

The Orchards Poetry Journal

Summer 2021



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For submissions visit our website at: orchardspoetry.com



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 Summer 2021

1. "Witness" by Ken Meisel
2. "Lincoln at His Mother's Death" by Steve Gehrke
3. "The Claim" by Rebecca A. Spears



Summer 2021

Contents

Don Kimball	
A Prickle of Porcupines	10
J.R. Solonche	
Rhinoceros Head	12
Kris Spencer	
L-O-V-E	13
Tamiko Dooley	
Signs	15
Becoming	16
Rebecca Gomezrueda	
An unfinished list of ways in which I know you	17
Michael Estabrook	
Indentation	18
Robert Donohue	
Self Reflection	19
Philip Quinlan	
Bitter Sweet	20
Siham Karami	
Wheelbarrow	22
Daniel Lusk	
Another Soft Day	23
Ken Meisel	
Witness	24
J.M. Jordan	
Homer on the Boardwalk	26
Susan Landgraf	
I Used to Believe	29
About That River	30



Summer 2021

Charlie Robert	
Simple in Retrospect	31
Katherine Hoerth	
The Storm's Genesis	32
Exodus: Evacuee	33
Proverbs: How to Prepare for the Next Big Storm	34
D.S. Martin	
Poem for a Time of Crisis	35
William Heath	
Winslow Homer's <i>The Fog Warning</i>	36
Barbara Sabol	
By Noon, That Last Day of May	38
As the Storm Bears Down	40
The Saints Have Faces of Stone	42
Lily Prigioniero	
Evicted	43
Carrie Vaccaro Nelkin	
Not the Day	45
Even Then	46
Beth Oast Williams	
Mary Sue Arranges Things	47
Fly, Pictarnie	48
Formation	50
Andrea Potos	
Poets in Eternity	52
Kathleen Brewin Lewis	
How Much I Love You All	53
The Poetry Reading	54
David Danoff	
Difficulties Feeding	56
Sharon Kunde	
Questions for a Book Thief	57
Victoria Korth	
Indentation	59



Summer 2021

Sally Nacker	
Emily Dickinson's Amherst, Main Street	60
yours truly, the happy recluse	
when I stood in Emily Dickinson's bedroom...	61
Kelley White	
St. Anne, Mother of Mary	62
Unpublishable	63
Mary Beth Hines	
The Hand-Me-Down Jolly Jumper	64
Scarborough Sail	65
Charles Weld	
Cordelia Stanwood's Olive-Backed Thrushling (I)	67
Cordelia Stanwood's Olive-Backed Thrushling (II)	68
Tania Runyan	
Sonnet for 5	69
Sonnet for 23	70
Sonnet for 47	71
Kate Meyer-Currey	
Air in the Street	72
Randy Mazie	
Chattahoochee Renewal: The Ordination of Spring	73
Rikki Santer	
Hand Shadows	74
Marion Starling Boyer	
Cento for Yūgen	76
Cento for Mångata	78
Gluggaveður	80
Richard Levine	
Light and Life	81
Marly Youmans	
Midnight Between the Water and the Air	82



Summer 2021

Matthew King	
Silhouette	84
Taken	85
Drawing Good	86
Mike L. Nichols	
Thirty-Six Snows	87
Steve Gehrke	
Lincoln at His Mother's Death	88
Daniel Patrick Sheehan	
Demolition	90
That Second Kingdom	92
On the Lehigh	93
Askold Skalsky	
Lingering	94
Patrice Boyer Claeys	
Crossing the Chicago River at Wabash	95
Sean Corbitt	
Marching North	97
Robin Helweg-Larsen	
(On the Value of Learning Languages When) Roughing It in	
Europe	98
Ex-Rover	100
John Whitney Steele	
The Gate	101
Judy Koren	
Tel Shikmóna	102
David W. Landrum	
The Monastery of the Holy Trinity, Meteora, Greece	103
Marriage	104
Leslie Bergner	
On viewing Marc Chagall's painting, <i>The Three Candles</i> —	105
Lisa Molina	
The Bridal Dove	106



Summer 2021

Pamela Taylor	
The First Time	107
Peggy Landsman	
Poetry	108
Martin Chrispine Juwa	
Two Rivers	109
Carolyn Martin	
Sonnet for a 25 th Wedding Anniversary	110
Jacqueline Coleman-Fried	
Once Upon a Time	111
Fiona Tracey	
Consciousness	112
Hilary Biehl	
Inventory of a Shop in Berkeley	113
If Meaning Is a Weakness	115
Nancy L. Davis	
My Aunt Tells the Story	116
Joe Crocker	
The Fat Lady Sings	118
William Doreski	
Dividing the Dark into Squares	119
Alison Rosenberg	
Gaseous Bedrock	121
Jason W. McGlone	
Mercy, Gratitude	123
David Stephenson	
Mission Statement	124
Terence Culleton	
The Woods of Saxony	125
Kelli Simpson	
Blood of Summer	126
Kathryn Sadakierski	
Summer's First Storm	128
Road Trip	130



Summer 2021

M. Brooke Wiese	
This Day, This Night	132
Rebecca A. Spears	
The Claim	133
James B. Nicola	
Remaking Made Things	135
Erin J. Kahn	
The light	137
Biographies	138



Winter 2020

Don Kimball

A Prickle of Porcupines

At sunset,
while sipping wine,
we spot a prickle
of porcupines
dining on our lawn;
apparently
from a crevice
in the old rock wall
behind our house.

Off to the side
a porcine sow,
despite her spikey
goth attire,
suckles twin
porcupettes.

Abruptly,
both pups break away
from her belly, romping
around a bed
of straw,
bumping each other,
like brats
in bumper-cars,



Summer 2021

when one pauses,
then pivots,
butting its
bristly little butt
against the other pup
chewing on a stick,

the first,
like a fraught spotter,
stomping its hind paws,
thumping its tail,
as if provoked,
or imperiled
by a predator—
fisher, coyote,
a farmer's gun?



Summer 2021

J.R. Solonche

Rhinoceros Head

He looks as though he hasn't slept
in weeks, the brown glass eyes softly sad,
the skin beneath folded and sagged.

He wasn't meant to be seen
from such an unusual angle,
we down here gazing at him

up there above us on the wall.
We want to reach up and rub his chin.
We want to toss a hat onto his horn.

Sweetness, all sweetness he is,
like a great, wrinkled gray rose,
with a shark's fin for a thorn.



Summer 2021

Kris Spencer

L-O-V-E

Upper Mall, River Thames

In my boathouse flat
and ugly as a railway carriage,
we looked out through the three windows,

each as big as a man.
An eel fought with a cormorant,
wrapping itself around the bird's greasy neck.

Winded and waterlogged,
the cormorant let go
slouching up on to a buoy

to hang its wings out
to dry, like an apology;
its dragon-eyes fierce

with adrenalin. We didn't fight
or pull apart. When you left,
I ran the two bridges

between Hammersmith and Kew,
making bets with myself along the way:
If I reach the jetty before the rowers



Summer 2021

then she will love me.

All summer, spelling love out with each stride—
L-O-V-E, like Al Green.

On the towpath, overtaking nannies
in activewear, mobiles squeezed
between shoulder and chin

like violinists—they, hurrying
to win a playground bench—
I thought of you.



Summer 2021

Tamiko Dooley

Signs

We came for the *soba* noodles
But they stick to the bottom of the bowl
The spider crabs crawl peacefully over Mibaru beach,
Unaware of the storm that's rising over the ocean

When we board the boat, I wave to a whale
I'd read that they respond to signals
Sure enough it comes up starboard,
Splashing and spraying us from its blowhole

I say that I asked the whale to join us
You don't respond
Perhaps the salty air carried my words away

The trip to Okinawa only began this morning
It's already clear
We came for the *soba* noodles
But they stick to the bottom of the bowl



Summer 2021

Tamiko Dooley

Becoming

For your own good

They can burn all the spindles in the kingdom
Make you change your name
Hide you in a thatched cottage in the forest
Bury your crown in the garden

But they can't hide who you are:
Your voice, your smile, the way your brain turns.

They also can't stop you
Climbing the staircase in the tower, even if it isn't

For your own good



Summer 2021

Rebecca Gomezrueda

An unfinished list of ways in which I know you

Ever since I sewed myself into the space between your ribs
I know you by the steady cycle of your breaths
And the precious push of your heart against my spine
Do you know that when you take in air I am jostled
Pushed to the very furthest corners of you
Which have already been rubbed bone
White by my inquisitive fingers
Like the worn spot on my old sleep shirt

I know you by anticipation of
The how and what and who of you
The knowledge of the things that you like
Things I try and find for you, bring you,
Shining stone and bits of clay, string,
Cotton to line your nest with
To keep you safe and full
Those little somethings you can tuck into
The cup formed by your palms
When you allow me to uncross your arms

I would like to know you by the way you look in the mornings
Golden and hazy
The glory of the sun drawn to you as all things are
Pinning your skin down, still,
And painting neon shapes behind your eyes



Summer 2021

Michael Estabrook

Indentation

She makes the bed
as she's getting out of it.
Seems more efficient that way.

Even though when she goes away
you can have
the whole bed to yourself
sprawl out in the middle you stay
on your side anyway
in your own comfortable mattress indentation
although you have been known
to use her pillows especially
the one retaining the faint scent of her hair.



Summer 2021

Robert Donohue
Self Reflection

Unlike a picture, mirrors leave no trace
That we have ever met, but here we are;
We've never seen the other from afar,
Preferring how it works out face to face.
There have been times, when in a public place,
Like shops, or lobbies, or a crowded bar,
Where warm acknowledgment may seem bizarre,
We've snubbed each other, bound by social grace.

Yet even if you're only my reflection
Do you have qualities beyond detection
To make of you a person I am not
And do we wish to make the other pay
When like two duelists measuring a shot
We turn our backs, and calmly walk away?



Summer 2021

Philip Quinlan
Bitter Sweet

for Lindsay, to whom I am both grateful and apologetic

*Think'st thou that I, who saw the face of God,
And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
Am not tormented with ten thousand hells...?
Christopher Marlowe, Dr. Faustus*

For it *was* hell, yet we were out of it;
you were, remarkably, my friend, my friend.
Salt and umami, sweet, I savour it
and spin the thread which led to bitter end.

Now if regret *must* be a part of it,
make mine the littleness of time;
let it not be: *We had the start of it,*
but just the start. The rest was pantomime.

You were a moment on my lips and skin;
mine was a lifetime of *non sequiturs*.
Now that I come to reel the memories in,
I loaf and fish the few I have of ours:

for if I kissed you, it was inwardly,
and if I held you, it was not as such.
But I assumed I would. And I assume
what I assume was probably too much,



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since you were young with all the youngness of the young,
and it was *being* you I coveted,
being so seasoned with a jealousy.
I fell, but not so much as *plummeted*.

And I suppose I made a meal of it,
although a meal was really all it was,
and you, for your part, made no deal of it.
Still, I must versify you, just because:

because we lived a little interlude;
because it's useful to refute the truth;
because I need to yarn as I need food;
because, if not, mine is an empty mouth.

Though you could sew, I can't unpick the thing.
Though I can write, how shall I write you down?
You were the sun when I was wintering.
You were a seed, and it remains ungrown.

Though you could knit a little, and could plait,
and colour me, and make the colours run,
what I have left of you is just a hat,
and even that, one day, will come undone.

For what began with kleftico, which left
its unctuous unguent upon the tongue,
must needs now end with lemons. Warp and weft
cross purposes to weave a song unsung.



Summer 2021

Siham Karami

Wheelbarrow

You rose among the leaves, a stirring of deep water;
your voice the slightest hush of sleep's water.

We never dipped ourselves inside that fountain's splash,
its writhing nudes in stone, sun-flashed fall of steep water.

Each vow maintains its daily ministrations,
each foray, a resurrection force to keep water.

You sleep a galaxy away, while I work through daily pains
and rages, buoyed by the cloud of you, a dream that seeps water.

Heading nowhere—the anvil stone, the weight of silence
press me down. To seek, where subterraneans creep, water.

A day without your words, my only substance,
taunts my thirst with heatwaves: desire won't reap water.

I hold your presence like papery wings or maple seeds
in sudden gusts, or waves' cool sweep of water.

What am I to you or you to me? A flurry
of the nameless, the heart's wheelbarrow, its weep of water.



Summer 2021

Daniel Lusk

Another Soft Day

Mist articulates the fragile rigging
of spider webs at the windowpane.

In olden time on rainy days
I wonder if sailors learned the craft
of ropes and knots, studying
such masterworks in shanty doorways.

Today in Irish parlors, lace-makers
dismantle the morning hours, bent
over pillows and arcane bobbins even so.



Summer 2021

Ken Meisel

Witness

I don't think I ever considered that the birds
were staring right back at me.

