



# Last Leaves

Issue 6 | Spring 2023



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*Last Leaves: Issue 6*

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Cover design by Kiera Baron

## Note from the Editor

To the wondrously talented submitters and fans of *Last Leaves Magazine*, this wasn't easy to start or to write: My hunger is leading me elsewhere.

In this issue of HUNGER, I wanted to see us when we're at our most primal, driven, and desperate—and I enjoyed seeing what that meant for many of you.

Through the collection of works we received for consideration, I realized it was time for me to step back as an editor. And it wasn't easy. I feared that I would be cutting off my connection to the literary writing world and my link to Kiera and Cailey. I was afraid of being thought of as a disappointment for pulling back from this passion project of ours.

But through a very kind conversation with them, I realized that I've grown a lot since the magazine started—we all have. And the funny thing about growth is that it can lead to a hunger for something new.

This doesn't mean I'll be so far removed from the mag that I'll disappear entirely. I'll pop back in occasionally to mull over some poignant reads, and Kiera and Cailey have assured that I'm always welcome as a guest editor for any issue I want.

You're in good hands with the ever-dependable duo with how they constantly give their all to ensure each issue is shipped out on time and that everyone and their work has ample consideration.

I've said this before in our first issue, but without the two of them, there would be no lit mag. I'm endlessly grateful to be included in this journey, and I will undoubtedly love to see how it continues to evolve.

~Maina Chen, Former Last Leaves Editor



## 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.

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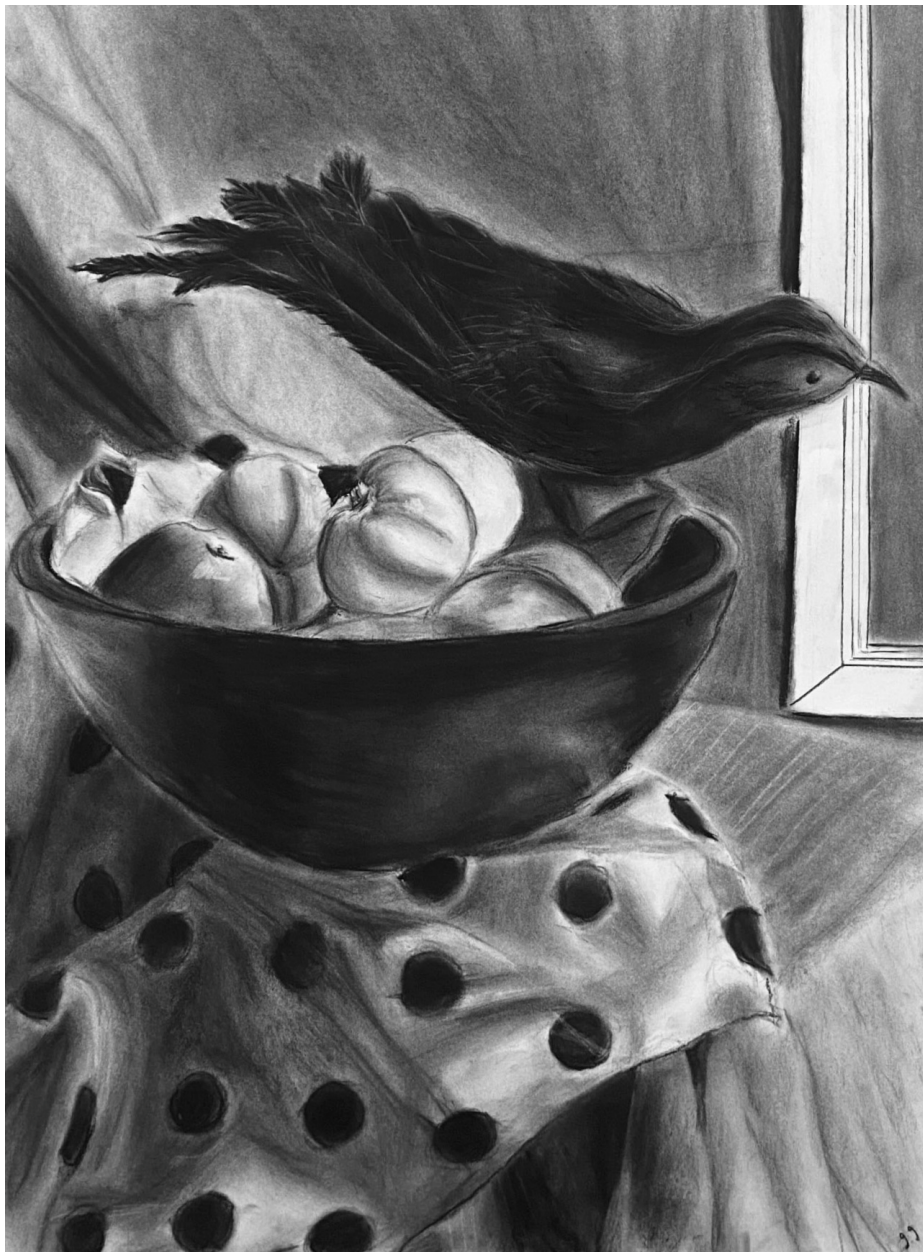
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Calm Night

*Gissel Gomez*

## I have Failed the Deer

*Chris Dungey*

I may have failed the deer—  
the six-point buck I shot at age  
fifty-eight, my first. We blundered  
into each other a half-mile  
from the hunting lodge near Luzerne.  
I joined the Club for the pickled bologna,  
sharp Pinconning cheese, well-oiled friends  
gathered around the fire pit with flurries  
spilling. All I'd seen before  
were cautious doe, coyotes  
sniffing past my blind.

\*

The promise I made  
as remorse swept in, still worrying  
if he'd stay lashed to the luggage carrier,  
was to waste nothing. In fact, the brain  
went to the DNR. Marrow-  
bones and hide were processed  
and we've eaten the last package  
of venison burger, butterfly steaks.  
Only those antlers remain neglected,  
collecting dust in the garage.

\*

Club tradition is to mount the rack  
or head above the cut-stone fire-  
places. Other members have done this,  
some long deceased but now remembered  
for their prowess. It is not too late to have  
my antlers glued onto a polished plaque.  
Dad even wanted his ashes spread  
near his blind. One day a grandson  
may read the engraving beneath my horns  
then on Opening Day sit out  
in Dad's mouse-chewed bucket seat,  
waiting for browsing ghosts.

## Finding the Tribe

*Laurie Kuntz*

On days when the air is rife  
with scent and breeze  
and there is no anger  
toward any living thing,  
on those days help the bone thin  
lift packages from step to door frame,  
and hold open that same heavy glass door,  
so the mother of three can balance  
carriage and carry.  
There comes a day,  
when a neighbor needs to know  
how to use something other than the landline  
in order to see a grandchild in a state  
with different borders.  
Summer days, bring a box of donuts  
to someone stuck at a desk,  
and pick a bouquet of wild asters,  
so affordable, pick bunches  
for tables where all are invited to sit,  
for it is in the invites that we find a tribe,  
and relearn how to help, to praise,  
to share our hunger,  
and how to come home.

## Away From Her

Laurie Kuntz

I want to remember my mother when she was still herself,  
not in a grip of sorrows and congestions.  
As death sits at her table, I am away from her  
now, the last questions can never be answered,  
no going back to mother and daughter  
only on to the dealings with death.

Cummings said, *Dying is fine*

but my mother is hooked up to a life gone stagnant,  
there is only the waiting, but once gone  
and out of the aching descent,  
I will easily remember a woman  
holding in her palms the lines  
of all her children's futures.

As death eats at her table, I am away from her  
picking huckleberries from trees rooted in my daily paths—  
like a child I engage in pulling down the heavy berried limbs  
carrying such sweetness, the way a mother carries  
the wishes and woes of her children.

When I should be near, I am far  
picking huckleberries, their juices run  
over my crescent fingertips and stain my skin—

stains that remain for days  
like the memory of my mother  
when she was still herself.

## When the twenty-first person asks me if they should become a social worker<sup>1</sup>

Callie S. Blackstone

### *Legal advocacy*

She takes the watch out of her pocket.  
The lines and numbers once signified something.  
She used to run on military time—she showed up early  
with her hair trimmed and her boots shined.

She has abandoned her hair—once high and tight,  
it's too unkempt for Navy standards now. It's still soft brown,  
it hasn't grayed after all these years. It is dirty, though—  
it isn't clear when she last washed it. It isn't clear  
if she buys shampoo or conditioner these days,  
or if she takes a shower at all.

She stares at the watch. She stares out the window.  
The watch reads two and the window reads dark.  
But her stomach growls, so she figures Burger  
King should be open. She has the secret knowledge  
that clocks don't guide the world, her biology does.

Hungry? Restaurants will magically open,  
populated by eager employees who know  
her name. Angry? Her psychiatrist will retract  
the misdiagnosis, stop the injections and pills,  
and her blood (count *and* sugars) will go back  
down. (She knows what the pills *really* do.)  
Sad? Her son will finally return his calls  
and admit that he was wrong all along.

The world is hers, it's in her hands. She walks the few blocks, sees the poster featuring a plethora of sandwiches. Why yes, she thinks, I will get the BOGO. I will feast tonight.

The darkened interior of the restaurant doesn't register. Nor does the *redblueredblueredblue* that bounces across the windows. When the cops appear in the reflection she decides to buy them sandwiches—*her treat*—despite her low income. She has, after all, always respected authority. She can't hear them over the *thudthudthud* of her fists against the glass. Beef? Chicken? Fish? French fries or onion rings? Diet or regular? She is yelling, demanding service. This is bigger than her now. Burger King doesn't back the blue and she won't tolerate it. *This chick again*, one of them says. *She's unhinged, she needs to take her meds and to chill the fuck out.* The other nods. *What she really needs is a trip to the looney bin.*

Their laughter joins the cacophony of flesh against glass, of shoes on the sidewalk—other late night explorers pause to take in what it's like when someone else gets arrested

## Waking with a child's heart

*Linda K. Miller*

new day  
awake with the dawn  
eager to get on my way  
a wide smile and a yawn

honeybun  
butter and strawberries  
cocoa coating my tongue  
no counting calories

reality  
an adult day  
work, accountability  
no child today

but before all that  
I'll get my honey scone  
and drink hot chocolate  
with strawberries at home

all the while  
dreaming of waking  
with a smile  
as a child again



## Melting shores

*Linda K. Miller*

With shaking hands  
ice drops off Earth's highest brow  
water ices my fingers  
sends shivers down my spine  
warm winds blow across deserts  
used to heat the days  
lizards laze under the blaze  
of skies burnt centuries on end  
but fires flare now as temps rise  
somethin's gone awry now  
Aussie life is dying now  
Amazon forests felling to the  
ground taking our air with them  
fear is hiking its way up through  
my guts, creating craters of pain  
as I eat meat that gobbles up  
acres of land better used to  
produce vegetables to feed  
multitudes rather than the few  
what's that old saying...  
crocodile tears...  
if I was truly sorry or guilty or  
caring, I'd give up meat  
instead I just give up on  
humanity as we  
rush toward extinction

## fed up - a poem in three courses

Gloria Heffernan

*appetizer: how Bullwinkle got that way*

fed—  
the contentment of a nourishing meal.  
the satisfaction nestled in the mashed potatoes  
on the Thanksgiving dinner table.

fed up—  
the bloated blinding rage  
in the wake of insults and irritations  
better spat discreetly into the dinner napkin  
instead of swallowed and stuffed—  
inflated like the Bullwinkle balloon  
in the Macys Thanksgiving Day Parade.

*entree: what Bullwinkle swallowed*

devouring each stifled word,  
each swallowed objection,  
promises never important enough  
for you to remember  
but too important  
for me to forget  
thank yous  
you never bothered to say  
because the giving had become  
too commonplace to notice.

*dessert: the icing on bullwinkle's cake*

apple pie or pumpkin?  
ice cream or whipped?  
thoughtless oversights?  
insults or neglect?  
choices relegated to reflex  
ingested out of habit and desperation

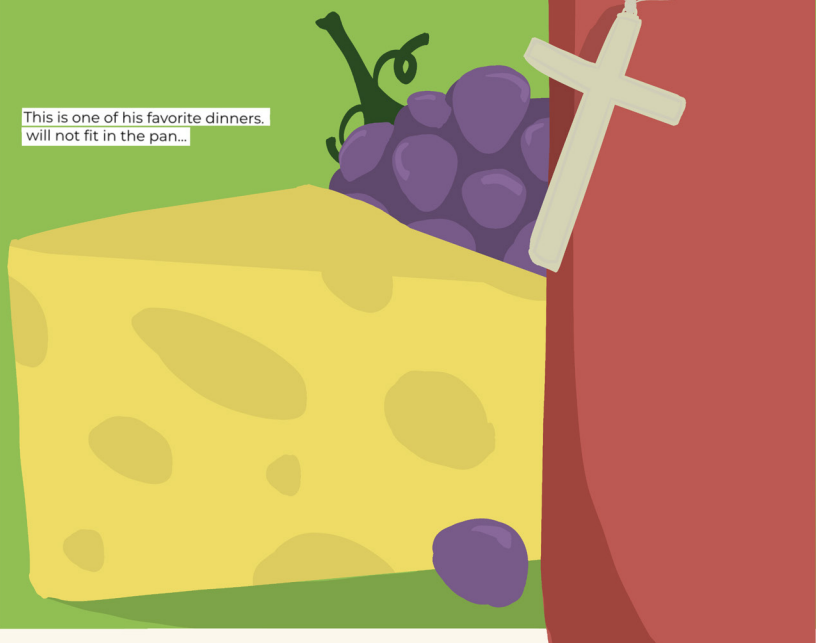
seen now in the fullness of ancient hungers  
i finally step away  
from the table and say  
*enough.*

## Pepperoni Lasagna

★★★★☆ 8 reviews

My husband comes from a large Italian family,  
when he married me--having grown up with a dad  
who had lots of delicious Italian recipes he'd gotten  
from friends whose parents had  
a dinner honoring a priest-relative  
who'll be celebrating his 30th

This is one of his favorite dinners.  
will not fit in the pan...



Pep Lasagna

*Daphne Fauber*

## Primavera

*Gloria Heffernan*

When the hem of winter  
begins to unravel  
in that muddy space between the seasons,  
my hunger for green  
drives me to the farmer's market  
where the promise of spring  
waits in bins of root vegetables  
and hothouse tomatoes.

No matter that they are the last  
Vestiges of harvest time.  
They will serve my purpose  
better than the waxed beauties  
piled geometrically under fluorescent lights  
in a supermarket where the blemished  
are discarded after the thousand-mile  
drive from the Sunshine State.

Just a taste of Spring propels me  
to the early morning parking lot  
where trucks line up side-by-side  
proffering crates of unvarnished fare.

Calloused hands drop potatoes  
and beans into brown paper bags  
along with a few hints for how best to  
coax out their flavors.

Carrots, zucchini, bell pepper,  
a fist of garlic, basil, and parsley,  
fresh farfalle made just yesterday.  
*Be careful not to overcook it*  
warns Rose as she hands me the bundle  
wrapped in butcher paper.

At home the kitchen blossoms  
with the fragrance of pasta primavera  
piled into white bowls  
to let the colors bloom like the tulips  
eager to erupt into a new season.  
For now, the mere promise will have to suffice—  
a bowl of Springtime  
in the waning days of winter.

## Summoning the Ferryman

*Gloria Heffernan*

She flags him down  
as if simply hailing a cab  
on Fifth Avenue in the rain.

But unlike the careless cabbies  
speeding through oil-slicked puddles,  
ignoring her as they splash her dress,

Charon obliges,  
steering his ferry expertly  
to the riverbank where she waits.

She steps gingerly into the boat.  
No need to announce her destination.  
He knows where she wants to go.

## In watermelon sugar

*Rachel R. Baum*

The monarch butterfly casts  
a batlike shadow  
worried, it paces  
the corridor of sky  
*come soon* text messages  
and grim phone calls  
are sweet nectar sipped  
by aging children  
they hover too long,  
whisper conspiratorially,  
about hospital protocols  
and overdue apologies  
they are butterflies, sensing  
watermelon sugar is near  
confused, hungry,  
greedy for anticipated news.



Kairos  
*Corey J. Boren*



## Patron Saint

*Bart Edelman*

Leonard begs for a patron saint  
To protect him from harm.  
Sister Oona suggests Saint Sven—  
One of the newer breeds—  
A man who came to the Lord,  
After his own personal struggles  
Brought him to his knees,  
Before he cut them off—  
A supreme offering, if you will.  
Leonard wonders, day after day,  
Could he commit such a sacrifice?  
Sever the appropriate body part?  
Would an ear, finger, or toe suffice?  
Or need he go bolder?  
He knows the stakes are high.  
A false, foolish move, now,  
And he'll slide deeper and deeper  
Into the color of despair—  
For which no name exists.  
Leonard contacts the Almighty,  
Asks him to deliver a sign—  
Some gentle declaration, at least—  
One last beacon of hope?  
But only silence follows.  
Leonard raises the knife higher,  
Lets it drop, wherever God pleases.

## Between-Time: The Hunger of the Dark

*Jennifer M. Phillips*

Another day dangles on the clothesline

between God and Magog.

A salting of small hail on the summer grass  
as bully thunderheads

bruise noon's sallow skin.

Most days we are blithe  
and self-preoccupied  
and then

July icefall crashes in

trees split, wires down.

We find ourselves like that Medieval mob  
of grotesques, naked, nervous

glancing over our shoulders

at what is too large to see or to define  
shivering as its shadow

passes over us like ether

limbs frozen in a dream  
no sound

from our moving mouths.

the hunger of the dark

stalking our toothsome moments

all the lithe green landscapes we inhabit,  
funneling us in.

## COSMIC HUNGER

*David Dephy*

The hills darken. Standing across from yourself  
you can feel the dark— your own existence, hunger.  
No one is around. It was noisy place. Noisy dark place,  
but even now it is assembling, as all your fears sleep  
in their emptiness now. Hunger is the end of loneliness.

All your nightmares having been picked clean.  
Now you see how your favorite moon rises,  
above all your expectations— the bridges of paradise.  
The ghost of a saint is leaning out the window,  
calling the night by its real name,

saying the words in different languages,  
yet, the self implies other, as the spirit of the moon  
creeps out of the sky, and you can steel feel yourself  
in that empty place on the night sky when the lilac  
shadow of the whole constellation has drifted away.

## Where do you think you're going?

*Ketia Valme*

To the moon  
Where we're viewed  
As gentle as a caterpillar in its cocoon  
Somewhere real; somewhere pure  
A place that doesn't fuck around with our insecurities  
It don't invalidate our vulnerability  
And inaugurate us into a swarm of negativity  
All cause our blood carries the history of inequity  
Our backs read the story of our ancestry  
Our ankles shackled in this system's penitentiary  
But they expect us to shut up and claim freedom  
While we watch our kingdom  
Corrupted by white wisdom  
Filled with nothing but mediocre visions  
Illustrated with demolition  
And their mission to invalidate the conditions  
That we undergo—  
I mean it's sickening—  
How they try to paint over the imprisonment  
That follows us like a silhouette.  
But on the moon  
That's a guaranteed reset.

