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Inspired by the small plot of apple trees near Cambridge, England, where writers have gathered for years with their books and pens, we welcome you to pull up a chair and enjoy poetry in the orchard.
Pushcart Nominations for Winter 2020

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2. “Pony Tracks in the Snow” by John Grey, page 32
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Featured Poet

KIM BRIDGFORD
I was very close to my mother. I miss many things, among them traveling with her to places like Iceland and Ireland, watching films with her at home, at the Ritzes, and the Telluride and New York Film Festivals, asking her for advice, and hearing her unique, deeply compassionate, and always optimistic perspective on the world. I remain inspired to live my life to the fullest as I remember her working very, very hard as an artist and administrator, always striving to provide the best for everyone she encountered. I’m still reeling and processing everything that happened this year, but re-reading her work has given me a small degree of solace as I reflect on her extraordinary life.

I wanted to choose poems of hers that meant a lot to me and represented the breadth of her interests and abilities across form. “Seasons” was included in the program distributed at her funeral service—it is a poem that resonates with other members of her family and me. “Genealogy” and “A Crown for the Divorcée at Fifty-Nine” are two of her more explicitly personal poems, and for that, they remain so important to me—the emotions and themes she explores in these works move me more than anything else she wrote. “For Sylvia Plath” is an earlier poem that speaks to her career-long affinity for Plath’s work, culminating in her book *A Crown for Ted and Sylvia*. And “Postcard of Speckled Eggs, Iceland” is included to gesture at the immense project she undertook with her dear friend and collaborator Jo Yarrington (which is in the process of being completed), as well as to show her love for whimsical subject matter (which included topics like fortune cookie sayings and Guinness World Records).

— Nicki Duval
Kim Bridgford (1959-2020) was an award-winning poet, professor, arts administrator, editor, fiction writer, and literary critic. In 1994 Kim was named Connecticut Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. She was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Literary Fellowship in poetry in 1999 and an Artist Fellowship in poetry from the Connecticut Commission on the Arts in 2003. She founded and directed Poetry by the Sea, a Global Conference for formal poets held annually in Madison, CT. She was founder and editor-in-chief of *Mezzo Cammin*, an online journal of formal poetry by women and The Mezzo Cammin Women Poets Timeline Project, the world’s largest database of women poets. Both projects recognize, support, and respect women poets, particularly women poets of color.

She appeared in national publications, including *The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Connecticut Post, NPR, Redbook, The Georgia Review,* and *The News Hour with Jim Lehrer* website. She authored numerous books, as well as stories, reviews, an introduction to Russell Goings’ *The Children of Children, Keep Coming: An Epic Griotsong,* and other pieces. Her poetry collection *In the Extreme, Sonnets about World Records* was the winner of the Donald Justice Poetry Prize. She collaborated with Jo Yarrington on *The Falling Edge,* a three-book series of poetry and photography. She was known nationally as a leader of the New Formalism movement in poetry and has been called “America’s First Lady of Form.”
Kim Bridgford

Seasons

The seasons are ensnared with suffering.
It’s hard to speak of one without the other.
There are those who can be caught on just one thing,
And feel the pull and tug of choke and tether.

Yet once the fallen world is re-imagined,
There is grace. The seasons are a cycle,
Where the moment that is genuflected, keened—
The bitter-tongued unfairness of debacle—

Undoes the origami of its frond
And supplicates the edges of beyond.
The seasons have an archetypal plot,
Like us: and from the garden in our lot,

The soul inside the envelope of human.
The Word was made to open and illumine.

Previously published in String Poet (2011)
Kim Bridgford
A Crown for the Divorcée at Fifty-Nine

1.
You never thought the absence would be you:
The time like socks, or tasks done in a row.
Of course, it’s not all like that: there’s more quiet,
And there’s more time to have the camembert,
The movies at the Ritz—the meal at Parc?—
The discount markers for the coming dark.
The irony’s the setting is for one.
The passing shock is just multiplication,
Like chalk pastels reverberating.
But other times it’s sad, like grief or the waiting
People do when someone’s passing. Writing
Might be the best approach, or more reading:
The Swedish language sitting there for you.
You never thought you’d look for more to do.

2.
You never thought you’d look for more to do.
Yet that is where you are. The narrative
On Facebook is cliché. The parted wave
Against her skin—the style you used to know—
Reminded you he’d given love away.
We all have things we do and don’t abide,
And yours was love, like silk or leopard, tried,
But only love that’s honest, not the lie.
It was imaginary: this whole thing,
Not that it didn’t happen (as it did),
It just was all played out, a redone story
You couldn’t quite believe: like the Louise Penny
You were figuring out. And it was unexpected.
That’s why they say the story needs revising.

3.
That’s why they say the story needs revising.
All the sad tropes one more time. Your friend has said
That one day you wake up and love is phasing
Into something else. Not that you understood.
Not that you thought the whistling trees, in quiet,
Were more than their sweet sound, a new disquiet,
Because you have to live the story through.
(Sometimes it is no longer entre nous.)
Occasionally you think of what it’s like
To peer inside the stores along the street:
Someone moving through each roller/rack
With a rapt expression, like an aesthete,
Might just be you, might be your body double.
It’s you outside your momentary label.
4. It’s you outside the momentary label. It’s difficult to think who you will be. All your previous selves, your old identity, Re-done in vintage. The body double Is just that you are you and someone else, As if you were time travelling just now: Like an eraser, rubbing out your marriage shadow. Here you’ve emerged, and not as someone false. Put on your sparkly sneakers and Chanel; Put on your silence and your “all is well”: As with all things, your thinking makes it true. What are you going to do and not to do? Try the sleeveless dress: light aquamarine. Then, when you do, you turn and ask a question.

5. Then, when you do, you turn and ask a question. A cabernet sauvignon? You toast: To me! A poignant feeling because you’re also saddened By the way life has gone. It’s destiny, They say, but you’ve always had a choice, A sense of purpose, and a driven voice. You are not stopping now, nor will you say That during this year, life will fall away. Your son turns, with his music, grace, The open lily of his changing face. So much to move life forward, and reserve; So much to see, recover, and deserve. Even in these sadder states, there’s good, Roast chicken, champagne. Music for the mood.
6.
Roast chicken, champagne, music for the mood:
Life cannot be the simple, practical,
But it can give you joy, heretical
And paradisical at once. It should.
As if you were inside a “Make Your Own
Adventure,” or “Tell The Story Once Again.”
It’s fine to sculpt a mood. You go to see
A film, and think of time in a new way.
Later, you will write, and read your book,
Prepare your classes, and then have a look
At the future. One reason it is difficult
Is that it is untested, a la carte.
You want to try the flavors, in each part.
You want to know it not just in result.

7.
You want to see it, not just in result.
It’s what you haven’t done—nobody’s fault—
And still do want. It’s not that everything has died:
It’s been reborn. Your fingers steeple God,
And you think, just now, of what you can become.
In the rewritten poems of life, the lamb
Lies down, and in its kindness, there is awe.
There’s no one way, and no one final law.
When you get up, you listen to the trees;
You listen to your heart, open your eyes.
It’s time for coffee, oatmeal, and the sun.
Then later there is music. On the horizon,
There’s the whole grand morning, like the dew.
You never thought the absence would be you.

The morning has a look of otherness about it,
The light vaguely radiant
Like the sun that spills
Through a church window.
It’s the time the imagination feels akin to,
All sweet, sure air.

If I could have met you,
It would have been at a time like this.
We would have warmed our hands
With cups of steamy coffee,
Talked out the morning’s hush.
Death, its shadowy beats
At the wrists, the throat,
We would have ignored for once.
Instead, we would have turned to take in the pots
Of thick-throated African violets
Along the windowsill.

Now as I look up into the sky,
The morning deepens,
And something holy happens,
Like the daze around the face of a person
Stepping out of a dark hallway
And suddenly walking
Into something other,
The rest of the light.

Postcard of Speckled Eggs, Iceland

The postcard says there are “no two alike.”
They look like maps, where all the water’s green
Or white, the continents in brown or black;
Or Easter egg Descartes’s who’ve learned to mean.

They’re eggs to please psychiatrists as well,
Who in their surfaces could find a hell,
Or childhoods lost in ink, or broken up,
Picasso’s tea leaves rescued from a cup.

This card, though, leaves the best part in the shade,
Like love made tangible before it’s made.
Pistachio ice cream cones, they’re not oval,
Deposited on hillsides from upheaval.
Insides sucked out, arranged in a display,
They’re art with something intimate to say.

Kim Bridgford
Genealogy

after "The Blue Terrance" by Terrance Hayes

I come from people who laughed and said they were birthed from pirates who threw the “e” from “Bridgeford” into the ocean, onto the back and forth trundle of the rough, salt air, because, in the New World, you can start out fresh, be economical. On the other side of the family, children were taken away—Helen, whose legs never grew, like a human fish swimming through the bottoms of chairs, the other who was nameless, deaf. They died in a mental hospital. Those things happen, my grandmother said, as if she had just fried up liver and onions and eaten them clean. Her stepfather once chased her around the table and slapped her when she read the newspaper—not for reading it and learning something, but for not knowing how to make it look unread. I come from people who know how to work, who work as if life itself were work—and it is, joy like an iris almost translucent, done in a shade of purple too delicate to describe. Marriage, death, pain—these are to be endured—but let a child be named or food be prepared, and everybody has an opinion. Casseroles appear, held in hands roughened from bleach, rings too tight and attached to flesh that pulls weeds from the ground with such force dirt skitters off and cowers in the grass.
I come from women who have given up everything for their men but their children, their love like a handmade scarf too embarrassing for the outside world. I come from men who late in life discovered their jobs had abandoned them, the gold watches and plaques inadequate for the hours spent away from home. I come from a place where dreams were clumsy on the big, wide lines of elementary school, then wadded up because you had to take care of others who had given up for you, who had had lives given up for them, and this giving up was a contract you signed before you were born. You did not move away to cities like New York, dirty, full of strangers, where belief in our Lord Jesus Christ was like a name tag to be read by thieves. On the Fourth of July, my grandfather, in his madness, took my son too close to a bonfire, pointing out the flickering landscape, and all I could do was run toward them. I always thought my story was about my grandmother, who loved my mother because she was her precious thing, along with my sister, and throughout my youth I navigated my grandmother’s will, pitiless and ready to cut, burn, clean, or drink in the same mood. When I was six she fed me salt instead of sugar because she could, April Fooled me into thinking she had bought me a kitten. She was a survivor, too. I come from a drive-through town, where you could go to church, or die as a teenager on the winding, unlit roads, and where, one day, I opened a book, the way people understand they are adopted,
crisp and clean and unapologetic as a raindrop
sitting on a leaf. I am like a foreign tongue
come home to roost, taking up the old language,
its polysyllabic mysteries and complicated syntax
revived with the attention of the beloved engaging in a music
so perfect it breaks. I come home to rest,
to be who I was, whoever that was, driving through the shadows
of the cut-down trees, circling the new trees naked as gifts
that no one wants. But they, too, grow: they grow up.