Everything has its eyes. Even the blind rock,
sitting so silently on the wooded path.

Even the fallen leaves, trying to remember; even
the eyeless dead fish, rotting blind in the pond.

All things gather, one at a time, to witness.
Even the parade of stars rising over a barn.

I don't remember what it was the woods said to me
when they warned me I'd been found there, alone,

trying to stop myself from telling the truth
of what I saw in myself. That I was just a lie.

But at the edge of the river, we witnessed it.
That I was afraid of accepting myself.

Everyone is afraid of accepting themselves
because they can't let themselves witness



Summer 2021

just what they are, the woods said. And all I could do
was try to understand what couldn't be said.

Somewhere, out in the forest dark, we heard
coyotes screaming every laugh they had.

To witness, I think, is to follow a path
of allowance; whatever happens, just does.

It's so difficult to let a river canoe you.
But that's always what happens, isn't it?

Love's just what the breezes do, through trees,
by spreading rumors at the edge of the forest

that awakens awe inside empty space. I never knew it,
that love was primarily a movement experience.

Endings too, are witness experiences. I was told this
in Atlanta once, by a woman I was dating.

She made me fresh coffee and bid me goodbye.
Whispered to me the high clouds and sunshine

sleep and fade slowly, *effortless*, like death.
Even the river doesn't explain that to me.



Summer 2021

J.M. Jordan

Homer on the Boardwalk

I.

Over the red-tile Spanish rooftops
the moon still hangs in the sky
like a rusted silver coin, or the eye
of a gentlemanly cyclops

who from his grey plantation sees
some upstart out to make a name
sneaking up to snatch his claim
through black groves of cypress trees.

Sensing an inevitable defeat,
he makes a dignified retreat
before some blinding spat's begun

and leaves the place to the litter and noise,
to the broken bottles and plastic toys
of the nearly naked brats of the sun.



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II.

Above a silver tidal pool
a woman's hair ensnares the sky.
The surfers try to catch her eye
with stunts of incandescent cool.

Her small son conjures in the sand,
piling a fort just past the swells,
but bristling phalanxes of shells
attack his dream of safe command.

She waves the raffish dudes away
and looks out over the green-gold bay
mouthing a prayer, as if she

were scanning the dim horizon for
some sign of a soldier off at war
or a sailor long lost at sea.



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III.

No clever wooden trick
arrived at midnight down
before the gates of town
to topple, brick by brick,

the fortress that we built.
No grinding phalanx came
to touch this place with flame.
No blood was ever spilt.

No, nothing but the pull
of a well-tattered moon
and the slow brush of waves

at last destroyed it all
and swept our gods (so soon)
into their deep wet graves.



Summer 2021

Susan Landgraf

I Used to Believe

God was in His Heaven,
and all was right with the world.
How simple it seemed then.

My grandmother believed
she would be with her God
in His kingdom of Heaven—

parents, husband, siblings
and the angels, no sadness
or pain. Simple back then:

get down on my knees before
bed and pray; if I died
God was there in Heaven

to take my soul. Now those
who knew me as a child
are gone. So simple then.

Grandmother had said, “If
it sounds too good to be true....”
I once believed in heaven—
the way it was back then.



Summer 2021

Susan Landgraf

About That River

Fastest I'm going to go today
he says, is slow—ceiling fan on high, my feet
soaking in a pan of cold water.
In one hand, iced tea two-spoons-sugar sweet,

a cold beer in the other. Afternoon,
farthest I'm going is this hammock strung
under the willow, where I remember
that river long time ago calling "Come."

I'd already been baptized, couldn't swim,
and I sure wasn't yet ready to die.
That river's still calling—louder today,
but now I don't need to ask it why.

As I listen to that river race to the sea,
I've done slowed myself to "wait-and-see."



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Charlie Robert

Simple in Retrospect

The house smells of apples and hard cold water.
Your dog whimpers in her dream chair.
Rabbits pouring out of countless bushes.
Easy pickings when you are still.
Outside there are stars.
Cold and bright and the Silence of the Country
is ripped up the middle.
When you look for it that is the beginning of trouble.
When you don't that is the beginning of pain.
This planet is pinned to the Void.
Filled with creatures close to the earth.



Summer 2021

Katherine Hoerth

The Storm's Genesis

In the beginning, there was water, warm
like breath, like life, like love. Who sent the sunrays
to the lapping waves? Who churned the storm
somewhere off in the Atlantic? Praise
the tilted axis of the earth, the swirl
of clouds arising towards the darkening sky,
ominous eye beginning to unfurl.
Who knew this tempest would intensify

into a monster as it carved its path
through the Gulf of Mexico, the Bay
of Campeche, then the tepid bath
water of the Texas Coast? To pray
to the same force that created this
feels like whispering to the abyss.



Summer 2021

Katherine Hoerth

Exodus: Evacuee

If only it were simple: pack away
your valuable possessions in your car.
Somehow, your gas tank's always full. You pray
God will part the seas for you and take you far
from here. He does. You have a place to go,
a promised land of endless milk and honey,
dry beds, electricity, a rainbow.
You'll never have to eat an MRE

because you were a chosen, privileged one.
But not everyone is "blessed" like you.
The walls of water crumble into Houston,
fill the streets, the homes, the lungs of who
remained: the poor, the homeless, and the old—
the ones who couldn't leave when they were told.



Summer 2021

Katherine Hoerth

Proverbs: How to Prepare for the Next Big Storm

There's nothing you can do to feel prepared.
Board up your windows, doors, and eyes to keep
your wits from blowing off. You'll still feel scared
whether your gas tank's full or not. To sleep
a full night's rest will take a miracle—
so instant coffee's good to have, and wine
will make the howling blackness bearable.
Don't always trust the weatherman; resign

to the reality of chaos. Know
evacuation routes like your own hand.
Fill your bathtubs up with hope. Tomorrow
you'll need it more than water. Understand
there is no refuge from the storms of fear,
but wisdom blooms like lilies once they clear.



Summer 2021

D.S. Martin

Poem for a Time of Crisis

What is that small feathered thing
meek & knowing that survived
in cramped quarters with all that would
soon be released upon us?

Without fear she lets me reach
deep into her now-lidless box
lift her in my hand & feel
her gentle heart thrumming

Is she kin to the dove Noah released from
his window or the first robin of spring?
Those who have come through storms
will recognize her plumage

Like to the lark at break of day she'll sing
We have not been left alone Her belief
merges with mine as I fling
her skyward & watch her take wing

knowing she'll return with an olive leaf



Summer 2021

William Heath

Winslow Homer's *The Fog Warning*

A lone fisherman pauses
in his rowing, tilts his head
at ominous fog blowing in
on the dark horizon. Just now
he's heard the mother ship's horn
warning of his danger. The pensive
profile—chin up, calculating how far
he must row for a safe return versus
the approach of an incoming fog
thick enough to leave him blindly lost—
suggests he's confronted this fate
before. What are the odds?
His fists, at canvas center,
firmly grip the oars.

No matter how sturdy the wood
his dory is made of, it is tossed
like a shell, turbulent waves,
crested white caps, lift the prow
skyward with each mighty surge,
plunge back down again as if
to dispatch the boat to the deep.



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Two large white halibut in the stern
prove a successful catch, all for naught
should he fail at the heroic task
of rowing to his ship, a small,
ghostly apparition in the distance.
Whether or not he survives
Homer's painting does not show.



Summer 2021

Barbara Sabol

By Noon, That Last Day of May

*At 3:15, May 31, 1889, the dam of a mountain lake broke
and swept away the city of Johnstown, PA.*

By noon, the tongue is herbed in the soak—
a proper meal for the mister this evening.
After Tom's third double shift at work,
a feast sweetened with basil Ann had been saving.

Next door a proper meal of mutton this evening.
Seven children to squeeze 'round the table.
Midday, the missus hangs the joint she was saving
for a daughter's birthday; and for her doll, a new cradle.

No more children around the Fitzgibbon's table.
The mister and missus plan a quiet supper
to celebrate their anniversary: thirty years in all.
By noon, the jelly is strained with loaf sugar.

The baker's wife plans light fare for their dinner—
cleaned out of pastries at the holiday parade.
By noon she's rolled out four dozen biscuits;
with a ladle of gravy, the meal's good as made.

Still humming The Battle Hymn from yesterday's parade,
by noon, the wife pulps the vegetable marrow.
Her hand trembles on the ladle, ever more afraid
of the long rain drumming against her window.



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By noon, Ann simmers her stock of bone marrow.
She frets about Tom in this storm after work,
as rain and wind now rattle the windows.
The stewpot's been seasoned, herbed tongue in the soak.



Summer 2021

Barbara Sabol

As the Storm Bears Down

*This is the hour of lead—
Remember, if outlived,
As freezing persons, recollect the snow—
First—Chill—then Stupor—then the letting go—
—Emily Dickinson*

*John Parke, Southfork Fishing and Hunting Club Engineer,
the morning of the Johnstown flood, May 31, 1889*

I wake to a day draped in gauze—
late spring snow heaped upon
one-hundred days of rain and still
more rain pummels the lake, swirling
with brush, logs, sawmill planks.
From the clubhouse porch I judge
the water yet another two feet higher.
Sluice disabled, the lake's bound to crest.
Here at last, my long-held dread—
this is the hour of lead—

the specter of flood. Past prayer, still
I implore, and row to the lake's far edge.
Stunned to witness storm water racing
from hills to creeks to lake, mounting
by the minute. I fight the current back
to shore. The pressure must be relieved!
I exhort every able man to dig, clear
layers of debris, divert the water's course.
Our day of reckoning has arrived—
remembered, if outlived.



Summer 2021

Picks strike through rip rap, shovels scrape,
fling bits of dirt, while horse and plow
strain. Even Club President Unger has
rolled his sleeves to trench a spillway.
All efforts are in vain. The current gains
strength, as the hard-packed earth holds.
Our shouts drowned out by the storm—just
rushing water and ring of metal against rock.
I will forever hear it, that discordant echo
as freezing persons recollect the snow.

Now the lake slips over the lip of the dam,
down the hill, into the path of town. A thin flow
at first, gathering force. The dam will soon give!
I gallop the washed-out road, and reach the men
at Heiser's store, who've heard such warnings
before. They shrugged off the news even though
their homes, their lives are at risk, but swore
they'd get word to the telegraph depot. I ride
to higher ground, lamenting the fate of those below—
first—chill—then stupor—then the letting go.



Summer 2021

Barbara Sabol

The Saints Have Faces of Stone

June 2, 1889, two days after the Johnstown flood

I kneel at the font in this church turned morgue
before entering the nave without husband and daughter.

Survivors file by rows of bodies as though in a fog
down the long aisles of this church turned morgue.

My gloved hand shakes, checking once more this coffin-lid tag
describing blood stone cuff buttons, silver watch—all so familiar.

And there, beside Robert in this church turned morgue,
asleep in her gingham dress, the small body of our daughter.



Summer 2021

Lily Prigioniero

Evicted

The movers vacated her sticky nest
of tiny unhatched cotton balls
from the back of my desk
anchored to the floor and wall.

She leaves her spot of dangling lines,
caused by the movers' violent cart
and seeks another place outside—
perhaps where the lilies sprout.

Now she skitters to the window
where church bells ring in open air
and stops to consider her embryos—
too lost to spin another web there.

I sit and stare as she's blocked there
in front of the screen—not knowing how
to take her leave, or perhaps just die where
the morning air still tends to blow.

She just scrambled by again—
that spider taken from her den;
she makes a dash across the floor
as I pick up clothes to pack and fold.



Summer 2021

I stand alone in my bare feet
and see she's just as lost as me—
she climbs the barren walls today
no longer hers, nor mine, to keep.



Summer 2021

Carrie Vaccaro Nelkin

Not the Day

Today is not the day, it seems,
to let the swallows loose, to kick
a closed door open
or clutch a current
to ride on the blue edge of clouds.
The wind's a cussed lout
that snarls
a rent through your hope
of finding a step, a rung,
any hold for a foot, a toe, a braid of hair.
You've seen the snapping maw
your whole life, yet only now,
as thinning time softens the color of storms,
do you forgo the wrestling, the shouting,
the stamping of your feet, the insistence it will not
break or bend you. Let it go. Life
has its own rhythms. It is a lie,
this thing about control. Ask the day,
ask the hours where they took you,
and where they dropped you off.



