



Young Ravens Literary Review

Issue 14 Summer 2021



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Introduction

In this issue of *Young Ravens Literary Review*, we delve into the intricacy of roots. Almost instinctively we know what *root* means. Even if we were to live in a world without flowers and trees, we would still need a word for those multifarious anchors of nature and soul that remain mysteriously hidden to nourish us. We would need a word for lineages of language that stretch back for centuries, their meaning entwining cultures and continents. We would need to describe where we come from and how we are still standing firm today in spite of storms, blights, and twists of fate. We need roots. Nature roots us in both the universe and ourself.

From Agnes Vojta, we learn that a name or a plant or animal can be a “another root,” a networked understanding of nature that grows the speaker herself (“Naming,” 7). Judith Kelly Quaempts and DS Maolalai explore how human roots are intertwined with those of the plant world. The tenderness of the orchardist caressing her trees (“Orchardist,” 15) and “the careful/hands of farm-workers” remind us to approach nature gratefully. In “Back to the Wild” (17), Claire Drucker’s speaker finds a self unafraid of the brokenness of the world, while Kelly Morgan’s calligram reveals that like racism, the roots of the kudzu are noxious, long-lasting, hard to eradicate (“From Kudzu, On Eating the South,” 10–12).

We seek connections through spiritualism and religion, and sometimes just a picture of a perfect fruit, as in Ana Pugatch’s “The Monks Took Pictures of the Fruit” (68) can root us in the happiness of the moment. The speaker of August Smith’s “In the Backyard” (21) wonders, “Have you, in fact, come back to your roots?” There will always be any number of experts to speak with learned certainty, but Smith’s self is “re-situated” again and again in baroque interiors and suppositions about transplantation to lush jungle landscapes. Ultimately, only the self knows its own home. Jennifer Shomburg Kanke seeks a beloved “you,” who does not return with the comforting “smell of mold and benzene.” The story of this absent person creates a kind of mental trick, a silent “impression of crickets on an August night/ that I can’t turn the sound up on” (“Maple Street on My Mind,” 25).

Connections and roots don’t have to be elaborate—they can be simple in their strength and beauty, like becoming familiar with the birds we see out our window daily, or following a cherished routine like making coffee (“The sharp, biting aroma inviting and familiar,” Jennifer Novotney, “Percolate,” 51), or hanging laundry on a line (Shelby Lynn Lanaro, “Out on the Clothesline,” 32). Dayna Patterson’s embroidered tree art deftly roots craftsmanship and nature together. At the same time, connections we seek don’t always happen, or fray with age, like memories lost to dementia or green spaces devoured by urbanization.

Ultimately, we seek roots and connection because we are scared and want to be stronger (Linda M. Crate, “just to be safe,” 54). Sending roots out, connecting with others and with the complex world around us, is worth it—we “plant . . . anyway” (Cameron Morse, “Strawberry Plants,” 75). Perhaps, deep down, we desire to “call upon the comfort of the things beyond the edge of vision” (Judith Ford, “Waves,” 50). We hope you enjoy the abundance of creativity in this issue. As always, we are grateful for you.

Elizabeth Pinborough and Sarah Page

Jemma Leigh Roe

Blessed Raven



Agnes Vojta

Naming

My first day here it snowed,
and birds like drops of blood
sat in the grey-green branches of a tree.
I was a stranger. Did not know
the names of tree or birds.

Naming is knowing.
Naming means: to tell apart,
to be familiar with the detail
that separates one from the other.
Familiarity breeds love.

I learned to name the cedars
and the cardinals, anemone
and great blue heron, spiderwort
and wild geranium. Every year,

I add new names: white avens,
thimbleweed, rose-breasted grosbeak –
each another root
I grow here.

Michael T. Young

Earth's Name

It's not simply the dirt or the peony rupturing it.
It goes deeper down but also higher up than that.

Once, when a bat's wing caught a wave as he curved
toward a water strider, I heard it plume the lake.

But the next day when I sat under a tree, reading,
the roots knuckling me added to that stem.

Though it was not something merely grounded.
My foot sticking out from under the shade,

grew warm in the translation of another word for it,
traveler from the country of fire. Later,

as clouds shaped the day, their parenthetical
floated a prefix that lifted its identity into thin air.

I breathed deeply, and remembered who I am.

L. Ward Abel

The Light that Travels

On this morning that seeps then pours
into bright halls, through small rooms
woods, over shoals, shallow bays
and floods the seaboard streams
 and grasses, expands rocks
 at their highest points,

I continue into what unfolds
 like
geologic
time
with its low groans and
scraping and cracks
in a godhead flow
I can only ride
and not divert.

Kelly Morgan

From Kudzu, On Eating the South

 You know,
 I didn't start
 in these parts.
No,
 first I started
 slow and easy
 on a continent
 across the sea.
 Arrowroot,
 they'd call me.
 But I was happy
to settle here—
 I like a new place to root, grow;
 to stretch my legs a while,
 walk round the fields,
 survey the land.
 So I came to these fertile
southern states,
and set up shop— a new plant nation
 to try my hand at conquerin', if you will.
People dug the ground,
 they turned and tilled,

and I reached into this brown earth.

I set myself in vibrant soil and began to coil, broil, boil.

Long story short, I'm talkin' to you now.

People called me erosion control long time ago, but you know
and I know, and they know that we can remove erosion
from that title they gave me—I'm just control.

I hold the toiling ground as property I crawl across the farmland,
stifle corns and beans. I grab at every chance there is

for leaves to start. I propagate. I lead.

Anyway, I'm ramblin'. I like to take my time when I tell a story,
you know. I think this world moves too fast, too ready

to renounce the past. You want to know what I'm most proud of?

My roots, my heritage: the tuberous tumors that extend for miles, for
centuries.

You can't see unless you start diggin', but underground, I'm everywhere.

That's right: nothin' makes me as happy as knowin' that I have grown
and fed my hunger, that I am inheriting the earth,
my birthright. I send out seeds, sometimes.

They do alright— some bust, but mostly they survive, and strive.

I shoot out runners that split at the nodes to form new plants,

and those do good. It's hard work, but honest, takin' claim

to more land each sunny southern day. Someone's gotta do it,

got to climb the locust fence and hickory tree— gotta climb that monument,

creep across the bronze, suffocate that sentinel 'til he is only me.

People've recoiled, said I'm a disease, but I know better.

Trees were made to be climbed. I gotta protect myself, my kind.

I provide— my family, my progeny:

that future is everything.

And, you know, back

on those seeds again:

they're hard-coated. They're sturdy, those things.

Sometimes I plant one and people

think it's spoiled, that

it's dead, but I know

better.

That seed

stays

dormant

for years

and

years,

and then

when you

think

you've rooted

out

the last

of

me,

I'm right there—

I'm blossoming green in your backyard; sulfurous, citrine.

DS Maolalai

Cauliflower

the leaves are thick
and heavy, callus-hard
as the knuckled hands
on farm-workers,
packed together roughly
in some warehouse
out near Sligo.
rows in wooden boxes,
and each a round
white flower, a gem
on velvet green, faced
up and just visible
as white-green light, balling
in a series of clenching
fists. they are pushed

into their boxes,
onto shelves in the dusty
backs of lorries on dusty days
and sent out to supermarkets
and to farmers markets
and roadside stalls
where we buy them, testing
with our fingers
for firmness and tense
fragility, these dead
unopened envelopes,
unseeded and dryly chopped.

and we take them home
and chop them further,
driving good steel knives
through vegetation,
tough as knotted muscle
in the thighs of short-haired dogs.
we boil broth soup

with fattish bacon
and handfuls of salt,

and feel life
and salt
in our muscles,
fields drying
on dusty days,
sun corrugating
over rows
arranged by the careful
hands of farm-workers,
a series
of knuckled fingers,
each of them
curling up.

Judith Kelly Quaempts

Orchardist

Hard frost underfoot
Cold stars overhead.
Without conscience the moon
shines down on row after row
of silvering branches.

She hears the snap and pop
as her trees lifeblood freezes.

Still she dares to hope.

Hope answers.
The moon clouds over.
The trees grow still.
A puff of wind, and
sweet miracle...
soft flakes begin to fall.

Arms outstretched she lifts
her face to the cool embrace
of snow.

She picks up her lantern.
and heads for home.
In passing, she touches
each trunk, gently,
as though touching
the face of a child.

Anneliese Kvamme

Awakening in Darkness

The night enfolds me, wraps its frosty cloak upon my shoulder, drawing shivers, gasps, bewildered dread, delighted turmoil, fear of unknown, unseen perils woven deep within the fabric. This embrace, unsought, yet not unwelcome, heightens dormant sense aware of eyes, the hoot of owls, the flap and flutter of the bat upon the moth—emerging moisture scents the desert air as I inhale an easy, silent breath.

