

Last Leaves

Issue 7 | Fall 2023





Last Leaves

Issue 7 | Fall 2023



Last Leaves

Issue 7 | Fall 2023

Last Leaves: Issue 7

Copyright © 2023 by Last Leaves Magazine

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

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

Edited and compiled by Cailey Thiessen and Kiera Baron

Cover design and end pages by Kiera Baron

Note from the Editors

Since our very first issue back in Fall 2020, Cailey realized that some of her favorite poems to read were food poems. From “Cabin Food” by Karla Huston to “My Daughter Hates Basil” by Liz Whiteacre, she found that food can be one of the most powerful images in poetry.

With that in mind, she set the table and welcomed in all the food images you could send—and was not disappointed. From juicy peaches to warm stew to plump tomatoes, you all brought the *feast*. And we, sitting in our respective homes devouring your poems, are ever grateful for the community that has made *Last Leaves Magazine* continue to grow and thrive.

Your contributions—whether in this issue, our past issues, or tucked away in our pockets—are, of course, the key to our existence. Your kind notes, repeated submissions, and readership leave us both humbled and elated.

We hope that you enjoy this feast of words as much as we do, and we can't wait to see you again as we prepare for the next issue.

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



Content Warning

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

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

Contents

On the Ferry to Bainbridge Island	xiv
Between Meals	1
Grandma's Sunday Kitchen	2
Buns and Jam	3
Ayayay's Pizza	4
Appetite	6
Groceries	7
A Summer <i>Fête's</i> Feast	8
On the Rocks	10
Peaches.....	11
The Fatted Calf	12
Canned Peaches.....	13
Gluttonous	14
Fish and rice.....	16
Jellied Salad.....	17
Night Harvest	18
Untitled.....	20
Three at Feast	21
Rooster.....	22
Fourteen	23
Gombaszedés.....	24
Acorns.....	26
Chanu-Christmas Eve Feast	27
The Wrath's Recipe	28
Food tv fantasia	29
RECIPE FOR CUPID'S BLACK CAKE.....	30
Cara-Cara.....	32
Oranges.....	33
[After The Orange].....	34

Lemon Pedicel	36
Autumn Orange	37
Birthday Feast	38
Vineyard.....	40
Fermentation.....	41
Moustache	42
Cheeto Dust Sonnet V.....	43
Bloody Cheese!	44
holiday entertaining.....	45
Sprite	46
Mom Can.....	47
Crave	48
inheritance	49
Cowboy with a life path 7	50
Dream week	52
Farm Dinner, Forest Grove, July 2017	53
Aubade to the Unmarked Mound	54
Berries	55
A Creature Sprouted from the Ground.....	56
Picnic at Sleepy Hollow.....	57
If you're reading this, I still love you.....	58
Bluff	60
Feast in the Forest.....	62
Yellow Picnic.....	63
my mother owns grief	64
Drinking Games	65
Meant to	66
Barnacles by the Beach.....	68
Cloys at the Cave.....	69
In the Country of the Black Eagles	70
CORVIDS.....	72

Stigma.....	73
My mornings with this Curious Winter.....	74
A Martyr's Slice of Pizza Picante.....	75
Could Kitchens.....	76
Things Like This	77
A Winter Birthday.....	78
Grand Forks Thanksgiving.....	79
Open	80
Dinner.....	81
How to Walk on Eggshells or How to Greet Your Husband at the Door.....	82
Vegan Benediction	84
AN UNENDING FEAST FOR THE SOUL.....	85
Easter Poem.....	86
and here's my hankie.....	87
What I Know about Cherries.....	88
Cafe	89
ORCHARD 2.....	90
The Memory of Hunger.....	91
hungry fortune.....	92
Ode to Arils	93
Untitled.....	94
Dissolution.....	95
You Can't Write a Poem About Tater Tot Hotdish	96
Cincy Chili Ode.....	97
Sarma	98
LIKE BOXED RED WINE IN A DIVE BAR	100
Girl in National Costume	101
Breakfast.....	102
Ode to Borsht.....	103
Dinner Plates	104
Olive Picking with the Greatest of Ease.....	105

Meat Counter.....	106
Bacon Busted.....	107
After Work	108
Clematis	109
Last.....	110
Gobble.....	111
Picking Blackberries From My Mother-In-Law's Cake.....	112
A Later Harvest.....	113
Ribbons in the Sea	114
Wild Thing	115
Eater's Eulogy.....	116
Argentinian Asado	117
A Mukbang of Childhood.....	118
Recipe for A Bittersweet Life.....	119
Tapering: Morning. Coffee	120
More.....	121
Beachcombing	122
Near the Sea.....	123
Sixth Anniversary	124
The Proof Is in the Gruel	125
Konda She Looks at Saoi Dreams, Her Face Seems Beautiful.....	126
less of it	127
nothing can beat this pillow!.....	128
Skipped Breakfast, Long Work Meeting.....	129
Emily as Trillium and Mayapple	130
Share some with the garden!	131
luna moth	132
How My Parents Told Me They Were Getting a Divorce	133
Still Life.....	134
Still Life with Eggplant	135
Gathering after the Melt	136

an ant ate	137
Imperfect Stew	138
Midnight Feast.....	139
ODE TO AN ONION	140
Corn	141
Spring Sandwiches	142
Breakfast Chez Chat	143
Strawberries.....	144
BAD FRUIT	145
Unrivalled Queen	146
Beans	147
The Assistant to the <i>Chef de Cuisine</i>	148
How to Be	149
This prescription is the only paper I fill.	150
Eat Sick And	151
Hum	152
Drink Me	153
Across the Table.....	154
WE MEET ON THE BEACH.....	155
Feast1	156
Feast	157
For My Last Meal.....	158
Cafe Angelique	159
At the Wake.....	160
We went away.....	161
Crepe Truck	162
Golden Hoards.....	163
Elegies for Restaurants Lost to the Pandemic.....	164
Contributor Bios	167



ON THE FERRY TO BAINBRIDGE ISLAND
Michael Shoemaker

Between Meals

Cynthia Gallahe

I am between yesterday and tomorrow,
with only the moment to hold onto,
illusions of time and place.

I'm between where and when I was born,
and where and when I'll die, I am here,
but it is always an in-between here.

Between you and me there is this place
called connection that at times
electrifies us

By its synchronicity,
but at others puts us
in between our distant thoughts.

I am between arrival and departure,
a traveler between rooms, sunlight and darkness,
between poetry, painting and pilates.

I ask, "Is there really
something called time? Aren't we
in just one long day, even when we sleep?"

"Still aware, still thinking and dreaming,
afloat somewhere between
the last world and the next?"

Is that why as a culture, between mornings,
noons and nights, we sit down to take a table together,
to find a solid sense of peace,

A temporary hold on what's fleet,
a group nourishing, all the while
drawing in, like breath,
an earmark of place and time,
in this pause from our in-betweens.

Grandma's Sunday Kitchen

Arvilla Fee

It was a family affair,
every Sunday in a kitchen
barely big enough for three,
let alone twelve,
but we managed;
tortillas sizzled in skilletts
filled with cooking oil,
ground beef simmered
on the next burner over;
it was my job to grate blocks
of cheese, best job ever,
as I could sneak a few strands
to stave off the wild hunger
I'd acquired when Grandpa's
sermon stretched too long.
One aunt was on lettuce duty;
she could slice it paper thin;
another aunt put refried beans
inside the golden shells
(she was the ex-wife of an uncle,
but no one seemed to mind).
When I didn't think I could survive
another minute, the oven would beep,
Mom would pull out pans of burritos
and red enchiladas thick with sauce.
We'd pass the plates and say the prayer
God bless us all; dig in!



Buns and Jam

J W Goossen

Ayayay's Pizza

Ana María Carbonell

Though we had landed the night before
it wasn't till we stood on that busy street
on broken-tiled sidewalk amidst

baked dough, diesel, and the humid air
of an Uruguayan summer
that we knew we had arrived.

The scent of garlic, tomatoes,
yeast outside the doorway
of her Spanish-style home
always did the trick.

Of course we'd have to wait
a good ten minutes for her usual greeting:
hands raised high above her head
then falling on wispy gray hair

she'd moan the beginning
of her name—*ay, ay*—followed by
It's been such a long time
and *Ay, why did you move so far away?*

By the end of our trip, she'd do it
all over again, this time,
*Ay, why did you come at all
now that you have to leave?*

During *abrazos* and wailings
beeps of whirring cars, hint of garlic
and oregano beckoned. Soon
I'd walk through the foyer

past the kitchen with chipped blue paint
to the *fondo* where I'd sit
in my spot on the porch swing
child feet dangling

sink my teeth
into thick dough
and despite *la familia grande*
take bite after bite—

as many as I ever wanted—
and swing back and forth
as if I had never left



Appetite

S.J. Perry

—*After Home in the Woods* by *Thomas Cole*

Uncle Jack taught me
how easy it was
to track cottontails
in fresh snow.

When we came upon one
hiding by standing still,
I raised Grampy's old .22
and squeezed the trigger.

I proudly carried
my trophy home.
Uncle Jack showed me
how to skin it.

But without its fur,
it looked like a tiny human,
and after Grandma cooked it
I wasn't hungry.

Groceries

Michael Theroux

In the Aisle of Housewares
with the oddity of kitchen goods
pinioned, in plastic and priced
two spatulas, \$3.49 (one
fiver, and they're mine) we
considered making dressing ...

Which led to a kiss, subtly public
but you had been away, at least
as far as the Kleenex
and I, in the Bulk Goods...
so longing played it's part,
rejoinings being such pleasure.

Later, in line, piling potatoes
to one side of the eggs and tomatoes
the warmth of your form
presses gently along my form
We'll melt the Sorbet
long before the bar codes
tally the shopping damage

A Summer *Fête*'s Feast

Finn Cassidy

This poem is my home-made truth-pie.
Made from old hand-me-down recipes,
mixed with the best of my current efforts,
ensuring the results match the goal:
'appreciatively shared rustic imperfection'.
Perfect for today's public and occasion!
For the special once-off-day-that's-in-it,
it's carefully prepared and presented on
a hand-me-down, hair-cracked heirloom,
round, ornately simple with indented curves,
as if to mark each passing minute of time.
Its frail and faded white with frail and faded
lavender *provençal cigales* called again for duty,
with two very aged, long-forgotten chips.
Marks of respect for past *Angelus* chimes?
Finishing touches shift slightly clockwise,
then slightly counter-clockwise several times
so that effort's full merit is on full display.
Now, the final roughly measured cuts,
an attempt to marry symmetry with share-size.

Warm greetings and salutations abound
a mid-July melting midday's sanctuary,

under the warm shade, under old-school's
old chestnut's old stone boundaries.
As I place it in its final-resting place,
huddled tight amongst a mish-mash
of other such thoughtful, delightful treats,
a *provençal arc-en-ciel* of savoury and sweet,
(ironically, displayed on another old poem
unwittingly linking past with present),
on a white and red checkered cloth without
a label to confirm its creator or origin.
This unique installation for one day only,
a once-in-a-life-time, never-to-be-recreated
works of artisanal, artistic heartfelt efforts,
sit in shade's baking heat guarded by pesky flies,
often over-powered by the waving palms
of carefree kids and adults.
Rolls of foil and film enwrap, giving a second life
to the lucky few, privileged to see morning's fresh stars.
Shared among the few staying late to help tidy up
after dancing with darkness's youthful infusion.
Crumbs and dead flies shaken from folded cloth,
to find a new place of rest, another realm of reality,
between summer weeds and well trampled soil.
The *fête's* feast continues without official words,
for next days' marching ants and hopping birds.



On the Rocks
James Reade Venable

Peaches

Vivienne Popperl

—*After Mary Szybist's "Here, there are Blueberries"*

Here, there are peaches
resting quietly in a cool porcelain bowl.

In the backyard we sit
under the pink Russian Tea Roses.
We do not fear want.

Here there are yellow peaches
ripening, soft flesh loosening
around each corrugated pit.

We sit around an iron table covered
by a red checkered cloth. What is
our purpose in this world?

Here the peaches' soft fuzzy skin
changes from yellow to blush.

We sit in the shade of the Russian Tea Roses.
How do we love
without judgment? Speak
without criticism?

Here our mouths water.
We imagine a piquant sweetness
on our tongues.

Here there are peaches.

The Fatted Calf

Arvilla Fee

I watched you walk away
with a defiant flip
of your honey-blond ponytail;
part of me envied you,
the way you stood up
to the big man,
taking your inheritance
without a second glance.
You were gone for years,
but I kept his laundry clean,
washed every single dish.
So, I didn't understand
his frantic race down the lane
when he saw you coming home,
the way he fussed over you,
drawing a bath, laying out a robe.
He told me to fix steaks that night
—steaks, dear sister,
with roasted potatoes in olive oil,
and salad greens with feta cheese—
I guess the child who sleeps with pigs
receives the better feast.

Canned Peaches

Susan Landgraf

My four-foot-eight grandmother toted
her eight-foot ladder and picked the fruit
without bruising. She left the plump suns
in the boiling water just long enough
to ease them out of their skins, then
pitted, peeled and slurped each one
into the scalded jars of sugar water.
After the lids popped in their steam bath,
she stacked them like golden coins down
in the fruit cellar – their glowing halves
ready for the china bowls on Christmas
and the long snow-filled days after.
These days the winters in Ohio are warming.
Lake Erie isn't freezing. No one cans peaches.

Gluttonous

Benjamin Bowers

Peer through a gap
in the low-hanging
boughs
past the peak
of twilight.
Look close,
widen your eyes
enough to see
without
the lens of limits.
You will find
a banquet table
the length of
life itself.

An impish
elfish devotee
will catch your
wrist.
Low-hanging
lights, like painted
fireflies
will catch your
eye.

They will seat
you in the banquet,
flooded with hands
and mouths
sloughing

their skins
and gorging
on rinds.
You will feast
on the sight
of a feast.

But,
you will ask,
am I allowed?
Is such
hunger not
gluttonous?

The devotee
will frown,
but you will
know it is
for you
not
at you.

Of course,
they say,
consumption
would be a sin
in a world
that drip-feeds
necessities.

Fish and rice

Pujarinee Mitra

Steamed fish wrapped in rolls of rice
similar to the mounds my mother
rolled to feed me with the *maach*¹ pieces,
deboning them, and arranging the bones
in a circle on the rim of the round *thaala*²,
stuffing the pieces into sticky, white rice,
yellowed by the turmeric in the watery gravy,
just like the miso soup in which you
sprinkle hot chili peppers,
making it spicier and ‘more Indian,’
in an Asian-American diner,
watching the droplets dribble down my chin,
as you put the rolls into my mouth,
dipping them in the black soy sauce,
your fingers stained just like my mother’s hands;
“Fish reminds me of Goa, my home,” you smile tenderly,
“That’s because you have not yet tasted *Maa’s maacher jhol*³,”
your smile brightens, the hues on your light brown cheeks
competing with the pink salmon
peeking from the rice rolls;
The fish from the Arabian Sea, do they ever swim to the Bay of Bengal?

¹Bengali word for ‘fish.’

²Bengali word for dinner plate.

³Bengali word for fish curry.

Jellied Salad

Allan Lake

A child hemmed in by a relative-stewn,
jellied salad prairie village between other
villages on a road between wheat fields.
Thinks this the whole world, this family,
this house, church, shop. And every face
that looked into his thought it knew more
about him than he ever could. Perhaps did.
Getting 'away' initially involved wandering
into a neighbour's for peanut butter on toast
then eventually hoisting an old suitcase
to an airport to fly anywhere with other
faces, with other accents, other languages.
If there's a war, he might enlist just to go.

