

A photograph of a squirrel hanging upside down from a mango branch, eating a ripe mango. The squirrel has brown and white fur with a dark stripe down its back. It is holding the mango with its paws and using its mouth to peel and eat it. The mango is green on the outside and yellow-orange on the inside. There are other green mangoes and dark green leaves in the background.

# *Young Ravens Literary Review*

Issue 12 Summer 2020





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*Summer 2020*

## **Editorial Staff:**

Sarah Page  
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## Introduction

In Issue 12, the authors and artists of *Young Ravens Literary Review* delve into the contours of the word “delicious.” Feast with us on Austrian krapfen stuffed with jelly, Japanese eggplant on matza, and all manner of scrumptious viands. Slake your thirst with lavender and chamomile tea, or on the thick pulp of oranges. Sip with Bailey Bujnosek on “a few choice drops of lemon juice.”

What is delicious may nourish us with the gorgeous and gruesome nature of mortality, as insects are impaled to catch fish for triumphant consumption in Barbara A. Meier’s poem, “The Joy of Grasshoppers.”

What we savor may change with the passage of time, mellowing or strengthening in our memory and heart. We may try to hold the flavor on our tongue, but as Shelby Lynn Lanaro notes, “Life quickly steepes.”

The care and patience in learning an art such as growing bonsai—the lush give and sweet take in a relationship—lead us to uncover a new narrative and understanding of ourselves.

All of the rich sensory experiences we have can become delectable to us. Like “the world / in an orange” (Vivian Wagner, “Peeled”), or “my mother’s golden bowl, her beloved / red handled egg beater” (Kelley White, “Practice Random Acts of Sweetness”).

Perhaps our existence is an exquisite sampling of wonders that we all wish to share with each other. In a bitter but beautiful communion, we can’t help but partake in the fleeting feast. For as Lori Levy declares, “Hunger. Thirst. We could call it love.”

Bon appétit!



*Meg Freer*

**Purple Daikon**





*Bella Koschalk*

# Ode to My Red Cuisinart Kettle

When we make tea, we become  
witchy, we become our mothers.

In urgencies, I turn to bagged  
lavender and chamomile  
and let myself swallow it and it's like listening  
to my mother  
saying prayers before bed to a god that will otherwise go  
unmentioned.

I drink the world and it sustains me.  
I wonder how thirsty I'd be without this red kettle.

We trace palm lines and listen close to loose leaf tea.  
I address illnesses with hands like my mother's:  
Hands that tell homemade stories.  
This is what it means to heal:  
boil water and pour.

When we make tea, our hands are steady.  
I say things with confidence  
*I love it here. I feel warm.*  
I remedy, I remedy.

My mother used to want to heal all that was numb in me,  
all that stayed awake.

Now  
I know answers  
and I become woman  
and I let myself fall asleep.



*Lori Levy*

## **Japanese Eggplant on Matza**

*For Marlon, Nao, and Peggy*

Is this the taste of diversity? On my birthday  
I eat Mexican cheese, Queso Fresco, topped with Japanese  
eggplant that Nao, my son's Japanese girlfriend,  
makes for me with miso paste and sugar. I spread the mix  
on matza left over from Passover. Salty, sweet, soft, crunchy.  
I open my mouth wide, want more.

Want this flavor in my home. Want to sit down with diversity,  
see it circling my table, blending with my Jewish/non-Jewish family,  
as when Marlon, my daughter's African American friend,  
joins us for Passover this year and takes a turn reading  
from the Haggadah. He tells us about a music festival in Scotland  
where he hid in his hotel room the first few days  
to escape fingers pointed at him, hostile stares, threats  
of violence—though, later, when the same people heard him sing  
in a musical, they embraced him. Greeted him in the street,  
talking, bantering, caught off guard when he knocked them out  
with his humor. Marlon eats matza, haroset, bitter herbs,  
shares his stories, his Egypt, makes us cringe, makes us laugh.  
We place our hands on each other's shoulders,  
sway side to side, sing the Passover songs.

Religion, race, nationality. *Divisive. Not our identity, says Peggy,*  
my 98-year-old friend. *Strip us all down and look inside.*  
*That's who we are.* No Passover for Peggy—but on Valentine's Day,  
the only holiday she and her husband celebrate,  
they write love poems to each other and read them over candlelight.  
Is this who we are? Smiles across a white tablecloth, over dinner, wine.  
The *I* who's a love poem. Sometimes a tragedy. Who thinks, feels,  
suffers. Who chooses, at one moment or another, to celebrate,  
as I do now: I celebrate color and spice, handed-down rituals. What shapes  
and defines us. What we bring to the table—knowing, believing,



I am not my matza, Nao is not her eggplant. I am Marlon, Marlon is me.



## *Anne Whitehouse*

### **The Essence of Trees**

Aunt Louise listed her garden chores on a chart  
in the laundry room next to the garage  
where she tended her collection of bonsai.  
In the careful work of repotting each tree,  
she found and trimmed its feeding root.

How the roots are pruned affects the growth,  
reducing and slowing the process.  
If the roots feather out, fine as lace,  
the tree will not outgrow its container.

Some trees grow in ridges, with long lifelines.  
Some have trunks that swell smoothly.  
Consider the difference between juniper  
and pomegranate. No pine is like another.

Light must enter the branches for buds  
to regenerate. Starting from the inside,  
she removed old, dry foliage with a tweezer  
and left new growth. Her practice  
benefited from her methodical nature.

It took two years for her to master  
the techniques of bonsai and the rest  
of her life to comprehend  
the unique language of each tree.



*Barbara A. Meier*

## **The Joy of Grasshoppers**

With my children by my side,  
pulling starthistle thorning our woodlot reserve,  
we gleefully chased with coffee cans—  
fish bait.

There was a promise in those legs drumming on the coffee can lid.

A promise  
of cool sheltering trees, water skipping rocks,  
lines cast to mark the passage  
of fish swimming upstream.