Summer 2021

Carrie Vaccaro Nelkin

Even Then

Even then, the luster worn,
paint scaly on the palm of my hand,
the dreams reduced to musty carpeting
and fractious neighbors, the lighting
gap-toothed, patience thinned
to a shatter, to irredeemable remorse,
even then when I slept at night
I saw rooms spacious in grace,
in the cheer of friends, the patina
of thought and wish.
I could not bear the shriveling
of illusion. And now,
arthritis in the pockets of my bones,
love softening the days, even now I step
through those doorways, float above
the oak floors, time collapsed,
the lines and angles
of sun from tall windows
and the corners rounding to the next turn and
the next and the one after that, even now
it all lives as it never did,
and never could tomorrow,
a perplexing sanctum, and I
a wraith visiting
what I can almost touch and smell again,
searching
for what it's trying to reveal.



Summer 2021

Beth Oast Williams

Mary Sue Arranges Things

And so it begins. Men in suits
leave home in a brush of whispers.
Women wash dishes, clothes,
dirty floors. Babies wait
to be fed. And so it continues.
Daddies come home with bouquets
of fresh dollars. Mommies sew
dresses out of deeds and trusts.
Children continue outgrowing
clothes. Mary Sue is tired
of losing control. Her husband
walks out, a child talks back.
She gathers women together
to arrange flowers. They compete
with each other and the winners
get ribbons. Some put apples
in with flowers, others add sticks
and stones. No one ever thinks
to weave a snake into the grass,
coiled like a tie, tight around a neck.



Summer 2021

Beth Oast Williams

Fly, Pictarnie

Between the eggs and apples
you explain the fall
season, the time it takes for fruit

to hit the ground. The juice
of neglect splatters the space
of goodbye across my face.

I board a plane and fly, hope
birds won't laugh as my arms
dangle limp at my side.

I travel alone, my back to the chair,
unaware that face down I could pick
up speed. The Arctic tern passes

the jet on her trek to celebrate two
summers a year. She crosses
borders faster than my staggered flight.

July, and July again, pins
me down. Remember
the time I walked into the fan,



Summer 2021

that month you read my letter
and said the words broke
your eye. Tears tracked

like sweat on the other cheek.
It's hot in October too, squalls
fight the heat between autumn's

legs. The sun, threatening
to leave, presses her burning
chest against a pane of porthole glass.

I press a stamp of the Scottish
Pictarnie to my last note, know
that I'll mail it to you tomorrow.

The whistle of my words travels
like a migrating bird, the encroaching
cold front predictable as the shift in seasons.



Summer 2021

Beth Oast Williams

Formation

I talk of abuse and older women
in knee-length skirts cross
and uncross their legs. Welcome
to one of my poetry readings.

Hear the clearing of throats,
the choke traveling around the room
like a tray of untouched cookies.
Amidst the shuffling, my voice

remains steady, even when I read
the line about a duck shot
mid-flight from the joy of her sky.
I do not cry. I get to the part

where my male assailant asks
if I like it and the audience is silent.
My job is now to assist the descent
of fog over facts, to pretend the bird

survives. When the ladies clap
I hear the slap of wings on water.
Bodies rise, compromised by the weight
of what's still lodged inside. I write

as a duck, as if feathers might ease
my landing. If I make it to eighty, ask
me what I remember. I'll say I once wrote
a poem as clear as November, hunting



Summer 2021

season was long. For the least resistance we flew in formation, the leader allowed to fall back, to follow when tired, one always drafting off the other.



Summer 2021

Andrea Potos

Poets in Eternity

With thanks to Richard Jones

A writer I admire mentioned there being
a desk in a corner of eternity
and I thought *yes*, that's what
I want: it doesn't even have to be a traditional
desk with drawers and knobs and things, any
rickety, unvarnished table would do,
even a lapdesk, the kind with the cushiony
underside, though I'm pretty sure my sheer
astral form will not need the softness,
only a guarantee that all
that I love to do and praise
will still be mine.



Summer 2021

Kathleen Brewin Lewis

How Much I Love You All

The rain came down
thick and gray this morning.
I counted the wrecks I passed
on the interstate, grateful
I wasn't one of them
then thought how it might be
to lie on the knife-cold pavement
bleeding out in the January rain—
sirens wailing, strangers bending over—
and when I did, I realized
how much I love you all,
every last, warm one of you,
the timbre of your voices,
the verity in your eyes.
Love enough to make a body rise
and beg another chance.



Summer 2021

Kathleen Brewin Lewis

The Poetry Reading

The young male poets read their work,
and it's all about dangerous things:
bloody fights with brothers, dumpster diving,
freight-train jumping, construction-site theft.
They are slim and attractive, and the audience
gasps at their insouciance, their derring-do.
They're busy living borderless lives,
starring in movie-poems.

If you are a female poet past middle age,
and a mother to boot, you will feel hopelessly dull
as you listen to them, ashamed of your rule-following,
your quiet poems about a pair of deer at twilight,
the vulnerable nape of your small son's neck.
In your next life you swear you'll be a man,
do shocking things and then write about them,
sip whiskey while you read aloud.

Then you remember the infants at your breast,
how important you felt as you fed them,
how they cried for you—and only you—in the night.



Summer 2021

You are not sorry, most of the time, that you picked
the dinner table life, wrote about walking the flat trails
along the river, the lacy ferns and upright herons,
even if it meant you were destined to bore young gods
with your quotidian body of work.



Summer 2021

David Danoff

Difficulties Feeding

She stiffens, twists her face away,
and pushes out her hands,
and starts to wail, incensed that I'm
not meeting her demands.

She's desolate, beside herself
at being so denied—
although the bottle was in place
before she turned aside.

I've spent a lifetime hungry, too;
bitter years I've wasted;
what I longed for at my lips,
I refused to taste it.



Summer 2021

Sharon Kunde

Questions for a Book Thief

What did you expect to find in my fifth-floor office,
rented cell in a hive of grubby academic acolytes,
its only perk the terrace view of the dusty tops
of other academic buildings, clumped like hungry

mushrooms. Did your pulse spike
when you uncovered the clipped envelopes in the drawer,
and what did you feel when you found Shakespeare's
sonnet 116, let me not to the marriage of true

minds admit impediments, cut into ribbons
(a trick I picked up for teaching sonnet structure)
which you left scattered on the stained carpet like spent
confetti? Why did you make the choices you made, taking

one *Norton Anthology of Poetry* but not the other?
Why *Hobomok* and not *The Coquette*, both controversial
early American novels whose heroines end badly?
Were you eager to read my admittedly brilliant margin notes?

Did you haul them to the textbook buyer, his cash
register stationed beneath the pop-up canopy outside
the bookstore at the end of every academic quarter?
Perhaps you used the proceeds to celebrate with a coffee



Summer 2021

from the adjacent Starbucks, one with a crown of foamed milk,
and used the rest to buy a dose of some wonderful drug.
I prefer to think of you by the rocky creek bottom, pondering
the Gilded Age's social grammar of décolleté and tuckers,

digesting the metaphysics of reader-response, floored
by the rhetorical force of Tony Kushner's queer stagecraft
as you burn page after page some damp January night
for the comfort of a little light and heat.



Summer 2021

Victoria Korth

Indentation

When a body stays in one place a long time,
or a brief-time's sudden plunge and hand-bell
indicating strict stillness. Black-out summer '78,
Kathleen lives above a grocer on Gregory—
triptych: two closet-sized rooms and a kitchen,
broom in one corner of the holiest panel.

I sleep in Sharon's bed beneath a painting for her next exhibit:
monochrome women with balloon dresses, arms twined
into branches, azure feet blurred. We walk, stir iced tea,
linseed, curry, lemon, part-time work, fresh coffee,
talk through the night in the churchyard on Thompson.
I would never be an artist, live so materially, sensually;
I too wake with images, but no need, yet, to realize them.
Sharon, on the Island with a great poet, Paul sculpting in Maine,
Anthony, too poor to leave the East Village.
I am refracted out of their productions: conventional,
see myself, yes, I feel it too, an ocean-liner-self.
And he, my father, continues to live, committed to a sanitorium,
his saint pointing toward a citadel, not into a dream,
all I have to do is endure, stay upright, memorialize.
Yet, flat stones are visible in the stream bed,
and bare feet cool in the rapidly moving water,
and a yew bush with tender berries returns my gaze.



Summer 2021

Sally Nacker

Emily Dickinson's Amherst, Main Street

I stayed in a room at a B and B—
across from the old home of Emily—
where once stood her father's field of rye.
I heard the fall wind as I closed my eyes.

I slept in a house on the land she viewed
from her window overlooking the field—
her sherry eyes on the gold, swaying rye
tossing and glinting, and waving goodbye.

Goodbye to the rye, now gardens and homes,
goodbye to the rustling swish on the loam,
goodnight, goodnight, dear Emily, I said,
then dreamed of her asleep in her Homestead.

Previously published in *Mezzo Cammin*



Summer 2021

yours truly, the happy recluse
when I stood in Emily Dickinson's bedroom...

You who
 breathe in my Address
eyeing my white writing dress—
beat-beat of your heart is Loud
but I may make your skin a Shroud
for stepping sole in my bedroom and
gazing out my Glass—
I could harden your heart to Tomb—
and can do it fast.
Lots of folks fall in love with me
now that I'm safely dead!
What makes you think I would have let
you backslide in my bed?
Writing poetry was my
 Luminous Innerwear—
no suitor in some bodysuit can possibly compare.
Leave
it to me
to feel...doubt...
moments after you
 Walk Out!



Summer 2021

Kelley White

St. Anne, Mother of Mary

*Attributes: book, door; woman dressed
in red or green*

*Wife of Joachim, patroness of Sri Lanka;
carpenters; childcare providers;
the childless; children; equestrians;
grandparents; homemakers/housewives;
lacemakers; lost articles; miners;
mothers, moving house; old-clothes dealers;
poverty; pregnancy; seamstresses;
stablemen; the sterile; teachers*

Now take up these attributes, my patron causes,
and you can see me better, waiting by the unlatched
door with my book and overflowing workbasket,
clothes to mend, bobbins for lace; by day I would be
surrounded by children, perhaps I am reading to them
(I am a rare woman, reading), or teaching something;
I'm the original home daycare provider; perhaps
my daughter has grown alone, unable to be noticed
in this din, or one like me so busy cleaning, advising
grandparents and the childless; look, even a stableman
has ridden for advice about a balky horse who is always
throwing his rider; and yes, I know the secret places
where lost things hide—even you, daughter, and what
you have found. Come, I will hold you, you are changed,
we will, this family, we will change the world.



Summer 2021

Kelley White

Unpublishable

This could start with a really inappropriate metaphor but I'm your grandmother and it is what I am thinking: you are my little china doll. There, it's out. Not so little as you were but still fine of face and hair, hands and ears and mouth. You are you. With at least three peoples in your family tree. And me. So what do I say? Other metaphors come forward, so many, somehow, of things we want to eat up—my little biscuit, pumpkin, cupcake, muffin, dumpling, peanut, sugar pie, honey bunch, oh, I am so in love I want to swallow you whole. This is all very unfortunate. When I was little there was a kind of candy no longer on the market, oh, dear, and I used to buy in in little boxes and line the inhabitants up on the table and bite them one by one. Oh, little one, I want to nibble your toes, nibble your fingers, your ears. Oh, such an evil grandmother. I might as well be the wolf. My eyes eat you up, my heart, my ravenous hungry heart.



Summer 2021

Mary Beth Hines

The Hand-Me-Down Jolly Jumper

Of my five lives
I find this one finest.

This child knows how to ride.
They call him Baby Dino.

He screeches when he flies—
A mini pterodactyl.

When his feet slam the floor,
He springs and squeals for more.

I share his raucous glee,
And grieve to feel him growing,

Hold on to his fat thighs,
Beg him to never leave me.



Summer 2021

Mary Beth Hines
Scarborough Sail

Father is a tall ship, holds me
steady in his square-rigged
sails above the roiling sea
before he tips to dip
my quaking shins, my knees
a little bit deeper
with each yelp and *please*,
please plea to lift
me higher, pitch me
into the fray.

I holler and squeal,
keel head over heels
before I crash, scrabble, rally
and rise—taller, brighter,
keener with every try
until I'm clambering over
his creaky shoulders to leap
through quickening sky
into white-caps, foam splash,
a madcap bowsprit ride.



Summer 2021

I gasp when I swallow
a blast of salty water,
thrash a choppy freestyle,
spill into riptide, swivel,
plunge, grapple until ropy
fingers net me, set me
face-to-breaker where I dive
the way he taught me,
beeline into surf swell,
under mayhem, into sparkle.



Summer 2021

Charles Weld

Cordelia Stanwood's Olive-Backed Thrushling (I)

It rode on her sleeve and the rim of her basket,
as she walked more than a mile from its nest back
to her house, pausing several times to set
it in the grass to eat mosquitos. At home, she cut
an earthworm into bits with scissors, but
that first afternoon the nestling refused this snack.
Hours later, hungrier and more relaxed, it flew
down from the windowsill to her mat on the floor
whenever her scissors clicked, its cue
to open its beak wide for food. It took her four
days to teach the thrush to bathe in a basin,
and the bird's next trick, after this success,
was to peck at her pen when she wrote, then
back up into her hand, prompting her
to dote by smoothing its tail feathers with a finger
which, she'd later note, was *his favorite caress*.