The breath, the chill within my nostrils, all the rustling movements and the sable stole awaken self, awareness. This is what it means to live. For life is me and not just me. I reach through ether, mythic though it is, and know I'm not alone. The night's embrace is comforting tranquility.

Claire Drucker

Back to the Wild

In ferns and flowering oxalis beneath grandmother
redwoods, I find the self unafraid of society
breaking into unmanageable shards.
Nettles and wild iris, purple as
a bruise, sway in the breeze, singing
in ancient tongues. Gracie says
I could live in the woods, happy and unencumbered,
as we walk over bay and oak roots and miles
of mycelium, a parachute threaded with our
shared genetic bones. Sitting on redwood duff,
sunlight reflects a perfect circular
web, and I am unwilling to walk back,
wanting to halt time, like the red-shouldered
hawk soaring above us

to become a new kind of stillness
a new kind of alive.

Anne Whitehouse

Excavations

I

Old bottles piled up in the hillside
under a litter of leaves,
brown, clear, green, and one,
that wonderful deep blue of Saratoga.

Strewn among them,
rusted metal cans, jagged rake teeth,
indeterminate pieces of plastic,
rotted cloth, an old leather shoe
crawling with worms.

They shouldn't be here,
and so they are going,
carted in milk crates
to the public dump.

II

It's been a year of deaccessions,
starting with two floods in the city
caused by upstairs neighbors
overflowing their bathrooms into ours.

The renovations went on for months
and in their midst came *Climex lectularius*,
that human scourge,
lodging in the cracks and crevasses
of our habitation,
forming a colony that fed on us at night,
so light its weight could scarcely be felt,
its bite a plague and misery.

All of our belongings had to be
examined, sanitized, fumigated—
sofas, rugs, chairs, and carpets,
bed frames and mattresses,
even telephone jacks
and electrical outlets.

Art was taken off the walls and treated,
clothes and linens cleaned and packed away,
closets, dressers, desks, cabinets emptied,
shelves cleared of everything,
as if we were moving.

We were like pioneers camping out
in our own lives,
with two changes of clothes,
underwear, a coat, and shoes,
computer, cell phone, and purse.

III

The elm seeds whirled like dervishes
in great gusts of an April wind.
The music of the Aeolian harp
was like a great vibration
echoing through my heart
as, perched high on a ladder,
I sorted through books
and other belongings:
what to part from? what to keep?

IV

In the beginning
she was flesh of my flesh.
All her growing was growing apart.

A multitude of children
have disappeared into the dark.

Sometimes I miss the feel
of her soft little hand in my palm,
four fingers curled around one of mine.

Her eyes alone unchanged from childhood—
their crystalline look of concentration,
one blue iris with a fleck of brown.

V

Climbing a column of air,
the yellow butterfly fluttered
like a ribbon in the breeze,

while orange poppy blossoms
fell soundlessly to earth,
and the hill rose like a shield,
leaning its dark shadow over us.

August Smith

In the Backyard

Mercury rising—
Will the bees be out to work
by the stump on the water spout-
side of the house?

Will the porch hornets sound like wild saxophonists?
They who have such an ancient feeling
roiling inside them.
I hope it is time for disparate voices to unite.

Even in the backyard my migratory instinct
needles me with self-doubt
Have you, in fact, come back to your roots?
What dreams are still unrevealed?

Is this the Amazon in the bones
that I've had since I was 12,
when I first invested green currency
in the banks of my inmost marrow?

Why then do I evade?—Clouds convening so suddenly.
Rain drops diving like skinny
daredevils leaping nimbly
off nimbus and cumulus cliffs.

The ancient ones may still be here among us
for all I know, the priest and the foreman
have more assurance than I do.
I am re-situated in a continually re-decorated interior—

Among the damask and brocade,
embossed wood paneling, silk screened wallpaper,
a mural ceiling runner,
and wainscoting, I sit on bamboo or teak wood.

Do I transplant myself to the *terra petra de Indio* and de-hibernate
from my suburban cave? Uncage the jaguar
or preen with the uropygial gland? Satchmo as a frogmouth bird,
Mozart as a ripple-back crocodile—each demands manifestation within.

Jemma Leigh Roe

Tree of Life



George Moore

The Boulevard

That street you grew up on is gone
torn down and built up with new developments

and though you have not been there in decades
you can see how the world has changed

passages and plagues and popping families
could never be calculated but have

changed the street where the oak all stood
and it is not the Boulevard anymore

but a thoroughfare a running route through
to someplace else the wide lawns cut back

for new lanes to carry these others through
But somewhere in the green these cells

remember leaves that would pile knee deep
and the series of front yards like a playing field

and the trickle that was a stream
It's the edges of the world that have changed

and if they lose their sharpness
one moment is retained

where the dead-end lane
met the wood and the unknown began

and you could escape the demands of age
that now consume you

Jennifer Schomburg Kanke

Some Good Tooth

Granny, hers were pulled by fifty.
Dead or dying, broken, swollen.
Dentures bathes each night at bedside,
soaked in cups of Scope or Listerine.
Polident expensive, fancy.

Mom would hide her holes with fingers
placed strategically in front.
Masking poverty with shyness.
Covered laughs and stilted smiles,
habit even after implants.

I will need a root canal soon,
maybe two. Much better than I'd
figured. I'd expected he'd say
"Nothing's worth our saving here,"
but instead he went "You've got some
good tooth here, decay is deep though."

He attributes it to my home care.
My generic mouthwash poured into
Listerine bottles, my obsessive flossing,
twenty-dollar nightguard from Publix.
All those things I do that don't quite
make up for the past.

Jennifer Shomburg Kanke

Maple Street on My Mind

The smell of mold and benzene comforts me,
but does not bring you to me, not really.
There is no trauma with you, so I leave you
in the past though you are
the one person I want to relive.
When I sit with the memory
of talking before turning in
small gossips of your past,
making the next day's grocery list,
I cannot smell Listerine or feel your rayon night dress.
My mind understands that you are not here,
you are a story I repeat to myself,
an impression of crickets on an August night
that I can't turn the sound up on,
can't bring into this room with me now,
no matter how hard I try.

Gena Schwam

Flowers in the Dark

Water only evaporates at night,
With the lights out,
Flowers wilting in the darkness,
A vase growing slowly drier.

Microscopic bristles drop off
Sagging petals,
Float down decaying stems
Landing on granite countertops.

In the morning time stands still.
Lights go on in a rush
Bustle in the kitchen, faucets on,
Vase refilled, dead leaves discarded.

The scent of shrinking flowers in a vase
Is a slow and steady death,
In contrast to what rises from the ground.

Angele Ellis

Nights in the Old Country

Out of the paper mill village night she came:
Mrs. Delhomey, my Nonna's neighbor. Small
as a child—my size—in nightgown, robe, and slippers.
Thin plaited hair, teeth taken out for sleep. *My Jo*,
she lisped to Nonna, *I'm running away from home*.
No one could blame her. Her daughter, Margaret, had a voice

that blistered paint from Buicks. Nonna was kind.
Would you like some ice cream, Mrs. Delhomey?
Yeth, my Jo. Nonna brought a Melmac bowl heaped
with hills of chocolate—her garden in early spring.
Like the Old Country, sighed Mrs. Delhomey,
blessing Nonna's paradise with her whistling exhale.

Once, I'd thought the Old Country was one country
spread behind a golden gate, as in a fairy tale.
By then, I knew the world was cut into nations,
stained different colors on the classroom globe—
but not that Nonna had called Margaret from the kitchen
phone. I'd hoped that Nonna would offer to make up

the soft green couch for this old lady spooning
ice cream past her bare gums, in perfect pleasure.
But Nonna took away the emptied bowl, placed
gentle fingers on the blue robe. She walked her friend
back through a sky thick with blinking stars,
delivering her to the dark realm of Margaret.

Decades gone. Nonna spoke of Mrs. Delhomey:
I loved her like she was my own mother.
I know, I said, through Nonna's fading kitchen—
the percolator clock above her sink pulsing
a pure red light into the shadows, holding
that present until it too became memory.

Matthew Mayes

Let It Be a Dream

Our Autumn sky is pregnant with violence: *Dies Infaustus*
whistles the shades of red and orange
as they dance across your skin. I look at you and I don't
know what to say; I'm standing right
next to you — a stranger — as you face
the t.v. eyes empty behind the shades of a dream;
no one's home, no one's
watching.