Oh how those grasshoppers danced on the water!  
Tugging on the current, skewered by a hook,  
oozing the tobacco juice spit.  
Rising to the temptation, biting in hunger,  
flashing silver in Oregon sun....

We bathed our ankles in earth spit,  
tangled our casts, roared in glee at each tug.  
Trout slayers with grasshopper guts!  
The joy of lives, drumming with the river's breath.



## *Charlotte Fong*

### **On Reflection**

Ten years ago, my grandma made the best apple pie I've ever tasted. Swimming in rich, thick custard, piping hot with a buttery crust, it tasted like weekends and puzzle books and trips to the coast. When we'd eaten our way through the whole thing, utterly satiated, I slipped away to her room and lay on lavender-scented sheets, full and content.

Last week, at her funeral, I asked my mum for the recipe she'd stored in a seventy-year old notebook in a biscuit tin under her bed. I followed it line by line, my grandma's voice in my head for each step. But somehow, when the custard had been poured and the first hearty spoonful, still too hot, gulped down, my taste buds fell numb. Leaving the unfinished bowl, I went to lie down and cried my first tears since she left us.



## *Sivakami Velliangiri*

### **Jackfruit Payasam**

Once a year the dead  
descend to their loved ones,  
to see if everything is fine  
with those they left behind.

One year is one day  
where they are put up.

Their loved ones  
prepare a feast of their favourite dishes  
as offerings and feed the crows.  
The dead need a physical form to land on earth —

the crows caw before they eat,  
and scoop away the served plantain leaf.

The elongated jackfruit sends out a scent  
to announce it has ripened.

This is the fruit meant for the New Moon  
mid-day lunch; peeled, podded, diced, with fingers  
dipped in coconut oil, sautéed on a low flame with ghee  
till it rolls like jelly, topped with ample sugar  
added to coconut milk with powdered cardamom.

Even Gods cannot resist this dish.



*Meg Freer*

**Eggplant Profusion**





## *Vivian Wagner*

### **Peeled**

You can see the world  
in an orange:  
all the brightness,  
all the hope,  
all the need  
for thick, pulpy skin.



## *Bailey Bujnosek*

### **From a wedge I squeeze...**

a few choice  
drops of lemon juice  
    into my coke.  
..... I set the wedge, still  
..... dripping, on the  
..... tablecloth. A little  
..... damp spot forms.  
..... \* ..... I scoop out one  
..... \* ..... seed with my  
..... thumbnail.  
..... I flick it down  
..... \* ..... to the cement,  
..... \* ... a dot of liquid.  
..... Soon, it will  
..... \* ..... evaporate.  
..... I sip the coke  
..... \* ..... from a straw  
..... but don't taste  
..... \* ..... the lemon.  
..... Was it all for  
..... nothing? I pick  
..... up the wedge  
..... \* ..... and squeeze  
..... a few choice  
drops of lemon juice  
into my coke.



*Joan Leotta*

## **Recipe for a Summer Supper**

After my watering has slaked  
their thirst, before searing heat  
can shrivel them, sun ripens my  
tomatoes. Using seeds saved  
carefully from past crops,  
these range in color from yellow to deep red-brown,  
irregular in size and shape.

My nose and fingers  
know when, still warm from  
consorting with the sun, these fruits  
will fall into my hand to join  
a profusion of Genoa basil  
in my basket.

On the kitchen counter, my  
knife chops several garlic  
cloves, and the tomatoes into submission.

I wash the basil, shred its soft fragrant  
leaves into the bowl, add salt and olive oil.

Cover. Let it sit while I watch  
our children play outside.

Later, when I add the warm pasta it will  
refresh and absorb the flavors, transforming  
garden abundance into a  
succulent summer supper to be  
enjoyed on the back porch  
our laughter and chatter providing  
the final and most important seasoning.



*Kelley White*

## **Practice Random Acts of Sweetness**

*—for an apron is just a cape on backwards*

How many dozen dozens of oatmeal  
chocolate chip cookies did we bake  
oh my darlings, through how many years  
when we hoped peace could be won  
by a wooden spoon and a few broken eggs?  
and all the time my own world  
was shattering, losing your father's  
love, my self-worth, my pride. How many  
dozen dozens of chocolate chip cookies  
did I eat, angry and alone, full of hunger  
no one, not even you, dear lights, could  
sate? And now years go by and I do not  
use my mother's golden bowl, her beloved  
red handled egg beater, her mixer, her  
grandmother's trivet, her father's chicken  
and chicks tureen. If it is not good  
to drink alone, what of eating alone?  
What if there is no other, what if alone  
is one's only choice?



*Bob MacKenzie*

**as the crow flies**

a shadow crosses the falling sun  
breaking the silence in my heart

barren trees stretch long shadows  
across the snow to touch my soul

set against the sun a silhouette  
crow crosses but pauses briefly

here in the woods my breath stops  
crow touches me and I am changed

on a winding path as the crow flies  
I am walking in the woods again



*Bob MacKenzie*

**Rainbow**





# My Sister's Protector

By  
*Phoebe Backer*

I was three years old when my older sister, Chelsea, contracted encephalitis and fell into a coma. I remember that time only in flashes: my grandmother coming into my room at night and saying "God bless," which sounded to me like "gobless"; the long, white hospital hallway; the Cinderella doll was I was told to give my sister but kept for myself.

My sister was in the hospital for two months, and during that time I lived with relatives. At the time, I could not know how serious my sister's condition was or how terrifying and traumatic the experience was for my parents. When I was older, I would learn that the chances of Chelsea surviving had been slim to none, that every day my mother and father lived with a sense of dread and desperation. Miraculously, my sister pulled through. When it came to recovery, though, she still had a long road ahead of her. She started at a local rehabilitation center, where they helped her learn to blink and chew, then walk and talk. All the milestones she had, at five, passed long ago, now had to be relearned. Of course, I didn't have any sense of the challenges and hardships my sister had ahead of her. I was just happy to have her home, and to be with my family again.

