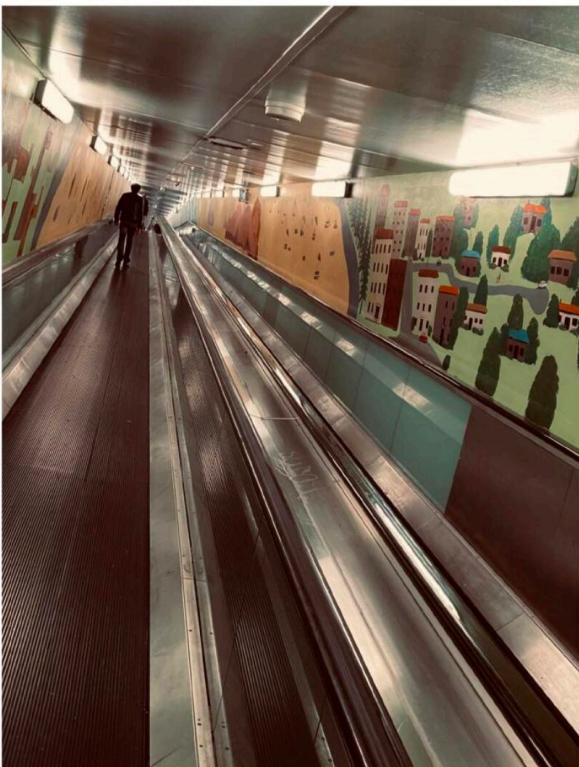


DOOR = JAR



WINTER 2022

ISSUE 25

DOOR = JAR

Door Is A Jar
Issue 25

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by Andrea Damic

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Like Flakes, Like Stars

Tuck Ledbetter

Poetry

In a dream I stood
with Dickinson
on a frozen lake
in Amherst.

Time grew from her lips
in the shape of
easter lilies
falling one by one
onto my skin as snow.

Snow has no color
save to the imagination—
but it too celebrates the light:
the way our words
hang frenetic in space
for flashes
of blue,
green,
and then are gone.

everleaves
Emily Paluba
Poetry

mint has taken over the garden.

“let’s put it in our tea.”

spring swirls get stuck

in our throats, so we
need chilling to open our chests
for bumblebees and navy-blue skies.

snowflakes spread
only if we hold our breath.
our mugs are jealous.

i’ll never claim i can sit on the clouds
like they’re dense enough
to hold my body up.

all of this love
is old love:
it was waiting in my bones.

“sing a new song.”
never. i’m a bird
and cannot change

my tune. i promise
these graveyard playlists
just need a little mint.

ann at night

Emily Paluba

Poetry

it's getting dark
and i like it that way.
the shadows catch my tears
and every closed door is a haven.
i soothe myself in black rooms
and allow my body to be held
even when it shakes like shooting stars.
i know it seems like i should crumble
but i swear i'm moving across the sky
the best way i know how.

the way my tapestry flutters over me
as i pretend to sleep
makes me forget i'm on earth.
makes me forget i ever felt cheated
of something.
i am everything
in the dark.
my blood coagulates into comets
in the dark.
my organs become a solar system
in the dark.
i like it this way.

outside myself
Emily Paluba
Poetry

tonight i'll blacken my nails
to cover the white spots.

crying is not cathartic
when your tears are snakes

angry on the way out
with nowhere to go.

i get itchy when i think of you.

sometimes i have to take off
all my clothes

to put them back on
so i can feel right again.

in another life i'd be
a pin with no back

a book with no bookmarks
a journal with no binding

a pen with no ink
a desk where not a single drawer is unjammed.

proxy wars fought between winter knuckles

and the desire to release a grip i never had.

Bird Watching

Stephen Zimmerman

Poetry

I came to the end of a path
And before me lay the unknown
I'd been following the flight of a little bird
And this is the way it'd flown

So now I was faced with a decision
Continue the way I'd come
Or lose my little winged friend
And turn around and go home

Which is more important
The comfortable, safe and secure
Or the thrill of a new discovery
I might find by hazarding nature

Almost as if the little bird
Could sense my hesitation
He sang me an encouraging tune
Urging me to seize imagination

We had a good time together
Me and my little winged friend
He gave me a tour of the forest
Until daylight came to an end

He sang me another song
This one sounding bereft
“Don’t worry I’ll see you again”
I called to him as I left

My Story in a Late Style Mustang Cobra Paint Job

Michael Malmberg

Nonfiction

After Larry Levis

I see the darkness ripping through these moments late at night when I can't sleep after trying to avoid isolation through Zoom conversations with you, the woman I loved. Through conversations with the other fifteen or so friends at this virtual pandemic birthday party. Their eyes dart minuscule yet expansive distances between existences in gallery view grid, skipping over a projection of me in the bottom right corner, sixteen people who will never see me objectively again. Sixteen people reminding me what it is to be a projection, to project oneself.

After I log off due to what I cited as "Internet issues" but was really because of your rant about how you will never put a man ahead of your career, something I don't feel I ever asked you to do. After this,

the void manifests behind ruptured tears in the space before the analog clock on my wall, small MystiChrome black hole with seared white edges like the images that plagued my childhood when I shut or rubbed my eyes too hard. Like the closed eye visualizations of my childhood: Trauma of childhood. Trauma of visualizing another watching you sleep naked after he dared you to, saying "I'll do it too."

These closed eye visualizations still speak to me in purple filtered playing cards, kaleidoscopic Tetris blocks, fresh static snow, and fractal family members' faces.

In 2004, there were just over a thousand MystiChrome Cobras made. The trademarked paint is created by suspending refracting particles of aluminum and glass in translucent chromium, laid over a black base. The color shifts based on the angle and intensity of light bouncing off and into the eye. Four tones appear across the surface of one of these Cobras, from topaz green to cobalt, royal amethyst to onyx. This paint, I always thought,

was made to conjure an image of space or nebulae, the simultaneous vast expanse of physicality, stars shimmering on the flecked surface, and the horrific emptiness of never accessing any of it
beyond our eyes. I remember

asking our friend Conner about her sleep paralysis demon on a pitch-black night as you struggled to stay awake driving back from The Cities. No, no, no, you assured me I'm totally fine. Her now-ex-boyfriend's mother entering her bedroom from the closet, slender shadow void of a person. Burning white sage in the morning throughout the house, unsure where she stood on spirituality and the occult, but unwilling to risk those vibes

lingering.