Apple Picking

If I could paint the orchard sky today
it would be a soft New England grey.
The moisture in the air, palpable,
hangs low like the trees with their heavy burdens.

Swaddled in loveliness,
not alone or together
just here with each other and the blushing apples
I take in their rounded perfection
and know it was beauty—not knowledge—Eve desired.
“Does anyone know how to waltz?” From the cast of the play, not a peep. We were students at college in ’74. I sheepishly lifted my hand. I had taken ballet as a kid. I’d watched films. But I never had danced it before. The director reached out for my hand, grabbed my waist, took a stance, and proceeded to whirl me in three-step for turn after turn. “I think she’s in love!” someone shouted. I felt my face burn, yet how could I tell them it wasn’t the man, but the dance? A little like flying, like floating, like spinning in space, a moment of perfect abstraction, ineffable grace.
Gail White
Why I Am Not a Buddhist

For Molly Peacock

Because it’s all-too-obviously true. Because we try to storm the walls of Bliss by finding happiness a million times the way we found it first: Sports victories, sex acts, great books. And in between the spurts of joy, we live in painful spells of longing for the next hit, like addicts. Oh, he’s right, he’s right, everything’s suffering, even what we call our happiness. If we could stop the Ferris wheel, if we could settle down, we might discover Emptiness is Bliss. He’s got our number. All his Truths are true. True, but so what? Can there be faith without the chance of being wrong, the spice of doubt?
Gail White
The Beautiful Girl

It was fun for a while to know
She could have any boy she liked,
That the other girls were helpless
In the face of the hot spiked

Punch of her violet eyes,
That innocent look of sin.
And then it was fun for a while
To know she could take them in,

That a man could fall so hard
That he’d let her wear the writing
Right off his MasterCard,
Finding her so exciting

That he’d fall for any story
Her honey-lined lips could tell,
Hand over all his money
And the condo lease as well.

Finally there was a man
Who got his mind on track,
Wanted to get his bank account
And his engagement ring back,
So she called an old boyfriend
Who watched the house with a gun
And the story ended badly.
The sequel wasn’t fun.
C.B. Anderson
Storage and Retrieval

In the dank cellar of the human mind
Are stored a lifetime’s worth of rusted tools
And strands of uttered words, both cruel and kind,
That molder in the moil of golden rules.

There, too, are hogsheads of untasted wine
Maturing in the clench of oaken staves
While millipedes and spiders form a line,
Like soldiers standing watch at open graves.

In dusty bins are valued scraps of copper,
Collected from a hundred junked machines,
Which raise the question: Is it really proper
For salvagers to live like libertines?

So lay your heavy weapons down, and strike
Your colors, showing you no longer pose
A threat. Prepare a banquet, if you like,
Inviting to your table all of those

Whom you have disrespected. Share the wealth,
And let your own good fortune thus expand.
Decant your finest vintage, toast the health
Of guests who then will praise your open hand.
Winter 2020

Remember, everything you’ll ever need
Is held in storage down those basement stairs.
Be not afraid to modify your creed
If sudden kindness takes you unawares.

A change of heart is never automatic,
And there may yet be treasures in the attic.
John Grey
Pony Tracks in the Snow

As sure a trail as any in this snow,
The winter notebook opens to a page
Of mammoth, mastodon, a blurred white age
Of giants moving deep and moving slow
To pull one more ghost stump, another row
Of spectral furrow teeth or to engage
The toughest field work of this phantom stage
With wood wheels of the wagons long ago.
The ponies are more present for this spoor
Than if the beasts themselves came trudging by,
Aristocrats to their hard-muscled core,
As heavy as the earth but heads borne high.
Not scent nor whinny, nothing measures more
What tracks the creatures leave in me and why.
John Grey

Swing

Above your swing, sway the boughs of oak tree,
Various cloud faces, some fat, some thin,
Push seat, wield chain, excited, your wide grin
Propelled high by nothing but arm and knee,
Ascend, a sweep of air, small victory
Over parental law, its hackneyed spin.
Where their lives leave off, you begin
At sky’s rim, intense, private history.

Prosaic, their know-it-all reactions
Constantly thwart your bold, incessant “Why?”
Cold faces ignore heartfelt suggestions,
Give nothing, robotically they reply,
Always repeating, “Don’t ask such questions.”
They’re ever grounded. No wonder you fly.
See the magnolia bursting
with what could be and the blue-grey
two-story shy beside it? There,
go in now, up the stairs and back too many years

into what could be, into the blue-grey
and stair-stepping into the long hallway of age,
go in now, staring full-face all the many years
that separate adult’s bed from child’s dream.

Two-stepping down the long hallway of age,
here where you cannot stand still—
between adult’s bed and child’s dream—
this is where you learned to fly.

There is a time you cannot stand still,
a time to leap from the blue-grey hall.
This is where your voice learned to fly
bursting from throat through song, through story,

each time leaping from the blue-grey hall,
“up, up into the atmosphere” of movies,
bursting from throat through song, through story,
“up, up where the air is clear,” Mary Poppins humming.
“Up, Up”—the atmosphere expanding as you moved into each new sphere, past flying the kite, past the kite itself, “up, up, where the air is clear,” beyond Mary Poppins. Humming yourself into belief, away from the world below into each new sphere, past flying the kite, past the kite itself, into the more real sky, the universe itself, all that was waiting of yourself. What you believed flew away from the world below with loud singing past the rooftops and soot-filled chimneys into the more real sky, the universe itself, all that was waiting. Dashing down the long hallway, you bounce on one bed, then the other with loud singing, past the rooftops and soot-filled chimneys, past the Mary Poppins stories—childhood dashed. Down the long hallway, past the beds, the other self waits. There are always two stories. There the blue-grey of what was. Over there, what could be, every magnolia bursting.
Marjorie Maddox
The Port: for Kim Bridgford

You must not abandon the ship in a storm
because you cannot control the winds....
What you cannot turn to good, you must
at least make as little bad as you can.
—St. Thomas More

Turning the world to good,
you inhaled the storm;
smiled, then exhaled what should
turn the world. Your “good”
steered can’t toward likelihood,
hope your port, words and warmth
that still turn our world toward good
and you. Inhaling poems, we mourn—our hardest storm.
Wabi-Sabi

*a way of living that focuses on finding beauty within the imperfections of life and accepting peacefully the natural cycle of growth and decay*

—Collins Dictionary

Even discarded things—the dried-out tufts of grass coated with frost, welter of sticks in mud, the roots of willow trees gnarled down to water, flotsam on a pond, the sway of berry-bushes in the winter wind—can live as an extended miracle—the leaf now only veins, blown, desiccated, up against a rock sings subtle music out.

I’ll drink with you. These teacups, not quite round, rough on the bottom, pot with crooked spout, a hut of reeds, the orange glow of fire and you there in coarse garments, one fine strand of graying hair against your cheek, fingers carved with the tasks of years. The grace you show, long practiced, is delight to crown the worn and well-used body that you lightly bear.
David W. Landrum

The Years

At night the loud winds roar over our heads outside, above us, harrying the stars. We wrap up in a blanket, pile on quilts, secure and warm, shielded against the cold. We are smooth stones made gentle by the flow of years that, rushing over us, took off our edges, polished us to be white like the moon lost in the black of winter sky.
David W. Landrum
Blues Sonnet

Got to pay your dues if you want to sing the blues.
—Ringo Starr, “It Don’t Come Easy”

You can’t just sing them. First, you have to know your stuff: the riffs, the chords, the runs. For sure. But more than that—much more. You have to show respect for the old bluesmen. Premature performances will only get you boos; in two minutes the audience will sense you’re empty of the very things the blues embodies. Enter as an apprentice and learn the craft. And one thing after that. You have to suffer. If you’ve lived without some pain, some loss—if you haven’t been flat broke, out of luck, then don’t stand up and spout what you think are the blues. Go home and pack and hit the road. Live hungry. Then come back.
Every year, I try the garden, remembering my mother and grandfather, how they fed us all summer, walked out the door, returned, arms full of fist-sized gems.

Always, I forget to water to weed to pick at the right time. My friend, the expert gardener, comes to my yard for work advice.

I show her my pride—the forest of tomato plants for once, amazingly alive. Loving their wildness, I ask her what she thinks.

Spreading one wide frond across her slim, flat hand, she says I have to choose between this wildness and the fruit I crave.
See where it is branching—
here, a whole new plant begins.
Help the plant conserve its energy.
Use it to make more yellow blooms.
Prune here.
It doesn’t know
another stem
will make it weaker.
Cut, breathe in the scent
so you can have abundance later.
Winter 2020

Patricia Davis-Muffett

A Land We Know

For María Luisa Cedeño Quesada, murdered in her hotel room while vacationing alone.

The lightning strikes, the city glows, its map electric from above. Storms that rage like a land we know.

This summer storm, like Costa Rica’s daily show, the way the sky broke open as we drove. The lightning strikes, the city glows.