Do be dreaming a dream where you can run
to the place where we made fifteen feet tall
ramps with two feet's worth of mud
and juvenile hands.

Do be dreaming a dream where you can escape
from these linoleum floors and faded gowns
to the moments when you'd gleefully steer as I pressed the gas,
because my legs were two years longer.

Do be dreaming a dream where you can return
to the time when our woes stretched insofar as having to figure out:
Do I go with or against the grain?

Do be dreaming a dream,
because no one can hear you.

Jennifer Novotney

Unrecognizable

Not a single sound exists
in the quietness of the morning
when the world has stopped
for one brief moment of time.
The leaves lay motionless on the trees
the road empty of cars
the birds quietly in their nests.

The drawers that belong to my desk
sit in the garage, filled with things to be sorted.
The picture frames of our favorite beach
lounge casually, propped up against the wall.
Books lay strewn on the floor in unsorted piles
with unread words waiting for a keen eye.
The alarm clock waits in dormant sleep.

I imagine her, a pushpin
on the other side of the map.
She does not remember my name
and I wonder if that was because my father chose it.
She calls me by her sister's name
my daughter's name
but never my own.

When I see her, I tend to seek
that glimmer of recognition
for her marble orbs to scan over me
register that I am her flesh and blood.
I could stare for an eternity into those eyes
but all I see is myself staring back and I wonder
if some part of her has already let go.

One day, on a quiet morning just as this
I will be in her house, looking over her things
the painting of the mother and daughter over her mantel
the collection of elephant figurines
her clothes folded unceremoniously in the drawers
and she will not be there to not recognize me.
I will be unrecognizable to myself.

Cameron Morse

The Stick

A delicate stick
braced just right among
three power lines
hasn't moved since the day

we arrived, a wishbone
pinched between two fingers,
a stubborn hanging on:
the sky above, the earth below.

Dayna Patterson

Sun Tree Going to Seed



Shelby Lynn Lanaro

Out on the Clothesline

I used to love helping Nana hang
damp clothes on her line. Corner,
clothespin, corner, clothespin.

She'd hand me shirts to pin and send
out over Papa's strawberry garden.
Once, while running a line of bright white

bras and underpants, she told me:
*I never let your grandfather see me
with the lights on.*

Yet there, out on the clothesline,
her underwear stared down the neighbors' +
yards. I still grin, even now, as I drive

by lawns adorned with banners of
vibrant briefs. The dryer in my own house
works fine enough, but there's something about

the wind billowing through my bedsheets,
about lying in linens and duvet blown dry
by the breeze. I air my laundry damp and clean—

just as Nana used to—but even with my closet
of crop tops and minis, my unmentionables
hang solely behind closed bathroom doors.

Kate Meyer-Currey

To the manse (Dunbar 2019)

Two shared pasts:
My mother's; mine
Double layered
Memories
Felted in kinship
Woven tight
Like plaid;
Dark squares;
Navy, bottle green
Are longer past;
Solid, foursquare
Like the manse's
Enclosing walls;
Set back from
The present world;
Modern additions
Jar, but blend,
The yellow, black
And white lines
Of road-markings
On the street where
We have parked,
Almost furtively;
We don't want them
To notice us; we just
Want to see the
Manse; home of
My mother's childhood
Holidays, in Dunbar
Where we went
Together when I was
Little, in the Seventies,
Visiting Auntie
And Uncle; dislocated
By retirement
From its enfolding shelter
To a low-set pebble-dashed
Bungalow, by the machair
Flat to the dunes
On the fringe of the town
Near the golf-course,

Where we took headsquard
Walks along by red crumbling cliffs
With raucous kittiwakes
Squawking like bagpipes
Squinting at the Bass Rock
With its guano icing, from
Boat rides round the bay.
Trips to Eyemouth; storming
Tantallon's sandstone ramparts;
North-Berwick or Preston Mill
Commemorated on tea towels
In Auntie's tiny kitchen;
Taste now the butterscotch tang
Of milkshakes at Grecco's
Or scraping out condensed-milk tins
To make tablet; flavours still
Tingling on my tongue
Of shared 'don't tell your father'
Sweetie-shop indulgence;
(A secret between Mum and me).
Exploring the tiny garden
Immaculate with flowers
Nooks for gnome-statues
And my childhood memories
To hide; hearing Auntie's
Clucks, exclamations;
Exhortations to keep
Our English accents
Muffled from the neighbours
Despite the thread of tartan
Blood that runs deep
In maternal veins
A family music only we hear.
That was my Dunbar;
A pattern repeated
From my mother's past;
A small-scale replica
Of the Manse, my Auntie's
Crowning glory; her
True heart and home.
Childlike, we peek
And peer together
Over new-built walls
And fences to
Our younger selves;
We see lawns laid

Trim and neat;
Box hedges, tidy flowers
Striped by paths
For lolloping dogs
And toddlers staggering
To mothers and aunts;
Flopping onto
Tartan picnic rugs
Overseen by windows'
Benevolent guardian
Eyes; peer through
The nets and there's
A table laid with
Crisp cloth and doilies
Awaiting high tea
With drop-scones,
Traybake; recipes
Handed down
By sweet-toothed time.
Notes also drift
On the air; Handel
On piano, diligent Auntie
Practising for services;
Or singing old songs
In her warm, low mezzo
Echoing back to
Other choirs; trained
And led by musical aunts
The rising lilt of Gaelic
Evoking tides of the
Western isles; or the
Organ keeping measured
Lowland time; the fabric
Of a Scots family:
We still hear the sermon
In uncle's pulpit diction
At children's service
'Lead us not into Drem station'
We follow this commandment
Even now; glinting beyond
The town is the chilly sea
Where Mum learned to swim
Fighting the cold with thermos
And 'chittery snacks'; towel
Scratchy as the sand
Between her toes. Recalling

Storms and floods of the
Time the land was drowned
And rivers ran red-streaked
With the hue of rowans
That skirt the harvest fields
This summer in East Lothian;
Our past is backed by ramparts
Of time, Edinburgh crags that
Look down on the Royal Mile
And the castle; the Tattoo is
Another family tradition where
Dancers interweave like
Our shared lives; I look up
At the ranked seats
I see my mother; she sees me:
This is the home of all our mothers
The pipe-skirl stirs our true blood.

Kelly Morgan

Prayer of Saint Frances

Come to the laurel and the sourwood cabin.
Thread life through the needles of circling white pines.
Strum the dulcimer; weave smooth the bracken.

Before you enter, see the breast of the robin
lift the morning off the edge of the skyline.
Come to the laurel and the sourwood cabin.

Take up the shuttle to blossom a pattern
that creeps into being like crackling grapevine.
Strum the dulcimer; weave smooth the bracken.

The fabric is coarse, like the hemlock battens.
Blackberries ferment into slow summer wine.
Come to the laurel and the sourwood cabin.

Now pause on the loom; let the warp and weft slacken.
Music gives time enough to ease the design.
Strum the dulcimer; weave smooth the bracken.

Stoke the fire in winter so the locust bark blackens.
Let go the roadway and the wheels that blind.
Come to the laurel and the sourwood cabin.
Strum the dulcimer; weave smooth the bracken.

For my great aunt Frances

Mark Heathcote

Hope, gardens every whisper

Hope, gardens every whisper
every thought, every flower
a brocade of desire
like dew-fall, they are there to wander
the landscape of your dreams
to filter down and replenish
every fallen mulched leaf-thereafter.
To a rainbow's end, we all must surrender—
tender as roots; heads up seeking the stars of heaven.

Arlene Weiner

On the Land

I pulled some plants that showed too-early green
when I might have been writing poetry.
On the way to the compost heap
with a kind of bouquet—fleshy roots, round leaves—
I thought of a poet-farmer-prophet
who urges *Get back to your roots.*
Back to the land. To soil and toil,
to your home place, your forefathers' place.

My roots are in Manhattan, north
of Harlem. When my sixth-grade teacher
gave us morning-glory seeds
I dug dirt from the park to plant mine.
In the window box a white worm arched out.
I shuddered and buried it. Buried it again,
until it unfolded green wings. Oh poet,
my forefathers had no land,
but now in my garden in Pittsburgh
wrens build, rabbits browse, the rhododendron
opens waterlily blooms to bees in June.

Rebecca Patrascu

Reunion

We are not surprised to find each other,
though our families are amazed.
The odds were so slender.

You, a teenage mother from the sixties.
Me, the newborn she gave away.
We tell each other it was time.

Or maybe luck, or fate, sent us both
to a fledgling registry on the web
before most people were online.

I don't discount God, or grace.
I just don't say so out loud.
I'm not sure what you believe.

