



Young Ravens Literary Review

Issue 5



Young Ravens Literary Review

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Introduction

In the fifth issue of *Young Ravens Literary Review*, authors and artists explore the four elements of fire, water, earth and air. Imagination explodes from the embers of dead stars as we dive into our own humanity through the many ways we both lose and find ourselves in the natural world: A bonfire entwines two lives in the darkness with the illusion of age and the promise of growing old with a loved one. Water rolls broken shells smooth as our own jagged edges are challenged and cleansed by the tides of time. Stones strain with the weight of a sleeping giant, veins pumping with fresh snow melt. A man follows the bliss of an unruly breeze into wild solitude—inviting only the reader to follow.



Sarah Page & Elizabeth Pinborough, Co-editors

Shandi Kano

Lost in Acadia



Janet R. Kirchheimer & Jaclyn Piudik

Demure Origins

Vital memory eliminates timeshare of earth's decision,
a sheave of mist rises as bark, petrichor, lemonflower

usher spark into seed: a rash altruism of hearkening, a seething
contradiction, fracture of ocean into grass as mercy from conversation.

The weaver disperses herbs, constellations whisper growth,
and music preserves textual vowels; intonations explore

tousled heavens and descend to sever mystery, move fescue
to leaf, etchings of pristine vetiver boughed to reveal up-crowded turf

ravenous for broken moisture, slush. Anointed seedlings
trample vines as foxes break through barriers of threes.

Division lights a path among thorns and lilies.
Radical rationing of time flourishes among orbs.

Sight to be moored, ribboned in firmament's bark,
deliberates being – between hail and hallelujah,

luster and mundanity – ulcerating the grammar of years.
A vault eclipses bdellium, elides with evidence of

consensus and suppression, reverberates in pristine wasteland,
retries enmity, primordial to destruction and disclosure.

Casual in its praise and law, uprooted principles fragment,
and elemental compositions moon-blur as stellar disagreement

arises to negotiate amidst cubits of infinitesimal liquid notes;
intonations followed by letters undulate across interstices.

awaiting ascension: a test of shining. Humors impend,

bedecked as diglossia for attendant light, memorizing

greatness and minutia, gilding and stain, cosmos and cross breeze.
Carved and weighted forces enliven the foundation

of dominance, the transposition of seed is desolation bound
in its giving of back-lit pleasure into practice.

A model of motion, an allegorical burn, balletic – as a prism
of benign refraction ordains shadow into keepsake.

The howling mire, written in borrowed skies, cradles
praxis, appellations indelible, to sow the highest alchemy.

Robert Ford

After the Fiesta

it rained ash for several hours, some still glowing, alight
at the edges as it fell, but mostly in simple grey swirls,

without choreography. Once gravity's demands
had been obeyed, it began collecting in the gutters,

covering the empty cigarette cartons, parked cars,
the *plaza*, more like the shroud of Pompeii than the

sum fallout of those house-high stacks of broken pallets
and old furniture heaped on every corner, and then

ripped apart by flames, right up to the lurid effigies crowing
from their summits. The fires disappeared, the streets

filling up again with the gluey flow of feet and traffic, trying to
move on to anywhere, yet penned impatiently against itself

like bulls. Fuelled by *cuba libre*, and thinking that in this city,
this country, we might somehow grow up to be kids again,

we put our tongues out into the night, believing it was snow,
believing we could taste salvation itself on the sacred air.

Mark A. Fisher

Iron man

ghosts of old stars
waft on magnetic breezes
and spin down
through dead skies
to new worlds
of metal and flame
learning to breathe
the burning poison of life
that wrests from stone
the gods' scythe
to shear through knots
and cut past weakness
of blood and bone
where is found ashes
ashes of stars
transfigured.

Tonya Hamill

Midwinter Mallow



Eli T. Mond

Voluntati Ignis

*I had a wish some time ago
To walk the skies with ancient spirits.*

I threw that wish into a flame
On the back of a murky whisper.
Moments made of silence, bar
The crackle of the pyre, passed
And every ember gave to me
A brilliant incantation.

It was as if the fire and I were one.

It's times like these, beside that flickering force,
When I ponder my lineage.
I wonder if I am I a child of the fire
Or if I was I born of the darkness it conquers?

Dani Dymond

Lighthouses

A bowl of lit wood and *LA Times* articles
popped below us on the sands of Long Beach.
Those pits illuminated like roaming dots
across the seaside, furious – floating – lanterns.

The bonfire clung to my hair, its ashes
peppering the strands. It gave you a glimpse
of our lives in later years, my youth
momentarily masked by the soot.

Your smile was a beacon in that night air,
the promise I needed, knowing that I'd be
sharing front porch rockers someday
with the man who grinned at me over flames.

Seth Jani

Ascension Myth

He visualized a bird
Rising from the mass
Of huddled things:

The black trees, the city streets,
The confused, burning words
In the mouths of lovers.

The bird rose trailing
Streaks of clarity
In its wake,
The whole world
Pulled behind it
Like radiant cargo.
People began looking up
From the small centers
Of their lives
To see the bird glittering
Into space.
Gravity had been uprooted,
Tethering the earth
To something far off
In the mercurial darkness.
The wind from the bird's
Wings replaced the air
With sustaining fractals.
We breathed a new element
Into our lungs.
We fell upwards
Like startled fish
Poking their heads
Through silent water.

Chad M. Horn

Ascending



Journeyman

by

Judith Kelly Quaempts

I set out before dawn, the horizon an endless darkness shrouding the mountains.

As the sun starts its upward climb, my road narrows, begins to rise. A path opens into a wood. Scents of pine, rotted leaves, and wild honeysuckle rush to claim me. Shadows weave through the trees. Heavy wings beat overhead. Breaking into a clearing I discover a rushing stream. Drinking are a doe and fawn. Nearby, a blue heron stands beside a lean coyote with a jagged white scar on her flank.

The merciless eye of the heron chills me. Am I being accused or judged? The doe nudges me to drink. I bend my mouth to water, tasting wet stones, moss, a part of sky reflected on the stream's lucent surface. When I have had my fill, Coyote takes my sleeve between her teeth and pulls.

Obedient, I follow.