My sister's road to recovery was slow and often painful. Though I was the younger sister, I began to see myself as her protector. Her illness and rehabilitation had left her in many ways fragile and she struggled to find her place among her peers. Looking back, I recognize the strength it must have required for my sister to do even the most basic tasks, and to assimilate back into a "regular" childhood. But back then, I only knew that she often seemed sad and that she was easily overwhelmed in social situations. When other kids criticized or questioned her for crying, I would become enraged. I made sure that everyone knew I was on her side, that to mess with her meant facing me.

When I was seven and Chelsea was nine, she desperately wanted to go to French Woods Festival of the Performing Arts, a famous sleepaway camp that drew theater kids from around the world. I didn't sing or dance or act, but there was no question in my mind that if Chelsea was going, I would go too. And so, we boarded the bus to Upstate New York and waved goodbye to our parents through the window. As the bus began to pull away, my sister started sobbing beside me. I remember this moment so vividly: I was smiling and waving at my mom and dad, and then Chelsea began to cry. A moment later, I did too. What I remember most is that I wasn't upset. I wasn't feeling



sad to say goodbye to my parents or scared to be away from home. But my sister's pain was my pain. And I couldn't see her cry without shedding tears myself.

Today, my sister is a freshman in college. She's healthy and happy and has a wide circle of good friends. From the outside, it appears the suffering she's endured because of that childhood illness has finally come to an end. I, on the other hand, still sometimes find myself struggling in the wake of it.

It's been thirteen years since my sister went into the hospital, thirteen years since my parents sat at her bedside, praying for her life while on the other side of town, my grandmother "goblessed" me in my bedroom. But for my family, there remain wounds from that ordeal that have yet to fully heal, traumas that have shaped the way we treat and react to each other. It can be very difficult to recognize, let alone challenge, the stories we tell ourselves to justify our patterns of behavior, our reactions and impulses. And it's only just now that I'm beginning to examine my own story as it has previously been told to me and as I have continued to tell it to myself.

At sixteen, I can look back and understand how after believing they might lose her, my parents would treat my sister with a kind of reverence and concern in the years that followed, even if they didn't do so consciously. As a child, though, I saw only that my sister was treated differently than I was, and I interpreted that to mean that she was simply more lovable, and therefore more loved. I can recognize too how my sister, as she began to establish her own identity and seek her own autonomy, might need, at least for a time, to establish boundaries between herself and the little sister who was always at her side. But there were times when she was with her new friends that I felt deliberately excluded, which made me feel angry and unappreciated and hurt.

Healing is a long and often incremental process. When my sister got sick, I was too young to understand the significance of the trauma my family experienced, but I was no less enmeshed in it, no less affected. My own sense of identity was shaped around being my sister's protector. If I thought of myself as a savior, I didn't have to confront the feelings of abandonment and unworthiness that resulted from my underlying belief that I was somehow less important than my sister.

Today, I'm working to construct a new narrative, one in which I stand at the center of my own story, no longer defining myself by the relationships I've had or the roles I've tried to play—sister, daughter, savior, saint. We all have experiences that have colored our perspectives and molded our belief systems, but these don't have to be the whole story. Instead, they can stand as a prologue, a brief passage before the real story, which is not so much about what happened to us but about what we learned from it and where we went after it and who we loved along the way.



## *Richard Luftig*

### **Upon Reflection**

See how autumn is in this lake,  
    All lotus leaves and willow.  
Oaks too, their bending branches  
    Float on top of mirrored water.

Flowering sweep-peas bend their necks  
    As if trying to catch a glimpse  
of their younger, better selves.  
    Bottlebrushes bristle their beards in mottled sand.

II.

Upon reflection I remember  
    How in a younger life,  
I watched you run in late October,  
    Your scarf and long hair playing

A classical duet with the wind.  
    *Don't worry, you said,*  
Just before leaving. *This lake will never change*  
    *so long as one of us recalls.*



## *Judith Kelly Quaempts*

### **Translation**

Summer mornings she spooned  
thick country cream from a Mason jar  
over raspberries picked that morning.  
In winter I woke to cinnamon-spiked  
rolls she baked at dawn.

Dinners of roast beef, mashed potatoes,  
rich dark gravy; turkey tamales with  
fat black olives. Homemade ice cream,  
cakes with sugary icings.

All those years her love for me  
through food. Too late I learned  
that food was her second language,  
the one she used to say I love you.



*Lori Levy*

## **Like a Dimple**

I know it's delicious, but, please,  
don't tell me now. Don't even whisper  
about the meat and mushrooms you're stirring in that pot.  
Later—another day? another hour?—I will swoon at your seasonings,  
fall in love with garlic and wine, the wooden spoon, your hand,  
but right now, this moment, I want to talk about lavender—  
how it shrubs along our wall, purples and perfumes, till ahhh  
overwhelms and I rush to gather all I can. I want to mash it  
in my clothes, fill a tub with armloads of its fragrance and float  
in water spiked with flowers—though, truthfully, I don't need a lot:  
a scrawny sprig is enough to press to my nostrils,  
inhaling, crazying, till my sighs turn to gold  
and I feel rich as a woman fulfilled.  
Lavender woos and wins every time, persisting  
till I declare it the color of my life  
and find myself asking, begging you, to tear off this roof  
of black slate shingles. Give me mud and straw,  
a hut with a roof thatched loosely enough  
to leave cracks for the sky to slit through, so I can lie in bed  
and eye-swallow blue. Come, look,  
I'll pull some down for you, streams, waterfalls  
of blue. I will mix it with lavender,  
knead it into dough with cinnamon and nutmeg.  
What? I think your ears are turning purple as I speak,  
and now, as you lean close, I'm sure I smell it in the crease  
of your neck. Just a trace, but too dizzying to ignore,  
suggestive as a dimple that hints at something bubbling  
and ready to erupt. Is that your sauce, still simmering  
on the flame? Suddenly I'm ravenous,  
can't wait another minute for your stew.