We read each other's biographies
piecemeal through email,
send pictures in fat envelopes.

Over the phone when we speak,
your voice evokes
a fast-talking Lauren Bacall.

I laugh at your jokes. I think
I hear you trying to laugh at mine.
One hundred and eighty days later,

when we meet in flesh and shared blood,
you're not exactly a mirror. No,
it's like looking at a glass door

when it's dark beyond, and the sun
is shining full-force on your back.
Neither of us has ever seen

so close a likeness before.
We smile often, glance at each other slyly,
like new lovers, just to spot that reflection.

It's the very same smile, most agree.

The bridge of the nose.
Earlobes. Eyes. Knees.

Pieces of anatomy.
I subtract what doesn't look like you
and assume a father.

The tabs and blanks of a jigsaw puzzle
I'd never cared about finishing
start to come together like a kiss.

Later, as we sit in a Jeep at dusk,
my three-year-old requests a song.
(One quarter of her comes from you.)

We duet "Hush Little Baby" clear through
without breaking. And this, at last,
is what breaks me – this bonus coincidence:

strangers singing together to a child
as she nods off to sleep, the odds we beat
when we both know all the words.

Gabrielle Langley

Estate Sale

Light slants through lace,
reaching for a wall.
I cannot count
the specs of dust,
the pale gold dancing
in a blue light.

A lifetime of kid gloves
and silk shoes,
dyed to match.
Vintage hat boxes
stuffed with monogrammed
letterhead, paper cuts,
blank thank-you notes,
die-cut valentines,
a forgotten chocolate,
a broken paint brush.

A tower of Vogue magazines
looms in the corner,
almost touching the ceiling.

How many buttons
scattered when this jar fell?

How do you rehydrate
a pressed flower?

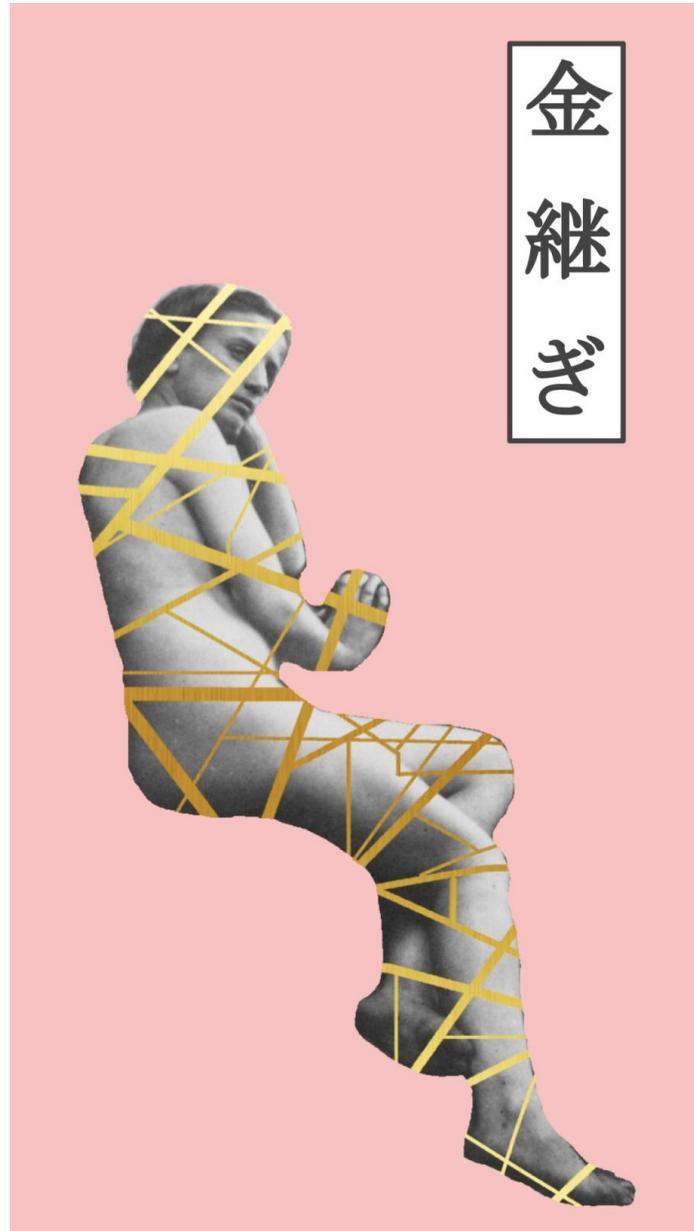
I want to untangle this
tarnished web of necklaces.

How many broken doll parts
would be required
to bring you back,
to clean up this mess?

It will take an army
of porcelain figurines
to find the missing teaspoon,
to reconstruct a shattered vase.

Maxwell Suzuki

Kintsugi Figure



I had always felt isolated from the Japanese side of my identity, especially since I grew up in a small town away from my relatives. In art, both writing and visual, I have found myself dealing with this disconnection by engaging in traditional Japanese concepts and expressions. 'Kintsugi Figure' is a piece that restructures the art of kintsugi, the repairing of broken pottery with lacquer and gold dust, into one that is reflected on the human form. I have learned that participation in these concepts has helped me understand and value my Japanese family roots.

Claire Drucker

The Dying Time

for my mother

In the hospital bed, an
operatic tune shoots from your

mouth, a trilling vibration, as if the ululating
cries carry you closer to the ethereal

edge, weight of your body
disappearing into refrain, into a tighter shell.

You could have been an opera singer except
a housewife, children, and career

were not woven into the 50's
so the music slipped away, those last years

almost nothing melodic except commercials
and old movie tracks on TV.

Above your head, a G, an A, a high B
undulate the air. You are running the scales,
betting on the sweet spot, humming
to be released.

We encircle you, sing you a
bridge, a language for your crossing

lay yourself down on the rocks now

three generations of women, chanting,
cradling you with our voices

let your body down in the river

sacred minutes, as if water empties you of song,
of sorrow buried deep in the cells

listen to the drumming on the other side

an invisible raft, lip of the horizon
you are destined for

lose yourself in the meantime

the leaving place,
where the call of blackbirds
with their red-tipped wings
can take your breath away.

Gary Lark

Snake River Gorge

Tough bright lupine
dot the gorge,
sunning balsamroot
along my trail to the edge.
I've brought my mother
to visit an Idaho cousin
a week after my father's death.

A great spill red rock
paints a thousand feet
across the river.
I can feel my father
in the muscles of my walking,
in the organs and wonder
of my being.

Tonight, up Pine Creek,
a couple trout for dinner,
a thunder storm,
alone among the trees
waving in the wind,
everything is so full
of emptiness.

George Moore

For Grace Emily Moreno

*“Everything we live we already lived
more intensely at the age of ten...”* – Enrique Lihn

Up the channel into New Mexico
you are the first born the first favored by time

and enter the new year seconds after
the old year has died

and the world is flush with faces
hungry for what you might become

You will live happily forever
or until you discover time

and then you may divide the world
into before and after

unable to settle on either side
You will be blessed with beauty

with the naturalness of a child
and smile before the camera

before the camera becomes an eye
and your beauty a mirror

As a young woman
names may mean nothing to you

until one name becomes who you are
and it will be spoken by another

You carry the name of a princess
and that of a great poet

but do not carry them like stones
let life help you carry them

and you may grow more each year
than in all the years you were growing

and when at last you hear your name
it may be someone else whispering

an echo of that first cry
and you'll remember this day

*Lihn, Enrique. "The Father's Monologue with His Infant Son." *The Oxford Book of Latin American Poetry*, ed. by Cecilia Vicuña and Ernesto Livon-Grosma, translated by Johnathan Cohen, Oxford UP, 2009, p. 367.

Waves

By

Judith Ford

Two seven-year-old boys run for the water as soon as the soles of their feet hit the sand, as soon as their sandals hit the sand free of feet. Barefoot then and shouting, voices pitched high, they plunge into water to their waists. I don't run for the water. I'm more reserved, or maybe it's that I'm more bound-up, more suppressed. I walk, calling, Don't go out too far! I pick just the right spot to spread my clean towel and settle myself to read Merwin's *The Shadow of Sirius*. Yellow sun heats the top of my head. In less than five minutes, I'm uncomfortably hot. Nothing makes sense then but to join the boys where they bounce in the lake like seagulls, riding waves, pushing the outer edges of safety.

"Nic, I call, can you stand there?"

"Sure, Mom," he shouts from out beyond all possible rescue.

I walk into the water; the air swells with the shouts of happy children. Green algae along the pier smells like sewage. I wade away from it. I glue my eyes to the boys bobbing in the distance, two small heads, four pale arms lifting over the murky gray-blue soup of the lake.