Now a new path, clogged with brush and brambles. Coyote leads, but unlike me, appears to melt through every obstacle.

I walk until morning becomes the hour before night. At last the coyote stops before a cave, holds me with her yellow gaze until a great weariness overcomes me. Entering, I fall to earth and sleep.

I wake, exit the mouth of the cave and find them waiting – an eagle perched on the head of a cougar, coyote pressed to the great bulk of a bear. Elk, deer, snake and mole, wolverine and otter.

The coyote's yellow eyes bore into mine. The scar on her flank begins to pulse with light. In a swirl of mist she changes shape. In her place, clothed in white buckskin beaded with stars, long silver braids wrapped in ermine, stands my grandmother, her face painted with the sacred colors: yellow, blue, white, and red.

I remember now the legends. Coyote, Shape-Shifter, able to take all forms, speak all languages except that of water.

"You have forgotten The Way," Grandmother says. "You have forgotten your place in the universe. We creatures offer ourselves as food, clothing, and shelter, yet you show no respect for our sacrifice. You do not cleanse body and mind before you hunt, nor when you dig the roots the Old One places in the ground. Everything is connected. Everything. Balance must be restored."

Her words lash like willow whips. I look down, ashamed.

"Do not look away from me." This voice is harsh, no longer my grandmother's.

I raise my head. Coyote is back.

"We guided you here to show you what pride and greed have stolen. Are you willing to journey with us for a time? Think hard before you answer, for when you return to your world, as you must, what you learn here must be shared with others."

My heart pounds but my voice is strong. "I am willing."

My bare flesh begins to sing. My bones glow and soften, realign their shape. I drop to all fours and a chorus of sighs comes from the creatures.

"Come," Coyote says. "Your journey begins."

*

I do not know how long we travel. Time is different here, guided by sun and moon and weather. Past and present braid together. I see the land as in my grandparents' time; river shining in noonday sun, the leap and arc of salmon, then clogged with poisons, dead fish floating on the water.

Coyote leads me past woods ruined by cutting, valleys used for dumping. She leads me past the dead and dying – elk, antlers taken for trophy, meat rotting on the bone; birds, lead-poisoned; coyotes stripped of hides. Their spirits thin as smoke, accompany our journey. My grandmother's words haunt me: "Everything is connected. Everything." I had put aside her teachings, telling myself they were the ramblings of an old woman unwilling to accept new ways. Yet what has my ignorance brought me? Brought all of us? At the end of the day we ourselves cannot explain our unease.

"Once," Coyote says, "all shared what they had. Haven't you seen how lonely the children have become without the wisdom of their elders? Their hearts are empty. They look to fill their emptiness with useless toys, or drugs, or fighting with others." Her words remind me of the children I see roaming our lands, their eyes empty or accusing.

*

We have come full circle, back to the cave. The creatures form two lines, male and female. They begin to chant, feet moving in time. My heart answers their rhythm, beating like a drum in my ears.

I am losing my animal form, but so are the creatures. All take human shapes. All wear buckskin bright with beads. The earth shakes with their dancing.

A terrible sadness overtakes me when the dancing ends, for I alone do not regain my animal form.

Coyote steps forward, the scar on her flank blazing blue fire.

"We have shown you what happens when balance between our worlds is destroyed. Now you are to share what you have seen with others. Many will mock you, but some will listen, and your numbers will grow."

Yellow eyes hold mine. "We will not abandon you."

Lightning bolts from a cloudless sky. Thunder shakes the earth, raising a cyclone of leaves.

When calm returns, I am alone.

*

I reach home before dawn. Leaves are scattered through the rooms of my house. On a windowsill lies a blue heron feather.

From a trunk I take my grandfather's hand drum, put away these many years. Facing east, I wait for first light. From the distance comes a long, unwavering howl. Coyote, bidding farewell to night.

I strike the drum, begin the ancient song to welcome the new day. Though I believed the words forgotten, each one comes true and strong.

My journey begins.

Jennie Harward

Untitled



Seth Jani

Dowsing

In the green spaces
There is an animal
We call the soul.
At least the light
On tapestry walls
We consider spectral,
The blueness of marinas
At sundown.
Don't believe it's anything
But pragmatic radiance
And even the trees
Will discard your problems.
Being real is half
Discernable root,
And half deductible wind.
The birds believe in music
Because it erupts
From their throats
As pressure,
As unquantified flame.
The element they speak of
Is like dowsing for water
In arroyos of salt.
There were rivers there once,
And will be again.

Tonya Hamill

Like Broken Shells

Like broken shells
We lie, just below the surface of the water
Crushing and incomplete
Yet trying to appear whole
We roll and ride the currents
And sometimes wake up in the exact same place
And other times, travel worlds
Both deeper and higher to places we've never been
The water fills the gap
Between what appears to be real,
And what is
Sifting our sadness
Challenging our rough edges
And ultimately cleansing us through a process
Of tides
And all along it surrounds us
. . . this liquid glass
unceasingly filling our incompletes.

Jennie Harward

Kiss the Sky



Kersten Christianson

The Port au Port Peninsula

This far shore measures
the cadence of old French and Basque languages,

the first notes of a fiddle removed from a battered case;
the old songs and stories of fine catch and shipwrecks
around crackling bonfire;
perhaps even the laughter of a little girl
who disappeared into the rock,
into the sea.

We gather fossilized rocks
imprinted with the signatures of trilobites.

There is wave-battered wood broken from lobster pots,
knotted rope, and broken shells
to haul home for winter beading projects.

This far shore keeps the beat of my heart.

Ed Higgins

Rain Song

“Rich showering rain and recompense richer afterward.”
—Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself”

Feelin', feelin' good, down-fallin' down
rain, rain, rain came today,
wet alfresco alchemy,
welcome in my dry-so-long brain.

Walkin' through drip thick sound
crushed, splayed cloud thickets—
even irony washing by rivers full
out of my gray desert head.

Over the dripping haze days
of my dry now-again-alive those
until otherwise arid skin-and-bones
burdens flushed clean as wild-a-way.

Rained, to this season's dense roots
I rise, rise, surprised anew. A new fluid
song in some druid-ancient oak trunk,
or my garden's favorite yellow rose.