Without careful calculation, he forges his own
fam in foreign city, works hard to buy a place
to lie and sigh in. The exotic who flew away,
grew old and retired to an armchair with puzzle
patchwork prairie to his pass the time,
outgrew desire to flee anywhere and quietly
assumed role of aged village boy with
stories to tell the grandkids who smile
and make their escape by phone.

Night Harvest

Nancy Hanna

At night
while you sleep
dark moon
white noise

I gather
the harvest,
what I place
on the altar
I have built
beneath your bed

sweet jasmine
from houses in Egypt
where our blood
comes from

cherry blossoms
from the tree in the yard
where I pull
fleshy fruit
off limbs

the rims of my nails
stained red
from digging out
stones
tearing flesh
in half
to offer you
something sweet
that will not choke you

while you sleep
I pull and grasp
bitter roots
tear them from the ground
gnash them with my teeth
steep them in boiling tears
drink them

I heal myself
to make you medicine

My sweet girl
sweetest one
sweetest taste in my mouth

I place these things
on the altar
I have built
beneath your bed

imagine flowering vines
growing underneath you
encircling you
protecting you

pray that you will smell in them
my love
pray that you will find it's scent
pleasing

a comfort
a blessing

Untitled

Alan Bern

another dream
of insects devouring
everything



keep quiet lest the Wolf
come back into Gubbio soon
and dine on all of us!

Three at Feast

Alan Bern



Rooster

Irina Tall (Novikova)



Fourteen

Dorothy Lune

I flunked school most months
for scribbles & suicidal ideation—
the catastrophe of forbidden girl,
the piston was a difficult read—
infuse warm larvae of April's sun
& the cool steam of window panes.

A moment graduates to memory—
ultimately losing itself like
a doorfull of dismounted thought
praying with its heels flat on the
mantle edge like my hair in the tub.

Prayer doesn't have to be religious or
Wanting to die & dying are
Separate images.

Gombaszédés

Zary Fekete

These days there are many books, many pages, all promising, but the right way to begin is to ask grandmother. Which grandmother? Choose one. They are all correct and never lie. Nagyí or Nagyika or Mamikam. From Pest or Dunantul or the Alfold, they each have their secrets. They each found a path. They were all young once. Their routes led them from little country hamlets and acres of chipped Communist blocs, down through the decades, past wall after wall, papered with propaganda, each sign promising something just beyond reach, not quite true. But the mushroom recipe doesn't lie. It just requires the right one.

Choose favorable weather. Just after a rain followed by a humid sun, hidden away in the shadows of the forest. Not a stir of breeze among the wet trunks. The only sound the drip drip of soaked leaves and the tiny scurrying of beetles and ants among the underbrush. Bring along a basket lined with embroidered cloth for collection and grandfather's sharp knife for exploring beneath rotting logs, make sure you aren't bitten by something waiting in the soaking darkness. Wear the right clothes. Tuck your tights into stockings and tie petticoats around knees, purposefully designating legs, so nothing can be caught in the grasping, greedy branches. Walk carefully. Hold hands. Pick a partner. Step where she stepped.

Watch the ground carefully. Remember the legend of the boy who wouldn't share his bread while he walked with his friends through the woods. He had a full mouth every time they looked back at him, so he spit out each guilty mouthful. The bread-droppings left a trail. They transformed into mushrooms, and that's why when you find one there are always more nearby.

Once your basket is full bring it to the village examiner. Some mushrooms are safe, but some carry poisonous secrets. Some promise succor but silently wound. Some sing sweet songs but echo with a hollow gong. All taste sweet and feathery on first bite, but some have dark pools in their past. Bring home the good ones, but throw the rest into the stream and watch them float away.

Finally, prepare your soup. Mix the mushrooms with the right broth. Thin-sliced for clear soup. Thick-chunked for heavy stew. The mushrooms will take on the flavor of their companions. In this way they make good neighbors. They don't betray secrets. They keep what is given to them. They protect what is beneath them with widened heads.

Acorns

Mark Nemeth

A lifelong desert dweller,
I'd never before walked
in a hardwood forest in October,
among the chitterings of unfamiliar birds,
with acorns falling all around me
like a storm's heavy first raindrops,
rattling the yellowing leaves,
thwacking branches of gnarled oaks,
crackling through underbrush,
and thumping on the ground
to litter the forest floor
with the abundance of autumn,
for half-seen squirrels to gather
and cache in secret hollows
against the upcoming winter.

Chanu-Christmas Eve Feast

Gerard Sarnat

Taking advantage of the gift of religious convergence,
a Jewish husband + Catholic wife -- by Talmudic law
this technically made their kids Christian --
for the most part respectfully, respectively
veto ham & brisket leaving roast turkey
as part of the family compromise which also includes
Hanukah bushes + it's his job to prepare the gobbler.

Everything seems to go particularly swimmingly
following her directions to "drain & rinse,
paper towels to pat dry, rub with olive oil
then paprika, garlic powder + pepper,
cover with foil, place in pre-heated oven for 45 minutes,
reduce to 350 degrees, lodge the thermometer
in the fleshiest part of the thigh; I'll remove it after Mass."

That is smoothly except since there are none of the spigots
Hubby expected in one of the little jars
(turned out to be red hot Hungarian smoky paprika
he finds deep in a drawer, not the regular seasoning
his spouse had already put on the kitchen island)
dumps all over the bird + instead of using the metal pot
top of the counter, I dig up recycled disposable aluminum.

Which's groovy till it becomes clear there's a hole in the pan's
bottom letting torrents of blood & guts left in the carcass
ooze through along with fat that catches fire but isn't noticed
until smoke alarms go off. Middle son pretty much takes over,
makes things right till my hysterical partner sees a broken oven
thermometer full of juice (NOT the proper meat tool) I'd tucked
above our fowl's leg as hook & ladder lights flash, sirens blare.

The Wrath's Recipe

Overcomer Olajide

The wrath's recipe, a forbidden culinary skill.
It all begin with a spark of anger,
A pinch of salt on scarred tissue—pain.

Make the air of fury blow to rekindle its flame,
Add a cup of envy till it reaches saturation point.
Then, stir with a black spoon in a clenched fist.

Next, a spoonful of grudges,
A drop of vengeance,
Let it simmer until its steam forms the shadow of a beast
And boils over.

Beware, it's a deadly concoction
For its steam can cause an ugly scald,
Its scent can make the nostrils exhale a puddle.

Tho, the first bite is alluring,
there comes an aftertaste,
A burning sensation on the palette,
Breath getting caught in the windpipe,
Sweats evolving into map on the tempo
And Salty droplets like drizzles of rain.

Food tv fantasia

Joseph A. Farina

Each morning
espresso or cappuccino
at historic chic cafe's
in rome, milan, venice and florence
Under a rising Mediterranean sun

At noon

Ligurian olives, kissed with extra virgin oil
Prosciutto di parma
Pasta made by milanese hands
Tuscan wine in murano goblets
Bocconcini di bufala and basilico
Al fresco beneath a Mediterranean mezzogiorno
Vistas of dream cities in background

Evenings

Are slow passeggiatas
Arm in arm
Along ancient rivers
Or coastal promenades
Banked with palazzos and palms
Dusk scented
With Sicilian lemons, jasmine and oranges
Laughter, around outdoor
Linen covered tavolas
The sound of the Mediterranean a love song
The setting sun a chiaroscuro caress
They're living their dolce vita
While we save and deny ourselves
Hungry for their recipes.

RECIPE FOR CUPID'S BLACK CAKE

I Echo

1. Measure with fearful discretion and mix together in stew

- Talking stage
- Good morning texts
- Small laughs
- Dates

2. Add sweeteners and superficial things beat just right

- A soft happy birthday message you never forget
- Two tablespoonful of cheek kissing
- One tablespoonful of french kissing
- White slimy fluids

3. Stir in

- Two drops of extracts from old heartbreaks
- 2/3 cups of *we're not really a thing* milk in small cues

4. Stir mixtures into one pound of white lies and pick a day to cook the cake and for serving

5. Place your final mix in an oven and increase the heat to “i’m bored” joules and leave on read and come back two days later with an “i’m sorry” reason why the cake didn’t work

6. Serve with icing called Closure

Notes:

- Ensure the talking stage is set to stimulation. Never speak of how broken your life is; this is not the place to use melted things.
- Let the talking stage go on and on and don't make the first move yet or else you might open cracks and tunnels that end things abruptly; you don't want to seem needy.
- You can use as much french kissing as you like. For more spiciness.
- White slimy fluids can be added either by fingering or soft strokes or blow jobs.
- The amount of white lies used, is dependent on how big you want to go
- Do not overmix the final mixture otherwise consumer will think you just played them or there's holes in the cake and there's a way to go back and fix things
- If there is no icing nor love of thereof the cake is done and by all means breakfast is served even though the sun is setting

Cara-Cara

Jeremiah Ogle

With razor nails I drag
& peel you like an orange. My teeth

Are stained with you, bleeding
fruit and zested rind — I squeeze,

I suck you dry. Discard your skin.
Done with you.



Oranges
Binod Dawadi

[After The Orange]

Ross PM Creason

a plastic cup of processed fruit
well-traveled pears in syrup,
wearing passport stamps we couldn't dream of
shipped from another hemisphere,
saccharine occultation of the orchard
but it's six in a sleeve
 [enough to go around]
suck the juice down, stab the slices
with a spork from a drawer full of single use plastic
fast food take-out guilt trip tightrope
 [take an orange]
close your eyes, only taste
small and ordinary sweetness
every handwritten recipe
tucked safe in a book
borrowed, copied, inherited
 [from someone else's]
following instructions
or improvising substitutions
butter for shortening, applesauce for egg
baking welcome-to-the-block banana bread
 [seder plate/stocking/poem]

yellow berry crops cloned, made vulnerable
in monoculture-crafted cloying sameness
pare cellophane off waxy skin
redundant packing preservation
compost what you can
 [settle into new contentment]
charcuterie on thrifted plates,
loose fruits and nuts assembled
at our housewarming dinner, family style
a celebration, *l'shma*, sacred
for its own sake
whatever cheeses were on clearance
cut with someone's pocket knife
we'll unpack the kitchen tomorrow
 [we have everything we need]
all hands to clear the table, clear the floor,
make room for dancing
it's the after-thunder chorus old as music
still here, still here

Lemon Pedicel

Terry Trowbridge

is a hard green stud
on the evolutionary branch shared by Lego.
Lemons zap, so a positive terminal.
The bead of a latex balloon already knotted.
The post of a snap fastener
on a yellow rain slicker.
Inedible wooden kibble
on a delicious baker's peel.
The wooden evidence of a flowering tree
that reminds the grocery shopper of original groves
and tastes like delicious acidic sins.
The remains of seasonal blossoms:
banal promise of futures in bloom.

Autumn Orange

Michael Shoemaker

I'll whisper to you a secret.
Spring beguiles, summer struts
And winter whistles away.
I am more at home with autumn orange
in its simple charming splendor.

Orange in the morning sunrise
that almost surrenders before it begins
and leaves in trees ablaze in color sweeping
down mountain slopes with the wind.

Orange in the feeling of plentitude
taking one's time on aimless walks,
raking the leaves half-heartedly and
listening longer to others' words.

Autumn orange, once more cradle me
in timelessness, safety, tranquility.

Birthday Feast

Tara Menon

On my birthday in Boston, the raging blizzard
meant we couldn't go out to celebrate.
Nature's thick confetti poured on menacingly
while the wind howled greetings.
No special meal or candles on a cake to blow out.

If I could have escaped Narnia-style through the thicket of
my clothes in my closet to my mother's duplex in India
and rewind time a few hours,
I could have appeared for the traditional birthday feast
Mom had instructed the cook to prepare,
even though I wouldn't be there.
She'd listed the menu items over the phone:
rice, sambar, errisery, olan, thoran, papadam, and pickles.
I lay on the sofa, watching white blots
thicken on the window panes.

The swirling aromas intoxicated me
while my fingers mixed curries
and I shaped potatoes and other vegetables into mountains
and let delicious spiced rivers flow
the way I used to as a child.
Dots of pickles enlivened the banana leaf
that served as my plate.
They are the keys that unlock the appetite
with explosions of heat.

As I streaked the pickles across the veins
of my leaf, the green surface became a palette.
I progressed from finger painting to finger licking.
Then cracked papadam over my mound of diminishing rice.
The cook ladled steaming seconds,
and, unwilling to flaunt the birthday tradition of not declining more,
I accepted whatever she offered.
Dessert, the milky rice pudding, tasted like ambrosia.
Satiated and full, Mom and I reclined on her king-sized bed,
caressed by waves of gentle breeze blowing in from the balcony.

When I woke up, the blizzard in Boston intensified.
Nature whipped up a frosted multi-layer cake
sporting sparkly branches embellished with a couple of berries.
She huffed and puffed, blowing wishes for me,
sending sprays of white into the air.
Rice grains clung to my raven hair.
My husband batted them away
and lumps of ice tinkled on the tiles.

Still some things can't be explained
like the taste of rice pudding lingering on my tongue.

Vineyard

Adina Polatsek

There are vines in my mouth dirt in my stomach everything
has started growing in my blood under my tongue are grapes
still attached to their leaves I wonder if I have gotten lost here
in this vineyard and if anyone looking for me would be able
to see my hair tangled in the green or the blankness of my face
under the moon I don't mean to sound ungrateful because
there are a lot of people who love me but I'm not sure they
think I've got anything left in me to know and honestly I feel better here
choked out by what will be wine the grapes fermenting in my
mouth it's good to be a part of things that grow with dirt
and sun and water I wish that was all I needed but give me sun
and I walk the road looking at my shadow trying to
cut it off give me dirt and I just want to be buried
in it give me water and I'll say I won't drink from your hands
despite knowing there is no good in refusing I don't want
anyone's fingers near my mouth I worry I'll bite them
to bits mine are already chewed to stubs oh and I've gotten
too many straight white lines on my skin to keep counting at least
plants don't attack themselves I keep growing thorns just to stick
them in my stomach

Fermentation

Adrienne Stevenson

Mist settles on vines, clouding ripe colours
into hazy pastels. Dew soaks field-workers' feet
in worn boots and legs in tattered jeans
as they patrol rows for ripest fruit. Sun
emerges, burns off moisture and highlights
vineyard roses in traditional accent.

Crates of grapes pass through the process:
stem, crush, strain, ferment—white from juice,
red on its skins, whether in steel tank
or barrel, sweet juice yields to yeast
that feasts on its sugar. Wine results, golden
or burgundy, acid for structure, tannin for age.

Swirl new vintages in your glass—celebrate
centuries of harvest; continued prosperity.



Moustache

Nicola Caroli

Cheeto Dust Sonnet V.

Craig Sipe

O Dust, orange Soot, your debauchery courts,
A lure so vexing these faux soddened nights,
More gravity than grave, a craved resort,
A passion that flesh can never requite.
But our poppy fingers expose the airs
A cheddar pucker surrenders the truth
To fuckers descending the stairs to bare
Our bogus stagger in the breakfast booth.
O boomerang curl, O damn, the yam hue,
Our bourbon diversion rendered sour,
Them Jax do yack, and expose me and you
In this true, taboo bender of ours.

*We took to the hills fair Chee Toe and me
Half in the bag, and straight on to the sea.*

Bloody Cheese!