I know my boy and I know that even here, here in the midst of water and sun, the pictures collect in his mind: the geometric patterns of waves rising and falling, moving in and moving out, diagrams of them, names for their shapes and sizes. Last week he imagined a spacecraft complete with detailed wiring and a whole new language for the planet he will travel to in his ship. He isn't thinking about how he'll get back to shore or what he will do if he gets a cramp.

While Nic's mind sees patterns, mathematical congruences, mine swells with patterns of disaster and loss. Last week I imagined several versions of the deaths of the people I love. I could write a whole new language of pain. Even now I picture Nic sliding beneath the waves. His hands reach for help; his lungs ache with water. His geometric mind slides into the hungry lake.

I stare hard to locate the actual Nic as he bobs in water up to his nose. He is fine, of course, puffed up with life, floating on the notion that he is safely held. And he is. He is sleek and beautiful as a young seal. I join him at the buoy, the rope that defines the safe zone, and convince him to swim closer to shore where I can watch him dive through the big waves without imagining his demise.

I'm back on my towel on the hot sand, reading *The Shadow of Sirius*. After two poems I

close my eyes and am filled with the sound of breaking waves, the clean, cool hiss of water against the skin of compressed sand. The air throbs with life. Not just the waves. Bees, gulls, the black crows, and the children. All this flows out over the sleeping bodies on the sand, into the green and gray of the breath of trees, the blue life of chicory, the green of milkweed pods on the hill waiting, breathless, for monarch hatchings.

I open my eyes, blink in the glistening light. The lake water moves now in smooth, rhythmic ripples, like muscles under the skin of a man's back lifting, like muscles under the skin of Judy's boa constrictor, whose name was Eve, as she slipped silent around my shoulders, my neck. Don't worry, said Judy. I just fed her and besides, she prefers rats. A wave slips around my son's waist, moves under his arms and lifts him lightly off his feet, sets him down, his light and lake's light mingling; the water glows. Nic's face shines.

When I was a young child, I would sometimes catch sight of things that grown-ups couldn't see. I'd turn my head just so, looking back over my shoulder quickly before the things could hide. I feared some of what I saw in the shadows. I didn't know their names, so I didn't know they were there to protect, to soften the edges. To give me cushion. These days, in the pit of night when I am filled with static electricity, humming with wakefulness, I trust the shadows that have accumulated over time in the corners of my bedroom. I call upon the comfort of the things beyond the edge of vision, beyond my mind's knowing. I use them to erase the dark worries, the fearful dreams.

I call the boys out of the water. They roll in sand until their hair and skin are coated. They laugh.

"Bury me more, Nic," Peter demands, though he's covered already clear to his chin.

I imagine single, sharp grains slipping under swimsuits and into warm places where they will chafe and bite. I keep this to myself. I allow them ten more minutes.

We trudge slowly up the winding path to the top of the bluff. The boys stop to look at a butterfly, at a stone that captures light and throws it back. I stop to catch my breath. To pick up the shining stone, slide it into my pocket to take it home, where, later, it will go gray and silent.

Gabrielle Langley

Constellation

If I try to imagine
a life without you
the Iceland spar
slips from my hands,
a Viking sunstone
and all the sextants
washed overboard,

hurricanes
the strongest anchor
cannot hold.

If the finest ship
must capsize
under the right conditions,
then teach me how to use wind
to shred all the sails.

Teach me to navigate
using only the stars.

Teach me how angels hide on the ocean floor,
how their wings float off to become the waves,

and if you make it back home,
please bring me
a starfish,
a green bottle
filled with pearls,
and the scent
of your warmest coat.

Michael Keshigian

Wildflowers

What is love
but the dried up bulbs
the gardener insists on planting
to everyone's objections
that irrationally burst
into magnificent dahlias.
The lunacy of uncertainty,
a fascination of delight,
most often unpredictable.
Wild grow
the flowers of the heart
in the garden of our lives,
wilder still
blooms affection.

Cathy Shang

All the Beautiful Broken Things

The flowers that I cannot grow
(they're pressed between book pages somewhere)
The porcelain vase that cracked in the kiln
(i have it on a shelf, the lavender glaze is still my favorite)
The songs I will never finish writing
(i wish i passed my music theory exam)
The shoelaces that I can never tie properly (i often run with them undone)
The shattered jar of jasmine syrup I dropped on my foot
(it looked somehow celestial in the 5 o'clock light)
The pictures that I can never paint
(i can never mix the right colors, my hands are always shaking)
The words that will never be said (my poems sounds better on paper)
The notes I can never sing (I wish I wasn't tone deaf)
The fear of disturbing what has already been cultivated
(i wonder how much love in this world hides behind silence)

Linda M. Crate

just to feel safe

I've always wanted the
deepest roots
of ancient trees to anchor
me down

don't always feel safe
unless i know something is
secure,

and so i wanted that;

to be rooted so deep down
no one could dig me up

i wanted to be the mighty redwood
no one would dare challenge,

and i wanted to reach so high into the heavens
that even thunder knew my name;
just to feel safe.

Meg Freer

Tiny Greens, The Burren, Ireland



Mark A. Fisher

Stirring Earl Grey

my morning routine
recombines atoms
tossed like dice in a game
Einstein's god refused to play
like Yahtzee at midnight
when you have to be up
early the next day
drinking transformed
sunlight
and water
and dirt
from across this Earth
tousled by butterfly wings
into unpredictability.

Jennifer Novotney

Percolate

There is something magical about grinding my own beans. The rip of the bag, the elation of the dense, musty richness escaping. I pour them in the grinder one by one until they hit the metal bottom with the clink, clink, clink like champagne glasses during a toast. Those beautiful brown beans unaware of the sharp blades by which they slide, nestle among. The gesture of shaking the grinder, ceremoniously pressing my thumb down firmly, clicks into place, no turning back. The whirl of the motor cuts, rips, obliterates until all that is left is a fine chocolate sand, to dust in a matter of seconds. I count to thirty just to be sure each piece is thoroughly chopped, ground to just the right consistency, while the crystalline coffee pot sits in the room, quietly waiting for me to complete my execution. With the soft putter of the percolation, a mere gesture of its company, the scene of the massacre disappears. The sharp, biting aroma inviting and familiar, an old friend come to visit, steam rising above its center. The light reflects in its eyes, not quite like a sparkle, but a twinkle, in the anticipation of its intoxicating, electric energy.

Gary Lark

Fundamentally

Quarks are hardly there
and gluons have no mass at all.
We call them particles
but they could be spots,
or dibbles, or woogles of energy
dancing with one another.
The elementary us is sparking
and playing hide and seek.
I watch the neighbor's two little dogs
chase and play for hours.
It is good to remember who we are.

Michael Keshigian

Nights in Cummings Cove

Those nights illuminated by the moon
whose white dagger severed the wet surface,
highlighted the stalks upon Gypsy Glen
which stretched off the shoal
into the crooked air
and the lake wore a tarnished chink
upon its silver armor.

The tall pines, stilled by the sheen,
waited till their presence
faded back to distorted disfigurements
to acknowledge the breeze.

The cold air was always crisp
and smelled of wild roses
that circled the shoreline,
exposed as the moon's silver eye
adjusted its stare toward the brush
and patches of mulch
gingerly caressing the lapping lake.

On nights such as these,
he would gaze at the cottages,
nesting beachside, their lights flickering
in night's magnificent isolation.

Little did he suspect
that this moment of adoration,
the opportunity to commune,
would become a longing
that would follow him.

Gena Schwam

Old Growth

My heart beats somewhere between
Feathers and stone:
Levity and gravity,
Heavy metals from the core,

Magnetic and tectonic
Pulling me back to myself.

In my youth I was a tree and
I stood with others growing roots,
We shared soil and minerals,
Blossomed fruits
Before wind and cold swept our leaves away.
There was never any doubt they would return
Like clockwork in the Spring,
A predictable rhythm of rebirth.

In the present I am one of only
A few in the thinning woods
A plateau of stumps:
Heart flows like water through an oxbow,
Slow and precious curve
Accumulating silt
I see the valley drop away into tributaries
Heading downstream.

Where I stand there is a verdant hillside
My heart is a flock of doves
Lighting on the mirror surface of the
Brackish waters
Stopping over on a flight path
Through the clouds
Over mountains and meadows to
Some unknown destination.

My heart is warm and I breathe you
Like delicate fire
Blue flame through my veins
The richest nutrients to keep me growing rings
Expanding outward into the space

Around my trunk
Taking shape like the gemstones

At the core of the Earth.