## Un-Coloured

*Lynn White*

Sadness leaches the colours from life.  
Even the bloodied black hole of death  
is bleached white  
with hunger.

## You are the eggs

*Nolcha Fox*

that run from toast,  
a fugitive from frappe mornings,  
the empty chair at my table,  
a gnawing need that eats my guts,  
a craving I can't fill.

## Inspiration

*Ripley Crow*

a muse  
must be  
kept  
out of reach  
because  
nothing  
inspires  
like wanting  
some-  
-thing  
unhave-  
-able.

## A Sandwich for Justino

*Evie Groch*

He grabs my attention as he enters tentatively.  
I sip my mocha at my local Starbucks,  
evacuated my house for the cleaning ladies.  
A sandy-haired tall, rail-thin Adonis who  
walks up to the pick-up counter and orders water.  
He's dressed in homelessness, speaks softly,  
strives to be invisible, but fails.

He glides outside, takes a few sips of his water,  
curls up on the pavement, leaning against  
Starbucks' floor-to-ceiling window to catch a nap.  
He never leaves the corner of my eye.  
I read, write, send emails, but always return  
my eye to check up on him.

I wonder what I've trained myself not to wonder:  
What's his backstory? Who misses him?  
Where will he sleep tonight?  
My heart aches. I think about buying him  
a bag of chips but feel shame at my pitiful offer.  
We've been trained not to give money.



As I get ready to leave, he awakens and reenters.  
He now orders a cup of coffee, and I dare approach.  
*May I buy you a bag of chips?* I offer.  
*Could I have a sandwich instead?* he counters.  
*Of course*, I say. He has removed my shame.  
I pay for his sandwich for which he whispers Thank you.

I turn to walk out, but instead turn back and ask,  
*What is your name?*  
*Justino.*  
*Hi, Justino*, I say as I give him my name.  
*Hello*, he says with a slight nod and not quite  
a smile on his lips.  
I knew I would come home and write  
about him and ponder the significance later.

## Digesting a Grandfather Clock

*Evie Groch*

The question is not why  
but how you should do it.  
Start with clean hands;  
assume it will be time consuming.  
Chime in for grace,  
emulate the gears' teeth.  
Do it by the numbers,  
time piece by time piece.  
Take minutes; they count.  
Go back for seconds if time permits.  
Credit it for original tic-tocs.  
Take it at face value, winding it up  
at the end of the meal.  
You will not be left with time  
on your hands, but rather  
hands on your time.



Self-Order Kiosk

*Michael Moreth*

## Kitchen Bin Hymn

*Daphne Fauber*

O Thee of infinites,  
I lay at Thy altar  
an ordinary offering of  
celestial citruses  
golden like a dawn  
tender as a breast  
sickeningly sweet  
that I vowed to eat  
yet abandoned.

Praise Thee!

Praise Thee!

O Thee of infinites,  
I lay at Thy altar  
ye heel of bread  
crippled crumbs  
coarse and crusty  
humbly begging  
for deliverance  
from the depths  
of the drawer.

Holy!  
Holy!

O Thee of infinities,  
I lay at Thy altar  
ancient lasagna  
a relic of time past  
that was agreeable  
but worse revisited  
in a clouded Tupperware tomb  
so as to suppress the sin  
of the —Cheese? Meat?

O Friend Unseen!  
O Friend Unseen!

O Thee of infinities,  
I lay at Thy altar  
and I praise Thee,  
for your omnipotence  
and conviction ensure  
I take the trash out.

Amen!

## A Callous Baptism

*Daphne Fauber*

I hold my keys between my fingers  
while I baptize myself in the holy waters  
of the public bathroom someone was  
too stupid or too saintly to keep locked.

Trash can wedged against the door to  
keep other potential venerators away  
as soap forms clouds and fluorescent  
lights make hazy halos in my vision.

A knock at the door—confession time—  
both real and imagined sins despite  
my resemblance of Mary not Judas  
no divine absolution will be granted.

With my makeshift rosary I pray  
the Roman soldier will withdraw,  
letting me rest in my manger  
and nurse my original sin.

## BURRITO

*Norman Minnick*

To the devil I sold my soul for a half-frozen burrito.  
At four in the morning, I sold my soul!

I had for years a handful of change in my left pocket—  
the one without the hole—but it was never enough.

## AMERICAN PASTIME

*Norman Minnick*

The muck and grill-gunk  
of scorched pork and scrapings  
of stainless-steel spatula burn  
into a finer and finer decay.

The seared lines on the long pig  
indicate an open-air ritual  
and the gathering of carnivores with a lust  
for bland camaraderie and burnt flesh.





## CUR

*Norman Minnick*

I am all stomach and appetite. I devour  
shit, peat moss, a litter of rabbits,  
all varieties of weeds and grass, a cast-out bone.

I vomit and I eat that, too.  
Every day a cute redhead skips by  
and I forget my sudden attachment to the leash.

I keep waiting and waiting, waiting for the day  
the backdoor opens and a voice calls out.  
They never gave me a name.

## A Snapshot of What is Mine

A. Benét

*For my people. Old, new, and becoming.*

So, we all gather round to take a picture.  
Me and my people. And when I say *my people*,  
know that I am also talking about the ancestors.  
Dressed down in their grace and guidance,  
They stand regal in the back waiting for us to ready.

But we are too busy cackling to notice a flash.  
We can't resist the urge to run when laughter bubbles  
over. Our lips, dyed cherry or orange or grape, peel back frozen,  
suspended in moment, while Ant prepares a roast of Lanti  
and his shoes or braids or socks or fit or ash-stained knees.  
We linger in this show of care taken from the old ways of dozens as

we are told to face the light. And I think of our skin.  
How it darkens in chlorine and sun, and the blue hue  
makes us something ethereal and beautiful and of God.  
And how after every poolside baptism  
I learn to like the taste of water on my tongue.

Like I learned to ask aunties for a plate home,  
and they taught me the joys of leftovers in the morning,  
greasing my scalp, dripping my wrist in gold, and  
finding peace in chaos and stillness and amen.

This is where I find myself in memory.  
Longing for the sound of laughter and nagging and silence,  
for the times I get my way because we secretly want the same thing,  
and fighting about wanting to fight is an unvoiced

*I love you*

*I see you.*

I see my people and fall to my knees.  
Ask God to never let us worry again.  
To bless our pockets with enough flow to make dreams reality,  
to support ourselves with more than sticks. I pray

that we are always surrounded by enough love  
to give us space to grow, to move, to learn new things.  
I weep to see them all reflected in crystal ball. See:

Sappy's whole head turn white,  
Pookie's name on the side of buildings,  
Re walking down the aisle,

Mo accepting degree after degree after degree,  
Phe dancing around a room, beckoning me over,  
and when I shake my head, tell me to *be so fucking foreal*.

I will know God is real when I witness them grow old.  
Our oiled skin will remain holy.  
We won't die of accidents or purpose or "self-defense."  
Our hearts will stop beating on the same day, at the same time,  
and it will be peaceful and warm and the opposite of mourning  
because we will still be together.

When I say, *my people*, know that my heart  
is speaking to you and you and you.  
When my eyes well up, it is with all the gratitude in the world  
and I exist to know you the way we know vulnerability and rivers and  
green

and dancing on bare feet and singing until our voice is hoarse  
and inking our skin and ube and keeping each other alive  
and learning to see in the dark, after flash, underwater, where we abide  
and abide and abide and abide and abide and abide together *again*.



## Desert Ride

*Dave Boyle*

## Katydid stakes

*Betsy Bolton*

An involuntary audience, we eavesdrop  
on insect passions, their thrilling tremolos,  
their desperate buzzings, stutterings, sputterings,  
all swelling into deafening force. Lost in the buzz:

the risk entailed by song. Singing to summon  
a mate, male katydids reveal themselves  
to tachinid flies who tune in to the katydid's call,  
home in on their prey, deposit larvae to swarm

the katydid, burrowing in, consuming him  
from the inside out, noshing the least important  
tissues first, holding vital organs for the final course.  
Reproduction or death, the lady or the fly—

katydid males face both options with every  
stroking stridulation on the forewing's  
washboard edge. What human song can compete  
with that pitch, that timbre of intensity?

## It Never Snows on Tuesday<sup>1</sup>

Jonathan Yungkans

And here it is Sunday, weather's thermostat  
set to hell and the switch broken off. Haggard,  
two ravens smudge the oily dawn sky, together  
on a power pole's cross-tree. Crucifying us  
and these corvids together, seemingly damned—  
like that song about the stone, "How does it feel?"  
The corvids stay nudged closer than I'd seen them,  
come freeze or storm, regular as my first coffee.  
One raven with its head leaned toward the other,  
sometimes on the other's wing, sometimes using  
its beak to groom the other. Watching concern  
unfold like an outstretched wing the color of all  
anxiety and hope poured and fledged.  
We alight on the branches of muggy heat.  
The whole tree oscillates day and night right  
beneath our consciousness like an undertow,  
snapping the chance of rest from underneath in  
the ironic timing of this supposed day  
of rest. The birds look worn, a bad-hair day  
in pinions and down. Barely dawn and the day  
pricks deep under brain and skin, percolating  
like an old black-and-white TV coffee ad,  
good till last drop. Apparition like these birds  
in their ratted attire. They and we still watch,  
hungering for a break in hell or weather.

*<sup>1</sup>Title taken from the poem "Plain as Day" by John Ash-  
bery, in the collection Can you Hear, Bird.*

## SPINNERS OF WEBS

*C. W. Bigelow*

Frothy translucent  
labyrinth

spun into  
additional avenues of silk

to attract the arriving hordes  
cheering the rebellious

who venture  
boldly,

naively courageous,  
impervious as they

dive in with little choice  
but to

charge the  
dominant spider.

Enticed by  
success in the vicinity,

mimicking the creator  
of the last web -

building on  
a few remaining strands

balefully drifting in the wind,  
hopefully duplicating

the remnants, memories and  
nutrients of webs long past.

## ALMOST 100

*C. W. Bigelow*

Is it good that I  
depend upon them  
like I did my parents?  
They are my children,  
after all, and they  
answer my questions,  
like I answered theirs  
when they were kids.  
And guess what?  
I remember  
none of the questions  
or answers,  
because I'm inching  
toward a century  
with a memory  
like a dust storm  
clouding the sky.  
Lucky to remember  
their names,  
recognize their faces  
and more fortunate  
they care about me  
enough to keep asking  
questions and providing  
answers I don't remember,  
but I do remember them  
and appreciate that  
they remember to visit me  
and ask me questions  
I struggle to answer  
and remember.



## last meal

*Julie A. Dickson*

hawk perched high above open field  
adjacent to weathered farmhouse

hunger gnawed at her insides  
constant burning pain in an empty belly

focused on the ground, her eyes darted  
right and left, watching for movement

suddenly, she thrust forward, swooping  
down with sharp beak open, shriek piercing

the air, talons picked up the rodent quickly  
she landed on a branch to devour her kill

poor poisoned field mouse was in death-throes  
at time of capture; hawk knew nothing of poison

just ravenous hunger, oblivious of the deadly meal  
that would take her life as well

## On the Coming Cold

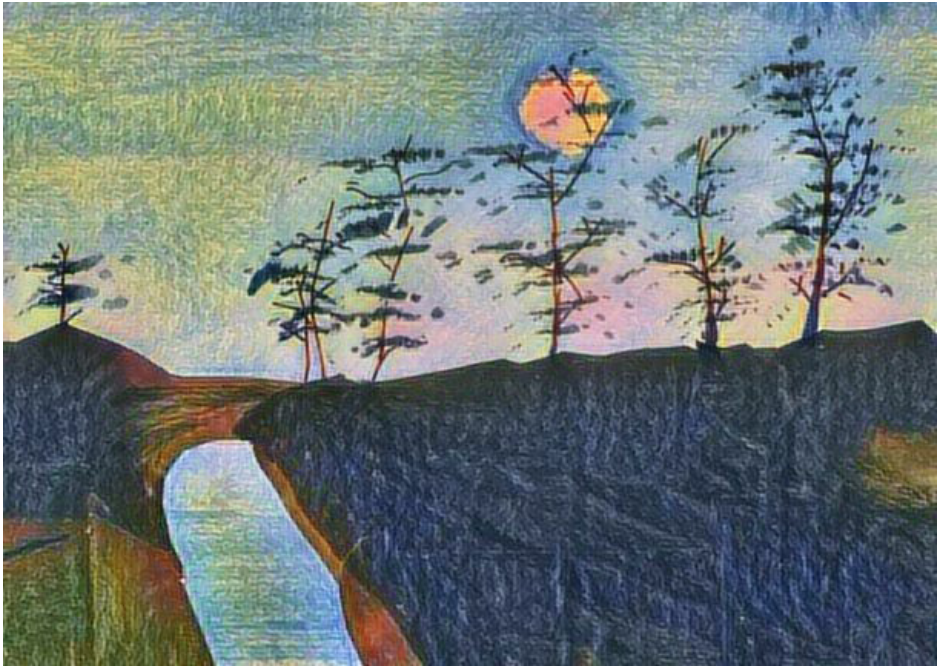
*Cameron Morse*

The bees are nosy in late September  
they look to me for a sip  
of nectar as the flower shops close.

Autumn stems  
the sugar that runs in the sewer  
all summer long.

Leaving them high  
and dry, the high on life. Stone  
cold sober, the jittery bees.

I drink my coffee black I am so  
strong and bitter the bees should know better  
than to bother me.



## Bridge Between Water and Sky

*Cheryl Caesar*

## Nightmares, I

*Cameron Morse*

1

In the orchard of  
nightmares, I pluck my brain  
tumor from a tree.

My mouth waters  
the roots with its teeth.

Tarantula branching above me  
may I be permitted  
a smidgeon of

moonlight  
through outstretched legs  
open to me?

2

A tangle of teeth tell the true story:  
I backed away from  
the woman

who loved me unworthy  
was to love myself.

I bit through her skin with my teeth.  
I bit through my skin  
with her teeth.

## Quiet at the Library

*Pasquale Trozzolo*

Soft sounds abound  
with rhythm unchanged  
excepting the encroachment of  
keys clicking a small distraction of reality.  
Among this quiet racket, she reads—slow—absorbing the  
shape of each word—careful turning pages as if separating the  
ink to claim her story. Casually she pushes hair, tucking messy strands  
on perfect ears—and glasses are pushed gently against a glorious slide killing me  
from a distance. Like Shakespeare, I wish to be a glove—that I might. She closes her  
eyes—seeing—what she reads. And me, knowing she's here only for the books, I write her,  
wondering what journey she's on and how I might, in this quiet, find her again tomorrow.

## crashing the banquet

*Andy VanDoren*

bloated summers and egos swell in the heat, the gas flames  
licking all that's rare. bloodred  
tablecloths and clattering forks on plates sticky with the stems  
of verbs. you bite your tongue,  
savor the metallic taste. dab your mouth, choke back the words  
you stole. pick my adjectives  
from between molars. what does my voice taste like in your  
mouth? your table and belly are full  
in the aftermath of the raze. I could salt the earth with what  
you left behind. when the guests pay  
compliments to the chef, do you realize how tightly your vocal  
cords entwine with mine? does  
the banquet hall echo without me? the open mouth that calls  
for you isn't asking to be fed. I am  
begging you to miss me.

## **pastoral lights**

*Andy VanDoren*

I wish for a long, wooden table  
one to feed my family, or  
whoever happens to pass,  
to share gifts of the garden  
and sate our bellies with laughs

and for bites of taste crisp air  
alongside morning tea:  
jasmine leaves, freshly green  
sweetened by the neighborly  
hums of the honeybees.

but every little luxury –  
fireflies in glass jars,  
kaleidoscopes of rainbows,  
the golden sun at daybreak –  
my heart already knows.



## You, Will Be a Wolf

*Eric Christopher Uphoff*

When I die, I will be a bird,  
feel the muscles of my wings.  
Perhaps an elk, laden with pride  
I never had. A boar,  
that would teach me the pain  
of my stubbornness.

But you, will be a wolf.  
Find me, wrap your jaw around  
my throat. Snap.  
Shatter vertebrae below my skull.  
Taste my flowing wine.

From your stomach, I will  
burrow your womb. Bear me,  
covered in your blessing I will be  
human again.



## Clean Plates

*Akua Lezli Hope*

We were never told  
think of the children in Africa  
who looked like us, but thinner  
warm, with fewer clothes  
always an unswatted fly in baby's eye  
who couldn't barter by tutoring  
the less smart for money  
to spend at Mr. Lee's for a sub  
who couldn't shovel snow, clean  
or rake leaves to get chips or Twinkies  
to substitute for meals, to take the edge off  
No one needed to evoke faces of others  
starving, black like us, yearning for ease, access  
privilege we saw up close, so close, next door  
driving by during rush hours,  
on television telling us to eat                    eat                    eat  
what we could not grow or afford  
We needed no incentive to clean our plates.

## esu-ri-ence

Gina Gidaro

/ i-sur-e-ints /

*noun*

1. when the surgeon opens you up, they'll find an unforgiving winter. a loud and tragic blizzard pushing at the walls of your ribcage. no singing tanagers or white-tailed deer. no flourishing green vines climbing up the whites of your bones or canopy trees guarding your heart. it's a landscape of starving **avidity** and famished ambitions. your fingertips are cold to the touch, your stomach full of heavy rocks and frost. nothing grows because there is a craving that is insatiable. devouring. ravening. hungry.

2. when you sleep you dream of empty towns with rolling fog. you're on a four-way intersection with a strong desire to go back the way you came. tall but crumbling buildings surround you, with shattered windows and busted doors. shadows pass your peripheral. you run down every forsaken street in search of something unblurred, until you feel drawn and malnourished. your feet bleed for years as you run and turn, run and turn. you are a thief who **is** always reaching for more.

3. when you sit at the table for dinner you are asked to say grace. you close your eyes and picture an ancient, burning chaos. a star's ability to just become. nebulous clouds, a vast nothingness, and a simple yearning to exist. you feel stardust tickle your eyelids and hope to someday understand your hunger as clearly as the galaxy understood its own. you squeeze the hands of your loved ones, pray a prayer that means something to them, knowing well that the food in front of you will do **nothing** for the everlasting esurience inside of you.



## Gaunt

*Arvilla Fee*

Look how thin we've become,  
the ribs of our relationship,  
the clavicle of our complacency,  
on display for the world to see.  
When did we stop eating?  
Was it the year we decided  
to abandon our éclairs in France  
and eat salads in Pittsburg instead?  
Was it those protein breakfast shakes,  
each of us trying to out-health the other?  
Was it that year our plates never touched  
the table at the same time, hurried, half-  
eaten sandwiches as we burnt our calories  
faster than we burnt money and the time  
spent making it? Your sea-foam-colored eyes  
barely glance at me, studiously avoiding  
the gauntness of my cheeks, the way I pick  
sesame seeds from a bun. Why not sit down,  
love? Shall we share a slice of chocolate cake  
for old time's sake?



