



Young Ravens Literary Review

Issue 9
Winter 2018



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Editorial Staff:

Sarah Page
Elizabeth Pinborough

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Contents

Cover Art: "Sámara de Fresno" by Juan Páez

<i>Introduction</i>		1
Wild Strawberries	<i>Antoni Ooto</i>	2
Strumming my Pain	<i>Dennis Trujillo</i>	3
Delectable	<i>Kersten Christianson</i>	4
Le Révélateur	<i>Stephen Register</i>	5
Currents	<i>Rasma Haidri</i>	7
Brolga Dance	<i>John Grey</i>	9
On the Rocks HI 293 Oahu RTE 72	<i>Keith Moul</i>	11
California Karma	<i>Thomas Piekarski</i>	12
The Rowing Eight on the River	<i>John Grey</i>	14
Tiger Lilies	<i>Terri Glass</i>	16
Spring Trillium	<i>Meg Freer</i>	19
Believable Lullabies	<i>Jared Pearce</i>	20
Beauty Transient	<i>Sunil Sharma</i>	21
Cathedral	<i>Paul Bluestein</i>	22
& the beyond	<i>Linda M. Crate</i>	23
Elegy for LPs	<i>Meg Freer</i>	24
The Box	<i>Hugh Cook</i>	26
Trust	<i>Rasma Haidri</i>	27
Leaves	<i>Marc Carver</i>	28
Mongolian Lamp	<i>Mary Buchinger</i>	29
Wabi-Sabi	<i>Antoni Ooto</i>	30
Friends, Lands, and Flowers	<i>Edilson Ferreira</i>	31
Memento Mori	<i>Robert Wexelblatt</i>	32
Illegible	<i>Don Thompson</i>	34
Sámara de Fresno	<i>Juan Páez</i>	35
<i>Contributor Biographies</i>		36

Introduction

In Issue 9, we delve into the dual themes of scarcity and rarity.

Life startles us with fleeting experiences that are rare and unique in the moment of their power, from the taste of a wild strawberry, the fierce orange of tiger lilies, to a voice that mesmerizes our senses with its rich musical persuasion.

Enduring strength and friendships are likewise rare. The abundant ties binding us together can become scarce and more precious with time, these remnant connections tucked in a dusty box or reverberating in a guitar tune.

Seasons turn and shock us with the transient beauty of a single falling leaf in Mumbai, or the pristine glory of the first snowfall. May we learn to treasure this rare earth and each other as abundance and scarcity are inexorably intertwined with chance and consequence.

Antoni Ooto

Wild Strawberries

Beijing nights, breezes and bells,
dark sky's bliss, and the small things;

I ask for everything

Sometimes I dare to feel empty
Like the wild strawberry's last sweet taste
Sugar and sorrow

Someday the words will lead
The false starts vanish

And when that happens
Just listen.

Dennis Trujillo

Strumming My Pain

*—In the winter of 1973, Roberta Flack
released the hit song “Killing Me Softly.”*

Bundles of laundry lay on the stoops
for plebes to deliver to rooms
of upperclassmen. Returning from class
I balanced my books and two bundles
and bounded up the metal staircase

of Company F4. Winter had arrived
at West Point, 1973. Soft snow blanched
the granite landscape. Delivering laundry
that cold day, I was struck motionless
in the hallway like one of the many

campus statues when I heard
“Killing Me Softly” from an upper-
classman’s room. The mesmerizing voice
and melody transfixed my heart
the way a whiteout in a forest

rivets the senses. For four minutes
I drank in the song that shimmered
like mist in the cavernous barracks
as if the universe somehow knew
it was the gift I needed most.

Kersten Christianson

Delectable

"I love you as one loves certain obscure things,
secretly, between the shadow and the soul." -Pablo Neruda

I pondered
this poem
while pillaging
the second to last piece
of my daughter's birthday
cake: chocolate with cream
cheese frosting.