Alessio Zanelli

The cheese was sublime. By far the best I've had in years.
Caramelized red onion chutney is its death, they'd say in Italy.
It was worth the pain, absolutely, the crazy drive in the pelting rain.
I've always said that Cannon Hall Farm offers for sale only the very best.
By the way, who's going to tell the landlady that we finished it all?
I'd drive there again, were it not for such horrible weather.
The sky looks really ominous towards southeast...
Or maybe for the gin & tonic and the fizz?
Then the Barolo and the Bordeaux?
Let alone the single malt.
What about the poetry workshop?
Now, we're meant to jot down some lines...
Gosh darn it, it's all because of that bloody cheese!
Still, we're lucky that our cottage lies pretty near the village.
And besides, we can always ring or send for sober Simon Armitage.

holiday entertaining

Joseph A. Farina

he embraces the glossy food & drink magazine (Holiday Edition)
begins to plan a gourmet affair
the consummate host
a confidant and mentor to all
at the silver soiree, in attendance-at page 84
black and white lined tables present succulent meats
on exquisite china-recipes and accouterments at page 99
vintage wine, in silvered crystal goblets
compliment veal and squab.
with notes of melon, honey and oak
he swirls his yellow plastic water cup
with the confident practice of a sommelier
he saw on page 95
fatigued with the intermingling, bonhomie duties of host
he takes his Thorazine
falls asleep in his ward's only good chair
anticipating awakening to the planned champagne brunch
(Perrier-Jouet Rose Belle Epoque 2004-at page 23)
with all of the usual guests that await him
waterford crystal and china in hand
dressed for the season as at page 144.

Sprite

Sam Moe

It's all an act, the whale
bones and maybe mercy
your hair was tangerine
then red as fresh berries
we used to pick with
your mother, back then
I didn't know what bee
stings were like, when
you looked at me, it
meant something, know
it was always the moment
of stinger then skin, never
about flight or freedom
or escaping the ribbons
and the bones, I grew
tired making a home
soon we were back on
the ships, hips to hulls
harpoon and the sea lull
how big do you think
the love was, how much
heat can one whale heart
hold, who's to say who
made the choice, who's
going to tell you about
salt spires, dolphin fins
I mistake for manta rays
electricity I draw crooked
from the sky and hide
in jars, this isn't a god
thing but a spell, a lie.

Mom Can

Joe Amaral

From a ragged farm view, you abide
unseen as the stoic tree who greets
each morning; beauty morphing
as aeras lose their leaves wintering.
Bountiful scape in cyclic hibernation.

You remain evergreen. Unseasonal.
The one tending fertile soil
where hydrangeas poof underfoot.
Mom: our pollen and sowing sun
raising sons, daughter, husband.

The family watering can. Wisteria.

I find it difficult to compose a simple
poem about you: durable woman
in the olivine kitchen window
washing dishes and watching us
wrestle on a strip of chicken grass.

Ordering an array of garden veggies
to procure through the smoked glass.
Canning tomatoes and blackberry jam.
Mom: who fattens us with love
long after the jarred food is gone.

Crave

Jen Wieber

He said he was vegan
every time he came over
and so I put out the meatless
dish every time.

But when he thought no one was watching,
he'd scarf down the-all meat pizza
and aged salami,
horcking it down so fast

I wonder if he could even taste it.
I wonder if he even enjoyed it.

inheritance

Joseph A. Farina

when my family gathered for Christmas
it was a crowded, cacophonous delight
three families re-united,
into a microcosmic village
of the one they left behind
our basement became a piazza
plywood tables, waiting to be piled
with foods, prescribed by history and ritual
my father and uncles playing cards
eating lupini and drinking homemade wine
we cousins playing penny Bingo
sipping spiked shots of ginger ale
my mother and aunts in aprons
cooking, cooking, always moving
in their Christmas kitchen dance
the sentimental strains of old Sicilian songs
from scratched records brought tears to their eyes
and giggles from me and cousins
Sicily was fable, stories to make us sleep
we took for granted what we had here
and could not understand the want
our families left behind.....
when finally we did, their past
was no longer there - nor was it ours.
gatherings disbursed -
leaving only silence and the ghosts
of our inheritance.

Cowboy with a life path 7

Dorothy Lune

Rule one is cradle baby Mary.
I often bite my own scalp—

as insufferable
as it seems / it's

a wisp / I smell orange. Rule
two is wash gowns

in the local river. Rule three
is the river reflecting

Mary's long hair like a
mermaid near. The bunnies

stole my holster again—
yet I keep my ways

of ticking boxes /
but never reach another's level.

On rule four the saloon scuttles
to midnight—

where the eyes of chicks
flutter flashing rivers.

The levels slug off heads like oil /
drenchful & fleeting. Rule five

unloads groceries
/ switches on a lamp / bites

away each morning, bunny
at my scalp, beautiful

meditation. Rule six is pregnant
with tip-toes & embodiment

/ the carrots are bitter
& flash like cameras.

Dream week

Dorothy Lune

Ma rue recalls seedless hooks
it's high & dry here—

I have a dreamy week or two
each month: Paris—

here's the real kicker, safety,
seafood, avocados in

season are my top priorities.
My feet are like blue

berries / my nourishing
dreams squander anyone

who compare to me
with pinkish glossy paste—

the paint water never
spills & I made a

Friend in the airport /
tomorrow. She said

*You have lovely, chunky
boots— I informed*

her that *those are my
feet, my blueberries. Hooks.*

Farm Dinner, Forest Grove, July 2017

Cameron Walker

The meal I have mostly forgotten because I was holding your hand.
I saved the menu, which you'd written in your cramped cursive.
Start with the wheel of local brie, each one hearty enough
to propel the long table out into the neighboring pasture.
On a cutting board, it was scattered with color:
Nasturtiums, dried apricots, a rainbow of pickled carrots and radishes.
The bread fresh from the clay oven, kneaded with your palms.
Your fingerprints making small imprints on the dough
And then vanished in the baking.

A moment: we stood in our aprons behind the hedge while everyone ate.
There was wine, too. Later, platters of fish that your hands reeled in,
the green leaves of a salad cradled to dry in clean towels.
At the end, fresh berries and cream in a bowl, your knuckles
tight around the whisk. I remember nothing of how it all tasted,
only the pad of your thumb against my wrist, the blue ink I traced
on the inside of your forearm. That dear place where you kept
all things dearest to you: an image of a garlic bulb,
the name of your mother, the silhouette of your best knife.

Aubade to the Unmarked Mound

Enna Horn

There were so many things you weren't able to tell me.

I sink beneath the water in the marble tub, I wander.

Touching the cotton squares of your patchwork quilt or

curling my feet against the sheepskin lining of your moccasins,
floating amongst the soapsuds of what it means to have your face.

It means we share a skin, it means I look at myself
in the mirror & see someone else.

Upon the flatscreen of a dull monitor, the drums drone,

the healing shells jingle amongst the grass dance,
the frybreads sizzling deep within the earthen oil,
the ancestors of my bones wearing the white garments,
gazing south, throat painted vermilion.

You weren't able to tell me the paint is called *wodige'i wodi*,

I had to

trace your footprints in the mud on the tearful trail,
pluck the dead roses, pink with sorrow.

You weren't able to tell me that once, we laughed & *anejodi* with sticks,

that our shawls fluttered, glass butterflies amongst the corn,
that our stomp dance worshipped the heartbeat of the earth,
that our masks once belittled our enemies & then
— we never removed them.

Your spirit sinks within me,

pink with sorrow, a pressed-paper thing,
rose memento smeared upon my throat.

You walked before
so I could walk at all.

You perished so that I could live.

I wonder. There are so many things you aren't able to answer.



Berries

James Reade Venable



A Creature Sprouted from the Ground

Irina Tall (Novikova)

Picnic at Sleepy Hollow

Frank William Finney

*Every family chooses its own clump of trees
under which to lay its corpses . . .*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Under the shade
of oak and pine,

close to the crown
of this legendary hill,

we share a meal
among the stones,

where Emerson chose
to bury his bones.

If you're reading this, I still love you

Sam Moe

Soon, June, and the mayflies aren't bad this year. Blistering emerald beetles from long before you left the grounds jewels in satin boxes, leaves a form of leaving, growing, falling, this isn't love for the stags, soon weevils, I'm quite fond these days of tigers and fires and potatoes, rain, whirling, mountain pine, we've been trying for a long time the good part about giving up your song means the grass can finally grow high as it's meant to. Please don't mistake me, I know about health and wealth depositing different kinds of vegetable flesh in the garden, it's just you hate the tall weeds, you would rather eat dandelions than blow wishes into skies breathtaking the shape of the loss, blue walls suffocate, everything was for your benefit, each comforter bright as morning sea, we pretended to be lost in boats

but really, what do you know of blood
sometimes salt, no fish for days, wet,
cold air, boxes of dreaming crabs, slabs
of candle wax cut and trimmed for more
light, more time, I don't want to assume
things about hunger but you know of it?
the emptiness, the desperation, clinging
to everyone's parent's legs but your own
those days in childhood you wished
they would hide you in a portrait like
a doll or a third child, feed you eggs
explain to you how to let go, how change
is exciting at first but soon everyone
is marching out of your heart, tell me
how you feel, tell me about devastation
earth in peels, deep green ink, the swallow
of your breakdown, down comes a throat.

Bluff

Sam Moe

Both our faces illuminated blue
I watch you in the corner, lawn
statues and a pond with hungry
orange fishes, everyone is tired

my heels stick in the muddied
earth, the storm already passed
the rain is old news. We've now
trained ourselves to avoid burns

back when we were younger
our mothers kicked the backs
of our knees if we weren't
praying deeply enough, folded

our shirts into our skirts and
once my legs fell asleep from
holding the same position too
long, my blood felt frozen, now

even after so much time has
passed, even though we keep
salt rocks and buttery seashells
in our pockets, I still feel static

in the space where my heart
once lived. I'm leaving the blue
moss too soon, saying goodbye
to mint and swallows, swollen

nests knocked loose from the
recent storm, where too-deep
puddles drowned several cars
and the only lights visible from

the back roads were from last
Christmas, soon is July, I was
driving home with my elbows on
the steering wheel and wondering

whether or not this summer would
be our last. Forgive me, it has
barely begun. I hope we'll live to
see the river thaw through the ice.

Feast in the Forest

Marianne Szlyk

Hawks no longer circle above this wood.
The young fox has skulked off screen.
Birch and pine protect birds and beasts
from us chattering humans and our dogs
stealthy cats and heedless cars.

Cloud-gray pigeons, woodpeckers,
and common chaffinches dine
on sunflower seeds sweet redcurrants
and halves of soft yellow apples
color of fall leaves fall chill.

Black and red squirrels take their turn
while starlings splash in the pool.
Night-colored boars amble uphill.
Robins and finches flash past. Songs linger
in the forest grove large enough for all.

I know birds only visit this wood,
this wood that I watch via web cam.
Boars and piglets block Poznan's traffic.
The government will cull them soon.
Hawks and foxes must also live. I know.

But today I witness the feast.

Yellow Picnic

Jackson Chapin

last sunday we had a yellow picnic.
pancakes and butter tabs floated out of the checkered basket,
and shy freckles camped in tall summer grass.

lemonade giggles bubbled up into the sky,
and the afternoon hummed along.

bugs swam through the muggy air
and ice cubes kept our foreheads cool,
softly clinking on glass.

honeycombs grew in our heads that day,
a chamber draining each time we laughed.
our heads pooling with that sap made things soft around the edges,
like naptime and butterscotch.

my mother owns grief

finch greene

she's been buying it in bulk since 2016 and keeps it on every flat surface in the house.

it crowds the china cabinet / outnumbered precious moments figurines and trophies i didn't do anything to earn / it curls up on the couch under my dad's sick blankets / it keeps his seat warm since he isn't here to do it himself.

my mother has more grief than she knows what to do with. she adds it to her morning coffee / sprinkles it over her dinner like shredded cheese / takes it with her blood pressure medication / feeds it to her plants / hangs it in every window / puts it in the wash instead of fabric softener.

she pays grief's bills / she calls grief three times a day to check in / she talks about grief like it's not in the room / she loves grief like a fourth child / she wants grief to have my bedroom when i move out / but grief has already moved in.

my mother's grief sleeps in my bed / my mother's grief doesn't put the cap back on the toothpaste / my mother's grief uses all the hot water / my mother's grief plays the tv too loud / my mother's grief gets the most christmas presents.

there is no room for mourning that isn't hers. my grief is a knockoff / my grief is bootleg / my grief is store-bought / my grief is undercooked / my grief is stale / but it is mine.

i lock my grief in my nightstand / i fold my grief very, very small / i chew my grief / i swallow it / i whisper my grief under my breath the way my dad hated / i leave it in the neighbors' trashcans / i give it away on holidays / maybe someone else has space for it.



Drinking Games

Nicole Zdeb

Meant to

Joseph Byrd

I meant to make some lunch. I knew you would come.

Hunger marks the return of a miracle. I am misquoting someone. I do this to make sure you care about things.

I meant to specify what those things are in all of this, meant to burst as I put those things in your mouth. Or at least wanted to, I mean.

Where two or more are gathered, it has been said, things start to happen. I meant to talk more about what those things are.

Meanwhile, please eat my lunch. Please ask what food I intend to stuff in your fucking mouth. Said mouth only deserves said adjective when attempting to singe my own orifice. This has been called kissing, by some people.

I have long begged for your shadow. It is enough. Feed me crumbs while crows circle overhead, for I have been readied.

I am a candy machine. Insert something, or stop staring. I meant to say goddamit at the end of that, but then I heard *Somebody tell that woman; there's a big boat up the river and she can't come down*, and that is a correctly quoted folk song, referring to your mother's insemination. I have begged for a reversal of fluids. I have offered my services to God. Thus, I do not cuss such aforementioned words.

Fritos crushed into our chili, and I meant to do that. I mean what you think when you see *Spice* written in India ink over my eyebrows.

I get stuck trying to find out what I mean. Mostly with you.

I meant that we were once a pairing—a vodka flavoring that wasn't fruited—a noodle tossed at the wall to check: will this stick?

I mean that some dishes don't. You knew. You had to, with my yolk dripping between your fingers.

I meant to write a play about us. I would have called it *Kitchen Disasters*. I saw it. It flopped.

I meant to make something.

I still love all of your ingredients: your harissa, your fandangoes, the rubicity of your mushroom impostors, those tender tips of my long-lost nibs, steaming as I beg to write your name in the language of lust on every mirror that shows me where your visage isn't.

I meant to wipe all of that off and away.



BARNACLES BY THE BEACH

Michael Shoemaker

Cloys at the Cave

Helen Grant

Dark chocolate quilts my tongue
cloys at the cave entrance of my throat
I roll the taste around like a globule of rich warmth
while the easterly wind gains momentum
bashes at my windows makes the fine hairs of my limbs
stand up and I swallow the muddy consistency
down to my gut the eye of my body's storm.

In the Country of the Black Eagles

Enna Horn

Where the tapestries blanch the beige brick,
The tunnels swallow the sheer cliffside,
The man weds the sea in a wet dream,
The feathers throttle the open throats,
The travelling people have music for blood,
And your oath to the fire eats at your skin,
Everything is about honour — except honour,
Which is about shame.

You are a king outside of your own country.
(Inside of your own country) you are a prisoner.
Throat scorched in rika, poem scorched in fire.
Your name, on lists to be crossed out.
Your voice, in choirs to be drowned out.
In the wet dream, your body in white,
Your body in a stoat's, averting hailstorms.
You leave yarn vejrora in the magnolia.
Stars brand your forehead, no doom;
Moons brand your chest; no wound.

The prison feeds you well:
Rika poured in small glasses,
Soul poured in black tea leaves.
Your fortune spits out feathers:
Eat whatever you choose,
Wear the same clothes as everyone else.
Your mouth, stained from the kanojët,
Your fingers, stained with its lemon scent.
Where is your honour now? (Your shame.)
In the woven white cloth in the black night,
In the dancing of the sunrise's shadow,
In the stoat with the smooth fur,
In the evening with bread & salt.

Everything is about shame — except shame,
Which is about honour.
You are free in the tongues you didn't learn first.
You are free in the feasts of them,
In the guilt that devours, warm as gullash;
Spilt crimson beneath the blackest eye.

