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YOUNG RAVENS

Literary Review





Young Ravens Literary Review

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Introduction

True story—

One rainy day when I was very young, a strong gust of wind caught my umbrella. For just a second or so, I was lifted perhaps a foot off the ground. My father quickly pushed me back down to earth, yet for many years after, I dreamed of flying high over the playground.

But as I grew older, sometimes I wondered if I had just imagined escaping skyward.

However, decades later when we were both adults, my youngest sister confessed that she had always been envious after witnessing my brief airborne moment. So, she would hold her umbrella up into the wind hoping for the sky to defy gravity and take her far and away, too.

Maybe we all feel the tug of a breeze in our bones sometimes.

S.E. Page, Co-editor

Michael Moreth

Unwavering



Carol Barrett

Lying Down on This Earth

for Rick Benjamin

I am falling in love with another poet
I really should stop this swooning on the page,
sand on the printed beach between my toes,
the breath of a stranger coming near like a bird
sudden in the vast sky, the whoosh of wings
my eyes astonished, so much beauty
in the world the very moment the voice
comes to me, my father calling, yes, once more,
though he has been buried at the feet
of rhododendrons some years now,
the memory of his voice rushing into bloom
on a day following a torrent of rain

and this stranger on the page knows it, and
loves me back just a little, the exchange
between us one of air and bird and leaf,
the knowledge of what it is to be alive
sudden as a feather rocking
in a windy fall, my chin lifted
to the sky, arms ready to receive
the certainty of one more turn
of phrase, one more thing
we both know, and there
it is, the connection breathing
back, pungent as the pitch
of an old pine, when a limb
is cut away, and the living
circles engrained in the wood
weep their quiet loss.

Holly Payne-Strange

My Place

There's a pull to this place,
To the wide, sweeping desert,
peppered with sagebrush and dusted with reptiles.

But the real siren's call comes from the trees.
The fallen trees, made rainbow crystal by chance and time.
Let's be honest, how is that
Not
Magic?

The signs say
Please do NOT take the petrified rocks.

Of course not.
This is not a place to be taken from.

It's a place to sacrifice.
A blackhole,
In which to leave snakeskin and sighs,
To bake under the hot sun
Until some transformation has taken place,
Grapes squashed and squeezed into wine,
An unforgiving cacophony of creation.

That's important, sometimes.
Sometimes,
With chance and magic,
When mighty things fall,
They become
Better.

Decay made beautiful
By the whims of nature.

Who could resist?

Michael Sofranko

**Over the Edge of Our Wooden Boat,
You Look into Your Reflection**

I wonder about all things
That live under the surface

Where the milfoil leans
Towards shafts of sunlight

And schools of small fish
Rise to be fed.

Under the influence
Of an enormous silence

Everything in the universe
Speaks to you.

The trees seem to whisper
When the wind blows.

At other times
The stillness is their song.

Vanessa Niu

unread notifications from: unknown number

at our root we must balance this
profound knowing (eyes meeting from
across the room, caught mid-laugh mid-joke
between separate conversations like a film
still, half a second of complete knowing—
i see you—i am being seen—the feeling that,
for half a second, each other's laughs
mirrored as though through wormhole;
does it hurt? this being known? how
voraciously have we been waiting to simply
be looked at by another who understands
the universal immateriality—this flesh “or
other” substance clinging to the branching
of nerves reflecting the cosmic web in a
dust particle, who happened upon
consciousness as a child spotting an intact
shell in the oceanic debris of the beach—
how long have you been waiting, my friend?
my stranger? my captain my president my
sailer? to be home, whatever it
means? the *i must know you* never makes it
out of the tongue. aristotelian tragedy in
three acts; *i see you, pass you, away.*)
and this profound ignorance (the scent
of a stranger who walks past on the street,
*i could know this smell, i could live or die
in it*, lost in the exhaust fumes of rolling
engines. the holding of breaths as stranger
passes stranger captain sailor, who each
thinks of their exhausted loneliness
and in the pit of their stomach is
determined to think loneliness is the
byproduct of the aloneness of feeling. the
holding of breaths and tongues, *i am not
seen. i am blind as cupid as colonizer upon
ancient soil.* the forgetting of family and
the blooming branches of each mirroring
the cosmic web. each brandishing cosmic
immateriality like swollen tear glands like
unfurling sunflower petals beneath the
prophecy of explosion; *i see you, pass you,*

away.)

Philip Jason

**As I pick the paw paw from the tree,
the slow ripples in the bark remind me
of certain religiosities**

It is strange how conversations about sin
rarely overlap with conversations
about the physics involved
in harvesting fruit. To me,

gravity is a moral inspiration, the way
it pulls on the smallest particle of dust
with the same vigor it employs
when reaching for the paw paw.

The universe, on the other hand,
is scamming us all. It's not expanding;
it's falling toward nowhere.
Hard to blame it. Being clever

is exhausting. I am just one speck, but still
I watch the tree limb bend toward me
like a miracle is happening
even though my hand is on the branch.

Mandy Ramsey

Ravens in the Mist



David Summerfield

The Place I take Flight

The green wood table with red delicious, waxed apples, purple silk chrysalises resting in a wicker basket is the runway of imagination and inspiration from which I take flight every morning. There is a soft dark in the kitchen like a gentle fog when I enter that is not foreboding but embracing. There is only the sound of my slippered feet like cat feet on the hardwood floor as they carry me lightly, a little unsteadily to my swivel chair, a Big Lots special with a paper-thin cushion which I fall into with a resigned swoosh.

I awaken the screensaver. Its sudden brightness stabs my eyes. As I contemplate writing the screensaver goes blank again. I swirl the mouse and the screen comes back to life. I peer bleary-eyed into the glass at its current motif of great coral reefs under a blue sky, until a tide of inspiration comes, a temporary barrier between me and the task at hand.

The percolating scent of dark roast permeates the room it finishes I pour my favorite cup. As the cup empties my fingers go to the keyboard like the controls of an airplane, I take flight.

An article I read described the known duration of Earth as one year, man's known existence as the last ten minutes, actual recorded history the last few seconds. If it were true then like Thoreau at Walden Pond locked in my own quiet struggle to do what I must, I could only think what a minute and finite struggle it was to know however productive, or fruitful my life might be or become, it would only be a bare speck, a nanosecond of time in the known universe.

Still, my fingers fly to the keyboard like heat-seeking missiles begin to type and clack as if by some guided force, like Patton's third army never yielding, in the same defiant way, I keep writing imagining, keep flying.

Joseph A Farina

traced in shadow

in twilight
as the moon rises
and the sun sets
you can see
the alignments of planets
you can feel the pull
of astral houses
rising as you stand
in your gravity
held fast by the near nightfall
and the slow escape
of light

Jonathan Ponder

Eastern Washington

The Blue Mountains, spread low and tapered like feet
hiding the horizon, are barely a memory until I place them
into the day I realized it was possible to not believe,

felt this drop through and split. I left to hike those hills
outside the cloistered mind, seeking the body lost
between my feet and my thoughts in the sky. Then

the slow turn from story through doctrine to the break
from stable language and rule to poetry and books,
until the daily mosaic of prayer and ritual and cross

could no longer comfort and no longer explain
the loss of a friend or the distance of God. And yet
I walked many more years before I confessed this.

Agnes Vojta

Gravity is Honest

As days grow shorter
and nights cooler,
a surge of energy rushes
through the garden:

grass blades stretch,
moisture shoots into the tips
of the tomato leaves.
The basil goes to seed.

In parting, summer pushes
the last fruit towards ripening.
Fall as a metaphor for aging?
That has been done before;

there's nothing that hasn't
been said. Trees shed leaves.
Water trickles downhill.
Gravity is honest.

Because Earth's axis tilts,
we get less sunlight. That's all.
Seasons don't happen
for spiritual insight

but by accident: a cosmic
collision knocked Earth off-kilter.
It also created the moon.
We can seek a metaphor

in that, too. Or just observe
the forces that make galaxies
spiral and black holes coalesce.
And marvel that we exist at all.

Matthew Praxmarer

Advice for Squirrels

Do not dive haphazard
Through life, unknowing
To what branch your aim
Is to jump. Instead first see
The acorn hanging supercilious
Yet dainty---take it:

Make Great Leaps!

Yet despite lofty prizes
And sure footing,
Be ready dear friend
For midair twists
And turns.

It is not always easy:
The very next tree.

Stephen Mead

Pan Laughs

Pan laughs through the stars & leaves shivering silver
during an eclipse not at all catastrophic.
The predictions' pale & no pall, this, only kindness
here in the statuary solace of these iron angel posts
against this brownstone.

Oh cellar windows of high heels & fronds,
where are the gargoyles & griffins of midsummer night?

In streets such as these, in jungles, even farms
throughout all timelessness, so many hopes set high
went to half-mast before.

Long the voyage of that Eros-chimera still sparkling
beyond war's grit & harsh lack, the gray winding veil
over those lands shadows petrify.

Dawn comes & the moon pulls its gravity in.
The Earth's poles are physics of poetry
sprinkling quarks, phloem, cells.

God, the universe was never missing nor mad—
Sprites in geometrics shoot their arrows to laugh at
the tandem abandon knows.

Kelly DuMar

Warrior Heart



Holly Payne-Strange

My Garden

Fingers in cold earth
Roots digging in deep.

Roses deserve more credit than they get,
A burst of life, rising up, fighting gravity
And ending in a beacon of beauty.

Demeter guides my hands as I garden,
As earth flows around me
And spells whirl into petals.

What a triumph it is, to grow.
To rise up,
The wealth of mint gone mad, cascading over everything,
Or the memory of rosemary, tough little spikes fighting against frost.