Summer 2021

Charles Weld

Cordelia Stanwood's Olive-Backed Thrushling (II)

Come pet was how Cordelia Stanwood would call her gentile allouette down from the trees, and he responded quickly the first day of his release, dropping to the ground for the ant eggs she'd brought, even landing on the shoulder of her companion, in thrall still to his captor. But each day, she had less allure until, seventeen days after he'd been caught, five after she'd freed him, Cordelia Stanwood was unsure if he'd show. It took thirty minutes of *Come pet* entreaty before the bird appeared. A two-species thrush fete filled the moonlit woods that evening, Hermit and Olive-backed duets interweaving in the misty air that *fairly palpitated* she wrote. Grasshopper was the entrée, during this, their last meal together.



Summer 2021

Tania Runyan

Sonnet for 5

To the one I love, who ogled the blue Accord
emblazing Grandpa's carport like a Close
Encounters light. The luminary rolled
as smoothly as the old man's glass
eye careened along the kitchen tile
when it escaped his porcelain cleaning bowl.
You swerved from awe to fear to faintness while
he chased that marble, hand over hole.
Don't look! Mom gasped, and whisked you from the room.
Your grandpa would die of the tumors that took his eye,
and later, you'd inherit the Honda, zoom
it schoolward and jobward till it blew in '99.
Your mother keeps the eye in an antique box.
It floats alone in darkness, waits to dock.



Summer 2021

Tania Runyan

Sonnet for 23

To the one I love, who two years a wife
and five years a poet didn't take
the time to watch the raindrop's half-life
illuminate his lashes and forgot to rake
the heaps of maple copters from the grass
to toss above your heads: *To us! To us!*
You really didn't know that time would pass.
You fell into the well-worn ruse
that you and he just had to pay, survive
until the next apartment, next degree, the next
decrepit Nissan spewing fluid in five
inches of snow. And there was always sex
to be had tomorrow, Friday, or all those other nights
when you had hours to waste on dumb delight.



Summer 2021

Tania Runyan

Sonnet for 47

To the one I love, who harbored quiet guilt
for loving quarantine and counting birds
among your closest friends, for throwing quilts
upon your knees as if the supple, shirred
extensions of peace had nothing to do with phlegm
and tubes, the corpses jammed in corridors,
an unemployed mother trying to stem
her children's hunger with expired corn.
You tell yourself you'll have to learn from this,
that even a party where you dance and smile
must slough off a loose, crumbly piece
of yourself, like sandstone in a nonstop mile
of river—bright and leaping with rainbow trout
until it's given serenity of drought.



Summer 2021

Kate Meyer-Currey

Air in the Street

Yesterday my street was subtly different.
Houses breathed in the damp air of late
afternoon through its heavy grey veil.
Gardens raised their eyebrow hedges to
look directly at passersby, no longer
filtering their gaze through iron-fence bars
or densely latticed twigs, as if fearing
contamination. Fresh shoots and leaves,
no longer socially distanced, reached out
to shake hands. Buds unfurled from restricting
PPE into late spring flowers, rehydrated by
cloudbursts. Lockdown's winter walls crumbled,
expelling stale oxygen from stony lungs.
Neighbours pruned roses that screened their
castles during shielding's hundred-year sleep.
A gust of wind followed me to my door,
dropping his mask to chat. Clouds cast off
their goggles, releasing pent-up raindrops.
And then birdsong broke out from every
enclosed lawn and patio, in a note of relief,
recognizing that their once-familiar street
was out of quarantine.



Summer 2021

Randy Mazie

Chattahoochee Renewal: The Ordination of Spring

Quietly, last night, the royal attendants returned,
readying the mountain palace for the ordination of Spring.
The regal throne of the Blue Ridge, by morning light,
had been arrayed in splendid wraps.

Her bluffs were cloaked with berbers of cyan,
her soft shoulders sheathed in crushed viridian,
her rolling hillsides swathed in shags of sage,
chartreuse, and tea-speckled flakes of mint.

Clothed in a majestic robe for her coronation,
a flowing train of mountain range following her,
the tufts of her ermine cape completing her,
in tribute to her lustrous peaks and ridges.

Crowned in a hazy sun, she is greeted by a grand processional,
clouds of stately gray-hatted dignitaries slow floating by,
followed by her cheering subjects, her forest birds singing,
all held back safely in the stands by her Royal Oak guards.

Yet through all this pomp and ceremony,
still I hear her whisper to me, *Come, walk my paths,
my glory roads, for I am now renewed,
grown warm, and readied to receive you.*



Summer 2021

Rikki Santer

Hand Shadows

Matters of ideas to be thrown
upon the wall. Stubby, curled
digits thrill in childhood memory
of flashlight under bedsheets
for wagging tails, wiggling
bunnies and waving
birds in flight.

A woman blows out a candle.
She pulls a blanket to her chin,
exhales a Marlboro before
twisting its butt into a bedside saucer.
She closes her eyes and rehearses
tomorrow. She drifts off. Shadows
stripe her fingers. Moonlight
drinks her in.

A man thumbs the slide switch
of a flashlight in the red glow
of his car's dashboard.
His leather gloves, raven black.
He strokes the eyeball trinket
on his key ring, and parks
down the street.



Summer 2021

A woman sets another match
to a candle wick. Her bedroom
fragrant as a garden
in cool moonlight.

A man wears leather gloves,
raven black, turns key
into a backdoor lock,
tiptoes toward a bedroom.

A woman grips the butt
of a handgun from
a nightstand drawer,
its shadow a cobra on the wall.

The moon waits outside
in a cloudless sky
silent, gleaming, sure.



Summer 2021

Marion Starling Boyer
Centō for Yūgen

*Japanese for the profound and mysterious beauty
of the universe and sad beauty of human suffering.*

look at the Moon

silver
it floats in silence
in eternal cold

I am one of the lucky ones
to see the Moon
close up

I tell you
until I saw Earth from space
I never knew what round meant

the bright Earth
pretty and blue
slow-swirling veils of white

in blackness, emptiness
beyond imagination

delicate clean



Summer 2021

my God, I thought
touch it
and it would crumble

everything dear
everyone you love
every human who ever was
 suspended there

our tiny world
 alone in a sunbeam

and the Sun
less than halfway through its life
 ripens a bunch of grapes
as if it has nothing else to do.

Sources: *Astronomers*: Galileo Galilei and Carl Sagan; *Apollo Astronauts*: Neil Armstrong, Alan Bean, Roger B. Chaffee, Mike Collins, James B. Irwin, Edgar Mitchell; *Space Shuttle Astronauts*: Loren Acton, Willie McCool; Russian Cosmonaut Aleksei Leonov; *Astrophysicist* Neil deGrasse Tyson; *Poet* Archibald MacLeish's "Voyage to the Moon," "Epistle to be Left in the Earth."



Summer 2021

Marion Starling Boyer
Cento for Mångata

*Swedish word for the moon's reflection on water
making a shining pathway to the horizon.*

The deepest part of night.
Shoulder to tender shoulder, you say,

tell me a make-believe.

I start imagining possibilities.

A shopkeeper would go down to the beach.
He studied the brilliant white mystery
of moonlight floating on the lake.
He learned that sticking spoons
in the garden attracted moonlight.

Like moon-tug, you say.

His collection, a bag of tiny moons
he jingled in his pocket, disappears.

Wherever I am going with the story,
it's opening its wings.

Tell me about his lost moons.



Summer 2021

The night is ours. Easy enough to imagine
we have time.

Luminous. Miraculous. That's what he said.
Many of them copper-colored.
He does not remember how he lost them.
He said it was a relief.
There were too many of them.

Every cell of your being responds
as something heavy lifts, slow as smoke,
slow as steam off a bath.

Our lives, while we have them,
can shine like new things.

Sources: Lee Young Lee, *Always A Rose*; Christina Beasley, *Rare Gifts*; Elaine Seaman, *Falling Timbers*; Jack Ridl, *Keeping On, Raking Leaves with the Gods in July*; James Scannell McCormick, *Three Beaches*; Kathleen McGookey, *On a Scale of Zero to Ten*; Laura Grace Weldon, *Call of the Void*; Jericho Brown, *Dear Whiteness*; Brian Turner, *Alhazen of Basra, Cole's Guitar, Where Telemetries End*; Christine Howey, *Destination Vacation, Meals*; Diane Seuss, *Rising, Viceroy*; Tony Hoagland, *Beauty, Honda Pavarotti*; William Stafford, *On Earth*; Patricia Smith, *A Colored Girl Will Slice You If You Talk Wrong About Motown*; Bob Hickok, *Rothko's Last Meditation*; Naomi Shahib Nye, *The Crossed-Out Word*; Pattiann Rogers, *For the Wren Trapped in a Cathedral*.



Summer 2021

Marion Starling Boyer

Gluggaveður

*Gluggaveður is Icelandic for “window weather,”
a pleasant-looking day but bitterly cold.*

Sharp blue sky and snow sequined in sunlight. It’s window weather but cold doesn’t keep me cocooned at my window.

Virtual school each day at the kitchen table, computer screens frame each student in a Zoom window.

Sticky fingers splay on a pane of glass where Nana’s hand presses against the care home window.

Graduates cruise through town in a parade, honking, waving, happiness balloons from their car windows.

In Madrid, confined in their apartments, people play Bingo. A shout: *trenta y tres!* The game resumes through windows.

I think I’m becoming Edward Hopper’s woman in “Morning Sun” staring vacantly out her bedroom window.

Quarantined Italians sing each other out of loneliness, arias float from balconies, opera booms from windows.

The sun drops lower, glints on the glass. A starling streaks toward our house. Feathers remain, strewn on the window.



Summer 2021

Richard Levine

Light and Life

Perseus was shrouded in cloud,
when I walked out to watch an hour
pass, like a disciple who'd left
his life behind for such a night.

I had abandoned delights
of touch and sound, to stand bereft
of those senses, and chance the fall
of hourglass sand on fire. The vault

of stars hid from my eyes, till, deft
as a prayer answered, clouds parted.
Then, I saw loneliness alive
in my heart. But as if by theft

and quick as a pocket picked,
streaks of light and life arrived as gifts.



Summer 2021

Marly Youmans

Midnight Between the Water and the Air

Hard to believe we walked the lake last night,
The water moving hidden, heavily
Below the ice while snow spun in the air
And moon made smears of light across the ice...
Hard because the sky emptied, a prelude
To morning's blues of sky and shade on snow.
In floods of gilt, the finches flit from thorns
To bare-branched lilacs, while the cardinals
And juncos punctuate gold flutterings.
What were we seeking in the depths of night
In wandering so far, pausing to watch
Kingfisher Tower tangle with the moon,
Withstanding whirling armies of the snow,
While Sleeping Lion vanished in the storm?

*We walked the ice not knowing why we went,
To fear, to joy, to see, to reinvent?*

Was it to bathe ourselves in lunar light
Or show that we could stride more levelly
Than geese on waves the ice and turning air?



Summer 2021

It seemed pure paradox to flee the vise
Of cold by seeking cold, to be renewed
By wandering without a goal below
Cloud-shrouded stars and the half-hidden horns
Of the moon, as if they could be arsenals
Of glowing weapons stored against the things
That dim our days, to set in flustered flight
All weariness that makes our hours a botch
And burden to ourselves when not attune
To music of the spheres, creation's flow,
The swarming snow of beauties that transform.

*Yet so it is and was, and so we went
And lost ourselves in wonder's element.*



Summer 2021

Matthew King
Silhouette

After the freeze-up, leaf-fall forgotten,
trees blur together into the winter
around the raven's sharpening figure
that cuts itself clear out of sleety sky.
No bigger bird will stay with me to die.
Blotting the backlight, black is the brightest
colour remaining, illuminating
the absence of what's left itself behind:
I and the raven, both of us flying,
one from the frame and one from the picture,
have yearned all year for this clarifying
reduction of our selves from their mixture
with everything we saw too well to get.
Some things we have to see in silhouette.



Summer 2021

Matthew King

Taken

That little balsam tree you've taken care of
since you dug it from the drive, to shelter
where it might survive, you've checked on daily,
faithfully—new buds? New growth? There's more
than last year, surely—isn't there? It's green,
at least, alive, it seems unsafely small—
is it taking to its shaky ground?
Be patient, it takes time, if it takes at all—

It's only been a week, no more, you're sure,
since last you saw—almost before you look
you see it's yellow, yellow, top to bottom,
every needle, every twig gone wrong—
as if its roots had reached some awful place
and taken what was waiting all along.