CORVIDS

Anita Howard

When the grass is frosty
I scatter out a fistful
of seeds, to make things easier
for the smaller birds.

Unfortunately, our corvids
will never read that script.
They barrel in to fill themselves,
a darkly-feathered mob.

A murder, a parliament, a clattering,
a mischief, an unkindness,
Hell's Angels of the bird kingdom.
No peevish little robin,

no chaffinch flecked with blue,
will fluff their plumage here,
no goldfinch lift red poll
among these sable gangsters!

And I half admire them
in my hungry vigils.

Stigma

Corey D. Cook

Months before you shooed the same squirrel
away from the snow-capped birdfeeders,
it's coat matted and dull,
it's hunger brazen – unseemly.

The squirrel that now sits on top of the compost pile
with last week's moldy plums and your blessing.

Relegated to picking through scraps as we
continue to serve and fuss over the birds.

Their striking feathers neatly tucked and fastidious,
manners impeccable,
one sunflower seed retrieved, consumed, at a time.

My mornings with this Curious Winter

Saptarshi Bhowmick

My morning starts with a sleep,
A sleep of coco-powder in the milk
And cup full of salmon leaves condescending
The air with pedestrian slumber.
Drowsiness numbs my eyelids as
I opened the first page of morning newspaper,
“A Government conspiracy drags civilians into disaster”
And I think of a different disaster then,
cooking in my kitchen with raw flavours and foreign spices.

My mother enjoys her little experiments with food;
Some fall out but seldom masterpieces brush out
The room as she carries the new dishes with her smile,
That particular moment makes me wonder why winter
Had to go, to make room for the ever-loving spring?
And I wait like summer waits for the sun
To come around a loop, full around
Just like my mother do, beside our dining table.

A Martyr's Slice of Pizza Picante

Frank William Finney

You took a bite. And then another
and another till the crust

broke a tooth and
you swallowed the fire.

Minutes later your
stomach ached.

Painters poked palettes
behind their easels.

You mumbled a prayer
to a microphone.

I hid in the throng
with a jar of flaked chili—

too late to sprinkle
a final blessing.

Could Kitchens

Hiram Larew

Where plums become summer
and suds these wishes –

Pepper by windows or with spoonfuls on high shelves
or even how dripping faucets matter

And over there are bowls aloft and ceiling's dew
and cellars shy or rugs love
or cans go

Yes whatever wasps want or milk licks
or knobs say or tiles keep
or years take or soap knows –

This jelly-jar summer
Its knobs on cupboards



Things Like This
Barbara Anna Gaiardoni

A Winter Birthday

Philip Andrew Lisi

My mother's apron was always red on birthdays,
starched and tied in the back with precision,
a perfect pair of loops,
one ribbon mirroring the other,
like little scarlet whips,
perfect for this year's circus-themed party.

I knew they were not really for me.
They were for the neighbors and other adults worth impressing
with a dizzying array of birthday party decor—
streamers in rainbow colors, crisscrossing the dining room,
napkins with clown faces, with the same wide smiles
worn by those gathered around the table,
balloons of blue, green, and yellow arrayed along the walls
and some in the corners where the hot air from vents in the floor
cause them to sway like floating heads of party guests.

I want to run to the basement where sound is cool and color muted—
but am stuck at a table full of harlequins,
the chairs are arranged too tightly around.
Behind my mother there is a window,
and the panes are covered in frost, like layers of icy spiderwebs.
It gives me something else to think about
instead of the too-blue icing of the elephant,
who balances on a bright yellow ball at the center of the cake.

She lights the candles now, and there is a hush in the room—
a moment of silence before the singing begins.
In the reflection behind her, the ribbons dance like fire,
turning the icy patterns on my window to tears.

Grand Forks Thanksgiving

Suzy Harris

At an old house off campus,
snow-muffled this day before Thanksgiving,
our farmer landlord brings
a skinned rabbit for our holiday dinner—
we must have roasted it, then
sat together in candlelight
at the small wooden table in the kitchen,
as if we three were the first to ever share
this meal together, giving thanks to the farmer,
to the rabbit, to the warmth of the tiny flames.



Open
Ira Joel Haber

Dinner

Bharti

Tonight as I sit ready for dinner
Which my father serves us lovingly
I ask my sister to get me an orange
Of course nothing is remarkable about it
Or the fact that every single night, before my father sleeps, he
counts six tablets and gives them to me without saying anything
I believe waiting for a person to swallow the blue white pills is
another way love speaks its old dialect
Accepting love then becomes a habit of promising your father to
take them as prescribed
Sometimes discipline to live outweighs the willingness to die
I believe the reason why most people fail is because they aren't
reminded to keep their blood
sugar in check, take the multivitamin on time, or told that they
are loved enough to not miss out the routine
It is scary, how love folds its tongue and licks the wounds off the
skin of someone who doesn't realise what it is
Love then becomes a parent we all want to escape

How to Walk on Eggshells or How to Greet Your Husband at the Door

Nancy Hanna

Register
how the door is
opened
Or shut

Analyze
the furrowed brow
decide if it is
fatigue
Or fury

Offer
the baby to be held
a possibility if he is
interested
Or not

If he has arrived with someone else
unannounced
express delight, and never
Surprise

Offer food

If there is some
If you had

the decency
the foresight
the concern

for his welfare,
for his day
for the impressions of his friends

If you have guessed that
tonight
he might come home
if you have not

Scrape
eggs off the floor
pick out
the sharp shells

And make an omelette

Vegan Benediction

Daniel Edward Moore

In the darkness that is salad
torn from earth's love of green,
there I am with the fork's steel teeth
smiling at the bowl, as
crushed croutons soaked in oil
wait for the stab and swallow.

Call me farmer of forgetfulness
who turned his back on the fallow field,
a mosaic of manure and light,
whose seen how consumption looks
in the prison yard of hunger.

Does your ribcage grieve
the songbird's throat
silenced by your organ's keys
failing in the night?

I'm holding court with animals,
listening close to what their eyes
are saying to my tongue.

AN UNENDING FEAST FOR THE SOUL

Mbonisi Zikhali Zomkhonto

You cannot invite a dead man to a feast
but if you could, feeding him a plate of maggots
would be the best way of him getting even with the grave.
Imagine him clearing the plate,
asking for seconds, with that gnawing feeling
that remembers the second they closed his coffin
these very same parasites were ready for stuffing
and had long been baying for his decaying blood.

We are always begging at the doors of the wealthy
And one day if we could get to eat them whole,
what an unending feast for the soul.

Easter Poem

Robert Beveridge

they say resurrection is impossible
but they are wrong

a Saturday night spent drinking
followed by a Sunday of coffee

and here's my hankie

Alan Bern

all this small talk
about the fruit flies
seeming to come
right out of the softening fruit,
when it's more about the fruit's wet bruising
that draws the flies in
entering to feast

it's the same with your loud talk
about my letter
to you – did you even read it? –
please put down my heart
and wipe your mouth

What I Know about Cherries

Jeffrey Howard

Before I learned the Spanish *cereza* while reading a board book, *La Oruga Muy Hambrienta*, to my baby daughter, coaxing her smile, her blue eyes, into sleep for the night as she takes one last, long drink of milk from her pink sippy cup;

Before I ate gelato veined rich with *amarena*, the sheen of cold melt loving my hand, my gluttony caught in the gaze of Brindisi's bronze lady high in her rudder of brick on the harbor's opposite side;

Before I took a gravel-hard pit between pointer and thumb, swallowing it like a bolus (on a whim or a dare, who can remember?) with a half-handful of silty loam, testing whether I had it in me to gestate an orchard,

Before I tasted my grandfather's favorite Thanksgiving pie, before my tongue failed to knot the stem,

I pushed open a chipped pantry door, my young eyes wondering, the dim shelves pregnant with Ball jars and bobbing fruits preserved in wine-colored juice, and in my mother's thin script the year she put them up inscribed on their circular tin lids.



Cafe
James Reade Venable

ORCHARD 2

Dee Allen

—In response to the poem “Blossoms” by Li-Young Lee.

Lady Death
Takes a back seat
To the fruit of Spring. Peaches.
Globular treats picked from Southern trees
[The only Southern thing I miss]

Heavy with juice,
Sugary flesh
That would delight taste-buds,
Spoon-blend into vanilla ice cream,
Fill oven-baked crust

Of future cobblers.
The rich orchard is
Carried in me
Bite after bite
After tantalising bite.

The Memory of Hunger

Devon Neal

As a kid I heard that when an animal tasted blood,
it became ravenous. What else is possessed by the taste?

As I stand at the Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument
with the food and supplies for a picnic with my girlfriend,

I think of tongues of grass lapping the blood and meat of young men
in 1862. Does it remember? Do the blades chew at my shoes

as I walk across, trying for the fruit inside?
Will it tear at the fabric of our blanket as we sit with our sandwiches,

or juggle her jacket as she tosses it aside,
folding and unfolding, searching for a pockmark wound

smoked and peppered from the sear of gunpowder.
After a time, we pack our things back into the car,

leaving behind a patch of green Sunday grass,
gnashing quiet in the wind.



hungry fortune

Jen Wieber

Ode to Arils

Susan Auerbach

Tucked in the pocks of pomegranate skin
you await release, first light on your gleaming
profusion, your upward thrust shameless
as a ripped bodice. How crimson you've grown,
how carmine your translucent sheaths.
How you tug and burst against the teeth,
that pause before the spurt, first bitter, then sweet.
No wonder desert ancients adored you.

It's Sukkot, the Jewish harvest fest, and you
and I are seeing a lot of each other.
Till making this recipe I didn't know
your name or nature. You are not seed
but its gummy pod. And not every start
bears fruit, like not every boat gets launched,
but no need to dwell on that here—you have
my complete attention. I pinch, you splatter;

I bite, you tangle the tongue. My husband
with cleaver and apron would tame your mess
outside. I submerge you in water still nestled
in quarters, fold back veils of membrane
to coax you out, always more of you clinging.
Gently you detach from feathery pith.
Slowly I swirl you underwater,
fingering your plenty like a cache of gems.

O to bare
my flickering iridescence,
to be lingered over,
savored and stirred,
ever ripe.

Untitled

Callie S. Blackstone

mist rolls over cracked concrete,
blocks starving plants from sun
we are all starving
gas prices tick higher
and higher
empty restaurant windows
papered over,
yellowed from sun
smell of stale grease
behind us
all of this, long behind us
civilization long behind us

we are here to feast

Dissolution

Ivi Hua

Love— close your eyes. With the house
blighted, scarring at the seams, your lashes float
like leaves. Through the window, the sunset is
bleeding light. You've been washed in gold, hair
spun into silk. The silence a current, your heart
heaving, glass sparrows between our bodies.

In this room, your hand on my shoulder,
nothing moves. Time spins to a stop,
standstill and etched glory. We fledgelings,
silent blooms. The floorboards an expanse of
dreams: roots, rotting. Love, I want you to stay.
When you're gone, I sink into sorrow,

unmake the walls. These strands of sea, of shore—
ephemeral, sweeping. Everything leaves, only to return.
Tides rise and fall, a hum of breath. Love, tribute
me once. Like a ghost, haunt me. Linger until memory
becomes reflection. Water and wind. Our eyes
salt of the sea. Eventually, our hearts
become mist.

You Can't Write a Poem About Tater Tot Hotdish

Anne Panning

It's too hot. It's too humid. Your mother wears a dishtowel slung over her shoulder like a frat boy toga. There's embroidered kitties on it playing with a ball of string. She sweats like a 26.2 marathon bumper sticker on the back of someone's Subaru she doesn't even know. She wears a striped blue sundress she sewed herself on the old Singer.

Who makes hotdish in August? you ask
without meaning to, in front of cousins in too-small shorts
and aunts with dark voices and fallen down perms. Your mother
knows the only way to feed an army is with three Pyrex pans
so browned and boiled over and bubbled with stains they will
never come clean, even under Comet's bitter green assault.

I do, she says
the tater tots sinking like little missiles into cream
of mushroom soup and Durkees deep fried onions,
the holy grail of hotdish, this hotdish you will never
make in your new white kitchen unless you acknowledge
the swerve of craving—like a bad accident you can't uncrash,
like the spider web you find every single morning
around your mailbox, like blood rich wine that settles in
your throat, like the quilt you sleep under made of old
neckties, pastel button-up shirts, your grandpa's plaid flannels.

Cincy Chili Ode

Craig Sipe

The Cincinnati chili---bacchanalia of kick
steeped over the round in consommé

and secrets for an afternoon
on the fringe of a simmer

Cloves, allspice, and bay
conspire with chocolate, dark

and tastes who must remain nameless
in the daisy chain, when we are served

splayed in libidinous crave three, four
and five-way topped with heaving

amounts of sharp, corruption so silk
that your discretion is left

unguaranteed.

Sarma

Lisa Ashley

—*Sarma is grape leaves stuffed with rice, a traditional Armenian dish.*

We trudge in conscripted from our play,
sit to the table and work.
Father's impatience wraps around his jeers
as he shows us how it is done.

Our small fingers plug away at stacks
of brined grape leaves, rumpled, easily torn.
Each leaf pile shrinks, grows tall again
down the long afternoon,
as more leaves appear in front of us.

Rice cooked in olive oil, canned tomatoes
and chopped onions in a sticky mound
in the massive frying pan ringed with spoons.

There is a particular tension to hold the leaves,
precision in the folding left and right to center,
a slight pressure to roll the rice in the leaf
hold it to itself.

We stack the cigars (his name for them)
round and round in a big pot,
like mossed layers of stones in our old well.
This family dish is fulcrum
to lost childhood time, stomachs filled.

I lick my fingers for the salt,
wonder if my secret is sealed.
I wrap his betrayal in finger-thick rolls
that look like his.

Of all the dishes his mother taught him
this is my favorite. I tuck and roll,
no longer hear his voice
or feel his hands.

The fat, green stubs stew gently
over a low gas flame,
lemon tang fills the house.
I wait for the slick and salty morsels,
the simple comfort of rice.

LIKE BOXED RED WINE IN A DIVE BAR

Michele Magnuson

I drink you in, bitter
on my tongue, biting
at my buds. Burning
as your sweet note
floods me with
fingers on my throat.

A cheap diversion
that will leave me
flush with shame on
my walk home. You
break my train of thought
just long enough to take
the edge off of living.



Girl in National Costume

Irina Tall (Novikova)

Breakfast

Jennifer Maloney

What happens first
is sound. No—what happens first
is the image of the sound.
It blooms

on the backs of my eyelids, a picture
of your lips, pushing words
into the coils of my ear,
corkscrewing deeper,
your breath spiraling into my awakening, words
like berries, bumpy as tongues they tumble, plump,
plosive—when you speak, I want to eat the words you say—

I want my mouth to fill
with the round firmness of them,
to press my own lips
against the surface tension of the skin
stretched over their sweetness.
I want to feel them—trembling, ready—
against my tongue, I want them to
pop!
like sun-warm cherry tomatoes,
like near-bitter blueberries, to pop

and then slither, spread, melt
on the tip where we sense sweet,
mellow on the back where we savor—
rivers of flavor rising,
flowing, sliding down my throat,
down into my body, down
into the pit of my belly and deeper,
deeper,
until your words have touched
the places I have wanted them to touch
since first you spoke them, and then I wake,
and I wake

hungry.

Ode to Borsht

Suzy Harris

You are the soup of my imagined past.
Standing in the dark kitchen,
I run roasted beets under cool water,
rubbing off the skins until

my hands are stained red.
Slivers of beets and beef, onions and cabbage,
and slices of apple go into the meaty broth.
The soup simmers, fat skimmed off the top.