Life is power,
It is the hum of the universe,
A crescendo of enchantment
That connects and binds.
An unending chain
Since the Greeks settled at Delphi.

My hands cramp as night falls,
And a breeze wriggles down my neck.
I should go inside, I know.
But I think I want just a little part of me to rise up,
Like my rose,
Gasping into the unknown.

It's where I found Her, after all.
I have much to thank Demeter for.

Isaac James Richards

Hiking

The place where / neck meets shoulder /
a bend in the river / or the rising of ravine /
that taut parabola / slope changing / with /
the elevation / gain / rivulets of blood /
tracing tendon paths / tension / easing /
through the underbrush / a pheasant /
weaving left and right / releasing little meeps /
for popped ears / open to waterfall roars /
loud as insight / the line between /
body and mind / earth and space / settles /
as a willow bows / toward reflection /
the pull of gravity / on backpack straps /
against trapezoids / where we carry /
stress / puts us in a permanent shrug /
toward this incomprehensible world /
relaxing / loosening / smoothing /
arcing toward / peaks piercing /
the sky of / a galactical asymptote /

Craig Kirchner

I know what you're thinking

It really is hard to figure,
how all these moving parts
stay well-coordinated enough,
to get me from the kitchen
to the dining room.

Especially since as they say,
deep down it's mostly just space,
which is so easily misdirected,
jarred, blown about, whisked
into different shapes and sizes.

The suction of a quickly opened
bedroom door opens the bathroom door
alongside of it, which significantly
disturbs the cobweb in the corner,
at the other end of the apartment.

I know what you're thinking.
*He's worried about the space
between his protons, and how suction
may affect his walking while he
has a spider camping in the living room.*

Darsie Bowden

Gravity

I ordered a gravity-free chair to put out on the deck. It was an impulse buy.

I barely stopped to wonder what a “gravity-free” chair was. An innovation, a liberating event, an oxymoron?

I just wanted to lie back at night to watch the stars, and then on very clear nights, observe the movement of comets. I imagined reclining without being limited by the gravitational pull of the objects around me, without restraints. During the day, I could float over the railing of the wooden deck with its peeling paint, past the blue jay poking furiously at the birdfeeder and past the azaleas in bloom, then move up through the cypress trees with their raggedy bare branches, damaged in a winter windstorm.

And then things would really start to change, as I sail over the fir trees out into the bay, then skim across the water like a loon, before rising up over the hilltop with the ease and grace of a cheetah in motion. By then my trajectory might be buffeted by gusts of unearthly wind, and I might run into the debris orbiting the earth in the upper air. Later, moving through the outer atmosphere, I might hit my head on abandoned rocket parts, and then maybe star dust. I might run out of oxygen. And have to live on Mars.

But apparently there is no such thing as anti-gravity. It is an appealing fiction, hypothetical, like a hypothetical strategy to live a good life or an abstract solution to help people out of poverty or a plan to end wars. In the world we live in, things with mass attract each other, and thus are tethered and grounded. Our life in the physical world becomes so complicated. We must attend to tides, to how we balance ourselves when we walk, to apples that could fall on our heads from trees.

And then the gravity-free chair arrived, in an ordinary brown box. It was quite heavy and difficult to remove from the carton. I dragged it out to the deck, bumping it along, dislodging the rug. The chair unfolded easily, and I installed the plastic drink-holder to the side. I positioned myself on the chair to test it out. I leaned back, reclining the chair, which raised up my legs. And in an instant, I could feel the pull of the earth, not burdensome like a heavy chain, but a gentle, unrelenting pull, like from arms in an embrace.

Later that night, I put a drink in the holder, threw a blanket over my legs, and sat back in the chair. It was a moonless night, and I waited for my eyes to become accustomed to the dark. Then there were stars, their positions fixed within the blackness. And I found myself gradually reassured by how intensely conjoined we are to the earth.

Meg Freer

Feet Fly



Mykyta Ryzhykh

Poems without Titles

Why do we need a church if a butterfly is not hiding in its attic?
A young cat plays with its shadow and tries to take off

Why do we need a tree if you and I will not stand in its shadow?
Our heart, one for two, is torn from overload

I'm walking down the path from home
Bells are ringing inside your ears

The round earth makes the way endless
Round earth paves the way back home

Forest temple on a cat's window sill
Autumn plays with the senses with predators and prey

The sky above forgives everything
The sky above is merciless

Dampness in the nostrils
Leaves fall from the trees
Birds are falling from the sky

Summer sand in hands
Prayer in silent hands
The silence of the beginning and the end

Roger Singer

Sometime Night

in the distance
a passing train
releases its name
over a
midnight village
where
a blinking yellow
traffic light
speaks to an
empty road
and gray
streetlight shadows
until morning,
when breezes
drift to a
distant place,
stirring laundry
and flags

Jonathan Ponder

Normandy Coast

A patchwork of fields embedded with the memory of war
and of so many seasons, so many bird songs,
that it would never occur to a soldier, or maybe

anyone, to count them. The day that I rode a bicycle
along the coast and rainstorms blew in and out all day--
when I sheltered against ruined stone walls

and inside old gun emplacements facing the sea,
ate Camembert cheese and baguette for lunch,
and imagined the soldiers alone, firing at thoughts--

that day began with family breakfast in a youth hostel,
a mosaic of languages and accents, of unspoken memories
and plans singing inside each parachuting heart.

Holly Payne-Strange

That Time in the Woods

When we walked through the woods,
I swear
I floated.

The moon's pull was far too strong,
Lifting me above the crunch of the leaves
To glide,
Next to you.

At least that's how it felt.
After months apart
We matched our step together
And spoke the same words in unison,
Giggling soft, like stars flickering behind clouds.

The woods have a magic like that,
An ease.
They allow you to let go of everything holding you down,
To dance
To dodge between the branches and saunter across the logs,
As if some rolling mist,
Happy to traverse a wild landscape,
To go into that rocky unknown.

Unconcerned with the easy path
Interested only in the beautiful.

Sarah Das Gupta

A Spring Tide

Earth lies held between
the pull of Sun and Moon.
In this spatial tug of war,
earth's oceans are trapped,
by Apollo's chariot
and the bow of Artemis.
In petulant, watery protest,
the waves leap ever higher.

The tide is rising
waves crash in fury,
over the sea wall,
surging, trespassing,
along the empty promenade.
Shells are thrown high,
caught in lizard tongues
of foam, licking clean
pebbles and shards of shingle.

In the full moon, the light
rides on the white crests
rolling shoreward,
frilly, frivolous white lace
on the dark muscle
of heaving water.

Waves pound over rocks,
Moon beams light a path,
over the wild waves,
Lighthouses vanish in foam,
ships are tossed,
water streams over the gunnels.

Then days of calm
till the moon
is new again.

DS Maolailai

The storm

rain comes down clattering
like a cat on piano keys

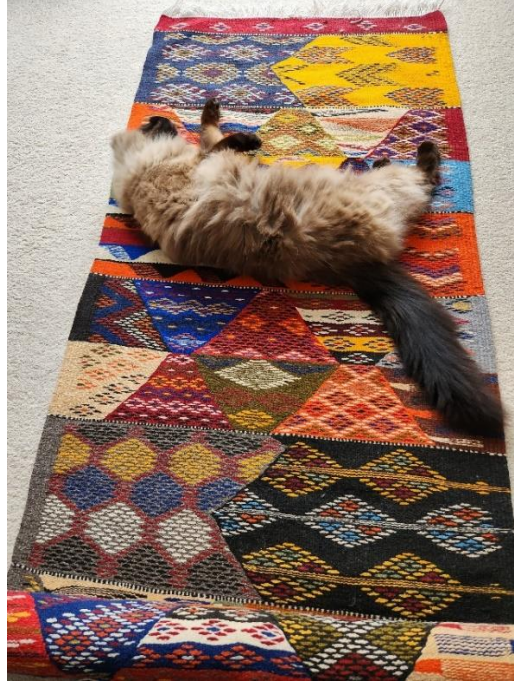
and we are on foot,
we are shifting a second-
hand wardrobe down-
hill from the Liberties,
over the bridge
into Smithfield.

it's been threatening
all day like this
rain: something
in atmosphere – hot and scotch-
tapish sticky. light fills
with the warm weight
of waking to underwashed
eiderdowns. and now

heat is breaking.
clouds chime
four o'clock.

John Delaney

Carpets



Moroccan magic, woven in the rug,
elicits from the cat a kind of whimsy.
He throws himself down and rolls around
ecstatically, stretching through a slew of poses.

Called “Sand Dunes,” waves of vibrant colors weave
through the runner. Their patterns ripple
like winds moving dunes across the Sahara,
grain by grain, sand powdered in the sun.

I imagine the weaver in her village home,
during the many months she worked on this,
was imagining, too, rolling in dunes
as a youth again, turning each second over.

From loom to room, the mind rides a magic carpet.

Every rug has a story. Bought in Marrakesh, this contemporary Berber rug is made from wool and vegetable dyes. It comes from a village in the “high” region of the Atlas Mountains.

Anne Whitehouse

Steady

There are ways of being steady—
unmoving, like a rock,
or in an even motion,
like metronome or clock.

Practicing balance, like a tree
rooted and branching.
With intention, I found my place
and held it, trembling.

Another form of steadiness
is simply not to fall.
Be ready to flee or stay.
Change happens to us all.

George Freek

The Past is Always With Us

The night is like frosted glass.

I gaze at the moon,

as wind rustles dead leaves

in snow-covered grass.

In this cold world

I'm lost in memories

of friends who are gone,

of joys that couldn't last.