Men ask, “What made this doctor go into the abyss (a resort!) alone?” Storms that rage. It’s a land we know.

Three days alone, the beach below. The virus behind her, she pulls off mask and gloves. The lightning strikes, the city glows.

Two wine glasses, an invitation, although— did she ignore his eyes, a hint of storms that rage? A land she knows.

Her body in a sheet. Gone like the undertow. She imagined she was free, dared to dream of love. The lightning struck, erased the city’s glow. Storms that rage. A land we know.
Don Thompson

Remains

Briars and wild vines comfort
the scattered, placid bricks
in their slow dissolution to dust.

No relic chimney, no steps
stepping up to nothing,
nor any grub-rotted timbers:

The roof must’ve lifted off one evening
like a huge, mossy bird
and flew away
into the oncoming dark.

As for the root cellar—
dirt’s been pulled down into it
for our sake. Otherwise
we might be reminded
of an open grave.
Don Thompson

Red Rock Canyon

This must be where time goes
to slow down.
A harmless illusion anyhow.

Sandstone erodes
almost immeasurably.

Although the wind still worries
and ancient colors
keep changing their minds,

nothing happens. Nothing.

And yet you drive away at peace,
amused by your dash clock’s
frantic efforts to catch up.
Thyme

Back roads bend, bump, and climb to these old stones.
The graveyard turf is mostly thyme, not grass.
Thyme, really, at this site of prayers and bones,
Reminding us time’s wordplay, too, shall pass.
Our springy footfalls rouse a living scent,
Faint crush of earthy green and citrus zest.
Thyme’s herbal whiff of warm, home-cooked content
Seasons the breeze above this plot of rest.
Inscriptions lichen-clotted, hard to read
Remember more than our eyes can decode.
We hear the passing drivers brake their speed
To ease their time along a twisting road
As we set our slow steps among the dead,
Sharing thyme underfoot and overhead.
Ted Charnley

The Clepsydra

Its inflow, outflow run on tears. Relentless dripping times the hours to irrigate your fields. It marks no lines of why, just when
to sprout and blossom in this place, to mate and sow your own, to know the numbing frost, become the harvest. Days that will not wait,

that weep from ducts, from spigots on or off, evaporate. And all the while what’s in this fluid thief will count your seasons lost
downstream. It runs brim high with tears to spin the solemn calendar of skies and skylings, draining years. Too slowly you begin
to savor time in salty water flying fleet through this machine, to stop the crying.
Rebecca O’Bern

Just Keep Doing Your Thing

My mother smiles, smears her mascara, and reads the inscription below us.

“Just keep doing your thing.”

As I bend down to brush a small patch of dirt away from the little stone covering my grandmother’s grave, I’m relieved to know, I think, that she thought more of us than of herself as her mind was inverting into itself and our bodies fluffed and flourished.

Seeing her grave makes me remember when she was bedridden and me, so eager, running in to see her with my hair ties pulling down my ponytails in a four-year-old tomboy stupor, and we played Dominoes.
As I think back on what little
of her life I can recall
all the small moments are patched together,
weaving through tall blades of grass
like a serpent on its belly
tempting me to forget.

Rebecca O’Bern

It Won’t Be Long Now

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.
—Isaiah 35:5

She smiles as the choir
opens their black binders
to perform songs of the lame walking,
the blind seeing again.
The deaf girl who goes to my church,
she knows the waves of the conductor’s hands
but not the rocking lilt of water
or the rise and fall of voices
in their rhythmic undulation.

Instead, she follows with her eyes
the signs created
with her mother’s hands and fingers,
the formation of “God”
an accusatory point toward Heaven,
then thumb drawn back against the chest
to halve a prayer.
The sign for “deaf” the same
as “closed,” like locked doors.

Previously published in Helix Magazine (Fall 2013)
Rebecca O’Bern
Lost and Found

on a news report from Realengo, Brazil (2013)

After their father died, the Almeida children went home to clean. Leonel was a hoarder, radios stacked on newspaper columns, parlor with a dozen end tables. The children took turns carrying boxes to the lawn. In the final box was Manuela, their old red-footed tortoise. They thought he’d escaped thirty years ago in 1982, when workers tore up the kitchen, but he was just lost inside, trapped within the hoard, surviving on termites.

As children, what else do we lose that stays? What keeps itself hidden, lofting in our minds, compartmentalizing old parts that we cover and fold into the rest? Maybe, for you, it’s all those memories you forgot or ignored, and the red-footed tortoise of your childhood is still there somewhere, waiting for some grief-stick to beat you into carrying what’s left onto the lawn, for the neighbors to parse, rummaging through all your pieces.

Previously published by the Connecticut Poetry Society (2017)
Carol Lynn Stevenson Grellas
Since You’ve Been Gone

Since you died, I’ve dreamt of being lost—
amid the unfamiliar, somewhere Frost
might call a traveler’s puzzlement, a quest
determining which pathway suits me best
as though I’ve heard an inner voice or song
yet overwhelmed which choice is right or wrong—
bewildered by the thought, I’ll cry for you
as if your death’s a thing I could undo.
A dream can be a devastating place
though more alarming still to wake and face
the truth of what is real. There’s no way
to signal you for help. Sometimes I play
old messages to hear your voice again—
as if you’re home, then ask you where you’ve been.
He wasn’t there
for my sixth birthday
eighth grade football games
my high school graduation
or college
not when I moved away
not my wedding
not the birth of my daughter
or son
never gave job advice
or girlfriend advice
never helped fix my car
or took me to a ball game.
Instead
my sister taught me to ride a bike
my brother how to work a drill
my mother how to treat others
and others filled in the gaps
but I had to figure out the rest
on my own.
These are the things
taken from me
on that night
in June
of ’67.

Previously published in *Genetically Speaking*
First Funeral

Tradition laid my father’s soul to rest.  
The church air: flowery spicy incense drenched  
wafting from swaying censers in the gloom,  
as clergy entreated peace.  

I wore my best  
and held my breath, kept every feature clenched,  
too numb to question, wanting to assume  
the proper posture.  

Of the spectacle,  
the funeral and its attendant rites,  
I keep only one sight—his empty shell,  
mocking the form, the dialectical  
presumptions flickering among the lights,  
declaring faith, for me, an empty carousel.  

I see him dead, yet hear him laugh nearby,  
in echo of his final lullaby.
Sally Nacker
Saying Goodbye

*If my heart arrests, let it keep arresting.*
I kept thinking of your willed words
as I walked one last time that spring
to your summerhouse. Birds

hopped and sang in the thickets on either side
of Veery Lane. The green
world trembled so bright I cried.
At the end of the long lane

the small, screened-in wood
house stood. Something fluttered inside it
like a large moth, or could
it be a bird, I thought

as I came closer. I saw then—
its nervous movement through the screen—
a little brown house wren.
I propped the door open between

the green world and the world inside,
stepped in, and drew
close to the frightened thing, tried
to guide it toward and through
the opening. I could tell
the wren’s small heart was beating
wildly, could see its little eyes, so gentle.
Then off it flew into the trembling.
Juleigh Howard-Hobson

Garden Ghost

“Meredith, you really must get this ridiculous notion out of your head. Ghosts don’t haunt flower beds in the middle of the day. They haunt houses. At night.”
—Rebecca Kent, High Marks for Murder

Yes, I realize I am a little bit underwhelming. People want ghosts to be Fantastic Things. To look … fantastical … I know I must be nowhere close to it, being a garden ghost. Still. I am truly dead, if that matters. The garden is all I want to haunt. We chose our places, ways and times to manifest. I haunt when the sun is shining, and birds sing. It’s too ghastly to skulk in shadows. I haunt days soaked with color and light, in the garden among the flowers. I know people do not notice me, or even believe I’m here. I don’t scare anyone. I just am.
Juleigh Howard-Hobson

The Funeral

Brooklyn, nineteen seventy-two. I was
A kid, but I was just cool enough. I
Watched reruns. The Monkees. I was not
Quite a hippie in my maxi-dresses
And glasses. Sneakers with socks. Grandma died.
We cleaned out her refrigerator. Hot

Mustard. Teeth in a jar to keep them cool
For when she put them in to go to church.
On the top a radio. Tuned to some
Funeral. Heavy corduroy gut lurch
In all black. Uncle dodging Vietnam

And talking about communes still running
And what he was going to do with his
Life. Not go back to college, he dropped out.
I don’t care. Glass ashtrays overflowing.
Smell of Aquanet mixed with Crown Royale. It’s
Hot and the fans are on. Some of us kids shout
Into the blades: Hello. Hello. Grandma
Can you hear us? Until a great aunt leans
In and says Knock it off you’ll get your tongues
Sliced in half. No fixing that. You oughta
Know better at your ages. Bored. Cousins
Drinking beer dregs. We are not dead but young.
Neil Kennedy

Upon Seeing the Death Mask of John Keats at the Brandywine River Museum, 2004

Thirteen years old, I didn’t give a shit about John Keats, but I resented death and could imagine how the mask had fit over his face, and how the poet’s breath grew quiet, rattled, and was silent. No more Endymion, no more *Bright Star*, no *Belle Dame Sans Merci* again would hint that life is short and love can leave a scar. John Keats was dead at only twenty-five. I was thirteen and had someplace to be, but didn’t have long till I might arrive where everything ends up eventually. I placed my hand against my cheek to trace the mask his mask had cast upon my face.
I think about Frankenstein, the mummy, zombies, ghosts, vampires, Nosferatu, poltergeists and revenants. All of them died, but somehow became undead. They haunt our dreams and waking hours because they challenge the natural order of things. Death and taxes, they say, are permanent and inevitable. So it is our instinct to fear something that was once dead, if it becomes reanimated in this world. One notable exception is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only one I know of who came back from the dead and didn’t scare the living hell out of everyone. Of course, he made most of his post-crucifixion appearances to his disciples and people who knew him. And those people were glad to see him and not afraid. But I wonder how the Roman soldiers would have felt had they met him strolling down the road to Emmaus several days after nailing him to the cross.