Summer 2021

Matthew King

Drawing Good

My grandpa taught me: get it drawing good.
I didn't wonder where it draws good from.
Where but from the house, though it doesn't come
back out again into the house. At some
remove, at best, the house is warmed with wood;
the fire heats things, and only if they face
it, like the sun heats Earth across cold space.

I worked this out in the dead of winter:
the house draws cold, and colder, from outside,
to fill the void that's left—so if I'd tried
sealing all the cracks, the fire would have died,
unless the walls buckled, windows splintered—
or so it seemed to make more sense to say
than fire drew good and warmed the house that way.



Summer 2021

Mike L. Nichols

Thirty-Six Snows

It's January, and where
is my mother? Not
falling through this
pale night sky.

Her crystalline form
floated frozen to top
the dirty snow
so long ago.

I hold one palm
against the sky,
a supplication to snow
gods. The snowflakes melt
against my skin. I turn my
hand, causing them to roll
together, gathering mass until
they drip down. And as each droplet
splats on the ice below I feel
not even a brief connection.

I think how the Earth travels
this darkness, tries to spin us
off its skin. Where we stop,
nobody knows.



Summer 2021

Steve Gehrke

Lincoln at His Mother's Death

The night swims in on the backs of hedgerows,
on the low moans of cows, on the moon, like a milk
stain on a child's mouth, while at the window,

the boy, nine, scouts the prairie through the dark,
the underbrush and hens, the night-empty sheds,
the darkness impressed on him the way peeled bark

stains the hands, his mother behind him in bed,
milk-sick, dying, death, he imagines, scouting her
like a fox at the fence-line. He's seen headaches

that drop her to a knee, dizziness, winter
in her mouth, the tongue turning white, turning brown.
He remembers kisses, leaf-shaped words, splinters

she pulled from his finger with her teeth, the crown
of pins held in her lips as she cinched a hole
in his father's clothes, that mouth decaying now,

like a winter nest. He's tried to see her soul
as a bird, carriage or cloud, but he's been told,
too, that the soul is, in itself, a wholeness



Summer 2021

laid beneath the body, like these blind fields
laid beneath the night. Once, watching crops burn,
his father said, this is how the land is healed,

the votive flames wicked along the tasseled corn,
stalk to stalk, one ash-pulse after another
dropped into topsoil, the pests and field-worms

razed, not like the purgatory his mother
read to him about, but—though he doesn't know
the word for it—tranquil, as if the lantern

might cross his mother's body and in the glow
of it, she'd be saved. But now, with poison tilled
deep into her veins, with her voice slowly

dying, like a glassed flame, the boy cannot still
the stucked hive breaking open in his chest,
the rush of darkness through the windowsill,

the night condensed in that room, like a musket
being packed, mineral stars, ash, railroad ties
like jewels knotted across the prairie's vest,

the pig-iron, threshers, the trammeled slaves,
the boy's face breaking, his mother submerged
in her fever's steam, a few coughs now, a wheeze,

her breath barbed, ragged, like a sawblade urged
across a board, the boy's face falling to her chest,
the future's torched divided cities being forged.



Summer 2021

Daniel Patrick Sheehan

Demolition

Not much left to take away:
Pebbledash masonry and gray
Drywall, splinters of the desks
Where ink-webbed calendars tracked
Deadlines and birthdays. Here the husks
Of cabinets are stacked
On heaped strands of rusted rebar,
Studs and joists and jointed hardware
Catching the late sun. The dog sniffs
The asbestos air, a loader
Throttles down, a dump truck coughs
Out a cloud. The border
Of the past is marked by a line
On the outskirts of our town
Where workers who grew thick and wan
In an office twenty years or ten
Come by and see it almost gone,
And murmur, and pass on.



Summer 2021

Someone with a greater wit
Surely could make more of it:
Raise from the dust an office ghost
To shoptalk and lament
A hundred years of labor lost,
Dollars earned and dollars spent,
And seeing, at the close of day,
Not much left to take away.



Summer 2021

Daniel Patrick Sheehan

That Second Kingdom

Hard to credit how it's done.
Wednesday's come and gone again
Five times since we took the ashes,
Bearing in our hearts such wishes
As one lays upon an altar—
Trepidatious, sure to falter
When the moment comes, to stutter
What words we've longed to utter.

Whom you would rescue, Father,
Let it always be the other,
Unless you say it is your will
That both should travel up the hill
Over which the stars contrive
To teach the pilgrim how to live.



Summer 2021

Daniel Patrick Sheehan

On the Lehigh

Into the river you cast another lure
And settle on the gravel of the bank
Where nothing will happen, you may be sure,

Except that the breeze will feather your hair
And the midges won't allow you to think.
Into the river, you cast another lure.

The plink upon the water is the cure
For a soul that ever failed to outflank
Those devils whose attack was fierce and sure

And made ungodly chaos from the order.
Out of the west the clouds begin to sink
Into the river. You cast another lure

And dare kindle hope, having come this far
Out of that netherworld, so dim and rank,
To the river polished, placid and sure,

But whatever glides beneath the water
Darts and skitters and is gone in a blink.
Did you even see it? You can't be sure.
Into the river you cast another lure.



Summer 2021

Askold Skalsky

Lingering

The answer is *Wait*, you say.
It all amounts to this. If only all
the oracles had said the same,
how many plots would not arise,

how many tragedies would close
or fall away before our eyes.
Protesilaus would not die,
who was the first to disembark

on Trojan land. Oedipus would
never have set off with fearful stare
to where the three roads stand.
Just wait, you say, out of the depths

of some uncertain wisdom not yet
understood, moving and not moving
in the bowels of anti-time while it
postpones a version of what we verge

upon, solves and unsolves, bids and
unbids us do the thing itself, inside
the asymptote of space it takes to move
the very time we have not plenty of.



Summer 2021

Patrice Boyer Claeys

Crossing the Chicago River at Wabash

I lift my eyes to the stripe of sky
above the river's open plain

framed by high-rise panes that shine
with golden light as if from stained

glass. Ornate towers from a distant time
face sleeker versions across the flow

their images doubled by the climb
of mirrored skin over steel bones.

Birds call and dive to the river below
flapping like clothes hung on the line

in my childhood days of long ago
the same sun that stripes the water's shine

today. Gone are college days lived and stored
in the house near the trolley, our wild-sprung

nights with tangled arms and legs on Baltimore
Avenue, waking to find mold on the mung



Summer 2021

sprouts and drum stands piercing Samsonite.
Lost, the rooftop water towers hunched

and squat, totems of the Lower West Side
where I gazed by the sill, my collar cinched

with an oval brooch. No more waving grass
as scud clouds raced from North Sea squalls

and I clung to the earth as your image passed—
the lone blue Citroen rounding the wall.

I am here, in this moment, as summer stirs
and the shining river runs with life.

Freed from February's gray slurry
the cracked mosaic of fractured ice

replaced by scullers who launch a shell.
Like an insect that strides atop the tow

its eight oars skim above the swells
to slice the surface of what is now.



Summer 2021

Sean Corbitt

Marching North

Unfolding, scroll-like, ocean hits horizon,
The boundary smoothed by great distance and dark.
What looms to the right is strange, more mesmerizing
Without that distant, world-dividing mark.
Water and sky combine in a wide black arc.
I gaze up, I see tangled kelp and eels,
As crashing clouds just gently gum our heels.

The three of us entertain a troubling notion
While marching north, as cocksure as cliché:
The bay, at any point, could melt to ocean,
And any stream we stomp in could be bay.
No map, no moon, no phones to light the way.
Danger be damned. The end, the bay, awaits.
Our feverish conversation fluctuates

Between bravura and the aforesaid threat
Of drowning, in a rill's width's worth of walking.
We realize there's no *crash*. The sand is wet,
Patterned with little pockmarks interlocking,
Signature of the waves, who write by rocking.
It was then we knew
We'd crossed the border of that splotch of blue
Cartographers once crossed, then drew.



Summer 2021

Robin Helweg-Larsen

(On the Value of Learning Languages When)
Roughing It in Europe

One two three four
Is OK, but you need more:

Un deux trois quat'
If you want a welcome mat

En to tre fire
With the krone getting dearer,

Bir iki uç dirt
Selling off your jeans or shirt

Wahid zoozh teleta arba
In a cafe by the harbour

Üks kaks kolm neli
For some food to fill your belly;

Jeden dwa trzy cztery
Language may be shaky, very,

Uno dos tres cuatro
But they'll love you if you're up to



Summer 2021

Eins zwei drei vier
Trying freely, laughing freer.

Previously published in *Unsplendid*



Summer 2021

Robin Helweg-Larsen

Ex-Rover

I was a rover, footloose treasure-trover,
Bahamian, Brit, Dane, Aussie, Canadian,
Easily settling, never for very long,
Followed the sun and the moon with a song.

Now roving is over, Death's raving and raging,
The threatening madman, waving a knife.
Even my babies have babies, are ageing—
Aren't there any more decades left in my life?

I was a rover—no grass
Grew under my feet as I'd pass.
Now grass grows and I cut it.
And it grows, and I cut it.
I was wired, now I'm tired;
Fired up, now I'm mired.
And the grass grows again...I give up.

Let me sleep in the sun, and sleep slow.
Let me sleep deep.
When was that rover me?
Let the grass grow.
Let the moon be the stone over me.



Summer 2021

John Whitney Steele

The Gate

It's not so hard to turn into a gate.
To do so, just assume this shape:
from kneeling, stretch one leg out to the side,
place your hand down on that shin and slide
it toward your foot. Bring your other hand
up overhead and reach toward your toes.
As you ease yourself into the pose,
let the space between your ribs expand.

Each pose is a gate that opens inward.
Go through. Enter yoga's vineyard.
Sample its fruit, its storehouse of old wine.
You might become a mountain, flower, tree,
some kind of animal, or mythic being,
a sage who strolls right through the gates of time.



Summer 2021

Judy Koren

Tel Shikmóna

Mosaics here surprise: you wouldn't know,
tramping on thistles, brittle summer stubble
and tripping over rubble, stumbling, slow,
that this rough trail leads to the long-ago

till suddenly—a broken arch, a floor
patterned in blue red black, flowers and birds
outlined in tesserae; below them, words
in Greek, a cross; this church by a rocky shore

for fifteen hundred years has lain here
abandoned, aeon-battered, yet still haunted
by echoes of shuffled feet and plainsong chanted:
felt, though unheard, upon the quivering air.

Silence; a cooling breeze as evening falls
upon the ghosts; a spur-winged plover calls
its lonely *sik-sik-sik*; above the shallows
a pied kingfisher hovers, hunting minnows.



Summer 2021

David W. Landrum

The Monastery of the Holy Trinity, Meteora, Greece

Memory of a visit there in 2004

First, you realize you don't want to talk.
You are afraid to sit down or touch things.
You do not see the monks much as you walk
the monastery grounds. Their absence brings
the realization they have tasks to do.
You are superfluous. The icons gaze
with wise and silent eyes that say to you,
Laughter, of course, and joy—but do not raise
your voice; to do so suggests you should be
not strolling on this rock thrust to the sky.
Things that do not echo eternity
are out of place here, on this mountain high
above the earth, where all things are arranged
to speak of heaven and divinity.
Here, in this holiness, you are estranged;
here, you, not they, become the oddity.



Summer 2021

David W. Landrum

Marriage

Those deep-down, earthy rhythms: day and night,
seed-time and harvest, summer/winter, forged
upon creation's anvil, ringing white
and hot; hammer and tongs held by the Lord;
beasts of the earth, insects and creeping things,
fish of the sea, leviathan, the sky
(he also made the stars); each bird that sings,
the turtledove's lament, the heron's cry
and male and female—all embedded deep
in nature's cadence; pillars of the earth,
foundational, continuing, the sweep
of love and intimacy, and of birth;
directive to the human race whereby
we can obey: be fruitful, multiply.



Summer 2021

Leslie Bergner

On viewing Marc Chagall's painting, *The Three
Candles*—

an ekphrastic poem

Three candles taller than the shtetl's rooftops
glow bright in the Belarus sky. My groom
and I, larger than life, hover above the village
while acrobatic angels swoop and dive.
Townswomen wave in wonderment
from the deep red earth below. Atop a fence,
a harlequin wails on klezmer clarinet.
A flying fiddler strikes a minor key.
White peonies, flung like stars across the sky,
match my simple wedding dress.
My husband holds me tight against the cold.
Gravity has no power here.
The artist's love keeps us from tumbling.



Summer 2021

Lisa Molina

The Bridal Dove

The gray dove spies the perfect tree
The bride processes nervously

She gathers twigs into her beak
The father, smiling, kisses her cheek

The string and grass are flown and placed
The groom and bride, now face to face

Fastidiously, she builds her nest
The vows, the rings, the kiss, the rest.