Alone, the stars surround me

like a cocoon,

spun by the mutilated moon,

those stars which replace the sun

with their dim light,

as they're extinguished

one by one.

Michael Sofranko

On Learning to Live Without You

for Linda

I received a message
I never returned
In time.

Then you never returned
At all.

I cannot erase
Your voice.

Years ago, when I stood behind you
On a cliff as you faced the Pacific

The wind howling onshore
Blew your words
Into my ears.

They rang like two shells
With the sound of the Sea

Inside them.
It never stopped.

When the wind whipped back
your hair
I moved closer

So that wisps of it
Would play against my face.
We were dreamers then.

Now I have a message
I never returned
In time.

And you, who will never
Return at all.

No guitar. No song at dusk.

No prayer inside
The small locked box I keep.

I am losing you slowly.
I am losing you
Over & over.

Under several layers
Of blankets,
I listen to the bayou,

Full of the wailing lament
Of everything living

In the false spring.
And I still hope to find you

In the unreadable murmur
Of insects, screeching of their needs
Through the canopy of trees.

Casey Killingsworth

Time and the girl who got killed

I saw a coyote walk straight through
our night vision camera carrying
the mystery of the world,
something so wild cruising through
town like a four-legged Chevy.

Yes, the mystery of the world is still
alive. Consider the judgments we
hand down when a girl dies and
the boy driver gets sent to some sort
of rehab center as if he will come out
understanding death.

Consider the bureaucrat at the job office
who lectured me because I didn't know
how to fill in the part that asks
for your middle name.

Well, I don't have a middle name I
told him, and I've never been to any rehab
but I know that girl isn't coming
back and I know that coyote will come
back. They always come back.

Casey Killingsworth

Looking out towards Long Island

Mail your friend who lost a son some bread
every once in a while. Never gets easy, easier.

Get back to him when he thanks you,
answer your phone when he calls,

look at the pictures he sends of his new house
that looks out towards Long Island.

Look around your own life and find
something there you too can hold on to,

something to squeeze that will remind you
that you have your kids to call up whenever,

that you can just call up your kids
for no reason, whenever.

Isaac James Richards

Ache

—after *Lisa Bickmore*

There's not always a cause—
that would be too fair. It appears
inside the squares we draw
for ourselves, no matter how hard

we try to keep it out. Then there's
the timing—always when least
expected, but not always when
it seems likely. I, for example,

did not anticipate a visitation
on Sunday afternoon, mid-summer
after a brownie and ice cream
just before a nap, sunshine filtering

through the blinds, casting shadowy
lines on the bed, crossing the
creases in the sheets, white as
sunlight. That's when it jumped

like a cricket at the window,
bouncing off, stung by its failure
to recognize the violence hiding
in that transparency, but that's

usually how it goes: openings
can as soon be rigid as they can
be freeing. And who would think
a sunny summer afternoon, after

eat and drink, and before sleep
could be a moment that manifests
the weightless gravity of this world—
the illusion that has us all mistaking

glass for air, and panes for pain.

Gerard Sarnat

Dysbiosis* Looming

Under strange gravity
of the Anthropocene era,
clinical medicine's grand
design has just begun to feel
more than a little bit weightless.

Apocalyptic natural world forecasts
are rendered with increasing urgency
recently, formalized as an “ecoanxiety”
mental health diagnosis that pathologizes
existential questions vulnerable to upcoming
upheavals — climate depression, environmental
grief and futilitarianism: during some rudderless moments,
I write using rising tide metaphors which function as convenient
metonyms for climate change's comprehensive human disruption.

For clinicians who feel especially steady on their feet, expressions
of ecologic nihilism might sound premature, hyperbolic, or perhaps
too literary. Equanimity, after all, is an ideal that many docs are taught
to strive for, the regulation of internal thermostats detached from one's
immediate surroundings...Still, every set point is prone to dysregulation.

*Blaser, MJ. “Fecal Microbiota Transplantation for Dysbiosis — Predictable Risks.”
New England Journal of Medicine, 21 November 2019.

George Freek

The Remains

Summer's flowers are gone.

All that's left are

the decaying remains.

The trees have been bare

for months. I don't remember

when leaves were there.

In my garden, a hammock,

creaks in a bitter wind,

as winter approaches in clumsy boots.

A lone crow sits in a tree.

I yell at him. He ignores me.

I speak to my elderly cat.

I speak to the moon and stars.

As is their way,

They have nothing to say.

I try to recall the aroma of roses.

It smells sweet,

but I can't make it stay.

Bart Edelman

My Brother, Broken

I want to ask my brother,
Why he is so broken;
Why he has no more sky in him,
Just ground to swallow
What's left of his days.

My sister-in-law tells me
I shouldn't pry, again.
Let him be as he is.
There's nothing left to figure out.
He went off the deep end,
Then withdrew, simple as that,
Before she cuts our phone call short.

Three thousand crooked miles
Now stretch between the boy
I shared a bedroom with and me.
Maybe childhood wasn't so trouble-free.
Perhaps, what I perceived as normal
Turned sinister, and I'm clueless.

Each night, in the dark of sleep,
I take yet another step
On the road home to my brother.
But I'm not wearing proper shoes,
And the laces come easily undone,
As if they're willing to explain.

Vern Fein

Life and Dark

A huge hawk flew across my mind.
The accident flung every detail
aside—how much yogurt to buy—
I was writing a grocery list
when the call came—
stars thrown into a sky so black
I can't even see the dull light
points of your life anymore.

My mind fell limp, like
watching someone drown
when I can't swim a lick,
or plunging into a cave
with bats, moon and sun
obliterated all at once.

The hawk drags away words—
leaves nothing to say.

Lisa Ashley

Night Sky

When I was young and our son was small
you painted the heavens on his bedroom ceiling
in fluorescent paint so the stars would shine all night

and now when I am old and filled with fierce pain
you clean the house and hang the laundry,
wash the dishes every night and you say

that's fair since I cook our dinner
and this love you hold for me is a boundless miracle
like the night sky I cannot do without.

Philip Jason

**You and I are living in the space the hot star gases made for themselves and
all we can do is mash ourselves into each other one fist at a time**

The wailing fox that stalks itself in the woods behind my house

attempts to give me advice:

Do not let adversity make you feel special, it says

Do not let your petals pave the way for rotten fruit

It reminds me of the gases dying in the stars and their
elemental corpses, which line the universe like lipstick.

Then it tries to tell me that Gravity is a spasm in the lumbar spine

of stellar history; I wail back No, it is the anger we feel

because everything is leaving us!

Oh my, how the disbelief is visible

in the custard of the fox's fur (it shares

a certain glamour

with the face you wear

after I offer you the salted drops of rain that fall

from the secrets you keep), but hey,

I am not a scientist, I am just someone

who cannot fly. And

my knuckles hurt

as I think of how far away you will be

when the universe is finally perfect.

Meg Freer

La grande roue—Montréal



David Milley

Galileo's Umbrella

Gall and fret, adhere and stick:
when two metal pieces touch,
airless, unrudded, unrudded,
they're hard to pull apart.

Here on earth, thin enough
gold wires merge on touch.
Cold welds, so used, make
delicate detonators.

Parents align children
to live lives by design.
Progeny marry plans,
cold welds on airless worlds.

When *Galileo* reached Jupiter,
its antenna – umbrella
packed closed for flight –
the big dish could not open,

cold welded. Still, the job got done.
Fail-safe sensors felt their way.
Then, eye shut tight, *Galileo* sank,
plunged to a hydrogen grave.

Terry Cox-Joseph

DNR

Guilt. That medieval pot
of oil carried
on shoulders should be free of
constraint, free to assist arms
that wave and hug. Trough
of waste, tether to misery.
What evolution fashioned
with thread, culpability locked,
bolted, sealed.
Useless unless acted upon,
shroud to conceal
every wisp of laughter.
How to release it,
how to unshoulder
its weight? Ask the songbird,
the cabbage moth, the dragonfly.
Observe their foraging, purposeful.
Contact fleeting and sure. Departure
swift. Listen to their buzzes
and chirps,
sounds that dance through
poplar limbs,
travel with electricity of joy.
Practice in the morning,
when blades of grass
festooned with dew reflect sunlight.
Practice at noon, when heat intensifies
the buzzing of cicadas. Practice in the
afternoon, when shadows slide like
ink across your toes. Practice
inhaling until your lungs fill with
hope, no room for anything but life.
Practice.
And practice.
And let go.

Lisa Ashley

Evanescent

What rides

on a snowflake

dust particles or pollen adrift

riding a crystal drop

steady slow

nowhere

in particular to go

snow angel

tick tick tick

in the hush flakes touch down

fugitive they fall.

Diana Raab

Mourning Before Death

we sit by the river
and like the flow of water
that hasn't flowed in decades
my eyes become filled with tears.

At ninety-two, my mother is dying
reclined in someone else's
brown vinyl chair, drooping orchids on windowsill.
television blaring nonsensical dialogue
which she no longer hears,
black and white cat on coral
bed cover, the same color of her horse
which I made her stop riding at eighty
after a concussion.

she wears the floral dress i bought her,
photos of her great grandchildren
along the perimeter of her mirror, names
and birthdays she doesn't care to know.

yesterday she showed me her breast
and I saw cancer eating at her
like the heartbreak she had
in her youth with fighting parents

and all her lost loves—rivers of tears
flowed her entire life.
and I ponder how we are our childhoods,
and also how different we both are
and always sat beside different rivers.

David M. Schulz

To Be Near Her Like Water

We were in our kitchen,
By the stove,
When my wife kissed my nose.

Ripples spread across my face
Like a smile.