I can certainly imagine their screams as they beat a fast path back to the city, swords and armor clattering in hasty retreat.
William Ogden Haynes
Sonnet for a Divorcé

At the end, he was an angel too far
from heaven, bones frail as a hummingbird,
weakened as the glow of a single star
receding through the darkness of space, blurred,
growing ever dimmer as miles are crossed.
He greets his death as a farmer welcomes
sunset, his work is done, and he has lost
the will to continue. When the end comes,
he doubts if there really is a heaven
above, but if it’s true, there is the chance
it will frown on wives numbering seven,
and Saint Peter may look at him askance
and slam the gate, his lifetime disparaged.
Can hell be worse than seven marriages?
I often stop
at this tiny cemetery,
just off the state route
that trails down from Hairy John.

Pastels might do the landscape justice—
or a fine camera
in the hands of someone
with a painterly eye.

The deep dark soil
has attracted the Amish—
their farms dot the valley,
and I am often slowed

by horse and carriage
as I coast along
the gentle curves.
But this graveyard

is older than the Amish farms
and it seems unlikely
that the faded names
would spark
a recognition
in the eyes
of the living.
Wikipedia
calls those with a passion
for visiting graveyards
“Tombstone Tourists,”
although I don’t suppose
I qualify—as this spot
of peace and respite
is on my way
from college to college.
The bones
buried here
are past memory.
Isn’t that the way of these
monumental places?
Graveyards have always
been for the living.
I finish my coffee.
and grab a piece of the view—
undulating glen
in sun and shade
to see me home.
Gale Acuff
Do Not Disturb

I don’t think I’ll mind being dead if I can be dead near Miss Hooker, also dead of course, since she’s fifteen years older than I am and if dead naturally, no fatal accident to either one of us, because although I’m 10 to her 25 I’ve been feeling what must be true love, which means for me at least at my age giving her a ring and a promise and later getting married, then on to the honeymoon and maybe our first baby, or Miss Hooker will have one and I guess that I helped in some way that I don’t know yet but have suspicions about, our door’s locked and maybe even bolted and maybe even a Do Not Disturb sign hanging on the outside part of the knob, and lights, there aren’t any, at least any lit, we burn a candle or a flashlight maybe or by the light of the TV, maybe even the radio or alarm clock or city outside the window or stars or moon, we see how much our eyes can see and something tells me that that will be heaps
and I think that as the days pass and we get to know each other better we won’t need eyes at all. At home I ask my folks where babies come from. *You don’t need to know that now,* they answer. *Pass the pork chops, please.*

This morning after Sunday School I asked Miss Hooker but she blushed and told me to ask my folks so I said, *I do but they say that I don’t need that information now.* Miss Hooker laughed and said, *They’re right, and when you need it you’ll be sure to get it.*

Which is a relief because if I don’t know how to help create a baby and me married then I won’t get arrested and have to go to jail, I won’t be good in a cage, and Miss Hooker would never divorce me, not on our wedding night, she’s a good teacher and if I don’t catch on she’ll probably fall to her knees again and pray my ignorance away. Feels good.
Gale Acuff
Fallen Arches

One day Miss Hooker’s going to have to die and if I’m still around myself and know about it you can bet that I’ll cry my share and not just cry but sob and not just sob but weep and not just weep but lament and after Sunday School this morning I told her so, I confessed it with my mouth you might say, at least Miss Hooker says it, I’m pretty sure she swiped it from the Good Book but she’s our teacher, that’s her job, I mean to save out immortal souls or die trying, at least, but anyway I swore to her after class that if she went to her eternal reward before I do, which is likely because she’s 25 to my 10, that I’d be there in person, in the flesh, in my best Sunday clothes to enjoy her funeral—participate in it, that is, and then said I’m sorry but she wasn’t offended. Miss Hooker said that she hopes nobody will regret her death because she won’t since she’ll be in

a better place, Heaven she meant, but she didn’t have to say it, it’s understood,
like the pronoun *you* in some sentences, like when she says *Open your Bible* to the Book of So-and-so, verse such-and-such, or I tell one of my friends *Go to Hell*, that’s what we learned in regular school last Friday—I mean the grammar, not that *Go to Hell*—that and a few other things I don’t really remember but it doesn’t matter so long as our principal won’t hold me back for another year, but in Sunday School I can only fail if I sin too much and don’t get saved—then I go

to Hell for Eternity and that means that I’ll never see Miss Hooker more, no, unless by some miracle she goes there, too, or by an even greater one if *I* make it into Heaven. Miss Hooker says that we get new bodies up there though the one she has now isn’t too bad. I wish for muscles and no fallen arches, I mean for me—I mean *on* me. Amen.
Robert Darken
Teacher

I was the novice, whippet thin with lead-black hair, the year we shared a classroom. He tilted toward retirement, smiled with grim patience beneath a bottle-brush mustache as if time and more time was the answer to every question. We both had leather briefcases, gifts from our wives: mine shiny, his stretched soft as if its belts had been loosened after dinner. I circled him warily, the old dog whose wisdom confused and crowded my brittle confidence. Once I read a poem he’d written and, moved, offered that the poem was lovely, to which he readily agreed. My face must have puckered into the shape of surprise or disapproval because he added,
I’m not being immodest. It’s a lovely poem. Inwardly, I scoffed. He was immodest; no other color could paint his self-praise. He had tooted his own horn, a cardinal sin among my people, prairie Protestants with a mortal fear of standing out.

Since then I have tried to make and remake his intent, wondered if he meant the poem was not his alone but came to him like a bolt that dropped out of a clear sky. Twenty years later my car hums along the parkway toward home after the school day when red-tailed hawks wheel against the blue and I lean into the windshield, strain to see so that if one swoops, shows the breadth of its wingspan, I might pick out the shapes of single feathers, almost hear the wings form words, feel the electric shock of knowing that beauty is beyond us but sometimes flies low to let us look.
Robert Darken
Woman’s Work

At 6 her van will roll into the driveway. Tonight the garlic cloves yield to my hands: they open secret hearts to the blade, sing themselves sweet in a spoon of oil.

The world is changed at every meal.

An hour ago: one son totes sacks of groceries while the other chops carrots. “Dad,” he says, “are we making the escarole soup, the kind you told us the poor Italians ate?”

The boys know cannellini from garbanzo.

Thirty years ago: My father seldom cooked. Some Sundays he made *tynde panekager*, thin pancakes rolled into jam-filled logs dusted with sugar, or *æbleskiver*, fat balls of pancake,

since Danes love pancake in any form.

I remember because it happened as rarely as a holiday, like a circle in red marker on the black and white calendar of days for which my mother’s hands provided every meal.
Winter 2020

Forever: her hands move with a kitchen knife
to slice potatoes, toss them in salt, fry them
brown and tender in the pan, the pan’s sizzle
that seems to praise this woman, any woman
who demands their men learn to do for themselves.
Winter 2020

Robert Darken
Blind Date

After the play we sit at a picnic table under a black curtain of sky. We eat fries and drink wine from paper cups. I hear my voice analyze the characters as though I’m acting a role: omniscient narrator, authoritative English professor. I monitor my audience for approval. The costume *du jour* is flannel with ripped jeans like the girls beside us who flip their dirty blond hair; you wear a flowered dress under a cardigan. When you talk about learning to play Boccherini with your trio,
your long fingers splay as though stretching to vibrate cello strings. Then you stop, as though music is too sacred to speak of with the uninitiated. Are you beautiful? Face pale and thin, sharp nose, wide mouth pointed down at the corners. Your eyes are black holes that compel me with the gravity of a sun, your hair a rainbow of blacks that shine darkly in the glow of the fire pit. When shadows flicker on your bare knee, I want to cover it with my hand
to see the yellow light move over my hand over your knee.
Maybe we both know I’m performing a part

that’s bigger than I can be. Miscast, I stumble
while you wait out the evening:

the curtain falls with a tight smile and quick wave.
The stars stare down with cold fire.
Barbara Loots
The View

Woman and Child on a Balcony by Berthe Morisot (1872)

Though Madame leans on a terrace rail above
the vista of a distant city scene,
her gaze seems inward. What’s she thinking of,
her lovely face contemplative, serene?
A plinth and urn of roses near at hand
suggest a cemetery on that hill,
for everywhere, it seems, the dead command
the best and highest views. Each flounce and frill
of her black gown and bonnet signal grief.
So, mourning, beside a little girl
who is the legacy of love too brief,
more priceless than an everlasting pearl.
Absent the sun, the sky a flattened gray
casts no shadows on this shadowed day.

Previously published in The Ekphrastic Review
Barbara Loots
Lazarus Speaks

Don’t you see? God’s kingdom is already among you.
—Jesus

When I came out, I was a different man.
Yes, you could say I came back from the dead,
as I supposed I was behind a stone
I couldn’t move, grave rags around my head.

The dark felt like eternity in there,
with time enough to ponder Was that all?
to breathe in peace the last remaining air,
and touch the vastness in a place so small.

Then suddenly a light burst in. A shout
out there from someone calling me by name.
The door to God stood open!
    So I thought.
But soon enough, the disappointment came.

Only the world again, with all its stink,
and nothing wonderful to tell or think.

John 11:38-44 Common English Bible
Peggy Landsman

Falling

I feel as if I’ve always lived with you.
Was there a life before this life of ours?
At times it is a struggle being two,
But love prevails. Estrangement loses power.
Rebuilding trust is hard. We’ve just begun.
There’s still a lot of damage to undo.
But we are two who wish to live as one.
We may be damned, but damn it, we’ll break through!
What else on earth is life worth living for
If it’s not love and intimate connection?
We’re here where we have never been before,
Two lonely lovers looking for direction.
We’re human. We are falling. Take my hand.
Forgiveness is our last place left to land.
This Is the Way It Might

The brass band turns off the main drag.
Down a side street they go, still playing
away as they disappear.
The music stops and the chatter of voices
starts. Not to put too fine a point on it,
but this is the way it might end:
each of us turning off the main drag,
down a side street that leads to oblivion

for the most sensible among us,
or to heaven for the most optimistic.
I’d be content to run into the band
resting on a field of grass between two

cafés and a woman, her uniform draped
with golden braids, offering me a trumpet,
asking if I’d like to play for the only
time, the only time in my life.
Lisa Barnett

Missing History

At the Plains of Abraham, Quebec City, site of the 1759 victory of Wolfe over Montcalm which resulted in the fall of Quebec to the British.