If Pablo Neruda,
I'd write this slice
a love poem; to the dark
sweet cacao seeds blazed
by vanilla, the sunset gold
of a buttercream sea lapping
against a distant shore

while I balance
both fork and pen
among fingers of my
right hand, alternating
dive and plunder with
thought and word.

Neruda, Pablo. "XVII. I Don't Love You as If You Were a Rose." *The Essential Neruda: Select Poems*, translated by Mark Eisner, City Lights, 2004, pp. 142–143.

Stephen Register

Le Révélateur

Vous illuminateur.¹

Rekindler of an aspect gone dormant.

This dimension of mind and inquiry and suffering.

You put music in me:

Dylan Thomas, and Стравинский.²

Vous sauveteur.³

Wrenched wide the cellar door long rusted shut.

Revealed a library of forgotten vintages,

Aging, becoming, waiting, refining,

Waiting,

To one day be selected and served.

Blood wine warm shifting in the lamplight.

Cool stone and musty racks cradling

Le Pin and Pétrus

Under layers of dust

In a dance of shadows.

Vous réparateur.⁴

You returned music to me.

Lux Aurumque⁵, and Кандинский⁶

Stretched out my gnarled fingers

Upon chromatic clusters

Now subject to my press. My hammer.

Vous criminel!

Broke in and set me

Ablaze.

Trespasser, arsonist,

Burning down my throat.

Vous chirurgien.⁷

You took out my heart and

Replaced it with fire.

¹ You illuminator.

² Stravinsky

³ You rescuer.

⁴ You repairer.

⁵ Light and Gold, choral piece by Eric Whitacre.

⁶ Kandinsky

⁷ You surgeon.

Rasma Haidri

Currents

When you hand me a handle-less teacup
with blue porcelain flowers,

I think of my mother,
saying science believed
in no such thing as a blue flower,

so if I found one, I'd be famous.
I looked for years, certain
I'd seen one, wondering
if science had heard of bluebells.

In the end, I thought blue
must be like apples—
who could say if apple in my mouth,
tasted apple to others?

You dip a wrought-iron spoon
into the cup—
Red currants...want some?

I expect sweet,
but get Wisconsin summer breeze
through my Norwegian grandma's clapboard house,
white-petal-clouds in a robin-egg-sky,
a hedge higher than my head,

where fat currants sit red-jeweling
among leprechaun leaves,
my tongue pressing the berries—
 juice zapping electric
 red, the only flavor
 tasting only of itself.

I was a girl then,
couldn't see over the hedge,
or dream I'd ever
taste such juice again.

John Grey

Brolga Dance

I was less than fifty yards away,
camouflaged by mulga.

Long and slender birds gathered
on a stretch of plain.
Their legs were gray,
heads green and coral red,
and some had dark pouches
flapping beneath olive-green beaks.

Each strode like a participant
in a ritual, every so often
making hoarse cries
that echoed in the mouths of others.

One picked up loose grass,
tossed it in the air,
then caught it in its bill.
The bird then launched itself,
with wings spread wide.
for a few feet in the air
and, once it alit on solid ground,
performed a sacrament
of neck stretching, bowing,
strutting, calling out and head-bobbing.

The bird who had watched
the performance most intently,
then joined in.
Others formed pairs,
went through a similar routine.
like they were getting up
some English country dance,
a Sir Roger De Coverley for brolgas.

The sun shined brightly on their backs
and scattered trees lent contrasting shadows.
What I can recall of it,
no doubt strips these actions of their true purpose,
to become more like a dream of my own making.
Yes, I dream it still.

I stayed until, courtship over or merely suspended,
they flapped their wings vigorously,
took off as ungainly as
their ceremony had been feather-smooth
before reclaiming grace in a wheeling, soaring flock
that disappeared beyond the hills.

I stepped out from behind my cover,
traversed their now-empty makeshift ballroom.
Never had solitude
felt so much like applause.