Oh, to be near her
Like water for awhile,
Like water in a clear
Quart jar. She is sand

drift.....ing
down,
glisten.....ing
crystalline,
set.....tling
upon
spar.....kling
light
of.....memory

Until shaken by the whistling of
Tea-kettle steam.

William Cass

Frames

My sister, Eleanor, didn't start giving frames for bereavement gifts until a co-worker's mother died. Her co-worker was the receptionist on their hospital unit for medically fragile children and, like Eleanor, was in her mid-fifties. She'd lived with and cared for her mother for many years and kept a small photo of her taped to the upper corner of her computer screen. While she was out on bereavement leave, Eleanor fitted the photo into the frame she bought, then left it with a sympathy card on her desk. The woman was so touched by the gesture that Eleanor continued to do the same whenever someone she knew lost a loved one.

Eleanor and I lived together in the brick house our parents bequeathed to us. Two years older than me, Eleanor had never been married or in a serious relationship, and neither had I. We resembled each other: plain-featured, overweight, unattractive. She was her unit's social worker, and I worked as a reference librarian. We led a simple, companionable life together. We had no pets, took turns cooking, shared household duties, and enjoyed the same British detective shows on PBS at night before turning in early to read. Eleanor liked knitting, gardening, and doing yoga, while I filled my free time woodworking, playing online chess, and taking long walks through our neighborhood.

The second time I can remember her giving a bereavement frame wasn't too much later than the first. It occurred when our next door neighbor's husband passed away. They'd lived next to us since we were children, and Eleanor must have signed both of our names to the card because the old woman thanked each of us with teary-eyed appreciation. Eleanor told me afterwards she'd explained the gift's intention in the card.

Over the next several years, she gave frames to our mailman, the checker at the corner grocery, and a cousin living across the country who we never saw but with whom we exchanged Christmas cards. The frames were always small, 3x5 or 4x6, and made of brushed nickel. She purchased them online and began keeping a supply on hand that she stored above the cereal boxes in our pantry.

When my head librarian at work had to put down his ancient dog, she sent me with a card and frame for him. She gave one to a nurse on an adjoining hospital unit whose teenaged son drove drunk into a tree, as well as to our dentist when his wife committed suicide. Old friends she stayed in touch with on Facebook got them; so did next of kin in the local obituaries with whom she was acquainted. Over the ensuing years, she did the same for many more people, some of whom she knew only passably well; I lost count of the total number. Afterwards, I was often witness to their expressions of gratitude, which always seemed deeply heartfelt and sincere.

Eleanor died herself overnight in her sleep shortly after she turned sixty-four. I found her when I went to awaken her after she didn't come down for breakfast before work one morning. Some sort of heart attack, I was told. Per her wishes, there was no funeral or memorial service; I simply spread her ashes over her backyard garden as she'd requested in her will, then stood by myself there on that cold, gray, fall afternoon and wept for a long time.

The first frame and accompanying bereavement card arrived for me almost immediately after her death. Others quickly followed. I put photos in each: her alone and the two of us together at various stages of life, with our parents when we were young, a couple I found that included extended family I barely remembered from years ago. I placed them throughout the house in random places. When I came upon one, I sometimes stopped to brush dust off its glass and recall the gentle spirit captured in her expression. As I did, I usually found myself shaking my head. At times, I smiled. On other occasions, it was hard to keep my lower lip from quivering. There she would remain, perched on her cardboard stands, for as much time as I had left myself. I was thankful for those frames, those reminders, even though I always felt the same pang when I encountered them, a hard-to-describe combination of longing, regret, admiration, pain, profundity, love. Looking out at me in her quiet way, full of life: my sister, Eleanor.

John Davis

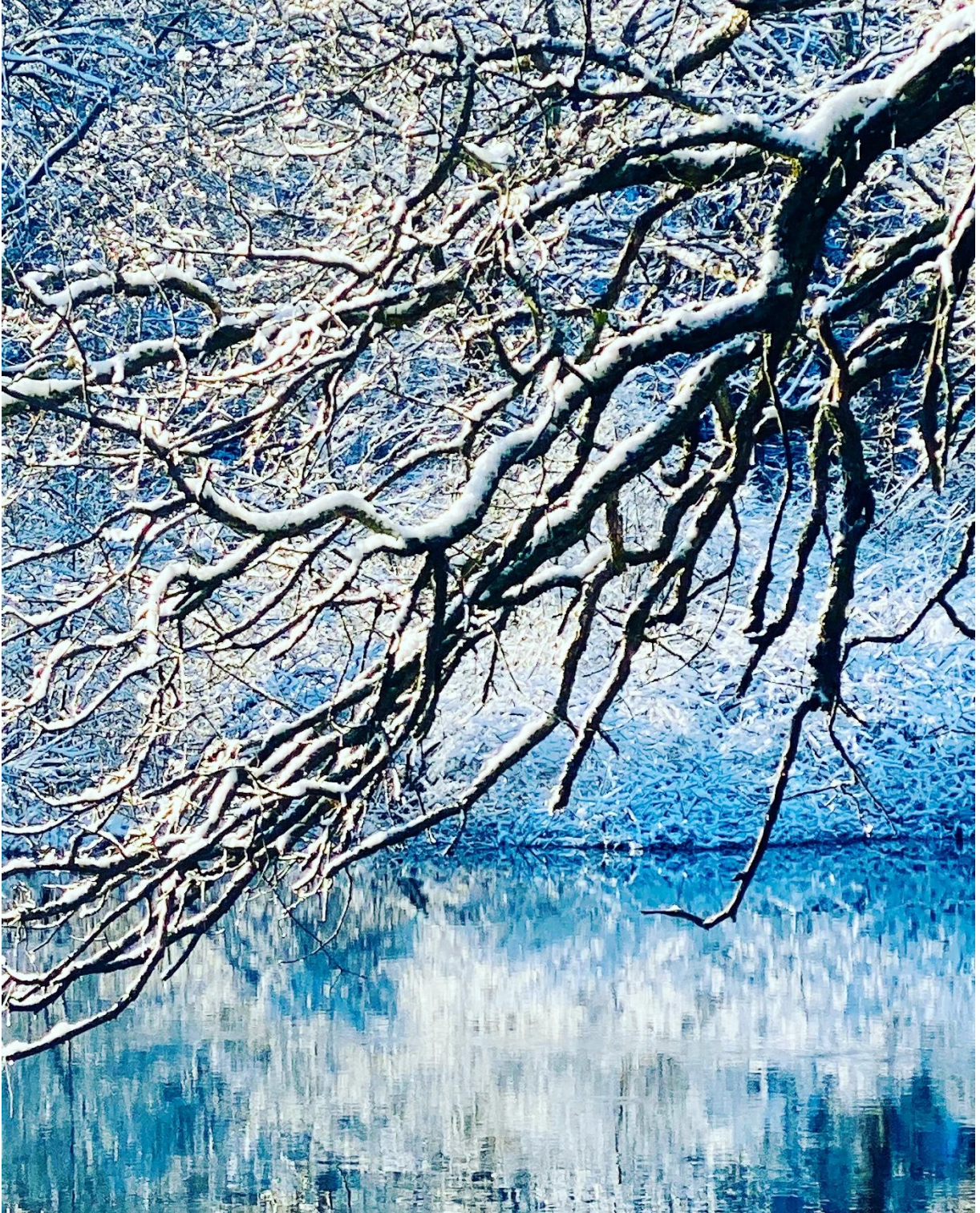
You Will Know the Wind

Sunlight will find you
at your own speed.
Here among weeds
there are no hours or years
only the green.

Listen to the voices on leaves.
Believe in silence and shade.
This path remembers
all your footprints.
It is so glad you have come.

Kelly DuMar

Blue Snow Branch—Charles River



Carol Barrett

Draft

Do you feel a draft?
—It could be a lost moment, unconnected
with earth, just passing through. — Galway Kinnell

The fire has gone out at the cabin.
I huddle in blanket and scarf, one hand
gloved, the other free, wondering
what moment to catch, tie to hearth —

the one where I lift the split pink cedar
onto a teepee of torn old shingles, tucking
a wad of newsprint into the ash, strike
match to flint — or the one where I follow

my pencil on lined pad, try to land a loose
thought, connect to where I've just been, or
where I might be drawn, some dew-laden path.
This day we switched our sleeping bodies

to Daylight Saving Time, tugging us forward
like children reluctant to leave a warm bed,
dragging teddy. I keep the kitchen clock
at last night's pace, preferring that hour,

not wanting to rush to advance it. I fear
too much may be missed in the shift. How long
can one rush breath, and not be dizzy?
Stunning, how one warm hand can settle

the difference, coax me to believe nothing
is lost, only risked. Whether I feed the fire,
or the flame on page, something right
announces itself, perhaps the very fact

I may choose, or that minutes matter,
devoted either to the flicker of a quick tango
licking the brick, or to the drawn-out lope
of a languid waltz, rhythm leading down-up-up,

down-up-up. Dance with me. Connect whatever
has strayed in our joining limbs. As branches
stir the wind, rub the window with a slight squeak.
As wood joins fire in a mellow after-thought.

Kersten Christianson

Ode to the Coffee Grinder, My One True Love

By neither rhyme nor rule,
I sing twittery exaltations,
to painted ravens in frames,
a flight of larks without path
in an empty kitchen.