When the soup is ready, the table
crowds with old ancestors.
We light the candles, sing the prayers
and raise our bowls to eat.

Dinner Plates

Joe Amaral

They pile in sinks.
Slick with grease,
kamikaze fruit flies
and dirty tissue.

You finger-lick
half-chewed
rib meat
while scavenging
a raw veggie.

Popped corks
roll about; dryly
shuddering across
crumbed granite—

stained red as teeth
and spiced tongue.

Dregs of beer neck
and broken wineglass
gleam in the dim light.

Our love-blind
groping undress.

Reaching
for one last
strip.

Olive Picking with the Greatest of Ease

Cynthia Gallahe

To fly heroically through air
held by twisted woody riggings,
ancient branches
radiate from prehistoric trunks.

Hundred-year-old trees tighten
against sun's theatrical spotlight, prepare trapeze
and high-dive for newly green,
nearly ripe crew of seasonal aerialists,

Limber in ancestral skills and savvy.
Autumn winds whip olive leaves
to silver-gray undersides
like circus tent flaps.

Olive pickers, both spectator and assistant,
affix nets below, ladders tall,
to coax oval athletes
by hand to descend

Toward landbound destiny with salt cure,
stuffings of garlic or gorgonzola,
or the ultimate path
to the press.

Unlike sun-sweetened bunches in vineyards,
the olive grove upholds
biting and pungent merits of the individual,
where high above, each swings

In solitary, unbruised asceticism,
at harvest, each vies for the station of extra virgin,
to flow as new oil to anoint priests, baptize babies,
declare Olympic champions, lavish salads.



Meat Counter
Ira Joel Haber

Bacon Busted

Craig Sipe

—*A stick sonnet*

Morning,
Sizzle,
Strips
Heaven
Crisp
Burgers,
BLTs,
Baconaters,
Crumble
Stroke
D
 E
 S
 C
 E
 N
 T
...
--Sizzle--
Bacon??
Damn...



After Work

Devon Neal

*“So then because thou art lukewarm,
and neither cold nor hot,
I will spew thee out of my mouth.”*

—Revelation 3:16

He was looking forward to this all week:
coming home after a long work week
and crashing on the couch
in a living room lit by a jittering TV
with a tall, sizzling soda
and a big bowl filled with humans.

He likes grabbing them by their stiff torsos
and feeling their arms and legs pelt against His fingertips,
or they way they pop with juice in His mouth,
but how there’s still a crunch between His molars
like pomegranate seeds.

But there’s that rare instance during those wriggling bites
when one of their bodies is kissed with cold
from the uneven heating of the microwave
and, just too worn out from a week’s worth of creating,
He spits them into the dark of the room,
clattering across the hardwood,
where they’ll stay all night
until He sweeps them up in the light of Saturday morning.



Clematis
Ann Privateer

Last

Nolcha Fox

We picnicked beneath the stars,
watched them fall as we clinked glasses,
drinking in each other more
than we drank up the wine.
Night air heavy scents of jasmine.
Fingers sticky from fried chicken,
watermelon. Kisses sticking to our lips,
each one better than the last.
I'd give my life if this one night
could last forever. Nothing lasts.
With first sunrise, you were gone.

Gobble

Nolcha Fox

I plucked tomatoes, carrots, squash
from our first-year backyard garden.
Baskets full, enough to stuff
the wild turkeys running, running
past the fence, away before they
landed on our plates.

I made do with store-bought bird thighs,
cubed them, added salt and pepper,
laid them nicely in slow cooker,
layered them with my fresh veggies.
Bathed in chicken broth, they simmered
for ten hours, long enough
for you to pack your clothes
and leave me for some young thing,
legs to lust for, lick up,
some young thing who thought
fast food was as good as she could get.

Picking Blackberries From My Mother-In-Law's Cake

Bryce Johle

—*After Robert Hass's "Picking Blackberries with a Friend Who
Has Been Reading Jacques Lacan"*

Blackberries are not subtle crests of light
obsessed with gradients opening with pink carnations,
then orange creamsicles, yellow-white peaches, and finally
newborn eyes like spring water rippling,
though, no one said they were

an early blanket thrown clean by the sunrise
If you pick blackberries, you might leave red-purple stains,
overrated juice spots in the sky, tainted with hard seeds that
wedge themselves beneath molars like the carpenter
ants which gnaw through damp wood behind the fridge

My mother-in-law offers me a slice of almond-crust ed cake
I accept, plucking the blackberry off the top and leaving
the rest for the ants because where dairy is involved,
blackberries are victorious over any horizon,
except a bowl of midnight fruit

in which I'll insist to whoever you are that blackberries are
not subtle nor crests of light, but dark little bubbles full of sour
water and tiny pebbles that stop my jaw, and while I go in for the
sensual image of purple juice staining Charlie's beard, I feel
sticky, like I need to wash my hands and my face

and refuse blackberries in my bowl at night, and usher in
neat, sliced peaches and bananas whose juice membranes are
safe, tightly packed, and of delicate taste, who ripen each other
summoning unseen gradients of light in brown paper bags.

A Later Harvest

John Muro

The harvest has found its way to bins,
that once were placed beneath these trees,
in an orchard white-washed by morning mist.

An early frost seems to have thinned
the air, while wind's fragrant vagaries
drift between dazed motion and stillness.

The last of the ruined fruit
hang unattended upon the boughs
and sunlight slants unevenly thru trees

that mark the place where someone's set
assorted baskets that are all empty now;
less between us, with a degree of ease,

I extend my weightless arms and gather
what little is left between the gnarled
branches and ink-besotted leaves.

Still, I'm thankful to have come when earth's
tilting away from fragrant startle
and winter's slowly rising from her knees.



RIBBONS IN THE SEA

Michael Shoemaker

Wild Thing

Savana Lee

Once upon a time my hunger left me. I went to bed whole and woke up injured, the unexpected storm cracked lightning through my nervous system. My hands weren't mine, my core gone quiet. My mother cut up pancakes and syrup, hand to mouth when I couldn't hold a fork.

Desire is a sin until you lose it.

Then you realize it's necessity. Maps built in like bloodlines, need that runs through your veins. To feel nothing, not a lover, not a pang, not an emptiness – I lay with my body and wept for her loss. Tell me what you hunger for, and I'll tell you, you're Alive.

Healing came on slowly until one day there was smoked chicken and rice under foil. Black beans, Cucumbers. Simple. Heavenly.

Months of silence, and now my mouth watered. I clutched at hunger with my whole soul and savored it. My heartbeat thrumming – I want, I want, I want, I want.

Feasting makes us wild things, all teeth and mouth and hands.

I've never known a thing so holy.

Eater's Eulogy

Edward Ziegler

—*On the Whole Science of Invented Foods*

Nature's world lacking prisms
weeders labors go lost.
But with new gardeners
that distinguish between pleasure, pain, and frost,
we can label yellow and chartreuse.
separate turquoise and maroon,
trick the soil and rainfall,
baffle the sun and the moon.
But plum blossoms become lemon thorns
as all red apples grow sour,
and at harvest time, they're no buyers,
you see, no one eats anymore.

Argentinian Asado

Pat Phillips West

Sometimes, out of nowhere—
it comes back with an odd ache—
the summer of seventy,
and I think how it took
nothing to gather this group
I fell in with,
all of whom loved food so hard
it would crack your bones,
my cozy bungalow
with the huge backyard—
the place we'd eat and talk—
they'd bring crusty bread, beer,
guitars, and the big old dog
someone had, I think of the time
Jorge prepared an Argentinian asado—
tenderloin and strip steak,
morcilla and chorizo sausages
spread over a parrilla
with slow burning wood embers—
scents and smoke drifted
through the screen door,
taunting everyone all afternoon,
as I chopped cilantro,
red onions, fresh oregano
for Chimichurri sauce,
later mismatched chairs
were dragged outside,
someone would throw a log
on the fire, we'd lean toward
the circle of light
and sing Baez, Dylan, Seeger,
so many moments imprinting
the clay of memory, perhaps
that's the pull, why they linger
long on the tongue.

A Mukbang of Childhood

Christian Ward

Fish pie with prawn earrings,
collapsing cliffs of cod, mashed
potato soft like pillows. Stuffed
zucchini with crispy flags of bacon.
Pizza, rarely. Unless homemade
with tuna or a plain Margherita
with stretchy cheese as long
as your arm. Sausages. Pyramids
of sausages with enough French fries
to last into adulthood. Baked eggplant,
dark as night. Scooped out,
stuffed with sugary tomato sauce
and topped with cheese. Dive in,
dive in, dive in. Return to adulthood,
your mouth starred with nostalgia,
the closest you'll ever get to home.

Recipe for A Bittersweet Life

Maya Klauber

In a large bowl, squeeze out the juice from each day. Add in the zest from their rinds and set aside for later.

In a separate bowl, sift 1 cup of friends —only the truest blue. Combine with good health (if it's in season), a dash of luck, and other like ingredients.

Gather together a 1/2 dozen dreams. Crack them open, one by one. Whisk, vigorously. Carefully remove the broken pieces while mixing in the zested juice.

Notice the bitterness. Sit with it. Stir until you find the sweetness again.

Fold in 1 roof over your head and 1 good dog to love you, even when you simmer; to love when you forget how. Top it all off with one reason

to rise every morning and 1 person to remember you when you're gone.

Tapering: Morning. Coffee

Helen Grant

Like the whole of the cosmos
 spinning vortex-like
in my cafetiere this morning,
that spiralling darkness
chaotic floating particles
drifting
only able to go with the flow
 of direction.

I watch
as my veins
 wait
for caffeine
in hope
of riding the reduction
of codeine.
Liquid murk
darkness drank.

Pour like the big bang,
intended,
to only know its own existence
on my taste buds.

More

Alina Zollfrank

—Dedicated to Mary Oliver's "Devotions"

Before I clamber from my night nest
onto my yoga raft, I imbibe one.

I shovel breakfast oat bran with
unripe apricots and sip another.

Between noon beef stew and
jasmine-tea time (chocolate bites
on the saucer), I devour several,
some slightly airy, one a boulder
on a ravine's bottom.

Only a drip remains in my cup.

Heavy, engorged, I must admit
to an element of addiction.

The robin trills in the old plum
as I melt into the lawn chair,
marvel at the sun's miraculous
disappearing act while I digest.

I rise to accept I want – need -
one more - or maybe two, three -
by bedtime, so I return to
Mary's book and, eyes shut, let
my fingers flip through pages,
trust they will land on just the right
piece for this quiet moment so
I can settle - sated -
and sail intact through the night.

Beachcombing

Aaron Lembo

The topography of the scene overwhelms,
on occasion; I wander and see a sea-lion
washed up on shore minus its head:
my jaw sags and my eyes narrow,
I want to look away but can't.
The smell is akin to a urinal.
I can taste its potency in my throat,
foul and acidic. My head tilts,
I watch thousands of flies feast
upon its grey silk-like flesh. I step closer
to view the gash and gag at the sight; the blood:
a red-black stain on the golden sand.
I look at the cascading waves to my left,
I watch as they lull back and forth,
indifferent to the scene they helped create.
I wonder what other dead, deformed beasts
might it contain in its polluted belly.
I turn back and head toward the promenade.
The seagulls start to circle and swoop.



Near the Sea
Ann Privateer

Sixth Anniversary

James Croal Jackson

As dark as this February has been
we still drank roses underground tonight.

We ate our fill of chestnuts and napa,
carried egg tarts uphill

under a rare, green comet,
and enjoyed the new taste

at home.

The Proof Is in the Gruel

Robert Beveridge

you burned your soft
palate on the porridge
but when you could
taste again it was
pleasant enough.
a few more shakes
of red pepper,
plasma, asafoetida,
perfection.



Konda She Looks at Saoi Dreams, Her Face Seems Beautiful...

Irina Tall (Novikova)

less of it

Michelle Fung

pulling the planets off your shirt,
drinking all the colors from your hair.
if there were ever a time to try
the flavor of sunlight,
why not that reflected off your face.
every morning is the same birdsong,
croaking from a sorry mouth.
the desperation dries your throat,
I'll drink some more.

I told you so many things
that you wanted to throw them back up.

you wanted those little tomatoes
and I would have let you kill
the whole, innocent garden
just to have them.
I would have stained my skin red
but yours would have been too.

it's all still spilling over my hands,
running through my veins.
the sprouting seeds, breaking me.
covering me in the new growths.

nothing can beat this pillow!

Abbie Hart

there is a whole face beginning to sprout
out of the pillow that i keep screaming
into and one day i am worried it will
decide to use me in the same way.

now that i have gotten to know
the under the bed crawl space she
is borne from, i am concerned about who
she will be.

perhaps she will have lovely white teeth
with which to bite me, latch onto cheek and tear.
and perfect alabaster memory foam skin
like snow nobody has walked on.

Skipped Breakfast, Long Work Meeting

Patrick Johnson

I nod and nod,
my eyes follow,
smile mimicking theirs.

Yet my brain falls
backward into the pit
of my rumbling tummy,

fantasies of lunch
demons dancing
atop this conference desk.

I notice how their glasses
suspiciously resemble
fried onion rings.

Let
me
lick.

Emily as Trillium and Mayapple

Darren C. Demaree

—*A poem beginning with a line by Wendell Berry*

Quivering, straight out,
I saw Emily walk naked,
on her fortieth birthday,

to the ravine behind our house
& when she reached
the shallow stream,

the poor graffiti on the rocks,
she arched her back
& closed her eyes to say

words I couldn't hear.
I asked her what she said
when she returned

& she smiled at me, went flush
with her whole body to be seen
with all the red she could

& then I saw just how much
the bloom of the small flowers
that lined our one acre meant to me.

I've only seen her naked in this yard
a few times. Bless my memory.
Even the ovenbird has visited

us more. When it happens
I hear splashing. It's different
than healing. It's melting

& refusing to be re-formed.
I get to be the water in her world
that ripples when she wants.

Share some with the garden!

Victoria McIntyre

I drink hot chocolate on a flower vine
in the backyard
the blue bells sing
and the squirrels gossip:
“She’s awfully greedy, isn’t she, not sharing a single drop.”

I pour
hot chocolate and marshmallows
i
n
t
o
the flowerbed
it hums with delight
I laugh and laugh until my throat is dry
I sip my drink using my toes as fingers
like an animal.

luna moth

Ivi Hua

this light gilds you, darling. we wax &
wane— cocoons sloughing to petals. laurel
& dianthus. bodies blooming: we translucent.
we more shell than sorrow. soot-lit dreams
& wings like scythes. light rings through flame,
echoes in the walls. our bones humming in ether, filling
hollow spaces. your eyes obsidian: flickering in ache.
we shrivel & shrink, molten as burning wax. lying
in darkness, night will knife us into hollow
& husk. we'll constellate into flicker, oil pooling
beneath our feet. sweep into soft shadow, tangled in leaves.
heartbeat throbbing through the glow. this time around,
we live forever. this time around,
we set ourselves free.

How My Parents Told Me They Were Getting a Divorce

Melody Creek

My mom has a pot of water boiling on the stove.
She has smacked my hand twice because
I reach for it, eager to see the bubbles.

My dad is reading the newspaper at the dinner table, but he isn't here.
His mind is somewhere else.
Perhaps he's thinking about that trip to Atlanta we took two years ago.

Dinner is ready and a heap of spaghetti is dropped onto my plate.
Ragu and once-frozen meatballs are poured on top.

I don't grab my fork but instead use my fingers and begin dangling the
noodle over my mouth, trying to get a reaction from my parents, but they
are arguing again, pointing at each other as I slurp another noodle.

This time the noodle becomes stuck in my throat and my eyes water.
I try to tell them that I can't breathe, that I need help.
But they aren't noticing me.