## *Janette Schafer*

### **Austria**

I walked everywhere  
in Vienna, fueled by *krapfen*.

Beethoven greeted me,  
his stone figure

perfectly arced, toe pointed  
forward. I threw a garland

of carnations about his neck.  
Mozart danced about the cobblestone

impish and frenetic, gripping  
life too tightly by the throat.

I sing to them an *Ave Verum Corpus*,  
lick jelly-sugar from my sweetened fingertips.



*John Kaprielian*

## **My Grandmother's Hands**

My grandmother's hands  
worked the dough  
effortlessly  
despite arthritis and  
advanced age she  
rolled and formed  
flipped and buttered  
cut and shaped  
egged and seeded  
over and over  
building buttery books  
of dough that  
tortured us with  
slow rising  
and baking and  
cooling  
as we waited  
drooling  
for the first  
katah  
to be ready  
to eat.

No one ever  
made them better  
no one  
makes them now  
though I try and try  
but this was one  
lesson she never  
gave to me.

I still dream  
of flaky layers



steaming  
my fingers burning  
just a little bit  
holding the  
too-hot snack  
I snuck off the  
rack.



## *Antoni Ooto*

### **Garlic**

was the first thing you'd smell  
at 49 Lime Street.

Next to oxygen, it was a life force.

Depending on time or season,  
windows open or shut,  
rooms had it by degrees.

Used for cooking,  
protection against the "Malocchio,"  
and as a medicinal supplement...

Giovanina ground it fine  
mixing it with olive oil and black pepper—  
dipped her finger in  
and swabbed my sore throat.

Rocking  
me asleep  
*neen na naw, neen na naw.*  
singing her lullaby  
with the taste of garlic.



*Lori Levy*

## **Not a Hollywood Movie**

We talk about love.

*Sometimes I love you more, sometimes less, he says.*

I feel the same way.

Think spectrum, range, hot warm cold

as in water from a faucet, the flow increasing, decreasing,  
the temperature not always perfect, but good enough.

Or we could say it's a matter of orange juice, eggplant . . .

He is groggy in the morning. I wake up renewed and ready for the day.

Ready, first thing, to squeeze oranges for him.

He can't begin, doesn't *want* to begin,

without a glass of fresh juice

brought to him in bed. A simple act for me.

For him, a big *ahh*, quenching, invigorating.

I don't have patience to fry eggplants for dinner.

He does. He stands by the stove, tender with the slices,

spicing them exactly right, turning them exactly on time.

I devour the eggplant, stuff the browned slices into pita bread

with cheese or eggs, tomatoes, hummus. With anything, everything.

Some moments we meld—grateful

to be living this life together.

Other times we argue like kids.

I tell him his way is mood-based, head in the sand, slow.

He says I have no priorities:

everything is important, demands attention.

*Sometimes you can't stand me, right?* he asks.

We laugh. This, too, is true.

Still, he craves my orange juice, I could die for his eggplant.

Hunger. Thirst. We could call it love.



*Shelby Lynn Lanaro*

## **Life Quickly Steeps**

When we make a cup of tea,  
we run off  
to do something—anything—else

besides wait  
as the timer ticks. How rarely  
we watch as herbs flavor water.

Mint, rose hips, elderberry  
marry steaming liquid,  
while the water eases the release

of herbal essences, pouring  
from their paper sachet; a dear  
friend spilling its soul.

As the timer ticks to its final beep,  
we make a choice:

1) we deem ourselves too impatient  
to wait for the infusing to finish,  
cut its time short, wring the bag,  
and throw it away;

2) we allow the immersion  
its full duration. Remain  
in restraint for the timer to end; or

3) we forget the timer and our tea.  
Let it over-steep in careless abandon.

Whether in haste or in reverence, we still  
drink up life's nectar  
while neglect always leaves



a bitter taste on the tongue.



*Shelby Lynn Lanaro*

**Johannisbeeren**





*Ann Weil*

## **Outside My Kitchen Window**

Outside my kitchen window,  
Just this side of the naked oaks,  
My feeders rock in the whisper breezes  
Their bounty laid for winter guests.

I used to cook for the children.  
Now I feed the birds.  
A tufted-titmouse is first to arrive,  
Elegant gray topcoat accessorized  
By an edgy mohawk.  
He's curious to see what the Lunch Specials will be.

Soon after come the dancing chickadees  
So dapper in their black berets  
Their heads cocked wondering what delicacies await.  
A flash of purple heralds the house finches  
Brilliant against snow laden pines.  
They love the black oil sunflower seed,  
But are momentarily displaced by  
The resident diva,  
A flashy, pushy, red-bellied woodpecker.  
Not to be outshone, a magnificent jay and his missus  
Fly in, and quite the melee ensues!

Is it any wonder that I stand transfixed  
At this all-star revue?  
Suds fill the sink until the water overflows.  
I wash the dishes and watch the feast.



## *Ellen Dooling Reynard*

### **Picking Vegetables**

A visitor to this garden  
searching for its hidden gifts,  
pulls aside a serrated leaf  
to discover an eggplant:  
amethyst pendant  
like a milk-full breast.

Plucked from its stem,  
it lies in a basket.  
Afternoon sun glints  
on the smooth skin.

Red heirloom tomatoes,  
near bursting with sweet juices  
soon nestle beside it.

Next, butter-toned summer squash,  
still wearing their springtime hats,  
plop into the basket

and the visitor turns to go,  
content to have found  
all that is to be found  
in this garden.

Unseen, a pea pod hangs  
from its vine, spared—  
for now.



## *Anne Whitehouse*

### **Balm**

A parade of goats clambered down the path,  
bells clanging. Between two cliffs  
jutting out to sea was a green valley  
with a gray road like a fallen ribbon  
surrounded by palm groves  
and little houses like white sugar cubes  
sprinkled down the slope.