From poem to word,
whole to granular, bean
erodes to grain by hand.
I could open a window,
welcome the wind at my door,

set granule to flight to travel
zephyr's crest from rainforest
to coffee's faraway land of origin,
somewhere like India, or Peru.
Or I could shimmy hip to Nina

Simone, to screaming kettle,
dip and spin spoon, cream rising
the sun in the umbra of a mug
glazed to the shade and texture
of Bishop's Beach, early morning

sun between squall, cracking night.
Aroma of honeysuckle, dark chocolate,
lavender, meet the salt of outer coast
flood tide; pungent and meandering
in its wild.

Anne Whitehouse

Meditation at North Beach Park, Burlington

Thickly wooded Juniper Island
rises from the lake
within swimming distance from shore.
The sloping peaks of the Adirondacks,
misty blue and far off in the distance,
belong to heaven and not to earth.

From the beach I watch a storm
gather from the mountains,
then sweep over the lake.
Whitecaps form on the surface.
It is like the sea,
and it is not like the sea.

Rain falls in large drops
propelled by a breeze,
and a canopy on aluminum poles
tumbles on the beach,
somersaulting erratically.

Under a shelter,
students and faculty gather
at an impromptu party
celebrating recent graduates.
I eat strawberry-rhubarb pie
and think of the mountains, eons old.
When they were formed,
fault lines pushed yellow dolostone
above the dark shale,
the older stone above the younger.

Now I am older,
I want to impart history.
Shivering children in wet bathing suits
wrap themselves in towels.
Sometimes the young listen politely
and sometimes impatiently,
propelled towards lives
that haven't happened yet.

I feel my hold on life growing tenuous,

like those islands farther off—
the Four Brothers—like steppingstones
appearing to float in the blue
without moving at all.

Thomas R. Bacon

Book Of Revelations

Quartet For The End Of Time

— *Oliver Messiaen*

Monarch butterflies float paper thin wings
thousands of miles to swarm tropical trees,
orange patterns like blossoms of sun.

Choreographed beauty, four cycles of life,

their generations then fly the winds back home.
Life: death, we too are born into the end of time;
the seventh trumpet sounds our sorrows
of lost yesterdays, this hour, and forever tomorrows,

hoofbeats of four horsemen in our hearts;
and chance, or random chance, gravity
binds our feet, mortality's heavy dance,
as we imagine the heaven of our ghosts.

Some see angel streets of gold — some
an empty sleep without dreams.

William Slattery

Adrift between the Harmonies

The Moon exists in the future
of the Moon you see tonight,
which is only the Moon that was
a moment ago & somewhere else.
The Moon is not attracted to Earth
where the Earth is but where Earth was.

But you're not here about the Moon.
You want to know about yourself:
how do you fit into all this,
what does it mean to be a mind
arisen from nowhere to die
after such a brief flicker of life?

The mind is metaphysical,
made to speculate rapidly;
in successive approximations,
stab toward truth, check repercussions,
do again what doesn't kill it;
learn from the other minds around
in flesh or books or video,
absorb all our human brilliance.

We make ideas, each of us,
the way bees exude honeycombs,
each one dribbling its little bit,
no one in charge,
because we all know what to do
— take care of those close around us —
and only crazy grand abstractions
— money, God, color, honor —
can blind us to the golden rule:
you do for me, I do for you.
That's the way we stay alive.

Me, I'm making my little poem
to comfort you, or comfort me,
this ache in me I share with you.
I rock this little lullaby
so you can sleep
and dream the dream I dream for you,

the dream of your own Universe,
you the center of everything.

But now let's throw that dream away.
Let's take a grander view of things:
all time, all space, exists at once.
Look, see, all here arrayed,
all that ever happened to now
& all that will ever happen
equally nonexistent,
past & future hung in the sky —
this place, like all places, distanced
from everything that's happening.
How silly, then, anxiety;
we might as well have fun with this —
ghosts riding ghost world through ghostly
presences in the emptiness,
consequences always fatal.

There is the matter of the self,
this fiction that my mind made up,
for reasons never obvious,
after my long swim in raw love —
if you can call such primal needs
self at all, as oceanic
as we arrive, we voyagers
actually wet behind the ears,
our little minds all dazed & splashed,
air raw in throats & lungs.
What is this for the first time? Hunger!

Now we are sharing mental space,
our minds assembled over time,
our systems of mental habits,
natural & cultivated,
organized to head off hunger —
and then do all the other things
we do to give each other meaning:
music, literature, dancing,
flows of spirits between some friends,
laughter when the bottle's empty,
pretty girls who take their clothes off
to tell you they're in love with you,
primal grown sophisticated
but primal yet at the root of it.

This mind emerged from infant seas,
an island in a sea of thinking.
We're not even islands, we're flotsam drifting,
mats of accidental tangle
that only begin to make sense
when we know we need each other
the way a hungry baby needs
before it ever tastes a teat,
when hunger's need seems answerless,
the way it's always going to feel
way down deep in the gut of us.

Craig Kirchner

Comet

As thing meets nothing
only where there is life,
a spark of primal force
meets night's smoky essence,
kindling like a distant lighthouse
on the horizon toward
some stellar Capricorn event.

In thrusts of gilded splashes
or softened strokes through misty haze,
mythic messages in blinding smear,
each a wave of blinding heat,
each to crest, to break then blend,
each to swell and soar again.

Nocturnal wildfire flares
illumine this mass of nihilistic sea,
scorches the onyx void.
An orange cryptic surfer
on tangible, neon-waxed flame,
becomes the only border point,
carves the black-hole spectacle.

Stephen Mead

Reveries

Our best intimacy came in the midst of your long journey towards death,
our touches gentle where deeper acts were implications just in trust.
Was it thanks to you, to me, going out of our minds?
By doing so we reached further than mortality
in this crossroads between dying & living.

Thank you. Nothing else I've ever known has come close
to being so purely itself.

The misunderstanding, the dense, have jealousy.
The ignorant walk away. What care we when in easy light
you become so radiant, & I too float with your travels?
Some say it's the pain medicine & that you hallucinate.
Some say it's just disease process, dementia, signs one must note,
but friend, such beauty I find, such sense through your rambling's will,
the shiny grace of need where your old self pours.

I know you confuse me with Kenny, Scott, Patrick, past loves,
past losses, that you are busy on a search to align their faces
with my own. The same goes for what surrounds you, an attempt
to make sense, control what this strange hospice means.

Interpolations storm forth, the business you used to run,
the social life lead, the romantic glamour of trips, a song in ears
when juggling gives inclusion & you try to remove my shirt!
Also, you trace my nose, cheek, hair, lean forward, kiss even
for reverie it is - we who were never lovers somehow confusingly
lovingly deep between the plane of life & dying that surely life itself
makes simple & clear.

I believe in that like an entrance despite how you might be dreaming
about snakes or seeing Chinese manuscripts in these sterile walls.
Yes, I believe in this opening's mysterious reverence for the transition
despite how you forget my name, say instead, *my own dearest love*.

Another time I asked what you were thinking of & "you" you replied,
adding "wonderful, wonderful" when I asked if that was good.

Intimacy answered better then, unexpected, & to cherish enlarges
what moments carry us beyond your death or mine.

Michael Keshigian

Present Comfort

He stands in the open doorway,
a brisk breeze caresses his face.
There is a shadow cast
from a dried maple branch
of straight lines
dyed black upon the lawn
that resembles a stick man,
an apparition that points up
as if to designate its source.
He imagines himself the outline
penciled atop the green,
where the grass is cool and moist
as it brushes his skin,
where vagrant ants
and earthworms tickle his underside
when they course beneath.
The landscape is quiet otherwise.
He is content.
Vagrant clouds, like the years,
move rapidly over him,
close enough to the sun
to threaten and momentarily
dissipate his imprint.
The implication of limited time
bears down upon him.
There is nothing he might do
to stem the inevitable,
but to distract himself
with the magic about,
for the future is dark,
the present, light,
though it will yield no notice
when it dissolves him.

Morgan Neering

8 a.m. in September

Barefoot on the stairs, coffee brewing
your feet move gently down each step
then stop
stand at eight in the morning listening
while the house hums its amber-hued melody.

All the windows are open and light
moves softly through them
filtering
drowsily, dreamily
like the lazy cat draped across your lap
time drifts unhurried, a languid
ebbing flow
you can hear it
in the way the flowers breathe.

Terry Trowbridge

Relatives of the Thoughtful Jellyfish

Jellyfish knurls itself into a fist just
before takeoff, middle of the scootch,
when the whole ocean appears to hold its breath

Jellyfish closes the distance between extremities,
proving it is related to frog, swish-to-hop,
hop-to-swish, close-open frog-like jellyfish

Jellyfish knurls itself into a fist and pauses,
posed in a curled Child's Pose asana, holds breath
in the pocket of its pocket, being a bubble itself

Jellyfish pauses. Illuminated tendrils drizzled up inside
the short skirt, thinking about their next movement.
Intentional time is invented in motionless invertebrate yoga.

Jellyfish blooms with tentacular petals, zigzags adrift
in conscientious scoops, one step at a time, proving it
is related to snail, steps made from scooping whole bodies.

Mandy Ramsey

Beach Nest



Helen Patrice

A Little Less Gravitation, A Little More Stillness, Please

Farewell Moon, as you leave our loving sight.
Stolen by time and loosening bonds.

The fish are tired of your tidal pull.
The merfolk exhausted.
Their homes and palaces never stay.
Finally, they will be free of the back and forth.

In the Mariana Trench,
Kraken run an organic machine
to wind back gravity
and sell it off in black chunks
to the likes of Mars.

Agnes Vojta

Andromeda

Two and a half million light-years away,
she spins, her spiral arms trail veils
of dust, as if a whirlwind dances
with a nebula of stars.

She scatters luminous clouds,
circles with the grace of a princess,
with the violence of a hurricane.
She needs no savior prince.