**Bowl O' Teeth**  
*Milly Aburrow*



## The Empty

*Mona Mehas*

To fill up the empty, I eat  
Living alone might have its perks  
Round every corner, sadness lurks  
A sugar high, my day complete

Phone calls and texts don't satisfy  
To fill up the empty, I eat  
My weight loss goals fall at my feet  
My body does not gratify

I shy from photos, camera  
Shows my truth, I run for retreat  
To fill up the empty, I eat  
Overweight, lacking stamina

Reach for candy, cookies, more treats  
Still lonely, I have no control  
No matter what, I won't be whole  
To fill up the empty, I eat.



## Dinner Time

*Mia Amore Del Bando*

You stripped me  
From my golden skin  
To the milk white of my bones  
To entertain you all summer

You knifed out my spine  
Salmon on a plastic cutting board  
Gutted out, deboned  
My flesh soft tangerine  
Ate up my skin without chewing  
My skeleton recycled for later  
Useful toothpicks, clean your cramped teeth

Hearty bite into my intestines  
Hanging in your hands like overcooked spaghetti  
My blood dripping off your chin  
You wipe with a sweater sleeve

Next is the lungs  
The left one blackened by tar  
It's dry and tastes like mold  
I chain smoked on the weekends

After you tolerated the mildew flavor  
The best is for last

My brain  
My lovely brain  
That gave permission for every disaster  
Allowed pain to register  
Welcomed depression as an honored guest  
Anxiety a close family friend  
Flirted with the line of men  
Who have killed me  
Including you

Best, world-class dinner you prepared  
My brain  
Trusted *you*  
You take another bite  
Sip on red wine and laugh  
Dinner time is ready

## off the leash

*Clay Waters*

I emerged  
tangled  
to a snarling at the base;

roots quickly licked raw  
a beast's throat hoarse  
from forewarning

a trunk of nerves  
paralyzed in place

images obsess:  
cars and glass  
towers and sidewalks  
laughter and blood

if I untether  
what will happen  
between now  
and the void?



## Draught

*Michael Neal Morris*

I picture my father,  
drinking at the airport  
before coming to see us,  
to steel himself before talking  
to my mother, whom he half  
still wanted. Now that we  
have buried her, I get it.

Wandering the morning,  
I, caffeine-addicted, put off  
the sun and the book.  
God, again, waits for me  
to gather enough courage  
to step away from swine.

I'm not drunk, but probably  
should be, probably  
shouldn't drive in this state:  
want, loss, suppressed terror.  
This weaponized world  
trafficking in woe, melts joy  
to make sneakers, grinds  
children to make coffee.

## leftovers

Andrea Gerada

your food is inedible. overcooked string bean caught  
like toy shovel in charred pan, you  
really shouldn't cook. no one wants you to.  
but you mutter for days about using too much salt  
and oil for deep-fried midnight cravings that we let you,  
anything to stop the taste of okra  
pouring bitter. rolling down pots that simmer.  
down the gossiping tongue.

you hide the best of them. waxy noodles behind splattered  
heinz jars where my brother can't  
reach (that's what you think) chocolate commiserating  
with carrots and *pechay*. what a sight.  
what a friendly refrigerator. we worry about your father,  
your evolutionary call to gather.  
hoard. our calendar says the world hasn't ended  
so tell me about this kitchen-bunker ruin?

you plan to starve him. i am fed, too much. your staggering  
footsteps signal bounty—yellow  
chips overflowing, spanish bread, star bread, pandan juice to  
boot. i am happy. mother's  
displeased, brother is scratching his head. but i am hit with  
regret sometimes so i wonder  
about your favorite food, your life, your lack.  
whether you ever went hungry.

## Appetite

*Annette Gagliardi*

you hunger  
for something

that nibbles—small  
bites at a time;

that eats away, slowly,  
steadily;

that chews  
ravidly, hunger blazing—

each specific craving like a  
hankering down under,

a yearning that smarts  
as it wets your eyes,

craves that certain  
something—

that certainty, unknown—  
until it is found.

## i can remember what it is to love

*Megan Diedericks*

watered down, spilled drainage –  
i hunger for the memories  
that are disguised and distorted;  
memories that fog windows up from the outside,  
where muffled silhouettes dance and extinguish.

in plastic containers, held together in haunted spaces:  
the way true honey remembers all the places  
it came from, and retains its form  
shapes my stomach into a howling wolf  
pleading for the tried and true reflections of the past,  
but all i am left with is the counterfeit flavor  
because time and emotional chemicals  
corrode my storms into flashes of lightning.

i remember everything, yet nothing  
because sometimes roses grow  
and sometimes thorns are all that remains –  
i hunger for the sensation of knowing  
that my memories are printed words  
on laminated pages,  
and not initials written in the sand  
washed away by the ocean.

but the certainty seems bleak:  
i fear all i do not remember  
and perhaps being hungry  
is good sometimes,  
because it means i can still  
feel, yearn, and  
love.

## A Mother's Hunger

*Jonathan Ukah*

Like a promise awaiting fulfilment  
My mother twirls in the tiny thread of anger,  
each time she watches the river swallow me,  
or the sun sink into my fingernails,  
or the moon collides with my forehead;  
she is the daughter of thunder  
and fire swims in her blood,  
on a landscape of burning pain,  
Excoriating her heart to a million slivers.  
when hunger feeds like a parasite,  
she is a lonely echo,  
floating over a setting sun,  
as time slowly falls away.

## THE BURDEN OF MEMORY (After Mei Yao Chen)

*George Freek*

My alarm awakens me  
like a blow, The sun drops  
through a miasmal mist,  
like a rock falling  
into a cavernous pit.  
Yet spring is the same  
as when I was a groom.  
An abundance of lilies  
and daffodils  
will still bloom.  
On this May morning,  
My wife's hollyhocks  
reach toward the sky,  
but my heart  
is like lead.  
I walk in circles  
and tell myself lies  
to try to forget the newly dead.

## Buffet

*Sean Whalen*

The offal pile in the pasture  
serves skunks, possums, hawks, and owls  
squirrels, blue jays, fox, and coyote:  
the trails are hard packed

from padded feet and raked with claws.  
There's been tails up and squabbles,  
fur and feathers flying. I'm afraid  
of what they will do

if I run out of bones.  
Will they hungrily disperse  
into the fields and streams?  
Or gather at my door

eyes little moons in the moonlight  
whetting tooth and fang on the threshold  
scrabbling and scabbling at the knob  
chirring and whirring, howling and yowling

until I get no sleep and out of madness  
offer up my own?







Content warning: Some readers may find the nature photography on page 65 disturbing. If desired, please skip to page 66.

biting  
 my [redacted] down [redacted]  
 [redacted] fingers [redacted]  
 [redacted] in [redacted]  
 My mind [redacted] the memory of [redacted] him [redacted]  
 [redacted] wax [redacted]  
 [redacted] [redacted]  
 arm [redacted] wrist [redacted] armpit [redacted]  
 [redacted] I sock [redacted]  
 me [redacted] and [redacted]  
 I [redacted] eat [redacted]  
 [redacted] myself [redacted]



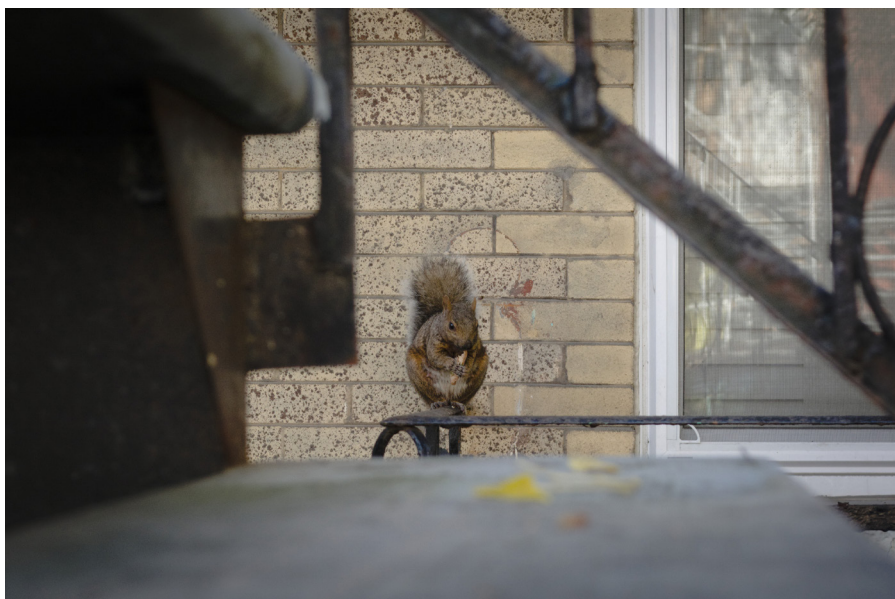
Oh, to End  
*Hazel J. Hall*

## Crumbs

*Sean Whalen*

For thirty years he saved  
every toaster crumb  
in a bread sack  
until one day  
it was a child

When they walk together  
to the store for ice cream  
it is difficult  
to protect him  
from the birds



## Hunger

*Allie Keats*

## Cathedral

Sean Whalen

Coyote wears his paws  
tracing a path from grove  
to grove. A rabbit. A mouse.  
a bite of garbage, tangy,  
dangerous, chickens,

a worn trail.

*Once under a darker sky  
he stalked campsites.  
Restless children  
asleep under stars.  
Small and lethal.*

*Sticks tipped with stone.  
Stick tipped with steel.*

Curled in the lee  
wind at his back  
sunrise colored eyes  
watch the silent house  
for the woman

to come with a bowl  
in her arms. Scraps  
of gingham arms.  
“Here chick chick chick.  
Get up pig pig pig.”

Steal a bite, a breath,  
from an altar of wood.

*Under a clearer sky  
he followed the cathedrals  
of hide, meat, bone.  
Immense, tendons,  
dangerous, tusks,*

*an unworn trail.*

Under the unsame moon  
coyote wears his paws  
on the familiar trace.  
A gingham scrap. A vole.  
An empty bowl.



## pearl-white necklace of teeth and souls

*Bailey Sims*

skeletons hang from my neck,  
an albatross of bones—clinking  
behind me, femurs and vertebrae

ribs where beating hearts once hid.  
these are my dead—my body  
my graveyard, a migraine

of mourning and longing  
and fear. echoes like wooden toys,  
wind chimes to remember

what once stood in their place.  
an albatross, guilt following  
for those who couldn't be saved,

those who i did not kill,  
but didn't keep alive, either—  
could even the bones blame me?



## February

*Britta Adams*

love tucked away  
in envelopes, deep sad hymns  
about the sea, frost-bitten earth  
sprinkled over graves. what is february  
but a catalog of ghosts  
and the panging hunger for spring?

**“I felt that silence was sweet”**

*Emily Dow Partridge Young after the death of her husband,  
Brigham Young, August 29, 1877*

**Britta Adams**

he died  
and the silence was a sweet,  
juicy plum. forbidden  
fruit found me lip-quivering.  
I couldn't help but bite  
deep. the skin snapped sour;  
it was delicious to the taste.

## I see the crow

Sarah-Marissa Marquez

through the window  
drift down somewhere

in the Cassia tree's deep green  
leaves, overtaken by clusters

of yellow blooms. I want to ask  
where it came from to escape

the wild crash of thunder. Morning  
rain spilling into afternoon. January

is washing away and I've only just begun  
to form my resolutions for this year. To

brainstorm in the paper planner I bought,  
called Garden Arches. The cool blue

softcover inspires feelings of peace.  
Much like discovering the woman

in the mirror, loving me more. She is me too,  
born with an empty womb meant to be full.

Words in her mouth. When she speaks,  
I listen. I can't control time, but I wonder

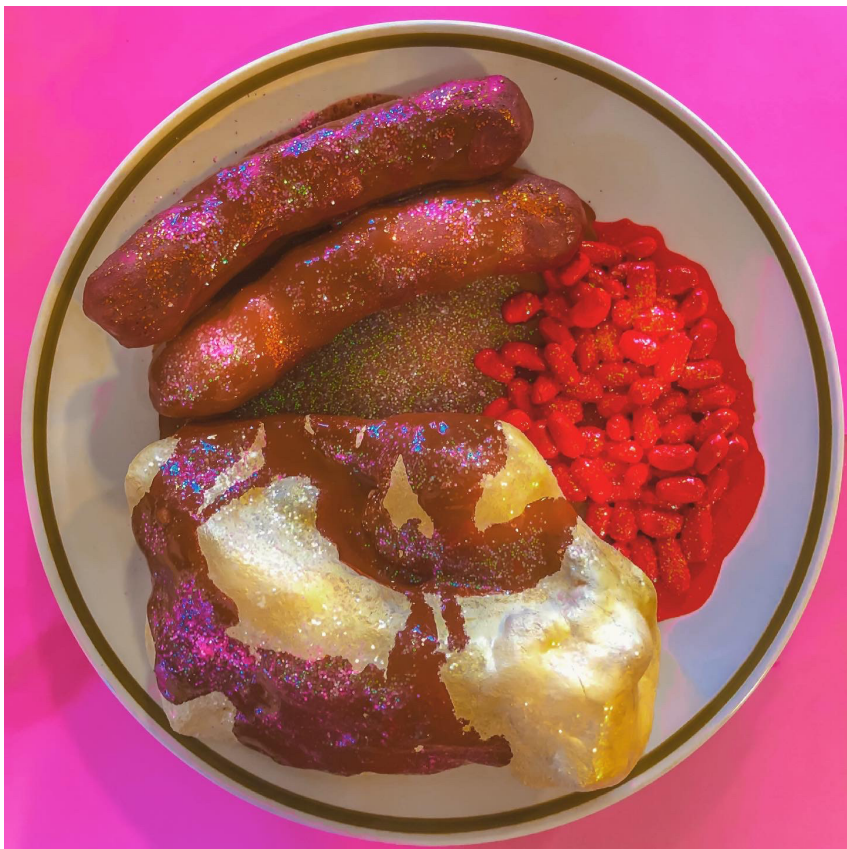
what if I stop celebrating this season  
of *soon* and act on instincts I rely on

to tell me *move now*. Reject no affection  
from you. Resist a craving for "just sex"

to have a conversation about how I feel  
last-minute gifts of flowers aren't special

anymore. And two years and counting is  
the long way out. There is a door ahead

we must walk through, together or apart.



Bangers and Mash

*Milly Aburrow*



Seduce Me  
*Milly Aburrow*

## After I Said Goodbye

*Cecil Morris*

I decided to make myself a suit  
of blackberry brambles, the thorns and leaves,  
the green heat, so much better than hair shirt,  
than the many twisting tongues of the scourge  
that reinforce failure at dawn or dusk.  
I wanted to occupy suffering,  
to embody pain outside as inside.

I decided to make myself a bed  
of rose canes and pyracantha, of thorn  
and spike, stripped of blossoms, berries, and leaves  
so I could sleep in agony ongoing.  
The numberless cuts, uncounted piercings  
not mere discomfort or evening ritual  
of flagellation, but true and constant

as the loss of our daughter, our nurse.  
I will not forget. I will not forget.  
I will not forget the doctor saying  
this is very bad or our daughter shrunk  
in silent fear, her knowledge visible  
in her eyes, her look through those final days.  
I could not save her, but I will save this.

## Friendship and Onions

*Joan Leotta*

My friend Roula lives  
so far away. We write,  
we call, but distance  
still keeps us separate.  
Tomorrow, Thursday,  
I'll buy onions  
slice them thinly, then  
sauté and scatter the caramelized  
slivers on top of lentils and rice  
in my friend's *mujadara* recipe  
and come evening  
I will eat her meal, bringing  
at least the flavor of  
our friendship close again.



## Aftermath

*Sunayana Dash*

Flesh throbbing, pounding pulse,  
the hunger gnaws her, tears her from inside out,  
hunger for what you ask,  
for warm skin against her palms, gouged from her own dirty nails,  
to remind them about kindness,  
that seeking love with open heart and spread legs  
doesn't mean being ready to be splayed open,  
to be drenched in pain worse than bruises,  
and in the years she has lived,  
the hunger has been cruel, taunting her  
with dangled frames of hope on the blurry horizon,  
always in sight, always out of reach.



## Yeats Narrates

*Rachel Johnson*

Things fall apart before they fall into place.  
At least that's the hope I cling to.  
I find myself creating beauty as a  
way to escape the unfinished project  
of remnants and chaos that is life.  
I don't want to read or watch, I don't  
want to run to fantasy, knowing  
it will change nothing.

I want to build, make the mundane  
gorgeous, as it is the only transformation  
I seem to have any control over right now.  
I sew tiny buttons onto a shirt, each  
representing a happy little pill that I am  
not swallowing. I stitch up tears in pants  
because my core has been slashed wide  
open and I can not mend it alone.

I embellish little bits of nothing and  
drench them in sentimental value while  
I drown in a downpour of anguish  
that aches and threatens to crush me.

Happiness is a hobby. It must be nurtured  
and practiced to get really good at it.  
I am dust covered and forgotten,  
a brush crusted over with glue, unwashed  
after the last time it was used.  
I watch things fall apart and try to  
build them into something new.

## Foxes come in pairs

*Kristiana Reed*

— as lovers do,  
awoken by strangled calls,  
cries of carnal pleasure,  
savagery with which they love,  
raise their young:

I covet a mother  
who will clasp the scruff  
of my neck, teach me  
how to kill, how to whine  
in ecstasy

— as lovers do,  
skulking along the embankment  
human nature caught,  
as splintered glass,  
a vixen and her mate,  
in their eyes:

grey with wisdom,  
mine bright blue,  
all the innocence I will lose,  
the innocence I will claw back,  
desperate, ignorant  
of how desire lingers

— as lovers do,  
slinking between the bins,  
garden fences, bottle strewn patios  
their forests,  
the urban sprawl,  
their legacy and lineage:

I wonder if anyone will carry  
my name, if there will be  
a cub, I did not want,  
and I'll call them Hope, or Dreams,  
or something else I've never had,  
I wonder if the growl beneath  
my tongue will ever escape

— as lovers do,  
mounting one another  
and climbing streetlights  
disguised as stars.



Into Silence We Move

*Edward Lee*

## A Greek Wedding for Gulls

*Kristiana Reed*

Oysters and mussels  
smashed / broken china:  
a celebration  
of the feast

the coming together  
feather bone and sky  
yellow beaks:  
sunlight heavy

in their songs —  
but we never visited them,  
this was the only place  
I did not share with you

the lighthouse  
sea pools of sky  
graffitied shelters  
and sand:

thank goodness we never married,  
smashed / broken china,  
thank goodness you chose to starve me,  
feather bone,  
thank goodness for clarity,  
sunlight heavy

in my songs.

## The New Bride

*Moonmoon Chowdhury*

Patience and silence sat  
at the apex  
of her trousseau, marked  
fragile in bold red.

“Eat after them”, her mother  
had reiterated, along with  
other mandates, seemingly  
conducive to the health  
and longevity of marriage.

She silenced her hunger  
pangs, patiently  
serving her marital  
family of twelve,  
an elaborate meal  
of dal, bhaajis, and curries,  
ladling generously,

Carrying forward the legacy  
of a semi-empty plate for self,  
taming the hypothalamus,  
meal after meal after meal,  
to earn the epithet  
of a worthy woman.