I sit with you and watch,
Open-eyed wonder,
Leaves coming back to bloom,
Hardened shell softening
Branches soaring higher.

Anne Whitehouse

Fertile Earth

I.

In the corner of the garden
we found the perfect spot
for the damask rose “Celsiana,”
but when we dug, we hit a boulder.
I said, “Let’s plant somewhere else.”
“No,” she disagreed, “we’ll find a way.”

For two hours we dug around it,
but couldn’t get it to budge.
With a plank, we made a lever.
The two of us stood on one end
and bounced up and down
and finally felt it dislodge.

It took two planks and the two of us
working all day to dig it out:
there, at last, unearthed,
a rock the size of a coffee table.
Two women, one aging and one old—
we gaped in awe of what we’d done.

II.

With patience, forbearance, and a stubborn will,
almost any obstacle can be made to yield.

She taught me to trust myself to find a way;
she taught me to look for it close at hand.

In the rock’s place grows the sturdy rose,
whose soft pink blooms and golden stamens
delight our summers.

The rock remained, too big to take away;
transplanted ferns now shelter in its shade.

III.

All afternoon before the rain,

I clipped the dead hostas' withered stems
and raked out piles of dead leaves from the beds.

Wet and chill, as if a cloud had sunk to earth,
in the strangely muffled air of November,
I listened to the chirp of a hawk circling overhead.

My body bent to my labors; my mind wandered free.
Make room! More room!

Jerin Anne Jacob

Apathy Does Not Breed Good Fruit

Apathy breeds like anthracnose
Tan lesions on our woody, shrub-aceous lives
Maturing the way rich ripe plums do.

Danger is then
 when apathy hungrily harvests
 a world - comfortably dying -
 When you rinse the numb
 warts off the globe
 Remember to filter
 your tools, wash them
 clean again - for dry, stubborn
Plum stains

Indifference, as black knot - propagates inscience
Teach them to comprehend the colors of biotic violence,
Subtlety: prunes are oblivious to taste

There's not one moyer plum rock worth camouflaging under.

Randel McCraw Helms

Last Living Male White Rhino Now Sleeps in Hope

(Sudan, the last male northern white rhino, died March 19, 2018, at age 45. There remain but two of his kind: his daughter Najin and grand-daughter Fatu.)

When Sudan died, his dozen caregivers wept,
Not only because he was magnificent
And they loved him, but that his long line now
Could end, forever. Quickly they withdrew
What little sperm remained in his wizened
Vesicles, and froze it lovingly. Consider
Its infinite worth: fifty-five million
Years of urgent transmission culminates
In these precious droplets. Seed from others
Of his species now dead, also carefully
Preserved, quietly awaits its goal in
The body of young Fatu. What better hope
For the human heart itself than such love
For a dying kind not even ourselves?

Jack D. Harvey

Bufo

They told me
the tree toad
in faraway Malabar
has no dreams;
in faraway Malabar
the tree toad
living in the trees
of the Western Ghats
they told me,
has no dreams;
that his dry flesh
lives forever,
unbound by any whorl of time;
eons the leaves protect him,
hide him, keep him dry;
his ways are every day the same,
and night, his friend,
and the moon before his eyes
enfold the muted gleam
of the precious stones
deep in his ancient head;
protection for his
poisonous flesh
they told me,
antidote for the falling sickness
and the Borgia rings.

He doesn't know or care.
He sees far beyond
his canopy of trees,
this living landscape,
never changing its face;
the salty dividing sea
and the crusty young world
he sees, clear as today,
here and now
millions of years roll by,
rolled up in his timeless gaze.

Who then,
stretched down

through the steaming
new-born world,
what was the giant hand
they told me
that touched his precious
head, dry as the desert sand,
then gone in a moment,
left him to his own devices?

Who indeed?

Would he dream?
Do they lie
who told me?
Does the burden
of those powerful jewels
hidden in his head,
worth more than
rubies or diamonds,
destroy his true nature,
his waking, his sleeping,
his being more than
any mortal creature should be?

And what would he dream?

On the ground
of his immortal life,
sound of water in a pond,
water in a pond,
a hasty splash and gone.

Ana Pugatch

The Monks Took Pictures of the Fruit

“The craving of a person given to heedless living grows like a creeper. Like the monkey seeking fruits in the forest, he leaps from life to life (tasting the fruits of his kamma). —Dhammapada

When the flood washed away the dirt from the hills—when the one road became a river and the river ran brick-red—the monastery had to ration its food. The monks didn’t mind, but reining in the appetites of *laowai* is no easy task. (Feeding a sangha of hungry ghosts).

So with the rains came Tuesday’s lesson: after breakfast we filled our bowls with hot water, swished the scraps and drank them clean. No grain of rice unwasted.

We climbed the mist to the highest hill with stomachs still hollow like morning. We were told the body doesn’t need much sleep since the day’s *zazen* sustains you.

To celebrate the rain’s end, the workers sloshed up our river-road with wooden crates of fruit. *Durian, dragon’s eye, rambutan.* (Back then I didn’t know their English names). The cook arranged the bounty into prism-blossoms,

and we waited for the monks to eat first. But they did not fill their plates. The monks took pictures of the fruit—those brilliant colors like birds of paradise, transforming over centuries to be perfectly different.

They tucked their phones into their robes and each picked out one piece. We filed over more slowly than usual. To see the fruit with new eyes—preserve their beauty in our minds.

**The Dhammapada*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Rebecca Patrascu

Adit

“The language itself...is like some bewitchment or seduction from the past, drifting across the country down the centuries.” -Jan Morris, *Wales: the First Place*

And once you have seen an adit, how can you not enter?
I myself am one foot in it, summoned by the language
that pulls at my body like a bed.

There is always a black bird in the old songs
carrying a message to the distant beloved. There is the moon,
and a stone cottage, and always, there is the sea.

There's the tree underneath which a lover will
have his grave. Maybe he'll have a harp or horse,
or maybe just the sea, the moon, the bird.

The adit is mine-mouth, the dark hole
in the hillside, within which sleeps a king
who will awaken blessed or mad.

I'm not looking for the king. The sea is behind me.
The black birds won't fly into the darkness
and my candle is tallow for want of wax.

But the language is upon my tongue,
it fills my ears, and will not be denied.
I go. I go. *O ran y groth*. As to the womb I go.

Jennifer Novotney

The Trees that Bind Us

I put my hand to my chest.
My heart speaks back
in rhythmic beats like
the steady motion of a drummer.
It is calming, soothing
as if all of creation moves to this dance.

The sun hits the tops of the trees
illuminating their heads, ordained
from a divine presence.
Each morning, each moment unique
yet connected to the other
tied together by a string, delicately draped.

Below branches bend
into contorted shapes.
Like limbs, their top halves coated
with white, wondrous snow
the two sides of nature
two sides of humanity's struggle.

The roots, steady and strong
like legs that hold the trees in place
impenetrable against the bold breeze blowing
stretching deeper beyond the layers
of earth and matter, here before us
here after we are gone.

Michael T. Young

Native Soil

If my heart keeps going back to the lake
whose water I sat by as a teenager,
it's not nostalgia but what my roots supply.

Dragonflies, and sun jewels cut
into its wave crests from a day long gone
nourished an insight that emerged only today.

It's not wisdom, but how every flower
that bloomed along my path since then
draws a shade of color from that reedy shore.

Each pond or puddle reflects back
through years, returning dead swifts
into the air, to the flight that lifted

my thoughts on their wings, banking
above the tree line, weaving patterns
intricate as arteries that sustain,

over a distance of the oldest memories,
what appears now, even to close friends,
like clouds of the approaching rain.

Tracy Donohue

welcome traveler

you who touch the bark of a tree
and breathe with it

you who press your skin against the sky
and smile at a breeze

you who stare into the heart of a flower
as if nothing exists but the rose

man-made liturgies
betrayed you long ago

you left it all for
July clouds
for salt and sand
and tidal pools

faith is in the winter's wait
hope in the morning light
charity in the dying tree

let preachers preach
we'll be out in the garden

Roger Singer

Travelers

stepping out
of a fog,
the air was
full,
I felt the road
differently
while
walking between
seasons
under jeweled
clouds
as shade
spread wide
over the face
of still waters,
brushing
familiar breezes
through the
hair of travelers

Ana Pugatch

Restoration of the Temple of Dawn

Bangkok, Thailand

Taking your picture, I carve your features from porcelain, too—
the sky gray with the ashes of kings. You are listening to the voice

*in your ear, about this replication of the Buddhist cosmology...its seashells
the ballast from Chinese ships see how they glitter each morning...*

The Chao Phraya is not glass. Its opaque waves cut into our boat,
and as we approach we see new ladders leaning into clouds.