Young stars fall from her arms,
glow brightly, diminish
to ghosts. We cannot dissect
what is at her center.

I don't believe the stars foretell
the future any more than the owl
who hoots in the bare tree
when snow blows across the field.

The night sky is a playground
for celestial bodies. They move
in their righteous ways,
joyful in their obedience to gravity.

Jacquelyn Shah

New Melody, Supreme

I seek the darkness, not the light,
go moonward on the great salt plain,
gather the thread of things
crystal, resplendent, yet unlit.
Crusted with salt, I watch the fairy birth
of some unformulated thought, a flame
from every element that gleams through the night.

The chattering voices of the day depart.
My incessant labor bends the stars
and all the threads of sorrow are unspun.
So happy in the rare fresh life of earth,
I am bound to sing!
The noise of the music of sleep,
music that throbs and soars and burns,
is born of madness and of impotence.
A tigress maddened with supreme desire
for what is called the puppet show of delusion
stirs only now and then; some deeper pang
draws back the veil of sleep.
I start, shudder, and pull together my mind . . .
this wisdom finds cessation of desire.
In my new melody, a tongue of fire
lives in quiet with a woman's passion.

O self divine, O living lord of me,
you are the soul serenely free,
will live with love forever in the dark
. . . supreme in self-contentment.

Cento—lines, in order of appearance, from different poems by Aleister Crowley, all included in *Poetry of Aleister Crowley* 2013, Ed. Gary Bates

Terry Cox-Joseph

All that Counts

Leaves snowing—
swaths
of yellow sails.

How beautiful
to fall apart

to lose pieces

to die.

The wind
has loosed
petioles
from their

branches,
sent them flying
like kites.

My hair a-swirl,
child again.

The moment
is all that matters.

The moment you
look into my eyes.

The moment
the sun fragments
through branches,

reminds us to
fly
among loosed leaves,

that life is
to be lived
in all seasons.

Vanessa Niu

Raspberries (Ode)

We're going to be making beds forever. Sitting
on chairs forever, at our desks forever and brushing
our teeth forever.

We could call it floating in existence
but it's not quite floating. We will be tangible—not
forever, but for long enough—in that we can feel the
coolness of the seatbelt on a winter's afternoon, and
that we can feel the burn of hot metal while warming
our soups.

And inside, the ache of missing someone
in the space between our heart and our outer chest,
heart beating like a hammer beating the piano string,
mechanical and losing heat and getting old. We're
going to miss someone forever.

This traveling circus. The
*yes, the world is a joke but it's on mankind, but also
the we lived happily during the war.* Picking raspberry
seeds out of our teeth forever, something's caught
in our teeth forever,

whether the feeling that we're
never going to see each other again when we parted
at the airport because bombs are going off forever or
the weather burning our skins off together, our news
anchor will compare acid rain and the Phlegethon
forever or

at least until the acid rain burns through
their broadcast station and It's going to be political
forever. And we're buying the groceries together and
the market is crashing forever and we say I love you
forever. We'll be intangible forever after this period
of long enough

—in my mind, I am sitting beside you
at the coffee table, silently eating raspberries with you
forever, with this unnamed sadness between us that
is too monumental to

verbalize. You would never
be able to fully acknowledge that I feel it, never I you,
but in the back of our minds we know without the
other to carry the weight

we would never be able to
lift our heads and eat these raspberries. So we eat
them forever. It is a love language and a fear of the dark,

and in the meantime there is autumn forever
and thick picture book paper forever and Christmas
cards forever and Billie Holiday Billy Joel Billie Marten

forever and crisp linen, smooth wood, mint, piano
concertos, airplanes in the urban skyline and, and and
and raspberries forever.

Alan Altany

Far East of Eden

Distracting myself by myself
during talks, sometimes
stranded in thick space,
forgetting what I just said
like an empty parenthesis
lost in a 4 dimensional
labyrinth for an eternal
moment, seeking help
from the waiting audience
until the idea flashes neon
bright in my deserted mind
& the talk resumes again.
Was that a convoluted prank
of old age, a gap in neurons,
a frosty hint of creeping
dementia on a November
morning far east of Eden?
Is my brain losing its mind?
Should I chronicle drowning
in the wild desert of God?

Sean Eaton

All This Music

They say that flowers are also songs,
and the sun, and the ocean-blue sky
on clear bright days. The chipmunk
is a song, and the squirrel, and so the
hare. The fox, also, and the bear, and
the wolf with his long speckled fur.
The wolf's piercing amber eyes are
songs when the slick rabbit falls into
his sight, and the rabbit's thumping
gallop through the underbrush as he
hurries toward life is also a song.
Cucumbers and tomatoes are songs,
and pineapples and raspberries,
and the moon is a song as it hangs
high in the sky, over forest or ocean.

The mountains of my homeland are
songs, and the pines which speckle
them, and the firs, and the maples,
and the silvery birches, and the sheer
countless birds which roost in them.
Not only their calls, but they them-
selves are songs as well, in how they
soar, and dip, and hop; in their
countless-splendored plumages.

The waterfalls in my mountains are
songs, and the dinosaurs' footsteps
baked into the slanted rockface are
songs, and my life is also a song,
albeit a sad one of many notes.

I must remember that my life also
has worth, because I sing in it.
Life is far, far too long to spend
entirely in lamentations.

Kersten Christianson

My Old Faithful

That there will be uncracked spines
and pressed paper pages

trails of printed text, tiny ants tracking
through grained sand, a steadfast troop

trapezing from one margin to the other.
That there will be shelves riddled

with wormwood paths, gathered
regional indie press collections

of poets and poets and poets.
That there will be fringe-ribboned

bookmarks, cards for mailing
while on the road, impulse buy items

seemingly disarranged and landed
by luck or whimsy: pens, pins, stickers,

exotic chocolates for nibbling, scented
candles like mandarin*pine or salted*basil.

That there may be sunlight filtered
through crystal window bling, bouncing

prisms into the mosh pit of my joy
when I happen upon a well-worn copy

of Lorna Crozier, Patrick Lane, or Susan
Musgrave verse to ride shotgun home with me.

Roger Singer

Floating Backward

heavy damp air
presses down
with an unseen hand

ditches full
from last
nights rain

we rest at fireside
telling stories
like water over
smooth stones

Kelly DuMar

Trunk in Snow



Contributor Biographies

Alan Altany

Alan Altany has BA & MA degrees in Catholic theology, and a Ph. D. in religious studies (University of Pittsburgh). After an academic career, he is a semi-retired, septuagenarian professor of Comparative Religions at a small college in Florida, USA. In the past he has also been the founder & editor of a small magazine of poetry (*The Beggar's Bowl*), a high school teacher, factory and lawn maintenance worker, hotel clerk, novelist, truck driver, etc. He has self-published two books of poetry: *A Beautiful Absurdity* (2022) and *The Greatest Longing* (2023). He writes with the steadfast support of his golden retriever, Zeke. Website: <https://www.alanaltany.com/>.

Lisa Ashley

Lisa Ashley (she/her), is a 2021 Pushcart Prize nominee. She descends from survivors of the Armenian Genocide and has listened to, and supported incarcerated youth for 8 years as a chaplain. Her poems have appeared in *Amsterdam Quarterly*, *The Healing Muse*, *Thimble*, *Blue Heron Review*, *Last Leaves*, *Snapdragon*, *Last Stanza Poetry Journal*, and others. She writes in her log home on Bainbridge Island, WA, the traditional lands of the Suquamish people, and navigates her garden with physical limitations in a constant state of awe. Lisa is currently working on her first manuscript.

Thomas R. Bacon

Thomas R. Bacon lives in Sitka, Alaska, a small island community in the Tongass Forest. His work has appeared in *San Pedro River Review*, *borrowed solace*, *Tidal Echoes*, *Cirque Journal*, *About Place Journal* and *The Tiger Moth Review*.

Carol Barrett

Carol Barrett earned a doctorate in Creative Writing, following a doctorate in Clinical Psychology. An NEA Fellow in Poetry, Carol teaches Poetry and Healing courses. Her poetry publications include *Calling in the Bones* (winner of the Snyder Prize from Ashland Poetry Press,) *Drawing Lessons*, and *Reading Wind* (forthcoming in February 2024.) Her Creative Nonfiction text *Pansies* was a recent finalist for the Oregon Book Awards. You will also find Carol's poems in *Christian Century*, *The Women's Review of Books*, *JAMA*, *Poetry International*, as well as over fifty anthologies.

Darsie Bowden

Darsie is a writer living on Bainbridge Island, WA. Previously Darsie taught writing at DePaul University where they published two books, one on authorial voice.

William Cass

William Cass has had over 300 short stories accepted for publication in a variety of literary magazines such as *december*, *Briar Cliff Review*, and *Zone 3*. He won writing contests at *Terrain.org* and *The Examined Life Journal*. A nominee for both Best Small Fictions and Best of

the Net anthologies, he has also received six Pushcart Prize nominations. His first short story collection, *Something Like Hope & Other Stories*, was published by Wising Up Press in 2020, and a second collection, *Uncommon & Other Stories*, was recently released by the same press. He lives in San Diego, California.

Kersten Christianson

Alaskan Poet, Moon Gazer, Raven Watcher, Northern Trekker, Teacher. Kersten Christianson derives inspiration from wild, wanderings, and road trips. Kersten is the poetry editor of *Alaska Women Speak*. She has authored *Curating the House of Nostalgia* (Sheila-Na-Gig, 2020), *What Caught Raven's Eye* (Petroglyph Press, 2018), and *Something Yet to Be Named* (Kelsay Books, 2017). Kersten lives with her daughter in Sitka, Alaska and enjoys road trips, bookstores, and smooth ink pens.

