom is buried in the shift of its fingers; the clock ticks.

What Do You Chinese Teach Your Teenager Son?

Yuan Changming

Study well! Have great self-expectations! Grow to
Be someone! Be the First! Be the champion! Be a
Patriot like Yue Fei! Study to become an Official! Re-
Member books containing all the wealth & beauty
You can gain. Be a filial son! There are three ways
To be unfilial; having no son of your own is the worst!
You can rise above others only through hardships! Re-
Member a strong man shall win a good wife. Boys
Do have tears, but never flick them lightly! Nor do
They keel down easily! You can be poor, but remain
aspiring! Be kind, and ready to do good deeds. Re-
Member the winner always as the king, but the loser
As a thief! Most important, do whatever you can
To win honor for your parents! To bring glory to
The family and ancestors!

But I am a queer, not really a son in your sense, Sir!

Heritage and origin

Eduard Schmidt-Zorner

When the ambient air
influences genes, then
Wrzeszcz is in my blood:
forests, heather fields,
the aroma of Kashubian cod
and flounders with potatoes
or the scent of fish soup
with bread, butter, sour cream.
A dream strongly anchored
and etched
into my subconscious -
burning longing for *Gdańsk*
and the Baltic coast -
this desire is like a tiny fly
enclosed
in a drop of amber.



Garden
Carolyn Adams

Tapestry

Suzanne van Leendert

*—Nine life-sized portraits decorate the walls of the dining room
of the Zuylen Castle, just outside of the city of Utrecht in the Netherlands.
These are members of the Van Tuyll van Serooskerken family, making it
one of the few complete ancestor galleries in the Netherlands.*

All around me, ancestors are staring
with piercing eyes from within their dark frames.
Each time I'm the first to blink.

With our family crest stamped in butter,
it's a balancing act to weigh my words.
A real lady must stay silent, remain invisible.

Where have my foremothers gone? I want to see
the tapestry to which I belong, the sum of all women
who came before me, painted in clear and colourful strokes.

I need them to feel the ground beneath my feet,
to bear my weight, to stop me from falling.
The past is not a one-sided conversation.

With my voice I want to broaden horizons,
blow a breath of fresh air through this house,
until layers of varnish start to peel off.

Family Tree

Elizabeth R. McCarthy

Which tree is our family?
Do we weep in the misty wetlands upon
the willow, heads eternally bowed in sorrow?

Did we start long ago from the tiny acorn
now safely held in the arms of the mighty oak
lifting us up to unearthly planes?

No, I believe we sit upon the branches
of the old sugar maple, our blood flowing
sweet and rich from lives lived in sunlight
and the darkness of night's cold chill.

New leaves sprout each spring, soft and green
opening to sun's warming kisses and summer
songs wafting in upon its gentle breeze.
Long before the empty skies of winter.

This hard tree where my children live
is held strong by the roots that carry us
through fall's blazing red and amber fires
as flames wither and die, falling to earth
season after season.



Leaves Fall Into Water

Ava Luetkemeyer

SONS & DAUGHTERS

Patricia Grant

They are born from your body and grow—
their bodies change: infancy, childhood, young adults,
and all the time you are changing.
Adulthood, senior citizen, and
childhood comes again to you and it is
spectacular.

Adolescence isn't so bad—you have no qualms about
being who you are,
fun and frolic come to play and
life is still an adventure.
Time is defeated in this way,
there is no “young” and no “old”—
we are “spirit” in this house we call “body”

Ancestry

Rebecca M. Ross

Those slippery rotting layers
scented with
deciduous musky earth
and overwintered wizened beer browns
slowly decomposing,

That rich darkest new soil
fecund and warming
forming under past seasons' papery leaves,

This fallen foliage
a blanket
a bed
a nursery of ancestors' experience
fortifying the forest floor
for nourishing roots and future branches
of this family tree.

Origins

Darrell Petska

I left to find my homeland.
Is it here? There?
I assayed birdsong,
tasted rivers and lakes,
sifted soils through my fingers.
Is this it? Can I now rest?
I wandered long, journeyed far,
plumbing others' eyes,
shaking hands, listening.
Is this my native voice?
Do I stand on native ground?
I asked my feet.
They said we are tired.
My nose said savor these flowers.
The wind embraced me as if familiar.
Had I arrived?
I consulted my heart.
It felt no joy.
My mind weighed evidence.
It could not decide.
Crestfallen, my eyes noticed my shoes.
Dust covered them, dust and muds
from every continent, every country.
I asked my shoes.
We side with your feet, they answered,
for surely it's the shoe rack at your door.

Gregor Mendel's Law of Individual Assortment

Barbara Krasner

—*After Matthew Olzmann*

When two or more characteristics are inherited
individual hereditary factors assort independently,
giving different traits an equal opportunity
of occurring together. She inherited
her mother's gams and her father's diabetes
which when combined make her look like Big Bird
without the yellow feathers. She inherited their love
of swing but only her father's hazel eyes which when
combined means she has a preference for Benny Goodman.
She inherited her mother's love of Royal Doulton
and her father's love of collecting books
on the history of publishing, newspapers, and wine
without ever reading them. She inherited her mother's fear
of all animals and her father's mantra of "I'll take care of it."
She did not inherit her mother's love of kung fu and Mexican
vampire movies. She did not inherit her father's weekend
naps or his grocery store. But why couldn't she inherit
her mother's thick hair and her father's ability to drive
a stick? Why couldn't she inherit her mother's way
of cutting an onion in her hand and her father's
joy of watering the lawn with a hose? In the assortment
of identical twins, she could have just as readily
become an athlete and be good at math. She
believes in individual assortment and will bear
that in mind the next time she opens a box of chocolates.

What Robert Lowell Could Not Know

Barbara Krasner

Jewish women secretly wear red ribbons
tied to their bras to ward off evil spirits
when they're pregnant. They respond
hoo-hah to gossip about other women,
which they secretly savor, and kibbitz
about the best gefilte fish they've
ever eaten. They kvetch about their husbands
and children but secretly kvell
about their accomplishments. Jewish women
may not know their yichus the way
males in New England can show
ancestor portraits in the hallways. These
women only have haunting
group shots of family exterminated. They
don't even know, and will never know,
who all these people were.

Genetics

Jeff Burt

Harvest's rot
to spring root

mother's gait reborn
my hitching speech

father's story lore
my marrow



Corner of Brandon and Magic

Marjorie Gowdy

My Husband's DNA

Linda McCauley Freeman

My husband— whose so-white skin
freckles in sun and for months held the mark
of our honeymoon snorkel excursion that burned

straps across his back, whose daddy's side stretches
all the way to Davey Crockett and whose great-great-
great-grandfather, James Freeman,

walked home to Amite County, Mississippi,
after the Battle of New Orleans
and told his 12 children the battlefield,

looked like somebody had picked
a passel of red birds — my blue-eyed man
gleefully tells me his ancestry.com results

include 2% Congo and Cameroon, and says
he can't wait to show his family, but never does.

Heritage

Aaron Lembo

Padre Pio, Princess Dianna
and John Paul II watched my grandfather
and I search the shed for limoncello
(their pictures, crudely nailed to the wall).
Once found, the heavy-set Italian
cheered and blew kisses to all three saint heads
before opening the door to his terrace.
I followed him to the table, thirsty
for the luminous, alcoholic liquid.

It is Sunday and I am a teenage boy
trying to talk to my papa nono
who cannot speak English, beside 'Beautiful'.
He pulls out a Swiss Army knife and grunts
whenever I ask about Messina, his youth.
He rests his right hand flat on the table
and stabs the space between his thick fingers.
Next, he roars, 'Bandito Giulano'.
He pours us each a small glass and salutes.

Familiar Reflection

Angela Acosta

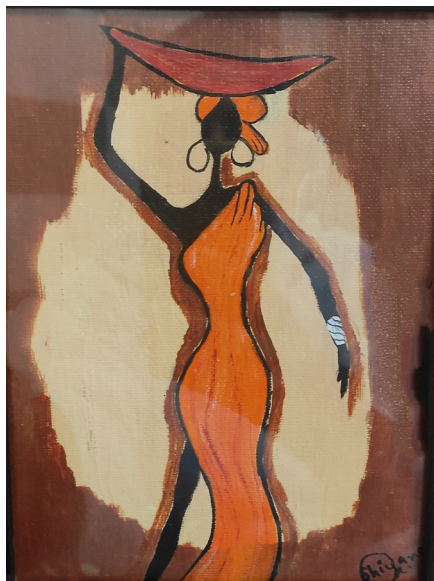
I stared back at a reflection of myself in the glass,
sitting in the science library for a late-night study session,
but the glass pane between our desks was not a mirror.
She wore different clothes and her hair was pulled back,
but how quickly I mistook her for me.

Here we were basking in the glow
of the florescent light illuminating a regal portrait
of an old white man wearing academic regalia
while we worked towards our own portrait-worthy degrees,
the first-in-family and once-in-a-generation milestones.

I know nothing about her,
another possible *hermana*, a Latina student
whose background may be nothing like my own,
yet I gravitate toward her through the glass
because her story is mine too.

For once an initial similarity, a serendipitous doppelganger,
brings two young women closer for a moment
until we return to concentrate on our assignments,
blending into the anonymity that having
thousands of classmates brings to a person.

I know we'll meet again for
I can't forget my own face,
and perhaps we'll talk and share stories,
across panes of glass or computer screens
because we've already shared our lives.



Abstract Tribal Art
Shiyana

Legacy

Catherine McGuire

I have sagged into my grandmother's skin –
though she is gone decades, she hung this on me:
dry, shifty like a loose sweater, soft – a leather glove –
so different from the peachy-rosy skin I had.

I must've left that somewhere –
discarded like a gym towel, draped
over my teen years, forgotten like a raincoat.

Now I have this Shar-Pei covering,
speckled and contoured by decades
of holding and letting go.

Frozen Time

Suzanne van Leendert

I rinse string beans from the freezer.
Under the hot tap they slowly release the cold.
I can still see you, bent over on the land,
brown almost black sand
clinging to gnarled hands.
With the low sun on your back,
the evening stretched on
as if wanting to avoid the night.
In a moment, these beans will dance in water.
I look through the steamy window.
The Prunus embraces the space
with its wide spreading crown.
Fallen leaves cover the ground.
On bare branches, white flowers bloom.

Rolling a Piecrust

Ann Howells

*A woman's place is in the House
and in the Senate*

—Bumper sticker

With moves graceful and intuitive, I roll a piecrust,
a sort of ballet,
hands imprinted with the choreography of generations.
Muscular memory resides in wrists, elbows, shoulders,
atavistic memory passed down in mitochondria –
generations of women
doing work no longer called women's work.
This is not my job; my job is cryo-research
at which I earn seventeen percent less than a man.
Still, I stand for many things. Today
I stand at a granite countertop, roll a piecrust,
bake a pie.
With moves graceful and intuitive,
imprinted with the choreography of generations.

she helped cook

Jess Skyleson

only women wife
 women survive
only survive

 children Patience, Fear, Love child

son wife children children

Her life is unknown, her name; names of others

*Wikipedia entry for Mary Brewster,
November 21, 2020*

coconut rice cakes

Camille Castro

I sift through the glutinous
rice flour with my aging grandmother
pat-a-pat-pat

her stocky veins
protrude from her ashen, old-weathered hands
like slender earthworms gliding through
to the surface

my grandmother's younger brother
hacks through the husks of
the coconuts
we foraged from the palm trees
in our unruly backyard
its sharp, elongated leaves gently
caressing the sturdy metal plates
of our house's tin roof

—slowly, one whisk at a time
a dash of salt,
a few shared laughs,
the grinding of roasted sesame seeds

and after a heart-rendering sigh
from a whole day's worth of manual
labor and effort—
it is finished
a stainless steel tray
brimming with soft, sinewy
—*kutitong labus*

Persimmons

Ana Marta Fortuna

early September father spoke of persimmons
as if knowing he would not
survive Autumn.
capitalism makes it happen - fruit out of season and I,
Woman
would tear the heart out of the fruit
to see you survive one last winter.

Making Fry Bread at the New Year's Eve Sobriety Pow Wow

Roberta Schultz

The line for Indian tacos snaked through concessions
and backed up toward the ticket booth.
Our emcee could see that human anaconda
from his announcer's table along the gym sidelines.

I watched him pass the microphone to the head dancer
then march toward the entrance of Holmes High School.
From my ticket booth view, I could hear apologies
from native patrons paying with Jacksons.

Over mundane counting of receipts, I had an upfront
ear and eye on each *a ho* and grunt of agreement.
I could hear the fry bread crew of elder women laughing
as they worked the dough into tasty taco beds.

One of them spied the emcee stomping along the gym floor
toward their busy concession. She thrust out her lower lip,
threw back her head to indicate to the other women
that a famous activist from the Occupation of Wounded Knee

was headed their way in a hurry. They all continued
making and serving Indian tacos, heads down. The emcee
slipped inside the side door to their service counter.
What do you need, brother? asked the fry bread chef.

Her knuckles met her hips in fists, her shoulders thrown back
in a stance I recognized as *approach at your own peril*.
I stopped counting money. The ticket takers inhaled.
Patrons quit sliding Jacksons through the booth window.

This line is moving much too slowly, the emcee began.
Maybe we could organize more like a mess hall, more like
an assembly line like we did in the Air Force. The fry bread chef
was not impressed. She pulled an apron from the door hook,

tossed it at the emcee's chest. Then she held up her hands—
dusted with flour, fingers spread wide—in front of his opened eyes.
I've been making fry bread in this hot kitchen for four hours straight.
Do you know what I—what any of these women here—could do to you

with our strong hands? The rest of the fry bread crew looked up to smile,
then went straight back to assembling Indian tacos. I resumed counting,
ticket takers exhaled, Jacksons flowed under glass. The emcee ducked
under the yoke of his apron, then washed his hands to work hard dough.

Digging Potatoes

Elizabeth R. McCarthy

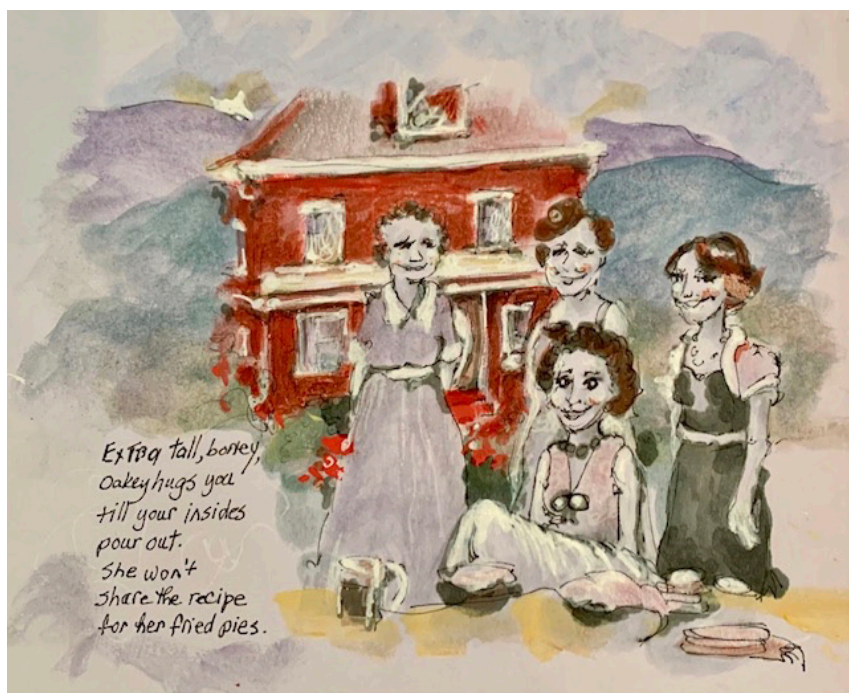
Stepping on the edge of this shovel
my full weight sinks down into the dark
cold earth where new potatoes are buried.

Waiting to be lifted into the sunlight
washed and dried, filled sacks of golden orbs,
treasure that only my ancestors knew

was life itself. The holy host that fed
our people until the blight of man and
nature left them to rot and die — there

in the green fields where old gravestones
now stand — crooked, moss and lichen covered.
Markers of my great long lost aunts,

uncles, cousins who would sit at my table
and laugh at the bounty before them
as I served up my tiny white spuds.



Sanford Avenue

Marjorie Gowdy



ANCESTORS

Andrew Feng

SPIRIT MONEY

Enna Horn

A bed of loose hair
Brown strands sewn through a corn husk
Letting the light in

Orchard

Shannon Donaghy

We wander across the quiet street
and pick the peaches right off the trees
in the summer evening while the fruit sleeps,
the skin of our bare feet thickening.

I remember me:
 in my Winnie the Pooh overalls
 holding fireflies in my grubby hands.

I remember me:
 watching the orchard burn in a heap
 from the window of my school bus.

I remember me:
 wondering at the empty field
 knowing that it was not mine to roam anymore.

One by one, they went;
so much of this old world changed,
so much of me ripped up, torn deep at the root,
stacked into one big mangled pile and set on fire
to burn into black smoke and rise
in the warm, unsuspecting daylight.

I BLOW ON SOUP IN HONOR OF MY FATHER

Michael Salzman

He liked chicken soup really, really hot
with or without matzo balls,
sliced carrots and tubes of celadon green
root vegetables waving in the heat.

He never reached for the jelly glass
holding water or hosed wine in his mouth
to put the fire out.

He loved old country-style potato soup
made with cream and combustible spices
his face partially hidden by a big spoon
and a curtain of steam behind which
a wizard appears,
the pleasure of his eating audible,

peering from beneath raised eyebrows
at a little boy he loved and feared.

smell of heaven

Mark A. Fisher

my grandmother's pancakes
were fried
crispy and greasy
slathered with margarine
and Griffin's syrup
the taste of summer mornings
with bacon
(from whence the grease)
and eggs
I got two large pancakes
and two little ones
while my brother
got a slew of little ones
I'll never know why
the difference
and I will never know
the like of them again
I cannot bring myself
to attempt their recreation
with hundreds of miles
and so many years
between me
and the smell of heaven

Bleach and Bananas

Julie A Dickson

Bleach permeates the air of Grandma's laundry room,
bed sheets stark-white, weekly washed in bleach-y water.
The strong chlorine odor stays on her hands,
as if she just stepped out, dripping from a swimming pool.
Suddenly we hear a rough knocking; Grandma peers at the door,
beckons me to answer and I see a man standing with a cartload
of bananas, his nose wrinkles as he catches
the odd scent wafting out the door to envelope him.
Grandma sends me for her coin purse, fishes out thirty cents,
handing it to the vendor and accepting the bananas
with her pale, wrinkled, beached-infused hands.
Once the door is closed, I turn back to the stove,
stirring a pan simmering spaghetti sauce, for
a lunch of leftovers - pungent tomato and garlic
struggling to overtake the bleach odor in the kitchen.
At lunch, bananas in the fruit bowl on the table,
while eating leftover spaghetti, I sniff again,
drawing in Grandma's bleach-y fragrance ,
trying to recall her smell when it's not laundry day.

Crossing

Richard Oyama

—*For my grandfather Katsuji Oyama*

I rode steerage on a tramp steamer to Angel Island.
Was it, as Melville might have written,
Sky-lake, rain-green, fire-waver, tsunami-perturbed?
Moon-shimmer, fog-bedimmed, storm-shadowed?
Wind-oblivioned, undulant-waveleted, ice-shoaled?
Did petroleum worm the sea bed? Imagine an island
With tame deer like Miyajima. What I dream is
Gone: Pine, cedar, vermilion torii. I am made to feel
Criminal. Interrogation and hakuji meat-smell.
On barrack walls odes to loneliness knived in Cantonese.

I rode a wing and a prayer, truck farming,
Son riding shotgun on a horse-drawn cart, and
Hawked avocado pomade to issei wives in
Wind-beaten Victorians in Monterey. I cut
Cane on the Spreckels plantation in Maui. Ahead was a
Green wall. My fiancée Miyo wobbled down a
Gangplank. I tossed her a cloth bag
Bulging with gold coins. This is all I have.
She was to the manor born. Begat of Teijiro Oki,
Miharu Clan, Fukushima Prefecture.

In America I was a boor. Miyo was a
Tolstoyan Christian. She converted me to the
Protestant ethic and the spirit of capital. I
Reeled home on a bicycle, pedaling figure eights under
An indifferent moon. After Wall Street tumbled I took
The family to the Los Angeles River when it was
River, not muddy empties, balled foil, ticket stubs to
Nowhere, vowing a death with honor. My
Eldest Wesley, amerika-jin, signed the
Land deed to stake a claim,
To invent the impossible.