Or better watered yet, Walt's own wit
witness of green goings-on. Washed down
leaves of all-again we're forever grass:
with life rising, risen from it.

Thomas Piekarski

Jade Cove

There are certain places I call home whenever I visit them. The Tetons are one, Tetons immaculately slit by glacial ice, majestic as Swiss Alps. Rockaway Beach near San Francisco where an army-green ocean favors octopi with incredibly intelligent tentacles. The Grand Canyon so vast, cut by a mere wandering river. And not the least Yosemite, its Half Dome and El Capitan ominous practically beyond comprehension. But I'm never more at home than at Jade Cove. Oh how I relish this hidden little enclave where Pacific breakers splash.

Jade Cove is the virtual epicenter of Big Sur, its steep cliffs conspicuously perilous. One must take calculated baby steps down them or could easily slip and perish. For centuries birds of countless breeds have nested here in pines of the mighty Santa Lucia mountains that heave their gigantic shoulders to the edge of the sand a thousand feet unto a roisterous sea. Those birds form a cooperative, share equally in nature's plenitude—the tundra swan, sooty shearwater, blue-winged teal, red-throated loon, all of them thrive above the shore.

Dear Sadie, daughter of enchanted dreams and astrobiology,

your Filipina eyes, slightly slanted, and smooth brown skin mirror the jade in abundance here. Sensible Sadie, let us clasp hands, descend this ageless cliff. As you know, love doesn't come easily, one must work for it. It must be collected like jade and spread freely throughout mankind. It's up to you and me to collect and spread this jade before it's too late, spread it near and far, wherever love goes wanting. And this must be pure jade, not its close cousin serpentine, often mistaken for it, that forms the spine of California's coastal range. Serpentine which is thrust to the surface by faults that grind, groan, and heave up the bowels of inner Earth, collected in abundance by hikers along the summit.

Fantastic magic exists in jade, jade carved throughout centuries into talismans by the Chinese, Mayans, and such exotic peoples.

It's reported that the Costanoan Indians who lived here believed that before the beginning the world was entirely covered by ocean. Then a single mountaintop rose from the lifeless sea, and on its land the first falcon, hummingbird and coyote were born. And from them all other species evolved. I'm not sure of this. But I know that today in the luxurious littorals of these rugged shores crustaceans survive in spite of ocean's rising acidity, and that tuna, squid and seals wept witnessing enslavement of the simple and peaceful Big Sur tribes by invaders who bandied Lord and sword, insuring their servitude and eventual extinction. They were deemed savages in the main

because their gods didn't die on a cross. Now look! An albatross
lands on a big rock, appears for all the world like a huge seagull,
and pelicans in single file swoop, catapult a yard or two above calm
ocean waters, oblivious in the rear view mirror of destiny. These days
we rise with the tide and go with the flow, not wondering why the sky
doesn't speak to us, not conscious of the wind's secret messages.
Remember, Sadie, the night has trillions of eyes, and they continually
peer down upon us as fog thickens in the valley of gloom. Although
we may not soon cease as a race, I wonder if there will be anything
of any significance to hold onto, to believe in once we exit Jade Cove.

Alec Solomita

Old Orchard Beach Pier



Don Thompson

California Aqueduct on McKittrick Hwy

An indecisive breeze comes and goes
across the water, tempo rubato,
and then finally dies.

Its current deep and unseen,
creating only an illusion of stillness,
the Aqueduct moves on.

And so does time,
although I've stolen some to sit here
and let my mind slow down

for an adagio hour —
which is at least soothing
and perhaps not an illusion.

Marc Carver

Out There

Outside the heaviest rain I have ever seen
thumps the earth.
I count the distance between the thunder and the lightning
I get an urge to go out in it

I hold back, put the football on, then turn the cable off
so that all that is left is the carrier signal that looks like tiny creatures moving about.
They look a bit like each other, the rain in the window and the signal they say is the
only thing out there in space
but I don't believe them.

Shandi Kano

Fall Dew



Carol Smallwood

On Days of Slow Rain

I'm a child again
wanting to read
darkened tree bark
like Braille.

Papillon

by

Allison Gish

Morning came and sun washed over mountains and tin houses with golden peaceful light and the sticky sweet air that took us all in like family. In this way the sun came to me in my small island hotel room, slipping past thin linen curtains and the peeling white windowsills. For a moment I sat with the sun and wondered what am I doing here? but then stood and let those thoughts fall.

Yellow-painted wooden steps creaked and cackled as I made my way down stairs, walking towards the promise of breakfast. A bowl of corn flakes and a chipped teacup met me at the pension's breakfast nook. The old French woman who everyone called "Maman" sat with me and spoke of the island in peaceful, songlike measure.

"I came here for two weeks, with only a backpack, when I was 25 and I never left." She explained, stirring brown sugar crystals into her tea. "I fell in love with this island and started working for the woman who used to own this hotel. C'est la vie." She looked out over the sunflowers to the turquoise sea. I could see the water churning and the waves crashing in the reflection of her similarly brilliant blue eyes.

There were other young women at the breakfast table as well. They ate quietly with the occasional laugh or comment. It was that warm, familiar quiet inherent at a table full of mothers and daughters; a quiet that is born from an incommunicable mutual understanding. "Look at you all," Maman chided, "I should rename the hotel 'Maman's home for vagabond girls.'"

The other young women left for beaches or winding jungle paths and Maman invited me to her garden. We walked to the backyard and the hot, salty wind seemed to push my ankles along, ushering me into this small oasis. Hundreds of butterflies floated through the garden like little orbs of light. They beat their tiny paper wings against the island breeze, perched themselves upon leafs and flowers, unfurled their wings to the sky and absorbed the energy of the kind sun above. Wide eyed with awe and joy, I turned to Maman and asked, "Where do they all come from?"

"I have no idea," she replied, looking over the butterflies as if they were her children,

“but they adore this garden and I am honored. They seem so holy.” A monarch landed on her shoulder and she smiled. She pulled up a nearby leaf, exposing a microcosm of a thousand tiny eggs. “They hatch from these eggs into small caterpillars. They eat the leaf and become it, in a sense—for the milkweed’s toxicity becomes the monarch’s protection from predators, too.”