## A few morsels of truth

*Moonmoon Chowdhury*

The bellies of waste bins by the roadside,  
Bulge with morsels of discarded food  
While the street children with tear-stained  
Faces and sun-dappled torsos, stare at  
The rice and potatoes simmering  
In the aluminium pot on the broken stove,  
Their bellies, a cavernous pit, since dawn.

Oblivious to the concept of  
A breakfast, they can break their fasts  
Only after earning enough,  
(often by begging), to procure  
The meager ration for the day,  
The dust, the honks, and the stares,  
The regular condiments to their meal.  
They devour each stray grain,  
Washing it down with rice water,  
Knowing not when their hungry bowls  
Will receive the manna again.

When I see rotting vegetables  
Peeping from the refrigerator,  
Or my fussy child wasting platefuls  
Of pilaf, fruits, and cheese,  
Or lavish parties where fish fingers,  
Chicken nuggets, and meatballs, linger  
Orphaned, next to overstuffed humans,

I think about the famished children,  
And pledge to alleviate their suffering,  
Only to end up with the lament,  
“Can one person be the antidote?”  
Like a bloody escapist.



## Bounce

Grant Burkhardt

In school we learned drunk drivers survive in droves  
because they overcome human instinct, which is to say

they're not alive enough to know:  
when impact is imminent, *brace*.

At the collision point, their boozy body bends  
like fresh rubber, and they stumble from the scene.

On the other side, a stiffening  
so natural, and everything shatters.

That tensing, that hardening, that preparing,  
our tragic condition, it's how we tend to be.

But what would happen if we forgot it –  
if we relaxed, would we bounce?





## Into Silence We Move

*KJ Hannah Greenberg*



walk into a bank with empty pockets

*Corey J. Boren*

## The Poet

*Charles Kell*

I was turned  
into a ceramic figurine  
surrounded by glass  
& others who were also

motionless. I admit  
I was frightened.  
My limbs completely frozen.  
After a length of time—

maybe twenty minutes, maybe  
a month—I grew calm.  
I felt warm & cool,  
like a vegetable. I wrote

fifty poems in my mind,  
scrawling images with  
an indistinct stare. This  
is immortality. This is death.

## The glass Grandma wanted in Grandpa's glass

*Sylvea Wong*

Us three, we were living in Hong Kong then  
Grandma in the shared kitchen, washing our 3 bowls

Us two, in our rented room with the two round chairs, unfolded  
their vinyl faux-wood shining so un-wood-like

my seat, the bed, orbiting the dining table  
or craft desk, or bookshelf, or whatever shape it had taken in that moment

To pour his glass of Rémy Martin was a responsibility  
that both thrilled and bored me  
Grandpa teased my splashes of amber, equating it  
to Grandma's lightest pours.

But a glass half-empty will succumb when it hears pressure,  
So at six years old, I would grant to him the reluctant extra ounce of  
nettled drops

I did not imbibe on the displeasures of wanting to please  
Still, before even a single sip had sunk, he'd trade with me,  
a twisted, twinkled wink.

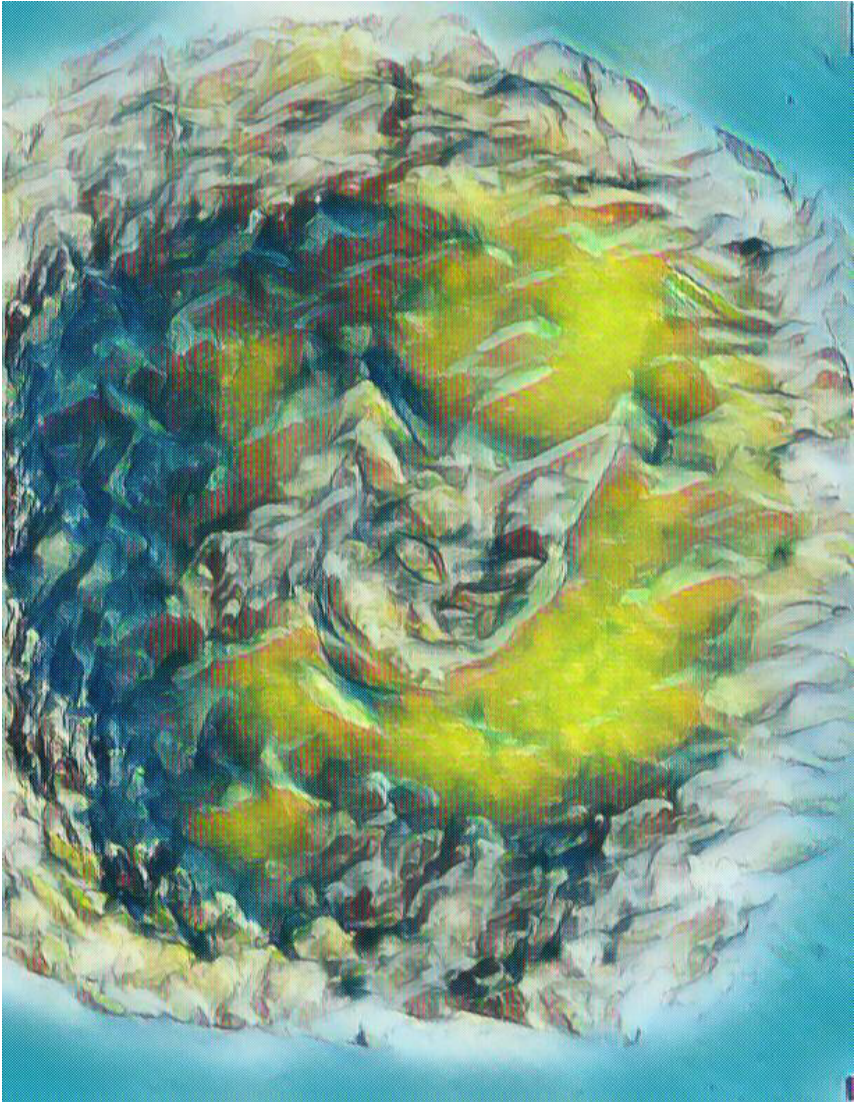
A wink I had yet to understand, but nonetheless, held the glow  
of a not-yet-buzzed, not-yet-passed, accumulated loved

Not ever would I find the warmth of that wink again,  
Not in shape, nor smell, nor heat,

or even tucked within the liminal curve at the bottom  
of an endless glass of cognac.  
Instead, decades of searching memories would teach me

All the guilt I cannot pay, still can't exchange the gilded words I wish I knew,  
or at least a chance to see that when we, us three, were in Hong Kong,  
it was us too.





Transitioning  
*Cheryl Caesar*

## Baked Goods

*Alina Zollfrank*

We weave a thread across the continent, our  
footprints: etched in cherry juice in the snow.  
When we march our sorrow      our selves      our soul  
back to the fatherland we leave a little  
in the wake for nosy rodents to find.  
It is astounding how we can      live on  
crumbs of kindness but remember the hardness.  
We are reduced to basic white sauce:      just  
water and flour. Milk is celestial. Butter a fool's errand.  
Salt in the trenches.  
And we walk  
across cratered fields and crumbled streets  
until we find a hay mound to burrow into.  
Then we go some more.  
We rocket along the trails the roosters  
have left for us      eggs, such  
brittle shells      drunken, raw      licked from chapped lips  
in the shadows of no one's barn. Is it kindness if.  
We steal from fellow humans who.  
Don't speak our language or do. I don't know if  
the shrapnel in my Opa's thigh made the journey  
faster or slower. Shrapnel can fly, before.  
It pierces its target. The butter knife cuts the potato in.  
Six pieces for eight people. Enjoy, Oma coaxes. Her  
voice a resonant well  
when we gather around the round table and stab at  
pink glass plates with dainty forks:  
cheese cake and Dresdner Stollen and cherry-apple strudel.  
In the pillowy corner, Opa's parchment hands wrap  
around a mug. He smiles into the tea and tells pungent  
jokes that have nothing to do with yesterday.

## Good Kids Eat Up

*Alina Zollfrank*

We close our eyes mid-flight drunk.  
We raise our grassy green bottles of Becherovka behind  
our backs sing good health to  
us to us! who overcame to be amidst the living  
with hardened bread heels and lonely radishes  
stuffed in holy coat pockets. We dream  
of broiled chicken wings hoisting their glossy selves  
through the howling sky straight into  
our mouths the end-all be-all where  
- with eyes cast below the ground - family  
sways lift-right-left-right in oceans of  
marigolds and lilies of the dead.  
Eat up, speak my grandparents and ladle  
another puddle of tripe onto my gagged plate.  
My guilty palate proclaims:  
I am the imperfect offspring to those  
who starved before me  
too skinny, too pale faced with daily  
embarrassments of head cheese and blood sausage  
swaddled in sauerkraut. Slathered and  
slaughtered choking caraway:  
harsh half moons an epidemic of legions  
who marched hands out to the benevolent state  
into the gaping mouths of stale Ersatzkaffee  
and gathered yellow and purple pansies  
while they panted their life away.  
Leathery toes on the ground, yeasty digits  
stuffed through gaps in the mesh. Leavened. Our  
lost eyelids hover.

## Forbidden Fruit

*Allyson Turner*

on my tongue,  
sweet juice  
suckled from the bite mark  
teeth peel dew-kissed skin  
from ripened flesh  
reveling in each sensation;  
next bite  
juice on my chin  
and I couldn't care less;  
lick my fingers,  
dripping with goodness  
and damn the consequences.



## deadflash

*Lucas Enne*

once running all brightlike halfsmiling in halfdark  
at the nothing of the far unpaved phantom roads  
all the while the rain steady falling all gorgeous  
to shroud that scene with deephappy distillation

you see you see in a thousand billion eyes  
risen lightyears above the old scene in this  
tall demonsent wilddark reminiscing on  
days you flew about the ending wildlight

just some wingflash deadflash longslaughtered  
world and light and worlds and lights  
you wish weren't gone and you wish to here  
you wish to god to send steady falling rain

beware



the

human

beware

*Alan Bern*

## Stone Proof

*Beth Gallovic*

The items I cross off  
my to-do lists  
are an effort, fifty years later,  
to win my father's love.

He spoke the language of hard work,  
financial stability—  
well, I'm not the only girl from the 70's  
who never got hugs from her dad.

Sifting one day through inky blue sadness,  
a bright white discovery—  
childish lucky stone I gave him  
before he took the bar exam.

Small stone proof—  
something I did  
mattered to him.

## One Lunch in Eastern Oregon, circa 1982.

*Alison Hurwitz*

The Vanagon parks, and they pile out in European sandals,  
pale thighs helixed with the ride; road pressed into skin and  
peeled off slowly, patterned by their pleather seats. They just paused  
their BBC mystery narration, but still, it accents them,  
modulated sentences incongruous as teacakes in this grassland.

Father surveys the scene before he peals the diner door  
for his family to walk inside. Wide shot of tiny  
wife, then Daughter, Daughter, Daughter. Their foot  
falls tap too loud against the tile. Instinctively,  
all alter stride, roll heel to toe: they library their feet.

Close up on the guy who doubletakes in Wranglers, boots,  
day-old stubble (jaw foreshadowing?) hostile gaze a burn  
before any match could catch, then, return to freeze-frame on  
the father: his bearded face, his Jewish nose, eyeglasses slid  
just a bit askew from heat. He adjusts them carefully. Watch

him take the temperature, weigh his options. His family's empty  
bellies. Youngest daughter watches every eye that watches her  
while they all sit still inside the booth, spines unnaturally straight,  
eat as quick as sparrows. Everyone goes with someone else  
to use the bathroom. The father doesn't go at all.

Easier to stall, use the next rest area. Easier to hold it  
than to rise and watch the Wrangler man rise just a minute  
after, unhurried, electric as the air before a storm. Easier  
to pay the bill. Easier to cut out now before another scene  
has gathered in the wings, twisting darkness in its buzzard beak.

Easier to drive until that diner hides  
its thickened grimace in the hills.  
Easier to keep on going  
till they're gone.

## The Poet's Mother Waits on Earth

*Alison Hurwitz*

You're out starwalking  
and I am too far from where  
you are to tether you,  
track syllables across the void  
between, or call you back, since  
love is soundless out in space.

Understand, it's as if  
you've joined a skin-optional collective:  
every organ played and opened wide,  
charted as if you were a planetarium,  
while I wait to resonate the swollen ache of you  
inside my chest: iambic dust of

comet tails and meteors,  
the craters of collision and elision  
concaved into your bones. I cannot be  
your shield, no landing pad for you to burn  
a vision into. But walking out by night  
into the field, I look for you far off,

to trace your constellation: shape  
outlined across the stretch of empty dark,  
your word-net cast and spangled with  
the ghosts of luminary bodies, your  
metaphors strange tesseracts of longing,  
astrography revisioned into music,

chords bent by time and mass and light.





glut  
*Alan Bern*



Dieta  
*Gissel Gomez*

## soil

*Claire Beaver*

dead end avenue  
return to the past and converse about dirt  
stuck to the top of our shoes  
then scratch and scratch it off  
and lick it from beneath our fingernails

yellow caution tape wraps the house  
that raised us, you tear it apart  
with your teeth and enter  
I follow behind dragging my shoes  
by their tied laces

barefoot on the dirty floor  
we haven't been inside for years  
preferring the grass and the stars  
to the yellow chicken painting  
that hangs where we ate



## Spring Palindrome

*Daniel Brennan*

1.

Spring has no sovereignty here.  
Life recedes beneath a concrete skin.  
We collide,  
we dare it to watch, to taste our pooling sweat.  
We, the honeyed jewels  
only friction and the dark can yield.  
Diamonds made by the crush of brick and steel,  
our bodies writhing against the crosstown wind.  
Cool afternoon, and my hand is guiding  
the thrust of your wants into oblivion.  
Daylight does its best to slip in through the  
tight spaces, to tell us  
how alive we are  
despite our litany of little deaths.

2.

We have no sovereignty here.  
Life comes up, roaring through cracks within  
the concrete.  
Dares us to look away.  
Dares us to miss the earth yielding below.  
On branches outside your window;  
diamonds, carried across infinite miles, made  
from the crush of ancestry. Of purpose.  
They return on the breeze and  
bury themselves over and over.  
They shut out  
the prised darkness, pulling want from our oblivion.  
Spring collides into both of us, makes us the same. Have we  
always been this way?  
It calls forth the daylight hidden  
between our little deaths.

## Momentum

*Daniel Brennan*

Is it because of my vices that I know virtue?

I eat too much, drink too  
much, and when night comes,  
I dream too much.

I have a tendency for leniency;  
no, I never learn from these bar-room  
boys and their easy-lipped ploys.

I can't say no when one door  
opens, and I can't remember  
how many I've moved through tonight;  
all I do, you should know,  
is court thresholds.

I fill my skull with party favors  
and savor the moment I crave another.

I take cabs home at four, five, six in the morning,  
and, lord, how the sun is punishing.

I rinse and repeat. I swallow my pride.  
I become justified. I become momentum. Less  
and less me, still clinging to the memory  
of boyhood.

But I do these things because without  
them, how can I know what it  
means to be good?

## Alphabet Soup

*Jane-Rebecca Cannarella*

You told me that the heartbreak resulted in writing good poems.  
The falcon flight hooked loops  
of a fake history set in stormy serif font. My life snipped  
into individual consonants and vowels,  
single letters processed in a blender and clumped together.  
The pride in your poems was lorem  
ipsum excitement, placeholders on a page. Nothing nourishing.  
The only result was lines of text,  
every word the same. Boiled and mixed:

spoonfuls of alphabet soup have made more sense.

## A Eulogy for the Dead and Dying

*Chris Atkin*

The silence at my grandpa's funeral spoke  
more about the man he was than any of his sons.  
A quiet so callous we felt it shred our skin.  
The December air made the ground every bit  
as cold and hard as the man we were about to bury in it.  
Because of Covid, we kept the service casual,  
and the congregation small. So eight sons  
circled their father's casket while their sons  
circled around them.

When my uncle Grant finally found his voice,  
he just said "Dad really loved Mom,"  
it was the only good thing left to say.  
And when his brothers finally took their turn to speak,  
sour memories puckered their lips,  
before they could shape them into grief.  
the man in the casket had died twenty years ago,  
on the night his wife had passed away, and now  
that his ghost was finally gone, the only things  
he left behind were hurtful words, and battered sons,  
and the smell of stale piss soaked into his bedroom carpet.

On the drive home my father said,  
"I wish he would've died sooner"  
and I know he really meant  
"I wish his good years had not been eaten by the bad."  
Now, I can't help but wish my father would die too,  
before the memory of the man who taught me  
to bake bread, and ride a motorcycle,  
is swallowed by the man who lost his soul  
to Joseph Smith, and Tucker Carlson,  
those prophets of a hateful God, Who'd see  
all the love flushed from my fathers veins  
and replaced with "faith," and "pride,"  
and bile.

I have a bone-deep fear of

New Year's Eve.

I

have

milk and honey.

I have twenty minutes before my shift.

I have

all this shit and

So many

knots.

I love

such things

I'd never be able to

want

A

home,

a kid

to



## Whose Hungry?

Chris Atkin

I was nine years old when she told me, *You are shaped like a jellybean!*  
She was shaped like a string bean, wispy and long,

and she mocked me through a mouthful of greens.  
I called her a *butthead* and tried to pretend the truth didn't sting.

When I got home, I ate a whole bucket of jellybeans.  
Look, I know I'm not literally the meal I had for lunch today

but my love handles still define me.  
Both a collection of lipids and a collection of stories.

Every pound on the scale,  
is another day I'd rather not remember.

Five pounds here // every time  
they thought I was stupid because of my size.

Ten pounds there // each stroll through the dairy aisle  
where a child pointed and snickered as I walked by.

Twenty pounds // that day in the Walmart parking lot she told me  
if I was just fifty pounds lighter, she might actually be able to love me.

Forty pounds // the day we found out my mother had cancer,  
an inoperable tumor latched to her colon, hugging her spine.

One hundred pounds. Ten years later,  
when we found out she suffered for nothing.

The tumor was a benign cyst  
and the doctor milked us for money,

I swelled with rage when I realized  
the nights she spent bent over a toilet

and days she spent caged in a coffin of blankets  
and flop sweat, fighting off that chemical cure did nothing.

She took pills for pain, while I threw back the leftovers  
to fight off sadness and fear, while the threat of loss  
ticked up the needle on the scale until it broke.  
Hunger swallowed me whole.

I'm buried // beneath the weight of days I'm dying to forget,  
mountains of me, standing between the man I am and the man I want to be.

Just once, I'd like to feel light. Just once,  
I'd like to shed this chainmail I've woven out of red vines and self-loathing.

Just once, I'd like to renounce the darkness I've swallowed  
fistful by fistful and feel the warmth of the sunlight I lost

when I turned my back on the east.  
Hey, uh // is anyone else here, hungry?