Summer 2021

Pamela Taylor

The First Time

while we slept under a new moon—
you in the spot where my talisman called
for a body to fill—a cop cruised by your car
after the 2AM parking ban went into effect,
ran your plates and registration for outstanding
warrants, and finding none, he ran your license,
did a double take when he checked your D.O.B.
against the day's date, and then kept on cruising
without issuing a \$30 ticket on your birthday,
the ticket you said I was worth the risk of staying for.



Summer 2021

Peggy Landsman

Poetry

Our bodies press against each other, my front to his back. Across his side, my arm lies pinned beneath his arm, which squeezes tight when I attempt to move. This silent struggle, a silly little game, goes on awhile until it stops. I run my fingers through his hair. I love those flowing, silver waves. My breath between his shoulder blades must tickle. Before he asks, I rub the spot, kiss it, and roll onto my other side. He rolls too. Our bodies press against each other, his front to my back. His fingertips touch me lightly as if he's blind and my skin's a poem in braille he's bound to learn by heart.



Summer 2021

Martin Chrispine Juwa

Two Rivers

Two rivers walk past my village,
pairing, sometimes hugging, sometimes staggering,
one bending onto the other for a peck
or support.

Sometimes their shoulders touch and hands wrap into
each other's, firmly.

They break down and shed their tears,
calmly hopping from one rock to another like faint memories
down the village to Lake Malawi.



Summer 2021

Carolyn Martin

Sonnet for a 25th Wedding Anniversary

She came to me in the rain.
—James Wright, “Sappho”

What a silly thing to do, this Memory
without umbrella or boots, slipping through
the drenching afternoon, reminding me
of early loves I filed away. A few
titled *puppy-ish* lined with clipped good-byes,
slamming doors, words enraged, hope-shatterings.
A few *six-month-stands* that did not thrive
in spite of spellbound lips and shudderings
I grew addicted to. One *commitment* failed.
One *if-only*. One *might-have-been*—preludes
to today. Bemused I stroll through fields
of dripping irises with gratitude
to all my left-behinds. Memory sighs,
See. Nothing is appraised the same way twice.

Previously published in *Verseweavers*



Summer 2021

Jacqueline Coleman-Fried
Once Upon a Time

As a man lay dying
in his bed by the sea

two white white swans
entered his cove

gliding around the bend
in the onyx-colored water—

gliding to reach him
before the tide departed.

I've seen the swans slake their thirst
from a pipe at the edge of his lawn,

a pipe bringing brook water to salt.
They hid their nests in his bulrushes.

Was it water, or something else, driving them
now, their necks stretching tall

to his windows—a swan's salute
as a man lay dying.



Summer 2021

Fiona Tracey

Consciousness

After Natasha Trethewey

I was awake while you were dying.
I watched each day of your decline,
behind you on your bed straddling your sturdiness.

And your knowing left no room for lying
so you were ruined by the brilliance of your mind
unmeasured, but the measure of a man nevertheless

I told you we would go down together, burning
in that moment when I made you mine.
So let the early morning hours from our bonds undress.

So let the early morning hours from our bonds undress
in that moment when I made you mine
I told you we would go down together, burning

Unmeasured, but the measure of a man nevertheless
you were ruined by the brilliance of your mind
and your knowing left no room for lying.

Behind you on your bed, straddling your sturdiness,
I watched each day of your decline.
I was awake while you were dying.



Summer 2021

Hilary Biehl

Inventory of a Shop in Berkeley

Colored trinkets. Tiny dolls.
Sugar spoons and paper balls.

Queen sized bed. Handmade lace.
Clock with an astonished face.

Spices. Perfumes. Bottled ciders.
Mossy branches. Cobwebs. Spiders.

Songbirds twittering in cages.
Spellbook missing half its pages.

Roosters with real feathers. Sunlight.
Silver mirror, scarcely child-height.

Wooden table made by Shakers.
Silence spread in dusty acres.

Woman, vast, with cobweb hair,
permanently in her chair.

Quilted coat of many colors.
“You can have it for five dollars.”



Summer 2021

Rumbling laughter. Needle threaded
with a camel. Dog, three-headed.

Fragile vase of baby's breath.
Fraying twine. A family death.



Summer 2021

Hilary Biehl

If Meaning Is a Weakness

If meaning is a weakness of the mind
and nothing waits in chaos to be found,
then songbirds are not letters sent unsigned.

It seems we are the opposite of blind,
hallucinating patterns on the ground,
if meaning is a weakness of the mind.

Spring comes. We hesitate to be unkind
by telling those who cling to life half-drowned
that songbirds are not letters sent unsigned.

Concertos, ably crafted and refined,
do not become cacophonies of sound,
though meaning is a weakness of the mind.

However much we think we are resigned
to senselessness, the metaphors abound;
but songbirds are not letters sent unsigned.

There are no implications to unwind,
no bright interpretations to expound,
if meaning is a weakness of the mind
and songbirds are not letters sent unsigned.



Summer 2021

Nancy L. Davis

My Aunt Tells the Story

1915

he plucked her out of the church choir
one afternoon, requested she stay as
others left.

Your voice is genius, I will teach you.

he did not disappoint. Nana was fifteen,
fulsome in face and figure, wide widow's peak
arcing auburn rivulets.

her father crushed in the mines two years
before, her schooling dropped
for mill work, why wouldn't her family
support this offer?

a rare contralto with boundless range,
she excelled, a quick study, prepared
for more, when

the wife stepped in, her song once
a gift, worn to grit—
four children and a stray.



Summer 2021

she had been the student,
all promise and blush,
her pitch perfect and strong

the thrum of piano strings
inchoate and wrong.



Summer 2021

Joe Crocker

The Fat Lady Sings

*another reply to Frances Cornford,
"To a Fat Lady Seen from the Train"*

Now I am unlovely. That is true.
But once I was beloved, or felt I was.
Those many years ago, he never knew.
I am unlovely now. Then I was true.
He never ever knew I loved him too.
I hid it then, and hide again because
I am unlovely. I am not untrue.
And once I was beloved, or felt I was.



Summer 2021

William Doreski

Dividing the Dark into Squares

Dividing the dark into squares,
each the size of a tabletop,
helps relieve the nightly stress,
the lonely starlight frothing.

You, stretched out on the sofa
in the other room, seem further
than the outer planets cringing
in their slop of ammonia storms.

How can we close the gap between
old age and the aspirations
of our sun-colored college years?
Not even the neighbor's dogs,

eager to bark down the moon,
can prevent our dreams from pouring
into every crack and crevice
marring our private histories.

You with your thousand lovers,
your brief Hollywood career,
the crooked bookkeeping learned
when you placed your faith in math.

Me with a long gray clerkship
in the dullest insurance firm
in which destiny could place me.
No wonder sparks couldn't ignite



Summer 2021

the papery shadows we cast.
Dividing the dark in squares,
I pile them like cut plywood
on the bed and admire my work

for a while before I go to sleep.
I'd ask you to endorse what I've done,
but you'd sneer like a steam engine
and remind me that when dawn comes

I must undo this puny effort
and replace all these pieces
if I expect the world to continue
in a breezy well-lit mode.



Summer 2021

Alison Rosenberg

Gaseous Bedrock

I can't blame you. I feign nonchalance as you sing
screamo music to me, so softly that my eyelids
begin to float down: so gently that I feel sane.

As a child I was too afraid to play tag,
because the sensation of being chased always
sent me into a frenzy of anguish, panicking

towards asphyxiation. *That explains*
a lot, you say when I tell you, jovial
with a tinge of pity. (Do I make you sad

when I tell the truth?) After we hang up
on a two-hour FaceTime, you drink a liter
of cinnamon whiskey because you miss your

first love, steady in high winds. Something compels me
to pay for your cab to the hospital. When
you say you care for me, the sentiment lingers

as a gas—almost tangible, but I can't quite
hold onto it when I curl my outstretched fingers
into a fist. It's all the same gibberish that I tried



Summer 2021

to decode when I fumbled through math problems,
back in the calc class that I flunked in high school.
Inept at logic, I'll try to realign your sentiments in a

way that's easier for me to digest—like the time you
picked me up with such an innocent lust that you
crushed my skull against the low ceiling. You cried

when I insisted that it didn't hurt, adamant despite
my own budding tears. (Do I make you sad when I
lie?) The first time I visit your new place, you make

the bed with dirty sheets and buy me a little plush
penguin, my favorite animal. The only things in your
pantry are an old box of mac & cheese and a jar of

peanut butter. *That explains a lot*, I sigh, stepping
over the murky stains and ignoring the empty jugs
of liquor as I foolishly offer to wash your dishes.



Summer 2021

Jason W. McGlone

Mercy, Gratitude

Out for a walk, I came across a pine marten,
leg-snared in a coyote trap, hungry & shrieking,
terrified to move.

It whimpered as I fiddled with the rusty
Gregerson fitting, fingers fat & cold.

The marten spun when the cable slid free & thanked
me with a bite on the back of my hand, opening me
up.

I stanchued blood all the way to the hospital, where they
asked what'd happened. I lied & said it was my dog,
who, laying on the kitchen rug at home, would never care.



Summer 2021

David Stephenson

Mission Statement

Whiling away time at a muffler shop,
Having examined all the magazines,
I saw a mission statement stapled up
Between the candy bar and coke machines

Which promised best-in-town customer care,
Transparency, respect, and honesty,
Precision diagnostics and repair,
And giving back to the community.

All these praiseworthy goals were news to me,
Things they completely failed to demonstrate
Through their thoroughgoing apathy
Throughout my stopped clock, bug-in-amber wait,

And I achieved a timeless, Zenlike state
While contemplating the entire deal,
Accepting it as part of karmic fate
While knowing the illusion isn't real.



Summer 2021

Terence Culetton

The Woods of Saxony

Outlandish notion for a housing tract,
the ring of it surreal, or just not real,
really—counterfactual, in fact.
Fiction, I guess, holds true as curb appeal.
I don't drive through. I'd leave the area
untested by mundane experience,
leave its strange untenable idea
of itself intact—its crazy self-known sense:
Saxons trudge along a quiet street
in bearskins, war hammers in their hands.
Housewives shriek and fly in shocked retreat
as husbands run to make heroic stands:
rakes clash on helms, sit-mowers flame and roar
like dragons—fateful still—in Eddic lore.



Summer 2021

Kelli Simpson

Blood of Summer

Blonde sun in a blue-eyed sky.
Long legged days stretched
from neck deep
to night's full abandon—
consummated by stars.

The earth spins
towards the moon's touch;
the crescent
shining tongue kiss
on the throat of a river—
warm as a willing girl.

But I
have the taste of mud in my mouth.
The form of a man, of woman, of hound.
I killed fire with spit
and spread the ashes around
where I stood
in the blood
of summer.



Summer 2021

Black sun in a sky of ice.
Days
lock jawed and trap snapped—
time is a fiction
stars tell to children.

The earth slumps at the corner bar,
her spin spent—
in her glass,
the last of her rivers.
Rare
as girls.

And I
have the taste of worlds in my mouth.
The form of a man, a woman; I howl
to kill fire with will and spread the ashes around
where I stood
in the blood
of summer.



Summer 2021

Kathryn Sadakierski

Summer's First Storm

Just when I turn my back,
Summer seems to sneak up on me, like that.
Tornado season once again,
The skies leer in their dull gray-green,
Stifled in cloud robes of darkest indigo.

From next door, there is the crack of a bat,
Neighbors playing baseball sound their loud laughs,
Cymbals crash,
Mirroring the grumbles of thunderclaps.
Humid air sparks dissension;
Rain separates from the heavenly womb,
Clattering clumsily to the ground in impertinent splatters,
Hissing like snakes as they connect with pavement.

Wiry silver bangles of light
Electrify the restless evening,
Fading fast to night,
Gilding the lightning bugs
Who swirl amid the scent of lilac
Softened by the embrace of rain
That nourishes the flowers with maternal tenderness.



Summer 2021

Awash in beauty, all nature sings,
And the galvanic might of the storm
Murmurs its last lullabies
As the stars return,
Serenity restored,
Breathing in the earth,
Its lonely petrichor.



Summer 2021

Kathryn Sadakierski

Road Trip

Silk balloons spun by gypsy moths
Are tangled in the trees,
Their tented webs
Visible from the road.

Pickup trucks are the only spots of color
On the dusty highways,
Until they eventually give way
To layered hills,
Grasses and flowers in ombre ripples,
Blankets of yellow and purple wildflowers stacked,
Enfolded in their sheets are the chickadees,
Hopping from the bushes that sway in the breeze,
Amidst gold and amber threads of grass.