Keith Moul

On the Rocks HI 293 Oahu RTE 72



Thomas Piekarski

California Karma

On a sweaty-hot July afternoon,
City smog mixed with wildfire smoke,
The atmosphere dense enough to gag on,
There is fortunately an oasis, refuge

In the shade at the Capitol grounds.
I repose upon well-watered grass
Glowing green, amid a grand display
Of exotic trees from various continents.

The smoky air doesn't seem so thick
Here, as I meditate with legs crossed.
Pedestrian paths span the lush grounds
And visitors wander in every direction.

The whole northern half of our state
Enveloped in a veil of wildfire smoke.
Its concentration varies, depends
Primarily on prevailing winds.

Emancipated tourists immersed
In cell phone euphoria take pictures
In front of the Viet Nam memorial
As I glance over at the Capitol dome.

It has lately been suggested that poor
Water management is responsible
For fire tornadoes incinerating
Hundreds of thousands of acres.

Contemplating future disasters
I'm motivated to write a poem.
Its characters are historical figures
Acting out lives in the firmament.

Earth is running out of fresh water.
Soon there will be flooding of coastal
Cities, but nary a drop to drink.
Then panic could set in, even anarchy.

Movers, shakers and corporate raiders
Oppress, and yet we live languid lives
Clutching hope. I hope for a delta breeze
To waft upriver and blow smoke away.

Perhaps technology will rescue us,
Unworthy as humanity may be.
For persecution persists despite
Protests, our congress gridlocked.

An eco-friendly world within view,
Silicon Valley Edisons inventive.
But will they develop means to make
CO2 and methane miraculously vanish

Before man as a species is expunged
From a planet that would reclaim it?
Inasmuch as that strikes me
As the concern du jour, I reflect

And seek answers in actions of others.
For I'm but one man. Individually
My opinion means little if anything,
Especially when kept to myself.

We pursue truth or suffer consequences
No matter if it's circumstantial. I want
Truth and beauty to be inexorably bound
As I recline and watch citizens stroll,

And await the main event, impending
Massive release of karma. I'm ready
For my tectonic plates to rupture
And release Mother Nature's rapture.

John Grey

The Rowing Eight on the River

First watch the eight.
They row with such vigor,
such intensity,
with arms that never let up.
Every sinew is stretched
to breaking point
then released like
an archer's bowstring.
Each back is taut,
every eye as coldly fervent,
as a stalking cat's.
Each knuckle reddens
where oar handle
fights back against
human willpower.

Then watch the boat.
It glides as if there's no
propelling force involved
but breeze,
and the river surface
is an ally
not an adversary.

Then take in both together.
It's like that madly paddling,
smooth drifting duck,
only upside down.
It takes a lot of work
for there to be no work involved.
And there's pain behind
every moment of painlessness.
I lie back on the bank,
caught up in the contradictions.

A duck floats by.
He has no idea what I'm talking about.

Tiger Lilies

By

Terri Glass

Tiger Lilies. They grew only in one spot near the entrance to the woods of towering fir trees. Tiger Lilies. My body gravitated toward them like a bee. Their petals were dazzling: bright tangelo orange and perfectly curled back brushing up against the stem. Yellow stamens dangled from their center like little bell clappers. Their heads draped over their tall delicate stems as if they were in prayer, thanking the earth they could guard the entrance of the forest with their unabashed beauty. I was bewitched watching them wave among a field of summer grass growing weary from August heat.

And they grew right next to the Wild Columbine, a double treat for me when I was a child. For the Columbine contained sweet nectar in the pointed red tips of its spurs that I could pinch off with my fingers and suck out like a Pixie stick. I was willing to taste anything once: dog biscuits, elderberries, a blade of grass, but the sweetness of Columbine was an instant hit in the discoveries of what summer could bring.

Although the sweet tips of the Columbine were alluring, what really drew me to that edge of the woods was the Tiger Lily's color. Nothing else growing in the field was that shade of orange, nothing was delicately freckled with dark spots. They were an anomaly; they seemed tropical against the dark green and blue landscape of the

Douglas firs. They rearranged my visual field and turned my brain to mush. I bowed to the Tiger Lily every time I would find one. And they in turn bowed to the earth. The earth must have felt doubly happy at this innocent enterprise.