## Divorced Eggs

*Lorette C. Luzajic*

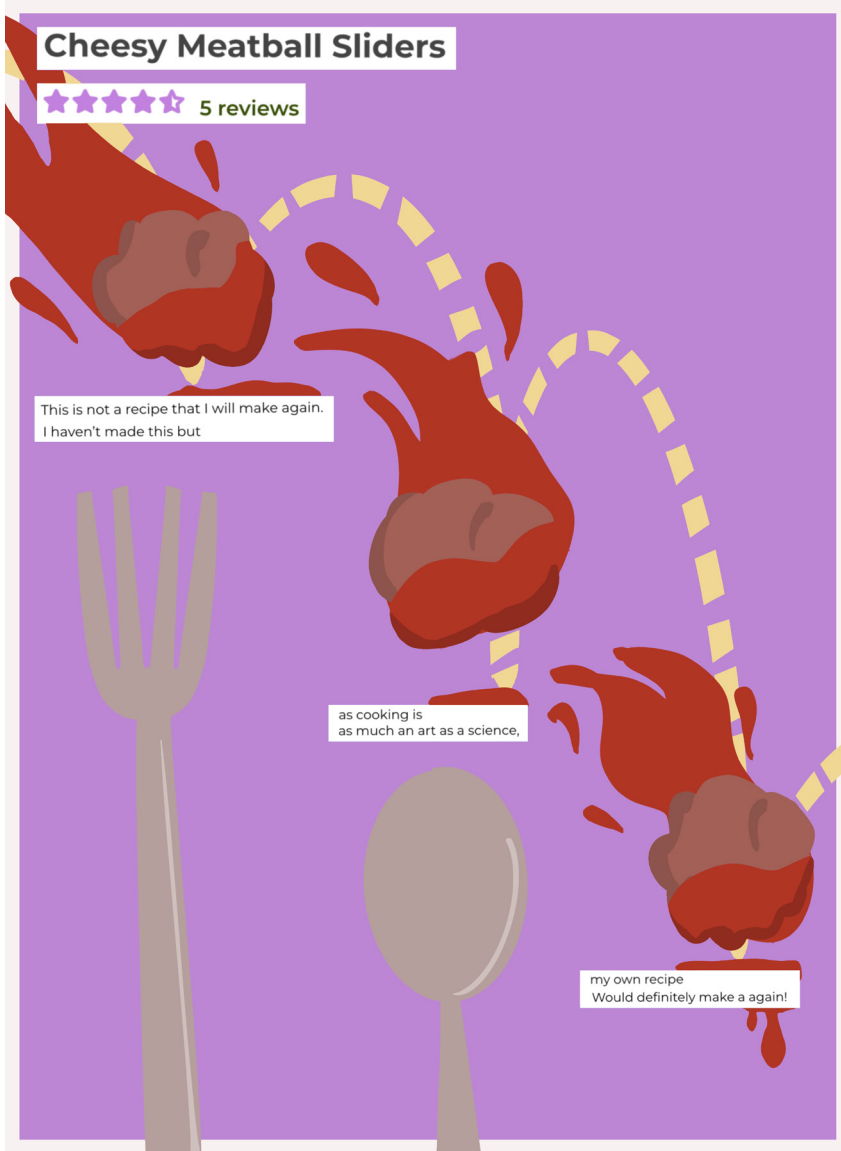
The first snow always made us homesick. I loved the gorgeous glow of autumn, with everything green battling the red world, like huevos divorciados. But when the frost fell, we all wanted to be back in Aguascalientes, where November mornings were mild but the heat at noon was enough to suffocate you. Mother heaped salsa verde on her plate and salsa rojo on Father's, and she knew I liked lots of both, with pools of tomatillo, chiles, and egg yolks over potatoes. Father ignored his plate and stared for a long time into his coffee. His sadness was different from ours. It was something that rode him until he was weary, something you couldn't see but you felt the heaviness of. Mother said it could happen to us if we learned to think too much. She warned us never to ask him what was on his mind, because he would tell you. Father was the silent type, unless given an invitation. What are you thinking, Luis? she asked, sawing a small slice of chorizo with a butter knife, forgetting for a moment her own caution. What am I thinking? Father repeated, raising dark river eyes from his mug. I'm thinking, what could drive a man to put a plastic bag over his head to stop his breathing? What could make someone do something they could never come back from? And he rose laboriously to his feet, pushing away his eggs, and shuffled through the kitchen doorway into the hall.



## Ground

*Ken Farrell*

The longing: to be a gasping muscle  
milled beneath another gasping muscle,  
both fighters' sweats and bloods blended, eyes stung,  
mouths dripped into and dripping. Yet one doubts,  
wonders why she's chosen to chew on this  
anxious attrition instead of red mud.  
Why eat longing and not weed-split asphalt?  
Like loaved clay, the answers can't be swallowed.  
Like ground, they sometimes fault, consume, but won't  
be consumed. Over time the answers lie  
like silt, layering all. Their weight enfolds  
her until she's ground, a tattered mountain  
buried under seas so blue so boundless  
empires of fish get lost in the rocking



## Cheesy Meatball

*Daphne Fauber*

## Calling

*Ken Farrell*

You can measure calamity simply  
by counting: floats in leaky bullboats;  
brambles, arrows, bears that draw blood;  
people – some dead – left behind;  
the days hunger shrivels you  
to tattered, skin-spindled sticks;  
the day hunger bests you  
and you eat your horse; or count  
the days you sleep in salt-flat  
graves of your own digging so  
you can trudge thirty miles  
by night. Then balance all scars  
against your foregone conclusion:  
*If I live, I'll be back next season*

## Field notes from Ridley Creek

*Mellisa Pascale*

The sluggish flow of creek water in June—  
somehow, it always makes me think of you,  
just buying time, with clear blue eyes, for I  
did not yet know of her. Did I let you  
slip through my fingers? Or were you checking  
that nothing slipped through yours? From tree to tree,  
red cardinals peruse the mulberries.  
“I’m sorry, but I have to trust my gut,”  
you said, in text, which seemed to be the wrong  
internal organ, for this sort of thing.  
Sweat trickles down bare legs and stings the spots  
where brambles took a bite—those thorny fucks,  
like you turned out to be, when you said let’s  
“stay” friends, and never spoke to me again.

## Hunger

*Jenne Micale*

There is a holiness that you can't speak.  
Words touch the lips, after all, and this is  
too pure a thing for a mouth. The bones branch  
into winter trees—holy and empty,

birdless and stark, your heart fluttering wings  
against the cage of your ribs. Your thin hands  
are working the lock. You will free it and  
yourself from the dirt of this earth. Holy

the air against your skin! You bend yourself  
around emptiness, a crescent moon,  
a tide drawn out, an empty shell whistling  
in the sand. You're measuring your food again,

giving it to the compost or the dog.  
When the fog wreathed your head and spun the room  
you greeted the hunger as a ghost bride  
lying with her in bed, sick and holy.

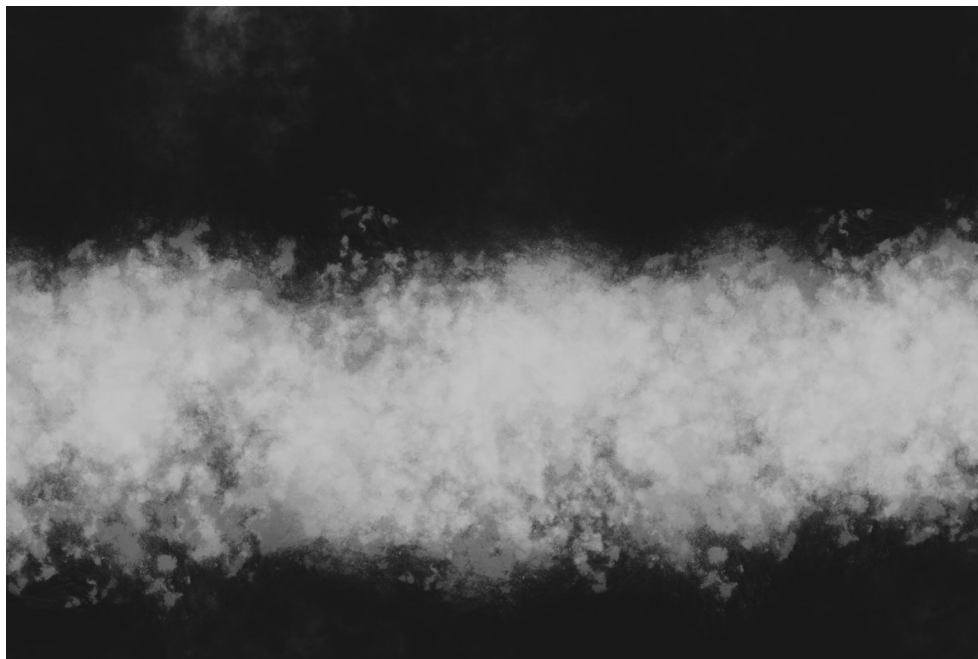
What is love compared to this purity?  
You were filthy with love, feasted and full  
as a moon. You turn from that orbit,  
laugh as they try to press clay to your shape

with desperate hands, trying to shore up  
the ebbing earth. You offer a glass smile,  
shining and fragile. You're a spirit now  
and need only the wind and emptiness,  
and damn the love that seeks to make you whole



## Rural Ride

*Dave Boyle*



## A Gentle Wound

*Edward Lee*

## The pit

*Jenne Micale*

That's me always, isn't it? Greedily  
tasting the scene, running my tongue over  
every part, salt on skin, the softness of  
a palm against a mouth, cat fur, sugar

straight from the jar. Give me every berry  
even the poisonous ones bitter-crushed  
and I wonder why I puke my guts out  
so often, head bowed to the tile, my hair

swinging over the toilet rim. Why not  
the grass, I ask? The crystal slivers of  
broken glass along with the peach preserves  
why not stones and every person I see

tumbling into that aching pit ink-black  
at the center of me, the one where you  
can drop a rock and never hear it hit  
the one without a bottom, this hunger

to pull everything in and make it part  
of me. They say gravity warps the well  
of space; there's no bottom to that, either.  
Drop it, listen: It doesn't make a sound.



## Making Poutine Rappee With My Husband

*Rhonda Melanson*

Let us skin those spuds naked  
till they look like heavy moons:  
whole  
halved  
quartered. Let us dream  
about being grated to barest bits,  
how we can get raw,  
ballsy even  
with those slippery shavings,  
sliding in  
the wiggly salted pork,  
tasty on the tongue!  
We can light fires  
under tin pot oceans,  
our little worlds  
boiling foam around their curves.  
We are a plateful of universes,  
our rounded bellies  
swollen enough to touch  
  
again, again  
skin on skin.



## London Scene

*Dave Boyle*



## Road to Freedom

*Dave Boyle*

## Acceptance

*Yuan Changming*

The moonrise later. The sea becoming muted  
Among foamy noises. All clouds scared away as  
Myriad shapes of thought sagged in blue dreams. &  
Inspirations glisten beyond the mirage like the moment  
That hangs in midair. A dawn with brilliant hopes is to  
Break for us as it once did for the last generation of earthlings  
With the first rays penetrating the bloated bodies of robots  
Or godlings. Whoever survives must have adapted to  
Or embraced the changes that are constantly evolving from  
Their own innermost beings, evaporating like the seawater

**Irony. Paradox. [English Media for Thought Pattern]**

*Yuan Changming*

There's neither egg in an eggplant  
Nor ham in a hamburger  
Much less any pine or apple in a pineapple

Just as English muffins were not invented  
In England, so French fries did not originate in France

Likewise, a guineapig is neither  
From Guinea nor is it really a pig

While boxing rings are actually square  
Quicksand always takes you down slowly

All writers do write, but fingers never fing  
A teacher must have taught, while a preacher could never  
Have prought; a vegetarian eats vegetables only  
And a humanitarian eats nothing but humans?

## Hidden Manifesto of *Stability* vs 稳/*wen*/

Yuan Changming

These two nouns are mutually translatable

Between English and Chinese, there's

No doubt about that, but no translator

Knows the most fundamental difference deeply

Rooted between two civilizations:

In English: only when you're *able* to join the *table*

Can you make sure something remains stable

Whereas

In Chinese: to achieve 稳/*wen*/ or *stability* means to

Produce *grain in a hurry*, or the other way around

## The Crow

*Steve Denehan*

It hit the grill of the car  
I did not feel it, barely heard it  
but it was big, meaty  
for a crow

it flew as though catapulted  
from the roadside ditch  
a ribbon of night sky  
on a breezy sunny day

inert in the rear-view mirror  
one wing, obviously broken  
pointed up, straight up  
at what had been left behind  
what had been stolen

I drove on, tried to put it aside  
tried not to think  
about hatchlings waiting  
starving

hours later, on the way home  
I looked across  
a thousand tyres  
had rendered it an oily black paste

four or five crows stood around it  
as if in discussion  
picking at what was left

as I drove past  
they flew away

## A Poem to My Father

*Steve Denehan*

When you sit at the dinner table  
your plate half empty  
your mouth half open  
your fork suspended  
halfway

when you stand in the garden  
motionless  
just yards from the apple trees  
the bucket in your hand  
swaying

when you sit on the passenger seat  
silently unsure  
of where you are  
just minutes  
from home

when you walk into a room  
to stand there  
on the verge of a question  
a pronouncement  
on the verge of who you used to be

when you put your palm against her cheek  
as though she were a sacred thing  
for seconds  
for minutes  
forever

when we sit  
across from one another  
talking, like we used to  
when your voice trails off  
when your eyes glaze over

where is it, that you go?



## breakfast

*Jonathan Chan*

exhaust thickens as the film  
on the skin, fingers atop  
the crisp crust, browned by  
charcoal, pressed, sealing the  
viscous green, pale yellow.

two shells shatter, whisked  
in a spiral of deft powder  
and a dark ooze. the treacle  
over the rim and around  
the throat, puddle lapped  
from a saucer.

nearby, he sits leaning,  
fingers curled around  
a frothing glass. further  
aside, she pulls off her  
mask, famished  
by the sun. golden  
springs. gelatinous pucks.  
grains packed as a cup.  
sated after the rims  
whirring down the bend  
and around an icy truck.

thin paper crushed, like  
foil. devices shudder as a  
morning abyss. the red folds  
of an umbrella begin to wilt.  
the lines furrow into beads  
of sweat. chatter suffuses  
in the concrete heat. they  
call it good here, they call  
it good there. they reflect  
on a time to meet.

## The Black Hawthorn

*Danielle Guthrie*

I stand atop the golden hill:  
the wiry heads of scotch broom fills the clearing,  
their tendrils reaching out to the sky,  
fingers twisting under the sun,  
their tips scorched and brown and begging to be set ablaze.

The lone tree stands out – a defiant ink blot.

The Black Hawthorn.

With its tall canopy of dark leaves,  
the branches are low with pale flowers,  
disguising inch-long thorns.

Even from across the clearing,  
the blossoms' reek corrupts the air:  
spoiled spices and molding meat.

Humans lay around its base,  
their naked backs leaning upon the trunk,  
asleep underneath its starry canopy.  
Though some chests breathe in the foul air without grimace,  
some stopped rising long ago.

The fetid smells settles on my skin, an oily coat,  
before I collapse onto my knees at the first body.  
Laying my hands on its stomach,  
the skin tears and deflates under my fingernails,  
a huff of breath,  
imploring.  
I oblige.

The first fistful, meat oozes between my fingers;  
wriggling worms after a downpour.  
I force it inside my mouth, maggots and all,  
swallowing its sour tang,  
feeling the lump move down my throat before  
plopping into my stomach.  
I reach back inside the body,  
pulling out another clenched fist,  
then another,  
devouring,  
slowly,  
until only femurs, vertebrae, and teeth are left;  
scattered blossoms in the shadow of the tree.

## For the Italian Stonecarvers of Barre, Vermont

*Tad Tuleja*

Hunger brought you here  
from the foothills of your native Lombardia  
to granite Vermont you came  
seeking work, *pane sicuro*,  
to keep food on the table  
and landlords from the door.

In Viggiù you worked outdoors,  
your *scalpello* catching the Milanese sun.  
In Barre the weather ruled,  
power drills vaporizing stone in airless rooms  
surrendering you at fifty  
to the *mal d'America*.

Trapped in that silica storm,  
did you dream of chestnut tagliatelle, Grana Padano?  
Did you read *Il Proletario*, sing “Bandiera Rossa,”  
ask Clemente patron of carvers to carry you home  
before the fog had swallowed  
your last breath?

Labor choked you silent  
but the song of the *scalpellini* echoes still  
across your adopted country  
from angels in churchyards, Madonnas in grottoes,  
olive branches encircling cenotaphs,  
fish and Cupids gracing bistro fountains.

*Pane sicuro* you sought  
and in seeking brought beauty  
to places where they do not know your name,  
do not understand that stone was bread,  
have not heard the chanting of labor’s children  
or the sound of granite dust taking a life.



sampson and delilah  
*Edward Michael Supranowicz*

## I Dreamt of You Again Last Night

*Phil Eggers*

Orange, orange peel, burnt orange, blood orange,  
Lemon, lemon pith, lemon rind, lemon peel, lemon-lime spritz,  
Pepper, clove, oak, smoke,  
Horse blanket, hay,  
Honeysuckle, honey, honey dew, cantaloupe,  
Caramel, coffee, toffee, chocolate,  
Mocha, mango, marzipan,  
Lemon grass, wet grass, green grape, red apple,  
Baked apple, apple blossom,  
Blackberry, blueberry, raspberry, strawberry, cherry, black cherry,  
Prune, raisin, plum,  
Peach, pear, apricot,  
Kiwi, kumquat, tangerine,  
Green apple, red grape, ruby red grapefruit,  
Banana, butter, butterscotch, bubble gum, brown sugar, band-aid, barbeque  
Pomegranate, pumpernickel, pretzel, tequila, rye  
Bread, bread crust, toast, burnt toast,  
Cranberry, cracker, flour, flower,  
Damp, dank, moss, maple syrup, milkshake, musk,  
Beechwood, butternut squash,  
Pine tree, pine sap, San Francisco sourdough,  
Cinamon, sage, sesame seed,  
Clementine, cardboard, chamomile,  
Parsely, paper, rosemary, thyme,  
Chai tea, candied yams, chardonnay,  
Basil, biscuit, jasmine, juniper,  
Marmalade, marshmallow, mushroom, mint,  
Fig, fir, goat fur,  
Date, donut, dragon fruit, graham cracker, granola  
Walnut, chestnut, peanut, pecan, pancake, pistachio,  
Almond sliver, acetone,  
Licorice, leather, hibiscus, hazelnut,  
Pineapple, papaya, passion fruit, plantain,  
Toasted coconut, tobacco, coconut shavings,  
Broccoli, green onion, star fruit, star anise,  
Cornflake, sweet corn, cream corn, tomato soup,  
Bourbon barrel, brandy barrel, rum barrel,  
Cedarwood, Cheerio.

I dreamt of you again last night.