Where I Walk

Gene Goldfarb

I've seen the roots
of the jaundiced spotted tree
buckle and break
the summer shaded pavement;
so on cool, wet days after
I'll skittishly trace
that attenuated pulse
of wayward appetite,
as I did the bluish veins
on the back
of my father's hand,
as his life eased quietly
past mine.

Whatever Next

Lorelei Bacht

Ghost fish, when will I drain
the tears of you, be hauled
out of this waiting-room terror –
the airport terminal of your absence?

Since mother called, slingshot
across the Atlantic some years ago,
nothing has changed, happened.

You have ceased to happen:

no more talk of tomato soup,
lavender soap, no-one to care
about the folding of napkins, or when
to put the kids to bed, no air –

the air has gone stiff and silent.

This dump is not the real world but
its ghost, not yolk but shell, but garbled

reflection – a fisheye bead, dewdrop
mercury spill. Not bluebottle but bait,
but hook – it is not right. The clock

hand hesitates to tick forward. Mother
does her best impersonation: looking
older by the minute, she has started
sewing, using up your fabric. Racket-
racket goes the machine. I imagine

you behind her, sat on a bench
of clouds, misremembering how
you drowned, waiting

for her, for me, for my daughter
and hers, to slip down the same muddy
bank and enter the river. Only

when all of us are crowned
in water thyme, will we

hold hands, enter whatever next.

Thacher Island

Erica A. Fletcher

Across Massachusetts dead children line weedy graveyards
stacked like cordwood
tucked in a blanket of pine needles & haircap moss

In the daily shipwreck of our life
I barnacle myself to you
my lighthouse of bone and flesh

There is an island with two lights where a family of children drowned
bodies broken on the granite in 1635
several centuries later we too try to keep our kids alive
avoid being spat out of the sea without them

Don't give me an island all picturesque
but dripping with poison ivy and sharp-shelled
with mussels once you get close

If some higher power plucks us from the hurricane
let the hand of God be a Monty Python-esque deus ex machina
flinging us ass over elbows

Not a punitive Puritan deity lashing us to the mast
no splintered schooner no monument to our failures
no legacy from those hollow cheeked ancestors

New England grit and piety will not get us through
just the hard, daily work of watch and wait
and two lights holding fast until we're all ashore

The line exists

Sudhanshu Chopra

The line exists only for those who believe
it does. We are rats, running, scattering,

spilled from bubbling vat of vermin life.
We are not ants marching in a file, or rows

of wet bed sheets hung out on the clothesline
to dry. What a versatile weave a bed sheet

is. Works as a curtain; can be suspended in
place of a picture on the wall. Refugees,

fleeing their torn homeland, reportedly
carry it folded under their arms, spread it

out to sleep in fields burnt to black, hold it
against wails of wind, building cabins with no

roof & a single wall, before arriving at camps
where there is a line for food even when there is

no food. A line that is real. A line that exists,
believe it or not.

Il Meridionale

LindaAnn LoSchiavo

Italians love their fruited trees — those figs.
Umberto, nonno mio, introduced
A gathering young family of this stock
To Brooklyn, pruned, clipped, prayed, devoted days,
Still pinned to memories of older ways,
Refusing to let inconsistency
Impose its stay. Allegiance to black fruit
I learned while earning a privilege to pick
Those soft and sticky *fighi*, synonym
For much not said in front of children then.

Still green, this fig, my oval office when
One's cultivation mattered — so we'd stretch chance,
Obsessed with spreading coffee grounds around,
Massaging the parameters. But still
Bold leaves perpetuated out of spite
Perhaps because life's spelled all wrong, New York
Much harder than in Naples (winter-poor) —
Though rich potentially for those who add
Refuse from kitchens, thick rinds, sour grinds
To foreign roots. It seems some trees are big
Misunderstandings in America,
Its cool completeness not in need of things
Italian. Nonno mio struggles, pits
His fading strength against Gravesend's deep weeds,
All dirt familiar. His pipe's a spoon to stir
Blue air, attached to him, one pleasure's home.

This Neapolitan tic: nature holds,
Poured into quarrels too small to contain it.
He prunes. He tries encouraging ripe figs
To form as if he knows, when he's detached
From this, freed trees will do just what they want.



Untitled
Cathy Leavitt

Valle de Mulini

John Muro

—*Amalfi, Italia*

The weight of the past is also
fashioned from a raw mixture
of shredded cloths and rags, the
color of November clouds and
day-old ash, warily lifted upon
a screen of wire mesh into air,
pulp pressed to substance on
felt and dried to a milky gauze
that soon takes the form of paper.
To those of you, dear ancestors,
who worked these mills and knew
full well the far greater weight
and ceaseless pummel of merciless
machines and wooden mallets
powered by redirected river water,
I offer here, in the filtered light
of the spandituri, this damp sheet
that now bears a simple watermark
from one who, please understand,
offers a poorer mixture of tears
and torment, knowing, too, how
hard it is to hold this parchment
towards the light without thinking
of the burdens you bore and how
inadequate the words will be
that I am now compelled to leave,
in muddled spill, with each of you.

Side Walking - Rio de Janeiro

Bruce Louis Dodson

Humble altars set by fire plugs, stop signs . . . tree trunks
Candles stuck in dusty cola bottlenecks along the curbside
Flicker nervously beside the evening traffic
Scent of ethanol exhaust and lipstick
Cigarettes are left
A bit of candy
Shiny coins—still new
Unspendable
Made worthless by spectacular inflation, time, and place.
These offerings are made to spirit gods displaced by fire and greed
Their forests gone forever
Forced to live upon the streets of Rio de Janeiro
With believers
Sleeping in favelas or the city's esplanades.

These ancient spirit deities are angry
They will have revenge.



the vercors

Christine M. Du Bois

The Vercors Mountain, France

Christine M. Du Bois

Stately, watchful elder,
rugged storyteller of ancient seas,
you anchor me, Vercors.
Silently, you speak of ages,
of chalky shells—fossils that recall your youth—
and of endless sunrises lacquering
feathered pines. Freely, you present us
scars of rockfall
and plate tectonics
on your stark, determined face.
You speak of ancestors so ancient—
of histories so old, Vercors—
that they remind us to remember.

“Oh, mountain, mountain come to me,” I call,
undeserving, you preserving
me. But you do not come, Vercors.
and so I seek you—
to cherish hushed and secret stories
hiding in your cliffs.

Contemplatively,
across golden wheat fields,
my great-grandfather gazed upon you, Vercors.
He considered your sunsets, ever seeming to arise
from within your stony façade—
as if you were a mood ring, slowly turning orange
towards your own passionate crescendo
of operatic light,
then dimming to deep purple—
a tiger-lily fading—slowly, gently dying.

Great-grandpa cast his eyes down valley too,
to where he labored, producing elegant, luxury paper
so Europe's wealthy could place official seals
over the watermarks of his town—
a town blessed with a rivulet of water
pure enough to slake luxury desires.

But not all desires.
The Nazis desired France, and my schoolgirl mother
looked across from her bedroom window
at your landslide slopes, Vercors,
and a Nazi officer in her front yard,
having commandeered the family's tranquility
along with half their dwelling—
it had such fine, vital view of the valley—
he pointed his machine gun
upwards at her face.

She fled. She was only twelve.
She fled to her mother, and for years
she fled from remembering.
Most of France fled too.
Except in special places, Vercors,
in your clever subversive crags,
your caves and limestone ciphers
of creatures long extinct—

there the bravest of the brave,
who stayed alive to France's loss in the last war
of *one third* of her young men,
yet who in this war would not cower, would not yield,
would bomb bridges and taste the blood of torture
and fight to their annihilation
to liberate France—as they died above the valley,
you cradled them, Vercors.

I grew under your impassive,
magnificent, blue-gray gaze,
running, playing among the paper factory's ruins
until finally, they tore it down.
Ruins are hazardous; no one should get hurt.
And still I look to you—to your ruined face, Vercors,
to your bluffs, and boulders, and caverns—
to you who hold our history
in your hulking, primeval heart.
Still I always look to you,
because you anchor me, and my past,
and my people's past,
and my planet's past,
Vercors.

Ruins

Miriam Sagan

in the ruins
of the lost city
you ask—where
did these people go?
and the dead
open one eye
surprised for just a moment
by our footsteps

on examining trees, soil & time

Osy Mizpah Unuevho

*I don't know why some people are
shaped to a place, back to a ditch, /
thighs to a stand of pines
—Kerri Webster*

water factor teaches me that the root of any tree &
its branches are alike in death & life.

& so, by time & place, i'm placed at the
middle of form; my hands as seed-doors
reaching out to the end of this morning &
collecting, years of light waiting to be
known.

sometimes, i have visions of dry season
manifestations of the soil & flesh: my father
calling his body a work-bench cut from the
trunk of an oak, upon which i & my sisters
are laid, spread-eagled & given open-heart
surgeries.

in this *carpentry*, he's careful not to let
roots from yesterday fill his mouth or
extend into our palms so that by the time
he's done, what he has created are
engineered seeds not shaped to the old
ways of searching for water in the earth.

Granja

Ana Marta Fortuna

swell in the mouth growing with sea
sad kisses of longing, so much body
widening on sand
like bird's silvery shadows on water.
I wedge myself offshore and say goodbye to scars on the floor
where stones come to breathe.

The County Fair

Bruce McRae

My father traveled to the far solitudes.
My father ate religion.
My father was a monkey riding show ponies.

He'd come home years later.
He had a jezebel at every gas station.
He had a fist like a bus.

Often mother would leave out cookies and cream.
She'd bundle us under her apron.
She exhausted her plenitudes and riches.

O daddy-o, like an imaginary friend.
Like a candle puffed out at both ends.
Like Cro-Magnon man counting up to ten.

So then mum buried herself.
She took to the high wires and two fridges.
She petted the boarder.

Not much fun for we thirteen kids.
Not much cop with these ciphers and struggling.
A hell of an example for the wee bairns.

I remember the Xmas tree on fire
and something being thrown from a bridge.
I remember the act of forgetting.

That there were questions we could never put to him.
The Cadillac shimmer.
His long black coat and his wicked glare.

And poor ma, with her head out the window.
Poor ma, embroiled with the children,
and her spirit broken.

Two Almond Growers Visit Mesa Verde

Mantz Yorke

It's hot, extremely hot. We're glad
to be in shade as we explore
the community of kivas and rooms
beneath an overhang of the cliff.
We imagine the Anasazi's struggle
to cultivate corn, squash and beans
among scrub on the high plateau,
trusting yields would be sustained
by winter's rain and snow, knowing
how it turned out – decades of drought
forcing an exodus to the south.

Our reservoirs in California
are at all-time lows: for years now,
the streams filling them have shrunk
as winter snowpacks have thinned.
Our almond grove, whose every acre
demands a million gallons a year,
is unsustainable. After this year's crop
we'll leave the soil – unirrigated,
impoverished by monoculture –
to fallow as it will: all we can do
is sell the land and relocate to Maine.

Night, Seen on a Rothko

Kathryn Paul

—*After a painting by Joan Pérez*

When you visited, Mom, you invaded.
My only defense was the museum, together
a refuge— where
I could enjoy you
enjoying the paintings
& you
could teach me about this artist or that—
The museum where for a few hours you forgot
to re-make me
in your image
and we were good together.
The longest you and I ever
communed was that half-light day
in the Rothko Chapel:
fourteen monumental paintings
hard-edged & darkly resonant—
layered hues stirring on an inky
ground — depth like nothing
I'd ever seen.
We sat — reverent — on the hard
wooden bench.
We did not speak.
It was enough.

You flew home, Mom, and painted
your largest canvas, in the style of Rothko—
never for sale.
You sent it to me long after.
Ebony so deep it absorbs all the light
and nearly all my inadequacy.
Inescapable, no matter where I choose
to hang it, your painting tugs and pulls
me ever closer, until I recognize
the faint nightlights of the barges on your childhood river...
the dissolving tears of a far-off radio tower...
blinking crimson, barely visible
beneath the pale and waxing moon.



Entropy
Cynthia Yatchman

Black Cow Travels (for D.O.D.)

KH Holladay

—*Published posthumously*

You would sing to us
on the highway
moo like a cow
black cow
old timeless songs:
The Eyes of Texas
were upon us,
the yellow rose
while small white signs
flashed by:
stay where
you are
inside
your car
Burma Shave
we laughed and made
a game
of rote by counting
crops, quick
changeovers
from corn corn corn
cotton cotton cotton
soybeans soybeans soy...
clouds in the sky
as you sang
all the dreams
we ever wanted
could not come true
because they were clouds.
Except the black cow
promise waiting for us
at home after the polio shot.
we cried
our noses stung
behind the bone

we were afraid
but had to play brave
to win the black cow –
ice cream swimming in coke.
After the clouds,
the river, swooping
up the roller-coaster
bridge, you would
sing
big river, big river, big river,
a hearty welcome
to alert us to concentrate
on the sides of the bridge
so we wouldn't fall off.
We were young to go so high,
and we were getting too close
to clouds, the drop to green
water would be too great
(our noses would sting).

Yours was a warning
and welcome roar.
We were drawing close
to your birthplace,
drawing a close to the pilgrimage,
your parents waiting.
We would pile out of the car,
play with mules and corn shucks,
tread carefully behind
the knees of your father
and mother. We wondered
at grownups and country nature,
wrote poems without knowing it,
and noticed you never
sang on the way home.

North River, Augusta County, 1903

Marjorie Gowdy

Beaver twist, skim, dive.
Thrush in the bittersweet along the bank.
Watercress and small bream today's meal, perhaps eggs
poached from Miz Evers.
"Git in here," Ma's hollering. "Git back here right now."
She's one angry woman, all the time, at the pigs, at Pa,
at church.

Stream swells under rushes, sun disguises desolation, and slaps against the stones.

Roland cuts wood, plants the corn, fetches water from the well.
When Pa asks, he cleans the privy.
The girls are quiet ones, not wanting to rattle.
"Tagged you." Run, giggle, hide.
"Where are they? Dinner's on."
Pa is dark-headed, silent in the house, grins outside, prepares a sack.

August heat, school starts soon for the girls,
harvest for boys.
Sweat pours from their faces onto long rusted scythes.
One old cow, a Jersey,
Sisters sweep the porch, the dusty walk.
Anything for all of them. Just to be outside.

Inside, brittle bitter heat and steam.
Outside, thick air yet a slight breeze beyond the creek.
One girl stoops.
She's hungry. *Here's an egg.*
Scythe hay twist husks jug of cool rich relief
Bulrushes in the cold August stream.

Night blankets the bare wooden house,
air frizzes between the promise of books, the fear of morning.
Ma screams into the night. Beans upturned.
Skinny hound licks what remains.
The cat burrows under a straw pillow, only its one eye shines.
You have to breathe, but no one breathes.

Beyond the green stream a valley road, beyond the screams a wide stretch.

"Here boy." Pa wakes him.
Hands Roland the sack.
Eggs, water, a two-dollar bill.
"I'll check on you. There's chance.
Run.
Now, git."

Christiana, Delaware, 1922

Cesca Janece Waterfield

Each spring, my great-grandmother gathered wild
leeks and their broad green leaves, knuckled

dough into elastic braids to later bake
with cardamom and sugar. She slid the chicken

once named after a saint into a boiling pot
with dumplings, kept muslin strips for lamp oil that spilled

in a crock by the door, sucked blackberry juice
from her fingers in the summer and slicked biscuits

with duck fat come fall. No one told her about
the yew trees of St. Mary's or the devil's promise

on the next scattered seeds. But she knelt in the chapel
for salvation and her cherry palmiers

made the boys say they saw footsteps of angels
on the engine house floor.

On Rincon Point

Erica A. Fletcher

How should we waste this precious day
the air is white and salty the wind
blows cold this morning

Drinking our coffee on the retaining wall that spares
this little house from the rising seas
our ocean keeps getting rougher and hotter

Pelicans glide low over the Pacific
streaks of salt smudge our glasses
sand granules wedge in my wedding ring

Here we idle in the marine fog layer
our children hovering behind us
impatient to be driven somewhere

The tide pulls in, an old wool blanket
worn through in places, your family name
stitched to the hem with red thread

Wrapped in the breath of your California ancestors
I can't shake the dread
of being one day closer to the grave

Let's waste more days together
the fog is stubborn
it might not lift at all



Sisters
Carolyn Adams

Finding Family

Gerry Stewart

The gate's rusted joints creak open,
protecting a tiny square of prairie,
wild amidst the corn fields.

Through Indiangrass taller than myself,
I follow my Great Aunt, a cousin
maybe once or twice removed,
seeking family buried in this dry whisper.

Her palsied finger traces stone,
names of pioneers and those she knew,
tow-haired kin who summer-danced with her.
I pick Black-Eyed Susans to ticking crickets.

In another cemetery's sterile lawn,
my grandfather lies with strangers,
his headstone lost in the rows,
a number only found with a map.

At his recent funeral, the waxy gladioli wilted,
a buzzing lawnmower hummed
with the grown-ups' voices as we walked away,
leaving him alone in the plot,
waiting for others to join him.

In the prairie's arms,
I lay my spitbug-covered flowers for him
between the jumbled graves
that lean in close to support one another.

Dear Mary,
Sheryl Guterl

I hold your depiction
of the great blue heron
as a Buddhist priest,
robed in gray, being still.

I read that
while sitting on the beach
of a New Hampshire lake,
in summer, watching a fishing heron.

I look up
just as the priestly heron,
in slow motion, lifts one leg
to advance an inch in the reeds.

The junction of your words
and my sight-line
to the tall weeds and even taller heron
is imprinted forever, and I thank you.

If someday words so beautiful
should flow out of my pen to portray
an eagle, a frog, a dragonfly, or a beaver,
it will be your spirit guiding me.

Trying to Read Wallace Stevens

Antoni Ooto

How difficult you are.
So, I'm reading your book, back to front;
from recent poems guiding back to a past
hoping to understand.

As lines weave and stanzas build,
in the margin I scribble notes.

Beginnings often challenge
but having never met,
I almost recognize you by words.

Finally, now here at the beginning,
let's talk.

o Dante

Alan Bern

—*Imitation of Dante's "Guido, I' vorrei che tu e Lapo ed io"*

Alighieri, I wish that you and Woods and I
could be taken up clearly into air
in a brilliant ship magically flying
and that in that sky we could go anywhere
we wanted without storm or turbulence
in any way facing our high flight,
but instead, that sharing all our thoughts,
we would want to stay together throughout the night.

And that the fair seer would bring us
Beatrice, Alice, and the lovely one
who lives at number thirty not far from us,
and speaking of sweet love all day long,
I know each of them would be as happy as

I believe that we would be, all three of us.



o Dante

Alan Bern

Dear Neil Perry

Cara Losier Chanoine

Every time I watch *Dead Poets Society*,
I write new endings for your life.
Sometimes, you are a Broadway darling.
Sometimes, you are Boston drag queen.
As literature, your death is tragic.
As symbolism, it's unbearable.

I know a boy who used to be a poet.
He breathed life into microphones in dark bars
and was raw, and fierce, and vital.
On stage, he looked a lot like you,
lanky and earnest, grinning puckishly at his audience.
When I saw him a few months ago,
I asked him if he was still writing
and he said no like he was surprised anyone would even think so.

Neil Perry, I can't bear your death
because every day that passes is already another artist suicide.
The world was not built for our survival.
Painters, and authors, and actors are resurrected as people
who go to work, and come home, and forget
that they ever put worlds onto canvases,
that they were ever brave enough to stand on a stage
in their own incandescence.

There are no bodies to bury,
but I mourn their loss
like I mourn yours.
They are why I cannot stop inventing ways
for you to escape the trap of the ordinary life that killed you.

To remain an artist
seems a matter of luxury and luck.
It is, perhaps, one of the few privileges you were denied.
It was, perhaps, the only one that mattered.
I imagine you as a beat poet,
a silver-screen detective.
I imagine you happy.
I take my own survival
and lay it, like a wreath of branches, at your grave.

In the Forest

Emily Reid Green

*—An ekphrastic poem inspired by Sylvia Plath's
self-portrait in semi-abstract style (1946- 1952)*

There is a tree falling in the forest.
Nightly I will search, bare feet and
palms begging the needles and bark to
take notice, bleed me ripping
raw. I want to leave a dripping
trail, be a crime scene, crawl
inside the dead and take root.
Take rot.