The thing about psychology is anything is proven to work if you think it will. Those rituals we all partake in help us

move on, as if to say, this was a thing that happened to me. The same way I heard Disney's Cinderella say "if you tell a dream, it won't come true" and ran to the

kitchen every morning to spill my nightmares to my mother to keep them from manifesting.

Conner told us this dream the night my grandfather died, and I sat in the backseat a couple thousand miles away from him—from you—receiving the news via family text group chat. You asked me later in your living room, I was sitting on that hot pink and turquoise Persian style rug, if I ever experienced sleep paralysis. What I wanted to say was my hallucinations speak to me in the form of a MystiChrome Cobra, mufflers roaring my name in, perhaps, a sonic boom—perhaps, just a simple Doppler effect—as it rips past, leaving me to feel the subtle whorl of the earth around its axis.

I want to say that hallucinations are so modern, the way we don't understand them. The void whispers to us through simulation glitches, and we look to psychology to explain how our trauma or loneliness created them.

If I can't send your pandemic night terrors back through the circuitry, if they'll only end up in some, just as beautiful, parallel version of you, I'd multiply them onto my own, to soothe your waking pit of loneliness I can no longer heal with the touch of my skin against yours in the morning.

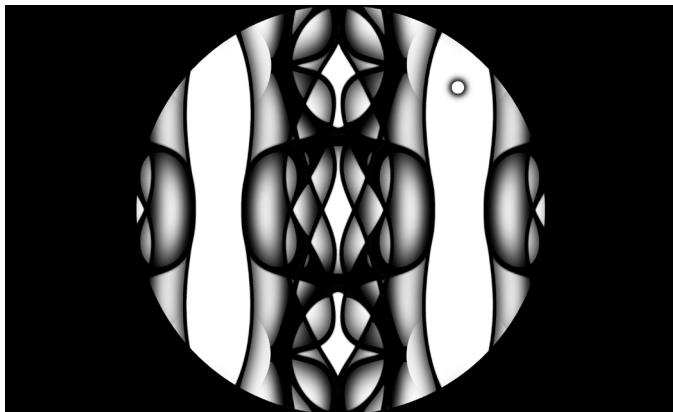
I'll let you write the narrative to our friends. Maybe I'll edit out that line painting you in poor light and feel that desolate imagination—in the absence of someone to tell my nightmares—pulling further apart those peripheral fleeting MystiChrome tears.

Because what I wanted:

a love that keeps close is so far from me. Like my father's when he left for war, seemingly in search for more trauma. Like my mother's when she played favorites and then gave said favorite charge as my babysitter. Like my brother's who was supposed to be a protector but instead—instead.

This hope, that I will not speak aloud even in an attempt to help you understand, perhaps because I don't believe I deserve to have my nightmares made null, perhaps because I've been denied the privilege for so long. With this hope gone, with you gone, there is nothing left to patch the void up before I turn an acute gaze it's way and must admit, if only to myself—no. I'll say instead simply that I do not think in black and white but in topaz, cobalt, amethyst, and onyx.

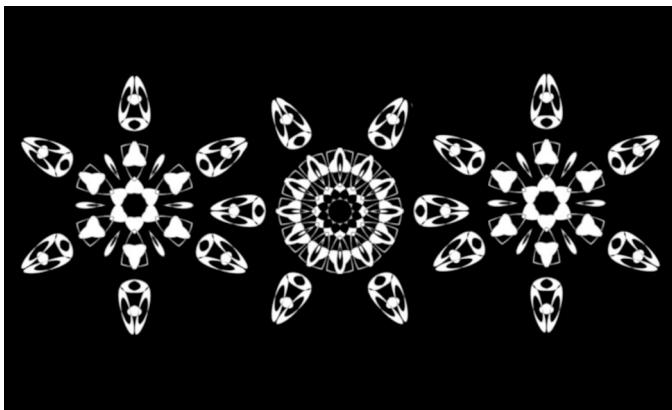
In the Pale Moonlight
Edward Michael Supranowicz
Art



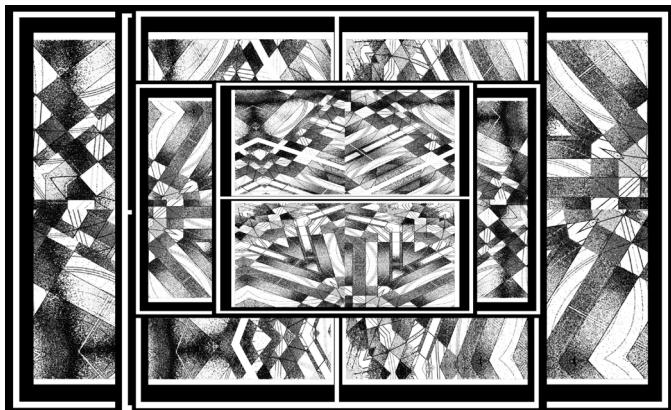
Jealous Flowers

Edward Michael Supranowicz

Art



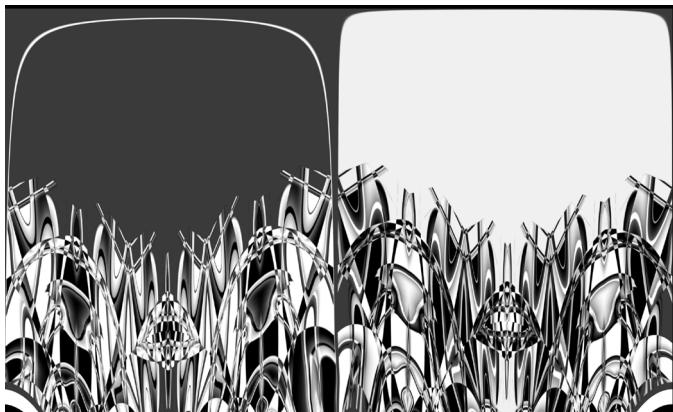
Boxed Set 3a
Edward Michael Supranowicz
Art