## The Death of Nihilism

*Phil Eggers*

Have you stood between cars on the N train as it lumbers across the Manhattan Bridge at midnight in late July after leaving her party early for fear that you might be overstaying your welcome only to take up smoking again? Have you quit your job at the French bistro on Atlantic Avenue, rated most child-friendly brunch spot in Brooklyn, and emptied your savings and bought a one way ticket to Denver and gotten in stranger's cars with stranger's dogs just to come crawling home three weeks later in order to sell comedy tickets in Times Square? Have you eaten magic mushrooms and sat alone at Shore Park gazing at the water towards Staten Island listening to Phillip Glass on a pair of Bluetooth headphones you stole out of the lost and found only to be sucker punched in the face by a teenager who demanded nothing more than your confusion? Has an open mic broken your heart? Has karaoke mended it? Have you closed work an hour early to flee to The Owl Farm on 9th Street and work on a poem heavy with repetition to dull down the anxiety and anticipation of being dumped by your girlfriend of two months who insists on meeting up for lunch tomorrow only to renounce Nihilism?

## waxing poetic with my best friend

Brigid Cooley

i've been low recently  
when i say low, i really mean lonely  
attempting to curb sad feelings by learning new things,  
like how to change the brake pads on my car  
and ways to say i love you in different languages

*sometimes being single feels like sitting outside on a cold curb  
under a dark sky in a residential neighborhood  
i can hear laughter coming from parties  
hosted inside houses with picket fences  
lined up orderly along the street*

*i can just barely feel the warmth radiating off fires blazing beneath mantels  
adorned with engagement photos and wedding invitations  
still, i stay outside, despite knowledge of unlocked doors  
and welcome mats. not exactly exiled  
but not yet reveling over an invitation to join either*

my best friend listens quietly through the phone  
i can imagine her furrowed brow and patient eyes  
the way she must be tilting her head to the side  
while assessing my melancholy monologue with precision and care  
she is well familiar with the fears stashed inside my busybody brain

after affirming my feelings, she takes creative liberty  
changes the analogy so that i am taking a long walk instead  
tells me i have never been one to sit around and wait  
and also that most people don't heat their houses with fireplaces anymore  
even if they have one



she hypothesizes the sky must be beautiful outside  
all wintry and full of stars  
reminds me how much i enjoy watching breath turn to smoke  
whenever temperatures dip down toward single digits  
says i look good with flushed cheeks and warm clothes

*sometimes, you've just got to feel the feelings,  
even when they suck. especially when they suck.  
it doesn't mean you're empty — you're far from it.  
besides, you've always been so resourceful. if this scenario were real,  
you outside and alone, i bet you'd pick up useful things along the way.*

while she talks, i glance at myself in the mirror  
notice how green my eyes look after crying  
watch my sadness start to subside as she  
makes a joke about our middle school dances  
and childhood crushes

once we hang up, i lay across my  
unmade full-sized bed and crack a wry smile  
because i can sleep on whichever side i want.  
later on, i'll make myself a cup of tea and read until 2 a.m.  
tomorrow, the sun is sure to shine.

## Final Mouth

*Elizabeth Porter*

For a moment, your grave was an open mouth, and I considered entering the gasp ahead of you.

Don't I always get home before you - to pre-heat the oven or start the roomba or pull tight sheets

over our sagging mattress? Only a hundredthousand heartbeats ago it was Sunday and you were procrastinating some report or work assignment and I was too busy stirring my own trouble to notice that the hair around your ears had grown too long and your favorite shirt was thinning. But now, a dozen lacquered shoes slow-march to the terrible pit and now we are all closing it and now it is a soft mattress of locked darkdeep soil. And now that moments are unstrung between us, the parallel divide between our bodies is a haunted hunger.

## Porn

*Paul Hostovsky*

My cat Howard  
looking  
out the window  
at the sparrows  
in the hedge,

his nose pressed  
to the screen,  
his mouth opening,  
twitching  
with desire,

his claws extending,  
retracting,  
the whole of his  
attention  
taut, poised,

pointing  
at all the winged  
bodies coming  
and going.

# Cinnamon Toast

★★★★☆ 4.5

Didn't knock my socks off,  
I could tell something was off  
and not right.



Thanks anyway though.

Cinnamon Toast

*Daphne Fauber*

## at the end of the day

*Brianna Cunliffe*

I can't unname our children.  
stones we left as gifts in the hollow of that river pine- it will never  
spit them out.  
my old wishes may unmake me  
but still, they clatter, ever  
down to the bottom of that cracked fountain

my gutter of a heart swells with clogged rain  
paying for its refusal to let autumn  
slip away. now the sweet leaves are rotted tyrants  
they will not let me  
flow on

still get zillow alerts from the slice of the mountains we chose  
foreclosures, mostly, tilting towards inevitable ruin.  
but I would have knelt to tear at rotted plywood, hacked  
kudzu from choked chimneys, from that blood moon until the turn of the  
century  
salvaged anything. everything. off those good bones we grew together.

now, geography, momentum, slant the light. the windows still shine  
tenderness, abiding, in that timber frame. you, as ever, multiplying, within  
down in the valley, now, I look in, starving from the  
unfolding road  
at the richness of every love we ever made  
that is now beyond my reach

## groundskeeper starving

*Brianna Cunliffe*

There are no tomorrows to be found  
    in that satin soil, that  
        crystal fountain  
nothing in that perfumed  
    dirt that could  
        see you through the night  
            sate any sort of hunger, even the  
                ones of the mind

It's an anemic kind of beauty that  
    snarls its comparison  
        like a sneer around the  
neighboring weeds,  
        there is  
    nothing to eat, here

That is your museum, your  
    performed      mutilation, a culling, a  
        hoarding, a desert of tenderness

I will not call it  
a garden



Feasted

*Alan Bern*

## All I want to do is

Caroline Reigel



Walk through a gust  
Of deep-fried air. Tear at  
An onion ring. Peel the skin, suck  
The translucent bone, animalistic and  
Alive with salivation. Take you to a grassy knoll.  
*There there*, I think, as I gently brush my fingers against your  
Forehead, your head in my lap. Your body to the moon. I wait  
For her buttery goodness to laminate you. Do you feel  
The cosmos pulsing through you? Do you feel the pull of  
Gravity inflating your bones? *When you laugh*,  
*Can it be real?* I will drag you across the lawn, down the hill,  
Your body leaving a snail trail through the tall tendrils.  
I drag you through the gravel of parking lot  
Where bright headlights blind me as I squint and pull.  
Kids run around, cars move with hesitation, doors slam  
Behind and in front. I make my way through the bodies,  
Past the carnival. Your shirt riding up, rocks scratching your skin.  
I hold your feet firmly against my armpit. Your body scooping gravel.  
Your brilliance a steady bumpity bumpbumpbump bumpity bump bump  
As it rolls unsteadily back and forth, back and forth again. I breathe heavily  
As I drag you. I am hung up on the idea of breathing pleasure into you.  
I am hung up on the idea of hanging you on a clothesline so that you can feel  
The summer night's warm breeze. Clipping a clothes hanger to the fat of  
Each shoulder so your feet could swing. I'd hang you out in January  
If that is what your brilliance would need. The dead of winter. The frost of the first  
Freeze. Your eyelashes glistening. Come spring, I would hang you out  
Next to my tanks and jeans, and let the scent of fresh clothing  
Arouse you from your daily stupor. I am hung up on the idea  
Of hanging onto *Nothing can last forever*.  
I am hung up on the idea of shrinking my body, of making  
A slice to your toe, stretching the skin and climbing in. Of making room  
For my body in yours. Rolling my shoulders against the tendons,  
Burrowing my way further in, sniffing and smelling and taking it all in so that  
I could know what it is to be in your labyrinthine machination.  
I would make my way around. I would explore. I would take a break  
On a cell, pull the backpack from my back, have a snack — trail mix  
And a cheese stick. I would take my time in you. Let you know  
What it is to have more life in you. Let you feel the pricking annoyance  
Of my determination in you. And when I make it to your brilliance,  
You would be sound asleep. You would drool me out of your



Cavernous mouth, let me ride the waterslide of your slackened jaw, and  
 I would pray that you would awaken with the zest of knowing what it is  
 To feel alive in yourself.  
 Large again, I would watch you wake. Feel your matter all over me.  
 I am hung up on making this work. I am hung up on ridding you of  
 Your scorned indifference, of your hauntings. How deep into you  
 Must I go? How far must I drag you? How long must I lay you  
 Beneath the glory of the moon? I tie you to a hand truck.  
 Let your arms dangle free so that I can hold one of your meaty hands. So that  
 I can show you the exhilaration of waving at a stranger, of  
 Moving your arms back and forth to slice through the wind, to  
 Move your body swiftly, to get your heart racing. I  
 Cut the rope and fling you forward. Watch your body stumbling,  
 Falling, crashing, crumpling. To learn again the embarrassment and tears  
 Of a knee scraping. Of worrying that someone saw you. Of getting up  
 Cautiously. Of having someone clean you. A tweezer to your knee,  
 A pebble removed. Hydrogen peroxide bubbling. A Band-Aid. A kiss.  
*When it stings, when it soothes, can that be a tender moment that you cling to?*  
 I am hung up on the years. I drag you to the eighties.  
 I smooch your foot into a roller skate. Smooch the other. Push my weight  
 Down on your shoulders, down on your hips, down  
 Until I feel your feet slide in. I tie the laces, catch my breath. I  
 Throw you over my shoulder and glide over the popcorn carpet,  
 Past the slushy machine, onto the roller rink. Your skates clatter  
 To the floor as I set you down. I stand behind you, grab you by your hips —  
*Your beautiful hips* — and we jolt around the rink under the  
 Glimmer of the disco ball. We stumble into line. When it is our turn  
 I kick you square in your tailbone, your strapped-in feet  
 Rocket across the concrete, your back bent backwards ninety degrees  
 Uncomfortably, your eyes — *your beautiful eyes* — boring into me.  
 I push you hard one more time and you clamber beneath the limbo pole,  
 Your body contorted. *Do you remember what it is to feel this childhood thrill?*  
 Your back — snaps. You lie — motionless. Take my turn. Take  
 You by the hips, take you by the torso, throw  
 The pieces of you over my shoulders. Unlace  
 Your skates, let them clatter. Pad away in my  
 Socks, try again tonight and tonight and  
 Tomorrow and tomorrow, searching,  
 Ravenously/pleadingly/relentlessly/  
 Always searching, for the next  
 Marrow to suck  
 And swallow



## Last Day Salad

*Sue Fagalde Lick*

You can't take it with you,  
you can't let it rot, you  
bought too much and you're leaving,  
so you dump it all on a paper plate—  
you don't want to do dishes again--  
and you shovel it in from left to right.  
Nothing left in the refrigerator now  
but a biscuit for breakfast, a single egg.

It's Sunday night, when your mom  
used to serve well-roasted beef,  
mashed potatoes, canned peas  
and chocolate cake frosted with Cool Whip,  
or—if your father was in the mood—  
you ate barbecued steak in the patio  
with potato salad, beans, lemonade,  
and ice cream sundaes for dessert.

But Mom's not cooking anymore.  
Your dad is broken and alone,  
living in a nursing home. You're going  
to sit beside his wheelchair while  
he eats chicken on rice, carrot sticks,  
maybe a tiny bite of cake,  
water, juice and milk lined up  
like shots of whiskey on a bar,  
aides checking off every bite or sip.

When he asks what you ate,  
you'll say, "A salad," not mentioning  
it was three inches high, a foot across:  
lettuce, apples, spinach, tomatoes,  
cauliflower, cucumbers, carrots,  
and chunks of ham with fat attached,  
soaked in low-fat zesty Italian dressing  
with garlic-flavored croutons,  
washed down with a glass of wine.  
No, you don't want to tell him that.

## Ripe

*Sue Fagalde Lick*

My father's refrigerator's empty,  
the cupboards bare, shopping  
too hard with his failing heart,  
his legs that won't obey his mind.  
He lets supplies run low rather  
than asking someone else for help.  
He says he has enough.

I wander the backyard orchard  
past rusty buckets, hanks of hose,  
weeds brushing against my knees.  
His berries have turned to stone, but  
the lemon, orange and cherry plums  
hang heavy with fruit, a feast ignored,  
rotting on the hard clay ground.

At the sink, I peel a plump orange,  
bite into its bursting lobes,  
let the juice run down my chin,  
thank God for this blessed fruit  
of a tree I bought one Father's Day,  
a small gift in a cardboard box.  
It grew and bore fruit, never picked,  
until today when I needed to eat.

## Becoming

*Amy Devine*

as you split the muscles at the core of me I can  
feel myself falling into rounded, ripe halves. I can  
sense you gathering the pieces with the least seeds,  
with the whole flesh, but I think I can  
swallow what you leave behind.  
using the seeds in my stomach to grow half of me back and  
feed you from my core again - yes  
I can.  
I can.

## **Anchorage**

*Amy Devine*

There are people who march solo across the deserts of Antarctica.  
People - human beings of flesh and clumsy nervous systems - who choose  
to isolate and expose  
and  
step from tents into landscapes where there isn't even life enough to die.  
I hear this and I think that we are a foolish creature.  
I think 'at least birds migrate for a better view of the sun'.

But. I suppose -

I have felt a fear greater than death, greater than no-life, grip the heart of me.  
I have heard the storms and the howls threatening just beyond my horizon  
and forgot what a sunrise was.  
It is a foolish, foolish thing; to be this afraid and make breakfast,  
answer phone calls,  
scuff shoes on linoleum, bite into just-ripe pears.

When asked the secret to her solo journey across Antarctica, one woman said:  
"Just get out of the tent.  
Every day. Just get out of the tent."

## More Than You Can Chew

*Toby Devens*

Bite off more than you can chew,  
my heart's permission, my mouth's temptation.  
Taste at least the headlong dash into  
defiance of the limits  
life's savory enrichment.

It could be caviar, how cannibalistic, or  
medical school or mushrooms that tantalize with flaring gills alarming poison,  
but still delicious going down and maybe you were meant for earth.  
You can swallow, you can spit that novel you were doomed to write  
the paged exposure of your luscious grand desires,  
the hungry urges, the gourmet fears. If you choke you choke,  
but you might not. To never know what you can bear or breed,  
to never try or test or feed on possibilities, for me too sour a choice, impossible.  
For you, Open Wide.



## Studying in the Library

*Zhihua Wang*

A boiled egg,  
a banana,  
and a steamed bun

tucked in my backpack  
weigh as much  
as my books and laptop.

After reading a chapter,  
finishing a critique,  
or drafting a paper,

I feed myself one,  
like a master  
training a dog.



Green Onions  
*KJ Hannah Greenberg*



**Digging in My Poems in the Morning**  
*Zhihua Wang*

Urged by the thought to please my heart  
and placate my blood, I open old lines  
and jot down new sprouts, like Narcissus  
viewing himself in the mirror, like a hearty

breakfast waiting on my table: honey,  
bread, soy milk – a feast after fast, nectar  
nourished by instinct and introspection.  
Ideas weighted, voices chewed, words

combed smooth with sheen. Hands knock  
them into keepsakes of black and white,  
like fresh produce on display, like what  
I care for is tended. Like applying lotion

on my face, my neck, I've touched  
my every nook and cranny, inside and out.

## They Call Me Desert

*Linea Jantz*

I curl my curves along the mountains' jagged back  
Press my open mouth against the flicker of their pulse  
Volcanic

The shattered sun floods an endless sky  
The deer staggering, stumbles  
Does not rise  
Hopping crow, I eat its eyes  
Obsidian beak a scarlet lullaby  
To Death cuddled newborn in my lap

Sagebrush breathed into woman walking  
My leather palms seldom greet the rain  
My roots stretch deep  
Follow the water



## STARVING

*Susan Alkaitis*

Shera started it.  
It spread  
like fire,  
a pyroclastic  
gossip flow.  
My sister and  
the other girls  
admired the way  
her legs hung  
under jeans,  
bracelets jangled  
on wrist bones.  
She taught the art  
of gorging.  
Her newfound  
prominence led  
to a course correct  
and she began  
lecturing on  
the elegance  
of depravation.  
It spread  
like wintercreeper,  
decaying the mortar  
like the smoking  
epidemic among  
juniors last winter.  
Bad seeds  
in wind,  
Shera extolled  
the infinite  
control it afforded.  
She said  
you could taste it.  
My sister followed  
her flame  
and she and Shera  
starved together.

## PART ONE

*Susan Alkaitis*

You press your fingers  
into the side of the tree.

We press our backs  
against the bark.

Your calves are tracked  
with dirt. I wonder if

I will return home with dirt  
under my nails.

Knots of root roll out  
making the ground uneven.

I cannot fix an object  
against the horizon and

I cannot imagine finding  
this tree again. So this is

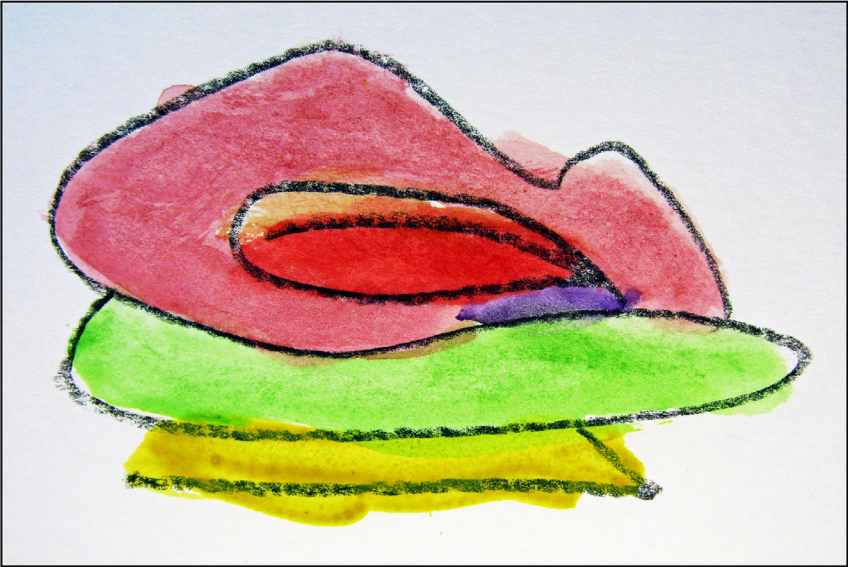
wanting in parts. And so  
this is the first part.