Above the Plains of Abraham, where we sit and look out over landscaped hills that roll down where the guidebook says the Plains had been, there is no sign of Wolfe or Montcalm. All we see in the reproachful August light—a groundhog beating out a singular tattoo with nut and fruit. He stands there like a general before the tourist troops who gather to observe him. A motley group—Americans, Canadians, and Japanese—who’d come to find the past, and found instead this groundhog eating calmly as you please, as though no armies ever fought below. We’re missing history, but we do not care as cameras click and people laugh and stare to see a groundhog busy with his work.
Survival’s what concerns him, though we think he’s here for entertainment’s sake alone—his hold’s as tenuous as Montcalm’s was when British soldiers climbed up from the brink of the Saint Lawrence. Winter is his Waterloo, and not the people gathered gawking here years after Wolfe and Montcalm met down on the buried Plains. We toss the groundhog food and watch him sift delicately through our gifts before we turn back to the Promenade—its boardwalk and its river views that shift as we climb up and down the wooden steps while waves of French break all around us. From here, it’s easy to forget that Montcalm was the one who fell, as families saunter past us on the way to *une glace* or from *l’hôtel*, while somewhere back above the Plains a groundhog digs his tunnels, and remains.
Lisa Barnett
Year’s End

Through the slats of my Venetian blinds, the world outside is like a notebook page awaiting its text, while snow falls down on trees and streets—random, mysterious, silent. What I mean to say is this: what have I learned from the accumulating snow and days? Is there a lesson I have yet to see—a pattern slowly sliding into meaning?

I wish it would come clear for the new year, that I might move ahead and make amends. The streetlights blink on, yellow as forgiveness; the snow forgets its falling, and is done. To reach this late season, I have traveled far. Now I am cleared, done. Let the new year come.
Maril Crabtree

Resolutions for a New Year

In this year it’s a new heart that I hold, its music unheard in this moment’s age, with willingness to learn how to be bold.

With pristine eyes a new world I’ll behold, I’ll live life as a prophet and a sage. In this year it’s a new heart that I hold.

With every beat it casts away the old and urges writing on the next blank page, with willingness to learn how to be bold.

I’ll sip fresh tea, new stories will be told. Away with anger, sorrow, envy, rage! In this year it’s a new heart that I hold.

While winter howls I’ll smile, endure the cold and wait for virgin buds to break their cage with willingness to learn how to be bold.

I’ll kiss the blossoms, let the year unfold as if the world has flown to some new stage. In this year it’s a new heart that I hold, with willingness to learn how to be bold.
Maril Crabtree
Exercising in the Age of Zoom

Reach up high, the teacher says. Keep your chest up, torso strong. Hearts stay open. Don’t forget to breathe.

The TV is on in the background. Nurses and doctors masked and gowned speak the unspeakable, offer their grief for all to see, unlike the black bags with bodies hidden, piled in refrigerated trucks or stacked in spare rooms.

Lengthen that spine, our teacher says. Our eyes are open. Stand tall, arms wide. Look up as high as you can. We’re still breathing. The numbers in black keep ticking up. The map is covered with red. Graphs fill the screen. The grief pours out onto empty streets. The TV blares sirens and cheers at shift change. Wild animals roam silent asphalt. Central Park teems
Shackleton’s huskies howl at the moon’s clean savagery. Scenting the island with their eagerness for adventure. I too will take my leave from quarantine one day scarper over mudflats through the ship graveyard skeletons, darting like a coral fish. Perhaps I will pose as a clergyman when I reach the mainland. Perfect cover—pure of spirit, immune to biblical curses. Hoarfrost of leprosy renders sensation of touch a memory morphs nose to dough ball, fingers to butchers’ hooks I’m not there yet but the plumb line is falling.
Pamela Sinicrope
Intensive Care

First bluebell peeks through snow, petals
pushing through crust like arms out of
sheets. Robins are first to flutter
notes to the sick in starched beds

weight of unspoken prayers answered
and unanswered ellipse

into oxygen. At the nurses’ station there was once
coffee and salvation-shaped crepes.

Now, only crow’s feet lift
your eyes, tenacious as the first bluebell.

But how will you breathe this crisp
into your lungs, kindle each patient

with words to will one more day
into the next to say goodbye,

to say good
morning to the gracious Robin?
Jennifer Fenn
Reunion with Grandmother

Around her house, crepe myrtles bloom the same
pink blossoms with their leaves like dark green jade,
just like in spring before the Covid came,
before close contact made her feel afraid.
Our Easter holidays were spent apart.
In June, she fell and cracked her pelvic bone.
Although by phone she soothed my worried heart,
I couldn’t go and help. I felt alone.
Her rehab done, I jump at her invite.
A bright hello illuminates her face,
her white hair framed by glow of kitchen light.
We’re sitting close, but still, we don’t embrace.
Within her soft, adoring gaze, I bask.
I’m sure she knows I beam inside my mask.
Andrea Potos

Daughter, Home

Pandemic 2020

I could call it a gesture
from the gods or the Great Mother,
or I could say it’s a byproduct
of world calamity—

our recently-grown daughter home all summer
long, from two thousand miles away, the luxury
of her daily presence, laughter, conversation
and meals together, in a remade womb of family

she became ours once more, a fact
we’d never considered dreaming before, as life
nudged me awake to remind me: we can never know
all the gifts that are to come.
Staycation

We were to leave for Ireland soon—
That trip will have to wait;
Perhaps we can fly off next June
Once viral fears abate.

We must remain at home right now,
At least with ample room
To work or take a break somehow
From email, news, or Zoom.

A daily walk does us both good—
Ditto, a glass of wine;
If settings could be changed, we would,
Although the same are fine.

It seems improper to complain
When each of us is well;
Should either ever go insane,
The other might not tell.
Jane Blanchard

Bird Feeder

The seed has all been eaten—
The perches are uncrowded—
The plastic panes have clouded—
The baffle is unbeaten—

The roof—once green—has faded—
The frame—long gray—has whitened—
The hardware still looks tightened—
The same could be degraded—

The whole—plus pole—is tilted—
The birds may well feel jilted—
Leslie Monsour
Life on the Los Angeles River

A heron stops in early spring
At an unlikely place,
Wading on stilts with folded wing
And skeptical, cool grace,

Aiming its handsome banded eye,
Its sleek, extended beak,
At darting schools of minnow fry
Inhabiting the creek

And slurry that the storm drains pour
Into the concrete flood
Canal, whose excavated floor
Has been returned to mud.

New sandbars bring forth willow shrubs,
And recent marshes hum
With frogs that feed on insect grubs;
Now water birds have come.

Today we watch the heron fly.
Its magnitude and hue
Reveal at once the reason why
We call it great and blue.
Leslie Monsour
The Burrowing Bees

I prize their wild and solitary charm
Of being. They serve no queen, and thrive
   Without conforming to the ritual and swarm
Of the industrious, honey-brewing hive.

Two weeks ago, the patio gave birth
To mounds of dirt where pavement cracked and lent
   A gritty opportunity to sound the earth.
They took a sunny corner of cement

Where heat starts early, lasting all the day.
First five or six, now several dozen zip
   Around in admirable disorder; drones relay
In restless idleness, while females slip

Like rain into their rocky subdivision,
Encrusted with the bullion of their toil,
   And, crouched among them, I rejoice in the precision
With which they hang midair, dissolve in soil.

They growl like dainty bullets, whipping, shooting
About my feet. I shift to find a spot
   Less near their sandy rings, the funneled cells for brooding,
Riddled beneath the fragrant bergamot.
At last, the males, converging, take the floor,
And, ravishing their mates in silvery blazes,
  Like frenzied tumbleweeds, they rollick, three and four,
With heads and abdomens in teeming mazes.

Their progeny is their preoccupation;
And time exists to see that life recurs
  As planned: the crucial splicing of a generation,
The fertile spring each larvaed heir ensures.

At dusk, the cooling stones grow still once more.
The world depends upon the sleeping bees—
  Their chambered hymn, the sweetest song in nature’s score—
Accompanied by distant piano keys.

Amanda Hall
Lover to My Rose

The potted rose will never be without
Companionship, as long as there are bees.
I watched a fellow curl himself about
The buds unconscious of his simple tease.
A trembling slip, a curl of restless fuzz,
His body like a fetus to its womb—
I marveled that there was no sound of buzz,
But silence from this quick, determined groom.
The most industrious of suitors is
A lover to the flowers, well as me;
I think he knows that all who watch are his,
As faster courtship, there could never be.
And jealous blush appears upon my rose,
When suitor to another lover goes!
Wildness creeps and slithers and bobs and darts through the wash. Above, the chitters and caws are punctuated by fluttering from palo verde to mesquite. These are the vulnerable. In the hanging succulent outside the window two squabs await their mother’s return, a beak clutching grasses and grains. My husband guards the nest in her absence, cautiously waters roots.

Others follow the map of the wash, searching for quail, rabbits, young snakes, and lizards. We’ve shielded our eyes from the sun to see two hawks soaring, then circling, and swooping. Owls stand sentinel at the roof edge. The bobcat and coyotes target and strike their own prey. Our tears are for the weak, the quail chick bullied from the brood, the bunny struggling in the pool.