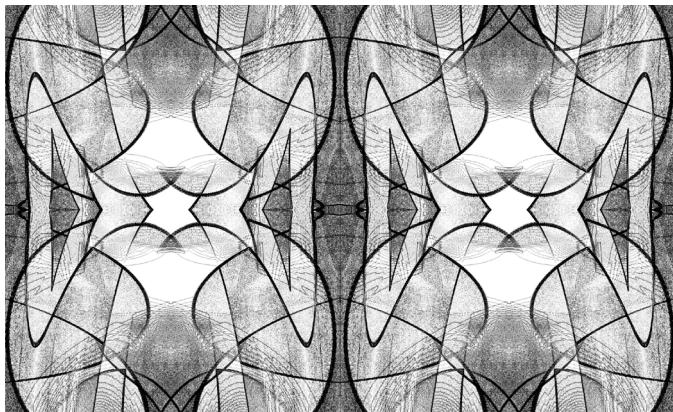
As Different as Night and Day

Edward Michael Supranowicz

Art



She Wants to Be a Butterfly
Edward Michael Supranowicz
Art



Second Chance

Erin Aube

Poetry

A thunderstorm came in the middle of an August day,
slicing the solid haze with fat raindrops from heavy
clouds, crashing to earth with a surprisingly sharp
precision, roughly coaxing a renewal before I knew I
was ready to come clean.

You were the loudest crinkling crunching beneath my
feet, when I was trying to tiptoe, the warmth of a bright
February day, reminding me of when my daughter and I
wore sundresses and picnicked in the park on that leap
day, melting the permafrost in spite of itself.

Now a fresh bloom on my lips, which are dry from
telling the world about us, yet newly cracked by the
harsh words gusting from our mouths.

I sing to myself incessantly, carelessly, like an
unyielding baby bird who has just jumped away from his
mother, but who has not yet realized the trouble he is in
... in like a lion, out like a lamb, waiting for the softness
to return.

Unraveled
Erin Aube
Poetry

I comb my daughter's hair as she begs me to stop. It is tight with tangles untamed by expensive shampoo, spray-on conditioner, leave-in conditioner, coconut oil, or curse words.

Thirty years ago, armed only with a fine-toothed comb, patience, and stories designed to distract, my Nana did the same to me. One week after I left my husband's house, I lost my Nana.

She alone could have understood the tangles I had gotten myself into, as if a spider had tried to backtrack out of her own design, to reverse her own steps, to undo her own web.

She alone could have gently touched my sore head and assured me that life was better once the tangles were tamed, no matter how much it hurt.

She alone could have told me that sometimes even the best designed plans needed to be delicately backtracked out of. And sometimes not so delicately.

The Vulcanologist's Husband

Hilary King

Poetry

Another dry day, the sun unclouded in the 7am sky,
the dog's leash scraping my palm.

I thought the volcano would fix the weather,
my husband says and I realize

 how wrong I've been,
 how poorly I use
 the space we save for dreams.
 His a meadow, green and daisied place

where seeds of knowledge blow in, then
promptly blossom.

He could become a volcanologist yet,
my husband believes of himself.

The hole where sorrow seeps in, some
let be dreamed over. The sky between my ribs
I've let become a spillway for all our floods—
daughter's bloody bitten nails, cancers,

accounts coming due. Who the better steward?
Not the one squinting and sweating,
struggling to pull the family dog
from the bushes.

A Haunting in a Small Town
Hilary King
Poetry

Men in neckties halted, asked us,

Aren't you—

Women at the grocery store reached out, then pulled
back
their trembling hands.

We lived as ghosts

hovering

over my father's grave. But he was buried
everywhere.

The stain of grief
spreads

to the furthest rooms.

The floor of our house damp,
rotting.

We tried to leave, to take

his memory
away

to find faces
comforting
in their coldness.

But he was buried everywhere.

Blackout
Zach Murphy
Fiction

My roommate took off right before I lost my job at the pizza place. The only thing he left behind was a note that read, “Moved back home.” If only the unpaid rent were attached to it.

I sit at the wobbly kitchen table, gazing at the floating dust particles that you can only see when the sunlight shines in at the perfect angle. Sometimes, you have to convince yourself that they aren’t old skin.

The air conditioner moans, as if it’s irritated that it has to work so hard. I haven’t left the apartment in four days, for fear that the hellish temperature might melt away my spirit even more. *Is a heat wave a heat wave if it doesn’t end?* I gulp down the remainder of my orange juice. The pulp sticks to the side of the glass. It always bothers me when that happens.

As I stand up to go put my head into the freezer, the air conditioner suddenly goes on a strike of silence and the refrigerator releases a final gasp. I walk across the room and flip the light switch. Nothing.

There’s a knock at the door. I peer through the peephole. It’s the lady with the beehive hair from across the hall. I crack the door open.

“Is your power out?” she asks.

“Yes,” I answer.

“It must be the whole building,” she says.

“Maybe the whole city,” I say.

“The food in your fridge will go bad after four hours,” she says.

I’d take that information to heart if I had any food in the refrigerator.

“Thanks,” I say as I close the door.

When the power goes out, it's amazing how all of your habits remind you that you're nothing without it. The TV isn't going to turn on and your phone isn't going to charge.

There's another knock at the door. It's the guy from downstairs who exclusively wears jorts. "Do you want a new roommate?" he asks.

"What?"

He nods his head to the left. I glance down the hallway and see a scraggly, black cat with a patch of white fur on its chest.