Terry Cox-Joseph

Terry Cox-Joseph divides her time between writing and painting. She is past president of the Poetry Society of Virginia and a former newspaper reporter. Terry's children, pets and home on the Deep Creek waterfront provide a constant resource for her creativity.

John Davis

John Davis is a polio survivor and the author of *Gigs* and *The Reservist*. His work has appeared in *DMQ Review*, *Iron Horse Literary Review* and *Terrain.org*. He lives on an island in the Salish Sea and performs in several bands.

John Delaney

Delaney's publications include *Waypoints* (2017), a collection of place poems, *Twenty Questions* (2019), a chapbook, *Delicate Arch* (2022), poems and photographs of national parks and monuments, and *Galápagos* (2023), a collaborative chapbook of his son Andrew's photographs and his poems. He lives in Port Townsend, WA.

Sean Eaton

Sean Eaton is a poet and artist hailing from the hills of New England. His favorite writers are Amy Clampitt and Ruth Stone. He is an emerging poet with work appearing in *Arboreal Magazine*.

Bart Edelman

Bart Edelman's poetry collections include *Crossing the Hackensack*, *Under Damaris' Dress*, *The Alphabet of Love*, *The Gentle Man*, *The Last Mojito*, *The Geographer's Wife*, *Whistling to Trick the Wind*, and *This Body Is Never at Rest: New and Selected Poems 1993 – 2023*, forthcoming from Meadowlark Press. He has taught at Glendale College, where he edited *Eclipse*, a literary journal, and, most recently, in the MFA program at Antioch University, Los Angeles. His work has been widely anthologized in textbooks published by City Lights Books, Etruscan Press, Fountainhead Press, Harcourt Brace, Longman, McGraw-Hill, Prentice Hall, Simon & Schuster, Thomson/Heinle, the University of Iowa Press, Wadsworth, and others. He lives in Pasadena, California.

Joseph A Farina

Joseph A Farina is a retired lawyer in Sarnia, Ontario, Canada. An award winning, push cart nominee, internationally published poet, his works published in many poetry magazines notably *Quills Canadian Poetry Magazine*, *The Windsor Review*, and appears in the anthologies *Sweet Lemons: Writings with a Sicilian Accent*, *Canadian Italians at Table*, *Witness* and *Tamaracks: Canadian Poetry for the 21st Century*. He has had two books of poetry published—*The Cancer Chronicles* and *The Ghosts of Water Street* and an E-book *Sunsets in Black and White*, and his latest book, *The beach, the street and everything in between*.

Vern Fein

A recent octogenarian, Vern Fein, has published just shy of 300 poems and short prose pieces in over 100 different sites. A few are: *Gyroscope Review*, *Young Raven's Review*, *Bindweed*, **82 Review*, *River And South*, *Grey Sparrow Journal*, and *Uppagus magazine*. His second poetry book—REFLECTION ON DOTS—was just released. His Muse is the entire world of poetry.

George Freek

George Freek's poem "Enigmatic Variations" was recently nominated for Best of the Net. His poem "Night Thoughts" was also nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Sarah Das Gupta

Sarah Das Gupta is a retired teacher from near Cambridge, UK. Her work has been published in a wide variety of magazines and journals from a number of countries, including US, UK, Australia, Canada, India, Germany, Croatia, and Romania.

Kelly DuMar

Kelly DuMar is a poet, playwright and workshop facilitator from Boston. She's author of four poetry collections, including *jinx and heavenly calling*, published by Lily Poetry Review Books in March 2023. Her poems and images are published in *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, *Thrush*, *Glassworks*, *Flock* and more. Kelly teaches a variety of creative writing workshops, in person and online, and she teaches Play Labs for the International Women's Writing Guild and the Transformative Language Arts Network. Kelly produces the Featured Open Mic for the Journal of Expressive Writing. Reach her at kellydumar.com

Meg Freer

Meg Freer teaches piano and writes poetry in Ontario. Her photos, short prose and poems have appeared in various North American anthologies and journals, and she has written two chapbooks of poems. She holds a Graduate Certificate in Creative Writing with Distinction from Toronto's Humber School of Writers.

Philip Jason

Philip Jason's stories can be found in *Prairie Schooner*, *The Pinch*, *Mid-American Review*, *Ninth Letter*, and *J Journal*; his poetry in *Spillway*, *Lake Effect*, *Hawaii Pacific Review*, *Palette* and *Indianapolis Review*. He is the author of the novel *Window Eyes* (Unsolicited Press, 2023). His

first collection of poetry, *I Don't Understand Why It's Crazy to Hear the Beautiful Songs of Nonexistent Birds*, is forthcoming from Fernwood Press. For more, please visit philipjason.com.

Michael Keshigian

Michael Keshigian is the author of 14 poetry collections his latest, *What To Do With Intangibles*, published by Cyberwit.net. Most recent poems have appeared in *Blue Pepper*, *Comstock Review*, *Jerry Jazz Musician*, *Smoky Quartz*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*. Published in numerous national and international journals, he has appeared as feature writer in twenty publications with 7 Pushcart Prize and 3 Best Of The Net nominations.

Casey Killingsworth

Casey has been published in numerous journals including *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Better Than Starbucks*, *The Moth*, and *3rd Wednesday*. His latest book is *A nest blew down* (Kelsay Books, 2021), and a new collection, *Freak show* (Fernwood Press), is due out in early 2023. Casey has a degree from Reed College.

Craig Kirchner

Craig thinks of poetry as hobo art. He loves storytelling and the aesthetics of the paper and pen. He was nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize, and has a book of poetry, *Roomful of Navels*. After a writing hiatus he was recently published in *Poetry Quarterly*, *Decadent Review*, *New World Writing*, *Skinny*, *Neologism*, *Wild Violet*, *Last Stanza*, *Unbroken*, *W-Poesis*, *The Globe Review*, *Your Impossible Voice*, *Fairfield Scribes* and has work forthcoming in *Ginosko*, *Last Leaves*, *Literary Heist*, *Blotter*, *Quail Bell*, *Yellow Mama*, *Unlikely Stories* and *The Light Ekphrastic*.

DS Maolailai

DS Maolailai has been described by one editor as "a cosmopolitan poet" and another as "prolific, bordering on incontinent." His work has nominated eleven times for Best of the Net, eight for the Pushcart Prize and once for the Forward Prize, and has been released in three collections; "Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden" (Encircle Press, 2016), "Sad Havoc Among the Birds" (Turas Press, 2019) and "Noble Rot" (Turas Press, 2022), which included "The cauliflower", a poem that first appeared in *The Young Raven's Review*.

Stephen Mead

Stephen Mead is a retired Civil Servant, having worked two decades for three state agencies. Before that his more personally fulfilling career was fifteen years in healthcare. Throughout all these day jobs he was able to find time for writing poetry/essays, and creating art. Occasionally he even got paid for this work. Currently he is resident artist/curator for The Chroma Museum, artistic renderings of LGBTQI historical figures, organizations and allies predominantly before Stonewall, [The Chroma Museum](http://TheChromaMuseum.com).

David Milley

David Milley has written and published since the 1970s, while working as a technical writer and web applications developer. His work has appeared in *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Bay Windows*, *RFD*, *Friends Journal*, and *Feral*. Retired now, David lives in New Jersey with his husband and partner of forty-seven years, Warren Davy, who's made his living as a farmer, woodcutter, nurseryman, auctioneer, beekeeper, and cook. These days, Warren tends his garden and keeps honeybees. David walks and writes.

Michael Moreth

Michael Moreth is a recovering Chicagoan living in the rural, micropolitan City of Sterling, the Paris of Northwest Illinois.

Morgan Neering

Born and raised in small town USA- Morgan is an American writer and poet living in France. Her work explores themes of nostalgia and self-discovery, and can be found in various literary journals such as *34th Parallel*, *Creation Magazine*, and *The Curie Review*.

Vanessa Niu

Vanessa Y. Niu is a second generation Chinese-American poet and classical singer who lives in New York City. She has written text for the modern composition scene at Juilliard and Interlochen, and can be found at the opera house, a slam-poetry session, or attending open physics lectures when not writing.

Helen Patrice

Helen Patrice is an Australian writer living in Melbourne. Her work has appeared in numerous journals, magazines, and newspapers, including: *Meanjin*, *Aurealis*, *Interzone*, *Mattoid*, *Southerly*, *Westerly*, *Orb*, *Living Now*, *The Age* newspaper, *Lady Liberty*, *Knot Literary Journal*, *Andromeda Spaceways*, *Spellcraft*, and *Nova*. She works in short fiction, non fiction, memoir, and poetic forms, and her new book of poetry, *INTO DARK WOODS*, will be out next year.

Holly Payne-Strange

Holly Payne-Strange (she/her) is a novelist, poet and podcast creator. Her writing has been lauded by USA Today, LA weekly and The New York Times. Her next novel, *All Of Us Alone*, will be a recommended read for Women Writers, Women's Books in December 2023. She's had her poetry published by various groups including *Door Is A Jar* magazine, *In Parenthesis*, *Quail Bell Magazine*, and will soon be featured in *Academy Heart*, among others. She would like to thank her wife for all her support.

Jonathan Ponder

Jonathan Ponder is a writer, librarian, and record collector. He has published poems in *Epicenter* and *The Pacific Review* and also wrote and recorded an album of Americana music called *Many a Good Long Year*. He is from Southern California but lives in Michigan with his partner, cat, chickens, and record collection.