The ocean crashed against the cliffs,  
frothing white on dark blue, and puffy  
white clouds massed on the horizon  
beyond the shadowy shapes of distant islands.  
The air smelled of sweet juniper, as I bit  
into the soft flesh of a ripe fig  
and basked in the warm sun.



# Cream

By  
*Christina Hoag*

Cream. The word takes me back to my childhood when spray-can cream didn't exist, when people would have shuddered at the paragraph of unpronounceable ingredients on labels of Fat-Free Cool Whip, when calories, carbs and cholesterol were medical terms.

That was back in New Zealand. It was a land of dairy where no one dreamed of a diet deprived of copious amounts of butter, milk, cheese and cream from grass-engorged cows. They were the prime staples in any home's larder.

When I was a girl, I would skip to the gate in the morning to pick up the two pints of milk the milkman delivered at dawn. The glass bottles would already be perspiring in the saffron glow of the day's rising sun. Under the bottles' silver-foil lids, which us kids would flatten into make-believe coins, rested a plug of ivory cream on top of the milk. I eyed that cream jealously because I knew it would be squabbled over at the breakfast table with my sister and brother. There was nothing as grand as eating cornflakes in cream, letting that liquid ribbon of satin glide over the tongue. It seemed the height of rich living.

My mother took cream with her coffee; it was plain old milk with tea. Every morning she dropped a whipped whiff into her cup along with spoonfuls of brown sugar. The cream would melt into a layer of floating foam that would leave her with a light mustache when she sipped. She would flick her upper lip clean with the tip of her tongue as she lowered her cup to its waiting saucer.

Cream was the companion of all desserts back then so a bowl of whipped cream was a *de rigueur* item in the fridge, but it took work. I'd have to stand on a chair to reach the kitchen counter, apron tied under my armpits, and toss a dash of vanilla and a splash of sugar into the bowl. Then I whipped the liquid cream with a metal hand beater. I churned the little wooden handle round and round and round until my arm muscles ached and the liquid miraculously turned into a snowy cloud. My reward was licking the beater clean of every droplet when the cream was finally whipped.

Whipping cream was a major production when we visited my aunts in South Island. They ordered several pints of milk and a half a pint of cream from the milkman every day, making a veritable industry of baking the cakes and puddings and desserts to go with it. Before lunch and dinner, we slathered that whipped cream between layers of sponge cakes, atop trifles, or over pavlovas.



Sometimes we even enjoyed cream between meals, especially if visitors were expected. Afternoon tea was rolled into the front room on a trolley. The teapot, clad in a hand-knit tea cozy, sat next to a lace doily on which we placed a plate stacked with oven-fresh scones or a Victoria sandwich cake.

I would smother the scone with homemade jam—red currant, gooseberry, raspberry, whatever was the recent season's garden harvest—and plop a generous spoonful of cream on top. Jam and cream were combined to create the filling in a sandwich cake. Biting into a slice was tricky—cream and jam would ooze out and smear over my cheeks. I'd have to hastily catch the overspill from the slice with a curl of my tongue before it dropped, but I wasn't always on time. A scrubbing at the sink was usually in order afterward.

Sometimes we would forego the whipping and simply pour liquid cream from a jug on to a plateful of strawberries or raspberries, but first we had to pick the fruit. My aunt on the sheep farm outside Kurow would dispatch us, equipped with bowls as bottomless as our bellies, to the raspberry patch outside her back door. We delved into the thicket of cans and plucked the raspberries until our fingers and mouths ran bloody with scarlet juice and our tummies ached. At lunch time, we piled the raspberries into our dishes with a dusting of confectioner's sugar, and emptied the cream jug over them so the berries looked like islands of fuchsia nipples lapped by a sea of silk.

Who eats cream with such luxurious abandon anymore?

I was visiting my sister in Washington State recently and we took a run to the grocery store to pick up last minute ingredients for dinner. As we surveyed the dairy case, our eyes set upon it at the same time—cream.

We looked at each other, afraid to even suggest such sinful consumption, but we knew what the other was thinking. My sister snatched the cream and threw it in the basket. It was done. We had splurged. Tonight we were going to indulge in the past and not feel a shred of guilt. Until tomorrow. Then we'd hit spinning class and long for the days when cream wasn't a treat.



*Shelby Lynn Lanaro*

**Serendipitous Squash**





*John L. Stanizzi*

**10.7.19**

**2.06 p.m.**

**74 degrees**

Placable and warm, the windblown, leaf-blown landscape,

omni-wind, causes the hills to resound like applause;

nervine patois of leaf against leaf, wind through every tree, and on the pond

delaine shimmers skitter across the water, small dimity islands.





*John L. Stanizzi*

**10.8.19**

**6.52 a.m.**

**55 degrees**

Pacified by the easy rain that has softened the leaves on the ground,  
overlander to the pond and back every day, today I see these showers as a balm—  
network of tiny droplets, each one, with its little concentric splash of replenishment,  
descendent feeder of the depleted pond, patient voice of the rain in the trees.





## *Randel McCraw Helms*

### **Sunday Morning**

To awake at a waft of bacon,  
The perk and sizzle of Sunday kitchen  
And the intoxicating tang of grease  
That thickened the riches of coffees,  
Was a taste of church before church began.  
Sunday breakfast—no Mass-fast for this crowd:  
Fuel! Fuel! a snowy trudge to holiness.  
And then, to see the Father still glad  
With communion wine from an early Mass  
And serving us bits of Christ on a tray  
In the brilliance of light through colored glass  
Was worth every slip in the snow on the way.  
Sunday morning in our neighborhood:  
When God wasn't dead and the rock still stood.



## *Janette Schafer*

### **White Rice**

The earthy smell of grain filled  
our house with a warm scent of comfort.  
The rattle of our old pot's lid sang in harmony  
with the chimes of neighboring church bells.  
This meant for us the truck had come  
and there would be cheese, meat,  
and bread, filling stomachs lonely  
too long with the ache of hunger.