"It was out lying in the sun," the guy says. "Looked a bit overheated, so I let it inside."

Before I can say anything, the cat walks through the doorway and rubs against my leg.

"Catch you later," the guy says.

I fill up a bowl with some cold water and set it on the floor. The cat dashes over and drinks furiously.

At least water is free, I think to myself. Kind of.

I head into my dingy bedroom and grab the coin jar off of my dresser. "This should be enough to get you some food," I say.

I step out the apartment door and look back at the cat.

"I think I'll call you Blackout."

a thursday in june

RC deWinter

Poetry

the day was fine and fair
dressed in all the alluring possibilities
of almost summer
but what have i to do with any of that
without you

i spent the afternoon
along the bank of the heartbreak river
its water salted with sorrow and blood
carrying fragments of words never said
never heard

but i heard them weeping
as they were swept away to the silence
of forever and adding my own contribution
to the swirling current
i tasted the memory of our last kiss

afterthoughts
RC deWinter
Poetry

scuffing along in the autumn twilight
trying to clear the heebie-jeebie cobwebs
though i'm bundled up against the frost i shiver

there's not a body to be seen on this lonely walk
but i feel your eyes following me
look there! what was that?
i swear i saw a shadow slip behind a tree

knowing my imagination needs sedating
i lash my mind to the rocksteady
concentrating on the here and now
the crisp night air the crunch of leaves
the shy kiss of the moon on the still-green grass

but it's no good
your eyes pull me out in the undertow of the wind
your smile a frosty kiss on my cheek
i can't walk out anywhere
without tripping over shards of you

people say there are no ghosts
but i know that's a lie
i pull my collar tight
knowing i'll never walk alone again

EVENING ARIA

Florence Murry

Poetry

It's not every evening Bach's Violin
Concerto Ops #3 pipes
through my window,
not every evening the cat strides
across the intractable floor,

and not every evening I spill
rice from my cupped palms.
I leave a trail across the tile.
It has taken me a long time to toss

the grain into the boiling water
where each will rise.
It has taken me a long time to arrive
at my table an empty bowl.

AT PLAY WITH MAGIC

Florence Murry

Poetry

You speak—your erudite tongue laps
up words, a version of Bach's Goldberg Variations.

Those slender fingers wired to set a flame
deep & visceral below my breast bone

where your trained ear discerns
my voice when we touch.

This morning I crave
coffee with a coco swirled

foam. The rings spread
your song that rushes

over me— your hot request
to polish to my chipped heart.

You live in my cerebral cortex where I strip
sunbeams & breathe

in clouds. Late nights our shape shifted
spirits read & discuss Russian poets.

I take you on walks, & hold
you in my pocket. I lean

against your wide chest. Incantations tunnel
into my ear. Your heart electrified

& primed, if you reach
for me, I will ignite.

WHEN WE LET GO

Florence Murry

Poetry

When we swing back and forth & reach
the sycamore's highest leaf,
when our loosened limbs move pain free,

when Moroccan musk enters
open doors & outside dolphin pods seize
morning light, we let go. We let go

the bone-chilling February days. We invite
a lover's glee, keep his modern threads
& breathe clear, ethereal air.

We invite ghosts to cease
their eternal swing. Their toes skid
to a stop in sand.

Their shadows untwist
back through a rusted
portal & empty into the dry squall.

Let the purple night flower open to full bloom.
We knife into the unknown.

Spigot
KJ Hannah Greenberg
Art



In Bloom
June Levitan
Art



All the Way Down
June Levitan
Art



Migration
Jackie Yang
Poetry

I think
a summer bowl of onions
crystal dishware magnifying
rays of sun
was a bad idea
in retrospect.

To the litter of maggots
I threw in the trash—
I am sorry.
You were gross.
I'm sure you'll be alright.

japanese knotweed

Jackie Yang

Poetry

here is a mystery
underneath
the hot rolled steel
of the subway track.
in spring
a white flower
smaller than a tooth
surges ripe
from a groove
that the rails
dug in
the ground.

and the sidewalk crack is yawning

Jackie Yang

Poetry

break her back
go back and break her back
if enough of us believe it
if we're all too scared to say it
if there's someone here to see it
then
it must not be a lie

Mining For Mercury On Mars

R. Gerry Fabian

Poetry

You woo me with Martian metaphors
involving solvents glowing red.
Your enthusiasm excites exploration.
Collect, contain and combine.
You offer unexplored regions
to claim as my own.
Your time entry calculation
flirts with solar error.

I know spontaneous spaces
that form as unstable red pellets
leading eventually to contaminate
and become a last time sequence.

The Azalea Bush

R. Gerry Fabian

Poetry

In bloom,
with its purple red flowers
like an Impressionist painting;
it's spectacular
It redeems itself
for the rest of the year
when it slice-cuts my arms
while pruning.
Those blood droplets
fall to the soil base
and are assimilated
into the roots and produce
what are now
'our' delicate flowers.

Caustic Minutia
R. Gerry Fabian
Poetry

slowly enters
the fiber system
of the soul stream.
In the initial stage,
it attacks
positive energy.

Later in life,
it imbeds
into day to day
common sense.

Finally,
it manifests
itself as
bitter skepticism.

The only antidote
is a large dose
of laughter.
It must be administered
daily.

The Revenge against Death

Victor Okechukwu

Fiction

Ezemadu, an old man walked down the red earthen road in grave silence. The wild elephant grasses on both sides of the road were powdered with brown dust and birds making noise flew when they saw his slow approaching steps. He had told himself that morning that he wasn't a coward like others who had fled the village. Though he was angry with his life and hadn't gotten over his wife's death three months ago, he was determined to see his burnt plantation before he die. To gaze at his last wish while the sun rose upon him. But Obeta, a short thin brown man sat on a molded stone gazing at the old man's large farm of nothing, and when Ezemadu met him he collected a kola nut and sat beside him.

“I need a gun,” Ezemadu said chewing the dry kola nut.