Yes, that color, orange wakes my eyes like sunrise itself. Orange is what I decided to wear at age 16 when I stole my father's car to go the junior class dance. I wore hot pants, and they were as orange as the juice Anita Bryant drank touting, "Breakfast without orange juice is like a day without sunshine."

The hot pants were so bright and short that my father would not let me go out of the house wearing them. But I snuck out that evening while he was hypnotized by the television set and drove off in the blue Ford Galaxie 500. I was a daredevil, a rule breaker, scene-stealer in my orange hot pants with white polka dots. Some kind of wild Tiger lily, but nothing happened at the dance. I paraded around, talked to a few boys and was back before my father awoke from snoring in his beige recliner.

For what makes a Tiger Lily special is not just that pizzazz of orange, but the contrasting dark spots. Can you imagine a tiger without its black stripes? Or a jack'o'lantern glowing in midday? No, contrast jazzes things up. And my hot pants were pretty jazzy, but the contrast of white polka dots made me innocent as a Creamsickle.

Tiger lily. The name suggests a fierce femininity. Tiger Lily is the name of the

Native American princess in *Peter Pan* who lives on the Island of Neverland. She is nearly killed by Captain Hook when she boards the *Jolly Roger* with a knife in her mouth. In Buddhism, Tiger Lily represents something softer: mercy, compassion and kindness. In some flower books, the flower means something entirely different: wealth and pride. But the flower seems spicier than that to me. One source of flower tattoo meanings states the Tiger Lily symbolizes, "I dare you to love me."

That is what the Tiger Lilies were saying as they made me stop before entering the forest: "I dare you to love me." And I loved those lilies, those luscious little scene-stealers of the summer fields. I loved them before I knew what love was, before a boy ever kissed me. I loved them because they tattooed the warmth of the sun in my heart and showered me with the curves of the earth. I loved their dark freckles that speckled me with surprise. I loved their reverent dainty heads bowing, bowing down and the earth drinking their prayers up like rainwater.

Meg Freer

Spring Trillium



Jared Pearce

Believable Lullabies

I want to hold her
Like a guitar, and her
Guitar music to
Hold me,

That between us
Harmony blooms
Like nicotiana which
Stops strangers who ask,

Why is this so beautiful?
It was planted in soil,
It was nurtured in sun,
It drank the rain and wind,

And when the moon
Brought her face to blow
Its trumpet, the flower's scent
Thrummed and plucked and sang.

Sunil Sharma

Beauty transient

The crimson leaf
Falls in slow motion
Early morning sun
Lighting up
Its golden body
Full of fine veins.
A tender thing
Now air-borne
It flies for few feet
Driven by the autumn wind
Of Mumbai.
Fluttering
It crosses the street
And then—
Mingles with the dust,
This kinetic piece
Of natural art
A creation of God
For the believers
In a mega city of
Gold-diggers and cynics.

Paul Bluestein

Cathedral

We stand at the threshold of the Cathedral of October,

one of the dozen calendared cathedrals

built within each circle of the moon.

Stained-glass windows of crayon-color leaves

and a vaulted dome of blue sky.

The sun is snared by the hands of the autumn clock

and pulled down from the afternoon sky too soon.

All of nature slowly turning away from summer but,

as lovers often do,

looking back one last time before leaving.

Linda M. Crate

& the beyond

the first snow fall
is the only one i like
because
the cold scarcely has ever
made me happy
with all its biting fangs and deep silence
the decay of flowers and plants,
and the scent of death and the sadness
of those who struggle with their
poverty;
i am emotionally drained in winter
as if the snow comes into my very bones
sucking straight from the marrow —
but that first snow fall
is something magical
a spell of soft white laughter that glitters
in the sun and beneath street lamps
when i walk home at night,
and there is no mud or dirt to mask the beauty
of it;
nor is there the exhaustion that comes when it lingers too long
just the pure simple song of the first snow
glimmering.