Finally the noodle works its way down my throat, and I gasp for air.
I go to twirl another noodle around my fingers, but now the spaghetti
looks like bored worms.
Suddenly, I'm not hungry anymore.

My mom shouts that she can't do this now and storms down the hallway.
My dad puts his head on the kitchen table, his shoulders shaking as he cries.
They still haven't noticed that I was choking, so I don't tell them.
I'm afraid I'll get in trouble.

This memory doesn't come back to me until two years later when I'm
served spaghetti
in a new kitchen by a man who didn't ask if I liked spaghetti.

If he had asked, I would have said I wanted soup.



Still Life

J W Goossen



Still Life with Eggplant

J W Goossen

Gathering after the Melt

Craig Kirchner

Everything tastes like chicken.
All the roses smell like dross.
Asparagus, makes the endangered
species list, then mushrooms.

Electric buses from all over the isthmus
bring in the foodies.
Millions of white masks,
all movement is slow, tentative,
alerts are posted red, the sidewalk
griddles the fallen, like fried eggs.

Sleep ten to a pen, bile in the throat,
gas in the lungs, dreaming of cacciatore,
and open spaces,
air conditioning, pregnancies,
and a sense of time.

an ant ate

Xin Yinzhong

an ant crawls
onto a cake.
it thinks
that this cake
is enough
to feed its colony
ten times over.
it thinks
it will take long
to bring this cake
back home.
it doesn't think
of last meals
or shadows
or predators
or wind.
it only thinks
of a full belly
for its colony.
it only thinks
of a warm
simplicity.

Imperfect Stew

Danielle Riccardi

It is the daily hour when the question
of dinner is always present,

and I turn barefoot to the crush
of green foliage, scavenging for what to pick—

amongst the vegetables, each with their own marks
of flowering: dimples and brown spots.

I find a few carrots in the fridge; this recipe
calls for circles. One carrot

has a slit on its side, split open
by an unknown force.

I cut away the damage, slicing
not circles, but jagged half moons.

Swish and swirl other ingredients
on hand, like peas and cardamom.

With time and heat, even unsightly
vegetables flavor the pot.

Midnight Feast

J.C. Pillard

I drink a dram of Samhain wine,
The color dark and deep.
It tastes of mist, a long-lost kiss,
And secrets you will keep.

I drink a dram of Samhain wine
Beneath the harvest moon.
The glow does show the things below;
The dead will be here soon.

I drink a dram of Samhain wine
While we lay out a feast
Of foods so nice, they will entice
The living and deceased.

I drink a dram of Samhain wine
And offer one to you.
A cup in hand, we toast the land,
And our whole ghostly crew.

ODE TO AN ONION

Michele Magnuson

The tears burned as they cut you
but not like my breath on the
nape of his neck. You ruin
the best of me, leave remnants
of yourself to remind me of
my humanity, I am no goddess
in a creation myth, there will be
no creation here, just my mouth
hot on his skin, praying his meal
was full of onions, too.



Corn
Ira Joel Haber

Spring Sandwiches

Devon Neal

I love the dance we do in the square wind from the open window. We circle each other, covering the kitchen counter with foil, a clattering knife, the small saucer. Serrated edges cute French bread better, rectangles shedding snowflake crumbs. You've got the tomatoes sliced, piercing weak red skin, juice-dewed seeds spilling slowly. I fill the air with onion vapor, the delicate fruits of your eyes turned away, hand-tearing lettuce. A spring sandwich is a finicky thing, calling for spice-dusted turkey, cold creamy mayo, and ice cubes tattering in a light bath of coffee. Mostly, though, they should be made with four hands, connected at the elbow, carrying thin paper plates through the sunlit kitchen, the breeze joining with a seat at the table.

Breakfast Chez Chat

John Delaney

He thinks I've forgotten where the kitchen is,
urgently leading me there by the flag
of his upraised tail. I'm his sous-chef,
listening for more nuanced instructions
as he stretches his paws up to the counter.
I show him the can of salmon paté
I have chosen; like a good wine he sniffs
and approves. I mash half of it on the plate,
then take a small handful of hard pellets
of herring to embed in the paste
and drizzle some water over. After all,
I'm running a five-star cat restaurant.
Presentation is everything. I don
my maître d' role and offer the meal
on a saucer to prevent whisker fatigue.
Standing back, I wait for *le mot juste*: meow.

Can I go back to bed now?

Strawberries

John Muro

Beneath a high summer
sky and a fragrant breath
of wind, the berries swayed
like tiny rows of sanctuary
lamps when you lifted
them from their straw beds
to buckets and then, gentle
as a pardon, washed their
nicked flesh and eased
each into a shallow bowl
of spun glass. Raising
one to your lips, I could
not help but notice how
the knuckled fruit most
resembled the brute muscle
of the heart that had,
for once, been freely
offered and gladly given.

BAD FRUIT

Jerry T Johnson

shriveled orange skins
black and blue limes
purple apples, black pears
rotted bananas, saddened
grapes, withered figs.
bad fruit served daily
at breakfast, at lunch
at dinner, at midnight
during the late night
snacking fridge raid.
lately all we been eating
is bad fruit. we spread
the table in the morning.
with proper etiquette
we hold our knives and
our forks. we bite, we
chew, we swallow. later
our guts rebel. we hug
stools. violently we puke.
we become plague, we
become pestilence, we
become pandemic, we
become epidemic, slowly
we become bad fruit



Unrivalled Queen
Barbara Anna Gaiardoni

Beans

Ann Howells

Today, I'm baking beans
the way Grandma baked them: molasses,
catsup, mustard, bit of salt pork,
simmered all day in her brown earthenware crock.
A pungent aroma permeates the house,
sets our taste buds watering
long before the beans grow tender,
absorb savory sauce.

When Grandma died,
sister claimed her handwritten cookbook,
yet complains her beans don't taste the same,
don't taste as spicy, as savory as Grandma's.

I don't have the recipe written down
in Grandma's own hand,
I scribbled it on the back of an old envelope.
But I possess the secret ingredient:
beans will never replicate that sweet piquancy
unless baked in Grandma's own crockery,
that battered brown beanpot
manufactured in 1930.

The Assistant to the *Chef de Cuisine*

Ronald J. Pelias

In our brigade of two, I'd like to claim
I'm the *sous chef*, but kitchen porter
and dishwasher would be more apt titles.
I happily serve as the chef tells me
my sliced pieces for *pomme* crunch are too
large, the potatoes and carrots are not
adequately peeled for the *ragoût*, the milk
is too old for the *macoroni au fromage*.
The chef reminds me of the temperature
for *poulet* before eating, the recipe
for boiling an *oeuf*, to wash *laitue* even
if the packaging says otherwise. I listen
to my orders as the odors of seasoned
salt rise in this daily ritual of survival.

How to Be

Jan Wiezorek

Nearby this tabletop,
dressed w/ chips & cheese rounds,

my eyes hide in fear of
which others may approach

to pinch a deviled egg,
retreat w/ picholines—

Manchego on a bun.
I am afraid to speak

to those I do not know.
It's easier to hide

below the tablecloth,
a privacy of green,

to hear their juices tell
a sherry how to be.

This prescription is the only paper I fill.

Heather Truett

Instead of poetry, I write
alphabet soup and tongue
the noodles against
my teeth. I am afraid
to dance in the empty
kitchen. The tomato
sauce looks like blood,
and you, reader,
are a vampire, needing
to tongue my veins
against your teeth.



Eat Sick And

Xin Yinzhang

you're not under famine and
not lacking in nutrients and
yet you want to give it up and
give up because you're big already and
getting bigger and rounder and
having those extra folds and
lumps of fat under skin and
your mother chides you on it everyday and
you're always hungry for more than just food and
it's never enough and
nothing you do makes it go down and
the line between starvation and
overfeeding becomes the opposite of yourself and
all you can think about is the mirror and
the chicken that you see in place of you and
sometimes you'd like it to stop for a while and
let you rest long enough to let you breathe and
hold yourself in place as the knife and
the fork pierce your meat before you swallow and
chew it all down so you could be useful in some way and
all the good people are thin and pretty and
all the bad people are fat and ugly and
if you can't be pretty you have to be thin and
gods, you can't stand it anymore.

Hum

Katherine Edgren

Amazed by the wondrous maze of maize,
I hear the hum of cornfields growing

knee high by the 4th
then higher than an elephant's eye.
Verdant waves of grain oh beautiful!

I'll climb into spacious skies with corn,
soar with corn croon paeans to corn
tussle with its silky tassels.

Deer sniff it out before picking time,
so I sprinkle with hot cayenne
vamoose small moose.

Never forlorn with all that corn.
Back next summer never mourn.

In winter's dark cave I crave
then carve the frozen cobs

while bushels of fresh-picked
rise up in dreams.



Drink Me

Nicole Zdeb

Across the Table

Srihith Jarabana

The chairs are placed parallel to the couch and TV
But they face across from each other
Their uncomfortable cushion and ebony legs
Seating two people who probably have a
Hard time maintaining eye contact, but
It's alright because they got a lot of food
In front of them, so they can avoid each
Other all night without confronting their
Thoughts that still pester them endlessly
Without fail, and the host keeps placing
New appetizers and deserts because she
Too can sense the tension present,
So they stuff themselves instead to
Not feel anything other than their
Constantly churning stomach.

WE MEET ON THE BEACH

ABRAZO

R.T. Castleberry

We have designed a dinner
for this island, these black pyramids:
Burgos cheese and honey, *Ensalada de Bogavanta* to start,
sopa de cangrejo and tabella for an entrée,
brimming, refilled glasses of Pesquera around the table,
cigala in a brandy cream sauce, white asparagus,
pargo a la sal with *guisantes*,
a thin slice of *bienmesabe*, a sip of Valdespino are dessert,
espresso and chocolate for the end.

We'll find a disco open for *milonga*,
wide hall, white lights beside the shore,
teasing musk of perfume and Passat winds.
You bring height, lightness, cool to a tango,
lean length of elegant legs in the line of dance:
the *abrazo*—bodies tipped to hips,
forceful play of heel, high step, gancho,
a driving swirl, *boleos*,
the tightly gliding *sacada*.

The casinos know your luck.
The black sand beach knows
the slow-rising promise of hazel eyes open
to ocean's horizon, the mid-morning sun.
“Coffee,” you ask. And it appears with
the first clementines, the last melon of the season.
We've captured spring here. It's always spring here.

The Menu

Ensalada de Bogavanta: lobster salad

Tabella: butter beans

Cigala: Dublin Bay prawn

Sopa de cangrejo: crab soup

Pargo a la Sal: sea bream baked in salt

Guisantes: peas

Bienmesabe: almond cake



Feast1
Stina

Feast

Susan Wolbarst

Cherry, berry, grapefruit, pie
Sushi, Mu Shu, Hangtown Fry
Lemon, melon, mussels, bream
Ice cream, sour cream, whipped cream, cream
Baked Alaska, Jambalaya
Enchilada, plums, papaya
Chocolate, chowder, cheddar cheese
Crabcakes, crawdads, crowder peas
Lobster, latkes, pâté, pears
Pretzels, pickles, prunes, éclairs
Truffles, trifle, muffins, mustard
Upside-down cake, waffles, custard
Crêpes Suzette and Hoppin' John
French fries, fish fries, fried wonton
Pumpkin, gumbo, kumquats, hash
Oyster Po' Boys, succotash.
Bacon, cauliflower, clams
Peanut butter, candied yams
Here's your first course of words to chew
before you taste the Brunswick Stew.

For My Last Meal

Kristin Yates

Let there be light—
something I can't get anymore—
a bowl of salt and pepper tofu,
crispy with garlic
and scallions
and spring onions
I eat
with my hands,
and hibachi zucchini so tender
it falls
off the fork,
and steamed rice with teriyaki sauce
that drips down my wrists,
and doughnuts—
strawberry and s'mores,
all on a picnic blanket,

and me
on a bed of leaves,

and I'll start with dessert
and the tofu—
and I'll dip my fingers into what's left
of what I know
this time
will be the last—
and I won't lick it
but I will
lick my fingers—
I will lick my fingers—

and if death is coming for me,
it's going to take me
and take out.



Cafe Angelique
Ira Joel Haber

At the Wake

Marianne Gambaro

The cousins spring up like crabgrass.

We'll miss your mother. (They never visited.)

Will there be a repast?

What are you serving?

and, oh yes, by the way

We'll miss your mother.

She looks lovely.

She looks dead

my husband hisses

as he goes out to the porch of the funeral home

to bum a cigarette

since he doesn't smoke.

Aunt Sophie is weeping in her wheelchair

not for my mother but because

she thinks she's the last

'til the twins go up to the casket.

Is their mother still alive?

she hisses in not quite a whisper,

a gleam of hope further corrugating her face.

Yes, she's in a nursing home

with Alzheimer's I tell her.

Aunt Sophie gives me a gap-toothed grin

and claps her liver-spotted hands

because she is not the last.

Mother would have looked askance

at the congealed ziti & meatballs served

at the repast. But she would have approved

of the cash bar and said

it served them all right.

We went away.

Lora Berg

On our return, giant termites
were emerging from our cedar table,
pellucid lobster bodies, swarmer wings.

Piles of frass strewn below punctuated
their feast, on what had been
a tree in the High Atlas;

carved double doors in Marrakesh;
of late, the storied surface
we dined upon, now

diminished to a carcass.
I hadn't even entered the other rooms,
yet the shed weight of it

made me laugh, that splintering
kind of laugh that sometimes spills
at news of a distant cousin's death

when, poof
a whole person's mind
ceases to exist

and lucky us, still here—
we hug our knees, try
to recall a few motifs.



Crepe Truck
Ira Joel Haber

Golden Hoards

Sarah Das Gupta

The season begins to turn,
a chill lingers in the evening air.
Trees start their annual fashion parade:
reds, browns, russets, yellows, crimsons-
a natural painter's palette.
Squirrels hoard beech and cob nuts,
setting up their winter larder.
In the stubble of the harvest fields
mice scuttle among the stalks,
foraging for any forgotten grain.
Small birds flit from hedgerow to bush,
searching scarlet hips and dark red haws,
hanging invitingly from wild briars and dour hawthorns.
Tiny wrens, blue tits and robins
search for dry, wrinkled seed pods,
before winter strips the landscape
to a white, cold skeleton.

Elegies for Restaurants Lost to the Pandemic

Jeff Burt

Antonelli's

O Pater pasta, pesto garlic spread on torn wheat, taste buds dreamed your fluid names, linguini, fettuccini, orzo amid clam, squid, and calamari, limpid pools of unfirm matter, the oily wine fulminating taste, noodles slipping over lips, tongue, and not a word lost to conversation, cheesy sauce thymed to arrive at a mouthy conclusion, the virgin oil paired with the randy vinegar, tart with tar, prostitute with pimp, coupled with sheaves of garlic like little ears left on a plate listening to drops of regret, secrets spilled

Mary's Chinese

Gone the wontoned, flat-noodled with the chicken and the fortune, cookie, sauced we were, vinegared, horseradished and practically pantless from the spice, water-gulped, chestnuttled and long string bean left at the plastic tablecloth of despair with a bowl of eels for a belly and the sound of chimes, of forks, the soft magnesium old woman's voice bartering chicken splits upside down on a wire like Morse code telegraphed to my stirrup and anvil, cash clutched in a fuchsia-fingernailed hand caressing the counter

Acapulco

Soft maternal tortilla wrapped around TNT, uncivilized burrito burning uninhabitable space, plain ancient masque hiding El Diablo, peppers amok, agave mix under shade of a blue umbrella, salsa a bonfire that would not douse, a burro on an up-mountain trail winding near the precipice with overloaded saddlebags and I fearing when it went by a brutal, fatal kick

Ice House

Mango this and panko that, but we ordered the straight up hard-charging salmon dallied with dill, blue collar, familiar, the everyday grind, the tap beer, the commoner, the regular Joe, or ordered the pounded calamari herbed into heroic favor, or crab grabbed fresh like a starlet on the screen, but in butter on the hot pan, the one-eyed flounder is still king

Fin's

The lattes came whipped and frothy, full of sarcasm and sugar, the condescending comments of a grandmother tasted over your practice of finger-poking on phones, the symphonic orchestration of sixty words a minute a lost art, banks closed, pockets open, the unprofitable day rising into the black of night as dark-roasted Indonesian twice-filtered java honey-topped with a golden O made lips its mirrored astonishment

Contributor Bios

Ann Privateer is a poet, artist, and photographer. She grew up in the Midwest and now resides in Northern California. Some of her work has appeared in *Voices* 2013, 2018, 2022, and *Third Wednesday*, among others.