“Gun can't take away the loss and pain,” Obeta replied, when he talked his black lips opened a little as though they were heavy.

“We need to protect ourselves,” Ezemadu said.

“Protect what? How can we the leftovers protect ashes and blood?”

“You're a difficult man.”

“And I hate to think so.”

“Haven't anyone told you?”

“And you dare to tell me. Jesus, sometimes I wonder where you came from.”

“From Ukorobia, Echieka family.”

“The one your father failed to tell you of.”

“Don't be an idiot. Let's better leave the dead man out of this.”

“I think the elders should meet and discuss these wicked herdsmen.”

“There’s no need for that, I’ve lost a good wife and three children in talking, now let’s take it by force.”

“No, Ezemadu you always allow your emotions to cloud your reasoning. If we see this from another angle-”

“What angle? This is my country, my father’s land which they built with their sweat and blood and settled in this beautiful place where we grew sorghum, rice, and corn, and now some filthy black men from the north made a mess of everything. What other thing do I own in this world if not this ashes” Ezemadu said pointing at the farm in smoking ashes and began to cry while his friend gazed at him horrifyingly? In the heat of nostalgia, Ezemadu traveled back to the day his son walked to him, while he sat on the verandah of his bungalow home wasting time, listening to the rustling silence in the cool of the evening.

“Papa I have been seeing cattle everywhere in this village,” Anaeche said, he had tough black velvet skin and his broad chest showed signs of maturity.

“What do you mean?” His father replied as he stopped eating the roasted corn.

“I saw them just now; the cows are in hundreds, and six black Mallams carrying sticks guide them through Amoke lane.”

“No, son, we don’t accept cattle here; we are farmers,” Ezemadu answered.

“Haven’t you heard the news, papa? The herdsmen have forcefully acquired the land at Akanu road.”

“That can never be possible. I’m an elder and no one has said this to me.”

“But the news is spreading around the village,” Anaeche replied.

“When did you hear about these things?” Ezemadu asked adjusting on the rafted chair.

“This morning, people gossiped about it in the market. It is said that they killed Mazi ifenna’s son with a gun for killing a cow after the herdsmen had given more than half his father’s land for the cattle to eat.”

“Did you see them with a gun when you passed them at Amoke Lane?” Ezemadu asked.

“Not really, but while they passed everybody kept shouting and some ran to the bush.”

“What? It can’t happen here, not in this community.” Ezemadu said in anger, “Go inside and get me my red cap.”

His son ran inside, while he, Ezemadu, walked to the tank used to retain rainwater close to the unpainted building, and took his red polo that was left to dry there. Then, took off to the red earthen street, trying to under each of the elder’s homes trying to prove a point and each of them listened nodding their heads and sighing. This was a calamity, how would the villagers would survive; half of them had large plots of land at Akanu road. For Ezemadu, he believed in what his forefathers said that land was gold, and the Akaunu road possessed about a thousand and five hundred hectares.

That evening the herdsmen went to set Ezemuo’s shrine on fire. And their cattle ate his field, while his wife cried on his dead body and his children fled. The next day half the young men fled to other districts and the community became a shadow of itself. Traders from Opi, Uzuwanne, and Obollo-Afor stayed away from the Odenigwe. The market was shut and hoodlums took advantage of it to beat up the night-watchers and loot traders’ goods. Ezemadu felt he was next and beckoned on his children and relatives to help guard his farm, but when the herders came, they laughed at him. Two men raped his wife and told him to watch, while he cried. She didn’t survive the injuries and after two months she died.

A man who had gone to tap wine from the palm tree, while tapping saw them and slipped out of fear; fell with his head buried in the sand for days.

“Ezemadu can you hear me.” Obeta touched him, “why are you crying? There’s no need for tears and this is not the end my friend, we still have a long way ahead of us.”

“Nkechi... They took Nkechi from me.”

“Be a man!” He said holding Ezemadu’s shoulder, “we cannot cry over spilled milk.”

“I don’t own anything again and death seems to be calling me. I have told Cyril to get me a gun; I must revenge.” Ezemadu sighed bitterly, removing his friend’s hand off his shoulder, stood up, and walked away dejected in the plumbing of an orange sun.

The End

Two Summers Ago

Steve Denehan

Poetry

Pancake mornings flowed
into hopscotch afternoons
into toasted marshmallow evenings
a babbling brook
a laughing stream
long since fallen stagnant

there was no one thing
no turning point
there was two summers ago
there is now

the now of reminiscing
glorious aching
for the nights, when we sat outside
the coffee warm in our hands
as the stars fell as pearls
into our cups

Another Last Goodbye

Steve Denehan

Poetry

Saying goodbye
was not easy

there was no rain
no pianos played

it was a day
like any other

goodbye
made sense

goodbye
was the right thing

then
now

it was hard, but then
last goodbyes always are

I know that you thought it was wrong
that we should hold on

just a little
bit longer

I know that you were angry
that you were not as sure as I was

and I know that you didn't look back
because I did

Superpowers
Steve Denehan
Poetry

What superpower would you choose?
my daughter asked
as birds chirped
in the evening garden

I knew that her question
was not a question
but more an invitation
to ask her the same

so, I did
Invisibility!
And flight!
I raised my eyebrows, waited

That's two...okay...flight!
What about you?
I had planned to choose flight
as these days I am more aware than ever

of gravity

I would like the power to assign sounds.
she raised her eyebrows, waited
I explained
that I would like to designate sounds

that raindrops would become piano notes
and rainstorms haphazard symphonies
trees would sway as violins

that thunder would be purring

that car alarms would all be poems
whispered
by Morgan Freeman

that breaking glass would be
a baby's giddy squeal

that balloons would burst
not with a bang
but with a moo

What sound would you give love?

I thought about it

A car crash.

she punched my arm

Drowning

There is no music
no birdsong
no distant cars
no phone calls, knocks or doorbells

I sit here
drowning in the silence
happiness is easy
sometimes

Tamagotchi
Caleb Bouchard
Poetry

All I've ever wanted, really,
is a tidy white egg
of language to carry in
my pocket like a Tamagotchi—
watch it eat and sleep
and poop and play and
fetch big sticks, heighten the
flavor. My friends and I
would watch growing words together,
maybe they'd share something, too.