So when I encounter the red-tail guarding the dove nest from below, my innards lurch. Even massive with wings withdrawn, she demands awe and reservation. She must have eaten one, readying for the next, but all my window banging and pan clanging doesn’t move her on. I admit sweat gathers on me. Could be the heat or her. I consider rushing her to save that last chick.
But I remember hawks heavy-winged above me, the gliding and patterns and power in the sky. And now she stands on the concrete, motionless, where she has no more business than a whale on the beach, and me where I live rooted to earth observing her unable to ride a thermal to rise fast, to set her wings and soar on purpose and beyond. To catch her without flight is the catastrophe.
Leslie Schultz

Dogwoods

for Judy

They are no dream. They are a dream come true. These twigs, so red against the April snow, nestle with pussy willows soft and grey. These two embody harmony on a day enflamed by public fear and private woe. Their gentle forms uplift and bring to view the memory of a friend who came to dine just last month, who knocked when twilight fell, who carried in these wands of wood and willow cradled in her arm, tied up in yellow paper, newsprint, yellow ribbon. I could tell they came from her garden, at a time when mine was frozen, mud-brown, glyph of brittle grief. I exclaimed, then set them in a square vase, four-sided, like the creamy bracts that frame each cluster of tiny golden blooms, too tame, I think, to call a flower. In any case, that night, the slender red was not in leaf
but formed a backdrop for the silver show of fuzzy nubbins shaped like kitten paws. Today—Ta-da!—a dazzle of bright green crowns every dogwood twig like a young queen—Persephone, perhaps, who scorns applause, yet yearly melts my heart, as well as snow.
Leslie Schultz
Tiny Troubadour

for Kim Bridgford

This morning, mist hangs on the garden tree.
Our young wren, a bachelor, yearns near his house.
No lady has joined him, but he stays close,
guarding his nest, his round door with no key.

Each day, I watch him perched up on our fence,
Near the wren house we hung from a newel post,
Safe from stray cats. He sings and flits, looks lost
Without a nesting mate. Yet, his competence

Compels my human heart. Tiny stalwart,
His sentinel stance is so valiant and true.
He never abandons what he must pursue.
He continues to woo, though the warm months depart.

He continues to woo the late summer air,
Over and over. No hint of despair.
Andrew Brookman
Ashbrittle Yew

Her hollow trunk divided seven ways
About her centrifugal core
Signifies her slow, luxuriant force.
Gathered in sinuous furrows
Of her bark, virent knots of shade, where time
And light curve, distort, deceive,
Unweave summer’s bright thread to bind my eyes
Amongst subtle apparitions
Of a dark noon. My mind cleaves to her lines,
Fluted bark and long depressions
Sunk in the yew. I follow her surface,
Her shallow recessions and keen
Grain tracing aqueous shapes beneath her
Canopy of green. This tranquil
Sequence of impressions eases pain
With dim bliss. Here whilst time deceives
I recline, considering the yew’s trunk,
How her seven-way unjointing
Was the work of her own blind strength and sense
Of her own decay, as one root
Failing struck forth more, reaching back through her
Own rotten, moss-furred heart to find
The earthen floor and plant her core anew
Amidst the fecund churchyard’s growth
Once more to regather, once more renew.
Andrew Brookman

Plague Pits on the Avon

Beside the wharf remains a vacant piece
   Of barren ground
Facing panelled glass let at corporate rate.
   The dead confound
Our craft and speculation. Their estate
Is founded there: a plague pit’s dismal lease
Denies the builder’s plot, its earth unsound,
Too dense with decayed flesh for digging.
See how our dead impede the living!
And prevent our labour with insistent sleep.

Their obstinance seems fair. All history
   Builds on the dead.
Let their bones for once refuse our burden
   And us instead
Bear our own guilt. This I say for certain:
We cannot endure alone. The mystery
Of being raised on crooked backs and fed
At a victim’s hands precludes all debt.
As their flesh subverts the spade, we yet
Persist solely by their mute gratuity.
Mindy Watson

Twice-Drowned Dog

an ekphrastic on Francisco Goya’s “The Dog”

Fifty-two inches of pigment pour down, swathing
Canvas in ponderous paint. Oh, what madness it
Summons, this palette that plunges, expunging all
Hope in its wake. Yet with arduous effort, one
Hound-dog endeavors to raise her brown head from the
Bog. Why’d her artisan master condemn her to
Clamber? He’s damned her forever to grasp mortal
Tethers in search of salvation that’s never to
Come. Yet what grace she depicts, fixing eyes rapt with
Bliss on some place she’ll exist when her flailing’s long done.
Elizabeth Eike

Falling

Lift your arms and hold them strong.
Include a soft and gentle curve
but keep your lines unbroken, long.

Tighten every limb and nerve.
Push through the floor, stretch to the sky,
your body taut and fit to serve.

Controlled, determined, head held high,
brush one leg out, round, strong, and slow,
then pushing off, prepare to fly.

Then fall and fall from toe to toe,
secure and free and fluid, tense—
awash in shade and spotlight glow.
Robin Helweg-Larsen
The Four Duties

First, to your family, the spouse you chose, children you gained who themselves had no choice; to give a space wherein to find their voice with safety, happiness, as each one grows.

To self: to keep yourself happy and whole, free of both physical and mental pain through yoga, exercise, good stress, good strain, a moderate diet, peaceful self-control.

To all humanity: using some gift, some insight, skill set, asset, useful tool to better people’s lives through work or school, some mast and sail or oar for those adrift.

And to the Muse that underlies the world: express yourself—banners are useless furled.
Robin Helweg-Larsen

The Poem

Poems are merely words you can remember word for word. Question: What makes them so? Think of the earliest nursery rhymes you know, held from child’s January to old December: rhymes, rhythms, imagery—rich as meringues. Then complicate discussion, don’t reduce odd imagery, words foolish, strange, diffuse—aim for rijsttafel with tongue-tingling tangs. Use richness to engage the memory: conflicting quotes from Bible, Shakespeare, Yeats, with Bach-like sense of heaven’s opening gates or hall of mirrors, or sun-scattering sea… Mesmerized readers have to puzzle out in memory mazes what it’s all about.
Terese Coe

Clerihews

Morgan Le Fay
made a fast getaway
when an innocent idyll
ended up homicidal.

Anton Chekhov
tried to eat a peck of
cherries each September
if he could remember.

Federico Garcia Lorca
wrote a play in Majorca
in which Salvador Dali
played an ingénue in Bali.

Luigi Pirandello
did not care for yellow.
He rushed to and fro
if one ordered Pernod.

Carole Lombard
was supposed to have starred
until the cable
she got from Gable.
Buddy Holly could have been a Svengali but had no protegé for “That’ll Be the Day.”

Neil Young was coming unstrung. All of his back-ups were headed for crack-ups.
Miriam Novotny

Cat

Sinew-strength of willow-swiftness,
Whisper-steps of soundless silk.
Shadow-son of will-o’-wispness,
Drifting ninja, specter-sylph.

Gold-green eye-flash!
Sharp-white teeth-gnash!
Whip-quick tail-lash!

Gone.
Mike Wilson
Licensed to Rhyme

I use poetry to settle grudges,
scribbling an ending where I win,
or to give my better nature nudges
toward the infinite, away from sin.
Rhymes are nets I use to gently catch
animals that Adam never named,
set them free in lines that I dispatch,
bring them into focus with a frame.
On the beach of metaphor I mosey,
scouring the sand for special shells
spiraling with meaning in the poesy
of a sonnet or a villanelle.
Poetry’s conceit clings like a curse—
still, I don’t despair—it could be verse!
Mike Wilson

Shouldn’t

Shouldn’t do it conscience says to me.
But that sinning scent around me lingers,
making mind a Cyclops that can’t see
yellow caution—shouldn’t’s wagging finger.

Shouldn’t do it. Conscience shakes my shoulder.

Think of consequences you should measure.
But my nether parts are feeling bolder,
rising, keen on claiming clammy pleasure.

Shouldn’t do it. Conscience grabs my arm.

Love is lust sashaying in disguise.
But I hear the words of ancient charm
muttered from the lips near parting thighs.

Shouldn’t didn’t win, of course—we did it;
then from prissy conscience we just hid it.
Carla Martin-Wood
The One

I am the one you have feared
since air burned your lungs
with that first borning breath
I am the shadow that rocked your cradle
humming lullabies in a minor key

I am the pea beneath your mattress
gobbler of bread crumb trails
frost on the match girl’s fingers
the ticking crocodile
I am the one who arsenics the apple
hexes the spindle
haunts the sleepless hollows of your mind

I am the Great Fee Fi Fo Fum

I curdle the milk
stop the clock
inspire the rooster to crow at midnight

I am the one who owns the big black dog
I am the one who
weighs the sum of everything
against a feather
legacy of the Garden
curse of the garnet seeds

I am the boatman’s boss

Though you run five miles a day
and eat only parsley
I will find you
though you stack chairs against the door
and hide beneath the covers
I will have my way
prayers and chants and charms
and all your ragged little gods
cannot protect you

Comes the day we meet
you will laugh at your folly
for you will find I am also
merely a pitstop
on the infinite path.

Previously published in *The Witch on Yellowhammer Hill* (The 99% Press, 2016)
Now autumn with her meditative sigh
sweeps cool across the fields of harvest grain
the cider press awaits, the pumpkins lie
abundant, blest by fertile earth and rain

with summer’s heated passion finally spent
the logs are stacked anticipating snow
while leaves abandon limbs in bright descent
all burnished with an incandescent glow

the world’s at rest, the year is winding down
as nature burns the residue away
and smoky incense hallows farm and town
while cricket vespers rise at close of day

a book, a purring cat, a pot of tea
oh, tell me, April, what are you to me?

Previously published in Into the Windfall Light (The Pink Petticoat Press, 2012)
This festive night, above the pandal
The breeze is waving flag and bunting.
The air is filled with hymnal chorus:
The priests, sonorous with their chanting.

A cloud of smoke from lamps and candles
Tonight haloes the Golden Goddess.
Her crown of gems, Her metal armor:
The lights are glinting off Her bodice.

She stares at us: the Primal Mother:
Her three eyes burning, bright and steady.
Her painted pupils cut through vapor—
This musk of incense, strong and heady.