Your morning coffee will be missed.
The kitchen too much silent tomb
without its body. When I return
rouse your sleeping self, you will sniff
my pine scent, then stomach rumble, then
roll over.

There is a tree falling
in the forest. And it sounds like
screaming.

Woodland Love

Sheryl Guterl

—After “Nature” by Mary Oliver

All night the seed’s hull
was pushed against,
tendrils unfolding within
until it burst

upward toward the Eastern light,
stretching for sunny warmth,
still coiled until its stem grows strong
enough to hoist the fan of fern.

I walk in the early morning, smelling
moist night, new green and old bark.
I spy the tender fronds,
which were not there yesterday.

Every morning is like this—
new buds on the pussy willow,
fresh mushrooms bombing upward,
old pine fallen to rest overnight,

always something different or new,
which is the gift of Nature,
which is the reason
I love her.

WHEN SYLVIA PLATH WROTE,
“WHO’D WALK IN THIS BLEAK PLACE?”

Kait Quinn

I imagine her ribcage an icebox
swollen with freezer burn; her heart—
once a blooming geranium—glazed
with dry frost, black with bite, the candlelight
of her aorta having gone out
with the last crimson petiole of the season.

I imagine her pupil swallowing
sweet slice of winter’s tangerine sky—her one eye
unblinking—in empty hope of efflorescing jade, pine,
pistachio out of slate. I imagine sun
dripping into ink, blue pond black with it, swan
stained with it; Sylvia plucking one of the fouled
feathers, now useless to him—the poor thing—but
a bottomless well from which to scrape
endlessly the poetry of December’s
brooding sunsets.

What vein can be tapped to ebb
these wintered tides? What words could pearl
from mind’s desolate plain?

Like Mother Like Daughter

Laurie Kolp

Ants bore into the peony
budded bright with leaves &
cleaved to walls where mirrors
drink the wind,
each one a perfect mold
feathered dark in thought.

Goldfinches gather in a field of thistles.
Hunger will consume the hours lost there.

If only the wind would leave my lungs alone
just to amuse the narrow mouth
keeping what you left between us
like an eye between two lids that will not shut.

Maybe fire in my lashes is a reflection
nobody watched before.

Opening, again, the wound along its numb scar
prayers that are made of
quartz-flake feathers, a rose
rippling phrases built of loneliness
slow as a leaf through water.

Tremulous breath at the end line,
understand I am always trying to
voice hollows of bodies.

Words of a snail on the plate of a leaf:
excuse me, I have work to do.

You perceive a tightening in the trees
zinc-white.

Abecedarian Cento Sources:

Claudia Emerson- Lines 3, 5, 8, 11, 15, 19, 22, 25

Mary Oliver- Lines 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 18, 21, 24

Sylvia Plath- Lines 2, 6, 9, 14, 17, 20, 23, 26



Cat Nap
Ann Privateer

On the Rest of Mary Oliver

D Larissa Peters

Water trickles, flows, *rushes*—

a tiny spring, just broken the pond,
moves from the field into the woods, waking the familiar
life of the woman who fell asleep in the grass,
with the fox, the bear, the water snake
and the birds—kingfishers, swans, bluejays, long left before her—gather
welcoming the woman who saw them, *heard* all
the songs and cries, knew all the peaces of nature,
with gratitude. She stands, calm, bold, at attention,
questioning and knowing, folding into the green,
the night, the calls of the sparrow.

Once upon a time

Mugu Ganesan

Five men's work for one man's rice and curry!

Take me home, take me now, have no worry!

I am not good at telling stories. She was.
And she had perfected this story of a nomad
who had no home, no kith, no kin and moved
from village to village, family to family,
along the *Vashishta* river.

The lone bedtime story Aaya always told to:

the warm summer night, the burnt sky
lying naked with all its beaming blemishes,
the howling dog silent now before the movie,
the watered, wet *thinmai* ready to wrap bodies,
the tired bullock still tethered to its empty cart
and me. In her wrinkled, soothing voice,
she once more enacted the story of this nomad,
his ordeals for food and home, the looming betrayal,
and his return to the river, to the next village,
to the next family.

Five men's work for one man's rice and curry!

Take me home, take me now, have no worry!

I do not remember how this story ended –
did he find a morsel that filled his stomach?
Did he find a home that embraced him as its own?
Or did the river give up and pour him into the sea,
empty, alone and scarred by deceit?

I must have closed my eyes each time before the end.
There are no *thinnaïs* here, howling dogs on the street,
or bullocks tethered to carts. I did ask the summer
nights and the naked sky – they could not recall.
They must have slept before the end too every time.
A wrinkled voice continues to whisper inside my head:

Five men's work for one man's rice and curry!
Take me home, take me now, have no worry!

Maybe there was no end. Maybe that river dried up
before reaching the mouth of any monstrous sea.
Maybe she too closed her eyes much before
the end of that story.

Just like she has now.
Empty, alone and scarred by deceit.

Aaya: Grandmother in Tamil

A Long Time Ago There Was and There Wasn't

Lisa Ashley

She crouched behind the wine barrel
doors crashing, shouts, her mother's screams
pounding Turkish boots set loose.
The small brown bird flew into desert air.

She vanished behind closed eyes
fell into silence that held her like a shroud,
cloaked in hunger without tears
the wind blew through her eyes.

She tipped and slid in the boat
in the dark as it rumbled for days and days,
like an ancient rockslide on Ararat
tumbled her into safe exile.

Boundless noise pitched over her on the dock.
Sounds marched out of open mouths.
Dry as dust this language
she would live in for seventy-nine years

yet never learn, never speak.
Lost in her wilderness of grief,
killing the memory of the killing,
she forgot how the story went.

Note: Armenian folktales often begin with the words of the title

On reading Ted Berrigan's Sonnet XIX

Sue Chenette

Harum-scarum shadow-leaves of a shrub rose
traced in a drift of light light-penciled patterns
over your lines, which deliquesce
melt into branches in my idling thought.

I want to know your sonnet here:
Wood-slat bench against concrete wall your
polytonic breezes addressing rue and hyssop
mysterious Billy Smith in the Cluny Garden while

my croissant crumbs and tracery spill
across the page align a wave's moment
a moment only loosed as a small gust
disarranges the correspondences the wages

of wind are loss and drift and yet —
this shrub rose on your page ...

His poets.

DS Maolalai

I met him one morning
on the corner of D'Olier
up College Green,
outside of Trinity. I was in college
and playing at studying literature
and there he was, standing
in the cold rose of October,
turning out trad tunes
for pennies from tourists.

one of the best drunks
I ever saw,
and a pretty good
session player,
brought low to this
like a swan
chasing breadcrumbs.

I suggested
we get lunch,
catch up,

let me see
what's going on with him.
he said
he was "going
for a pint with the poets" – indicated
these junkies
sitting on a statues feet.

I nodded
and went back
to meet some poets
of my own.
other students. we discussed Joyce
and Beckett
over coffee.

in hindsight
I should have gone
with him.
his poets
were definitely better.

Broken Lines

Kate Maxwell

All those Kamikaze poets nose diving into too much nothing
picturing plummet's thrill, but ending
 with an earthly thud, a crash, a curious cow
snorting at broken lines, dismembered words
all splattered cross a depth of field that poets
 non-numerical, could never guess.

All those preposterous poets disembowelling emotions
onto white snickering pages
 now, sadly oven-gassed or sinking
in the puddles of their leaking sanity
should have spent more time re-organising
sock drawers or scrubbing bathtub rings.

When I've caught myself dressing in red underwear
to pen a poem on bushfires, or leaping from the shower
 wild-eyed as a hound in hunt just to snatch
 some words in water bleeding ink
I picture the rolled back whites of those dead
poets' eyes and embrace my mediocrity.

Even in red underwear, my muse has short attention span
hankering after Netflix and internet pandas.
On odd occasions when I've crammed too much into my brain
for it to turn its teeth on me: spitting out tortured text
 inventing new epiphanies, I've vowed only
to play Candy Crush and watch the shopping channel.



At the End, Find the Beginning

Edward Lee

Never meet your heroes

Bartholomew Barker

and mine was hard to find.
I spent all day searching
the bars of Los Angeles,
my crisp printed pages of poems
becoming sweat stained
from sun and sidewalk.

I had to buy him a drink
before he'd even look at my work.
And though he already stank
of vodka, it was an honor.

After a cursory read,
Hank slapped me on the back—
too hard.

“That’s a good start, kid,
but you’re too smart
for your own good.
Too many years in college,”
(I was only there for four)
“not enough working—
look at your hands—
no calluses!”

It’s true. I’ve only ever worked
with my mind. Never carried a mailbag
nor jarred a pickle.

But I have a callus on the last knuckle
of my middle finger from years of writing
long hand and when I showed it to him,
he laughed the laugh, too loud,
of an afternoon drunk.

The Affect of Tears

James B. Nicola

Poets have cried and sung a thousand years
in hopes their tears would help the wretched see.
Now scientists have proven that their tears
came in conjunction with their poetry.
For water dropped from eyes not only bears
salt, but attendant proteins to assuage
such things as grief, shock, horror, and the fears
that can't be helped, of any time or age.

Wet weeping doesn't help at all in feeding
or clothing, true, but when love goes astray
it hurts far less (and stains less, too) than bleeding:
salt water may wash half the aches away.

The same tears that help sufferers endure,
however, also tend to make them half
blind. Poets, though, do not want to obscure
until the point they're making disappears;
some of them, therefore, try to make us laugh
until it hurts, and *that* way, summon tears.

ANCESTORS

Kait Quinn

—*After Ada Limón*

I was born on hospital sheets on Jackson Street
between two bends in the Brazos. I don't remember what
I first saw beyond crimson estuary that corralled
me into fluorescent gulf. Or how the doctor smacked
her palm against my bare pink ass, rattled my Texas
bones into tempestuous wailing. Or father's face, mother's thighs,
stretch of sister's pupils—or was it a narrowing?
Later, I remember water plunking against windows, running
down windshield like rivers, cresting the banks
of the bayou, the way it swallowed me at the ankles,
gagged throat, knocked me directionless
in the Pacific—all that power from a single swell. Imagine
you must survive without breathing. I've come here
from the sea, obsidian depths, beached kelp tangled
on pudendal shore. I know nothing beyond brine in lungs,
dead stars stacked into scapula and sacrum.

Keeping the Peace

Marianne Mersereau

Every Sunday, my great grandfather
walked a mile to the small country church
carrying his old tattered Bible
but he never ventured inside.

Leaning against the hickory tree
he listened to the hymns and sermon,
hounds praying across the hill
and crows singing overhead.

He left at the last amen and walked home
alone. No one rushed out to ask for
a donation, shake his hand or wish him
a good day. He kept his peace to himself.

Protest ants

Clay Waters

You are eight, and don't question why
we walk this path
the third time in the third year
to bless this fractured stone
trailing our edgy knot of bodies
still as saints, quiet as noon.
You never knew him
(he was no great man)
and so turn
to plunder the mausoleum for the earliest death
breath cooling in that long low room.

Dying Young

Savannah Cooper

I used to imagine the Rapture, a sudden
disappearing, and how it would feel to stand
in an empty house while the world fell apart.

I never expected to live this long, grew up
swallowing stories of martyrdom and sacrifice,
expected to find one day a gun at my head.

Most Sunday mornings I wondered
what would happen if a shooter burst
into the sanctuary, debated whether

I could play dead on the floor beneath
the pews. If nothing else, it broke
the monotony of hell in a handbasket,

shame and stuttering hymns. Destined to die
young, I knew, cut short in my prime standing
for something, even if I didn't know just what.

And now I stare down a different barrel,
the long years that lie ahead, and heaven
and hell mean nothing to me, distant

nightmares from another time, the cries
of fanatics who forgot their humanity
long ago.

Golem

Betty Stanton

I decorate my walls with drawings of him pieced together
with mud and metal and bone, small
plump fingers spreading waxy colors across dozens of pages
torn from school notebooks. My
father tells me the story – Prague at Easter, a priest
turns Christians against Jews, the Rabbis
make a choice, they learn –

to bring him to life,
to shape him from soil, like Adam, into the shape of a man,
to dance for him, breathe the name of God into his skin,
to tattoo *emet*, truth, into the muddy flesh of his forehead
to write God's secret name on thick paper and force it, rough,
under his unfinished tongue.

My father watches from the corner of every drawing as he rampages –
rises like smoke over
bricked chimneys as he is killed. When we sit shiva, my mother and I
drape every sheet we own
over the large mirrors he hated, cry in dirty clothes. Later we will leave
stones across his
headstone, bind him into *beit olam* –

to wait for God. Stones last, solid as memory, they do not
die. In every story, when his work is done, they must ink
met, death, across his skin.

Cave of My Sisters

Hunter Liguore

clay bricks in summer
burning hot with tribal fire
the drum beats steady
 in time
 on clover
where the deer dances
and the glow of amber decorates the glade
with twinkling lights above
connecting our ancestors
my sisters begin a circle
 in stillness
 in beauty
fireflies carry our voices
as the old songs are sung
 gifted by one grandmother
 down six generations
to the next in line

at the center a clay pot brews
a special drink
my sisters drink and pass along
 looking forward to a new year
 a raised cup
to the solstice summer sky
to Ophiuchus and Hercules
protectors of the purple night
the drum, our whole heartbeat
grows louder
 as cave shadows grow bold and brave
 a metamorphosis
with hearts lifted
we cross the greatest distance
 our undivided awareness
 deep in the Mother's belly
another season

unfolding.

After getting busted for public drunkenness

Laurie Kolp

Mama suggests I find a new concept
of God which, she says, is not
beer. She says not to
think of God as Oz,
as some being afloat in gold
with scrutinizing eyes cast
down on me. She says to
think of him as
my conscience, the voice within.
Instead of rash decisions,
Mama says, wait and see.
Ignore the neighborhood
gang arguing inside my head,
tossing brackish thoughts like pocket
knives. Just listen, she whispers.
My dog, Jake, asleep in my lap,
snores like my father, who
died from this disease.
The susurrant of autumn leaves
at my wooly-socked feet as Mama and I
heave the wooden swing back
and forth, back and forth, creaking beneath
the old shady oak. She says God
could even be this tree, this moment
right here. From head to toe, a current
fills me with peace.

Like a Pillar of Cloud in the Sinai Desert

Rebecca Herz

the cloud that leads us now once led our people
moves when God tells it to move and stops when He tells it to stop
we follow it through these dusty years in limbo
hoping an angel is riding upon its dust
searching in vain for an oasis, as did our ancestors
praying on rocks and to rocks, then being struck to death
for the sin of seeing God in the inanimate, while the cloud
that leads us to hover above our mothers, starts and stops
forms and dissipates, then, in the same breath
unleashes storm and sweet, bitter manna



*Cook's Garden Soup:
quart beef jelly, quart veal jelly.
Boil. Add carrots and turnips. Serve hot.*

Kitchen Garden
Wendy Lou Schmidt

Sunday Night at Goodsouls Kitchen

Richard Oyama

How do I say to you the heart is
Not metaphor but a place of terror and
Stoppage? That the body has been
Invaded by butterfly mesh? I cannot
Defend my crossed wires or
The need to tell more truth than one can bear
To those I love most. It's the
Impulse to wound or confess. She
breathed the high air of the Himalayas as
she fell on serial rocks. I did not know
Her grievous injuries and only thought to say
'What a gimmick!' thinking of biting the head off
A snake. It's only rock 'n' roll.

What I meant to say was Jai guru deva om
Glory to the shining remover of darkness.

Chapel of Bones

Joe Amaral

—*Inscription: stop here and think of the fate
that will befall you, 1816*

I wander the earthquake-sectored
architecture of Lisbon, hypnotized
by illusive azulejos: ceramic, tin-
glazed tileworks containing multitudes
of numbers, pictures, and languages
from old and new worlds. I am a creation
of my forebears, a wayfarer trying to culture
my diaspora beyond the asymmetry
of travel magazine cutouts. I take a train
with my family to visit *Capela Dos Ossos*
in Faro, a building made of human bones
squared floor to ceiling—mortared femurs
serried in rows like grids of the macabre.
Inside the ossuary, alongside mounted skulls,
I pose for photos like a deer head in a hunting lodge;
smiling wide with all my teeth intact. I kick at
an occipital shard that has tumbled
from the wall. It spins across the vault
making profane noises like fallen cymbals.
The expression on my appalled, Catholic mom,
who had tiptoed in voiceless the way
houses absorb family arguments, made me
reconsider my lapsed spirit. We are a collage
of unwritten, nameless lineages
forgotten like cemeteries weeded over.

Two Kinds

Savannah Cooper

There are two kinds of preacher's daughters—
the good girls and the bad girls. I fell squarely
in the former category, straight-A student,
quiet and accommodating. I never went out,
so my parents forgot to give me a curfew
until I was seventeen and went to a late movie.
No cigarettes, no alcohol, no boy with his hands
running up my thigh, much as I wanted it,
wanted to feel desired, adored, seen.
Much as I wanted to feel anything at all.
I floated the high school corridors like a ghost,
sat the Sunday pews like a martyr. Didn't even
begin to wake up until I turned twenty, spent
another ten years cracking the lily-white veneer
of my angelic belief. These days, I don't hold
to anything my parents taught me, and my teen self
would be so ashamed to see what I've become.
Sweet girl, I love you, I'm sorry, but you can't begin
to imagine the freedom of heathens, the relief
when blasphemy loses its sting.

Dadaí Mór

DS Maolalai

he wrote amateurish
poetry all done longhand
on blue notepaper. was excellent
at gardening. and we've
talked about it:
probably he was also
a fascist if not actually
a nazi. that's the thing
we don't talk about. not
in the family, only alone
and in poems, and my grandmother
once on a documentary. like,
clearing out his office
when the house was being
sold, my brother found all
of these leaflets – all headlines
about “shylocks” and mapping
the war. at the time
we thought it funny.
our grandad! what a fact!
look: I told people,
when I heard about the marches,
it was hating the english
which got him on with hitler.
but look: he was a fascist –
I remember a kind man
who gardened like an artist. he died
when I was ten – do you trust
my judgement from then?

Not All About You

Gene Goldfarb

Empty your pockets when
putting on your pants
your purpose to remain uncorrupted
and the crease on your legs stay
neat for opportunity to pay a call

Listen to your teacher who
will teach you the times tables
how to read Dick and Jane
and perhaps some humility if
you watch her hands and some
patience if you listen to her breath

Ask your father that question
he will be gone sooner than you think
and the answer no matter what
will feed you for ten thousand nights
while you wait for that lonely train

Pet the cat before you leave
her feral indifference is just for show
she may be a practiced killer
but she still loves you in her way

Put a small coin in the cup
the drops of sustenance
for those you'll never meet
the world is too big to thank you

Remember when the birds chirp
their love songs through the trees
they're not for you
though you wish they were.

What I Have Become

James B. Nicola

I have become what no one wants or needs
but what one unsuspecting soul may find
one feckless day. The obsolescent seeds
I've planted, though, persist like spores of weeds
sown in the unexamined lot behind
a slapdash, dusty thrift store: one sloughed book
in a boxful of books by the dumpster rank.
These won't sell, they said. I growled back a *Thank
you for that*, unvoiced. Won't you linger, look
at the sign with one word scribbled on it—**"FREE!"**—
and take one? Note how Past and Future bleed
amidst such welters of dead greenery.
Now rifle through my leaves and deign to read
what I have left, and let a soul be freed.



The Tattered Troubadour

Jim George

Evictee

Bruce McRae

You mean the house inside the house.
You mean the mythmaker's lodgings,
with its many doors and million windows.

Which is the sea under the mountains
or a thirteen billion year old light ray.
Which is everywhere, like ancient snow.

Oh, but why didn't you say so?
You mean the house next door to the nothingness,
across the road from the flaming hospital,
by the perpetually exploding dancehall.

Where the carbon blobs happily dwell
and midnight barks like a dog.
Where the spectral sailors are knocking.

The house made of bones being broken.
The house of minds snapping.
The house where the World used to live,
until Tragedy stopped by for a while,
until Time spat out its toothpick.

I remember the blinds in the kitchen
coming down hard.
Like a fist on a table
or satellite crashing.
I remember there were dirt walls in the cellar
and an angry lightbulb on all night.
With vast continents
hidden under its floorboards,
Mr. and Mrs. Chemical, long dead now,
rearranging the grassblades,
old toys still in the yard,
bejeweled in the glistening rain,
the roadway passing
filled with the children's lost voices:
like a skip-rope-rhyme
in my feverish mind.