A Paperback Life
Caleb Bouchard
Poetry

In my next life, I'd like to be a
little paperback novel with
pulpy liver-spotted pages and
peach fuzz print and faint white wrinkles
that reach down across the
spine and which deepen
when cracked open, like the face of the
smiling old man who sells oranges and apricots
in town.

[Dream about grandma but it was not]

Caleb Bouchard

Poetry

Dream about grandma but it was not
grandma, it was some kind of root
vegetable inking the
bed with birthday wishes,
puking twenties on
pillows, asking
how things are
at art
school.

DEATH TO THE UNAFFECTED

Nicanor Millan

Drama

A play in one act.

Day. An empty courtroom. Enter JUDGE sword and scale in hand. He rests them on the bench. Enter JURY, each with half-empty golden cups. Enter Bailiff, club in hand, and CONDEMNED. JUDGE pulls a jackal mask out of the bench and masks himself.

JUDGE (to CONDEMNED)
 Feeble-minded mere imp, mere servant,
 Speak at once: what exactly affects you?

CONDEMNED (indifferent)
 To speak from the heart: nothing much.

JUDGE (enraged)
 If no-thing affects you, then death,
 Death to the unaffected.

(BAILIFF prepares the knot in figure eight.)

CONDEMNED (stoic):
 But wait.
 Before you condemn me, listen... please listen:
 Wool affects me, as do bees, virgin's milk,
 And why... wax, wax too.
 Snow, in media res, strawberries in June.

JUDGE (curious)
 And does sadness affect you too?
 The fight to eradicate it?
 Does the effort make you feel the moon?

CONDEMNED

Well... I am affected by the moon: when it sings, when it sleeps.

The crackle of a bagpipe...

And the effort, sure—the heron-effort of keeping water still.

JUDGE (curious)

And what of revenge,
Or a well-fought fight?
Strength in knowing your place,
Or keeping toxic company?

CONDEMNED (delirious)

Day and night: Divine alliance,
Divine, align!
Bitterness of the sea,
Sweetness of a breeze...

JUDGE (interrupting)

Enough! Enough!
I order that fire-tongue to be put out.
Bailiff—action!
Sort it out, organize his thought!

(BAILIFF puts his club in CONDEMNED's mouth.)

JUDGE

Jury, let us hear it: illuminate the matter.

JURY

O jackal of jackals,
It's clear that this poor man would be better off

As the unemployed beggar or banker with outstanding debt.

He'd be better off as an outspoken, superstitious, bureaucrat

Who thinks white and black exist.

It is obvious... He has already been beheaded,

Rolled down the ravine and forgotten.

His head's probably floating in the swimming pool

Of some unlucky Naga unable, too, to discover herself.

(JURY laughs with each other.)

What difference then would death make?

(They take a long drink from their cups.)

Yet nonetheless, do we find him

Guilty... guilty of course.

And let us drink again to it:

Death! Death, to the unaffected.

JUDGE (affected by the speech)

Well... like the best of them

It seems my turn has come

To blow out the candle of truth.

But underneath this skin, who is it that decides?

I wonder what those who sail oceans

In search of truth's light are like.

Cowboys, perhaps... or maybe vice-inclined.

Honestly... just do what you must do.

The sentence has been read.

(BAILIFF arrests CONDEMNED. Another identical BAILIFF enters, with a mask in his hand. CONDEMNED, in panic, struggles, but they easily manage to put the mask on him. The

only distinguishable feature of this mask is two
gold coins for eyes. Once masked,
CONDEMNED calms down.)

CONDEMNED (blissful])

I see... I can finally see
The lateral lights in maiden-eyes,
The darkness in the souls of the sincere.
Always something to think.
Always a birch to climb...
Faces, palms, and the future!

This moves me! This moves me!

End.

Restart
Jonathan Fletcher
Poetry

for my nephew

As quick as my fingers were with a Nintendo 64,
yours were faster with an Xbox: thumbs that
rapped away on the sleek, wireless controller.
You sprang up, twisted your body, grated your
teeth as we raced in *Mario Kart*, neared the
finish line, neck and neck: me, Donkey Kong,
you, Diddy. Like them, we, though uncle and
nephew, were often mistaken as father and son.
But unlike them, we weren't a pair of primates.

Although you liked the translucent, neon lane of
RAINBOW ROAD, the thrill of speeding on the
busy freeway of TOAD'S TURNPIKE, BANSHEE
BOARDWALK was your favorite course. To
dodge the Boos, fanged ghosts, as white as
marshmallows, shaped like them, too, you
swerved right, then left, into a haunted house,
through bursts of purple bats. You rarely died.
When you did, you simply pressed CONTINUE.

I, on the other hand, kept dying, again and again,
especially when a Boo attacked from the moat.
Spooked, I'd careen into the water, off the edge
of the screen. Time to press CONTINUE. One
day, though, when I'm a phantom, my finger
won't be able to. Will you miss me then? Let
me haunt you. I promise to be as friendly as
Casper. I'll wait for you, too, will float about
until we reunite as Boos. Then we can restart.

keep your darkness

Linda M. Crate

Poetry

you wouldn't be the chosen one,
because you could never be brave
enough to make one sacrifice;

convenience is your balm
and you could pretend to ooze with
charm and charisma enough to
keep someone in your arms that you
didn't ever love—

i have always hated a man insincere,
and i fell for you because you reminded
me of a woman i fell in love with;

but she would've never wounded me
the way that you did because she was
brave and soulful and full of light not
wrapped in the skins of darkness pulling
her backward to hell the way you are—

i cried once when i saw a vision you in the
afterlife walking in the darkness alone,

but i realized that perhaps that is what you deserve;
those who break hearts and dreams and
devour hearts deserve no light.