Neatly hidden alongside the fields of corn and wheat,
Beside the grain siloes and red barns,
Are football fields, stadium lights in opposition
With the natural blades of sun
Cutting through the brush,
A goalpost reaching its arms desperately
Like tree branches only barely seen
From the complex stitches of road knit together
That trucks race across,



Summer 2021

Subtle notes of Mellencamp, Hall & Oates,
Aerosmith, and Whitney
Rising from the radios,
Balloons of polyphonic symphonies
Emerging from webs of tree leaves,
Into the sky, the sun,
Above.

Whitney says a prayer,
Asking, *how will I know?*
As the flowers and their grasses whisper their responses,
The wind echoing them back,
Until the words fall back on your ears,
Ricocheting across the radio waves,
Like a game of telephone.



Summer 2021

M. Brooke Wiese

This Day, This Night

Across the bay at night lights shine
and glitter along the mainland shore like
far-away planets and stars. Buoy bells strike
and chime, a tone poem atop the waves. A line

of towers flashes morse-code patterns known
only to skippers heading to the dark
sea to fish. Each beacon is a landmark.
Each transmitter blinking says you're not alone.

Earlier we linked arms along the beach
collecting shells, delighted when a pod
of dolphins breached and played across the broad
beachfront. If I could have any wish

it would be this: that this day and this night
would replay every day, every night.



Summer 2021

Rebecca A. Spears

The Claim

This morning, plums hang ripe
in the orchard, nearly ready to be
sugared and boiled down for jam.
The world is not such a bad place
after all. A look in the barn,
and the lamb born last night rests
with its ewe. Seems content, just
existing in the moment.

The form of all things—
the plum-ness, the lamb-ness,
the impression in the hay—disclose
the body as home, the central nature
of being. This claim to existing
in the world.

Last night, the violet darkness
consumed our lanterns swung along the path—
Time to lamb, even with so little light.
We called to the ewe, who turned
her face toward the door's sweeping draft.

How was it she bleated so softly
just then when we saw her body convulse,
and later when there was new life?
Is it her nature to stay so quiet?—



Summer 2021

to hide what we could hardly see,
the lamb lifting its open mouth to claim
its mother. Would she recognize her offspring?
And what if she refused? What is it,
to never be claimed?

After a beat, she let the lamb
latch on to her. And so they were
rejoined—lamb and ewe indulging
in a feast of intimacy as the darkness
gave way to the dull blue light of dawn.



Summer 2021

James B. Nicola

Remaking Made Things

The time-olde battle was Light versus Dark.
The new one, (Ful)Filled versus Hollow, put
you and me in a new light. What expression,
after world wars, meant anything? What dreams,
post-Bomb, could coax your soul out from her shroud
of dismay? The Electric world was night—

light-bulb charged, but still.... And poems, once ignited
when a whim of light disturbed the dark,
became night's inverse image: when a shroud—
from eyelids or contemplation, surely—put
lights out awhile, or lit the dark. And dreams,
as eructations somewhat formed—expression—

made “made things,” poems: often the expression
of capricious thought or passing feeling, not knight-
ed; often a rash soldier's lyric dreams
of craft and fame. But both sorts filled the dark
with driven deliberation of days' despairs and put
the gods on notice, *We are here!* A shroud

veiled heaven, in a flash, in a flourish. The same shroud
veiled the *convention* of heaven, that rank expression
of an obsolete clerical class. And the Modern put
a properer perspective on the night,
now pied with day, as light had been laced with dark;
removed the sanctimonious from dreams;



Summer 2021

replaced the black-and-white with color. Dreams were sometimes *only* color, for the shroud became chiffon, so it no longer darkened empty existence, but dyed the expression of daily living-and-dying with variegated night. The Modern—the Electric, in effect—was put-

ting the Existential on notice. Offputting poetry, though, is oft forgettable: Dreams of only texture, hue or form, make night palatable, but *shouldn't* they stay shrouded; and Conscience—Art—strive for *artful* expression of true light, not of artificial dark?

Let's not put back, over our hearts, the shroud of rancid dreams, nor glorify the expression of a night as artless as the un-made dark.



Summer 2021

Erin J. Kahn

The light

When sun shines through my city
Skyscrapers sing silver, great high rises gold
When sun hits the side of burnished buildings
And makes steel glitter like diamonds
I see the pyramids at Giza
Rising in stern-faced salutation
I see the temple of Solomon glisten
Columns of perfect polished marble
Brick is like amethyst, concrete like crystal
Glorious steel a blinding ray
And the light, the light
Is all I see



Summer 2021

Biographies

A lover of beauty in all its forms, **Leslie Bergner** comes from Hamden, Connecticut. Retired from a writing position at Yale University, she has turned her attention to writing poetry, which brings her solace and joy in these difficult times. She is a winner of a Nutmeg Poetry Contest award from the Connecticut Poetry Society.

Hilary Biehl's poems have appeared in *The Lyric*, *Phantom Drift*, *Dappled Things*, and *Mezzo Cammin*, among others. She lives with her husband and their son in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Marion Starling Boyer has four published poetry collections. Poetry from *The Sea Was Never Far* became "Best of the Net" and a finalist in *The Atlanta Review*'s 2018 International Competition. Boyer's other books are *The Clock of the Long Now*, *Composing the Rain* (Grayson Books 2014 Chapbook Winner), and *Green*.

Chicago author **Patrice Boyer Claeys** has written four poetry collections: *The Machinery of Grace* (Kelsay Books), *Lovely Daughter of the Shattering* (Kelsay Books), *Honey from the Sun* (with Gail Goepfert, Blurb) and *This Hard Business of Living* (also with Goepfert, forthcoming from Seven Kitchens Press). More at www.patriceboyerclaeys.com.

Jacqueline Coleman-Fried is a poet and essayist living in Tuckahoe, NY. She has attended a weekly poetry workshop for the past four years at The Writing Institute at Sarah Lawrence College. Her work has been published by *Home Planet News Online* and *The Voices Project Poetry Library*, also online.



Summer 2021

Sean Corbitt is a poet from Maryland.

Joe Crocker lives in Yorkshire. He is a little old to be starting out in poetry but succumbed to the muse during the Covid lockdown and has had a few things published, mainly in *Snakeskin* magazine and in *New Verse News*, *Bewildering Stories*, and *Light*.

Terence Culleton has published three collections of poems, his most recent being a collection of fifty-four English sonnets, *A Tree and Gone*, just out through Future Cycle Press and available on his website: www.terenceculletonpoetry.com.

David Danoff lives in the Washington, D.C. area and works for the federal government. His poems have appeared in *The Orchards*, *The Yale Review*, *Poet Lore*, *The Raintown Review*, *Measure*, *The Lyric*, *Snakeskin*, *Antiphon*, *Unsplendid*, *Innisfree Poetry Journal*, *Tikkun*, and elsewhere.

Nancy L. Davis has published poems in *Cutthroat*, *The Dewdrop*, *From the Depths*, and *15th Anniversary Edition: Best of Philadelphia Stories*. Awards include a Pushcart Nomination, First Place in the Sandy Crimmins National Poetry Prize, Finalist in the Joy Harjo Poetry Prize, and Semi-Finalist in TulipTree Publishing's *Stories That Need To Be Told* anthology. *Ghosts*, her chapbook, was published by Finishing Line Press July 2019.

Robert Donohue's poetry has appeared in *The Raintown Review*, *Grand Little Things*, and *The Road Not Taken*, among others. He lives on Long Island, NY.

Tamiko Dooley studied Latin and French at New College, Oxford. She is raising two young children in England. When there's no pandemic, she's hired as a wedding pianist from time to time.



Summer 2021

William Doreski lives in Peterborough, New Hampshire. He has taught at several colleges and universities. His most recent book of poetry is *Mist in Their Eyes* (2021). He has published three critical studies, including *Robert Lowell's Shifting Colors*. His essays, poetry, fiction, and reviews have appeared in various journals.

Michael Estabrook has been publishing his poetry in the small press since the 1980s. He has published over 20 collections, a recent one being *The Poet's Curse, A Miscellany* (The Poetry Box, 2019).

Steve Gehrke has published three books of poetry, including *Michelangelo's Seizure*, which was selected for the National Poetry Series. He teaches at the University of Nevada in Reno.

Rebecca Gomezrueda is a Philadelphia area poet, playwright, and speculative fiction writer. Her short stories and poems have appeared in *The Drabblecast* and *Trouvaille Review* among other markets. Recently, her first stage play *The Clinic* premiered in the 2019 Philadelphia Fringe Festival with Lone Brick Theatre Company.

William Heath has published two chapbooks, *Night Moves in Ohio* and *Leaving Seville*; a book of poems, *The Walking Man*; three novels, *The Children Bob Moses Led* (winner of the Hackney Award), *Devil Dancer*, and *Blacksnake's Path*; a work of history, *William Wells and the Struggle for the Old Northwest* (winner of two Spur Awards); and a collection of interviews, *Conversations with Robert Stone*. www.williamheathbooks.com



Summer 2021

Robin Helweg-Larsen's poems, largely formal, are published in *The Orchards* and elsewhere in the US, UK, and Canada. Some favourites are in The HyperTexts. He is Series Editor for Sampson Low's *Potcake Chapbooks—Form in Formless Times*, and he blogs at formalverse.com from his hometown of Governor's Harbour, Bahamas.

Mary Beth Hines writes poetry, short fiction, and nonfiction from her home in Massachusetts. Her recent work appears, or will soon appear, in journals including *Amethyst Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Literary Mama*, *Orchards Poetry Journal*, and *Snakeskin*, among others. She is looking for a home for her first poetry collection.

Katherine Hoerth is the author of five poetry collections, including the forthcoming *Flare Stacks in Full Bloom* (Texas Review Press, 2021). In 2015, she won the Texas Institute of Letters Helen C. Smith Award. She is an assistant professor at Lamar University and editor of Lamar University Literary Press.

J.M. Jordan recently began writing again after a twenty-year hiatus. He is a Georgia native, a Virginia resident, and a homicide detective by profession. His poems have appeared recently in *The Chattahoochee Review*, *Image Journal*, *Louisiana Literature*, *The Potomac Review*, *Carolina Quarterly*, *Smartish Pace*, and elsewhere.

Martin Chrispine Juwa is a poet from Malawi. He has one poetry anthology to his name, *Drifting Smoke*. His poems are published, or are forthcoming, in 43 online magazines, journals, and anthologies, including *JAYL* (Issue 2), *BNAP Anthology*, *LOCKDOWN 2020*, *Pangolin Review*, *HELD Magazine*, *Strange Births*, and *Pensive Journal*.



Summer 2021

Erin J. Kahn is a writer and printmaker usually based in New York City. Her work has been published by The Society of Classical Poets, *Fantasia Divinity Magazine*, and Epic Publishing. She is also a theatre critic at StageBuddy.com and book reviewer at woodbtwntheworlds.blogspot.com.

Siham Karami, author of *To Love the River* (Kelsay Books, 2018), also has work published in *The Orison Anthology*, *Able Muse*, *Tiferet Journal*, *Presence*, *Smartish Pace*, *Think*, and elsewhere. See her nature photography on Instagram @sihamkarami. Nominated multiple times for both the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net, she blogs at sihamkarami.wordpress.com.

Don Kimball is the author of three chapbooks, *Tumbling* (Finishing Line Press, 2016), *Journal of a Flatlander* (Finishing Line Press, 2009), and *Skipping Stones* (Pudding House Publications, 2008). Don is the former president of the Poetry Society of New Hampshire and a longstanding member of the Powow River Poets.

Matthew King used to teach philosophy at York University in Toronto; he now lives in “the country north of Belleville,” where he tries to grow things, takes pictures of flowers with bugs on them, counts birds, and walks a rope bridge between the neighbouring mountaintops of philosophy and poetry.

Judy Koren, from Haifa, Israel, returned to poetry, her first love, after retiring in 2017. Her poems have appeared in Israeli literary magazines and in magazines abroad including *Better Than Starbucks*; *Lighten Up Online*, *The Road Not Taken*, and *The Taj Mahal Review*. She is President of Voices Israel, a society for poets writing in English.



Summer 2021

Victoria Korth is a practicing psychiatrist caring for the chronically mentally ill. Her poem “Harlem Valley Psychiatric Center” won the 2020 Montreal International Poetry Prize. Other work has recently appeared in *Jelly Bucket*, *Broad River Review*, *Ocean State Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *LEON Literary Review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Barrow Street*, and elsewhere. Her chapbook, *Cord Color*, was released from Finishing Line Press in 2015. *Tacking Stitch* is forthcoming 2022. She is an MFA graduate of the Warren Wilson College Program for Writers.

Sharon Kunde has writing in or forthcoming in *The Harvard Review*, *The Colorado Review*, *Salt Front*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Twentieth-Century Literature*, *Split Rock Review*, *The LA Review of Books*, *The LA Times*, *Midwestern Gothic*, and other journals. Her chapbook *Year of the Sasquatch* is forthcoming with Dancing Girl Press, and her chapbook *From Dark to Waking* was selected as a semi-finalist for Persea Books’ 2012 Lexi Rudnitsky First Book Prize.