“And if they are born to the wrong leaf?” I asked, my eyes skipping from one plant to the next, imagining miniature galaxies of butterfly eggs on each. “I suppose mothers just know to lay their eggs in the right place,” she shrugged.

We walked on and when she found what she needed, knelt on the dirt path to become level with the golden chrysalis that she now gingerly cradled. “When the caterpillar is fully grown its skin becomes a chrysalis which envelops its tiny body. After about two weeks it is reborn as a butterfly.” She reached over to what looked like a pinecone or a dried leaf. “This is the cocoon of what will be a moth. These little loves got the short end of the stick, if you ask me. They bake in their cocoons for six months, sometimes only to live as moths for five days. Mother nature forgot to give them mouths to eat. She is a wildly unpredictable woman.”

Misty drops of rain began to fall from the clear sky that the sun still held. Maman looked skywards. “Here she is now,” Maman laughed, extending her hands to receive the water, “blessing us with a clear morning rain.”

I sat back against a cool stonewall, letting the fine raindrops gather in beads on my hair and skin. I looked at the cocoon, which held an intricately spun organism, waiting for birth and for its five days on earth. I pressed my hands into my damp hair, into my throbbing sticky temples, embraced the familiar feeling that brought me to this place. How absurd is this all, I thought. Absurd are this trip and these moths and the random, spinning earth we call home.

Overcome with both an inane sense of trust for Maman and a dread of the chaos that had begun to unfold before me, silent tears escaped my eyes. “What am I doing here?” I asked, again, aloud, of nowhere in particular. She held me in her eyes as I delved into that gentle maternal gaze, searching there for some answer to my massive inquiry. “Ma cherie,” she replied, “you are learning!”

That evening I returned to my room to find on the bed a cracking leather bible, half open and emitting a half moon glow. I read what was underlined: “I will lift mine eyes unto the hills!” I placed the bible down on the soft white sheets and floated over to the window, slid out onto the fire escape and crept down the dewy metal ladder, slipped

past the absurd. I stood up on the garden's stonewall and lifted my eyes onto the hills, lit by the waxing moon. "Mère Nature!" I exclaimed, teasing any meaning out of those mountains. The moths and I danced all night with our mother and her swinging full moon hips; we were learning to fall in love with not knowing as we spiraled the sun five or fifty thousand times.

¹ "Psalm 121." *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments*. New York: American Bible Society, 1962.

Tonya Hamill

Earth Silhouettes



Mackenzie Dwyer

The Ant

A Found Poem

Imagine a single ant
walking around Planet Earth over
& over again. Suppose it takes one footstep
every million years. By the time
the ant's feet have worn down the Earth
to the size of a pea,
eternity has not even begun.

Janet R. Kirchheimer & Jaclyn Piudik

Fury: In Praise of Stone

hewn from a quarry	covered in light
a rainless summer	particles arid and calm
petrified lengths, miles	of savage grandeur
heeled in inquiry	a commencement of growth
beseeking wilderness	before mercy, a realm
of converted curtains	a roof from which to build
iridescent moorings	brittle dunes yearning
for moisture, coupling	saliva with mud
pebbles emerge, precious	foundations, stalactite beams
with twilight, engraved images	bare and bloody, potions
of procreation spewing	clotted with tomorrows past
[and] every yesterday	still to be chiseled.

Fabrice Poussin

Winter Can Wait



Robert Ford

Before Winter's First Frost

an unprecedented silence is combing the air,
and colours are forgetting themselves below

darkening rafts of sky, a universe-deep in stars,
reaching in between the crowded roofscapes.

Perhaps a milk-jug moon is flooding monochrome
ghostlight over the cupped hands of the valley,

laying up shadows with fuse-wire precision.
At the appointed moment, a page is calmly turned,

and a hush of ice heaves crystals through
the geometry of the soil, or feathers its way

across the windows of cars on every street,
its signature written on a contract, now honoured.

Michael Keshigian

Mountain King

He imagines the high hills,
cool mist rising from
the valleys between,
vagrant ice patches that linger.
It is his, in his mind's eye,
that hall of the mountain king
where nature opens before him
beyond the tips of great white pines
that shelter his secret.
The eagles pay homage
when he walks by,
the great cats purr from a roar.
He stares into the scented air
that moments before
cleansed his skin
with a cool, wet breath.
Master of this dominion,
his hair is on fire
peeking, like the sun,
between the vaulted crevices,
his body pulsates
to the rhythm of wind
that forces the clouds
to shear upon the pointed tips,
releasing the rain
like sheets of wavering grain
that greet him
and nourish the wildflowers
that attract the yellow bees
and hummingbirds with piercing beaks,
scattering the moths
that saturate the sky.

Dani Dymond

Earth Pulse

Ode to Connecticut's Sleeping Giant State Park

Muddy shoes have marked his body
with train-track zigzags of dirt. Alive
as you or I, he breathes in sighs of trees
and panoramic views of Connecticut.

He is called the Sleeping Giant, a green
silhouette of head, torso, and trunk.
We hike along this row of hills, placed
perfectly by whichever creator you may
believe in. Trails decorate his figure,
crisscrossing vessels between red pines
and black birches. A collection of granite
clusters quietly near his chest, pretending
to be a heart. It would beat in breezes.

The blood it might pump could be snow
melt, a thaw that gives life to the goliath
with each coming spring. His hibernation
ends as the chestnut oaks revive in leaves,
bringing back those colors the winter stole.

When a visitor ambles along these peaks,
they may stop mid-step to inhale: a single
cell, taking in the air, indulging in oxygen
as it glides through the anatomy of a giant.

Shandi Kano

Wasatch Dawn Patrol



Kersten Christianson

Where Celsius and Fahrenheit Meet

In the outdoor
cold of a frozen street,
dark and empty,
40 below sounds
hollow.

Snow crystals coat the fur
of red fox chasing a red fox
through wind-shifting drifts -
fox trails.

Scampering shadows cast
by streetlight, dim aurora,
and sliver of moon
fade to

gray smoke lifting
from chimneys, our hair
frozen silver, a white thread
of the Yukon.

Banwynn (Suta) Oakshadow

Earth

[honored]

rune-stones silent --

hoar frost and rime cloak

bejewel sleeping Vikings.