To Ma, we know, we kneel and pray;
Her formless form this image of clay.
I watch the sisters climb three steps and go inside Rosellen’s house. When they see me they beam and wave. I wonder what they know about the girl who studies them. Dad murmurs, “Low IQ.” We rake more brittle leaves. “Be neighborly. Don’t stare.” The sisters climb three steps. They go to special ed, east Sacramento. A small bus honks and idles every day, empty. They beam and wave. I wonder what they know about tonsils, Neptune, or polio, quicksand or mushroom clouds, infinity. I watch the sisters climb three steps. Perhaps they go into a pink bedroom like mine, lift a window and listen to the rain, to sirens, black phoebes. The sisters beam and wave. I wonder what they know and what they say at night when sleep is slow to come, when branch on glass clinks mystery. I watch Rosellen’s daughters climb three steps and go. They beam and wave. I wonder what they know.
standing on the steps
of the airplane staircase
and seeing the runways
which stretched,
long and flat,
like a wet pair
of trousers
being laid on a line.
and he felt
in his chest
sort of rising potential;
the feeling of birds
as they step from an edge—
as they open the drop
to their wings.
God flew out of Logan to Copenhagen
on the same flight, sat in Economy
and neither of us had a window seat.
Boarded the same train into the heart
of the city. God said walk with me
into the square, under the plane trees,
each snug in a slow-release green
watering bag. And God threw words on
the cobblestones as the wheels of a thousand
bicycles passed, imprinting them like veins
on leaves. And the clouds slowly roused themselves,
throwing shadows as we traveled on to Bergen
where the seagulls screeched like Hitchcock’s birds
and there was no way to stop them. Later—
 flying home and given a window seat above the earth—
 I could see nets strung like gossamer along the coast,
and only slowly realized they must be holding pens
for farmed salmon. And the farmers were invisible
and the lives of the fish were invisible
and the sun lit the ripples of the North Sea
like lightning only there was no sound,
only the light on the surface separating us.
William R. Stoddart

Old Lady on Plane

I wish to go beyond the nervous small talk with the old lady sitting next to me on the plane who has an Italian accent and talks about her garden. I have a garden so I ask her about tomato plants and she looks around before whispering about coffee grounds she never throws away along with eggshells and the inedible parts of vegetables all mixed together and spread around her plants. What about the insects, I ask. She looks off toward the flight attendant who has a hard smile for a large man blocking her refreshment cart. The man relents and moves sideways like a crab back to his undersized seat. The thing about insects, she tells me, is that they don’t eat much. She smiles, proud that she has mastered English and she rambles on about how there is no meat on pizza in Italy, and now I feel my smile hardening since I never intended the conversation to last this long.
but it serves us well as the turbulence is ignored and time flies by and I’m thinking of all that goes along with the knowledge this old grandmother has told me, the consequences she never bothers to whisper like the vermin her garden must attract. She tells me that nothing is wasted and she even throws orange peels into the garden mix and says the coffee grounds keep ants off the plants and yes, regular coffee works better than decaf. I can smell the coffee the flight attendant is pouring for the attractive lady in the business suit across the aisle that I would never talk to except for the obligatory good morning to open possibilities that can only be shared by strangers paying no heed to consequences, the unfathomable layers of words like silvery chords frozen in blue, fading slowly like vapor trails through a fallow sky.
Rimas Uzgiris

Death’s Fragile Echo

after Venclova

Driving late, there is only the road
that holds my vision like a chain
while my ears (or brain) hear the echo
of your voice until I almost see your face
appearing and disappearing in the snow:
this may be an impenetrable wood

for all I can do to get home, a wood
hiding longing, doubt and just this road
leading on through Boreas’s blowing snow.
Destiny is another word for chains –
for a future we don’t want to face
with freedom amid chance and the echo

of what we once were: the lugubrious echo
of our own voice in a well in a wood
in whose water we never see a true face,
so that we turn once more to the road
and gladly put ourselves in metaphorical chains
for who can then blame us for the snow?
One of the extraordinary aspects of snow is how it muffles every hint of an echo. Likewise, I sometimes want to chain myself to the petrified wood of the aimless, serpentine road and never gaze upon my, or another, face.

There are too many problems I cannot face alone, and your absence (all absence) is snow threatening to end my journey on the road. Language itself rings like a hollow echo, as when a woodpecker knocks on wood and finds no beetle there. Let there be a chainsaw that cuts it all down, a chainsaw to end the mummery we can’t face: for didn’t Frost travel a nocturnal wood, and didn’t his horse taste the snow, and isn’t every journey a flawed echo of the well-travelled, well-shared road?

The inescapable chain of our existential road draws us through the inevitable wood in snow where we face ourselves: death’s fragile echo.
Rimas Uzgiris
Immigrant

The asphalt steppes have sunk beneath new snow, and the perennial cheeping of horns is muffled this May day in Lithuania where no birds sing. What is your ground? What names do you still know? Stolid pines, hermetic relics of persistence, ruffle a cerulean sky cut by scream: aluminum wings lower a hopeful load to ground. We all crave a new beginning before being brought down to earth by Anangke, the mother of grave attraction. We grow into what must be and frown at fate, biting a gooseberry plucked one summer in a garden where love grew sour. We cannot drown the memory of those gone mute to us—forever beginning again, what but memory do we own?
Celebrate midwinter’s long-traveled light
dear little ones, on this longest of nights.
For all that is immured in purgatorial winter,

for that which we see in our time, all rise
to the darkness above, returning you this place,
this peace. May these celestial pictures

light your way through dark valleys
until you reach transcendent dawn.
And when you look into the vastness

of dreams-deferred, lost years from now,
like the slow burn of rust
on the polished surface of a dream,

may it not slow your steps. For now,
breathe in the cold dark of midwinter’s night:
sleep the peace of angels my pride,
sleep the peace of angels.
Lisa McCabe
Tree Cutting

So many from which to choose,
The balsam in the balsam grove—
I’d scouted there since early fall,
The season when the firs let loose Their cones to seed this hinterland.
I scanned the lot, put all to proof
And tagged the one that barely stood
With twisted trunk on shifting sand.

Call what I do a sacrifice—
A kind of cull with which to save
The ones that have a better chance
Of growing straight. I shake the ice;

The branches lift into a shade
Resembling more or less a tree,
Then tremble as the cutter’s axe
Completes its arc and plants its blade.

Just true enough to do its bit,
Sufficient, not most beautiful,
To hang some coloured glass upon,
A consolation when it’s lit.
Mary Beth Hines
To the Red Maple in Spring

March maple gathering snow outside my frost-bleared window, you have captured my prayers in your winter branches for years.

I petition relentlessly. You sway in the pressing breeze. Lichened bark bears remorse for lost courage, compassion.

I present my disappointments. You waver; inhale them. God laces your ruby bulbs with pearls of spring snow.

I trust you to stream into blowsy green leafdom soon, to stretch into star-blossom April, May, June.

I’ll turn and leave you when sun razes fear to dust. On my knees, will return, open-palmed, in due season.
Biographies


C.B. Anderson was the longtime gardener for the PBS television series, The Victory Garden. His published books include Mortal Soup and the Blue Yonder (2013) and Roots in the Sky, Boots on the Ground (2019), both published by Kelsay Books. He still gardens professionally and recreationally.

Lisa Barnett lives and writes in the Philadelphia area. Her poems have appeared in The Hudson Review, Poetry, Better than Starbucks, Measure Review, Think, the anthology Sonnets: 150 Contemporary Sonnets, and elsewhere. She is a three-time Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award finalist and the author of two chapbooks.

A native of Connecticut, Leslie Bergner graduated from Trinity College, where she studied English literature and creative writing. She went on to write for Yale University and several corporations and to teach high school English. She is particularly enamored with the sestina and sonnet. Her poem “Apple Picking” won a prize from the Connecticut Poetry Society.
Jane Blanchard lives and writes in Georgia (USA). Her poetry has recently appeared in Allegro, Halfway Down the Stairs, Innisfree, Lighten Up Online, and Mezzo Cammin. Her fourth collection with Kelsay Books is In or Out of Season (2020).

Andrew Brookman indulges his fascination with human pathologies through his work in the field of disease classification. He holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy from King’s College London. Andrew has not previously offered any poetry for publication, preferring to write for catharsis whilst hoarding his work at home in Somerset, England.

Luanne Castle’s Kin Types (Finishing Line), a chapbook of poetry and flash nonfiction, was a finalist for the 2018 Eric Hoffer Award. Her first poetry collection, Doll God (Aldrich), was winner of the 2015 New Mexico-Arizona Book Award. She’s a Pushcart and Best of the Net nominee.

Srinjay Chakravarti is a writer and editor based in Salt Lake City, Calcutta, India. His creative writing has appeared in over 150 publications in 30-odd countries. He has won the Salt Literary Award and first prize ($7,500) in the Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Memorial Poetry Competition 2007–08. Website: www.srinjaychakravarti.com.

Ted Charnley’s work has appeared previously in The Orchards, and in multiple issues of such journals as Passager, Think, The Lyric, and The Road Not Taken. He lives with his wife in a 200-year old farmhouse they restored in central Maryland.

Maril Crabtree’s book *Fireflies in the Gathering Dark* received the 2018 Kansas Notable Books award. Her work has appeared in *Kalliope, Earth’s Daughters, I-70 Review, Adanna, Persimmon Tree,* and others. She served as poetry editor for *Kansas City Voices* and contributing editor for *Heartland! Poems of Love, Resistance & Solidarity.*

Robert Darken earned a BA from the University of Chicago and an MA in Education from the University of Michigan. Originally from the Midwest, he now resides in Connecticut, where he teaches English at New Canaan High School. His work has appeared in *One Art* and *Red Eft Review.*

Patricia Davis-Muffett holds an MFA from the University of Minnesota. Her work has appeared in several journals and public radio and is forthcoming in *Rat’s Ass Review* and *Amethyst Review.* She lives in Rockville, Maryland with her family and makes her living in technology marketing.
After a glamorous childhood in Brownsville, Brooklyn, Steven Deutsch (and his wife, Karen) settled in State College, PA. Steve’s work has appeared in more than two dozen print and online journals. He was twice nominated for the Pushcart Prize. He is the current poetry editor for Centered Magazine. Steve’s chapbook, Perhaps You Can, was published by Kelsay Books in 2019. His full-length poetry book, The Persistence of Memory, has just been published by Kelsay.