Matthew Praxmarer

Writer and novelist Matthew Praxmarer, graduate of Vermont College of Fine Arts, is a Continuing Lecturer of English Composition and Creative Writing at Purdue University Northwest where he maintains a steady output of radicals who learn to question the status quo and avoid the “naked this” and other promiscuous pronoun usage.

Diana Raab

Diana Raab, MFA, PhD, is a memoirist, poet, blogger, speaker, and award-winning author of thirteen books. Her work has been widely published and anthologized. She frequently speaks on writing for healing and transformation. Raab blogs for *Psychology Today*, *The Wisdom Daily*, *The Good Men Project*, *Thrive Global*, and is a guest blogger for many others. She’s the author 13 books, including two memoirs: *Regina’s Closet: Finding My Grandmother’s Secret Journal* and *Healing with Words: A Writer’s Cancer Journey*, and five poetry collections. She’s editor of two anthologies: *Writers and Their Notebooks* and *Writers on the Edge*. Her memoir, *Hummingbird, Messages From My Ancestors, A Memoir With Writing Prompts* is due out in January 2024 (Modern History Press). Many of her talks are based upon her book [Writing for Bliss: A Seven-Step Plan for Telling Your Story and Transforming Your Life](#) and its accompanying book: [Writing for Bliss: A Companion Journal](#). Visit her at <https://dianaraab.com>.

Mandy Ramsey

Mandy is an artist, mother, photographer, and yoga teacher who loves to create and write. She self-published her first book “Grow Where You’re Planted” in 2019. She has been previously published in *Cirque*, *Alaskan Women Speak*, *Tidal Echoes*, *Poets Choice*, and *Elephant Journal*. She holds a M.A in Yoga Studies and Mindfulness Education and has been living off the grid in Haines, Alaska since 2000 in the timber frame home she built with her husband. She believes that flowers and the natural world can heal, connect, inspire, and sprout friendships. Find out more on mandyramsey.com

Isaac James Richards

Isaac James Richards is a poet, essayist, graduate student and first-year writing instructor in the BYU English Department. He has won four poetry contest awards and five essay contests, with his most recent poems forthcoming in *Amethyst Review*, *BYU Studies Quarterly*, *Constellations*, *The Encephalon*, *Irreantum*, *Trampoline*, *Volney Road Review*, and elsewhere. He is also a reader for *Fourth Genre* and a contributing editor at *Wayfare*. He can be reached via his personal website: <https://www.isaacrichards.com/>.

Mykyta Ryzhykh

Published many times in the journals *Dzvin*, *Dnipro*, *Bukovinian magazine*, *Polutona*, *Rechport*, *Topos*, *Articulation*, *Formaslov*, *Literature Factory*, *Literary Chernihiv*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *Stone Poetry Journal*, *Divot journal*, *dyst journal*, *Superpresent Magazine*, *Allegro Poetry Magazine*, *Alternate Route*, *Better Than Starbucks Poetry & Fiction Journal*, *Littoral Press*, *Book of Matches*, *on the portals Litcenter*, *Ice Floe Press* and *Soloneba*, in the Ukrainian literary newspaper.

Gerard Sarnat

Poet and aphorist Gerard Sarnat is widely published internationally in print and online. He has been nominated for the pending Science Fiction Poetry Association Dwarf Star Award, won San Francisco Poetry's 2020 Contest, the Poetry in the Arts First Place Award plus the Dorfman Prize, and has been nominated for handfults of Pushcarts plus Best of the Net Awards. Gerry's publications include 2023 *San Diego Poetry Annual*, 2022 *Awakenings Review*, 2022 Arts & Cultural Council of Bucks County Celebration, 2022 Rio Grande Valley International Poetry Festival Anthology, *Turtle Island*, *MIPoesias*, *Ocotillo Review*, *Gravity of the Thing*, *American Writers Review/ San Fedele Press*, *San Francisco Creative Writing Institute*, *Israel Association of Writers in English*, *In Parentheses*, *Sacramento Review*, *Pocket Samovar*, *Black Sunflower*, *Free State*, *The Broken City*, *Sandy River Review*, *Three Rooms Press/Maintenant*, *New World Writing*, *Songs of Eretz*, *New Verse News*, *The Font*, *BigCityLit*, *HitchLit Review*, *Lowestoft*, *Washington Square Review*, *The Deronda Review*, *Jewish Writing Project*, *Hong Kong Review*, *Tokyo Poetry Journal*, *Buddhist Poetry Review*, *Gargoyle*, *Main Street Rag*, *New Delta Review*, *Arkansas Review*, *Hamilton-Stone Review*, *Northampton Review*, *New Haven Poetry Institute*, *Texas Review*, *Vonnegut Journal*, *Brooklyn Review*, *San Francisco Magazine*, *Monterey Poetry Review*, *The Los Angeles Review*, and *The New York Times* as well as by *Oberlin*, *Yale*, *NYU*, *Slippery Rock*, *Northwestern*, *Pomona*, *Brown*, *Harvard*, *Stanford*, *Dartmouth*, *Penn*, *Johns Hopkins*, *Columbia*, *Grinnell*, *North Dakota*, *McMaster*, *Maine*, *Universities of British Columbia* and *Toronto* and *Chicago* and *Virginia* presses. He is a *Harvard College* and *Medical School*-trained physician who's built and staffed clinics for the disenfranchised as well as a *Stanford* professor and *healthcare CEO*. Currently he is devoting energy/ resources to deal with *climate justice*, and serves on *Climate Action Now's* board. Gerry's been married since 1969 with progeny consisting of four collections (*Homeless Chronicles: From Abraham To Burning Man*, *Disputes*, *17s*, *Melting the Ice King*) plus three kids/ six grandsons — and is looking forward to potential future granddaughters.

David M. Schulz

David M. Schulz is a citizen scientist, artist, and writer working in the northeastern corner of California. He appreciates dark skies and lessons learned from the prevailing winds. He has a poem in *Shooter Literary Magazine's* 15th issue and was a contributing author for an article in volume 2, number 5 of *The Planetary Science Journal*.

Jacquelyn Shah

Jacquelyn Shah of Houston, TX, holds: A.B., magna cum laude, Rutgers U; M.A. English, Drew U; M.F.A. and Ph.D. English literature/creative writing—poetry, U of Houston. Publications: poetry chapbook, *small fry*; full-length poetry book, *What to Do with Red*; poems in various journals. *Literal Latté's* 2018 Food Verse Contest winner, she is the 2023 winner of *Choeofpleirn's* Kenneth Johnston Non-fiction Book Award; her hybrid memoir *Limited Engagement: A Way of Living* was published this summer.

Roger Singer

Dr. Singer is a Poet Laureate Emeritus of Connecticut, and past president of the Connecticut Shoreline Poetry Chapter, in association with the Connecticut Poetry Society. He has had over

1,500 poems published on the internet, magazines and in books and is a 2017 Pushcart Prize Award Nominee.

William Slattery

William Slattery's poems and essays have appeared in *The Magazine of Speculative Poetry*, *Poetry LA*, *Santa Clara Review*, *ONTHEBUS*, *The Herman Review*, *The Los Angeles Review of Los Angeles*, *Antioch Review*, and elsewhere.

Michael Sofranko

Michael is a writer, editor, poet, and professor, who received his MFA from the Writers Workshop at University of Iowa. He also attended the PhD program in Creative Writing at the University of Houston. His work has appeared in many literary journals. He received the Sean Christopher Britton Award for his manuscript, *Homing Instincts*, and was awarded the Antonio Machado Prize for his collection, *American Sign*. His research into the wide-open casino culture in Hot Springs, Arkansas, during the early 1960s, laid the foundation for *The Vapors*, a series pilot for television, which he recently co-authored with award winning filmmaker, Michael McKinley. He has led Creative Writing Workshops in the United States and Europe, and for eighteen summers he taught at Cambridge University, England, as part of the Oxbridge Academic Program, where he served as Dean of Faculty. He currently lives in Houston, Texas.

David Summerfield

David Summerfield is a graduate of Frostburg State University, Maryland, and a veteran of the Iraq war. He has been an editor, columnist, and contributor to various publications within his home state of West Virginia. His creative nonfiction has appeared previously in *Military Experience and the Arts*.

Terry Trowbridge

Researcher Terry Trowbridge's poems are in *Pennsylvania Literary Journal*, *Carousel*, *Lascaux Review*, *Kolkata Arts*, *Leere Mitte, untethered*, *Snakeskin Poetry*, *Progenitor*, *Nashwaak Review*, *Orbis*, *Pinhole*, *Big Windows*, *Muleskinner*, *Brittle Star*, *Mathematical Intelligencer*, *Journal of Humanistic Mathematics*, *New Note*, *Hearth and Coffin*, *Synchronized Chaos*, *Indian Periodical*, *Delta Poetry Review*, *Literary Veganism* and more. His lit crit is in *BeZine*, *Erato*, *Amsterdam Review*, *Ariel*, *British Columbia Review*, *Hamilton Arts & Letters*, *Episteme*, *Studies in Social Justice*, *Rampike*, and *The /t3mz/ Review*. Terry is grateful to the Ontario Arts Council for his first writing grant.

Agnes Votja

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

Anne Whitehouse

The publication of "After the Apocalypse" in Issue 3 was Anne Whitehouse's first appearance in *Young Ravens Literary Review*. She is pleased to have her poems published in Issue 19. She is

the author of six poetry collections and six poetry chapbooks, mostly recently *Being Ruth Asawa* (Ethel Zine and Micro Press, 2023), as well as a novel, *Fall Love*. Her poem, "Lady Bird," won the Nathan Perry DAR Chapter's 2023 "Honor American History" poetry contest and the National Federation of State Poetry Society's Power of Women Award.