you used your trauma as a weapon

Linda M. Crate

Poetry

if you rub a kindness in someone's face
that's not kindness,
just a reminder of how little you mean
to them—

so if you don't mean your kindness
then i don't want it,

never asked you for any hand-outs;

always worked hard for everything
i've had and i don't need your gifts if they
come at that price because who wants
to be tethered to the reminder that they are
nothing to someone they love?

i am sorry that you were hurt,
and no one could heal your aching or
your trauma;
but it didn't give you any right to use it
against me as a weapon.

should've never provoked my wrath

Linda M. Crate

Poetry

if you want me to be the villain
then that's what i'll be,
i know that's what they reduce
strong women to being;

let the wolves come because they
will love me & they will be better and more
loyal friends than you could ever be—

every crow and raven that loves me
will remember your name,

and every false accusation that you made
so that you can be cut by the knife
of your own tongue;

and your tell tale heart will be buried
somewhere in the wood—

no one will find you
because i am the villain that never loses,
the one that always gets ahead;

if you wanted to remain safe then you
should've never provoked my wrath.

all i want is my freedom

Linda M. Crate

Poetry

work is a chore and a bore
that doesn't feed my soul,
i would much rather be writing;

all of my time should be free and
i should be able to live comfortably
as i explored my interests—

instead i live in a society that values
money over people,

and personal growth and joy is
something you have to find on your
own time and your own time
never lasts long enough nor are you
ever paid enough for all of your hours;

i don't know why we ever agreed
to live life this way—

all i want is my freedom, a chance
to live and thrive and bloom
not simply exist waiting and hoping and
praying for a better tomorrow.

you were just a lie

Linda M. Crate

Poetry

you were all smoke and mirrors,
illusion after illusion;
wanted the dream of me
not the reality—
could never deliver on any of
your promises,
and wrapped your secrets tighter around
you than your flesh and bones;

i think the butterflies flying toward the rainbow
were telling me of promise that would come
if i just left you—

had my misgivings, but didn't listen to my
gut instincts;

you said such pretty words such as i felt
as if i had always belonged there,
who was i to disagree?

i wish i had agreed to disagree because it would've
saved me a lot of time but lesson has been learned,
and bridge has burned and now i have a
fonder appreciation for myself and all of my magic.

From Older Hikes

Emily Chew

Art



White Sands National Park

Emily Chew

Art



Petroglyph National Monument in Albuquerque
Emily Chew
Art



Diablo Canyon Graffiti in Santa Fe

Emily Chew

Art



OLD AGE
Milton P. Ehrlich Ph.D.
Poetry

When waiting for the mailman
becomes the highlight of your day,
you know you're getting old.
When you better wear a bib
to eat your mamaliga to protect you
from melted brindza running down
your chin, you know you're getting old.
When it takes more than five minutes
to get up and out of your lazy chair,
you know you're getting old.
When you no longer can hear
the doorbell or telephone,
you know you're getting old.
When you're grandchildren
refuse to play chess with you
because you can't remember
what you're doing, you know
you're getting old. When you
can't tell what day of the week
it is, you're in big trouble.

Fruits of Prohibition

Lorna Wood

Poetry

Before football games, my father,
feigning a raspy throat,
went to a certain drugstore
where, for a wink, he was ushered
into a back room,
and while the druggist—
inured and cheerful—
poured a flask of “tonic,”
the audience of fetuses
preserved in jars,
looked on, harbingers
of good times to come—
not quite applauding
with tiny nubs and hands.

The Hand That Sank Lower Than a Foot

Lorna Wood

Poetry

The wrist broken, the hand in a cast
sank lower than a foot, being now only
a club or lever, often in the way.

Imprisoned in an open-ended sock
and a cast, the fingers could not easily open.
Toe-like, they built up sweat between them
and began to stink.

When the sock got wet, the hand
grew rubbery where the wet patches
touched it and developed pruny wrinkles,
then deep crevasses, and the whiteness
of a mushroom.

The sock smelled fungal.
It was changed, but moisture
soon made the new sock
identical to the old.

The hand itched.
Rubbing against it,
the cast and the socks
made blisters and calluses.

The long blister by the thumb
burst, dried, and became a map of a lake,
bordered by dead skin like lace.

The hand, mortified,
did its best, ignoring
tight skin and the sore wrist.

It levered and clubbed
as usefully as it could,
and gradually, insistently,
It became a hand again.

As a hand, it was entitled
to therapy, moisturizing,
gentle yoga.

In time, it forgot
that it had ever been
lower than a foot.

Contested Matter

Mikal Wix

Poetry

I.

He buds in size from the microscopic insult, bulbous as a burl, a gouty toe, an uninspired saint, captured now by light under glass to reveal a folly of the body howl an incessant drift. He is impolite as even bright suns dim in time, galaxies fly apart like surf shattering, scurrying to the rip. Some will not survive; he thrives on bowed heads and murmurations. His dwarfish complexion will compromise tissues, an expanse of relentless affection, a deep roundness of thorns hidden by years of grave diplomacy, draft speech written, headline sketched, arousing other solutions, raising infamy.

II.

He struggles to play along as second chair, to debate performances by the overcast ruling classes cutting swiftly through internecine hospital corridors, like the bronze Achilles in the hall niche, or the *aurora borealis* in the lobby fountain, intimate contradictions, pipe dream satire of a showcase excavation by *expertos medicos* to oppose the rabbis, who care to speculate on the pernicious nature of worms in apples. He leads the *voir dire* but has no stomach for spoken truths found idling on the bench with affidavits, *ex parte*, and appeals, or in the Operation Theatre with pincettes, forceps, and trocar. But white sheets never lie, and suspects or defendants in custody die off and on.

III.