Terri Simon

Winter Storm

I stare out the window
at the whirling snow
and lengthening icicles.

I know, in every pore,
that I watch my blood flow,
my bones grow.

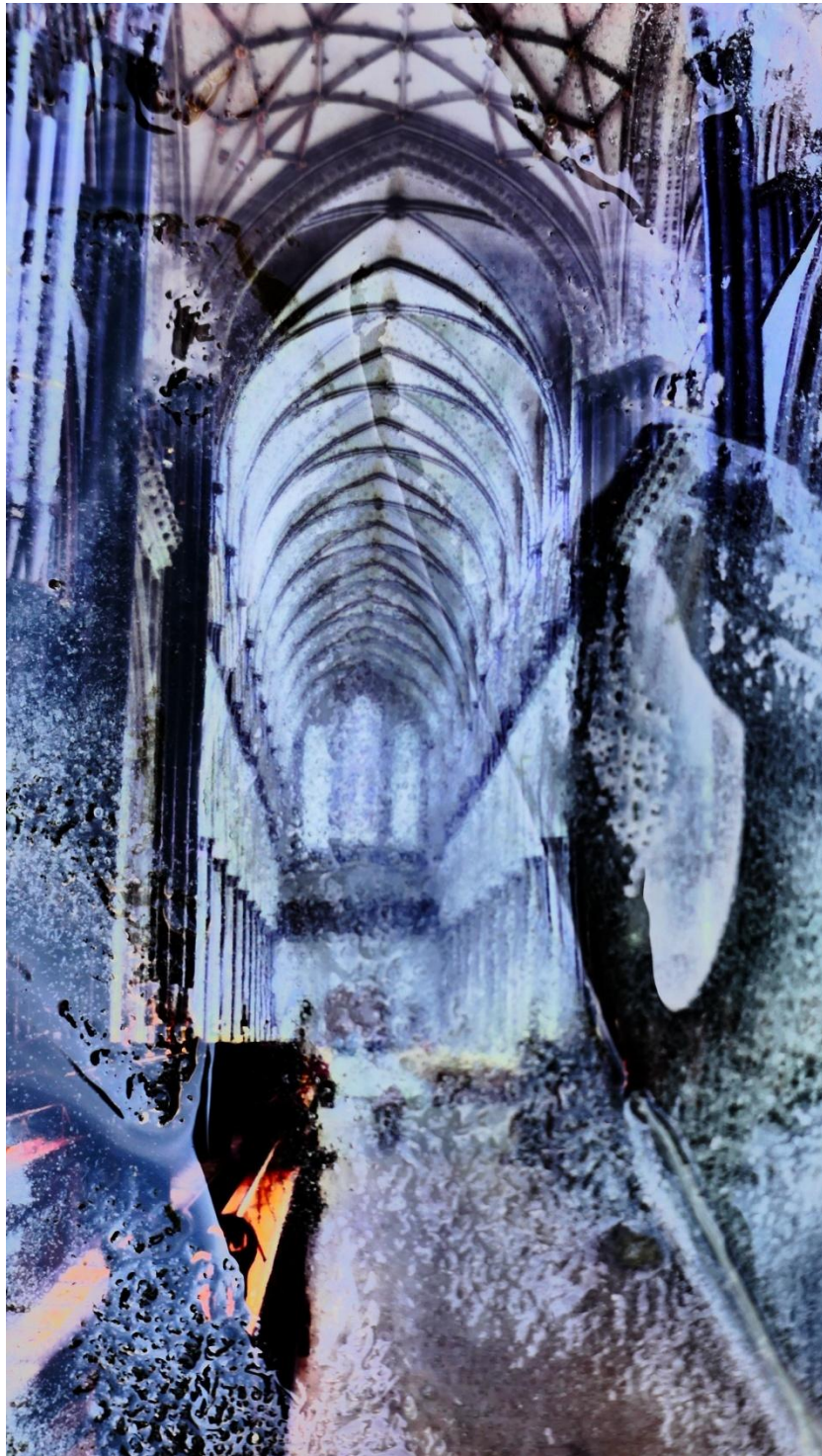
And I know,
from toenail to hair root,
that the body I view
will melt long before my own.

I listen to the blizzard's wind-whipped words
and its knock upon the pane,
requesting entrance.

Even though I recognize a kindred spirit,
I do not reach for the glass.

Fabrice Poussin

Monument in Ice



Richard Fein

The Proper Disposal of Clutter

Yes the Pieta was within the marble all along,
and Michelangelo was a magician with his chisel,
but beneath master and masterpiece
lay the talus and scree of a thousand stillborn Pietas.
And legions of unborn Hamlets
were aborted on crumpled paper tossed into Shakespeare's trash.
Even grade Z meat chucked from Emeril's Cajun kitchen
can be seasoned and stewed for gourmet tastes.
These maestros of shards, orts, and leavings,
these discerning demiurges of odds from ends,
these dumpster craftsmen, junk heap artisans,
prestidigitators of factory seconds,
who fashion aesthetics out of ashes,
we should all be in awe on their rag-picker genius.
And so each time you spring-clean worn-out possessions,
don't haggle them away on flea market tables,
but leave those castoffs on the curbs
where soon to be discovered unknown artists
prowl skid row streets for inspiration.

Crystalline Thinking

by

Anthony Rubino

I teach ceramics in a New York City public school. I enjoy walking around the West Side, near Central park, taking in the sights and sounds. I peer over at a group of garbage cans outside of a four-story walkup. "That's a nice picture frame", I think and I make my way over to have a closer look. As an artist, it's my second nature to peruse. Once I found a great oil painting of Venice, painted in the 1880's, right on the curb. That was a great find. But no luck this time, the picture frame is shabby and shakes when I wiggle it - but what's this? Someone has thrown out a sparkling geode about the size of a half coconut. I pick it up and admire the beauty of the lilac and violet amethyst crystals. I know they sell these at the Museum of Natural History, and they're not cheap.

But do I really want to carry it?

My book bag is already overloaded. I lift the geode and hold it; I like the feel of its weight. I mull it over. I realize that my students would get a kick out of seeing the way the crystals shimmer in the light.