J W Goossen, born and raised in Vancouver, currently lives in Ladner, BC, and enjoys carving out time for painting and writing poems and stories. Publishing credits include *Rhubarb*, *Geez*, *Grain*, *Canadian Stories*, *Red Ogre Review*, and *Alchemy*. Connect at www.jwgoossen.com.

John Muro is a resident of Connecticut and a lover of all things chocolate. He was nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize and has authored two volumes of poems – *In the Lilac Hour* and *Pastoral Suite* – in 2020 and 2022, respectively. His work has appeared in such journals as *Acumen*, *Barnstorm*, *Sky Island*, and the *Valparaiso Review*.

Robert Beveridge (he/him) makes noise (xterminal.bandcamp.com) and writes poetry on unceded Mingo land (Akron, OH). Recent/upcoming appearances in *Bond Street Review*, *Live Nude Poems*, and *Down in the Dirt*, among others.

Adina Polatsek is a writer from Houston, Texas. She is currently studying at the University of Texas at Austin and was the runner-up for the 2023 James F. Parker Prize in Fiction. She has work published with *Apricity Magazine*, *Soundings East Magazine*, *Welter*, *Hothouse*, *Ligeia Magazine*, *Figure 1*, and more.

Jackson Chapin is an interdisciplinary artist, writer, curator, and collector from New York State, US. In his work he aims to counteract habituation and prick his reader. He has self-published several image-text books and is currently working on a B.F.A. at Cornell University.

Anne Panning recently published her first memoir, *Dragonfly Notes: On Distance and Loss*. She has short work published in *Brevity* (5x), *Prairie Schooner*, *The Florida Review*, and more. She teaches creative writing at SUNY-Brockport and is working on her next memoir, *Bootleg Barber: A Daughter's Memoir*.

Victoria McIntyre is a writer currently working on the unceded lands of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwəta (Tsilil-Waututh) Nations. She is the Reviews Editor at *PRISM international*. Her work has been published by The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, *The Goose*, and *The Hart House Review*.

Jerry T Johnson is a Poet and Spoken Word Artist whose poetry has appeared in a variety of literary publications worldwide. Jerry is author of two poetry collections: *A Coldness* published by Finishing Line Press and *Poets Should Not Write About Politics* by Evening Street Press, which was selected winner of Evening Press' 2020 Sinclair Poetry prize.

R.T. Castleberry, a Pushcart Prize nominee, has work in *Vita Brevis*, *San Pedro River Review*, and more. Internationally, he's had poetry published in Canada, Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, among other countries. His poetry has appeared in *You Can Hear the Ocean: An Anthology of Classic and Current Poetry*, *TimeSlice*, *The Weight of Addition*, and *Level Land: Poetry For and About the I35 Corridor*

J.C. Pillard is a writer and editor living in Colorado. Her work has been published in *Metaphorosis Magazine*, *Abyss & Apex*, *Penumbric*, and elsewhere. When not writing, J.C. can be found gardening or knitting far too many sweaters. Find more of her work at www.jcpillard.com.

Bryce Johle's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Parentheses Journal*, *Ennoia Review*, *October Hill Magazine*, *Maudlin House*, and *Pennsylvania Bard's Western PA Poetry Anthology 2023*, among others. His chapbook, *Airplane Graveyard*, will be published by Finishing Line Press in 2024. He lives in Pittsburgh, PA, with his wife and stepdaughter.

Patrick Johnson is an emerging, Queer poet from Queens, New York. He is a public school science teacher and labor union advocate. His poetry draws from many themes, often inspired by science, human history, and family. He facilitates a weekly poetry workshop, and enjoys supporting other poets in their artistic journeys.

Nancy Hanna is an emerging Egyptian-Canadian poet living in Toronto. Her work is influenced by themes of nature, faith and belonging as well

as by the shifting grounds of identity in family and culture. She works as a teacher and loves trees and working with small children.

Susan Wolbarst lives in rural Gualala, California. Her writing was published in *Plainsongs*, *thewildword.com*, *pioneertownlit.com*, and others. It is upcoming in *Third Street Review*. She won second place in California State Poetry Society's 2022 contest. She enjoys reading, cooking, walking on the beach and messing around in kayaks.

Adrienne Stevenson lives in Ottawa, Canada. A retired forensic toxicologist, she writes poetry and prose. Her work has appeared in over sixty print and online publications in Canada, USA, UK, Europe, India, and Australia. Adrienne is an avid gardener, voracious reader, and amateur genealogist. Her debut novel *Mirrors & Smoke* was published in August 2023.

Marianne Gambaro's poems and essays have been published in print and online journals including *Mudfish*, *CALYX*, *Oberon Poetry Magazine*, and *The Naugatuck River Review*. Her chapbook, *Do NOT Stop for Hitchhikers*, was published by Finishing Line Press. Her career as a journalist is often reflected in the narrative style of her poetry. <https://margampoeetry.wordpress.com/>

Michael Theroux writes from Northern California. With careers as a botanist, green energy developer and web site editor, Michael is now seeking publication of his art writings; some may be found in *Down in the Dirt*, *Ariel Chart*, *50WS*, *Academy of the Heart and Mind*, and the *Lothlorien Poetry Journal*.

Finn Cassidy (he/him/his) grew up along “the troubled border” between Ireland and Northern Ireland during the 1970s and 80s. In 2002, he swapped “the rat race” of corporate Dublin for “a snail’s pace” at high-altitude in the rural French-Alps. His poems have appeared in *Poetry Cooperative*, *Green Ink Poetry*, *Sublunary Review*, and more. He can be contacted on X/Twitter (@FinianCassidy) or by email (fcassidy@email.com).

Binod Dawadi, the author of *The Power of Words*, is a master's degree holder in Major English. He has worked on more than 1000 anthologies published in various renowned magazines. His vision is to change society through knowledge, so he wants to provide enlightenment to the people through his writing skills.

Benjamin Bowers is a full-time student from England. You can find him @benkb_poetry on Instagram or at benkbpoetry@gmail.com.

Allan Lake, originally from Canada, has lived in Vancouver, Cape Breton, Ibiza, Tasmania, W. Australia, and Melbourne. Lake has won Lost Tower Publications (UK) Comp, Melbourne Spoken Word Poetry Festival & publication in *New Philosopher*. Latest poetry chapbook (Ginninderra Press) *My Photos of Sicily* contains no photos.

Zary Fekete grew up in Hungary, has a debut chapbook of short stories out from Alien Buddha Press and a novelette (*In the Beginning*) coming out from ELJ Publications and enjoys books, podcasts, and long, slow films. Twitter: @ZaryFekete

Gerard Sarnat MD's authored HOMELESS CHRONICLES, Disputes, 17s, Melting Ice King. Gerry's published by Gargoyle, Newark Public Library, Blue Minaret, Columbia, Harvard, Stanford, Main Street Rag, New Delta Review, Northampton Review, New Haven Institute, Buddhist Review, American Journal Poetry, Poetry Quarterly, Brooklyn Review, LA Review, SF Magazine, NY Times. Gerardsarnat.com

I Echo is a Ghanaian-Nigerian writer on a never-ending search of self. He is confident in one thing: He would like to explore the world, realize new cultures, create new conversations and hopefully save the world by saving himself. He tweets on @AyeEcho

Jeremiah Ogle is a poet from Northern Virginia. He is currently studying poetry at George Mason University.

Terry Trowbridge's poems have appeared in *The New Quarterly*, *Carousel*, *Dalhousie Review*, *Lascaux Review*, *Kolkata Arts*, *Leere Mitte*, *The /t3mz/ Review*, and more. Terry is grateful to the Ontario Arts Council for his first writing grant, and their support of so many other writers during the polycrisis.

Joseph A Farina is a retired lawyer and award winning poet, in Sarnia, Ontario, Canada. His poems have appeared in *Philadelphia Poets*, *Tower Poetry*, *The Windsor Review*, and *Tamaracks: Canadian Poetry for the 21st Century*.

He has two books of poetry published: *The Cancer Chronicles* and *The Ghosts of Water Street*.

Dorothy Lune is a Yorta Yorta poet, born in Australia. Her work has appeared in *Pinhole Poetry* & more. She is looking to publish her manuscripts, can be found online @dorothylune, & has a substack: <https://dorothy-lune.substack.com/>

Sam Moe is the author of the poetry books *Heart Weeds* (Alien Buddha Press) and *Grief Birds* (BS Lit). Sam grew up in MA and earned her PhD in creative writing from Illinois State University. Her writing has appeared in *orangepeel mag*, *Whale Road Review*, *The Indianapolis Review*, and many others. You can find them on Twitter and Instagram under @SamAnneMoe.

Sarah Das Gupta is a retired teacher living near Cambridge, UK who taught in India and Tanzania; Her work has been published in over 40 magazines/journals from US, UK, Canada, India, Nigeria, Mauritius, and Croatia. She started writing six months ago during a long hospital stay, learning to walk after a serious accident.

Devon Neal (he/him) is a Bardstown, KY, resident who received a BA in Creative Writing from Eastern Kentucky University and an MBA from The University of the Cumberlands. He currently works as a Human Resources Manager in Louisville, KY. His work has been featured in *Moss Puppy Magazine*, *coalitionworks*, *Sage Cigarettes Magazine*, *Rough Cut Press*, and others.

Corey D. Cook's seventh chapbook, *Passing Cars*, will be published by Maverick Duck Press in 2023. His poems have recently appeared in **82 Review*, *Black Poppy Review*, *Cajun Mutt Press*, *Duck Head Journal*, *Freshwater Literary Journal*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Naugatuck River Review*, and more. Corey lives in East Thetford, Vermont.

Ivi Hua is an Asian-American writer, dreamer, & poet, with works published/forthcoming in *Juven*, *Polyphony Lit*, & the *Aurora Journal* among others. A Best of the Net nominee & cofounder of Young Poets Workshops, she believes in the unifying power of writing. You can find her @livia.writes.stories on Instagram.

Katherine Edgren has two books of poetry: *Keeping Out the Noise*, by Kelsay Books, and *The Grain Beneath the Gloss*, by Finishing Line Press, plus two chapbooks: *Long Division* and *Transports*. Her work has appeared in journals including: *Coe Review*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Light*, *Orchards Poetry Journal*, and *Third Wednesday*.

Mbonisi Zikhali Zomkhonto was born in Makokoba in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. He is a poet/storyteller. One of the recent publications he has appeared in is *Colossus: Body – An Anthology of the Self* by Colossus Press (San Francisco, California 2023) which defends the rights of women to have autonomy over their bodies.

Susan Auerbach is a retired professor who returned in midlife to creative writing. Her poems have appeared in *Spillway*, *Gyroscope Review*, *Greensboro Review*, and other journals, as well as in her memoir, *I'll Write Your Name on Every Beach: A Mother's Quest for Comfort, Courage & Clarity After Suicide Loss* (Jessica Kingsley, 2017).

Aaron Lembo's debut poetry pamphlet *It's All Gone Don Juan* (erb-ace-press) was published in 2020. His work has been published widely online and in print. He has taught English in China, Vietnam, and Spain. Currently, he lives and teaches in South London.

Melody Creek resides in East Tennessee with her husband and three fur children. She has been published in *Earthen Lamp Journal*, *Picaroon Poetry*, *Awakened Voices*, and more. Her first book *Anxiety, Depression, and Other Sorts of Trauma* is now available. When she isn't writing poetry, you can find her meditating in nature. Add her on Facebook: Melody Creek-Poetry.

Tara Menon is an Indian-American writer based in Lexington, Massachusetts. Her poems have been published in *Orchard Poetry Journal*, *Raven's Perch*, *Rigorous*, and more. Her latest fiction has appeared in *Armstrong Literary*, *The Hong Kong Review*, and *Litro*. She is also a book reviewer and essayist whose pieces have appeared in many journals.

finch greene is a poet from the New York City area. They are a virgo, a cat mom, and very, very tired. Their work has been featured in *BULL-*

SHIT lit, *trash wonderland*, and *embryo concepts* zine. You can probably find them reading smutty fanfic or painting their nails.

Alan Bern is a retired children's librarian and published/exhibited photographer with awards for his poems and stories. He has published three books of poetry, has a hybrid fictionalized memoir forthcoming from UnCollected Press, and performs with dancer/choreographer Lucinda Weaver at PACES. Lines & Faces, his press with artist/printer Robert Woods: linesandfaces.com.

Arvilla Fee teaches English Composition for Clark State College and is the poetry editor for the San Antonio Review. She has published poetry, photography, and short stories in numerous presses, and her poetry book, *The Human Side*, is available on Amazon. For Arvilla, writing produces the greatest joy when it connects us to each other.

Dee Allen. African-Italian performance poet based in Oakland, California. Active on creative writing & Spoken Word since the early 1990s. Author of seven books: *Boneyard*, *Unwritten Law*, *Stormwater*, *Skeletal Black*, *Elohi Unitsi*, *Rusty Gallows*, and *Plans*, and has 70 anthology appearances.

Lisa Ashley (she/her) is a Pushcart Prize nominee, descends from Armenian Genocide survivors, and supported incarcerated youth for eight years as a chaplain. Her poems appear in *Last Leaves Magazine*, *Amsterdam Quarterly*, *The Healing Muse*, *Blue Heron Review*, *Thimble*, and *Snapdragon*, among others. She writes in her log home on Bainbridge Island, WA.

Pat Phillips West. Her work appears in various journals including: *The Inquisitive Eater*, *New School Food*, *Haunted Waters Press*, *San Pedro River Review*, and elsewhere. She has received multiple Best of the Net and Pushcart Prize nominations.

James Croal Jackson is a Filipino-American poet who works in film production. His latest chapbooks are *Count Seeds With Me* (Ethel Zine & Micro-Press, 2022) and *Our Past Leaves* (Kelsay Books, 2021). Recent poems are in *Stirring*, *Vilas Avenue*, and **82 Review*. He edits *The Mantle Poetry* from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. (jamescroaljackson.com)

Danielle Riccardi lives in Northeast Connecticut. Her work has appeared in the *Love, Art Play Poet's Corner* and *The Journal of Undiscovered Poets*.

Ann Howells edited Illya's Honey for eighteen years. Recent books: *So Long As We Speak Their Names* (Kelsay Books, 2019) and *Painting the Pinnwheel Sky* (Assure Press, 2020). Chapbooks *Black Crow in Flight* and *Softly Beating Wings* were published through contests. Her work appears in small press and university journals.

Lora Berg co-authored *The Mermaid Wakes* (Macmillan Caribbean) with artist Canute Caliste. Her poems appeared in *Shenandoah*, *Colorado Review*, etc. Lora served as cultural attaché abroad. She holds a Johns Hopkins MFA and worked as poet-in-residence at Saint Albans. She participated in the Poetry Collective with Lighthouse in Denver.