Ethics Lessons

Felicia Mitchell

When your long-lost cousin who finds you online
is the great-great-great-great-great granddaughter
of an uncle who fought for freedom from England
even as he held an enslaved African in his arms
like pillage or plunder.

When your grandmother died
six days after her father had her committed
to an asylum instead of taking her home to the farm,
where the porch had rocking chairs—
where her own brother lived in another wing of the asylum,
whistling for a dog he had not seen in years.

When one clue to a family secret is one first name,
dangling there on a family tree like a question mark
that takes the place of a whole paragraph
that could explain how people stolen from their homes
married into your family without dowries.

When man and wife are not buried in the same resting place.
When first cousin married first cousin.
When stepson killed stepfather over a sister's cow.
When a cousin not many times removed killed his wife,
another cousin, and killed himself, three children left to carry on.

Then the ethics lessons are embodied,
as much a part of your psyche as blood in your body.
Then you sit on your own porch and stare at a sky
as vast as the list of lessons—some known to you
and some just the source of dreams or strange habits.

Duplex: Dad's Guitar

Shannon Donaghy

The sound is so familiar, it frightens me.
Six strings, all of them steel and harsh on my fingertips.

Steel strings wrapped harsh around my fingers
Make something like music when I move.

I moved like music when he'd play something.
Now I'm playing, but I'm not sure how.

Now I'm playing, but I'm not sure what.
Hurried fingers squeaking as they glide over frets.

My fingers hurry over frets that don't belong to me.
I play pretend until I can play for real.

When I play, it does not sound real.
The frightened sound is so familiar.



Chair
Carolyn Adams

Ode to an Antique Rocking Chair

Ann Howells

I imagine you were a gift – carved
from an old walnut felled when the farmer,
my great-grandfather, added a second room –
loving husband to young wife
heavy with his firstborn. He, West Virginian,
small, wiry, strong calloused hands.
She, weary from canning butter beans,
feeding chickens, rendering fat for soap,
delighted in your gentle motion
as she mended britches, ripped sleeves,
on the braided rug before the fire.

Your arms chamfered by twitching fingers,
rockers flattened by repeated motion,
how often have you soothed? How many babies
has your to-and-fro eased through teething,
colic, fever?
How many descended into coal mines?
Fought wars? Died young?
How many labored on farms, bent with arthritis
till worn thin?
How many were seers who rocked
and gazed into the future?
How many went on to greatness? To disgrace?

We place your age
at over one hundred twenty-five years,
over twelve decades ago. Household matriarch,
you've graced bedsides through children,
grandchildren, great-grandchildren.
How many generations will you lull to sleep?

My Grandmother's Dressing Table

Lois Perch Villemaire

As a young girl, I would climb onto the upholstered
seat facing the mirror of my grandmother's dressing table
sitting against the wall in her bedroom,

I would inspect each item as if it were new,
matching comb and brush, bottles of perfume, jewelry box
filled with necklaces, bracelets, and screw-on earrings,

Playing dress-up I slipped on a bracelet or two,
dabbed toilet water on my neck imitating her
running a comb through my curly hair,

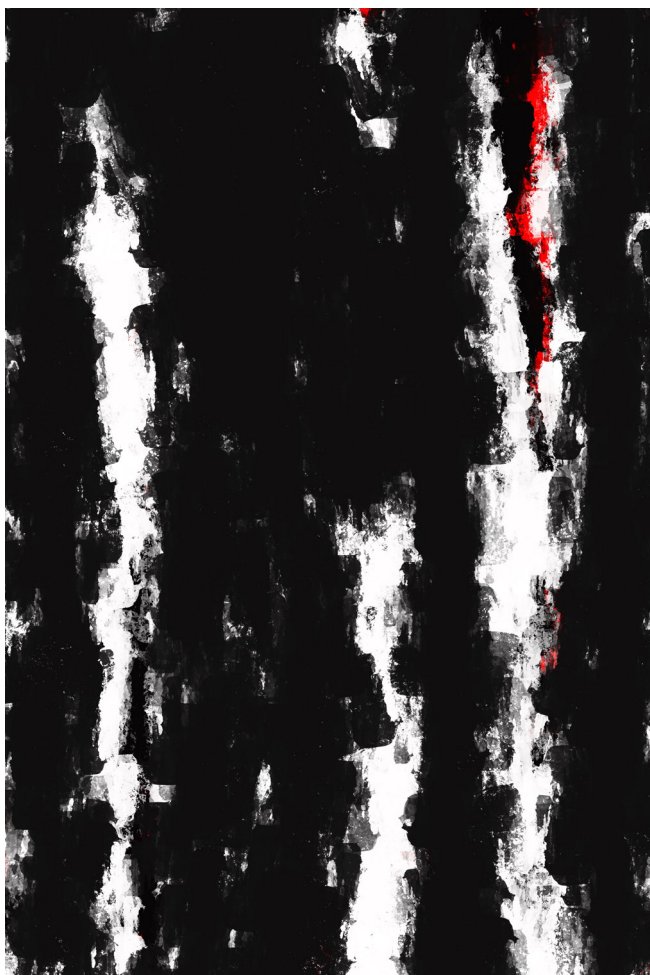
I would reach for the silver handled mirror
with an engraved design on the back to study my face,
brown eyes, freckles splashed across my nose,

Inhaling familiar scents brushing my finger in the face powder,
I would touch tubes of lipstick, eye color, rouge,
and fumble with the funny scissors that curled her eyelashes,

A silver framed wedding photo taken in 1921
faced me from the corner of the table, my grandparents
watching me pretend I was grown up.



Dressmaker
Wendy Lou Schmidt



Furies
Edward Lee

Yellowed Gloves

Julie A Dickson

A pair of aged yellowed gloves
hastily placed into a drawer
beckon to me as I explore,
wander through Nana's house.

An eerie sensation creeps over me
when I think of her wearing gloves
and a black netted pill box hat,
fashions that I somehow evaded.

I fall back in clumsy, jerky steps
as my eyes flick over a portrait of her
hanging silently – but in my head
I hear her soft rattling voice.

I think of past journal entries
with pages erased and rewritten,
trying to capture some moment gone,
words thready and empty at best.

Valuables

Karen Ulm Rettig

When my grandmother sold her house, she gave things away.
She had been a farmer's wife in lean times
when life held no margin for waste
and belongings were few and cherished.
Prosperity arrived at last, and abundance
with it, but thrift was ingrained.
She was a wonderful, warm grandmother,
the keeper of a well-stocked cookie jar,
and now she invited her daughters and granddaughters
to help ourselves to things she couldn't take along,
still-useful items too dear to consign to a rummage sale.
They filled the table and overflowed
onto the floor: curiosities from her travels,
vases from her gardening days,
kitchen tools rubbed smooth with familiarity,
two sets of dishes—we drew straws for those—
throw pillows with bright knitted covers,
the coffee mug she had used to measure
ingredients for her oatmeal cookies,
hand-crocheted doilies,
plates with *25th* in silver or *50th* in gold, a little garish,
pitchers, platters and serving bowls.

We fingered and inspected, all of us
veteran consumers accustomed to plenty,
most of us never touched by poverty.
We laughed and reminisced and selected
whatever took our fancy until the energy
drained and some glanced at their watches.
The table was still accusingly littered
and apprehension clouded Grandma's face, fear
that maybe her treasures were unlovely.
At that point, a few of us began to reassess
the remaining items and remember forgotten needs,
feigning excitement over each new acquisition, praising
its color, shape, luster when we couldn't conjure
a use. As we added to our hoards,
looking a little greedy, feeling
a little obvious, we emptied the table.
I drove home that day with a full trunk.
I wouldn't keep it all, but Grandma didn't know that,
and if she suspected, probably didn't mind.

The Story Stone

Lisa Ashley

She sits in her straight chair
near the cook stove in the farm kitchen.
I watch her read her Armenian bible,
gnarled fingers tracing words, muttering,
turning pages back to front.

Her thick-heeled shoes clunk
across the faded linoleum,
her cotton stockings droop,
her bib apron cradles onions
she lifts from the bushel basket
in the cold storage room.

Her brown hands tuck grape leaves around rice,
tear the damp lavash into pieces,
pry up the stove lid,
push kindling sticks in day and night.
She smells of garlic, olive oil, mint,
her whiskers in brown wrinkles scratch my cheeks.

She knows no English, I know no Armenian.
My ears tune the soft guttering of her words
as she speaks with my father.
I whisper to her behind my hand
scubbity, scubbity, scubbity.
She tosses her head back, we laugh.

Memories slide in and out, ghosting
like September sunlight slanting through blinds.
Stories never told hover in that house,
wavering phantoms in her parlor,
they migrate behind the curio cabinet door,
colonize her mementos with their silence.

Her voice roosts inside me somewhere,
muted, pricks my skin,
a straight pin lost in my skirt hem.
I suck on her story stone
like those who suck stones in the desert,
thirsty for more.



Lady
Carolyn Adams

Baci

Jess Skyleson

—*The term used when a player's ball actually touches
("kisses") the target, awarding them an extra point.*

They are much heavier than I thought-
like holding the weight of two worlds,
balanced in each hand,

and I feel my palms begin to sweat,
sliding against the cool,
smooth surface of the *bocce*

as your uncles and cousins turn towards me,
shifting foot to foot, trying to spot the *pallina*,
that tiny ball yards away,

hidden somewhere in the thick grass.
I can sense your silent encouragement,
your soft brown eyes expectant,

hopeful, when they meet my hesitant blue.
Your brother's voice calls out, "*Il turno*,"
and I step resolutely forward, breath held,

arm extending like a Scottish warrior
unexpectedly glazed onto a Roman vase,
my empty hand feeling naked, powerless,

when the ball hovers in mid-air,
then bounces unsteadily to a stop
amongst the others on the hill.

I join the huddle as we all rush in,
surveying the field like a group of gods,
our planets circling a small white sun,

and am ashamed to see mine at the outskirts,
not even remotely close
to touching that coveted target.

Then your *Nana* motions me over,
and I awkwardly bend down beside her,
trying to lower my tall frame that long distance

to her diminutive white head.
She grasps my chin
in her surprisingly strong hands,

lays her cheek against my own,
and places a quiet kiss beside each ear.
Standing up, I feel an extra pull of gravity,

as if I have suddenly entered her orbit—
and realize, in that moment,
I have already won.

To a Manhattan

Mike Coste

It's Herb Alpert's mournful trumpet,
Tiki torches and plastic parrots,
Bright Hawaiian shirts,
That dusky moment of fiery magnificence.
The day's penultimate hour before dark slumber's finality.
The moment Sisyphus pauses
 before again ambling downward
 to resume his perpetual task.

It's not about the buzz.

The high
 alcohol content
Forces me
 to sip
 savor
 ruminate.
The sweetness of vermouth and cherry.
 Cold sweat trailing down the lowball glass.

It's about my dad's shaky hand,
 Dropping the ice:
 Clink, clink.
Pouring whiskey (not too expensive)
Pouring vermouth.
And adding the cherry.

Dresden Plate

Jeanne Blum Lesinski

Holidays we crowd our mother's house:
aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews
finding favorite relatives, siblings, spouses,
playing games, watching sports,
eating, drinking, doing dishes,
talking, listening long into the night,
sleeping wherever we will—
on foldout beds, sleeping bags, and
mattresses pulled from under beds;
lying shoulder to shoulder
in my mother's bed, I listen
to her gentle, metronomic breathing,
sense weight, the Dresden Plate,
flannel bat heating me in a steady
rhythm of stitches joining years,
cotton floss embroidering lives:
Grandma and her mother had measured,
cut, pieced greens, greys, blues, browns
in a dozen empty plates atop a table.
Around the quilt's bound borders
they sewed a double helix, tiny
repeating stitches that bind us all.



Me and Dad
Jeanne Blum Lesinski

RED TIDE AT DUSK

Jenifer DeBellis

You refuse to let a little toxic air come between you guys & your night out. The beachfront sign reads, *no swimming*: *Karenia brevis concentrations*. Like *Katrina*, waves beat the beach. Winds skim the shore & kick up algal bloom that constricts your breath intake. Several guests leave before their food arrives, their collars pulled up to cover their mouths. You fold over a few times as you walk the pier that leads to patio seating, your throat & eyes seal in resistance to the poison. You can't catch your breath like you couldn't catch it as a kid when trouble whipped up around you with little warning. This time is different between child & parents, though. Your conversation breaks

the surface as the sun hits the horizon. The least adapted to red tide, you take longer to loosen your lungs & find your voice.

A slightly dystopian poem

Kika Man 文詠玲



The world is going to hell.

One day, there will only be toilet paper inside toilets
instead of water. Shit everywhere.

The sky has already gone ablaze,
the wind has left the gardens that are rotting.
Stenches fill the explosive air.

A lone chair
made out of plastic
will be my home.

The world is going to hell.

It rains acid. Rainbows are made of the fading colours
of trash. Broken tones of spew-like green and
dried up remainders of humans fucking.

Humanity is trash, it always has been.
Let the insects rule them once and for all.
We are the vessels they move in.

One cockroach each and if you lose a limb
in the ice-cold desert of tumbling apartments,
thousands will crawl out of every single vein.

The waterways and tear-filled highways.

What is green is actually the poison of long-forgotten
parasites, termites the size of planes that people did not want to see
coming. When they do, they spew fruitful mosquito-like creatures
that suck away all the muscle in a human body.

This world is going to hell.

The air you breathe is the fume of old tobacco and oil factories
melting in nuclear breakdowns. The kind a wailing baby
who does not stop crying can cause.

There are no babies anymore. There are no hugs anymore.
There are no teddies anymore.

Everything is melting but the sun is frozen.
Kept in a plastic cup filled with coke
and a plastic straw up the snout of a wild boar
crowned king.

What does it mean
to be disgusted
by the annihilation of what we were once used to.

The world is going to hell.

Like a leopard stretching its back, breaking it into a thousand pieces,
so does our worldview. This apocalypse
brings us back to our basic species needs,
excrements will no longer be frowned upon.

The world is going to hell.

Because people can't stop screwing up.
And selfishness is the core of governmentality.
Larvae instead of eyes.
Isolated tea bags collecting the fungus of discarded bodies.

Suicidal tendencies spelling out the word dystopia.
Humanity is lost.

1985 (little brother's watching you)

Clay Waters

my sister is staying, we leave
with two empty suitcases and a stack of teen magazines
deemed too childish for college.
The poses are clean, immaculate,
nothing like the nudes I smuggle upstairs,
cynical bodies straining sweat.
I trace laugh lines and freckles
until it's too dark to make them out
then stretch out in the back seat to sleep.
Brave with the forced inaction of night
I make plans to run away in the morning,
to follow them into dorm rooms
warm with kiwi teas and snug blue nightshirts
where their sharp elbows sink on velvet pillows,
discussing silk, or divorce, or quadratic formulas
as somewhere a candle lends romance to a room.

Refusing to Name My Second Son After My Father

Eric Weil

My son was eight months old when my father died,
and after the funeral, my grandfather cornered me
to compel a promise: give my second son my father's name,

tradition among men. No, I whispered to the old man
standing in his grief like a tornado-stripped tree, I couldn't spend
my life calling a son my unlucky father's name. He pressed

me mute. Two years later, my grandfather was dead,
my wife pregnant. My grandmother reminded me
of the promise she knew I had made. No, I whispered

to the crook-spined old woman, I gave no such promise.
Yes, she insisted in the bitter taste of loss. No, I whispered
as the months passed, winter greening to spring,

fierce phone calls mounting as the due date approached.
Saved by nature's odds, we had a daughter,
and my grandmother died, unnecessarily disappointed.



Adirondack 1

Harold Ackerman



Adirondack 2
Harold Ackerman

Downsizing

Adrienne Stevenson

My ninety-five year old aunt
has decided to downsize
her collections of tiny jugs
condiment dishes, vases
salt and pepper shakers
three generations of books
photos, memorabilia
and travel souvenirs

She has begun to discard plants
pressing slips and cuttings
on unwary neighbours and friends
some have been in the family
almost as long as she has

Next will be artwork
gifted by forty years of students
—she wishes she could find them all
to regift the memories, mostly good
of their brief time together

After each visit I am burdened
with photo albums, to augment
my own growing collection
kitchenware only fit
for the local dumpster
even furniture, most of which
finds a new home at the Goodwill

Must life's detritus be so pathetic?

How tragic that what once held
so much meaning for her
has so little worth for others
friable, ephemeral,
sold for a dollar
at the garage sale

Bleeding for You

Diana Raab

Today while opening your mail
my middle finger slipped into
the envelope making a cut
under my nail that would not
stop bleeding even after
five gauzes and same number
of band aids.

It was then that I realized
my finger was connected
to my heart which has bled
since my very first push
into the world, after
being in the womb
that did not want me.

I pull the page out and it's
A bill for your nursing home,
which I will gladly pay—
I'm grateful for the life you gave me,
and to my ancestors, but
don't think I take care of you because
you were a good mother.

You did your best
sad there were days I deserved better,
but all is good now—
I'm no longer a victim to you
I've found my own joy.

Wishing you peace
During your final days.

My Husband Finally Cleans Out His Closet

Linda McCauley Freeman

It's not entirely his fault. This mancave,
this place I knock to enter. Also, the place
everything we don't know what to do with goes.

When we clean, organize, and scour the house,
the boxes brimming with stuff go there:
the books we can't bear to part with,
for who can toss a book? The pages
of the great novel he has yet to finish writing.
High school yearbooks and clothes outgrown.
Our entire past crated and stuffed into his closet
for another day.

Today was that day. Each box an astonishment.
A blue-inked note attached to nothing
that says, For my free-spirited daughter,
I love u! Mom, and suddenly she is alive again.
Wedding invitations to each of my marriages.
A photo card greeting me from Salem's Hawthorne Hotel
in 1998, where we went for a Halloween weekend.
My husband, who was not yet my husband,
is faceless in a mask, while I coil beside him
in a plunging black pantsuit, looking so sexy
I cannot stop staring. I never pictured myself like that.
But here is proof I was. When I say so, my husband says
I still am, which I appreciate, but I know I am no longer
that girl. There is a manila envelope of wedding snapshots,
and a whole photo album from my first wedding.
The whole thing a jumble like my life. Not ready
to let anything go.



Untitled
Cathy Leavitt

BABYSITTING DANNY

Linda Quinlan

I taught him to steal,
my favorite Aunt's son.
He opened his small hands
and delivered his haul
to the older girls he loved
sitting at the red booths
at Ralph's Pizza,
balloons. erasers, wax lips
that bled into our mouths.

His mother was 43
when neighbors called my mother.
Death odors
wafting in the hallway
like a dinner gone bad.

Danny and I met for the last time
at a 5th Street bar
down the block
from his mother's old haunt,
where I ran numbers
from her hand to the bookie joint
across the street.

My hand reaches for his,
then retreats.
He is a tear waiting
to fall on my cheek.

I wanted to steal something for him,
to give him his mother's laugh,
the way she held a martini
and a cigarette.

I paid for his beer and left
and offered nothing more.
He follows me out.
A stray dog walks in front of us,
each step and effort to look proud
locked in its own misery.

Six months later he was dead,
beer bottles scattered on the floor.
The California sun on my face.

A gun in his hand.
No suicide note.
A picture of his mother
on his night stand.



Cleveland Art Museum

Ann Privateer

The picture of a young girl speaks

André Narbonne

In the picture, a young girl of about eight stands between two men sitting on stools in front of an outhouse. Sepia tone. Written on the back: c. 1944 outhouse with Roma, Franoise, Noé.

Montréal is big city life:
telephone, electricity, radio,
running water, indoor flush toilets, bathtubs,
streets, sidewalks, traffic, street cars, electric buses

at L'Arch de Noé my brother and I wear bathing suits
from morning to mosquito time

there is no beach

to cross the rocky bottom of the Richelieu
to reach the soft clay beyond
is an exercise in sensation

we don't press past the moment the water cups our chins
and the wake of the rowboat splashes our lips
as Roma muscles to the depth line
(we can float, but we cannot swim)
no need to go far
waist deep, the bottom is soft, warm,
inviting to leeches
we keep a jar of salt on the shore
for later

Yellowed memories

Eduard Schmidt-Zorner

Snow-covered fields lie wide
on which playful crows are dancing.
Deep stretches the countryside
up to the frozen hem of the horizon
uniting with the Baltic Sea.
Drains and ditches, silver lanes,
willow trees, wizen.
A buzzard hovers over the plains.