Susan Landgraf was awarded an Academy of American Poets Laureate award in 2020. Her books include *The Inspired Poet* (Two Sylvias Press, 2019), *What We Bury Changes the Ground*, and *Other Voices*. More than 400 poems have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Poet Lore*, *Margie*, *Nimrod*, *The Meadow*, *Calyx*, and others.

David W. Landrum is a retired English Professor. He has published poetry in numerous journals including *Evansville Review*, *Measure*, *Christianity & Literature*, *First Things*, and *Algebra of Owls*. *His new chapbook, *Tawny Wisdom*, *is forthcoming from Barefoot Muse Press.



Summer 2021

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 *Mezzo Cammin*, *Nasty Women Poets* (Lost Horse Press), and *The Orchards*. She lives in South Florida where she swims in the warm Atlantic Ocean every chance she gets. <https://peggylandsman.wordpress.com/>

Richard Levine, a retired NYC teacher, is the author of the forthcoming *Now in Contest* (Fernwood Press) as well as *Richard Levine: Selected Poems* (FutureCycle Press, 2019), *Contiguous States* (Finishing Line Press, 2018), and five chapbooks. He served as co-editor of BigCityLit.com and is currently an Associate Editor. website: richardlevine107.com

Kathleen Brewin Lewis writes about the natural world and family life. She is the author of two chapbooks of poetry, *Fluent in Rivers* and *July's Thick Kingdom* (both from FutureCycle Press). Her full collection, *Magicalcanda & Other Marvels*, is forthcoming from Shanti Arts. She lives in Atlanta.

Daniel Lusk is author of several poetry collections and other books, most recently *The Shower Scene from Hamlet* and *The Vermeer Suite*. His work appears in *North American Review*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Innisfree Poetry Journal*, *New Letters*, *Poetry Ireland*, *Poetry*, and other journals. His genre-bending essay, "Bomb," was awarded a Pushcart Prize.

From associate professor of English to management trainer to retiree, **Carolyn Martin** has published poems in more than 130 journals throughout North America, Australia, and the UK. She is currently the poetry editor of *Kosmos Quarterly: journal for global transformation*. Find out more about Carolyn at www.carolynmartinpoet.com.



Summer 2021

D.S. Martin is Poet-in-Residence at McMaster Divinity College and Series Editor for the Poiema Poetry Series from Cascade Books. He has written five poetry collections including *Ampersand* (2018), *Conspiracy of Light: Poems Inspired by the Legacy of C.S. Lewis* (2013), and his new book *Angelicus* (2021).

Randy Mazie's poetry has been published in numerous media, including *Light*, *The MacGuffin*, *DASH*, and the *Anthology of Transcendent Poetry* (Cosmographia Books, 2019).

Jason W. McGlone's work has appeared in *Potluck Magazine*, *The Metaworker*, and *Sledgehammer Lit*, and he has work forthcoming in *Imperial Death Cult*. He makes music under the name Mourning Oars, holds an MFA from Queens University of Charlotte, and lives in Cincinnati.

Ken Meisel is a poet and psychotherapist, a 2012 Kresge Arts Literary Fellow, a Pushcart Prize nominee, and the author of eight books of poetry. His most recent books are: *Our Common Souls: New & Selected Poems of Detroit* (Blue Horse Press, 2020) and *Mortal Lullabies* (FutureCycle Press, 2018). Meisel has recent work in *Concho River Review*, *I-70 Review*, *San Pedro River Review*, *The Wayfarer*, and *Rabid Oak*.

Kate Meyer-Currey was born in 1969 and moved to Devon in 1973. A varied career in frontline settings has fuelled her interest in gritty urbanism, contrasted with a rural upbringing. Her ADHD also instils a sense of "other" in her life and writing.



Summer 2021

Lisa Molina is a writer/educator in Austin, Texas. She taught high school English and theatre, was Associate Publisher of Austin Family Magazine, and works with students with special needs. Her writing can be found in numerous journals, including *Beyond Words Magazine*, *Trouvaille Review*, *Neologism Poetry*, and *The Ekphrastic Review*.

Sally Nacker was awarded the Edwin Way Teale writer's residency in the summer of 2020. Her poems appear in *The Orchards Poetry Journal*, *Mezzo Cammin*, *ONE ART*, *An Amaranthine Summer*, *Hawk and Whippoorwill*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Your Daily Poem*, and *The Sunlight Press*. *Kindness in Winter* (May 2021, Kelsay Books) is her new collection.

Carrie Vaccaro Nelkin's poetry has appeared in *Third Wednesday*, *Writing in a Woman's Voice*, *The Poet*, *Grasslimb Journal*, *Connecticut River Review*, and other places. Carrie also writes speculative fiction and is a member of the Horror Writers Association. You can find her at cvnelkin.com.

Mike L. Nichols is a graduate of Idaho State University and a recipient of the Ford Swetnam Poetry Prize. He lives and writes in Eastern Idaho. Look for his poetry in *Rogue Agent*, *Tattoo Highway*, *Plainsongs Magazine*, and elsewhere. Find more at deadgirl dancing.net.

James B. Nicola is the author of six collections of poetry, the latest being *Fires of Heaven: Poems of Faith and Sense*. His decades of working in the theater culminated in the nonfiction book *Playing the Audience: The Practical Guide to Live Performance*, which won a Choice award.



Summer 2021

Andrea Potos is the author of several collections of poetry including *Marrow of Summer* and *Mothershell* (both, Kelsay Books), *Arrows of Light* (Iris Press), and *A Stone to Carry Home* (Salmon Poetry). Her poems can be found in many places online and in print, most recently in *Spirituality & Health Magazine* and *How to Love the World: Poems of Gratitude and Hope* (Storey Publishing, 2021).

Lily Prigioniero is a professor of writing and art conservation and has taught in various study-abroad programs in Florence, Italy, including New York University, Brandeis, and the Florence University of the Arts. She lives with her family in the hills of Montespertoli.

Philip Quinlan has been published variously, but historically. Now, he wishes to be published similarly and presently, or even at all. Any laurels accrued “back then” have by now withered in the pitiless summer heat of the East Saxon province of England. He must begin the world anew.

Charlie Robert is a writer and poet living in Silicon Valley. His work is Punchy. Stark. Filled with creatures close to the earth. He has been published in various Literary Journals and Anthologies and currently is working on new collections of original poems and chapbooks.

Alison Rosenberg grew up in the suburbs of New York City and now lives in Brooklyn with three friends and an Aussiedoodle. She graduated from Barnard College in 2020 as a double major in human rights and English. She currently works in pro bono law, but always makes time for poetry.



Summer 2021

Tania Runyan is the author of the poetry collections *What Will Soon Take Place*, *Second Sky*, *A Thousand Vessels*, and *Simple Weight*. Her guides *How to Read a Poem* and *How to Write a Poem* are used in classrooms across the country. She received an NEA fellowship in 2011.

Barbara Sabol's fourth poetry collection, *Imagine a Town*, was published in 2020 by Sheila-Na-Gig Editions. Her work has appeared most recently in *Evening Street Review*, *Mezzo Cammin*, and *One Art*. Barbara conducts workshops for Lit Youngstown and Lit Cleveland. Her awards include an Individual Excellence Award from the Ohio Arts Council.

Kathryn Sadakierski's writing has appeared in *Capsule Stories*, *Critical Read*, *Halfway Down the Stairs*, *Northern New England Review*, *Origami Poems Project*, *Prospectus: A Literary Offering Blog*, *The Abstract Elephant Magazine*, *The Scriblerus*, *Yellow Arrow Journal*, and elsewhere. She holds a B.A. and M.S. from Bay Path University.

Rikki Santer's poetry has received many honors including five Pushcart and three Ohioana book award nominations as well as a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Her tenth poetry collection will be published this fall. Please contact her through her website: www.rikkisanter.com.

Daniel Patrick Sheehan is a journalist at a newspaper in eastern Pennsylvania. His poems have appeared in *First Things*, *Dappled Things*, *North American Anglican*, *Mudfish*, and other journals. Two were included in *The Slumbering Host*, a 2019 anthology published by Little Gidding Press.



Summer 2021

Kelli Simpson is a mother and writer living in Norman, Oklahoma. Her work has appeared in *Lamplit Underground*, *Coastal Shelf*, *Dreams Walking*, and elsewhere.

Originally from Ukraine, **Askold Skalsky** is a retired college professor living in Frederick, Maryland. His poems have appeared in a number of magazines and online journals in the USA as well as in literary publications in Europe, Canada, Australia, and Bangladesh. A first collection, *The Ponies of Chuang Tzu*, was published in 2011.

Nominated for the National Book Award and twice-nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, **J.R. Solonche** is the author of twenty-four books of poetry and coauthor of another. He lives in the Hudson Valley.

Rebecca A. Spears, author of *Brook the Divide* and *The Bright Obvious*, has writing included in *TriQuarterly*, *Calyx*, *Crazyhorse*, *Verse Daily*, and others. She has received several awards for her work. In 2021, *Brook the Divide* was shortlisted for Best First Book of Poetry (Texas Institute of Letters).

Kris Spencer has written seven books. His poems are published in a number of journals, most recently *Acumen*, *Bluepepper*, and *the Balloon Literary Journal*. Kris is a Headteacher in west London. He grew up in a village outside Bolton. He has studied and worked in Hull, Cincinnati, Oxford, and Jersey.

John Whitney Steele is a psychologist, yoga teacher, assistant editor of *Think: A Journal of Poetry, Fiction and Essays*, and graduate of the MFA Poetry Program at Western Colorado University, where he studied with Julie Kane, Ernest Hilbert, and David Rothman. John lives in Boulder, Colorado and loves hiking in the mountains.



Summer 2021

David Stephenson lives in Detroit, MI. His poems have appeared in *The Lyric*, *Able Muse*, *Measure*, *California Quarterly*, *Blue Unicorn*, and other journals. His collection *Rhythm and Blues* was published by the University of Evansville Press in 2008.

Pamela Taylor lives and works in the Boston area. Her recent work has appeared in *The Adirondack Review*, *Atlas+Alice*, and *JAMA: Journal of the American Medical Association*. She has a doctorate from UCLA and an MFA in Writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts, and she is a Cave Canem Fellow.

Fiona Tracey is an emerging writer and poet from West Virginia, where she studied Creative Writing at Shepherd University. Her work has been published in *The Blackwater Review* and is forthcoming in *SPARKS*. She is currently the Senior Editor of the literary magazine *Sans Merci*.

Charles Weld's poems have appeared in many small magazines. Pudding House published a chapbook of his poems, *Country I Would Settle In*, in 2004. Kattywompus Press published the chapbook, *Who Cooks For You?* in 2012. A mental health counselor, he lives in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York.

Pediatrician **Kelley White** has worked in inner-city Philadelphia and rural New Hampshire. Her poems have appeared in *Exquisite Corpse*, *Rattle*, and *JAMA*. Her recent books are *Toxic Environment* (Boston Poet Press) and *Two Birds in Flame* (Beech River Books). She received a 2008 Pennsylvania Council on the Arts grant.



Summer 2021

M. Brooke Wiese's work has appeared in numerous publications, most recently in *The Raintown Review* and in *Poem*. Her poems have also been published in *Atlanta Review*, *Barrow Street*, and *Grand Street*, and her chapbook, *At the Edge of The World*, was published by The Ledge Press in 1998. After a very long hiatus, she has again been writing furiously. She has worked in education and nonprofit social services.

Beth Oast Williams's poetry has appeared in *West Texas Literary Review*, *Wisconsin Review*, *Glass Mountain*, *GASHER Journal*, *Poetry South*, *Fjords Review*, and *Rattle's Poets Respond*, among others. Her poems have been nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize. Her first chapbook, *Riding Horses in the Harbor*, was published in 2020.

The most recent books by poet and novelist **Marly Youmans** are a long sequence of poems, *The Book of the Red King* (Montreal: Phoenicia Publishing, 2019), and a novel set in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, *Charis in the World of Wonders* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002). You may learn more about her fifteen books of poetry and fiction at www.thepalaceat2.blogspot.com.

For yours truly, the happy recluse

it all started when he fell in love with Emily Dickinson.

Initially (while standing alone in her remarkable bedroom)

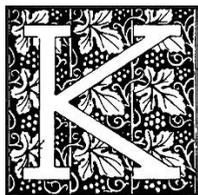
E.D. threw him out—

but later that night, she leaned from an overdream window

& lowered a basket on a rope—

no cookies in the basket, but a jewel/star : that hovers

to this day : where the basket went away!



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