Elizabeth Eike is a senior studying creative writing at Colorado Christian University. While poetry is not her strong suit or her favorite form of literary art, she has a great appreciation for the meticulous work and keen ear required to craft a true poem.

Jennifer Fenn has written poems since high school. Now an accounting assistant for a large powdered milk company, she writes about nature, her faith, social justice, and hope in adversity. Her work is published in seventeen journals, including Song of the San Joaquin, Monterey Poetry Review, Brevities, and Tiger’s Eye.

Carol Lynn Stevenson Grellas currently is enrolled in the Vermont College of Fine Arts, MFA in Writing program. She is a ten-time Pushcart Prize nominee and a seven-time Best of the Net nominee. In 2012 she won the Red Ochre Chapbook Contest, with her manuscript Before I Go to Sleep. In 2018 her book In the Making of Goodbyes was nominated for The CLMP Firecracker award in Poetry. In 2019 her chapbook An Ode to Hope in the Midst of Pandemonium was a finalist in the Eric Hoffer Book Awards. Her work has most recently been published in Mezzo Cammin, Verse Daily, and Adelaide. Her latest book Alice in Ruby Slippers is newly released from Aldrich Press.

Amanda Hall is the author of many self-published volumes in poetry, fiction, theatre, and scholarship—among them two epic poems, The Gift of Life: An Epic in Verse and The Laughing Pen: An Epic Satire in Heroic Meter. She has been a critical journalist, in the past, for The New Individualist, tackling issues of aesthetics. She currently resides in Southwest Florida.

William Ogden Haynes is a poet and author of short fiction from Alabama who was born in Michigan. He has published seven collections of poetry (Points of Interest, Uncommon Pursuits, Remnants, Stories in Stained Glass, Carvings, Going South, and Contemplations) and one book of short stories (Youthful Indiscretions) all available on Amazon.com. Approximately 200 of his poems and short stories have appeared in literary journals, and his work is frequently anthologized. www.williamogdenhaynes.com

Robin Helweg-Larsen’s poems, largely formal, have been published in The Orchards Poetry Journal, Better Than Starbucks, The Road Not Taken, and elsewhere. Some favorites are in The HyperTexts. He is Series Editor for Sampson Low’s “Potcake Chapbooks: Form in Formless Times,” and he blogs at formalverse.com.

Mary Beth Hines writes poetry, short fiction, and nonfiction from her home in Massachusetts. Her work appears in journals including Blue Unicorn, Crab Orchard Review, Lighten Up Online, Literary
Mama, The Blue Nib, Rockvale Review, and The Road Not Taken, among others. She is working on her first poetry collection.

**Juleigh Howard-Hobson** is a Million Writers Award “Notable Story” winner and a Predators and Editors top ten finisher. She has been nominated for the Best of the Net, the Elgin, the Rhysling Award, and the Pushcart Prize. Her poetry has appeared in the December 2016 issue of The Orchards, as well as in Able Muse, The Lyric, The Barefoot Muse, Raintown Review, Think Journal, and scores of other venues.

**Vera Ignatowitsch** is addicted to poetry, raspberries, and the occasional good scotch. Her poems have been published in The Lyric, San Pedro River Review, The Road Not Taken, Peacock Journal, The American Journal of Poetry, The Orchards Poetry Journal, Asses of Parnassus, and elsewhere. She is Editor-in-Chief of Better Than Starbucks Poetry Journal.

**Neil Kennedy** is a poet and librarian. A collection of his work is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press.

**David W. Landrum**’s poetry has appeared in journals in the US, UK, Canada, Australia, and in English journals in Hong Kong. He is a retired English professor and taught for many years at Grand Valley State University in Michigan.

**Peggy Landsman** is the author of a poetry chapbook, To-wit To-woo (Foothills Publishing). Her work has been published in numerous literary journals and anthologies, including Nasty Women Poets (Lost Horse Press) and Mezzo Cammin. She lives in South Florida.
where she swims in the warm Atlantic Ocean every chance she gets.

Jim Landwehr has two memoirs, Dirty Shirt and The Portland House. He also has five poetry collections, Thoughts from a Line at the DMV, Genetically Speaking, On a Road, Written Life, and Reciting from Memory. Jim is a past Poet Laureate for the Village of Wales, WI. For more, visit: jimlandwehr.com.

Barbara Loots has published poems for fifty years in literary journals, online magazines, textbooks, and anthologies. Her collections, published by Kelsay Books, are Road Trip (2014), Windshift (2018), a finalist for the Thorpe Menn Award for Literary Excellence, and The Beekeeper and other love poems (2020).

Marjorie Maddox has published 11 collections of poetry; What She Was Saying (prose, Fomite Press); 4 children’s and YA books—including Inside Out: Poems on Writing and Reading Poems with Insider Exercises (Kelsay Books, Finalist Children’s Educational Category 2020 International Book Awards), for which Kim Bridgford wrote a back cover endorsement. Please see www.marjoriemaddox.com.

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

Lisa McCabe lives in Lahave, Nova Scotia. She studied Film at York University and English Literature at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. She has published in *The Sewanee Review, HCE Review, Better Than Starbucks, The Orchards Poetry Journal,* and *The North American Anglican* among other print and online journals.

Kathleen McClung’s books include *Temporary Kin, The Typists Play Monopoly, Almost the Rowboat,* and *A Juror Must Fold in on Herself,* winner of the 2020 Rattle Chapbook Prize. Associate director and sonnet judge for the Soul-Making Keats literary competition, she teaches at Skyline College and lives in San Francisco. www.kathleenmcclung.com

Susan McLean, a retired English professor, has published two books of poetry, *The Best Disguise* and *The Whetstone Misses the Knife,* and one book of translations of the Latin poet Martial, *Selected Epigrams.* She lives in Iowa City, Iowa.

Born in Hollywood, California, Leslie Monsour is the author of two poetry collections. Her work has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, most recently *Choice Words, The Dark Horse, Literary Matters,* and *Light.* She has received a Fellowship from The National Endowment for the Arts and five Pushcart Prize nominations.

Miriam Novotny is a poet and writer with a special interest in fantasy, fairy tales, and the beauty of the natural world. She enjoys reading books, spinning stories, and drinking cinnamon tea. Read more of her work at theglasshill.blog.

Rebecca O’Bern received her MFA in creative writing in 2017 and currently reads submissions for The Southampton Review and Mud Season Review. A recipient of the Leslie Leeds Poetry Prize, she’s been published in South 85 Journal, Hartskill Review, Storm Cellar, Helix Magazine, and others. Find her on Twitter @rebeccaobern.

Chris O’Carroll, author of The Joke’s on Me (White Violet Press, 2019), is a Light magazine featured poet whose work also appears in Love Affairs at the Villa Nelle, New York City Haiku, The Best of the Barefoot Muse, and The Great American Wise Ass Poetry Anthology.

Fiona Perry was born and brought up in Northern Ireland but has lived in England, Australia, and New Zealand. Her short story, “Sea Change,” won first prize in the Bath Flash Fiction Award (2020), and her fiction was shortlisted for the Australian Morrison Mentoring Prize in 2014 and 2015. She contributed poetry to the Label Lit project for National Poetry Day (Ireland) 2019. A graduate of Queen’s University, Belfast, and Lancaster University, she
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Andrea Potos’ most recent poetry collections are Mothershell (Kelsay Books), A Stone to Carry Home (Salmon Poetry, Ireland), and Arrows of Light (Iris Press). She has received several Outstanding Achievement Awards in Poetry from the Wisconsin Library Association. A new collection Marrow of Summer is forthcoming from Kelsay Books in Summer 2021.

Leslie Schultz (Northfield, Minnesota) has three collections of poetry, Still Life with Poppies: Elegies (Kelsay Books, 2016); Cloud Song (Kelsay Books, 2018); and Concertina (Kelsay Books, 2019). Her poetry has appeared most recently in Raintown Review, Blue Unicorn, Naugatuck River Review, Mezzo Cammin, North Dakota Quarterly, Poet Lore, Third Wednesday, and The Midwest Quarterly.

Pamela Sinicerophe lives in Rochester, MN where she works as a behavioral scientist. She is currently enrolled in the low residency MFA program at Augsburg University, and her poems have appeared in Literary Mama, 3Elements Review, Oakwood Journal, and Appalachian Journal, among others.


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Rimas Uzgiris is the author of the poetry collection, *North of Paradise, Tarp* (poems translated into Lithuanian), and translator of five poetry collections from the Lithuanian. He holds a Ph.D. in philosophy and MFA in creative writing. Recipient of Fulbright and NEA Translation Grants, he teaches at Vilnius University.

Mindy Watson is a formal verse poet and federal writer who holds an MA in Nonfiction Writing from the Johns Hopkins University. Her poetry has appeared in venues including *Eastern Structures, the Poetry Porch, the Quarterday Review, Snakeskin, Star*Line, and *Think Journal.* She’s recently also appeared in Sampson
Low’s “Potcake Poets: Form in Formless Times” chapbook series and the Science Fiction and Fantasy Association’s 2019 Dwarf Stars Anthology. You may read her work at: mindywatson.wixsite.com/poetryprosesite.

Gail White is a formalist poet living on Bayou Teche. She is a contributing editor of Light Poetry Magazine and has had work in Alabama Literary Review, Atlanta Review, Measure, and other journals. Her book Asperity Street and chapbook Catechism can be found on Amazon.

Mike Wilson’s work has appeared in magazines including Cagibi Literary Journal, Stoneboat, The Aurorean, and The Ocotillo Review, and in Mike’s book, Arranging Deck Chairs on the Titanic, (Rabbit House Press, 2020), political poetry for a post-truth world. Mike resides in Central Kentucky and can be found at mikewilsonwriter.com
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