A picture book takes childhood by the hand;
memories settle as dust on what remains.
Sun penetrates through roof beams
into an imaginary faded wonderland.
There it is, my island under dreams:
Endless *taiga*, abundant clouded lake land.

Would like to hide, seek shelter, in fields of rye,
or between those thumbled pages of a fairy tale,
star money coins like rosary beads recounting,
pass through my fingers, dreamily,
to pay for moonlight over the *Curonian Spit*
and the *Vistula* river.

The memory suitcase gets heavier,
heart grows old
a thousand nights since passed,
counted by falling calendar sheets,
the hair grows white, open fields are cold,
a broken cross warns at the waterside.

Only thoughts remain on yellowed photos:
A forlorn couple with me
in front of green pine forests.
A lonely house near marshy meadows.
The step beyond the horizon not far away.

Neoma

Antoni Ooto

—*For Alie Neoma Finley DeCroke, mother*

Jitters of impatience
tiny on a print of memory

Recalling and
blurring the person worth saving

In every photo of every album
there, your non-smile transfixed

In childhood, a toddler on the lawn
or cowgirl on a rented pony

Your missing smile aimed
at a lens that challenged your will

And later, a woman at weddings, at picnics,
sealing those same stiff lips

Sitting cross-armed thinking about a smoke
when all the nonsense was done

Always determined to hide your true face
a rare capture—indeed.

Starlings as self-portrait

Ed Higgins

*"We wander here for a time, then vanish into dust/
Things aren't other than they are."
—Wang An-Shih, 1021–1086*

Things do maybe vanish as they are,
I the cumulative likeness
of all my poetry selves for example:

As winter starlings raiding my hen house,
indifferent in their comings and goings
to the frightened hens.

Not indifferent to my swinging broom,
like vanished speckled, panic stars
some escaping out the open door.



Wedded
Cynthia Yatchman

HOW THEY LIVE NOW

John Grey

On the mantle
above the fireplace,
the widow's husband
hasn't aged in forty years.
He's glossy black and white,
looking smart in swim trunks,
a thin cloud of hair
bisecting his chest
and coiled muscle
bulging from each upper arm.

On a dresser,
children grin from framed photographs,
willingly keep up the pretense
that they live at home.
They play sport.
They blow out candles.
And they always will.

Her parents are forever
looking out for her.
And the beauty is
she can turn them around
to face the wall
when she doesn't need their advice.

And look at that young woman
in her wedding dress,
in bright color of course,
nothing but the best for her.
Her dream guy's
on his way to the church.
Her mum and dad
are in the next room,
serving up tears with pride.
And there's babies in the future,
one son, one daughter,
who will grow up fine and
respectful and grateful.

And then she looks in the mirror,
gives thanks to God
there's no one snapping pictures.

Sometimes Your Mother Calls While You're Having Sex

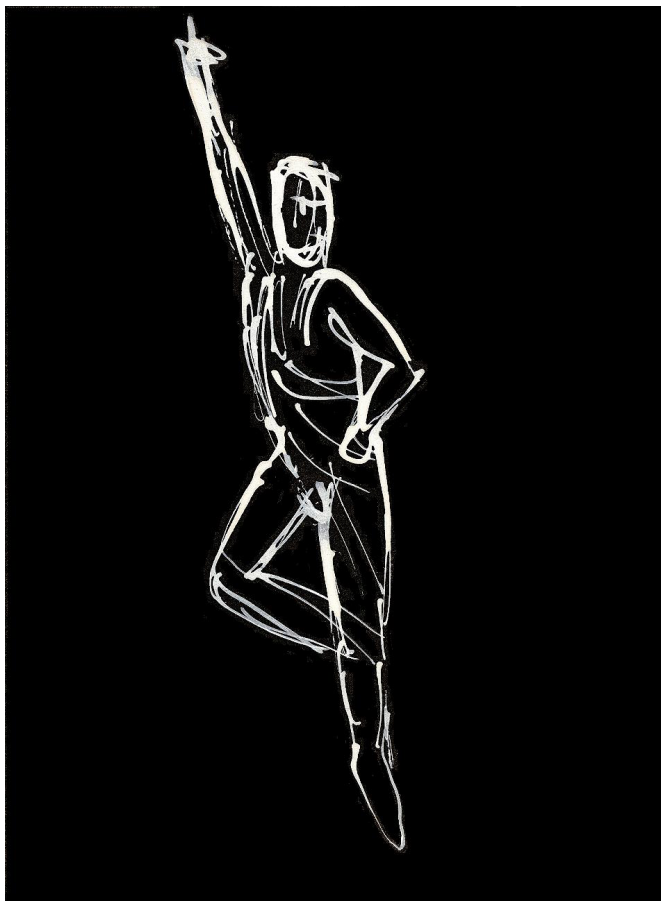
Elizabeth Edelglass

Sometimes your mother calls
while you're having sex,
and you don't pick up,
because she's the only one
who uses your landline anyway,
but then she calls again on your cell,
and you think it might be important,
like last year with Dad and his heart—
maybe she's on the floor
with nobody to pick her up,
not since Dad and his heart.

Sometimes your mother calls
while your kids are finally
on a playdate after a year of pandemic,
and you give him a nudge
with your foot, just gently,
meant to shoo him to his side of the bed
for a moment,
but it turns into a toes tug-of-war,
a tangle, a torrent,
and you think she won't hear
the husky background whisper,
the tickle in your voice,
the tremble in your breath.

Sometimes your mother calls
while you're hot in his arms,
and you let her talk
while you count to twenty,
then tell her the car keys
are in your hand or the washer
is bonging or the bread is burning,
the bread you learned to bake
during this long, lonely year,
when all you wanted
was the kids out of the house
for an hour (or even twenty minutes)
alone
in bed
with him.

Sometimes you remember she's always alone,
so you let her talk an extra two minutes,
while you nestle and snuggle,
then tingle,
then throb,
then you say I love you
before you hang up
and turn to him fully
knowing she knows
and hoping she's happy
because, of course,
sometimes her mother called.



Retiré
Jim George

My Mother-in-Law Comes to Live with Us

Cecil Morris

Now, melting with age in her recliner,
her ankles looking snake-bit or gangrenous
with swelling, purple mottled with brown spots,
she slides in and out of sleep, one minute
working out puzzles for Pat and Vanna
and the next dreaming herself a girl skinny
and wild, her hair whipping around her face
as she looks back for brother who chases
her down the longest hill, the playing cards
snapping gunfire in their spokes.

She shakes her head at the fools on Family Feud,
the crazy things they say and how Steve cuts his eyes,
and feels the ache in her knees even when she sits still.
Later she dreams herself bouncing metronomic,
her bare feet blooming dust at each rhythmic
catch of earth as she jumps and drops and jumps
between the whirling scythes of double dutch:
left left left right right right double down spin around
double down then left right left.

She remembers her mother scolding her
for footprints in the house, for dirt ground in skirts,
for hems ripped, for grease on sleeves, for tears,
for missing cards from the solitaire deck.
The past is never really gone, she thinks,
not all of it, and that's some consolation
now that she is more idea than action.

Thrift

Dana Sonnenschein

*When I was little, she made my dresses
out of feed-sacks, my mother would say
and sigh, cheeks flushed. Her mother
raised rabbits, and killed and fed her
the one she'd petted and named.
So I imagined Mom wearing burlap,
bags with neck- and arm-holes
cut out, the seams rough
against her scrawny, stiff shoulders
as she raised her hand in school.*

Since then, I've seen quilts from the West
she grew up in, each block printed
with a bright daisy or faded tulip;
I've heard about husbands sent to town
to get a certain brand of salt, sugar,
or flour for the picture on the sack.
If you didn't have 10 cents for red dye
in 1935, you picked chokecherries.
You saved everything, believing
This will come in handy someday.

My mother didn't like to sew,
but she had a drawstring laundry bag
full of old clothes we ripped apart
for dust-cloths and scrubbing;
she stored graham crackers and saltines
in coffee cans, baked box cakes
to save herself time, and made
a mean clean-out-the-fridge soup.
We'll always have enough to eat, she said,
as if that was all we needed.

Thrift was a habit she handed down
like her pleated skirts and sweaters
hand-washed thin and smooth.
Of course, she'd wanted something new.
Sometimes I did, too. She bought me
a baggy angora pullover once. On sale.
It's so soft, she'd whisper, eyes closed,
stroking the sleeves. I wore it
for years before I found out
that kind of wool comes from rabbits.

Easter Sunday, 1940

Joan Mazza

My parents return from their honeymoon
to my maternal grandparents' home for dinner,
still affectionate newlyweds in love. They gather
round the table, where my grandmother has set out
soup plates. First course already served. Vincent,
the eight-year-old boy, who ten years later
will baptize me with his older sister Mary, circles
the table, looking for a bowl of chicken soup
he's willing to accept. Each soup bowl
has one chicken head, which my grandmother
loves. She sits at one end of the table near
the kitchen, my grandfather at the other end
near three tall windows. No one complains.
They spoon the broth, patiently waiting for pasta,
as my grandmother picks and eats brains
with a needle from her mending basket.

On Grandmother's Lap

Roberta Gould

Bounced on her lap
facing the counter
Her rhythm was lively
I was lucky
She wasn't working
Having fun with me

After she died I learned
her special face that afternoon
was normal for grandmothers
not the sadness I often saw

Dignity of loss

I didn't know the letters had ceased
after 30 years, her kin and neighbors
a world left behind

Photos were published after the war
skeletal corpses, those left with bodies,
not ash, nor dismembered life
hacked on Vilna's streets

their silence she could only guess
that happy afternoon on her lap
their names she never said

I a child, not knowing the why
of her usual sadness
enjoying our special hour that afternoon
and after, her soup, with celery and chicken

GRANDMOTHER

C.W. Bigelow

The melody of your voice reciting nursery rhymes
strummed the winter branches
above the freshly planted garden.

You greeted us with the
gravelly murmurs – immediately credible –
an old-school street cred,

a ballsy Madonna
who easily and joyfully spilled – “Don’t let him
bullshit you, I drove him to school each day.”

Glimpses of a pale blue wink in the harmless clouds,
your eyes floating softly in sprawling wrinkles,
while the dawn sun gently lifts night frost from the grass

Despite your quivering grip
you resolutely refused to abandon your post
until my grandfather was tucked safely behind secure doors

You shakily scrolled your signature
on nursing home check-in forms
in a hectic race with mortality.

Rolling strips of brown sod into firm loops
revealed a fertile bed of moist, cold soil,
while miles away, your final task achieved,

mother earth smiled
as I delicately spread
new seeds into straight rows.

Grass In My Hair

Bruce McRae

I was arguing
with the scarecrow.
His voice
was like a wall
of sand coming
closer and closer.
He had corn
on his breath
but no mouth
to speak of.
His mind
was a straw stalk
in the wind,
all the colours
of a golden
rainbow, there,
but not there,
even his pinstripes
soil-scented.
And I was saying
to the scarecrow,
“We end,
we begin.”
I was telling him
the true names
of all the dead.
I was asking
a stupid question:
“Where’s the crow
inside my head?”
Which he thought
quite funny,
a perpetual grin
on his dried lips,
his eyes seeing
into the far distance,
a tear forming
in the new silence
that summer, and he
impeccably dressed.



Patched 2

Jackie Partridge

I looked closely at the tree and noticed breaks in its skin. It was more than just cracks. Parts were missing and there were holes. The bark of the tree reminded me a lot of my grandmother and that it showed age, it showed memories of passing time.

Her hands wrinkly and weathered.
Marked by moments of time. And repeated gestures slowly causing wear.
As time unfolds the skins become thick, leathery almost.
Fine line wrinkles transform into crevices forming canyons
on the landscape of the body.



Patched 3

Jackie Partridge

Rubbing my hands against you feeling the bumps, the grooves, the scars.

Seeing the blemishes, the wrinkles, those fine lines.

Every mark.

Every indentation.

Watching you weather—

watching you rot

Hoping you don't fall.

April

Lorelei Bacht

To those who will come after us: there was
no secret. We were not cruel, not

particularly – we simply needed to redeem
the tall, tangled grass of the plain, its withered

wind into something
predictable: for one of us to die, and all of us
to live was a sensible equation.

Our invented greeting to crocuses,
mud of the sun, was all we knew of life –

we embraced it without distance or gold,
and called it a living. The river rolled
too large to leave our fate to chance.
A simple trick: for one of us to die, and all
of us to live was a sensible equation –

only the lamb, her costly loss, would
appease the rolling anger of clouds amassed

over the vast and thawing plain: the dance,
our only possible response
to the ripple of threat

that advances through the tall grass of spring.

Kanavu

Mugu Ganesan

Nee yen kanavu.

You are my dream.

On that slumberous village night
in our moonlit courtyard,
you swept each mountain of my fears
with your peafowl feather like fingers
and whispered

nee yen kanavu -

gave a million miracle-wings,
put heaps of clouds under my feet
to ascend, to dream.

The moon from that night
and a few stars that have aged since,
tired from chasing me across countries,
are here again
on this forlorn winter,
at the edge of my half open
white window blinds.

I look up:
falling flakes
bearing my name
scream

sapna

kelwaab

Rêve

sueño.

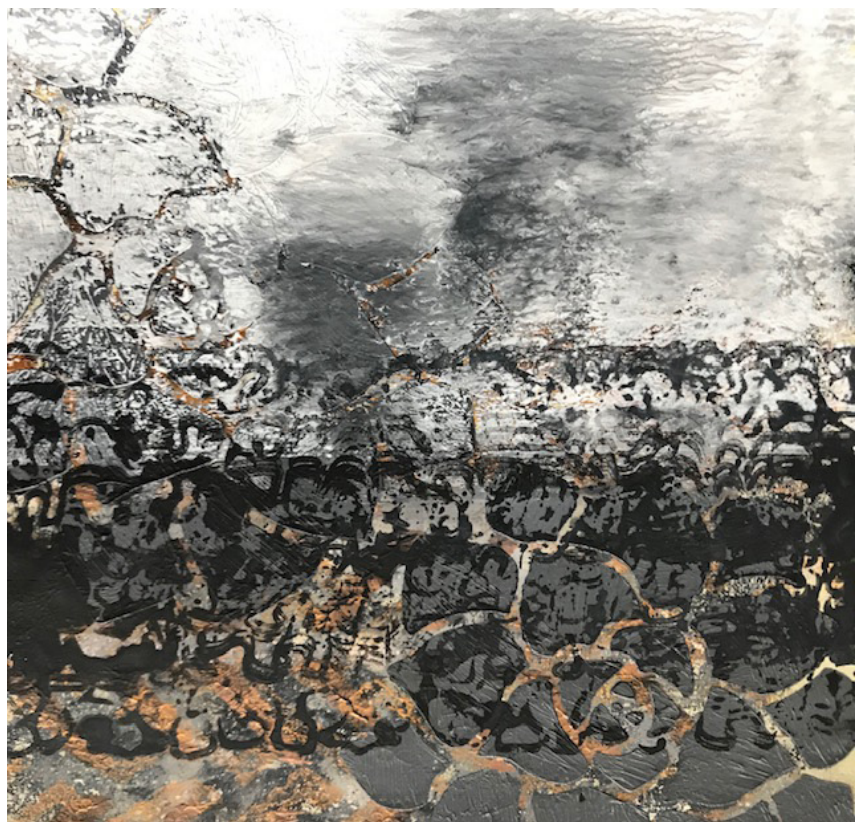
Amma –
please whisper
nee yen kanavu.

Kanavu: Dream in Tamil

Once

D Larissa Peters

Remember nighttime fireflies
sparking
on the vast field dark,
green. With delight,
a child hunts for them. In
surprise,
she watches them shine.
That was you.
Once,
surprised by little things.
Savoring
the drips of honey, no matter how tiny the
taste,
withstanding the inevitable bee's sting.
Once, our imagination,
created
monsters out of towels
draped
over doors, suddenly silly in the
sunlight. Once.



Change
Cynthia Yatchmane

Forever, Rabbit

Clay Waters

I cannot explain
why I lay in two
atop the short grass
stained rose-gold under the mounting sun,
my pointed profile undignified, absent the rest

multiplications of renown
severed at zero
primed to colonize
only oblivion

but did I first know
crooked boards, carrot slices
a water bowl
from the girl who cried
not repulsed at the broken thing at her feet

was I brought to the backyard in bags
and given all the grace
a plastic tub could provide

did the world spin on
and did it stop

did it all disintegrate
a scattering across the cosmos

and did there remain
across the indifferent eons
the slightest of entanglements

still registering,
on the fuzziest of frequencies,
as Love?

Anemone Sonnet

Sue Chenette

All down in crevices and nooks anemones
frillfin goby go by blue crab snapping
shrimp sudden as a nag of thought imploded
bubble in a reef of dream Oh, just try to pry

that oyster open at low tide, and I am forced
to write “blenny” when I meant “memory.”
Most individuals are dark brown, bearing
a series of five black saddles across the back.

I think she wore a pillbox hat like Jackie Kennedy,
but only for church and other formal occasions:
“Goodbye, shrimp cocktail at the Supper Club!”
“Goodbye, Canasta!” When I wrote

“Anemone” I meant wave, her flounced nylon
sleeve, sudden breeze I meant gone by.



Elephants Remembered

Marianne Mersereau

My mother saw elephants, not in a zoo or circus,
but on Virginia's Wilderness Road.

Trainers marched them up steep slopes
past tobacco barns, grain silos and country stores.

They lumbered toward the big tent in Tennessee
in 1939, and I believe they remembered

Mary, their beloved ancestor hung from a crane
in Erwin, 1916. She moved out of the parade line

to get a tasty piece of watermelon and the trainer
hit her with a whip. Her abscessed teeth made her cranky,

causing her to kill him in rage. *Crucify her*, the crowd
shouted, and they buried her in the rail yard

thinking she'd be forgotten, forgetting how loud bones speak.

The Stillness of Evening

Lee Triplett

A dozen gardenias
flood the house
with their fragrance
and I no longer feel alone.

Those who have gone
on before me comforted
me in the dark empty night.
My mind's searing thoughts left.

The pain of a place can be
lifted into a starry night
and folded into the loom
that travels through generations.

Left behind to go forward
onto a sandy shore swept
daily without promises
or expectations: only change.

Three Flowers for Cynthia

Lisa Ashley

Forsythia

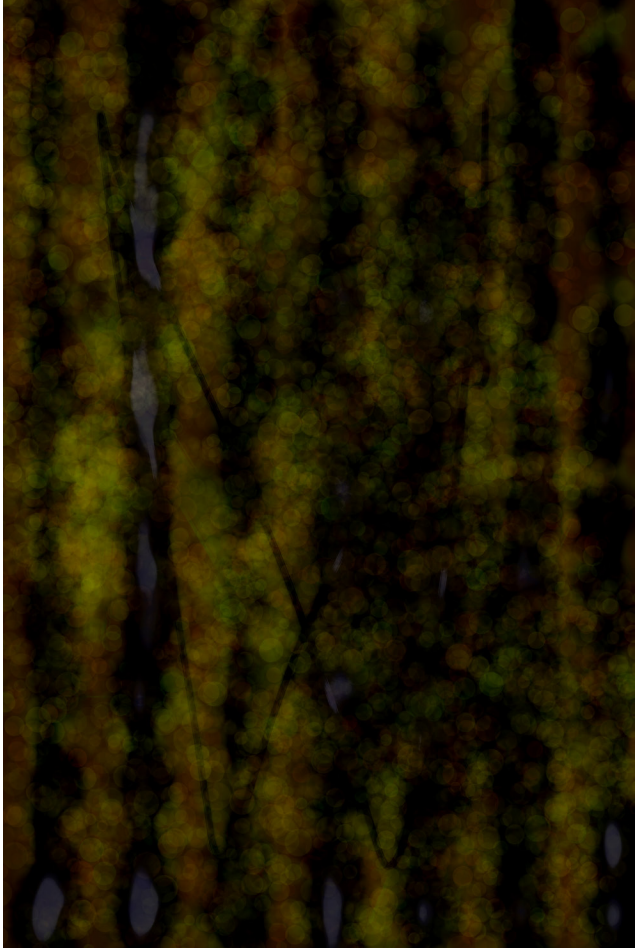
First to the party,
prima ballerina at the annual Mud Ball,
flouncing a crinoline petticoat
at the bottom of the front porch steps.
Yellow, yellow, yellow rounds in my mouth,
pulls me out of winter's frozen cave,
muck that sucks at my red rubber boots.
I watch whips of gold snap in the wind.
Our forsythia bush is yours, Cynthia,
slant rhyme of early spring.
Circlets of buds on brown canes
soon to be collars of stars,
soft mass of sunlight I want to lay
around my shoulders like a feather boa.