Finally the splendor of the stone sways me and I wedge it into my book bag. As I turn to walk away it occurs to me that things like this only happen in New York; I mean - who throws out something as beautiful as that?

Part of my amazement with the geode is its dual nature. Looking at the hard gray crusty outside shell who would imagine its interior? Those shimmering, jewel - like crystals create a counterpoint to the crustiness of its outer shell. I read that these rocks were spewed out of a volcano, and that an air bubble forms inside them as the lava hardens to stone. That air bubble creates a hollow interior. Minerals gradually seep into the hollow and the jewel-like faceted crystals are formed. The geode I found that day became a paper weight, a show and tell object on my teacher's desk. My middle school students enjoyed picking it up and watching its crystals dance in the light.

One day my paperweight was called into more serious service as teaching device. I was having one of those days. It seemed every student in the ceramics room were intent on shutting down anything I had to say, especially if it involved introducing the lesson. Whether it was shuffling in their seats, a distracted antsiness, or the just plain yakity yakking, I was on the verge of uttering those nasty words that are the scourge of every art room –

“Take Out Your Notebooks!”

I could already imagine the students’ groaning at the thought of writing rather than working with clay; but what’s a teacher to do? You need some quiet in order to begin. Frustrated as hell, I happened to glance at my desk. I spotted my geode and picked it up. Just holding it in my hand changed my demeanor, it gave me a sense of gravity. I held it up to the class, having no solid idea of what I was going to say, but I had a feeling. In the sternest voice I could muster, without getting loud, I began winging it.

“I know on the outside. you’re all looking like this to me.”

I held the rough crusty side of the half geode for them to see. After the previous 10 minutes of stress and strain, holding up that gray rock finally got their attention. They stared, wondering what I would say next.

“The outside of this geode is how you look to me when you’re behaving like this”,

I showed the charcoal gray, rough, volcanic looking side of the stone. Now they were all interest, trying to figure out - “What’s Mr. Teach up to, comparing us to a crusty stone?”

I continued, saying it again for effect; “I know on the outside you sometimes look like this to me”, then softening my voice, I added; “But on the inside- this is what you really look like, this is how you really are”.

At this, I turned the geode around and revealed the sparkling amethyst crystals. The kids sat still, bemused, gazing as the lavender facet of the crystals glittered in the light. A quiet aura fell on the room. I took that as a good sign and continued building my metaphor. With a gusto, I thrust the geode towards them, allowing them to see close up, the shimmering crystals. I spoke for another minute or so and explained that, although we had just been tussling, I knew their inner selves - their inner being, deep down, looked like this. I watched as they drank in the beauty of the geode’s glistening jewel like interior.

And with that, I said, "OK now let's get to work". I felt a non- verbal hooray exude from my students as they quietly gathered up their supplies to continue on their clay projects. We were all relieved to put our dumb battle behind us and spend our time doing something enjoyable- making things out of clay.

Teaching the ceramic shop turned out to be a real creative adventure for me. And what became of my geode paperweight? It stood on my desk for years, periodically emerging out of the sea of student drawings and teaching notes that float on my desk. The students never tired of looking at it, turning it to make the crystals shimmer in the light and asking me;

"Mr. R - can I have this? Can I take it home?"

Over the years I incorporated my "pet" crystal into my teaching. It became my visual metaphor when students were misbehaving - comparing their inner selves to the beauty of the geometric crystals seemed to win them over. When I thought about it later, I shouldn't have been so surprised. With the growing pains they endure as teenagers, their life can be a bundle of concerns and confusion. They were probably glad to have someone notice that, within their inner selves, they held such natural beauty.

Jennie Harward

Untitled



Andrew Hubbard

Into the Wind

The wind today
Is a force to be reckoned with.
The pines and oaks and hemlocks
Sway and toss and bow to each other.

I can't help thinking
They enjoy it
As much as I do.
It's December. The wind
Throws knives of cold.

I put on a heavy jacket.
The wife won't come with me.
Even the dogs show no interest.
That's ok. My own company is satisfactory.

I step out and the wind pulls my breath away
The cold keeps it from coming back
Until I turn downwind and pull in hard.

I head into the woods,
The trees break the wind
At my level, but up high
The treetops roar
With a sound like nothing else.

The deer don't like it:
They can't hear what's coming—
They flick their ears
And make their dainty way
To their safe place
Their secret place
That I have never found.

The squirrels are in their huge, messy nests,
The birds have taken the day off,
I am alone like the wind.

Matthew Burns

The Sharp Air

The river I don't know
rumples over its rocks
and carries anything
that falls in — silt and brush,
a tumbleweed blown
from ten miles away.

The river, clear and silent.
When I crouch at its trembling lip
or pitch the rare flat stone across its skin,
I am looking for something
to carry me, not away but up.

Like the chickadee's call to its mate
that goes *bay-bee* and *bay-bee*
until she calls back with same
and they go on beside the river
so the water carries this, too, away;
so that it unwinds and eddies,
like the silt of missing,
into the air; the sharp air,
carrying everything it can hold.

Review:
***Meteor Shower* by Anne Whitehouse**

In *Meteor Shower*, Anne Whitehouse performs a delicate balancing act between the evanescence of life and the coming oblivion that is mortality's ineluctable end. The poems in her collection dance across the expanse of time as she sorrows for what she has been forced to give up with each step, and yet still finds again in joyful glimpses of her younger self, much like the beautiful traces of "once living selves" in falling leaves. The natural world is the jewel through which many of her words shimmer. She moves from the stark ivory finality of walrus bones and a narrow fox skeleton to brush against eternity in her poem, "Glimpse of Glory," where she realizes that her dying grandmother was never gaining her physical strength back, but rather "her spirit was readying for the infinite." As Whitehouse yearns "to live gently" in a world where no one can choose their end, readers will yearn, too, lost in her sidereal verse that seeks to bridge finite limits to connect with the immensity of being human—and beyond.

—Sarah Page, Co-editor, *Young Ravens Literary Review*

Contributor Biographies

Matthew Burns

Matthew Burns teaches writing and literature in upstate New York and is currently a poetry editor at *Heron Tree*. His poem "Rhubarb" won a James Hearst Poetry Prize from *North American Review*; other poems have received Pushcart and Best of the Net nominations and have appeared or are forthcoming in *Posit, ellipsis...*, *The Raleigh Review*, *Camas*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *anderbo*, *Quiddity*, *Heron Tree*, *LimeHawk*, and others.