Elegy for my LPs

By

Meg Freer

I pick up each record, study it, read the liner notes, slide the disc out of its sleeve, and finally thank them all—for providing joy and continuity as they followed me around the continent.

I need the space; they need a true audiophile to appreciate them. Half I received new, as a child. The rest I bought used, out of my meager student income: an eclectic collection of mostly classical music. All are black vinyl except one, smaller and translucent reddish-pink, the colour of the inside of a beet, fittingly quirky for Poulenc. I almost keep that one.

One is the size of a 45 RPM and the only one that does not preserve music. It records Albert Einstein: “The great scientific genius discussing the most controversial issue of our times, “The Use of Atomic Energy.” I realize I misremembered the title as “The Use and Misuse of Atomic Energy.” Embossed on the back: Rare Records Incorporated, Collector’s Item, Immortal Voices, History Making Events. It seems irreplaceable so I keep it.

The stack of LPs I donate kindles a memory of the autistic boy who followed me around at community orchestra rehearsals and concerts. I seemed to be the only adult

there who talked to him and could see his musical soul.

I attach a note to each of the cases that hold the cold CDs containing hours of precious music in digital form. This gentle reminder reads: "Please handle this disc with care, dear, for it may have a tiny part of my musical soul burned into it." The vinyl never felt cold.

Hugh Cook

The Box

It doesn't matter, of course, whether
The box exists or not.
The artwork, those watercolored, dripping
Pastel peaches, and limes: The Sweet Life,

Those calligraphic lyrics
Aren't even mine, or
The Artists.

"I still have your stuff,
The art you made me, in a box."
I can picture each piece so clearly,
Each tribute to the momentary,
I feared my scribblings were ash, or just dust.

The little part of us,
In that box that still sings,
When you lose yourself in memory.
Those could only be ours,
Such old feelings,
Like smells immortalized
In a shirt.

Rasma Haidri

Trust

I kneel in the attic,
next to a box of little girl dresses,
feeling our impending goodbye.
No brain, I am only heart
and skin and breathing,
 staring at nothing,
not even an imagined
Kristiansand,
 till I see
in the flashlight beam,
a world of dust, swirling chaos,
specks like planets
flung from orbit,
massing, revolving back,
splitting into twos and threes
and lonely ones—
 and I know
I orchestrated
this music of spheres—

as I watch,
everything changes:
dust specks settle
 into one flow—
from solos to chorus,
and this too, I know
I conduct.

Marc Carver

Leaves

Sometimes the autumnal sun
shines on the trees for the last time
and you see the real beauty of things
you look in people sometimes too
looking for that same nature
that same beauty
surely it must be there
if only people could shed their leaves too
and start again.

Mary Buchinger

Mongolian Lamp

Today, I'm brooding about the brown broken lamp
brought whole from Mongolia by my student, his gift—
"Teachers are lamps" —six pounds; thick clay, fat wick.
Casualty of my move here to this new office, it lies
in jagged pieces on my windowsill. The morning carried
news of other ruinous moves, mockingbirds wintering
in New England, sugar maples on the march to Canada.
I brood, I brood, so brief the time I'm able to keep my arms
spread and lifted up. How heavy heaven's bound to be.

Antoni Ooto

Wabi-Sabi

The tree sheds its clothes
feeding the wind,
growing in the moment.

Time finds serenities...
the old gifts in wabi-sabi.

A traveler
with deep roots,
with imperfections,
newer, older
sways naked,
ever-changing skyward.

Edilson Ferreira

Friends, Land and Flowers

I am guilty of not having many loves
and so few being my friends.

I am a man of old-fashioned customs,
the one who hopes to be duly introduced
and then exchange a full conversation.

Forgotten refinement of the times of yore,
etiquette learned in the old social rites.

My friends are few, faithful and heartfelt,
not subject to those usual taps on the back,
easy laughs and feigned cuddling.

They are always austere, even stern,
but never fail when you need them.