Lilac

The hedge neglected and gangling
thrives between our house and theirs,
pale lavender torches signal the bees.
My nose bulldozes into ticklish tufts
where I drink deep, swallow its fragrance
like purple broth to nurture my old bones.
A whiff of it and I am home again,
and she is bringing in an armload.
So swift the blossoms fade once cut,
tiny lilac trumpets turn brown and drop,
a harbinger of the years to come—
my leave taking, her retreat,
we dropped out of sight.

Poppy

The Memorial Day parade wound its way
to the cemetery year after year where we heard
how the poppies blow, row on row in Flanders Fields.
Those poppies, sirens of summer
in huge crepe paper skirts, danced along our driveway.
You liked the bold summer flowers best—
zinnias, geraniums, marigolds, snaps—
decked out in red, orange, gold, magenta,
chosen to electrify your world.
You were happy then, on your knees
hands in the dirt, hidden away
among your friends the black-eyed Susans.
Wherever you went down those spring and summer days,
I wanted to go with you.



Path(s)
Edward Lee

Sand Verbena

Tamara Madison

Mine is a pale land:
pale sky, pale sand,
pale sun-bleached everything.
My playground was bare sand
studded with stone and shell
from a long-dead sea.
Playmates were lizards
and quail, my playthings rocks
and my own thoughts.
Some years, winter watered
seeds that slept in the sand,
then spring covered the dunes
with purple verbena, low-growing
flowers with furry leaves
and furry stems. I made bouquets,
stumbled over dry gullies
to give them to Mother — a clutch
of sweet-smelling blossoms
that sagged in my sweaty hands.

Bee Whispering

Marianne Mersereau

When my beekeeper Grandpa passed away, no one remembered the ancient Celtic custom of telling his bees.

In the days following his death, Grandma complained of ghosts whispering in her ears at night and a strange buzzing noise.

When she arrived at the hive to assume his duties, she found it empty and the whole colony attached to an oak limb.

Unlike a swarm, this is an abscond, when the bees decide they've had enough, clean, pack up and leave with the queen.

Grandma apologized to the bees, captured the cluster in a sack returned them to the old hive, kept the queen caged underneath

fed her sugar syrup until the workers rebuilt the comb, she was released, the whispering ceased, and Grandpa rested in peace.

orem boulevard

Corey J. Boren

it sparks in my mind, again and again,
the delicate locomotion of fingers
pinning sheet to clothesline,
fabric like a wedding dress, or perhaps
a sailboat as it jumps in dalliance
with the wind, and she is unaware
of the oncoming storm that will ruin
three hours hard work, because the tenement
faces east and she cannot see the angry
half of the sky. her soap-scented hands,
a strand of silver hair stuck in her mouth,
wrinkles winking, laugh lines looking
at waving hands of white. she strokes
soft cotton, tickled by a stray strand,
not knowing that she is only an impossible echo.

Names

Joseph A Farina

he was christened Salvatore, after his grandfather and his grandfather before. nuns and school boards changed it to Sal and Sam in their anglo-ization, a mere rump of the saviour his name meant. He kept his secret Sicilian names, turrìdo, toto, that only family and paesans knew. We were all victims of such name changes: Giuseppe became the common Joe, Rosario became Ross. complacency, was seen as a sure sign of assimilation. we kept our secret names secret, below the assimilation radar. Zsa Zsa for Rosario, Pino and Peppe for Giuseppe. It was our way of holding on to our birthright, our continuity with ancestors. We followed the rules became citizens but kept our pane rustico, refusing the inoffensive whitebread smelting pot of those who feared us being here, creating instead the mosaic called Canada.

memento mori

Corey J. Boren

someday, you'll die, of course.
someone will undress and dress you,
paint your face for the mourner's sake.

your rolling pin will become termite fodder
long after we've finished the pie crust under your wrists
and green apples picked just this morning.

they say we'll be remembered for a century, if that,
if we don't all get fried in some solar flare or crushed by a rogue planet.
nothing lasts forever—names become maiden names.

grayscale photographs fading into yet more
grayscale photographs, a film of white particles on china.
attics became attics to hold such things, until the floorboards

catch fire and the whole place burns down.
forgetful beings we are—generations warped
by this game of telephone until the dna isn't even ours anymore.

still, i exhume the bodies. hold your corpses to my chest
and breathe in the dust, pick a hair off the scalp and tie
it around my finger. let the dead bury the dead, i am told,

but i cannot. i must clutch onto every name and anecdote,
thread the baby teeth into a necklace, singing hymns to myself
about all the things you did as we sail into oblivion.

learn to pray

Ana Marta Fortuna

as I stepped into the night
cold like my father's hand
trees rose like incense sticks and
fog we smoke celebrating
the redemption of death.

GURI I RËNDË NË VEND TË VET

Enna Horn

(The Heavy Stone Stays in its Own Place)

Black ink weeps from the pen's fountain,
English scribbles, each letter, a mountain,
Great-Grandfather vanished with his brother,
Disappeared beneath the snowcaps as his mother
Wept, wove her white cloth, ignited the fire,
Memories become dreams, dreams, faded desire,
Liberation licked the prows of ships on water,
Escape from the golden scythe that came to slaughter
Shepherd boy leaves his footprints in the sand
Red hair, red cloak, red skin of his motherland,
House on the corner of a cage forsaking name,
Home is now a word, it will never be the same
Black ink weeps from the pen's fountain,
Great-Grandfather gave me words from the mountain
Snow buries cold knives into the soft skin
Of my throat, a thousand lives worn too thin
Of the skeletons who came before me, shod
Their horses, broke their backs so I can trod
Upon them, so the blows of the reaper can soften
An endless spiral in which I quiver often
Red cloak, white cloth, burning lantern oil
Each time I plant another crop, I overturn the soil
The soil stains hands, stains gloves, stained sheet,
Black ink on the paper, chafe within the wheat
Poems have an ending, stories have a close,
And lives can be remembered in the prose
Red handprints, black handprints, footsteps fade
Memories become dreams in a hammock in the shade
Drop of sweat, drop of blood, drop of weeping
Names & foundations within my breast, be keeping
Each word reclaimed, bespoken from the mountain,
Ink that is black, seeping from the pen's fountain.

Dear Mother

Katrina Kaye

Do you remember the time
they put the caution sign in our front yard?
A response to the speed bumps
installed on our road in early July.
Bright yellow, diamond warning:
Caution: Speed Humps Ahead.

We laid eyes on it,
exchange no words, yet
immediately decided
it had to go.

We didn't file a complaint to the city,
didn't make phone calls or ask any questions,
We didn't even bother waiting for dark,
but immediately sized wrench to nut
and unscrewed the metal tower.

I lowered the sign to the ground
as you removed the bolt,
it slid easily free.
Too easy.

It was large and heavy,
but I was strong then and I carried it alone,
placing it effortlessly into the bed of the truck.
Back when you had the Chevy, remember?

I returned to find you staring down at
grated metal sunk deep in the earth.
"What about this?" you said, kicking the stump.
"I suppose we could just cover it up."

I gripped the protrusion firmly
with bare hands and loosened it
right
Left.

Like Excalibur for stone,
the metal post unsheathed from earth.
"That's my girl," you said and filled the
small square hole with rocks,

as though it had never been there.

We waited until dark to drop the sign off.
I directed you to a discreet dumpster
behind my old elementary school.
It was the same spot I would deposit
trash bags of beer cans
after high school parties
so you wouldn't find them when you came home.

You kept the motor running
as I jumped into the bed of the truck
and stealthy lowered large metal sign
into the near empty dumpster.

We toasted our accomplishment at the local pub,
fearless of repercussions.

Do you remember it mother?
Two women in our wild state,
defending our homestead
while the men slept,
no attempt at apology,
daring them with set jawbones
to strike again?

Mother,
we were feral then,
we broke up bar fights,
arm wrestled the boys,
and buried our own.

Stood our ground
joined our powers
enacted rebellion.
And now,
I hear your words spray
through my lips.

I have finally mastered your tone
for better or for worse.
I channel your strength through
my veins and I am proud, Mother,
proud and so very grateful.

My Grandma Sits, 1966

Cecil Morris

My grandma sits, small in the old chair
that swells above its dark claw feet.
Nibbling soda crackers and sipping iced tea,
she watches colors dance across the television,
watches for old Dr. Hardy and Jesse,
her favorites, almost her peers, and waits
for something good on the Nashville Network
like the tribute to cousin Minnie Pearl.
The whirling, humming blades of her electric fans
swirl another summer over her,
spin it through the room so that nothing light can stay.

My grandma sits, sagging against the afghan cover
draped over the old chair. She naps to noon news,
her mouth open and her eyes closed, a box
of pictures to her left, a photo-album
spread to empty pages to her right.
“This one’ll be for your daddy,” she said
before she fell asleep, before she dozed
amid her history, her hands in her lap
next to the remote control, an empty bowl
of ice cream and a crumpled napkin.
Fifty-three years a widow and still
she wears the thin gold wedding band.

My grandma sits, dissolving into death,
her muscles melting into fat like ice cream
too long exposed to heat. Her memories pool
about her feet, and she dips into them
to serve the best to her visitors:
Pap-pa, his guns and dogs, his still in Kentucky hills;
Cecil, namesake grandsire, tall and strong and gone
too soon, too long, his hair like mine, his temper too;
Uncle David and his violin—not a fiddle,
not at all—that carried him around the world
in dark suits and shiny shoes; me, small and freckled,
tying strips of tissue to her fans
or letting them blow across the room.



There's Not One of Our Husbands We'd Want

Linda McCauley Freeman

I.

Thirty-six years and five children, Mary says she loves the ocean, Bill the desert. They bought a house in Arizona. She hopes California will break off and a new ocean form around the dusty red rocks.

II.

It was Peg's only time away from Tom in 20 years. Her asthma cleared up as the week progressed. She says she knew he loved her because he never left. Her father married five times. When the week was over she returned to him and to her oxygen mask.

III.

On their wedding night, Karen found Jim masturbating to an S&M movie in the hotel suite. What he liked was to be hit, although he knew she'd been abused as a child. After the divorce years later, she asked him why he hadn't told her. You might not've married me, he said.

IV.

The man on the train saves his wife a seat, nuzzles her neck, watches her read. He moves his finger along the edge of her dress, keeps it up as she shifts toward the window, buries herself in her romance novel.

The Moths

Savannah Cooper

My grandmother used to collect
the moths that loitered around
the back-porch light, store them

in an old shoebox in the pantry.
I would sit at the kitchen table
coloring and hear the rustle

of their brown and gray wings
behind the closed door,
the growing panic of a trapped

creature. And to this day, I can
think of no earthly reason why
my grandmother would catch

and slowly murder moths
in a cardboard casket,
so it must have been a dream—

one of those night images
that clung to me as a child
until it took on the haunting

shine of memory. How much
of who I am, the stories
I've woven around myself

like a cloak, is just dream
nonsense mistaken for reality,
horrors and mundane strangeness

that my sleeping brain concocted?
My grandmother baked sugar cookies
and apple pies, let six-year-old me

name her dog and paste cartoon
stickers to her vanity mirror.
But for the life of me, I keep

remembering those goddamn moths,
the desperate flutter of their wings
only slightly worse than the silence
that followed.

MY MOTHER'S REAL PEARLS

John Grey

We're orphans, my sister said to me.
I was thirty five at the time,
but the word still stung like a needle in my vein.
It was during that necessary inventory
of the old house.
Underwear like no woman wears any more
headed straight for the dumpster.
My sister dug out a string of fake pearls
from the back of a dresser drawer.
The pearls were from a time
when a woman's throat
spoke louder than her tongue.
But fake reminded us of
the poverty she endured in her early years.
She had to look her best
when everything was at its worst.
Photographs overflowed the albums.
a history of everything working out for her
despite the harshness of her beginnings.
husband, house, children.
Pictures were black and white at first
but then full color
by the time we kids showed up.
The pearls followed the underwear into oblivion.
But we divided up the photographs.
It was as if her life had broken apart,
gone on different journeys.
My collections of snapshots
are string around the mantel's throat.
They're real besides.

Zeus Declining

Cecil Morris

On this summer afternoon I find my
father stripped to his waist, courting cancer
in the summer sun, staining the redwood
fence around his yard. He wields the broad brush
like a weapon, this steady bronze figure,
spreading the oily stain without dripping,
neat as always. He's a little thicker,
his flesh looser on his bones—like a robe
about to fall—than when he towered over
the easy afternoons of my childhood.

Inside, sitting at the kitchen table,
a glass of ice water sweating in his
hands, he repeats stories he told last week
and asks me questions I answered before.
He worries about things lasting—the stain
(too thin he says), a faucet we replaced,
my job, the country. After dinner, he
falls asleep watching a Perry Mason
re-run he greeted like a friend returned.

Head back, mouth open, jaws slack in sleep,
the worry drains from his face, lines soften,
yet he still looks old, all his years showing.
He seems so far away, remote and small—
a form viewed wrong way through binoculars—
frail even—no lightning left in this man.
I cannot make him fit the memories
I have of him. I wonder what's happened
to that man who never slept before me,
who never worried over anything.

The Wet Nurse Who Fed the Flesh of the God

Dr. Sara L. Uckelman

My own baby died,
A broken empty shell
In my empty arms, my
Broken heart beneath
Breasts that refused to wither.
They gave me a god to feed,
To give me a reason to live.
The teeth of a god gnaw,
Blind to everything but hunger.
His greedy mouth upon me,
Piercing skin and piercing heart
Leaching my life blood,
I became his reason for living
He became my slow death.

Doctor's Orders:

D Larissa Peters

*A non-obstructing mass involving the mid transverse colon
suspicious for an adenocarcinoma ...
but no evidence of metastatic disease. Left inguinal hernia
with incarcerated loop of large bowel.*

My sister tells me—with that dainty push of her delicate glasses—this means
part of my grandfather's bowels have been stuck
just outside his colon. *Otherwise, no*

obstruction—all the words sending more confusion
tunneling the calls, visits, emails, texts
green and blue bubbles, sans serif bodies, looks, tones of worry buried
beneath letters: *non obstructing mass, metastatic*
create a uncertain cringe, on loud repeat to my grandfather, gnarled hand

unsteady—holding out his microphone, aiding understanding—
with still steady thoughts. He
slowly chews the choices like supper: softened meat,
dentures echo, cracked castanets beating
slow, hidden behind closed lips: *to surgery or not to surgery,*

daughters wonder, did he understand? Couldn't *enlarged heart*
or better yet, *too big* be enough
for the mouthful: *cardiomegaly*? We need a translator, just so we know exactly

how to grieve—or maybe not—for the man lost
in the lengthy linguistics of disease.
Are there weeks or months left when they say *parenchymal cysts*?
After a life well-lived,
the only one we're looking for—we think—may be
unremarkable. But stage 2 colon cancer.

That word we know. Now
from him, tucked into depths of the maroon-green armchair—
holding the handkerchief
to the corners of his mouth—words on repeat: *thank you, God bless you,
I love you ...*

Why I work the ER on Saturday Nights

Ann Chinnis

—*After my Uncle John, Greatest Surgeon of all time*

I learned to suture from
Uncle John, who had one
good eye that he'd close,
loop a nylon thread 'round
a Missouri dirt road,
throw a hitch that made
tissue sing "Sweet Baby Jesus,
bring me on home". Gashed flesh
limped in from Joplin, hernias
from Galena, a split lip
from Springfield. He'd close
his good eye; and the injured
always left whole.

Working the ER on a Saturday night, I draw
the short tongue depressor to fix the knife
fight's loser. All I need are my fingers
and thread. I turn the lights low,
close one eye, listen to the fascia
chant to its muscle, smell where
the Cupid's bow longs for the lip.

feel the chins cleft, bereft for its jaw.
With my needle I can make anything better
than new: a drooping spirit
a yawn, the sun's orange rising through the ambulance doors.

This is the truth:

When my Uncle John sat on the banks of
the James River, his buddy snagged a fat catfish,
mauling its mouth with the barb. My uncle shut
his good eye, plunged his hand in the bucket,
sutured the gape, and set the fish
free. When all the catfish tumbled down
the falls, hit the rocks silly, they
lipsticked their whiskers, waved
to my uncle, plunged in deep silver. That's why
I work the ER while other folks sleep.

Triolets for Two Brain Injuries

Cesca Janece Waterfield

I. Islington Road Triolet, 1954

Uncle Larry's skull hit the sill with a crack
after Granddaddy's fist swung like a clapper.
Years later, his head still rings like the mouth of a bell.
since his skull hit the sill with a crack.
He smashed the milk jug, spilling clabber
after Granddaddy's fist swung like a clapper.
Uncle Larry's skull hit the sill with a crack
after Granddaddy's fist swung like a clapper.

II. Triolet for a Regimen

My sister collapses, a wave, she falls
without three doses a day of primidone.
The doctor says, epilepsy, aura, grand mal.
My sister collapses, a wave, she falls.
She lines up capsules: primidone and phenobarbital.
Lights flash, she doesn't answer the phone.
My sister collapses, a wave, she falls,
without three doses a day of primidone.

Showering With My Mother

Betty Stanton

The second time my mother is wet, we can't stop our
laughing about her fumbling at the back door for her

keys until her bladder gives way. She is too tired, not
embarrassed or blushing at this newest sign of the battle

waging under her skin, bombs dropping like hot flashes
had twenty years before. She would wake, shivering in

her own sweat cooling the heat building across her chest.
Her first time wet in public I was a stack of bills, two weeks

past due, a cancer to be cut out so that she would survive
my fat pink fingers reaching for her, breasts sagging, nipples

and feet aching at my new weight. Later, I would lie in bed
with the ghost of her fears, fingers tracing those scars

across her body, a pirate charting my path through stars.
This second time, I help her shower. Help to rinse away

the urine hanging acrid to her skin. Under the hot spray
she hisses and shudders, wet again. This time I am with her,

my arms around her slick body. As I hold her up, I watch
hot water redden scars that had been breasts I'd suckled.

Shadow Person

Shannon Donaghy

Shadow person in the hallway
Shadow person on the lawn
Shadow person in the pantry
Then all the food is gone

Shadow person in the dryer
Shrinking all my teenage clothes
Shadow person in the well
Making every shower cold

Shadow person in the driveway
Moving with the oak trees
In the shadow-covered twilight
Falling acorns, autumn breeze

Shadow person near the bookshelf
Glowing rainbow, oil slick
Shadow person floating nowhere
Burning slow like candle wick

Shadow person in the garage
Knocking cardboard boxes loose
Almost think it's a mirage
Until I see the shadow move

Shadow person in the river
Followed me to friends' backyards
Shadow fist around my collar
Keeping me from falling hard

Shadow person tried on my boots
Scared my friends
Told the truth
Stashed a knife downstairs for proof

Then threw the TV off the roof
Shadow person in the closet
Out the closet, scared of pride
Shadow person in the corner

Always hiding from my eyes
Shadow person at my bedside
Passing dreams from head to heart
Shadow person in my writing

Shadow person in my art
Shadow person in the drain
Caught in hair
Stuck on brain
Shadow person, there, now here
Shadow person, gone insane

Effects

John Muro

—*For Mother*

Returning to the room where
you pretended to live aloud in
sallow light with the console
radio and its ornate filigree of
thread-leaf bronze, where all
sounds were familiar and
convincing to ear: sheets of
aluminum shaken for thunder;
cellophane crinkled to mimic fire;
bundles of books falling in place
of bodies; even corn-starch to
conjure feet tripping across snow.
But it was the uninvited grief that
proved too painful for voice
and came in the form of a young
life lost and memories stored
somewhere nearer the periphery
of heaven, looked after by the
patron saint of hopeless causes
who, you knew, would heed
your petitions since hearing
was the last faculty to fail.

Woodlake

John Muro

—*For Father*

Those final days spent
thirsting for air with an
anguish that made the
silence between each
gasp a moment of grace;
remembering, too, the
stale air tinged with the
medicinal smell of witch-
hazel and wintergreen, and
companions, still as clay
pots, overdressed and
tucked in corners, waiting
for the next gust of wind
to bear them away, while
you maintained your sad
confession and asked the
angels to be mindful and
to look over each of them,
and I watched you quietly
return between breaths to
the comfort of rooms that
you kept well-tended behind
those lightless, hazel eyes.