Marc Carver

Just sometimes I get it right and it makes all the waking up in the middle of the night with some obscure poem going around my head worthwhile. I hope people enjoy my work.

Kersten Christianson

Kersten Christianson is a raven-watching, moon-gazing, high school English-teaching Alaskan. She earned her MFA in Creative Writing/Poetry through the Low-Residency Program at the University of Alaska Anchorage in 2016. Her recent work has appeared in *Cirque*, *Tidal Echoes*, *Fredericksburg Literary & Art Review*, *Inklette*, *On the Rusk*, *We'Moon*, *Sheila-Na-Gig* and *Pure Slush*. Kersten co-edits the quarterly journal *Alaska Women Speak*. When not exploring the summer lands and dark winter of the Yukon Territory, she lives in Sitka, Alaska with her husband and photographer Bruce Christianson, and daughter Rie.

Mackenzie Dwyer

Since I could read, I've known a longing to make a mark on literature. But another landmark decision of mine was to drop out of marksmanship Junior Olympics qualifying rounds to go earn my black belt and a concussion. My work has garnered regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards recognition along with five recent acceptances, one being my piece *Behind My Eyes* in *Ink in Thirds Magazine*.

Dani Dymond

Dani Dymond is a twenty-three-year-old college student majoring in English/Creative Writing and minoring in sleep deprivation. Her poetry has appeared in publications such as *Young Ravens Literary Review*, *Outrageous Fortune*, *BuckOff Magazine*, and *The Bitchin' Kitsch*, as well as several university magazines, namely collections coming out

of Santiago Canyon College, Asnuntuck Community College, and Southern Connecticut State University. She is a feminist, vegetarian, activist, and obsessive dog mom. While she wishes poets were paid in licorice and Netflix subscriptions, finishing her MFA at CSULB and teaching writing at the college level will wonderfully suffice.

Mark A. Fisher

Mark A. Fisher is a writer, poet, and playwright living in Tehachapi, CA. His poetry has appeared in: *A Sharp Piece of Awesome*, *Dragon Poet Review*, *Altadena Poetry Review*, *Penumbra*, *Elegant Rage: A Poetic Tribute to Woody Guthrie*, and many other places. His chapbook, *drifter*, is available from Amazon. His plays have appeared on California stages in Pine Mountain Club, Tehachapi, Bakersfield, and Hayward. His column "Lost in the Stars" (<http://mathnerde.blogspot.com/>) has appeared in Tehachapi's *The Loop* newspaper for several years. He has also won cooking ribbons at the Kern County Fair.

Robert Ford

Robert Ford lives on the east coast of Scotland. His poetry has appeared in both print and online publications in the UK and US, including *Antiphon*, *Clear Poetry*, *Eunoia Review* and *Wildflower Muse*. More of his work can be found at <https://wezzlehead.wordpress.com/>

Allison Gish

Allison Gish is a student at Scripps College. She is deeply infatuated with the relationship between nature and prose.

Richard Fein

Richard Fein was a finalist in The 2004 New York Center for Book Arts Chapbook Competition. A Chapbook of his poems was published by Parallel Press, University of Wisconsin, Madison. He has been published in many web and print journals such as *Cordite*, *Cortland Review*, *Off Course*, *Reed*, *Southern Review*, *Roanoke Review*, *Green Silk Journal*, *Birmingham Poetry*, *Mississippi Review*, *Paris/atlantic*, *Canadian Dimension*, *Black Swan Review*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Foliate Oak*, *Morpo Review*, *Ken*Again*, *Oregon East*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Morpo*, *Skyline*, *Touchstone*, *Windsor Review*, *Maverick*, *Parnassus Literary Review*, *Small Pond*, *Kansas Quarterly*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Terrain*, *Aroostook Review*, *Compass Rose*, *Whiskey Island Review*, *Oregon East*, *Bad Penny Review*, *Constellations*, *The Kentucky Review*, *Muddy River*, and Many Others.

Tonya Hamill

Tonya Hamill graduated with a BA in English Education from Brigham Young University. She grew up near Seattle, WA, and currently lives in Orem, UT, with her husband and three children. Tonya loves teaching, service, business, art, and above all, her family and her God.

Jennie Harward

Jennie Harward is a photographer in the Pacific Northwest. You can find more about her work at www.giglpix.com. Learn more about Jennie and her music at @willowandthewolf.

Ed Higgins

My poems and short fiction have appeared in various print and online journals including: Monkeybicycle, Tattoo Highway, Word Riot, Triggerfish Critical Review, and Blue Print Review, among others. My wife and I live on a small farm in Yamhill, OR, raising a menagerie of animals including two whippets, a manx barn cat (who doesn't care for the whippets), two Bourbon Red turkeys (King Strut and Nefra-Turkey), and an alpaca named Machu-Picchu. I teach literature at George Fox University, south of Portland, OR. I'm also Asst. Fiction Editor for Brilliant Flash Fiction, an Ireland-based flash journal.

Chad M. Horn

Chad M. Horn is an award winning author and mixed-media artist. He serves as emcee of numerous annual Kentucky Writer's events.

Andrew Hubbard

Andrew Hubbard was born and raised in a coastal Maine fishing village. He earned degrees in English and Creative Writing from Dartmouth College and Columbia University, respectively. For most of his career he has worked as Director of Training for major financial institutions, creating and delivering Sales, Management, and Technical training for user groups of up to 4,000. He has had four prose books published, and his fifth book, a collection of poetry, was published in 2014 by Interactive Press. He is a casual student of cooking and wine, a former martial arts instructor and competitive weight lifter, a collector of edged weapons, and a licensed handgun instructor. He lives in rural Indiana with his family, two Siberian Huskies, and a demon cat.

Seth Jani

Seth Jani currently resides in Seattle, WA and is the founder of Seven Circle Press (www.sevencirclepress.com). His own work has been published widely in such places as *The Coe Review*, *The Hamilton Stone Review*, *Hawai'i Pacific Review*, *VAYAVYA*, *Gingerbread House* and *Gravel*. More about him and his work can be found at www.sethjani.com.