Frank William Finney's poems have been published widely in literary journals and anthologies, including *Anomaly Press*, *Flora Fiction*, *Metachrosis Literary*, and other places. His collection *The Folding of the Wings* was published in 2022 by Finishing Line Press. A native of Massachusetts, he taught literature in Thailand for twenty-five years.

Marianne Szlyk lives in the DC area without a car but with her husband, the wry environmental writer, Ethan Goffman, and their new cat Tyler the Tornado. Her most recent book is *Why We Never Visited the Elms* (Poetry Pacific), available on Amazon. Her poems have appeared in *Beltway Poetry Quarterly*, *Poetry Breakfast*, *MacQueen's Quinterly*, and *Verse-Virtual*.

Robert Castagna is an undergraduate at UMass Boston and an Osher Reentry Scholar where he studies creative writing. Robert was awarded the Massachusetts Cultural Council Fellowship. His work was published in *Diagram*, *Dead River Review*, and *The Watermark Journal*, along with his book of photographs and poems entitled *Borderlands* in 2022.

Cameron Walker is a writer based in California. Her essays, short stories, and poems have appeared in publications including the *New York Times*, *Terrain*, and *Cosmic Daffodil*. She is the author of the children's book *National Monuments of the U.S.A.*, and of the forthcoming essay collection *Points of Light*. www.cameronwalker.net

Ross PM Creason (they/he) lives in the suburban swamp of Northern Virginia. Stars and gardens inspire him to write while his snuggly cat & dog work hard to prevent him from writing. Their work has been published in *boats against the current* and *bubble magazine*.

Alina Zollfrank from (former) East Germany loathes wildfire smoke and writes to get out of her whirring mind. She cares for two teens, a husband, three rescue dogs, and countless plants in the Pacific Northwest and finds inspiration in the lightness and heaviness of this world. Her work has been published in *Bella Grace*, *The Noisy Water Review*, and *Last Leaves Magazine*. More at <https://zollizen.medium.com/>

Michelle Fung (she/her) is a Chinese American writer and student from Washington. She is currently studying at the University of Pennsylvania, and her nonfiction pieces can be found in *What We Experience Magazine*. She writes poetry in between classes and can be reached at fungmichelle17@gmail.com.

Xin Yinzhang particularly enjoys writing poems and short stories, though she hopes to be able to publish a book someday. When not writing, she is daydreaming about writing.

Ana María Carbonell writes and teaches in the Bay Area where she lives with her rescue pup and musician husband. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The MacGuffin*, *Artemis Journal*, *The Acentos Review*, and elsewhere, and was a finalist for Tucson Festival of Books' literary contest.

S. J. Perry's work has appeared in *Inlandia: A Literary Journey*, *The Journal of Radical Wonder*, *Cholla Needles*, *Last Leaves*, and elsewhere. He grew up in Kansas, where he studied at Emporia State University and the University of Kansas. A retired high school English teacher, he has lived in Southern California's San Geronio Pass since 1985.

Vivienne Popperl lives in Portland, Oregon. Her poems have appeared in *Clackamas Literary Review*, *Timberline Review*, *Cirque*, and others. She received both second place and an honorable mention in the 2021 Kay Snow awards poetry category by Willamette Writers. Her first collection, *A Nest in the Heart*, was published by The Poetry Box in April 2022.

Nicola Caroli trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and earned an MFA in Creative Writing at Vermont College of Fine Arts. She created interdisciplinary poetry performances and curated participatory poetry events for twenty years. Lately she's focussed on her own writing and is pitching her cross-genre story *Lucca & Leary, Strays from Jerusalem*.

Helen Grant has been published in a wide array of magazines such as *The Poetry Review*, *Stand*, *The Live Canon 2019 Anthology*, and *Acumen*. She daydreams about how she'd spend poetry prize money, or the lottery, an unhealthy amount. Some of her poetry and photos of travel can be found on Instagram @helenlgrant.

Suzu Harris is the author of the 2023 chapbook *Listening in the Dark* about living with hearing loss and learning to hear again with cochlear implants. She has served as a poetry editor for *The Timberline Review* and several of her poems have won recognition from the Oregon Poetry Association.

Savana Lee is an artist, published author and mama of two from Colorado. She loves flowers, anything magic, and is passionate about mentoring women to find their creative voice. You can find her on social media or her website.

Overcomer Olajide, known by her pen name DUT, is a Nigerian poet with a fervent passion for writing. She has been dedicated to gaining valuable experience for over a year. She spends her free time engrossed in novels, listening to music and draws inspiration from various forms of Art. Her poetry was recently featured in *Rewrite the Stars Magazine*.

Susan Landgraf received an Academy of American Poets Laureate award in 2020. Books include *Crossings*, *The Inspired Poet*, *What We Bury Changes the Ground*, and *Other Voices*. *Journey of Trees* is forthcoming in 2024. More than 400 poems have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Poet Lore*, *Margie*, *Nimrod*, *Calyx*, and others.

Pujarinee Mitra is a PhD scholar and Graduate Instructor at the Department of English, Texas A&M University. She suffers from a case of serious obsession with Bollywood films (especially those with Shahrukh

Khan in it). When she is not otherwise occupied with a good book and a large mug of coffee, she experiments with cooking all kinds of South Asian cuisine at home.

Kristin Yates is an award-winning poet, artist, cat cuddler, and work in progress from Lewisville, North Carolina. Her poems have appeared in *Tiny Seed Journal*, *Beyond the Veil Press*, *Writerly Magazine*, *Unstamatic*, *Campfire Poets*, and others. She can be found on Instagram: @beautefantasy

Srihith Jarabana is a sixteen-year-old poet hailing from Oakville, Ontario. He likes boxing and board games. He also enjoys walking on the trails and riding the train to Toronto on weekends with his friends.

Jen Wieber is a Creative Copywriter, Poet, and Content Creator/Visual Artist with a degree in Education. She lives in Boise, Idaho, with her husband and three daughters. When she's not wielding a creative pen, you can find her on the jiu jitsu mats, in the forest, or in shady karaoke bars.

Michele Magnuson went from "I hate poetry" to holding an MFA in Poetry (thanks, Karl). She also dabbles in flash fiction and Jane Austen fanfic short stories. She lives in California with her daughter and gets paid to LARP as a math person at a high school.

Darren C. Demaree is the author of nineteen poetry collections, most recently *neverwell* (June 2023, forthcoming from Harbor Editions). He is the recipient of an Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award, the Louise Bogan Award from Trio House Press, and the Nancy Dew Taylor Award from Emrys Journal.

Philip Andrew Lisi lives in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where he teaches English by day and writes poetry and flash fiction by night alongside the ghost of his cantankerous Wichien Maat cat, Sela. His work has appeared in *October Hill Magazine*, *Flora Fiction*, *Sparks of Calliope*, *The Abbey Review*, *Litbreak Magazine*, and more.

Hiram Larew is founder of Poetry X Hunger: Bringing a World of Poets to the Anti-Hunger Cause and has poems in recent issues of *Contemporary*

American Voices and Poetry Scotland's *Gallus*. www.HiramLarewPoetry.com and www.PoetryXHunger.com

Saptarshi Bhowmick came from the outskirts of a town named Berhampore and strives more and more in his world of limited opportunities. Although he had been mentioned to be lethargic, he managed to find joy in his plentiful creations. His poetries and flash fiction appeared in many international magazines and websites.

Daniel Edward Moore lives in Washington on Whidbey Island. His work is forthcoming in *I-70 Review*, *Watershed Review*, *Flint Hills Review*, *Sugar House Review*, *The Main Street Rag Magazine*, *One Art Poetry Journal*, and *South Florida Poetry Journal*.

Stina sometimes pauses from consuming excessive amounts of salsa to document the absurdity.

Irina Tall (Novikova) is an artist, graphic artist, illustrator. She graduated from the State Academy of Slavic Cultures with a degree in art, and also has a bachelor's degree in design.

Bharti is a resident of Himachal Pradesh, India. She loves cats and currently owns a dog names Jugnu that was rescued. She wishes to own a cat farm one day. She can be reached at her instagram [@useless_thought25](https://www.instagram.com/useless_thought25) or email: ar.bansal2011@gmail.com

Michael Shoemaker is a poet, writer, and photographer. His works have appeared in *Ancient Paths Literary Journal*, *The Compass Literary Magazine*, *Front Porch Review*, *Agape Review*, and elsewhere. He lives in Magna, Utah, with his wife, and son where he enjoys looking out on the Great Salt Lake every day.

Joseph Byrd's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Punt Volat*, *Pedestal*, *South Florida Poetry Journal*, and more. He's a Pushcart Prize nominee, was long-listed for the Erbacher Prize, and was in the StoryBoard Chicago cohort with Kaveh Akbar. An Associate Artist in Poetry at the Atlantic Center for the Arts, he is on the Reading Board for *The Plentitudes*.

Ira Joel Haber was born and lives in Brooklyn. He is a sculptor, painter, writer, book dealer, photographer and teacher. His work has been seen in

numerous group shows both in the USA and Europe. His work is in the collections of The Whitney Museum Of American Art, New York University, The Guggenheim Museum, and others.

Anita Howard is a writer, storyteller, and actor living in Passage West, Co. Cork, Ireland. Her work appears in *HeadStuff*, *Poetica Review*, the *Querencia Press Autumn 22 Anthology*, the *December 2022 Mslexia Moth*, *Literature Today*, and the *Boundless 2023 Anthology of the Rio Grande Valley International Poetry Festival*. She is on Twitter as @AnitaHowardSto1.

Enna Horn writes from somewhere deep in the belly of the Midwest. Their work has been featured in fifteen different publications. Sometimes, they can be found on their Twitter @inkhallowed. Most times, they cannot be found at all. To read more, please visit <https://ennahorn.wordpress.com>.

Craig Sipe is the author of the poetry collection *Lovely Dregs*. His recent work has appeared in journals including *Iconoclast*, *Spank the Carp*, *The Café Review*, and *Hole in the Head Review*.

Cynthia Gallaher, a Chicago-based poet, is author of four poetry collections, including *Epicurean Ecstasy: More Poems About Food, Drink, Herbs and Spices*, and three chapbooks, including *Drenched*. Her award-winning nonfiction/memoir/creativity guide is *Frugal Poets' Guide to Life: How to Live a Poetic Life, Even If You Aren't a Poet*.

Callie S. Blackstone writes both poetry and prose. Her debut chapbook *sing eternal* is available through Bottlecap Press. Her online home is callies-blackstone.com.

Alessio Zanelli is an Italian poet who writes in English. His work has appeared in over 200 literary journals from seventeen countries. His sixth collection, *The Invisible*, will be published in late 2023 by Greenwich Exchange (London). For more information please visit www.alessiozanelli.it.

Joe Amaral's first poetry collection **The Street Medic** won the 2018 Palooka Press Chapbook Contest. His writing has appeared in *3Elements Review*, *Anti-Heroin Chic*, *Please See Me*, *Rise Up Review*, *River Heron Review*, and *The Night Heron Barks*. Joe works 48-hour shifts as a paramedic on the California central coast.

Edward Ziegler is an Emeritus Professor at the University of Denver. He has the remarkable distinction of having his legal writing cited and quoted by the U.S. Supreme Court as well as by state appellate courts in all fifty states in the USA. His work appears in various publications, and he has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. edwardziegler.com

Abbie Hart (she/they) is a 19-year-old poet from Houston, TX, currently living in Worcester, MA. She has been published over 30 times, and is the editor-in-chief for the *Literary Forest Poetry Magazine*. In her spare time, she learns useless skills, daydreams about pottery, and does her best to be a nice warm soup. Her website is abbiemhart.wordpress.com.

Jennifer Maloney writes poetry and fiction and has been published in *Litro Magazine*, *Synkroniciti Magazine*, *South Broadway Ghost Society*, and many other literary magazines and journals. She is the co-editor of the poetry anthology *Moving Images: Poetry Inspired by Film* (Before Your Quiet Eyes Publishing, 2021).

Barbara Anna Gaiardoni is an Italian pedagogist and author. From September 2022 to today, her Japanese poetry have been published on sixty-five international trade journals. Drawing, cooking and walking in nature are her passions. “I can, I must, I will do it” is her motto.

Nolcha Fox’s poems have been curated in *Lothlorien Poetry Journal*, *Alien Buddha Zine*, *Medusa’s Kitchen*, and others. Her poetry books are available on Amazon and Dancing Girl Press. Nominee for 2023 Best of The Net. Editor for Open Arts Forum and Chewers & Masticadores. Accidental interviewer/reviewer. Faker of fake news.

Maya Klauber is an artist and emerging poet living in New York City. She earned her BA in creative writing from Colby College and had poems published by *The Café Review* and *Off the Coast*. She earned her Master of Social Work (MSW) from Columbia University while coping with chronic health struggles—experiences that have informed and deepened her writing.

Jeff Burt learned the importance of storytelling from farmers and hands at the grist mill he inhabited in summers as a method to tell a moral, a

joke, or a deserving slice of life. He has contributed to many journals, including *Heartwood*, *Kestrel*, *Willow Journal*, and *Red Wolf Journal*. More are available at Home | Jeff Burt

Craig Kirchner is retired and thinks of poetry as hobo art. He loves storytelling and the aesthetics of the paper and pen. He has been nominated twice for a Pushcart, and has a book of poetry: *Roomful of Navels*.

Christian Ward is a UK-based writer who has recently appeared in the *Rappahannock Review*, *South Florida Poetry Journal*, *The Dewdrop*, *Dodging the Rain*, *Wild Greens*, *Mad Swirl*, *Dipity Literary Magazine*, *Impspired*, and *Streetcake Magazine*.

John Delaney moved out to Port Townsend, WA (after retiring as curator of historic maps at Princeton University Library), and prefers remote, natural settings. Since that transition, he has published *Waypoints* (2017), *Twenty Questions* (2019), and *Delicate Arch* (2022), poems and photographs of national parks and monuments. *Galápagos*, a chapbook of his son Andrew's photographs and his poems, will appear later in 2023.

James Reade Venable was born in Manhattan, New York. He has been published in *Black + White Photography*, *Dodbo*, *F-Stop*, and many more. He is a 2x London Photo Festival Monthly Competition Winner and was on the Shortlist for the Storytelling category in this year's 500px Global Photography Awards. He lives in New York City at the moment.

Jeffrey Howard teaches writing and multimodal composition at Converse University and directs the university's writing center. His poetry and non-fiction have appeared in literary magazines such as *Arcturus*, *Wordgathering*, and *Glass Mountain*. A former magazine editor, Jeffrey lives with his family in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Jan Wiezorek writes and paints in southwestern Michigan. *The London Magazine*, *Poetry Center San José*, *Minetta Review*, and *The Orchards Poetry Journal*, among others, have published his poems. He taught writing at St. Augustine College, Chicago, and wrote the ebook *Awesome Art Projects That Spark Super Writing* (Scholastic, 2011).

Ronald J. Pelias spent most of his career writing books, e.g., *If the Truth Be Told* (Brill Publications), *The Creative Qualitative Researcher* (Routledge), and *Lessons on Aging and Dying* (Routledge), that call upon the literary as a research strategy. Now he writes for the pleasures of putting words to the page.

Nicole Zdeb is a writer, visual artist, and astrologer based in the Pacific Northwest.

Heather Truett holds an MFA from the University of Memphis and is a PhD candidate at FSU. Her debut novel, *KISS AND REPEAT*, was released from Macmillan in 2021. She has work in *Thimble*, *Hunger Mountain*, and others. Heather serves on staff for *Beaver Magazine* and is an editor emeritus for *The Pinch*. Find out more at www.heathertruett.com.

Mark Nemeth holds a Ph.D. in civil engineering and works as an engineer for a federal water management agency. His research has been published in the *Journal of Hydrology* and the *International Journal of River Basin Management*. His poetry has been published in *Abandoned Mine*. He lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