The temple is under renovation. Bamboo scaffolds the crumbling
prangs. Human hands have polished off the moss to make Wat Arun

as radiant as it once was. Four hundred years ago, shards of green
and pink were pressed into each side, and as the temple set

it cast a white sun over the river, its faces rippling like pearls.
But the five stupas have faded, their façade dulled by heavy rains.

“It won’t be what it once was,” I say. As you look out over
the water, you take the seashell from your ear and place it into mine:

*Restoring the temple isn’t easy, and the climb through six heavens
is steep—but some are willing to take that risk as they vanish into sky.*

Cameron Morse

Strawberry Plants

Budding whitely
in soggy cardboard—

I raise their heads
above the shoveled

clumps, press down
clammy soil

around their prickly stalks.

It's with the plants that
have clutched the
least dirt with their roots

I most think of hope
because they are
hopeless

and I plant them anyway.

Dayna Patterson

Moon Tree Going to Seed



Contributor's Biographies

L. Ward Abel

L. Ward Abel's work has appeared in *Rattle*, *The Reader*, *The Istanbul Review*, *The Worcester Review*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Versal*, hundreds of others, and is the author of three full collections and ten chapbooks of poetry, including *Jonesing For Byzantium* (UKA Press, 2006), *American Bruise* (Parallel Press, 2012), *Little Town gods* (Folded Word Press, 2016), *A Jerusalem of Ponds* (erbacce-Press, 2016), *The Rainflock Sings Again* (Unsolicited Press, 2019), *Floodlit* (Beakful, 2019), and *The Width of Here* (Silver Bow, 2021).

Linda M. Crate

Linda M. Crate is an author, poet, and writer from Pennsylvania. Her works have appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies both online and in print. She is the author of seven published chapbooks, three microchaps, four poetry full collections, and the novel *Phoenix Tears* (Czykmate Books, June 2018).

Tracy Donohue

Tracy Donohue recently retired from teaching at East Carolina University's School of Theatre and Dance, where she taught acting, speech and writing for solo performance.

Claire Drucker

Claire Drucker has published her poems in numerous journals, including the *Women Artists Datebook*, *Epiphany*, *Puerto del Sol*, and many others. Her last chapbook, *The Fluid Body*, was published by Finishing Line Press. She teaches English at a local community college and lives in Sebastopol, California, where she loves to swim, dance, and play marimbas.

Angele Ellis

Angele Ellis's poetry appeared on a theater marquee after she won Pittsburgh Filmmakers' G-20 Haiku Contest. She is author of *Arab on Radar* (Six Gallery), whose poems about family and heritage earned an Individual Artist Fellowship from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, *Spared* (A Main Street Rag Editor's Choice Chapbook), and *Under the Kaufmann's Clock* (Six Gallery), a fiction/poetry hybrid inspired by Ellis's adopted city of Pittsburgh, with photographs by Rebecca Clever.

Mark A. Fisher

Mark A. Fisher is a writer, poet, and playwright living in Tehachapi, California. His poetry has appeared in *Angel City Review*, *A Sharp Piece of Awesome*, *Penumbra*, *Young Ravens Literary Review*, and many other places. His first chapbook, *drifter*, is available from Amazon. His second, *hour of lead*, won the 2017 San Gabriel Valley Poetry Chapbook Contest. His poem "there are fossils" came in second in the 2020 Dwarf Stars Speculative Poetry Competition. His plays have appeared on California stages in Pine Mountain Club, Tehachapi, Bakersfield, and Hayward. He has also won cooking ribbons at the Kern County Fair.

Judith Ford

Judith Ford's writing has been published in *Caveat Lector*, *Clackamas Literary Review*, *Confluence*, *Connecticut Review*, *Evening Street Review*, *Hampden-Sydney Poetry Review*, *Jumbelbook*, *The Laurel Review*, *The Meadow*, *New English Review*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *The Paragon Journal*, *The Penmen Review*, *Pennsylvania English*, *Quarter After Eight*, *Rubbertop Review*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Waxing & Waning*, *Willow Review*, and many other journals. Ford coauthored a poetry collection with Martin Jack Rosenblum, *Burning Oak*, published by Lionhead Press (1986). Ford has received Pushcart Prize nominations for fiction and poetry, won first place in the Willow Review Prose Award (2005), and was awarded "most highly commended" in the Margaret Reid Poetry Contest (2008).

Meg Freer

Meg Freer grew up in Montana and lives in Ontario. She worked in book publishing, and now she teaches piano and enjoys being outdoors year round. Her photos and writing have appeared in journals such as *Ruminare*, *Young Ravens Literary Review*, *Borrowed Solace*, and *Eastern Iowa Review*. She coauthored with Chantel Lavoie a chapbook of poems, *Serve the Sorrowing World with Joy* (Woodpecker Lane Press, 2020). Her poems have won awards in several contests in the US and Canada.

Jack D. Harvey

Jack D. Harvey's poetry has appeared in *Scrivener*, *The Comstock Review*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Typishly Literary Magazine*, *The Antioch Review*, *The Piedmont Poetry Journal*, and elsewhere. The author has been a Pushcart nominee and over the years has been published in a few anthologies. The author has been writing poetry since he was sixteen and lives in a small town near Albany, New York. He is retired from doing whatever he was doing before he retired. His book, [*Mark the Dwarf*](#), is available on Kindle.

Mark Heathcote

Mark Andrew Heathcote is adult learning difficulties support worker. His poetry has been published in many journals, magazines, and anthologies. Mark resides in the UK. From Manchester, Mark is the author of *In Perpetuity* and *Back on Earth*, two books of poems published by a CTU publishing group, Creative Talents Unleashed.

Randel McCraw Helms

Randel McCraw Helms is retired from Arizona State University's English Department. His recent poems have appeared in such places as *Young Ravens Literary Review*, *Dappled Things*, and *Silkworm*. His chapbook "Animal Prayers" was published in 2020.

Jerin Anne Jacob

Jerin Anne Jacob is a poet, educator, researcher, and social entrepreneur. A teacher of literature and language, she is currently also pursuing her doctoral research on feminist retellings of biblical narratives in India. Her works have been published or are forthcoming in *Press Pause Press*, *EKL Review*, *Paper Dragon*, *Gulmohur Quarterly*, and an anthology tentatively titled *Of Dry Tongues and Brave Hearts*.

Michael Keshigian

From New Hampshire, Michael Keshigian is the author of fourteen poetry collections. His latest collection, *What To Do With Intangibles*, was released in January 2020 by Cyberwit.net. He has been published in numerous national and international journals and has appeared as feature writer in twenty poetry publications with seven Pushcart Prize and two Best of the Net nominations. michaelkeshigian.com

Jennifer Shomburg Kanke

Jennifer Schomburg Kanke, originally from Columbus, Ohio, lives in Tallahassee, Florida, where she edits confidential documents for the government. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *New Ohio Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Pleiades*. Her chapbook, *Fine, Considering*, about her experiences undergoing chemotherapy for ovarian cancer, is available from Rinky Dink Press. She is a reader for *Emrys* and serves on the board of directors for Anhinga Press.

Anneliese Kvamme

Anneliese Kvamme is a high school English language arts teacher who is finishing up her Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies degree, focused on English and writing, at Western New Mexico University. She has loved writing poetry for years, publishing some of it on her personal blog, kvammefamily.com.

Shelby Lynn Lanaro

Shelby Lynn Lanaro is the author of *Yellowing Photographs* (Kelsay Books, 2021). A New England native, Shelby earned her MFA in 2017 from Southern Connecticut State University, where she now teaches first year composition and creative writing courses. Shelby's poems and photographs have appeared in *Young Ravens Literary Review*, *Verse of Silence*, *The Wild Word*, *Wild Tongue*, and elsewhere.

Gabrielle Langley

Gabrielle Langley has won the Lorene Pouncey Award, Houston Poetry Fest's Jury Prize, and the Vivian Nellis Memorial Prize. Her first book of poetry, *Azaleas on Fire*, was released in 2019. With work appearing in a variety of literary journals, and three Pushcart prize nominations, Ms. Langley was also a spearhead and co-editor for the anthology *Red Sky: Poetry on the Global Epidemic of Violence against Women* (Sable Books, 2016). Additional information about this poet can be found at www.gabriellelangley.com.