Her Stolen Voice

Betty Stanton

I recognize my grandmother's voice four years after
she has died, the harsh sharecropper's consonance, soft
vowels of off-key hymnals – I catch myself following

the woman who has suddenly stolen her voice through
the aisles of the grocery store, watch her test tomatoes,
onions. Watch her hesitate over heads of red lettuce

and eight types of apples. I follow her sharp, thin hips
which are not wide enough, the block of her shoulders
which is not the right shape – I stop myself reaching out

to bury my face against her breasts, listen to the solid
beating of her heart, the stuttering surprise of her breath.



Tribal African Art
Shiyana

The monkey's eyes can see death

Kika Man 文詠玲

At my grandmother's funeral, everyone
received some money hidden
inside a little red pocket,
it had to be spent
on the way home.
Good luck in the form of a frappuccino,
so my ancestors would not haunt me.

They also gave away white
envelopes with some candy,
to wash away the bitter taste of
death on your tongue.
Sweetness to cure the end of all life and all dust,
sweet teeth that decompose
one day at a time. Until you are left
with a morbid mouth that smells of the sugary
death awaiting at the bottom of your stomach.

We did not burn papier-maché,
no iPhones or cars given away. Despite the luxury
many are now used to, our grandmother went on to live
without material. She now lives
with my grandfather in a locker far away
from home, hidden from the fire of the monks
and the monkeys with their grabbing paws.
They aim to drag along every spirit
in the fires of our ancestors.

Anne

Suzanne van Leendert

—For Anne Hendriks, my grandmother

The ancient Egyptians believed you only really die
the last time someone says your name.

This morning someone asked me for mine
and after I said it, I kept thinking of you –
how in my name you are forever reflected.

In an instant I saw you sitting there again
in my mother's kitchen, darning socks or snipping
the ends of green beans, a smile on your face.

I wanted to tell you how the years have gone by
but I like to think maybe you already know that
even though you are no longer steeped in the earthly.

In a time still to come, when I will be hearing
that last whisper of my name and feel the final pull
on my silver cord, it will be your name spoken too.

When Mother Became an Ancestor

Amrita Valan

Bent broken bangles,
Jangle in memory's ears
Glints of lost gold caress
Insides of seared eyeballs.

Retinal images retained
For as long as visual cortex
Can hold, an endless short
Played and replayed
On instant recall.

What used to be
The comfort of swan's neck arms
Are feather touch psalms
Aflutter in my chest.
Winging me to warm places.

Plucking sorrows in violin stringed
Tender strokes
Creased ivory digits of deceased fingers,
Severe phalanges of time,
Through cracks and fissures offerings of
Light
Forever angled on a perfect pearl,
Mounted upon a slender gold ring
Winking vacillations of time.

Space scintillating in tandem with
Memoirs of tenderness

Dainty tapered squeeze of lemon quarters,
Delicious, her sweet lemonades quench
Parched heart, thirsting motherly love
I transcend sand dunes of oblivion.
Now, and forever, she is
Both my mother and
ancestral talisman.

Behind her, velvet queued satin shadows,
Grandma, great grandma, great aunts,
Peer through half-moon glasses
Form a torque, a quantum line
Of spooky entanglement
Linear gyre in a bewildering
Uncertain universe.

Place Holder

Jeanne Blum Lesinski

My heart has a place
holder for the lost one
of every one hundred
over 65 who've died
of covid that appears
in a dream as my nephew
who resembles my father
as I finally reach another
year longer than my dad lived
when he died of a heart attack
at 60, sudden and brutal
as the long line of dominos
tips then topples one,
then another in a string
that spirals like a shriek
through an airless dreamscape,
compounding all the griefs
as they slap the next
in the growing line,
until the burn of my own
screams wakes me.

Storing

Judy DeCroce

Mother's death was not even visible
but she could not stop storing...
packing,
labeling,
reassigning;
the family history, the precious,
and treasures less so.
Accumulating
like mines under snow
almost visible;
beginning to come loose.

And pretending to be precious,
death emerged,
was picked up...
not put away.

Zhongqiu (Mid Autumn)

Kika Man 文詠玲

Mid autumn and the moon is round,
hiding rabbits and goddesses.
Bare feet in the grass,
my heart is grieving.

The poles of bamboo hitting my bare back,
loud as the tears of an elephant
living for their deceased.
Whales singing a song of mourning.

The sun rises, where
did this wish come from
to not be alive.
So I pretend I do not exist.

I breathe in limbo,
breathe out and along with my breath
follow my lungs.
I empty my body

for my ancestors.
Looking up, the moon
representing the little lights
will never stop shining.

Death Two Ways

Angela Acosta

I live and die between two cultures,
dreaming of Aztec dances and funeral dirges,
of deep mourning and intense celebration.

Mexicans call her *la muerte*, lady death in Spanish,
our Catrina wearing a dainty floral hat,
a goddess of death smiling upon us.

You call him the grim reaper,
the man whose scythe takes with exacting precision,
but our death gives us life,
bringing back our beloved *muertos*
for a yearly picnic in a cemetery.

Our death brings back memories
of breaking bread, pan de muerto,
with our *antepasados*, our ancestors
from *abuelos* to *tatarabuelos*,
generations linked by remembrance and love.

Your death may be impersonal, sterile,
a final farewell or tragic goodbye,
but we dance up to her on *Día de los muertos*.

On Day of the Dead we dress
as skeletons filling altars with marigolds,
basking in the comfort of our community
who will one day offer us a feast when we join the ancestors.

Seven Nights of Mourning

Nithya Mariam John

The inky flag on the gatepost,
wrapped my cold heart.
We lived near the burial ground.

The moon stayed longer than the night before.
I sat on the terrace
with a bowl of rice.

The moonlit *moonga* hooted,
a stranger to my obstinate presence
for the past seven sleepless nights.
The wind shushed the other lullabies.

Slowly, the barren jackfruit tree
in our churchyard
extended one of its arms to me-
each leaf a finger.

The bats flapped their wings and flew o'er my head.
My mother perched on one of its branches.
Her eyes flamed,
long, silky hair loose.
She was draped in her Kanchipuram wedding sari.
She slid down the branch.
Her eyes locked mine
and blazed, a pair of ancestral monuments.

She'd always hated it
when her repose was disturbed.
She balled the rice in my plate.

I gripped the rosary.

Three years old,
I bit her fingers
when she tried to push
a rice ball down my throat.

Two decades later,
I wanted to taste her blood again.

Moonga: owl in Malayalam, the native language of Kerala

MOURNING CHORES

Enna Horn

The prints of hands upon the mud as such;
Their final hours, they pray their souls to touch
A body kneeling, every memory engrained,
Ancestral clay, brown and sun-ink stained
Words tremble in their throat a clotted song;
None of them speak a lie, but still are wrong.
Impression of a water mirror there,
A longing every time they braid their hair.

Baptismal, legs as branches in the bath,
A grandmother locks her tendril gaze,
Vines of an open grave binding feet.
Medicine turns the spirit's wheel, wrath,
Creator-g-d hovers spineless as she prays,
Reflects, your face looks like the face
Of an ancestor that you will never meet
A nameless, hungry ghost of this place

Who visits sites of bodies with no stone?
Who invites the restless souls into their home?
Dreams, forests aching black, richer in loam,
Where blood has fed the roots, blooming bone
Tongues slice through knowledge unbeknown
On the water-mirror which the moon has shone.
A bath, a river, a pond in which to drown:
Many years of life, all spent looking down.



Matriline

To Torres

Contributor Bios

Julie A Dickson is a NH Poet and writer, lover of feral cats and advocate for captive elephants. Her poetry appears in over 40 journals including *Eckphrastic Review*, *Open Door*, and *Sledgehammer*. A Push Cart nominee and former poetry board member, Dickson has been writing since her early teens.

Kika Man 文詠玲 (she/they) is a writer from Belgium and Hong Kong. Kika writes about her mixed heritage, mental health, and travelling. She is a member of Slam-T (a spoken word & slam poetry platform) and also a PhD Student in Queer Sinophone Studies. They have been published in *Capsule Stories* and *Anti-Heroine Chic*, among others. You can find Kika on Twitter and Instagram @kikawinling and further on kikawinling.wordpress.com.

John Grey is an Australian poet, U.S. resident, recently published in *Sheepsh-head Review*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, and *Hollins Critic*. Latest books, “Leaves On Pages” “Memory Outside The Head” and “Guest Of Myself” are available through Amazon. Work upcoming in *Ellipsis*, *Blueline*, and *International Poetry Review*.

Savannah Cooper (she/her) is a leftist bisexual agnostic and a slow-ripening disappointment to her Baptist parents. You can almost always find her at home, reading a sad novel or cuddling with her dogs and cat. A Pushcart Prize nominated poet, her work has been previously published in *Parentheses Journal*, *Midwestern Gothic*, *Mud Season Review*, and multiple other publications.

Ana Marta Fortuna was born in Portugal in the eighties. She is a clinical psychologist and a poet. Author of “O Peso da Nuvem” her first poetry book edited by Alma Azul in Portugal. She has two original poems published with Ajar Press in Vietnam and Poetic Sun. One can often find her living in some random city near the sea.

Joseph A Farina is a retired lawyer in Sarnia, Ontario, Canada. Several of his poems have been published in *Quills Canadian Poetry Magazine*, *Ascent*, *Subterranean Blue*, and *The Tower Poetry Magazine*. He has had poems published in the U.S. magazines *Mobius*, *Pyramid Arts*, and others. He has had two books of poetry published: *The Cancer Chronicles* and *The Ghosts of Water Street*.

Elizabeth R. McCarthy lives in an old farmhouse in northern Vermont with her husband and cat. Retired from teaching, she turned to poetry in March of 2020 when covid closed the world down and time became a windfall. She enjoys sharing poetry on Zoom with the Lockdown Poets of Aberdeen, Scotland.

Dr. Sara L. Uckelman is an associate professor of logic and philosophy of language at Durham University. Her short stories and poems have been published in numerous journals and anthologies. She is also the co-founder of the reviews site SFFReviews.com, and founder of the small press Ellipsis Imprints.

Roberta Schultz, author of *Touchstones* and *Songs from the Shaper's Harp*, is a songwriter, teacher, and poet from Wilder, Kentucky. She writes some of her songs on a mountain in North Carolina. Song lyrics and poems have appeared in *Women Speak, Vol. 7*, *Panophy*, *Still: the Journal*, and *Sheila-na-gig*.

André Narbonne is the reviews editor of the *Windsor Review*. His writing has been anthologized in *Best Canadian Stories* and won the Atlantic Writing Competition, the FreeFallProse Contest, and the David Adams Richards Prize. A short story collection, *Twelve Miles to Midnight* (Black Moss Press), was a finalist for the Danuta Gleed Literary Award.

Elizabeth Edelglass' poetry and fiction is often inspired by her ancestors, especially her foremothers—known and imagined. Her poems have recently appeared in *Compressed*, *Trouvaille Review*, *Sledgehammer*, and *Sylvia*. Her fiction has won the Reynolds Price Fiction Prize, the William Saroyan Centennial Prize, the Lilith short story contest, and others.

Katrina Kaye is a writer and educator living in Albuquerque, NM. She is seeking an audience for her ever-growing surplus of poetic meanderings. She hoards her published writing on her website: ironandsulfur.com. She is grateful to anyone who reads her work and in awe of those willing to share it.

Ann Privateer is a poet, artist and photographer. She grew up in the Midwest and now resides in California. Some of her recent work has ap-

peared in Third Wednesday, New Feather Anthology 2021, and Entering, to name a few.

Shannon Donaghy is a lesbian poet and book publicist from South Jersey. Her poetry appears in *Plum Tree Tavern*, *Sapphic Writers*, *Journal of New Jersey Poets*, and more. She's been a podcast guest on Karamo with Karamo Brown as well as Hidden Compass. Follow Shannon on Instagram @after_this_chapter

Nithya Mariam John is a poet, translator, and editor from Kerala, India. Apart from her three short collections of poems titled *Ruminations and Reflections: A Pinch of Poetry & Perspectives*, *Bleats and Roars*, and *Poetry Soup*. Her scribblings are housed in *Indian Literature*, *The Alipore Post*, *Borderless*, and more, and forthcoming in *Sanglap* and *DoubleSpeak*.

C.W. Bigelow lives around Charlotte, North Carolina. His fiction and poetry have appeared in *Midway Journal*, *The Blue Mountain Review*, *Glassworks*, *Blood & Bourbon*, *Good Works Review*, *Backchannels*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Short Story Town*, *Flash Fiction Magazine*, *Remington Review*, and *INK Babies* with a story forthcoming in *Drunk Monkeys*.

Rebecca Herz is a graduate student of social work on a path toward earning her LCSW. She is a writer of poetry and partakes in all art forms. Her new chapbook is scheduled to publish in Fall of 2022. You can find her published work on <https://medium.com/@homecomingpoet> and <https://www.sinisterwisdom.org/SW117>.

Okpeta, Gideon Iching is a Nigerian poet. He is a contributing writer for Joshuastruth Magazine (JT MAG). His work has appeared at *The Last Leaves Magazine*, *Literary Yard Journal*, *Words and Whispers*, *Academic of the Hearts and Minds*, and elsewhere. When he's not writing, he plays the keyboard.

John Muro is a resident of Connecticut. His first volume of poems, *In the Lilac Hour*, was published in the fall of 2020 by Antrim House. It is available on Amazon. John's poems have been published or are forthcoming in *Euphony*, *Last Leaves*, *Moria*, and more. He is also a two-time nominee for the 2021 Pushcart Prize.

LindaAnn LoSchiavo, recently Poetry SuperHighway's Poet of the Week, is a native New Yorker and member of SFPA and The Dramatists Guild. "A Route Obscure and Lonely" and "Concupiscent Consumption" are her latest poetry titles. Forthcoming is a paranormal collection of ghost poems, a collaborative horror chapbook, and an Italian-centric book, "Flirting with the Fire Gods," inspired by her Aeolian Island heritage.

Sheryl Guterl writes from New Mexico and New Hampshire. Retiring to the Southwest after a career as an educator in New Jersey, she appreciates more sunshine, higher mountains, and less winter ice. Her cabin on a lake in wooded New England provides inspiration and refreshment with cooler summers.

Michael Salcman is a poet, physician, and art historian and was chairman of neurosurgery at the University of Maryland. Poems appear in *Arts & Letters*, *The Café Review*, *Hopkins Review*, and more. Books include *The Clock Made of Confetti*, *The Enemy of Good is Better*, *Poetry in Medicine*, his popular anthology of classic and contemporary poems on doctors, patients, illness & healing.

Linda Quinlan's poetry book *Chelsea Creek* was published in 2019 by Brickhouse Press. She is the recipient of The Wicked Women's Poetry Award. Her poems have been published in many journals, some of which include *The North Carolina Literary Review*, *Pudding*, *Sinister Wisdom*, and *The New Orleans Literary Review*. She currently lives in Vermont with her partner.

Dana Sonnenschein teaches at Southern Connecticut State University. Her publications include *Corvus*, *No Angels but These*, *Natural Forms*, and *Bear Country*. Recent work appears in *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Permafrost*, *Feminist Studies*, *Poppy Road Review*, and Terrain.org's *Dear America* anthology. Find her @lone_wolf_poet on Twitter, dana.sonnenschein on Instagram, and www.facebook.com/Dana-Sonnenschein-104761453404

Eduard Schmidt-Zorner is a translator and writer of poetry, and short stories. He writes in four languages. Member of four writer groups in Ireland and lives in County Kerry, Ireland, for more than 25 years and is a proud Irish citizen, born in Germany. Published in over 160 international publications.

Richard Oyama's poems, stories, and essays have appeared in *Premonitions: The Kaya Anthology of New Asian North American Poetry*, *The Nuyorasian Anthology*, *Breaking Silence*, and other literary journals. *The Country They Know* (Neuma Books 2005) is his first collection of poetry. He is currently at work on a young adult novel and a full-length poetry collection.

Bruce McRae, a Canadian musician, is a multiple Pushcart nominee with poems published in hundreds of magazines such as *Poetry*, *Rattle*, and the *North American Review*. His books are "The So-Called Sonnets" (Silenced Press), "An Unbecoming Fit Of Frenzy" (Cawing Crow Press), and "Like As If" (Pski's Porch).

Kathryn Paul is a survivor of many things, including cancer and downsizing. Her poems have appeared in *Intima: Journal of Narrative Medicine*; *Rogue Agent*; *Hospital Drive*; *The Ekphrastic Review*; *Lunch Ticket*; *Stirring: A Literary Collection*; and *Pictures of Poets*. Kathy lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

D Larissa Peters grew up in Indonesia and is somewhat of a nomad. After meandering around the East Coast for more than 10 years, she moved to California—in the middle of a pandemic! Her poems have appeared in *Rabid Oak*, *Corvus Review*, and *Louisville Review* with forthcoming pieces elsewhere.

Barbara Krasner holds an MFA from the Vermont College of Fine Arts. She teaches family history at William Paterson University and writing family history at StoryScapes Studio. Her own family history fuels her writing, including her poetry chapbook, *Chicken Fat* (2017).

Linda McCauley Freeman is the author of the full-length poetry collection *The Family Plot* (Backroom Window Press, 2022) and has been widely published in international journals, including in a Chinese translation. She was nominated for a Pushcart Prize 2021. Recently she appeared in *Delta Poetry Review*, *Poet Magazine*, *Amsterdam Quarterly*, and won Grand Prize in StoriArts Maya Angelou poetry contest. She has an MFA from Bennington College. She lives in the Hudson Valley, NY. Follow her at www.Facebook.com/LindaMcCauleyFreeman

Ava Elizabeth Luetkemeyer is a talented, precocious six-year-old growing up in The San Francisco Bay Area with her loving mother, Lori, father, Jesse, smart-as-a-whip little sister, Amelia, and pet dog, Inar. She loves school, art, music, dancing, her many friends, and traveling to Oregon to visit Nana Leslie and Poppa Gene.

Edward Lee is an artist and writer from Ireland. His paintings and photography have been exhibited widely while his writing has been published globally in magazines, including *The Stinging Fly*, *Skylight 47*, *Acumen*, and *Smiths Knoll*. He is currently working on two photography collections: “Lying Down With The Dead” and “There Is A Beauty In Broken Things.” His blog/website can be found at <https://edwardmlee.wordpress.com>

Harold Ackerman retired from teaching to devote creative time to capturing light at the right moments and to writing fiction and poetry. He has poetry most recently at Visitant Lit and photo art most recently at Uppagus. Please find a more complete list on his gallery page at briarcreekphotos.com

Cynthia Yatchman is a Seattle based artist and art instructor. She works primarily on paintings, prints, and collages. Her art is housed in numerous public and private collections in the Northwest and she has been shown nationally in California, Connecticut, New York, Indiana, Michigan, Oregon, and Wyoming.

Shilpa Gupta uses **Shiyana** as her artist name. She used to write and paint her thoughts out. She wants to explore her talents on the social media platform to hold a special place in her community while expressing her thoughts and connecting to those people whom she loved the most.

Angela Acosta is a bilingual Latina poet and scholar. She won the 2015 Rhina P. Espallat Award from West Chester University and her work has appeared in *Pluma*, *WinC Magazine*, *MacroMicroCosm*, and *mOthertongue*. She is currently completing her Ph.D. in Iberian Studies at The Ohio State University.

DS Maolalai has been nominated nine times for Best of the Net and seven times for the Pushcart Prize. His poetry has been released in two collections, “Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden” (Encircle Press, 2016) and “Sad Havoc Among the Birds” (Turas Press, 2019).

Erica A. Fletcher works in biomedical research in Boston. Her poems have been published in *Sky Island Journal*, *Hawk and Whippoorwill*, *Uppagus*, *Silkworm*, and *The Writers' Cafe Magazine*. She has played in the rock band Nurse & Soldier since 1997. She can sometimes be found on Twitter at @ericafletcher.

KH Holladay was born in 1954 and grew up in Nashville, Tennessee. She graduated cum laude in English from the University of Wisconsin and lived much of her life in North Carolina before her death in 2016. She was a fierce devotee of poetry, old movies, and the North Carolina coast.

Judy DeCroce lives and works with her husband poet/artist **Antoni Ooto** in rural upstate New York. She is a poet and flash fiction writer widely published globally in print, online journals, and anthologies. As a professional storyteller, Judy enjoys performing and teaching that genre.