Never accustomed to false praise
and empty words,
but prompt, effective and friendly deeds.

Like the land where I was born and raised,
dry plateaus and arid hills, narrow creeks
and honest meager sheaves by the harvest.

Stubborn trees that, unlike the others,
wait for the driest season to bloom,
naked even of leaves, find strength

to bring forth delicate yellow flowers,
resembling the pure and true gold.

Robert Wexelblatt

Memento Mori

There's a majesty in the dying year,
a tragic sepia-saturated
acceptance, a dignity beyond fear.

To beseeching Lycaon Achilles said
that one morning, noon, or night he'd be dead,
even he, the most invincible of men;
yet he couldn't say precisely how or when.

Prometheus must have believed in progress.
He gave us fire—medicine and metallurgy,
ships and shampoo—yet left us to guess
the date set for our death. He gave blind hope,
his last gift, condition of using the rest,
the boon of ignorance that helps us cope.
Progress? Sure, but not for him, not for those
who are chained and know they're food for crows.

Ever wonder, as you watch the final brown
oak leaves shed their branches and spiral down,
wake to first frost and think of all that's past,
whether this November will be the last?

Don Thompson

Illegible

The wind scribbles wisdom in the grass.
I want to understand what it says, of course,
But the handwriting's hopeless
And the language either dead or not yet born.

Juan Páez

Sámara de Fresno



* Leaf is from the town of Fresno, in the department of Tolima, Colombia.

Contributor Biographies

Paul Bluestein

Paul Bluestein has written poetry for years, but has only recently begun to submit his work. He is a physician by profession (still practicing), a self-taught musician (still practicing) and a dedicated Scrabble player (yes, ZAX is a word). He writes poetry when The Muse calls him unexpectedly and rings insistently until he answers, even if he doesn't want to talk to her just then. Nonetheless, he finds it exhilarating to be a new arrival to the world of poetry, a Stranger in a Strange Land.

Mary Buchinger

Mary Buchinger is the author of three collections of poetry: *e i n f ü h l u n g/in feeling*(2018), *Aerialist* (2015) and *Roomful of Sparrows* (2008). She is President of the New England Poetry Club and Professor of English and Communication Studies at MCPHS University in Boston. Her work has appeared in *AGNI*, *Diagram*, *Gargoyle*, *Nimrod*, *PANK*, *Salamander*, *Slice Magazine*, *The Massachusetts Review*, and elsewhere; her website is www.MaryBuchinger.com.

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 is the author of two collections of poetry, *Something Yet to Be Named* and *What Caught Raven's Eye*. Kersten also serves as the poetry editor of the quarterly journal *Alaska Women Speak*. When not teaching, she can be found somewhere in the Yukon.

Hugh Cook

Hugh Cook attends University of Santa Barbara, California, studying Writing and Literature. His poetry has been published in *Tipton Poetry Journal* and *The Catalyst* literary arts magazine.

Linda M. Crate

Linda M. Crate is an author, poet, and writer from Pennsylvania. Her works have appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies both online and in print. She is the author of five published chapbooks, a microchap, and the novel *Phoenix Tears* (Czykmate Books, June 2018).

Edilson Ferreira

A Brazilian poet, Mr. Ferreira, 75, writes in English rather than in Portuguese. Largely published in international journals in print and online, he began writing at age 67. He was nominated for the Pushcart Prize 2016. His first Poetry Collection – *Lonely Sailor* – is coming soon, scheduled to be launched in London, November 29th 2018, with one hundred poems. He blogs at www.edilsonmeloferreira.com.

Meg Freer

Meg Freer grew up in Missoula, Montana and now lives in Kingston, Ontario. She has worked as an editor and currently teaches piano and music history. She enjoys being outdoors year-round, playing the piano and running. Her award-winning poems and photos have been published in various journals and anthologies.