Gary Lark

Gary Lark's most recent collection is *Daybreak on the Water* (Flowstone Press, 2020). Other work includes, *Ordinary Gravity* (Airlie Press, 2019), *River of Solace* (Flowstone Press, 2016), *In the House of Memory* (BatCat Press, 2016), *Without a Map* (Wellstone Press, 2013), *Getting By* (Logan House Press, 2009). *Easter Creek* is forthcoming from Main Street Rag. His poetry has appeared in *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Catamaran*, *Poet Lore*, *The Sun*, *ZYZZYVA*. <https://garylark.work/>

DS Maolailaí

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

Matthew Mayes

Matthew is a recent graduate of the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he received a BS in Biopsychology. He is currently in his gap years working as the office manager of an outpatient psychiatric clinic. In just over a year he will apply to medical school where he will pursue an MD/PhD, while conducting research into the neurobiology of addiction.

Kate Meyer-Currey

Kate Meyer-Currey was born in 1969 and moved to Devon in 1973. A varied career in frontline settings has fuelled her interest in gritty urbanism, contrasted with a rural upbringing. Her ADHD also instils a sense of “other” in her life and writing, whether folklore feminism or urban myth. Her chapbook *County Lines* (Dancing Girl Press, forthcoming 2021) juxtaposes these realities. Other poems include “Family Landscape: Colchester 1957” (*Not Very Quiet*, September 2020), “Invocation” (*Whimsical Poet*, forthcoming), “Cailleach” (*Sage Woman*, forthcoming) and “Dregs” (*Seinundwerden*, forthcoming).

Kelly Morgan

Kelly Morgan is a rising senior at Vanderbilt University majoring in creative writing and minoring in mathematics. She serves as editor-in-chief of *The Vanderbilt Review* and poetry editor of *SciLit Review*. Her writing has appeared in *The Blue Route*, *Vanderbilt Lives*, *The Vanderbilt Review*, and *Scaffold: A Showcase of Vanderbilt First-Year Writing*, and is soon to be published in *Mosaic Art & Literary Journal*. She is the winner of the 2021 Iris N. Spencer Villanelle Prize and of a Scholastic Art and Writing Silver Medal.

George Moore

George Moore’s poetry collections include *Children’s Drawings of the Universe* (Salmon Poetry 2015) and *Saint Agnes Outside the Walls* (FurureCycle 2016). He has published in *Poetry*, *Colorado Review*, *The Atlantic*, *Orion*, and *The North American Review*. A finalist for the National Poetry Series and the Brittingham Award, and recently longlisted for the Gregory O’Donoghue and Ginkgo Prizes, he presently lives on the south shore of Nova Scotia.

Cameron Morse

Cameron Morse is Senior Reviews editor at *Harbor Review*, a poetry editor at *Harbor Editions*, and the author of six collections of poetry. His first, *Fall Risk*, won Glass Lyre Press’s 2018 Best Book Award. His latest is *Far Other* (Woodley Press, 2020). He holds an MFA from the University of Kansas City—Missouri and lives in Independence, Missouri, with his wife Lili and two children. For more information, check out his [Facebook page](#) or [website](#).

Jennifer Novotney

Jennifer Novotney's poetry is forthcoming in *Buddhist Poetry Review* and *Amethyst Review* and has appeared in *Poetry Quarterly* and *The Vignette Review*, the latter for which she was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. In 2014, she won the Moonbeam Children's Book Award for her debut novel, *Winter in the Soul*. She lives in North East Pennsylvania with her family, where she teaches English and creative writing.

Dayna Patterson

Dayna Patterson is a writer, textile artist, and amateur fungophile who makes her home in the Pacific Northwest. daynapatterson.com

Rebecca Patrascu

Rebecca Patrascu's work has appeared in publications including *The Racket Journal*, *Pidgeonholes*, *Bracken Magazine*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Colorado Review*, and *Valparaiso Review*. She has an MFA from Pacific University and is the author of the chapbook *Before Noon* (Finishing Line Press). She lives in northern California, works at the public library, and catches honeybee swarms in the spring.

Ana Pugatch

Ana Pugatch is the 2020–21 Poetry Heritage Fellow at George Mason University in Virginia. She is a Harvard graduate who studied Buddhism with the Woodenfish Foundation while teaching English in China and Thailand. Her work has been featured in publications such as *The Los Angeles Review*, *The Poetry & Meditation Anthology*, *Thin Air Magazine*, and *Literary Shanghai*, among others. She recently won the 2021 McIntyre Light Verse Award.

Judith Kelly Quaempts

Judith Kelly Quaempts' poetry and short stories appear online and in print. Her most recent poetry appears in *Young Ravens Literary Review*, *Persimmon Tree's* West Coast states poetry contest issue, and an anthology from The Poetry Box.

Jemma Leigh Roe

Jemma Leigh Roe studied art at the Université Paris-Sorbonne and received a PhD in Romance Languages and Literatures from Princeton University. Her poetry and visual art are featured or forthcoming in *Canyon Voices*, *Feral: A Journal of Poetry and Art*, *Literary North*, *Young Ravens Literary Review*, and others.

Gena Schwam

Gena Schwam is a poet and artist who lives in Washington state. She enjoys running and spending time in nature.

Cathy Shang

Cathy Shang is a sophomore studying in Shanghai. She enjoys creative writing, drawing, filmmaking, and is very active in parliamentary debate.

Roger Singer

Dr. Singer is the Poet Laureate Emeritus of Old Lyme, Connecticut, and past president of the Shoreline Poetry Chapter, in association with the Connecticut Poetry Society. He has had over 1,250 poems published on the Internet, magazines, and in books and is a 2017 Pushcart Prize Award Nominee. Some of the magazines that have accepted his poems for publication are: *Walt's Corner*, *Westward Quarterly*, *Jerry Jazz*, *SP Quill*, *Avocet*, *Underground Voices*, *Outlaw Poetry*, *Literary Fever*, *Dance of My Hands*, *Language & Culture*, *Adelaide Literary Magazine*, *The Stray Branch*, *Toasted Cheese*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *Indigo Rising Magazine*, *Down in the Dirt*, *Fullosia Press*, *Orbis*, *Penwood Review*, and *Subtle Tea*. He is the recipient of the Ambassador Poetry Award from the Massachusetts State Poetry Society, the 2019 Louisiana State Poetry Society Award, and the 2020 Arizona State Poetry Society Award. He was included in *Mad Swirl Anthology* in 2018 and 2019.

August Smith

August Smith received his BA from Loyola University/New Orleans and MFA in Creative Writing from Cornell University. His poems have appeared in *Wide Open*, *The Great American Poetry Anthology*, and *Down in the Dirt*, and are forthcoming in *Bending Genres* and the *Writer's Egg*. He resides in Alpine, Texas.

Maxwell Suzuki

Maxwell Suzuki is a Japanese American writer and artist who has recently graduated from USC. He is currently writing a novel on the generational disconnect of Japanese American immigrants and their children. Some of his other work can be found at www.lindenandbucks.com.

Agnes Vojta

Agnes Vojta grew up in Germany and now lives in Rolla, Missouri, where she teaches physics at Missouri S&T and hikes the Ozarks. She is the author of *Porous Land* (Spartan Press, 2019) and *The Eden of Perhaps* (Spartan Press, 2020), and her poems have appeared in a variety of magazines.

Arlene Weiner

Arlene Weiner is active in the poetry community in Pittsburgh, in Pittsburgh Poetry Exchange and Squirrel Hill Poetry Workshop. Ragged Sky Press has published two books of her poetry, *City Bird* (2016) and *Escape Velocity* (2006). Her poems have been published in a number of journals—including *Pleiades*, *Poet Lore*, *The Louisville Review*, *U.S. 1 Worksheets*, and *Vox Populi* (voxpopulisphere.com)—and in anthologies. And her work has been read by Garrison Keillor on *The Writer's Almanac*. She was awarded a MacDowell residency. She also writes plays. Her play *Findings* was produced by Pittsburgh Playwrights Theater Company.

Anne Whitehouse

Anne Whitehouse's poetry collections include *Blessings and Curses*, *The Refrain*, *Meteor Shower*, and, most recently, *Outside from the Inside* (Dos Madres Press, 2020). Ethelzine

published [Surrealist Muse](#), her poem about Leonora Carrington, last year; her poem, *Escaping Lee Miller*, is forthcoming. She is also the author of a novel, *Fall Love*.

Michael T. Young

Michael T. Young's third full-length collection, *The Infinite Doctrine of Water*, was longlisted for the Julie Suk Award. He received a fellowship from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. His chapbook, *Living in the Counterpoint*, received the Jean Pedrick Chapbook Award. His poetry has been featured on *Verse Daily* and *The Writer's Almanac*. It has also appeared in numerous journals including *Cimarron Review*, *Gargoyle Magazine*, *One*, *Rattle*, and *Valparaiso Poetry Review*.