In a heaping mound served next to thick slabs  
of fried spam and a ladle of creamed corn,  
salty margarine melted and spread  
like a child's blanket over the rice.

Our bellies were satisfied  
and Mother smiled again  
as everyone yawned and stretched  
contented because we were full.



*Christopher Woods*

**Winter Tree**





## *Anne Whitehouse*

### **A Dog's Life**

Come down to the lake with me.  
Real winter is here at last,  
ice crystals and freezing fogs,  
the sun so bright it hurts my eyes.

Veils of mist like gossamer silk  
drift over snow that blows over ice  
where our dogs chase after each other,  
making the most of what they have,  
be it a stick or a snowbank.



## *Stephanie Hauer*

### **advent**

somewhere in  
those brisk particles of air,  
chilled by winter's icy gaze,  
are the tiniest pinpricks  
of a season of joy  
that i cannot  
resist.

slowly i feel them,  
the glittering gemstones of  
christmastime,  
infiltrating my soul,  
entering through my sniffing nose  
as i walk through campus  
wrapped in my heaviest coat.

the wind lifts those sparks,  
clusters them in my lungs.  
they spread throughout  
my whole being.

it is not yet thanksgiving,  
but i cannot deny entry  
to this jubilant dust of christmas,  
feeding slowly into my heart.



*Joan Leotta*

**Pie by Another Name**

A few over-ripe  
peaches beg to be sliced,  
dusted with cornstarch  
brown sugar, nutmeg, then  
removed to the succor  
of a single crust  
laid onto a flat pan where  
I overlay all with pats  
of sweet butter.

My baker-trained fingers  
I twist the edges to hold  
in peachy goodness, then  
bake, this oddly-shaped  
concoction.

Leftover peaches baked in  
misshapen dough—  
taste better when called,  
*galette*.



*Shelby Lynn Lanaro*

**Winter's Break**





## *Stephen Kingsnorth*

### **Cherry**

Why do I keep the best till last  
when eating cake;  
quite unlike wine.  
My mindful taste buds  
find their pace, start marks  
from first eye-captured plate,  
declared by sharp seep under tongue,  
gland leak swamping salivary, amylase-ready,  
first attack.

But then with  
fingers, silver fork, or even, patience,  
Latin grace,  
I have to pick the landing site,  
where to dig archaeology.

A cherry bakewell,  
red top last,  
or jam glued to the underside,  
roof icing goo-spread over top?

My favour is  
to face the bland,  
sandwich crusts or boring crumbs  
of comfort, prelude true tidbits.

As strategy slowly evolves, brings  
nearer mountain summit loom,  
my nightmare,  
banquet guest of Queen,  
We finishing,  
my dish removed.



\* In British royal custom, known as “The Royal We,” the monarch always refers to themselves formally as “We” rather than “I.” When the monarch has finished eating their dish, all guest plates are removed.



## *Cynthia Trenshaw*

### **Communion**

With reverence  
I offer him a piece  
of finest chocolate.

He says,  
    offhandedly,  
that he can take  
or leave it.

Horried,  
I snatch it  
from his fingers,  
hold it up  
before him.

This is like Eucharist,  
I explain. If you don't believe,  
if you are not devoted,  
you're not entitled  
to partake.

He asks, Do you really  
believe that,  
about Eucharist?

Not always, I confess.  
But always  
about chocolate.



## *Shobhana Kumar*

### **An Amnesia of Words**

She has never been good  
at writing recipes down.  
We taunt her  
believing she refuses to divulge  
a secret ingredient  
and sets an impossible bar  
for the rest of us.

“Watch,” she says  
and begins to weave her charm,  
taking pinches full of spice  
and handfuls of others.

Of course, we lose track.

But we are eager  
to make a book of her signatures.  
Posterity is on our minds.  
She flounders each time  
we ask for measurements.

The book is a disaster.  
She dies, leaving us  
with the eternal aftertaste  
of mistaken proportions.

We are reminded of her wisdom:  
when you commit memory to paper,  
it disappears.



*Shankar Ramakrishnan*

**Fruitful Squirreling**





## Contributor Biographies

### Phoebe Backer

Phoebe Backer is a student at Friends Seminary in New York City. She dances competitive hip hop, scuba dives with sharks, and loves surfing and wakeboarding. She loves to travel, especially to Australia. From an early age she has been involved in her community and related activities. She is currently a member of the Robin Hood Teen Council and her whole family is deeply involved in community service.

### Bailey Bujnosek

Bailey Bujnosek is a writer from Southern California. Her essays, articles, and interviews can be found in *Teen Vogue*, *Girls' Life*, *The Adroit Journal*, and elsewhere. Her poetry has been featured in *Bright Lite*.

### Charlotte Fong

Charlotte Fong is a children's book buyer for a library supplier, currently writing poetry, flash fiction, and short stories. Fong recently rediscovered her love of writing since studying it at university and is enjoying experimenting with different styles. She lives in Lancaster with her husband and an overflow of books.

### Meg Freer

Meg Freer grew up in Missoula, Montana and first worked in book publishing. She now teaches piano, takes photos and enjoys the outdoors year-round in Ontario. Her photos, poems and prose have been published in journals such as *Ruminate*, *Vallum Contemporary Poetry*, *Young Ravens Literary Review*, *Eastern Iowa Review*, and *Rat's Ass Review*. In 2017 she attended the Summer Literary Seminars in Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia. Her poems have won awards and have been shortlisted for several contests in both the U.S. and Canada.

### Stephanie Hauer

Stephanie Hauer works as a contracted staff writer at Rehumanize International. She contributed to the fourth edition of the Catholic Youth Bible from Saint Mary's Press, and has published articles with *Array of Hope*, *To Write Love on Her Arms*, and *Celebrate Life* magazine. Her poetry is featured in *Pinnacle Anthology* and *Create | Encounter*. When she's not muttering at a manuscript, Stephanie is usually sipping an iced chai tea latté or fussing over her succulents.