Terri Glass

Terri Glass is a writer of the natural world and former director of California Poets in the Schools. She is the author of three books of poetry and recent an e-book about the history of haiku, *The Wild Horse of Haiku*. Her work has appeared in *About Place*, *Young Raven's Literary Review*, *Fourth River*, *California Quarterly* and many anthologies including *Fire and Rain: Ecopoetry of California* and *Earth Blessings*. She holds an MFA in creative writing from USM. See www.terriglass.com

John Grey

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident. Recently published in the *Homestead Review*, *Poetry East* and *Columbia Review* with work upcoming in *Harpur Palate*, the *Hawaii Review* and *North Dakota Quarterly*.

Rasma Haidri

Rasma Haidri grew up in Tennessee and makes her home on the arctic seacoast of Norway. She is the author of *As If Anything Can Happen* (Kelsay, 2017) and three college textbooks. Her writing has appeared in literary journals including *Nimrod*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Sycamore Review*, and *Fourth Genre* and has been widely anthologized in

North America, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. She is a current MFA candidate at the University of British Columbia and serves as a reader for the Baltic Residency program. Awards for her work include a Vermont Studio residency, the Southern Women Writers Association emerging writer award in creative non-fiction, the Wisconsin Academy of Arts, Letters & Science poetry award, and a Best of the Net nomination. Visit her at www.rasma.org.

Keith Moul

Keith Moul is a poet of place, a photographer of the distinction of place. Both his poems and photos are published widely. His photos are digital, striving for high contrast and saturation, which makes his vision colorful. <http://poemsphotosmoul.blogspot.com/>

Antoni Ooto

Antoni Ooto is a poet and flash fiction writer. He has been a frequent contributor to *Palettes and Quills*, and has also been published in *An Upstate of Mind*, *Amethyst Review*, and *Front Porch Review*. He lives and works in upstate New York with his wife, writer/storyteller, Judy DeCroce.

Juan Páez

Juan Páez was born in Palmira, Colombia, in 1973 and focuses on scientific and children's illustration. With an M.A. in semiotics from the Tadeo University, Bogotá, he teaches drawing and visual appreciation at the district university in Bogotá, where he lives and bases much of his work. His work is faithful to the traditional notion of graphic drawing, but with a flexible style that is often inspired by the natural world and organic forms. Contact information: caudapodo@gmail.com

Jared Pearce

Some of Jared Pearce's poems have recently been or will soon be shared in *Picaroon*, *Southword*, *Wilderness House*, *Triggerfish*, and *Valley Voices*. His collection, *The Annotated Murder of One* is just released from Aubade. (www.aubadepublishing.com/annotated-murder-of-one).

Thomas Piekarski

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

epic adventure *Ballad of Billy the Kid* is available on Amazon in both Kindle and print versions.

Stephen Register

Stephen Register is a Track and Field coach at Cumberland University, graduate of Yale University and Belmont University, and author of the military memoir *Meantime: The Aesthetics of Soldiering*.

Sunil Sharma

Sunil Sharma is an academic and author-freelance journalist from the suburban Mumbai, India. He has published 19 books: solo and joint. He edits *Setu*:
<http://www.setumag.com/p/setu-home.html>

Don Thompson

Don Thompson has been writing about the San Joaquin Valley for over fifty years, including a dozen or so books and chapbooks. For more info and links to publishers, visit his website at www.don-e-thompson.com.

Dennis Trujillo

Dennis Trujillo is a former US Army soldier and middle/high school math teacher from Pueblo, Colorado. In 2010 he spontaneously began writing poetry not knowing where the spark came from. Since then his poems have appeared in more than seventy magazines, journals, and anthologies including *Atlanta Review*, *KYSO Flash*, and *Sacred Cow*. In 2016 he received nominations for both a Pushcart Prize and a Best of the Net award.

Robert Wexelblatt

Robert Wexelblatt is a professor of humanities at Boston University. He has published five fiction collections; two of essays; two short novels; essays, stories, poems in a variety of journals, and a novel awarded the Indie Book Awards first prize for fiction. A collection of Chinese and another of non-Chinese stories are forthcoming.