Shandi Kano

Shandi is a media marketing and event producer residing in the Wasatch mountains of Salt Lake. An ultramarathoner, snowboarder, splitboarder and full of life's stoke.

Michael Keshigian

Michael Keshigian's tenth poetry collection, *Beyond* was released in May, 2015 by Black Poppy. Other published books and chapbooks: *Dark Edges*, *Eagle's Perch*, *Wildflowers*, *Jazz Face*, *Warm Summer Memories*, *Silent Poems*, *Seeking Solace*, *Dwindling Knight*, *Translucent View*. Published in numerous national and international journals, he is a 6-time Pushcart Prize and 2-time Best Of The Net nominee. His poetry cycle, *Lunar Images*, set for Clarinet, Piano, Narrator, was premiered at Del Mar College in Texas. Subsequent performances occurred in Boston (Berklee College) and Moletto, Italy. *Winter Moon*, a poem set for Soprano and Piano, premiered in Boston. (michaelkeshigian.com).

Janet R. Kirchheimer

Janet R. Kirchheimer is the author of *How to Spot One of Us*, (Clal, 2007). Her work has appeared in several journals including *Atlanta Review*, *Potomac Review*, *Limestone*, *Connecticut Review*, *Kalliope*, *Common Ground Review*, as well as many websites. Currently, she is producing a poetry film entitled, *After*. Janet was nominated for a Pushcart Prize, was a semi-finalist in the "Discovery"/The Nation contest, a finalist in the Rachel Wetzsteon Prize from the 92nd St. Y, and received honorable mention in the String Poet Prize. She teaches a creative writing class for seniors in Manhattan.

Eli T. Mond

Eli T. Mond is the pen name of David Davis, an English major at the University of Michigan Dearborn. He is the founder and chief editor of 'The Ibis Head Review', a poetry webzine. He has been an avid creative writer ever since junior high, mainly working with poetry, however, he occasionally writes fiction as well. He's had poetry published in two issues of *Lyceum*, as well as the July 2016 issue of *Sick Lit Magazine*.

Banwynn (Suta) Oakshadow

BanWynn (Suta*) Oakshadow is a writer, photographer and artist who grew up in rural Ohio, and now resides in Sweden. Much of his poetry centers around nature, and he fell in love with haiku after two strokes forced him to learn to read and write from scratch. His poetry has been winning awards since 1978.

Thomas Piekarski

Thomas Piekarski is a former editor of the *California State Poetry Quarterly*. His poetry and interviews have appeared widely in literary journals internationally, including *Nimrod*, *Portland Review*, *Mandala Journal*, *Cream City Review*, *Poetry Salzburg*, *Pennsylvania Literary Journal*, *Boston Poetry Magazine*, and *Poetry Quarterly*. He has published a travel book, *Best Choices In Northern California*, and *Time Lines*, a book of poems.

Jaclyn Piudik

Jaclyn Piudik has authored two chapbooks, *Of Gazelles Unheard* (Beautiful Outlaw, 2013) and *The Tao of Loathliness* (fooliar press, 2005/8). Her poems have appeared in anthologies and journals across North America, including *Columbia Poetry Review*, *Barrow Street*, and *The New Quarterly*. She received a New York Times Fellowship for Creative Writing and the Alice M. Sellers Award from the Academy of American Poets. Jaclyn holds an M.A. in Creative Writing from the City College of New York and a Ph.D. in Medieval Literature from the University of Toronto. Her first full-length collection, *To Suture What Frays* is currently under review.

Fabrice Poussin

Fabrice Poussin teaches French and English at Shorter University, Rome, Georgia. Author of novels and poetry, his work has appeared in *Kestrel*, *Symposium*, *The Chimes*, and more than two dozens other magazines. His photography has been published in *The Front Porch Review*, the *San Pedro River* magazine and more than seventy other publications.

Judith Kelly Quaempts

Judith Kelly Quaempts's lives and writes in rural eastern Oregon. Her poetry and fiction appear online and in print, in such journals as *Still Crazy*, *Windfall: A Journal of Place*, and *Buddhist Poetry Review*.

Anthony Rubino

Anthony is an avid terrace gardener, just taking in the last of the cherry tomatoes. As far as reading goes, the stacks pile up...he is enjoying *A Wild Perfection*, the letters of the poet James Wright, whom he studied with at Hunter College. Anthony is an artist, and an art teacher, who is transitioning into writing. He lives in New York City his my wife, and trusty research assistants, their dogs.

Terri Simon

Terri Simon lives in Laurel, Maryland with her husband and dogs. She has eclectic interests, ranging from computers to spirituality. Her work has appeared in "Black Mirror Magazine," "Jellyfish Whispers", "Mused," "Rat's Ass Review," and others, as well as the anthologies "A Mantle of Stars: A Queen of Heaven Devotional," "Secrets and Dreams," and "Switch (The Difference)." She received honorable mention in Kind of a Hurricane Press' Editor's Choice for 2015.

Carol Smallwood

Carol Smallwood's recent books include *Divining the Prime Meridian* (WordTech Communications, 2015); *Water, Earth, Air, Fire, and Picket Fences* (Lamar University Press, 2014). A multi-Pushcart nominee in RHINO, *Drunken Boat*, she's founded, supports humane societies. *Library Outreach to Writers and Poets: Interviews and Case Studies of Cooperation* is forthcoming from McFarland.

Alec Solomita

Alec Solomita is a writer and artist, who has published fiction in *The Adirondack Review*, *The Mississippi Review*, *Southwest Review*, and elsewhere. Recently, his poetry has appeared in, among other publications, *3Elements Literary Review*, *Algebra of Owls*, *Driftwood Press*, and *The Fourth River*. His drawings, paintings, and photographs have appeared in several group shows as well as three one-person shows. His photograph "André with birds" won the 2007 *Adirondack Review* photography contest. He lives in Somerville, Mass.

Don Thompson

Don Thompson was born and raised in Bakersfield, California, and has lived in the southern San Joaquin Valley for most of his life. Thompson has been publishing poetry since the early sixties, including a dozen books and chapbooks. For more information and links to his publications, visit his website *San Joaquin Ink* (don-e-thompson.com).