### **Randel McCraw Helms**

Randel McCraw Helms is retired from Arizona State University's English Department. Making poems is his lifelong vice, and his recent work has appeared in such places as *Young Ravens*, *Blood & Bourbon*, and *Silkworm*.

### **Christina Hoag**

Christina Hoag is the author of novels *Skin of Tattoos* (Martin Brown Publishing, 2016), Silver Falchion finalist for suspense, and *Girl on the Brink* (Fire and Ice YA, 2016), *Suspense Magazine's* Best of YA. She is a former journalist and foreign correspondent for the *Miami Herald* and Associated Press. She has taught creative writing in a prison and to at-risk teen girls. [www.christinahoag.com](http://www.christinahoag.com).

### **John Kaprielian**

John Kaprielian has been writing poetry on and off for over 30 years. A nature photographer and photo editor by occupation, he brings his keen eye for natural history to many of his poems, which often inspired by his observations. He studied creative writing at Cornell with the poet A.R. Ammons while getting his degree in Russian Linguistics. He has been published in *Minute Magazine*, *The Blue Nib*, *Thema*, *Blue Mountain Review*, *What Rough Beast*, and the *New Verse News*. He lives in Putnam County, NY, with his wife, teen son, and assorted pets.

### **Stephen Kingsnorth**

Stephen Kingsnorth (Cambridge M.A., English & Religious Studies), retired to Wales from ministry in the Methodist Church, has had over 100 pieces accepted by some thirty on-line poetry sites; and *Gold Dust*, *The Seventh Quarry*, *The Dawntreader*, *Foxtrot Uniform*, *The Writer's Café*, *A New Ulster Poetry Magazines*, *Vita Brevis Anthology 'Pain & Renewal'* & Fly on the Wall Press *'Identity.'* <https://poetrykingsnorth.wordpress.com/>

### **Bella Koschalk**

Bella Koschalk is a creative writing major at Idyllwild Arts Academy. She has been recognized by the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards for her poetry and fiction. She was a semi-finalist for the 2019 Faulkner Wisdom Short Story competition, as well as receiving an honorable mention from the Nancy Thorp Poetry Contest. Her work has appeared in *CutBank Literary Magazine*, *Sonder Midwest*, and elsewhere.



### **Shobhana Kumar**

Shobhana Kumar has two collections of poetry and six books of non-fiction covering industrial histories, corporate legacies and biographies. She is deeply influenced by haikai art forms and her book of haibun, titled *All the Roads Come Home* is forthcoming by Red River. She is Poetry Editor of *Sonic Boom* and its imprint, Yavanika Press and Interviews Editor with *Humankind Journal*.

### **Shelby Lynn Lanaro**

Shelby Lynn Lanaro received her MFA in 2017 from Southern Connecticut State University, where she now teaches Freshman English and Creative Writing. A New England native, Shelby has an acute attention to nature and capturing its splendor through words and photography. Shelby's poems and photographs have appeared in *Young Ravens Literary Review*, *The Wild Word*, *Verse of Silence*, *Better Than Starbucks*, *Gnashing Teeth*, and others.

### **Joan Leotta**

Joan Leotta is a writer and story performer. Her poems have been published in *The Lake*, on *The Short Humor Site*, the *A-3 Review*, *Hobart Review*, *PineSong*, the *Ekphrastic Review*, and many other journals in the UK. Her work has been read at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, England. Her essays, articles, and short stories are also widely published. On stage she tells folk and personal tales of food, family, and strong women.

### **Lori Levy**

Lori Levy's poems have appeared in *Rattle*, *Nimrod International Journal*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Mom Egg Review*, *Confrontation*, and numerous other literary journals and anthologies in the U.S., the U.K., and Israel. Her work has also been published in medical humanities journals and read on BBC Radio 4. She and her family live in Los Angeles.

### **Richard Luftig**

Richard Luftig is a former professor of educational psychology and special education at Miami University in Ohio now residing in California. His poems and stories have appeared in numerous literary journals in the United States and internationally in The United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Europe and Asia. Two of his poems recently appeared in *Realms of the Mothers: The First Decade of Dos Madres Press*. His latest book of poems, *A Grammar for Snow*, has been published by Unsolicited Press.



### **Bob MacKenzie**

Bob MacKenzie's poetry has appeared in more than 400 journals across North America and as far away as Australia, Greece, India and Italy, and his work has been translated into Greek, Persian (Farsi), and Arabic among other languages. He's published sixteen volumes of poetry and prose-fiction and his work has appeared in numerous anthologies. Bob's received numerous local and international awards for his writing as well as an Ontario Arts Council grant for literature, a Canada Council Grant for performance, and a Fellowship to attend the Summer Literary Seminars in Tbilisi, Georgia.

### **Barbara A. Meier**

Barbara A. Meier recently retired from teaching and Oregon and moved to Colorado to spend time with her mom. She was just in time for quarantine 2020. Her first Micro Chapbook, *Wildfire LAL 6* came out this last summer from Ghost City Press. *Getting Through Gold Beach* came out in November 2019 from Writing Knights Press.

### **Antoni Ooto**

Antoni Ooto is a poet and flash fiction writer. Known for his abstract expressionist art, Antoni now adds his voice to poetry. His study of many poets has opened and offered him a new form of self-expression. Antoni's poems have been published by *Eldritch Lake Magazine*, *Amethyst Review*, *The BeZine*, *Young Ravens Literary Review*, and many others. He lives and works in upstate New York with his wife poet/ storyteller, Judy DeCroce.

### **Judith Kelly Quaempts**

Judith Kelly Quaempts lives and writes in rural eastern Oregon. Her poems and short stories appear online and in print, most recently in an anthology published by the *Poeming Pidgeon* and in the *Buddhist Poetry Review*.