Antoni Ooto lives and works with his wife, poet/storyteller **Judy DeCroce**, in rural upstate New York. Ooto is a well-known abstract expressionist artist whose art is collected throughout the U.S. Currently, poetry is an additional expression of creativity, and, he is widely published globally in print, online, and in anthologies.

Jeff Burt learned the importance of storytelling from farmers and hands at the grist mill he inhabited in summers as a method to tell a moral, a joke, or a deserving slice of life. He has contributed to many journals, including *Heartwood*, *Kestrel*, *Willow Journal*, and *Red Wolf Journal*. His site is <https://www.jeff-burt.com>.

Suzanne van Leendert lives in Utrecht, the Netherlands. She writes in Dutch as well as English and won several poetry competitions in the Netherlands and Belgium. Apart from being a writer, she's an award-winning documentary maker. Using both images and language, she questions life and tries to give it meaning.

Patricia Grant is an 80-year-old woman with the soul of someone who's 60. She's lively, active in her local Senior Center starring in plays and singing carols, showing everyone that age doesn't have to be a limitation. When she's not writing words of wisdom for her five children and their children, she's making some of the best peanut butter fudge in the world and giving it to everyone she can.

Enna Horn spends most of their time putting their pen to paper, or their hand to the plough. They speak five languages, and enjoy exploring the maddening, mysterious strands of identity. They live in midwestern America with livestock, crops, and the forest for company.

Mike Coste lives in Littleton, Colorado, just outside of Denver. Their works have been published in *The Burningword Literary Journal*, *34th Parallel*, *Right Hand Pointing*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *Madblood*, *Jitter Press*, and *Dual Coast Magazine*. They have also had two short plays produced locally.

Diana Raab, PhD, is an award-winning memoirist, poet, blogger, speaker, and author of 10 books and is a contributor to numerous journals and anthologies. Her two latest books are “Writing for Bliss: A Seven-Step Plan for Telling Your Story and Transforming Your Life,” and “Writing for Bliss: A Companion Journal.”

Corey J. Boren is a senior at Utah Valley University whose work has appeared in journals such as *The Allegheny Review*, *peculiar*, *Essais*, and *Last Leaves Magazine*, among others. Corey was also longlisted for the Button Poetry 2020 chapbook prize. While poetry is his first love, he’s had more than a few dalliances with speculative fiction, literary theory, webcomics, and really bad collages. To see more of his work, visit coreyjboren.com

Yuan Changming hails with Allen Yuan from poetrypacific.blogspot.ca. Credits include 12 Pushcart nominations & chapbooks (most recently *LIMERENCE*) besides appearances in Best of the Best Canadian Poetry (2008-17) & BestNewPoemsOnline, among 1909 others. Yuan both served on the jury and was nominated for Canada’s National Magazine Awards (poetry category).

Gene Goldfarb now lives in New York City where he writes poetry and prose. His poetry has appeared in *Black Fox*, *Sheila-Na-Gig*, *Red Eft*, *Twenty-Two Twenty-Eight*, *Green Briar*, and *Quiddity*, among other publications.

Jackie Partridge is a mixed media artist living in Wellesley, ON, Canada. She graduated with her MFA from Concordia University in 2018. Jackie’s practice involves a series of images titled Patched where maps are

transformed into pulp and is embedded into the tree where the bark has naturally peeled away.

Sudhanshu Chopra is a poet, wordsmith, and pun-enthusiast. Thirty-one and rootless, he is fascinated by nature and frustrated by its incomprehension. He wishes we had evolved better or not at all. It is the midway that causes Catch 22 situations, which are quite troubling, mentally and otherwise. He tweets at @artofdying_

Lorelei Bacht (she/they) successfully escaped grey skies and red buses to live and write somewhere in the monsoon forest. Her recent writing has appeared and/or is forthcoming in *After the Pause*, *Harpy Hybrid Review*, *The Inflectionist Review*, *Sinking City*, and others. She is also on Instagram: @loirelei.bacht.writer and on Twitter @bachtlorelei.

Jeanne Blum Lesinski is an author of nonfiction, flash fiction, and poetry. She writes about people and places dear to her. Her recent work has appeared in *Non-Binary Review*, the *Alphanumeric podcast*, *F3LL*, *Midway Journal*, and *Plainsongs*. She was a finalist in The Ekphrastic Review Women Artists contest. When not at her computer, she may often be found in a garden or on a bike trail.

Christine M. Du Bois is an anthropologist with poems in a dozen anthologies and online magazines, including *Central Texas Writers and Beyond 2021* and the *Valiant Scribe Literary Journal*. Poems are forthcoming in *Psychological Perspectives*, in the *Canary Literary Magazine*, and in the Red Penguin Press's *Words for the Earth*.

Lois Perch Villemaire resides in Annapolis, MD. Her stories, memoir flash, and poetry have been published in a number of journals and webpages. Her poems have been included in anthologies published by Truth Serum Press, American Writers Review 2021, and Love & the Pandemic by Moonstone Arts Center.

Alan Bern is a retired children's librarian and an exhibited and published photographer with awards for his poems and stories. Alan is also a performer with dancer/composer Lucinda Weaver as PACES and with musi-

cians from Composing Together. Lines & Faces, his illustrated broadside press with artist/printer Robert Woods: linesandfaces.com

Darrell Petska is a retired university editor. His poetry and fiction can be found in *3rd Wednesday Magazine*, *First Literary Review—East*, *Nixes Mate Review*, *Verse Virtual*, *Loch Raven Review*, and elsewhere (conservancies.wordpress.com). A father of five and grandfather of six, he lives near Madison, Wisconsin, with his wife of more than 50 years.

Ann Howells edited Illya's Honey for eighteen years. Her most recent books are: *So Long As We Speak Their Names* (Kelsay Books, 2019) and *Painting the Pinnwheel Sky* (Assure Press, 2020). Her work appears in many small press and university journals.

Miriam Sagan is the author of over thirty books of poetry, fiction, and memoir. She founded and directed the creative writing program at Santa Fe Community College until her retirement. Her poetry was set to music for the Santa Fe Women's Chorus, incised on stoneware for a haiku pathway, and projected as video inside an abandoned grain silo in rural Itoshima. Her blog is Miriam's Well: <http://miriamswell.wordpress.com>

Ann Chinnis was born and raised in Virginia. She is an Emergency Physician for 40 years and a student at the Writers Studio in New York. Her poetry has been published in *The Speckled Trout Review*, *Around the World: Landscapes & Cityscapes*, and *Sledgehammer*, and is forthcoming in *Drunk Monkeys*.

Clay Waters has had poems published in *Green Hills Literary Lantern*, *The Santa Clara Review*, *Roanoke Review*, as well as *Last Leaves*. His website is claywaters.org, featuring his self-published cozy mystery novel *Death in the Eye*.

Amrita Valan's work has been printed in *Last Leaves*, *Poetica 2 and 3*, *The Poet's Christmas*, *Faith*, *Childhood*, *Friendship* and *Adversity* anthologies. Her work appears in *Piker's Press*, *Short Story Town* among others. Her collection of poems *Arrivederci* was published in May 2021. *In Between Pauses* was published in November 2021.

Joe Amaral's first poetry collection "The Street Medic" won the 2018 Palooka Press Chapbook Contest. His writing appears in *3Elements Review*,

Anti-Heroine Chic, Please See Me, River Heron Review, The Night Heron Barks and *University Professors Press*. Joe works 24-hour shifts as a paramedic in midcoastal California. IG: @joeticmedic

Lisa Ashley, MDiv, lives on an island in the Pacific Northwest. Her writing is inspired by her work with incarcerated teens, her Armenian ancestors, other poets and her physical challenges. Her work has appeared in *Last Leaves Magazine*, *The Amsterdam Quarterly*, *The Healing Muse*, and other journals.

Marjorie Gowdy has been published in *Roanoke Review*, *Artemis Journal*, *Floyd County Moonshine*, *Valley Voices*, *Indolent Books*, *Clinch River Review*, and *Visitant-Lit*. In 2022, two poems to be displayed with quilts in the Colonial Piecemakers Guild & Poetry Society of Virginia (PSV) exhibition in Hampton, VA. Essays in *Katrina: Mississippi Women Remember* (2007).

James B. Nicola, a returning contributor, is the author of six collections of poetry, the latest being *Fires of Heaven: Poems of Faith and Sense*. His decades of working in the theater culminated in his nonfiction book *Playing the Audience: The Practical Guide to Live Performance*, which won a Choice award.

Jenifer DeBellis, M.F.A., is author of *Warrior Sister*, *Cut Yourself Free...* (LTP) and *Blood Sisters* (Main Street). She edits *Pink Panther Magazine* and directs aRIFT Warrior Project and DWGuild. A former Meadow Brook Writing Project fellow, JDB facilitates summer workshops for Oakland University and teaches for Saginaw Valley State University.

Cecil Morris retired after 37 years teaching high school English and now tries writing himself what he spent so many years teaching others to understand and (maybe) enjoy. He has poems appearing in *2River View*, *Cobalt Review*, *Evening Street Review*, and other literary magazines. He likes ice cream too much and cruciferous vegetables too little for his own good.

Jim George is a writer-artist from Reading, PA. His artwork, fiction and poetry have appeared in *Last Leaves*, *Otoliths*, *The MOON*, *Dream Noir*, *Lotus-eater*, *The Sea Letter*, and *Pennsylvania Bards Southeast Poetry Review*. He has authored two books: *Jim Shorts*, an illustrated collection of stories and poems, and *My Mind's Eyeful*, a children's book, both available as PDFs.

Marianne Mersereau is the author of the chapbook *Timbrel* (Finishing Line Press). Her writing has appeared in *The Hollins Critic*, *Bella Grace*, *Still Point Arts Quarterly*, *Deep South Magazine*, *Seattle's Poetry on Buses*, *in-Scribe*, *Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel*, and elsewhere, and has been selected for numerous anthologies.

Eric Weil lives in Raleigh, NC. Journals ranging from *American Scholar* to *Poetry*, from *Main Street Rag* to *Silk Road*, and from *Dead Mule to Sow's Ear* have published his work. He has three chapbooks in print. eaweil8521@gmail.com

Wendy Lou Schmidt lives in Appleton, Wisconsin. She has been writing short stories, essays and poetry for the last ten years. She is also a mixed media artist. Written pieces have been published in *Chicago Literati*, *City Lake Poets*, *Literary Hatchet*, to name a few. Art pieces have been published in *Rat's Ass Review*, *Three Drops From A Cauldron*, and *The Horror Zine*.

Ed Higgins' poems and short fiction have appeared in various print and online journals including recently: *Modern Haiku*, *Statement Magazine*, and *Tigershark Magazine*, among others. Ed is Writer-in-Residence at George Fox University. He is also Asst. Fiction Editor for *Brilliant Flash Fiction*. Ed has a small organic farm in Yamhill, OR, raising a menagerie of animals—including a rooster named StarTrek.

Bruce Louis Dodson is an American living in Borlänge, Sweden, where he writes fiction and poetry. His work has appeared in: *Pirene's Fountain*, *Buffalo Almanac*, *So It Goes*, *Maintenant*, *Permafrost*, *Poetry Pacific*, *ArtAscent*, *Vallum*, *Bangalore Review*, *Workers Write*, *NGY Review*, *Whitefish Review*, and *Local Gems-Beat Generation Poems*. <http://brucelouisdodson.wordpress.com>

Carolyn Adams' poetry and art have been published in the pages and on the covers of *The Hunger Journal*, *Steam Ticket*, *Apercus Quarterly*, *Apeiron*, and *Red Weather*, among others. She has authored four chapbooks, with one being a collection of her collage art, entitled *What Do You See?*

Cara Losier Chanoine is a poet and English professor from NH. She's the author of the collections "How a Bullet Behaves" and "Bowetry: Found Poems From David Bowie Lyrics."

Hunter Liguore is a nature-witch, often found roaming hillsides, old ruins, and cemeteries. Her work has appeared in *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Porridge Magazine*, *Irish Pages*, and more. *The Whole World in Nan's Soup* is now available from YeeHoo Press. For more, visit: www.hunterliguore.org or @skytale_writer

Betty Stanton is a writer who lives and works in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in various journals and collections and has been included in anthologies from Dos Gatos Press and Picaroon Poetry Press. She received her MFA from The University of Texas at El Paso.

Mantz Yorke lives in Manchester, England. His poems have appeared in print magazines, anthologies and e-magazines both in the UK and internationally. His collections "Voyager" and "Dark Matters" are published by Dempsey & Windle.

Sue Chenette grew up in northern Wisconsin and has lived in Toronto since 1972. Her most recent books are *Clavier, Paris, Abyssum* (Aeolus House, 2020), and the documentary poem *What We Said* (Motes Books, 2019), based on her time as a social worker in Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty.

Felicia Mitchell's poetry can be found in a journals, anthologies, and the book "Waltzing with Horses" (Press 53). She is thankful to be included in the 2022 anthology "Storms of the Inland Sea: Poems of Alzheimer's and Dementia Caregiving" (edited by Margaret Stawoway and Jim Cokas for Shanti Arts).

Jess Skyleson is a former aerospace engineer who began writing poetry after being diagnosed with stage IV cancer at age 39. Their poems have been selected as finalists in the Tor House and Yemassee Poetry Prizes, and have been published by *Oberon Poetry Magazine*, *Stillhouse Press*, *Nixes Mate Review*, and *Ponder Review*, among others.

Aaron Lembo has taught English in China, Spain, and Vietnam. His debut poetry pamphlet *It's All Gone Don Juan* is published by erbacce-press (2020). His libretti have been performed at the Leeds Lieder Festival and at the International Anthony Burgess Foundation and his film/poetry podcast, Verse Amor, is on Youtube.

Lee Triplett was born in South Carolina and graduated from USC with a degree in performance piano and took computer science courses at University of Texas at Austin. They worked as a software programmer in San Antonio, Texas and Charlotte, NC. They live their life as a poet, reader, schizoaffective and bipolar patient, pianist, and queer.

Karen Ulm Rettig has a Fine Arts degree and began writing when in her 30s. She is a member of Cincinnati Writers' Project and has published one book, titled "Finding God: Our Quest for a Deity and the Dragons We Meet On the Way." Find her online at karenulmrettig.com.

Emily Reid Green's poetry has appeared in various publications, including: *The Keeping Room*, *Of Rust and Glass*, *The Pangolin Review*, *Eunoia Review*, and *The Ekphrastic Review*. Her first chapbook *Still Speak* was published in 2019 by Writing Knights Press. She has also been a sponsored poet with Tiferet Journal and their annual poem-a-thon.

Adrienne Stevenson is a Canadian living in Ottawa, Ontario. A retired forensic scientist, she writes poetry and stories. Her poetry has appeared in over thirty print and online publications in Canada, the USA, the UK, and Australia, most recently in *Bywords*, *The Elpis Pages*, *Silver Apples*, *WordC-ityLit*, and *The BeZine*.

Cathy Leavitt is an artist from Vermont. She lives with her family and menagerie of animals. Cathy comes from a family of talented women artists who encouraged her artistic exploration. Her art has been featured in art shows and magazines worldwide.

Rebecca M. Ross is originally from Brooklyn but currently lives, hikes, and teaches in New York's Hudson Valley. Rebecca's writing has been published in *Streetcake Magazine*, *The Westchester Review*, *Soul-Lit*, and *Peeking Cat*. She has poetry forthcoming or published in *Uppagus* and *Whimsical Poet*.

Mark A. Fisher is a writer, poet, and playwright living in Tehachapi, CA. His poetry has appeared in: *Reliquiae*, *Silver Blade*, *Last Leaves*, and many other places. His poem "there are fossils" (originally published in *Silver Blade*) came in second in the 2020 Dwarf Stars Speculative Poetry Competition.

Joan Mazza has worked as a medical microbiologist, psychotherapist, seminar leader, and is the author of six books, including *Dreaming Your Real Self* (Penguin/Putnam). Her work has appeared in *Rattle*, *Potomac Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Poet Lore*, *The MacGuffin*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, and *The Nation*. She lives in rural central Virginia.

Catherine McGuire is a writer and artist with a deep concern for our planet's future. She has five decades of published poetry, four poetry chapbooks, a full-length poetry book, *Elegy for the 21st Century* (FutureCycle Press), and more. She shares her Sweet Home, Oregon half acre with cats, chickens, a garden/orchard and bees. Find her at <http://www.cathymcguire.com>.

Bartholomew Barker is an organizer of Living Poetry, a collection of poets in North Carolina. Born and raised in Ohio, studied in Chicago, he worked in Connecticut for nearly twenty years before moving to Hillsborough where he makes money as a computer programmer to fund his poetry habit. www.bartbarkerpoet.com

Mugu Ganesan is an emerging poet based out of Minneapolis, Minnesota. He writes poetry in English and Urdu. His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Hindu*, *Burning House Press*, *Scarlet Leaf Review*, *Last Leaves Magazine*, and more. Mugu's poetry is focused on expressing the strife that comes with being human through his observations and life experiences across cultures and continents.

Roberta Gould has poems widely published in journals and anthologies. She was an editor for *Light*, a poetry review, and has translated poems by Sor Juana, Jorge L. Borges, Jose Watanabe and others. Roberta was a grant recipient at the University of New Mexico and organized a responsible tourism campaign. Two of her books include "Woven Lightning" (2019) and "Talk When You Can, Tell the Truth," (2020). You can find out more on her website: robertagould.net

Andrew Feng creates surreal, horror artwork and portraits through drawings, paintings, and digital art. He would describe himself as a metalhead, fashion enthusiast, and a lover of black who spends his time blasting metal music while drinking boba tea. Andrew hopes to spread awareness

about mental health through his horror-style art. You can follow him on @kingfengart_ on instagram!

Kate Maxwell has probably been a teacher for too long. As a result, her interests include film, wine, and sleeping. She lives in Sydney and spends her spare time dreaming about colder climates and trying to get published. Her first poetry anthology is *Never Good at Maths* (Interactive Publications, 2021). She is not actually a maths teacher. Kate can be found at <https://kateswritingplace.com/>

Gerry Stewart is a poet, creative writing tutor, and editor based in Finland. Her poetry collection *Post-Holiday Blues* was published by Flambard Press, UK. *Caledonian Antisyzygy* is to be published by Hedgehog Poetry Press in 2022. Her writing blog can be found at <http://thistlewren.blogspot.fi/> and @grimalkingerry on Twitter.

Kait Quinn is a law admin/poet. Her poetry has appeared in various literary journals, including *Heart*, *Polemical Zine*, *Chestnut Review*, and *VERSES*. She has also self-published four poetry collections. Kait lives in Minneapolis with her partner, their regal cat Spart, and their Aussie mix Jesse Pinkman, Jr.

Laurie Kolp is an avid runner and lover of nature living in southeast Texas with her husband, three children, and two dogs. She is the author of *Upon the Blue Couch* and *Hello, It's Your Mother*. Her poems have appeared in *San Pedro River Review*, *SWWIM*, *Rust + Moth*, and more. Laurie is currently working on a project to honor her late father.

Camille Castro, 22, is an English student at her local university. Her works have appeared on *Minute Magazine*, *Porridge Magazine*, *tenderness lit*, and elsewhere.

Osy Mizpah Unuevho spends his time between Lagos and Minna where he works as a geologist and collects poetry, photography and music. He is a member of the Hill Top Creative Arts Foundation where he helped as mentor and editor. He contributes in poetry at *Ovi Magazine*.

Tamara Madison is the author of the chapbook *The Belly Remembers* and two full-length volumes of poetry, *Wild Domestic* and *Moraine*, all published by Pearl Editions. Her work has appeared in *Chiron Review*, *the Worcester Review*, and many other publications. A swimmer, dog lover, and native of the southern California desert, she has recently retired from teaching English and French. Read more about her at tamaramadisonpoetry.com.

Cesca Janece Waterfield graduated from McNeese State University with an MFA in Creative Writing. She is the author of three poetry collections and a forthcoming memoir. Her work has appeared in *Map Literary*, *Scalawag*, *Writers Resist*, *Deep South Magazine*, *LUMINA*, and many other publications. Find her on Twitter @cescajanece

To Torres is a Filipino graphic designer, illustrator, and visual artist. Their visual style is often whimsical and surreal, with sociopolitical commentaries and feminism as common themes. They are also fond of drawing their family and friends. Find them on Instagram: [totorres_art](https://www.instagram.com/totorres_art).