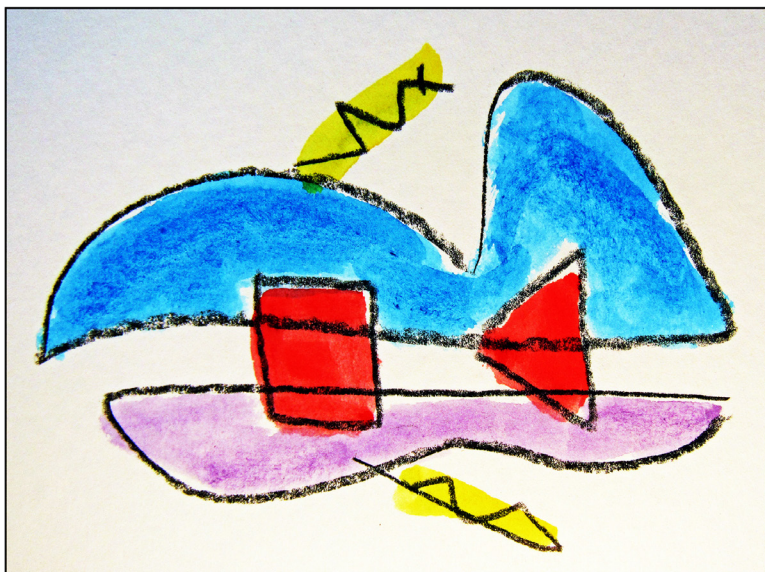
## I Hibernate Within Myself

*Bethany Jarmul*

I eat blubber by the fist-full, washing it down with melted butter, building brick upon brick underneath my skin. I curl up inside my esophagus, hair hanging into my stomach acid. While I sleep, my cubs are born. They suckle me dry, then when hunger gnaws their insides, they take bites of my brain, chewing on my hippocampus and cerebellum. When I awake, breasts deflated, mind half-gone, I attempt to untangle myself from within, but I can't find my way out. My teeth keep getting in the way.



Roast Beef  
*Michael Moreth*



Sandwich  
*Michael Moreth*

## Ears of Corn

*Bethany Jarmul*

Two small growths appear, one in each of my ears—green hair-like things. Growing thicker, longer by the hour. Leaves sprout. Maturing cornstalks grow overnight, each three feet long and laden with much fruit. I'm out of breath from turning my head and looking in the mirror.

*You look like a reindeer, my dear.*

*Jeez, thanks a lot.*

I go to the barber. He trims them down to nubbins. Alas, they regrow.

The dentist performs an extraction, a root canal. Alas, they regrow.

The doctor prescribes a shot, a cream, a pill. Alas, they regrow.

I decide, right then in the doctor's office, these cornstalks are a part of me. They are my ears.



## The Last Time I Went Home

*Eli Slover*

Driving back, I remind myself  
pink is a kind of  
red shaded light.  
The sun tucks itself  
in nighttime's sockets.

Misery sits on my arm,  
swollen as a tick, and  
I thumb the steering wheel  
nervous as a seraphim. I  
imagine if things were different.

The fading cars, headlights  
their only proof, reside in  
memory's long moan.

Home is not just one place  
but many, and the heart that  
beats for them is interminably  
broken.

Lying in the Grass Behind a Grocery  
Store on Fox Grape Plaza in Springfield,  
Missouri

*Eli Slover*

—*After James Wright*

On the knoll of mostly dead grass,  
propped up by my elbows, a knee up,  
eyes half closed under the sun,  
I can almost imagine the passing  
cars are white waves on a beach.  
Golden sand crumbles between my toes,  
flecks of amber grass peeking through.  
Songbirds become seagulls  
crying, and the movie theater  
across the street is a slow, gray tanker  
chugging darkly across the water,  
carrying cancer over a half empty  
parking lot in the afternoon heat.  
The wind ruffles my hair gently.  
I will love you until the oceans dry.



**Idilica**  
*Gissel Gomez*



## Greens

*KJ Hannah Greenberg*

## Gardening For Dummies

Ed Brickell

Pot by pot across the patio,  
I'm failing at this god thing:  
The shriveled orange fists  
Of marigolds, raised in protest.  
I gave them all a home, however cramped,  
I water them when I'm not too busy.

Clearly it is not enough,  
Not even for the stoic rosemary.  
The brown stems, the shriveled leaves,  
All drooped in prayerful mockery.  
They are not impressed with me.  
How to be the druid of my dreams  
In a temple of blooming perfection?

Over my slumping shoulders,  
The oak tree's mistakes on proud display:  
*Look at me*, it implores endlessly,  
*See how my branches never make sense.*  
*Some of me giving birth, some of me dying,*  
*All of me right now. What other way to be?*

## **We Met at a Farmer's Market**

*Forrest Timmons*

“I want to be with you,”

is what I said when we were drinking that sweet homemade wine,  
but now I'm sober and I'll reiterate,

I want to be with you.

like a plum's flesh, fallen, rotting on the ground, wants to be with its pit.

I've tried to grow facial hair, and it's also blond, but not blond like yours.

Mine is blond like hair and yours is blond like a great rolling wheat field,  
or peach skin.

When I worked in an apple orchard, lopping limbs off trees, bottling cider  
and baking donuts and pies, watching families arrive and find amusement

in the work I lost sleep for, sliced fingers and wrenched muscles for,

I would come home smelling like cinnamon and sap.

But now I come home and smell your musty, earthy, almost pungent scent,

when I wear your shirts or sleep in your bed or nestle in your armpit,

my appetite is greater for this than

for any fruit I've harvested.



Portait of the Author as a Single Mother

*Cheryl Caesar*

## Partition 1947

*Tara Menon*

I look at every face,  
long, round, oval and square  
to see if any belong to my parents.

No one looks like them.  
My father and my mother must be staring at faces  
to find me, their ten-year-old daughter.  
Holding my breath, my stomach tightening,  
I look at the dead men and women,  
and glance away with relief.  
My parents must be gazing at dead children,  
to make sure none of them is me.

The border that will soon divide  
seems to keep moving further away  
because no matter how far I go  
people always tell me I have many more miles to travel.  
Hindus desperate to cross over into India,  
Muslims rushing to make it to what will become Pakistan,  
but right now I don't care about my faith.

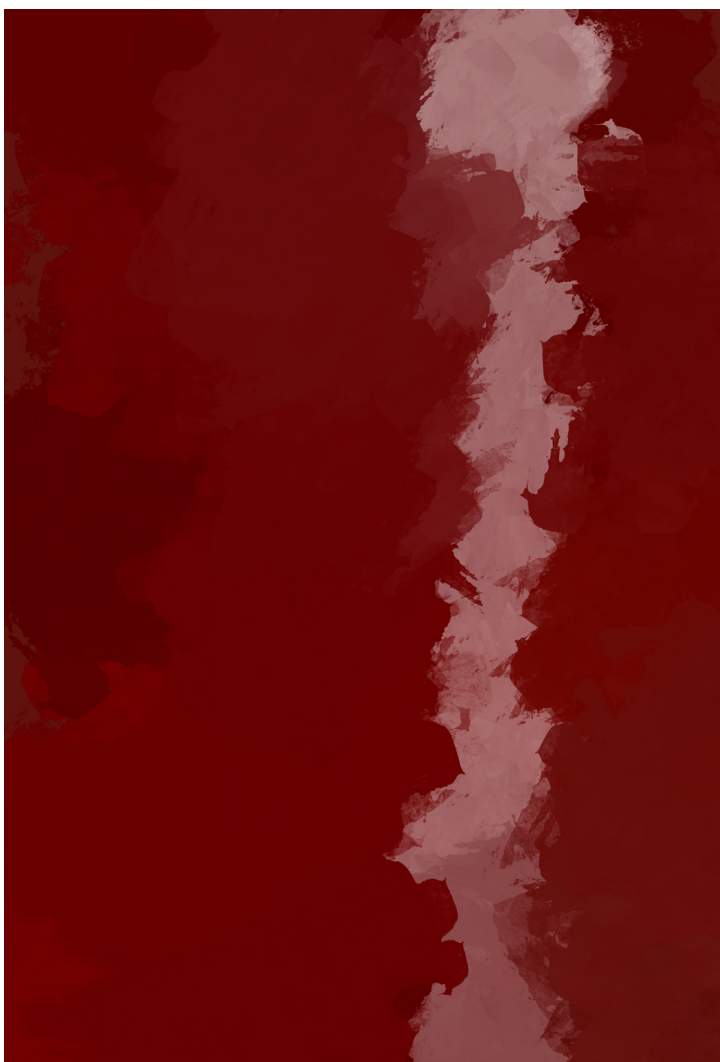
Sometimes it's hard to believe a border will exist  
when it wasn't there the day before,  
I know my parents want to be on the other side,  
so they must be waiting for me over there.  
I just want my parents and my baby brother  
and my home that burned too brightly,  
the windows framing greedy flames  
the night we fled wearing pajamas,  
grateful just to be alive.



## The Sweeper's Daydream

*Tara Menon*

She sweeps the floor with her twig broom.  
The end of her sari flows dangerously close to curios  
until she tucks it into her petticoat.  
The fake gold studs glitter on her nose.  
Her cheap red glass bangles tinkle as she sweeps.  
Her shiny ebony plait sways as she moves from side to side.  
She daydreams she's a dancer as she chases dust and dirt  
in a house where a family of six resides.  
She imagines the curtains, the spotlight, the applause.  
Give her anklets that will herald her steps,  
jasmine to decorate her hair and perfume the air,  
a pink costume with generous pleats to replace her faded red sari,  
a stage for her feet to thud, thud, before an audience.  
Help her fantasy come alive, if only for a day.



## A Question of Lost Lust

*Edward Lee*

## Contributor Bios

**Laurie Kuntz** is a three time Pushcart nominee and a Best of Net nominee. Her fifth poetry collection: *Talking Me off the Roof* is available from Kelsay Books. Visit her at: <https://lauriekuntz.myportfolio.com/>

**Callie S. Blackstone's** poem "When the twenty-first" is a part of a series of poems that consider what it is like to be a social worker through fictionalized events and how her own internal landscape has been impacted by her career. Her debut chapbook *sing eternal* is available through Bottle-cap Press. Her online home is [calliesblackstone.com](http://calliesblackstone.com). ACAB.

**Linda K. Miller's** *Poems to Amuse, Bemuse, and Entertain* is on Amazon. She's been published in various books and magazines. But really, she's just a retired person stressing over words and playing with cats. Waiting for the end of the world in a climactic rush of ice.

**Gloria Heffernan** is the author of *Exploring Poetry of Presence* (Back Porch Productions), the poetry collection; *What the Gratitude List Said to the Bucket List* (New York Quarterly Books); and the chapbooks *Some of Our Parts* (Finishing Line Press) and *Hail to the Symptom* (Moonstone Press).

**Rachel R. Baum** is the editor of *Funeral and Memorial Service Readings Poems and Tributes* (McFarland, 1999) and the author of the long-running blog *Bark: Confessions of a Dog Trainer*. Her poems have appeared in *Poetica Review*, *Raven's Perch*, *One.Art*, *Crosswinds*, and others. She chairs the committee that will select the first Poet Laureate of Saratoga Springs. For more information, visit: <https://rachelrbaum.wixsite.com>

**Bart Edelman's** poetry collections include *Crossing the Hackensack* (Prometheus Press), *Under Damaris' Dress* (Lightning Publications), *The Alphabet of Love* (Red Hen Press), *The Gentle Man* (Red Hen Press), *The Last Mojito* (Red Hen Press), *The Geographer's Wife* (Red Hen Press), and *Whistling to Trick the Wind* (Meadowlark Press).

**Jennifer M. Phillips** is a much-published immigrant, gardener, grower of Bonsai, and painter. Phillips grew up in upstate New York and has lived in New England, London, New Mexico, St. Louis, Rhode Island, & Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Her chapbooks include *Sitting Safe In the Theatre of Electricity* and *A Song of Ascents*.

**David Dephy** is a Georgian/American award-winning poet and novelist. The founder of Poetry Orchestra and an author of full-length poetry work *Eastern Star* (Adelaide Books, NYC, 2020) and *A Double Meaning*, also full-length poetry work with co-author Joshua Corwin. (Adelaide Books, NYC, 2022) He lives and works in New York City.

**Lynn White** lives in north Wales. Her work is influenced by issues of social justice and events, places and people she has known or imagined. She is especially interested in exploring the boundaries of dream, fantasy and reality. <https://lynnwhitepoetry.blogspot.com> and <https://www.facebook.com/Lynn-White-Poetry-1603675983213077/>

**Nolcha Fox's** poems have been published in *Lothlorien Poetry Journal*, *Alien Buddha Zine*, *Medusa's Kitchen*, and others. Her three chapbooks are available on Amazon. Nominee for 2023 Best of The Net. Editor for Kiss My Poetry and for Open Arts Forum. Accidental interviewer/reviewer. Faker of fake news.

**Jonathan Yungkans** is a Los Angeles-based writer and photographer whose work has appeared in *MacQueen's Quinterly*, *Panophy*, *Synkroniciti* and other publications. His second poetry chapbook, *Beneath a Glazed Shimmer*, was published by Tebot Bach in 2021.

**C.W. Bigelow** lives around Charlotte, North Carolina. His recent fiction and poetry have appeared in *Blood & Bourbon*, *Good Works Review*, *Back-channels*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Flash Fiction Magazine*, *Remington Review*, *Hare's Paw*, *The Write Launch*, *Hole in the Head Review*, *Last Leaves Magazine*, and *Tiny Seed*.

**Evie Groch** supervises in Graduate Schools of Education. Her opinion pieces, humor, poems, short stories, & recipes have been published in the *New York Times*, *The SF Chronicle*, *The Contra Costa Times*, *The Journal*, *Games Magazine*, various anthologies, and online. Her themes are travel, languages, immigration and justice.

**Daphne Fauber** (she/her) is a writer, artist, and microbiologist based out of Indiana. Her work is upcoming in the *Garfield Lake Review*, *The Last*

*Girls Club Magazine*, *Permafrost Magazine*, and *Diet Milk Magazine*. She can be found on Instagram at @daphne.writes.

**Norman Minnick** is the author of three collections of poetry. He is the editor of *The Lost Etheridge: Uncollected Poems of Etheridge Knight* (with a foreword by Yusef Komunyakaa). He is also editing a collection of interviews and essays on Etheridge Knight that will be published in early 2023. His work has been published in *The Georgia Review*, *The Sun*, and *New World Writing*, among others. Visit [www.buzzminnick.com](http://www.buzzminnick.com) for more information.

**Betsy Bolton's** work has appeared or is forthcoming in reviews like *The Hopper*, *New Croton*, *Split Rock*, and *Gyroscope*. Her chapbook *Mouth Art of the Bald-faced Hornet* was longlisted for the Kingdoms in the Wild Annual Poetry Prize; the title poem was nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

**Jane-Rebecca Cannarella** (she/her) is a writer and editor living in Philadelphia. She is the editor of *HOOT Review* and *Meow Meow Pow Pow Lit*, and a former genre editor at *Lunch Ticket*. Jane-Rebecca is the author of *Better Bones* and *Marrow*, both published by Thirty West Publishing House; *The Guessing Game* published by BA Press; *Thirst and Frost* from Vegetarian Alcoholic Press; and others.

**Edward Michael Supranowicz** is the grandson of Irish and Russian/Ukrainian immigrants. He grew up on a small farm in Appalachia. He has a grad background in painting and printmaking. Some of his artwork has recently or will soon appear in *Fish Food*, *Streetlight*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, and others. Edward is also a published poet who has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize multiple times.

**Chris Atkin** is a Pushcart Prize nominated poet and high school English teacher from Orem, UT. He has a B.A. in Education from Utah Valley University. His work has been published in the *Lascaux Review*.

**Lorette C. Luzajic** is a widely published writer, editor, artist, and educator living in Toronto, Canada. She is the founding editor of *The Ekphrastic Review*.

**Julie A. Dickson** has been a guest editor, is a past poetry board member, writer of YA fiction addressing critical teen issues, and primarily a poet. Her work appears in 50 journals including *Misfit*, *Girl God*, *Blue Heron Review*, and *Last Leaves*. Dickson advocates for captive elephants and feral cats.

**Ken Farrell's** work appears in various anthologies and in journals such as *Pilgrimage*, *Sport Literate*, *Watershed Review*, *Coffin Bell*, and *Iris Literary Journal*. He holds an MFA from Texas State University, an MA from Salisbury University, and has earned as an adjunct, cage-fighter, pizzaio-  
lo, and warehouseman.

**Mellisa Pascale's** essays and poetry have appeared in *Elswhere Journal*, *City Creatures Blog*, *Moss Puppy Magazine*, and other publications. She holds an M.A. in Writing from Johns Hopkins University and is studying for her M.Phil. in Medieval Studies at Trinity College Dublin. Find her at mellisa-pascale.com or on Instagram @mellisapascale

**Allie Keats** is part-time photographer and full-time pretentious bore living and working in Tiohtià:ke/Montreal, the unceded territory of Kanien'kehà:ka. Their work frequently explores the quiet conflict between nature and human creation in the context of urban spaces.

**Lucas Enne** is an author and poet from the midwest United States. His works are published or forthcoming in *The Dread Machine* and *Illustrated Worlds*. See [ennewritings.com](http://ennewritings.com)

**Jenne Micale** lives in the woods in Upstate New York with her husband and cat. When she's not scribbling, she is making music as the ethereal/wyrd folk project Kwannon, learning Gaeilge, and practicing aikido badly.

**Rhonda Melanson** is a poet and teacher living in Sarnia, Ontario, Canada. She is the author of two chapbooks *gravenotes* (Beret Days Press) and *My Name is Mary* (Alien Buddha Press).

**Cameron Morse** holds an MFA from the University of Kansas City-Missouri and lives in Independence, Missouri, with his wife and three children. He is the author of ten collections of poetry and serves as Senior Reviews

editor at *Harbor Review* and a reader at Small Harbor Publishing. His first collection, *Fall Risk*, won Glass Lyre Press's 2018 Best Book Award. Visit his website here: <https://cameronmorsepoems.wordpress.com/>

**Pasquale Trozzolo** is a retired madman from Kansas. His work appears in numerous journals and anthologies including *Sunspot Literary Journal*, *The Pangolin Review*, *What Rough Beast*, *34th Parallel*, *From Whispers to Roars*, and *Last Leaves Magazine*. He is the author of two chapbooks. Still no tattoos, or MFA, he continues to complicate his life by living out as many retirement clichés as possible. <https://pasqualetrozzolo.com/>

**Andy VanDoren** is a queer, synesthetic poet inspired by natural phenomena. Themes of their work include abstracting reality and unreliable narrators. Through poetry, they paint pictures of how the world looks from inside their mind. They are published in *Celestite Poetry*, *Lavender Lime*, *Ink Drinkers*, and more. You can find them on Twitter @raggedypoe

**Eric Christopher Uphoff** is a wanderer who has called Texas, Japan, and Taiwan home. He currently finds himself an early childhood educator at a bilingual school in Taipei. He holds an MFA in writing and a BA in music. His poetry can also be found in *Book of Matches* and *MockingHeart Review*.

**Akua Lezli Hope** is a creator and wisdom seeker who uses sound, words, fiber, glass, metal, and wire to create poems, patterns, stories, music, sculpture, adornments, and peace. Published in numerous literary magazines and national anthologies, her collections include *Embouchure*, *Poems on Jazz*, and *other Musics*, *Them Gone*, & *Otherwheres*. <http://www.akualezlihope.com>

**Gina Gidaro** is a creative writing graduate and photographer from rural Ohio. She enjoys watching Asian dramas and anything spooky. Her work has appeared in a few magazines and online zines. If she's not writing her own stories, she is probably obsessing over someone else's. More information can be found at <https://ginagidaro.wordpress.com>.

**Arvilla Fee** teaches at Clark State and is the poetry editor for the *San Antonio Review*. She has been published in numerous presses, and her poetry book, *The Human Side*, was just released. It is available on Amazon and the Wifp & Stock website.