### **Shankar Ramakrishnan**

Shankar Ramakrishnan, popularly known for his tag "Vishnumayam" began his photography journey with a humble second hand point and shoot camera. He went on to create sensation with his 12 mega pixels and later 41 mega pixels mobile phone cameras for several years till he acquired his DSLR. Shankar showcases through his two Facebook pages, "Vishnumayam" and "Out of (my) Focus" which have a post reach of 25 thousand to a lakh. His photographs have found repute with photographers of international repute on Gurushots.com and have been displayed at the 7<sup>th</sup> annual photo exhibition of the Jaipur Photographer's Club.



## **Ellen Dooling Reynard**

Ellen Dooling Reynard spent her childhood on a cattle ranch in Jackson, Montana. A one-time editor of *Parabola Magazine*, she is now retired and lives in Nevada City, California where she writes fiction and poetry. Her poems have been published in various journals including *Persimmon*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Silver Blade* and *Muddy River Poetry Review*.

## **Janette Schafer**

Janette Schafer is a freelance writer, nature photographer, part-time rock singer, and full-time banker living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Her writing and photographs have appeared in numerous publications. She holds an MFA from Chatham University in Creative Writing. She has a forthcoming chapbook from Main Street Rag Publishing titled *Something Here Will Grow*.

## **John L. Stanizzi**

John L. Stanizzi is author of the collections—*Ecstasy Among Ghosts*, *Sleepwalking*, *Dance Against the Wall*, *After the Bell*, *Hallelujah Time!*, *High Tide—Ebb Tide*, *Four Bits*, *Chants*, and his newest collection, *Sundowning*, just out with Main Street Rag. John's poems have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Rust & Moth*, *American Life in Poetry*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Blue Mountain Review*, *The Cortland Review*, *Rattle*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Connecticut River Review*, *Hawk & Handsaw*, *Third Wednesday*, and many others. His creative non-fiction has been featured in *Stone Coast Review*, *Ovunque Siamo*, and *Adelaide*. John's work has been translated into Italian and appeared in many journals in Italy. His translator is Angela D'Ambra. John has read at venues all over New England, including the Mystic Arts Café, the Sunken Garden Poetry Festival, Hartford Stage, and many others. For many years, John coordinated the Fresh Voices Poetry Competition for Young Poets at Hill-Stead Museum, Farmington, CT. He is also a teaching artist for the national recitation contest, Poetry Out Loud. John is a former New England Poet of the Year, and teaches literature at Manchester Community College in Manchester, CT, where he lives with his wife, Carol, in Coventry.

<http://www.johnlstanizzi.com>

## **Cynthia Trenshaw**

Cynthia Trenshaw has served as hospital chaplain, midwife to the dying, and massage therapist to homeless people on the streets and under the viaducts of San Francisco. She currently lives on Whidbey Island in Puget Sound. *Meeting in the Margins* (She Writes Press), won the 2018 Independent Publisher gold medal in Social Issues. Her first



book of poetry is *Mortal Beings*, (Finishing Line Press, 2019). Her writing has appeared in over a dozen literary journals.

### **Sivakami Velliangiri**

Sivakami Velliangiri is a senior poet, born in Madras and brought up at Trivandrum, and now living in Chennai. When Sivakami Velliangiri was Sivakami Ramanathan she published her poems in *Youth Times*. After coming to Chennai she published in various literary journals and Professor Srinivasa Iyengar included her among the women poets in his "History of Indian Writing in English" in his 1980 edition. She co-ordinated the British Council Poetry Circle and enjoyed bringing young ones to poetry. Her online Chapbook *In My Midriff* was published by *Lily Literary Review*. *How We Measured Time* is her debut poetry book.

### **Vivian Wagner**

Vivian Wagner lives in New Concord, Ohio, where she's an associate professor of English at Muskingum University. Her work has appeared in *Slice Magazine*, *Muse/A Journal*, *Forage Poetry Journal*, *Pittsburgh Poetry Review*, *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*, *Gone Lawn*, *The Atlantic*, *Narratively*, *The Ilanot Review*, *Silk Road Review*, *Zone 3*, *Bending Genres*, and other publications. She's the author of a memoir, *Fiddle: One Woman, Four Strings*, and *8,000 Miles of Music* (Citadel-Kensington); a full-length poetry collection, *Raising* (Clare Songbirds Publishing House); and three poetry chapbooks: *The Village* (Aldrich Press-Kelsay Books), *Making* (Origami Poems Project), and *Curiosities* (Unsolicited Press).

### **Ann Weil**

Ann Weil is a former teacher, professor, and scholarly author, still has a few things to say. Her work takes inspiration from both the ordinary and extraordinary; her first publication of poetry will appear February 28, 2020 in *Amethyst Review*.

### **Kelley White**

Pediatrician Kelley White has worked in inner city Philadelphia and rural New Hampshire. Her poems have appeared in *Exquisite Corpse*, *Rattle* and *JAMA*. Her recent books are *TOXIC ENVIRONMENT* (Boston Poet Press) and *TWO BIRDS IN FLAME* (Beech River Books). She received a 2008 Pennsylvania Council on the Arts grant.



### **Anne Whitehouse**

Anne Whitehouse's new poetry collection, *Outside from the Inside*, will be published by Dos Madres Press, and her chapbook, *Leonora and Lee*, about Leonora Carrington and Lee Miller, will be published by Finishing Line Press.

### **Christopher Woods**

Christopher Woods is a writer and photographer who lives in Chappell Hill, Texas. He has published a novel, *THE DREAM PATCH*, a prose collection, *UNDER A RIVERBED SKY*, and a book of stage monologues for actors, *HEART SPEAK*. His photographs can be seen in his gallery <http://christopherwoods.zenfolio.com/>. His photography prompt book for writers, *FROM VISION TO TEXT*, is forthcoming from PROPERTIUS PRESS.