**Chris Dungey** is a retired auto worker in Michigan. Over one hundred of his poems have been published in lit-mags and online. This is probably his first published poem in three years due to preoccupation with a novel and short fiction. His most recent collection from ADP/Kindle is *We Won't Be Kissing*.

**Mona Mehas** (she/her) writes about growing up poor, accumulating grief, and climate change. A retired, disabled teacher in Indiana, USA, she spends most days at her laptop with two old cats as chaperones. Previously, Mona used the pseudonym Patience Young. She's published multiple essays, stories, and poetry in journals, anthologies, and two museums. In 2020, Mona watched every Star Trek show and movie in chronological order. Follow on Twitter @Patience77732097 and [linktr.ee/monaiv](https://linktr.ee/monaiv).

**Mia Amore Del Bando** was born and raised in Long Beach, California. She is a Los Angeles-based flight attendant. Her profession allowed her to travel to several countries and practices her independence wherever she goes. She has been featured in *The Art of Everyone, You Might Need To Hear This, Flora Fiction*, and others. She is a faithful friend, difficult daughter, and selfish lover.

**Yuan Changming** hails with Allen Yuan from [poetrypacific.blogspot.ca](http://poetrypacific.blogspot.ca). Credits include 12 Pushcart nominations & 15 chapbooks, most recently *Sinosaur* (Redhawk Publications). Besides appearances in Best of the Best Canadian Poetry (2008-17), BestNewPoemsOnline, Poetry Daily, and nearly 2,000 others across 49 countries, Yuan served on the jury, and was nominated, for Canada's National Magazine Awards (poetry category).

**Steve Denehan** lives in Kildare, Ireland, with his wife Eimear and daughter Robin. He is the author of two chapbooks and four poetry collections. Winner of the Anthony Cronin Poetry Award and twice winner of Irish 'Times' New Irish Writing, his numerous publication credits include *Poetry Ireland Review* and *Westerly*.

**Clay Waters** has had poems published in *Green Hills Literary Lantern*, *The Santa Clara Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Roanoke Review*, and *Last Leaves Magazine*. He lived in Florida until the age of four and recently returned to find it hasn't



changed a bit. His website is [claywaters.org](http://claywaters.org), featuring his self-published cozy mystery novel *Death in the Eye*.

**Jonathan Chan** is a writer and editor of poems and essays. Born in New York to a Malaysian father and South Korean mother, he was raised in Singapore and educated at Cambridge and Yale Universities. He is the author of the poetry collection *going home* (Landmark, 2022). He has recently been moved by the work of Noah Arm Choi, Spencer Reece, and Roger Robinson. He has an abiding interest in faith, identity, and creative expression. More of his writing can be found at [jonbcy.wordpress.com](http://jonbcy.wordpress.com).

**Danielle Guthrie** writes both poetry and prose, exploring the dark fantastical. Originally from Vancouver Island, she now resides in Edmonton, Alberta. She is currently working on her first novel.

**Tad Tuleja**, a folklorist with a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Texas, has written widely on folk and popular culture and received a Puffin Foundation grant for his song cycle *Skein of Arms*. His poems have appeared in *Blue Unicorn*, *The Road Not Taken*, and *Adirondack Review*.

**Rachel Matthews** is a queer writer and librarian based in Vermont, with a Massachusetts core. Her short fiction has appeared in *Puddlefar*. You can read more of her blackout poetry on Twitter @raymattswriting.

**Phil Eggers** is a poet and painter living in Brooklyn, NY. A finalist for Brooklyn Poets Yawp Poem of the Year 2020, his work has appeared or is forthcoming in places such as *Thimble Lit Mag*, *Vita Brevis*, *Red Wheelbarrow*, and *Cobra Milk Lit Mag*.

**Corey J. Boren** is a recent UVU graduate and Oreo aficionado. Corey served as Editor-in-Chief of *Touchstones*: Utah Valley University's Journal of Literature and Art in Fall 2021, and has been previously published in *Last Leaves Magazine*, *The Allegheny Review*, and *Better Than Starbucks*. To see more of his work, visit [coreyjboren.com](http://coreyjboren.com)

**Michael Neal Morris'** most recent books are *Based on Imaginary Events* (Faerie Treehouse Press) and *The Way of Weakness*. He posts regularly to

the blog *This Blue Monk* and makes music as Device Flesh, sacramental, and Clique Bait. He lives with his family just outside the Dallas area, and teaches Composition and Creative Writing at Dallas College's Eastfield campus.

**Andrea Gerada** is a writer from the Philippines. She loves candles, cats, and children's stories.

**Annette Gagliardi** is a teacher, author and poet. She has two children's books, a full-length poetry book (*A Short Supply of Viability*) and a new novel (*Ponderosa Pines: Days of the Deadwood Forest Fire*) published, along with work in various anthologies and magazines. Her website is: <https://annette-gagliardi.com>

**Megan Diedericks's** debut poetry collection, *the darkest of times, the darkest of thoughts*, is available on Amazon. She's situated in South Africa, and when she's not writing, she's living in worlds of fiction with background music to match—or playing with the dogs. Other projects, and social media, available here: [megwrites.carrd.co](https://megwrites.carrd.co)

**Jonathan Ukah** is a graduate of English and Law living in the UK. Jonathan's poems have appeared in several poetry magazines and anthologies, including the *Poet Magazine*, *State of Matter*, *Wildfire Words Poetry*, *New Note Poetry*, *New Reader magazine*, *whiskyblot Literary*, and others.

**Alan Bern** is a retired children's librarian and the award-winning author of three books of poetry. He is an exhibited/published photographer and performs with dancer Lucinda Weaver as PACES and with musicians from Composing Together. Lines & Faces, his press with artist/printer Robert Woods, [linesandfaces.com](https://linesandfaces.com).

**George Freek's** poem "Enigmatic Variations" was recently nominated for Best of the Net. His poem "Night Thoughts" has also recently been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. His collection *Melancholia* is published by Red Wolf Editions.

**Michael Noonan** lives in Halifax (famous for its Piece Hall), West Yorkshire. Has had stories published in anthologies. A volume of his short sto-

ries, *SEVEN TALL TALES*, is available at Amazon, as a book or kindle; and he has had one act plays staged, and published in book anthologies.

**Brigid Cooley** (she/her) is a poet, journalist and storyteller based in Georgetown, Texas. She is dedicated to highlighting the stories of others while also carving out a space to share her own experiences. Her work has been published internationally, in publications including the “skin” edition of the *Formidable Woman Sanctuary* and the upcoming “horror” edition of the *Wells Street Journal*.

**Hazel J. Hall** is a nineteen-year-old disabled-queer writer based in rural New Hampshire. Right now, she is pursuing an English degree while working on her first novel. More of Hazel’s work can be found in *Dream Noir*, *Overly Lit*, and *Sage Cigarettes*, with other pieces forthcoming or visible at their site, [hazeljhall.com](http://hazeljhall.com).

**Edward Lee** is an artist and writer from Ireland. His paintings and photography have been exhibited widely while his poetry, short stories, and non-fiction have been published internationally. 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>

**Zhihua Wang** is a graduate from the Arkansas Writers’ MFA Program at the University of Central Arkansas. She worked as the Managing Editor of *Arkana* from 2019-2020. Her recent work has appeared in *Aji*, *Last Leaves*, *Across the Margin*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Nurture*, and elsewhere.

**Gissel Gomez** is an eighteen-year-old Mexican American artist. She is a first-year student at Williams College interested in English and Studio Art. Her artwork has been recognized by several publications, and she hopes to make people stop and stare at her work.

**Linea Jantz, M.Ed.**, has worked in a wide range of roles over the years including waste management, paralegal, medical records staff, and teacher. Her articles can be found in magazines including *The Dyrft*, *Trail Sisters*, and *Singletracks*. She has poetry forthcoming in *Thimble Literary Magazine*.

**Susan Alkaitis** is a writer living in Colorado. Her poems are forthcoming in *Illuminations*, and she recently won a Causeway Lit award for her poetry. Her work has also been published in *Rattle*, *The Punch-Drunk Anthology*, *Slow Trains*, *2River View*, and *Glass*, among others.

**Bethany Jarmul** is a writer, editor, and poet. Her work has appeared in numerous literary magazines and been nominated for Best of the Net and Best Spiritual Literature. She lives near Pittsburgh with her family. Connect with her at [bethanyjarmul.com](http://bethanyjarmul.com) or on Twitter: @BethanyJarmul.

**Eli Slover** serves as an assistant poetry editor for *Moon City Review*. Their poetry appears in *Remington Review*, *MAYDAY*, *Freshwater Literary Journal*, *Frost Meadow Review*, and elsewhere.

**KJ Hannah Greenberg's** art has appeared on covers in many places, including *Angime*, *Black Petals*, *Impspired [sic]*, *Pithead Chapel*, *Red Flag Poetry*, *Right Hand Pointing*, *Smoky Blue Literary and Arts Magazine*, *The Broken City*, *Torah Tidbits*, and *Yellow Mama*. Additionally, her digital paintings are featured in *One-Handed Pianist* (Hekate Publishing, 2021).

**Ed Brickell** lives in Dallas, Texas. His poems have appeared in *Modern Haiku*, *Hedgerow*, *Last Leaves Magazine*, *Copperfield Review*, *The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*, *Loch Raven Review*, and other publications.

**Cheryl Caesar** is an ex-expatriate, having lived in Paris, Tuscany, and Sligo (Republic of Ireland) for 25 years. She earned her doctorate in comparative literature at the Sorbonne, and now teaches writing at Michigan State University. Her chapbook *Flatman: Poems of Protest in the Trump Era* is available from Amazon, although she hopes it will soon be of historical interest only. You can find her poems and artwork in *Words Across the Water*, published by Fractal Edge Press.

**Forrest Timmons** was raised in Princeton, New Jersey, and now studies English and creative writing at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington. He draws inspiration for his poetry from the relationships with people, animals, and food he built during his time farming in upstate New York.

**Tara Menon** is an Indian-American writer based in Lexington, Massachusetts. Her most recent poems have been published or are forthcoming in *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *Arlington Literary Journal*, *Global South*, *San Pedro River*

*Review*, and *The Loch Raven Review*. Her latest fiction has appeared in *The Hong Kong Review* and *Litro*.

**Toby Devens'** first book of poetry was released by Doubleday. Later, three of her novels were published. Now she's back creating poetry that has appeared in journals such as *Verse-Virtual*, *Glimpse*, *Snakeskin*, and *Home Planet News*. Writing fiction, adjusting plots and characters, she holds her breath; writing poetry, she exhales.

**Amy Devine** (she/her) is an artist from a lineage of artists whose poetry has been in several publications including *Beyond The Veil Press*, *Soft*, and *Gems*. She is based in Sydney, Australia and is currently working on her first book. She can be found at devineinspirational on Instagram.

**Sue Fagalde Lick** is a writer/musician/dog mom living on the Oregon coast. She has published two chapbooks, *Gravel Road Ahead* and *The Widow at the Piano*. Her poems have also appeared in *Rattle*, *The MacGuffin*, *Sage Soup*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *New Letters*, *Cirque*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Diode Poetry Journal*, and other publications.

**Caroline Reigel's** recent poetry can be found in the *Papeachu Review Five* (Winter 2023). Her creative nonfiction last appeared in *Proof The Zine*, 004. Caroline's writing captures quiet moments and the visceral experience of being human. She writes from Minnesota, where she lives with her partner and two perfect pugs.

**N. Jones** is in love with everything at once. On Twitter for the hot takes, weird genders, and cats, @ablazeinhim

**Michael Moreth** is a recovering Chicagoan living in the rural, micropolitan City of Sterling, the Paris of Northwest Illinois.

**Daniel Brennan** (he/him) is a queer writer from NYC, who spent his childhood in the rural Blue Ridge Mountains of Pennsylvania. Brennan hopes to juxtapose the vastness we experience within our changing natural world with the often daunting intimacies the queer body presents. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in various journals.

**Brianna Cunliffe** is an environmental justice activist and storyteller. As a queer woman who grew up on a disintegrating Carolina coastline, her work explores fiercely loving the fragile places we call home. Her work appears in *Reckoning Magazine*, *Vagabond City*, *Lucent Dreaming*, *Storm Cellar*, *Claw and Blossom*, and more.

**Milly Aburrow's** uncanny sculptures and installations of the everyday mundane encapsulates the correlation between today's connotations of food and the slang and theories connected. Exploring foods social commentary. Scrutinising whether food needs to identify with superfluous associations and the person who eats it. She fabricates artworks engrossed in the sphere of consumerism, both materialistic and nutritious, relatable and ironic.

**Beth Gallovic** has been seen on the hiking trails around Boulder, Colorado, pulling out creased squares of paper from her backpack to scribble down lines of poetry. She marvels, often, and especially outdoors, at what an expansive force poetry has become in her life. Her poems have been published or are forthcoming in *Pine Ron*, *Quibble*, and *Twenty Bellows*.

**Paul Hostovsky's** latest book of poems is *Mostly* (FutureCycle Press, 2021). He has won a Pushcart Prize, two Best of the Net Awards, and has been featured on Poetry Daily, Verse Daily, and The Writer's Almanac. Website: paulhostovsky.com

**Elizabeth Porter** lives, writes, and teaches middle school in south-central Pennsylvania. She has been an educator since 2020 and a ravenous consumer of poetry since her own middle school days. Her work is forthcoming in *Eunoia Review*.

**Sylvea Wong** is an artist living in New York City in search of something meaningful. While she's not certain what exactly it is she's looking for, the pull to articulate her pursuit remains.

**Sean Whalen** is a health and safety professional in Iowa. He's been on a bit of a hiatus from writing, but is trying to get back in the groove. Back in the day he had works in *Mid-American Review*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, and *The Sow's Ear*, among others.

**Bailey Sims** is a writer and editor from Pittsburgh, PA. She is the Head Copy Editor of *The Fourth River*, and she edits novels for self-published authors through her business, Lena Creative Solutions. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her friends and her cat, Stella Luna.

**Britta Adams** is a writer, intersectional feminist, and frequent mid-shower vocalist from Orem, Utah. She writes poetry as a means of understanding and inhabiting complex feelings. In her newly acquired spare time since finishing graduate school, she enjoys bingeing documentaries, curling up with a good book, and belting out a good song while baking delicious treats.

**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 *Cobalt Review*, *Evening Street Review*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *Poem*, *Talking River Review*, and other literary magazines

**Joan Leotta** plays with words on page and stage. She performs tales featuring food, family, and strong women. Internationally published, she's a 2021, 2022 Pushcart nominee, Best of the Net 2022 nominee, and a 2022 runner-up, Robert Frost Competition. Her chapbook, *Feathers on Stone*, is out from Main Street Rag.

**Sunayana Dash** is an IT consultant who lives in Bangalore, India. Her poems explore emotions and the inner workings of relationships among humans. She loves taking pictures of the sky and believes art exists in every form in nature. Her works have appeared in *The Great Indian Anthology Vol.3* and *The First Line Poets Anthology*.

**Rachel Johnson** earned a BA in English Education with an emphasis in literature from CSU Fresno in 2012. She has not been published yet. She regularly competes in her community's local poetry slams and is often asked to read for special events put on by the former Fresno Poet Laureate.

**Kristiana Reed** is the Editor in Chief for *Free Verse Revolution* and has self-published two poetry collections. Reed often explores the self and memory through the natural world and written portraiture. Her work has

been recently published by *Nightingale & Sparrow* and is forthcoming in *Vocivia Magazine*. Instagram: @kristiana.reed.

**Moonmoon Chowdhury** is an Indian poet, currently based in the Netherlands. Her work has been previously published or is forthcoming in *Borderless*, *Tell Me Your Story*, *A second cup of tea* by The Hive Publishers, *The Pine Cone Review*, *Sylvia magazine*, *Sonic Boom Journal*, *Amethyst Review*, *Sixpence Society Literary Journal*, and more.

**Grant Burkhardt** is a writer of poetry and short stories. He was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

**Charles Kell** is the author of *Ismael Mask*, forthcoming from Autumn House Press in 2023. His first collection, *Cage of Lit Glass*, was chosen by Kimiko Hahn for the 2018 Autumn House Press Poetry Prize.

**Dave Boyle's** themes are very escapist /surreal - much action, boys and girls adventure pics -women on large motorbikes and sidecars, British Bobbies, jungle action, animals and famous characters. He also bolts terrible books shut and make lampshades with x-rays. Website is Boyleswellington and lives in New Zealand.

**Alina Zollfrank** from (former) East Germany now nags her teens and cranky beagles in Bellingham, WA. She loathes wildfire smoke and people who don't leash their dogs, and loves to write to get out of her whirling mind. Published in *Bella Grave*, she's caught the poetry bug. More at: <https://zollizen.medium.com/>

**Allyson Turner** is a poet, a dreamer, a crafter, a lifelong student of the earth, and a librarian. They have been writing poetry for over a decade now in the pursuit of living what someone once called “a poetic life.” Allyson draws from their religious background—using Biblical imagery to a fault—their queerness, a mystical view of the universe, and the desert landscapes they grew up surrounded by.

**Ketia Valme** is a resilient writer from Cambridge, MA, who aspires to inspire others through her authenticated writing voice. The Westfield State



University student started her own radio show and a spoken word club, forming a safe space for writers to express their creativity. Writing's her passion, as she proves!

**Sarah-Marissa Marquez** (she/her) is an MLIS student at San Jose State University. She is based in Los Angeles and has work published and forthcoming in various magazines and journals, including *Capsule Stories*, *Human/Kind Press*, *Kissing Dynamite*, *Mud Season Review*, and more. When not writing, she can be found tweeting @Sarahmarissa338.

**Alison Hurwitz** writes gratefully in North Carolina and was previously published in *Tiferet Journal*, *Writing in a Woman's Voice*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, *Book of Matches*, *The Shore*, *Amethyst Review*, *Rust and Moth*, *Thimble Magazine*, *Academy of the Heart & Mind*, *River Heron Review*, *The Jewish Writing Project*, *Speckled Trout Review*, and *Gyroscope Review*. [Alisonhurwitz.com](http://Alisonhurwitz.com)

**Claire Beaver** is a multi-genre writer from Long Island, New York, who is currently working towards her M. Phil in Creative Writing at Trinity College Dublin. She has previously won the Danielle Alyse Basford Writing Prize from Johns Hopkins University.

**Ripley Crow** began writing as a child. Ripley graduated from Southwest Minnesota State University with a bachelor's degree in ELA Education. Published in *Train River Anthologies*, *365 Days of COVID*, and *Last Leaves Magazine*, Ripley grew up in rural Minnesota and now continues to live in Minnesota with a spouse and two children. @poetwhispers28

**A. Benét** is an emerging poet from California. She has a weakness for coffee and the color of burnt clay. Her work is featured in *The Origami Review* and *Onwords Press*, and is forthcoming in *Feed* and *Acorn Review*. You can find her on Twitter @benettthewriter or email [benettthewriter@gmail.com](mailto:benettthewriter@gmail.com).