Pulse worship by white and blue hands, gowns floating in rooms like commensal flies, sparkling machines casting their lines, lures, blood feeding his hypnotic,

churlish flesh. He is flush with recent victory, land grabs, knotting the party bow tight, he consumes full with every flagellation, the quintessence of a manifest destiny now on trial for life and limb. He lifts off, drugged to dream of a city of ghostly vagabonds, who sail a calm zephyr from the West. He is sentenced to transportation by the Butcher's Apron, when loving poachers arrive to sift through bone and spirit pickled in the principle of uncertainty. They stake fierce bets as contestants for actuaries, premiums, reserves, dividends, all predicting decay and fixing the vanquished for an eternity in formaldehyde by dipping him whole in the gilded spectacle of quarrelsome heirs, who reap the wind in silence here night and day.

All Light Is Scattered

Mikal Wix

Poetry

Where we live now, we have storms.
They grow and then fall on us like shame.
But we don't bear it alone.
The twisters that roar through here are Homeric.
And the typhoons are indescribable,
 except to say,
“Oceans come ashore like mothers come to Jesus.”
The need to pray is incidental, having become ironic.
We don't wait for a reason; we already know it —
 Our Planet is oxymoronic.
Fires and floods,
 wet-bulb demons and radiation spikes,
Rising, reverent hands always cool;
Sinking suspicious thoughts always expand.
Preacher says to kneel before him,
 but we only take one.
There's a sense of majesty in defying the man.
We aren't deluded by the smooth robes,
 or the taint of Original Sin inherited at birth
Because the skies themselves write ghostly psalms,
Places and names that catch in the throat.
Detailed perceptions are cast on us in sharpness
 to deliver a language of venom,
 full of ruthless verbs
 and drunken smog sunsets
 by enhanced satellite feed.
Reflections and petitions are dead on arrival.
Wind barbs and isobars are self-evident,
 and hailstones unrepentant.
And so, we move again,
this time to a place with black sand
 and even whiter church,

The bells of which sing praise
For the judgment of cottonmouths
 and copperheads,
For the wisdom of speaking
 in spluttering tongues,
And for the heresy of relativity,
 though they won't say
 if for special or general,
 or if the penance is conditional.
But what's the Word for killing the world,
We ask, because uxoricide's already taken,
And our resentment of needing her is savage.

A Ghost
Alonso S. Hernandez
Fiction

Hot water splashed on stained ceramic. Lather built up and disappeared through the drain. Steam rose from the sink and wafted out to the rest of the dirty, dingy kitchen. When the man was done with a plate he loaded it onto a tray filled with cups and silverware and other stained ceramic plates and pushed it through the prehistoric dishwasher tunnel, where more steam filled the room. The machine groaned and clanked as it dumped near-boiling water on the dishes. Scalding water splashed onto the man's forearms and hands every time he put a new rack through, but years of practice left his nerves numb to the point he hardly noticed it.

That was how he spent the night. Every night, for the last couple years. He'd arrive near midnight and, some nine hours later, he'd emerge from the restaurant's backdoor; the raw, red skin on his hands and face, the fifty dollars tucked inside the man's jean pocket, and a neat stack of mostly clean, if slightly splotchy, plates, cups, and silverware the only proof that he had been there.

That was how it had been the last two years. Really, the man was supposed to arrive at 4 p.m., leave the time he came in, and make double what he actually got paid every night. But, according to the books the owner kept, the man didn't work those hours. According to the books, the man wasn't on the payroll, nor was he on the staff list. According to the books the man didn't work there at all; he had quit two years ago. Because, two years ago, the man came to the owner with a request to switch to the morning shift.

The man had requested the switch on a day where he had been a few minutes late to work. The man told the

owner that the bus he took to get to work only came at certain times. The days that he did have the car, he said, he had to pick up his daughter up from her elementary school and his wife had to take the bus home. It would be easier, he continued, if he could take the morning shift so that he and his wife could take their daughter to school, he could be dropped off at work, and then his wife could take the car and their daughter home.

“You want me to do you a favor after you came in late *again*?” the owner asked incredulously after hearing everything the man had to say. The owner sat back in a black leather chair and let out a heavy sigh. He sucked his teeth and pawed at his thin, orange goatee.

“How about this? I don’t need another body taking up space in my kitchen in the morning. But you can come in after the restaurant closes. I’ll wait for you, I’m usually still doing paperwork ‘til damn near midnight, anyhow. I’ll leave the back door open and you can come in then. You just make sure it closes when you’re done. And for the love of god, don’t make me wait up for you, okay?”

The man had been beyond grateful. “Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.”

The owner continued. “Now, since your hours are going to change and there’s no tips coming in at that time, your pay might look a little different, okay? And it might just be easier paying you up front rather than me forgetting to get you a check in the middle of the night when my brain’s fried, okay?”

“Yes, sir.”

The man turned and began to walk away.

“Juan, another thing. I’m doing you a solid here, okay?” The owner was still sitting back in the chair, rubbing his chin. “Know what that means? It means I’m doing you a favor, I’m helping you.”

“Yes, sir. Thank you.”

And that’s how it came to be that the man, Juan, stood alone in front of a drop-in sink, his back to the empty and dimly lit kitchen in the dead of night. A ghost, shrouded in mist.

Ms. Pac-Man
Marcella Eve
Poetry

Some where, a girl forgets to feed
Venus flytraps
their mouths shut
so long she stopped checking

Else where, a woman knows what it is
to be sick of trick fruit and
dying and craving
solitude eats the road all the way up

to the mountain house
cuts the phone lines

lugs a turtle-killer
of beer
to the docks
peels off all her clothes for the

moon, quaking on fawn legs

submerges
her big toe

Prospector
Marcella Eve
Poetry

He is seated next to me
on the train. The train
was late
had hit a car
on the track some
miles back. This
puts him in a
situation.

He's got an eastbound
train to catch.

The next doesn't come
for days and anyway
he doesn't have
that kind of money.

See, he was panning for gold
in the Redwoods
been going back ever since
he saw that
one
years ago in a river bed
and lost it
when he waded over.
He knows the river's
still got it.

Concrete
Marcella Eve
Poetry

It is so easy to keep quiet
invite strangers to your home
and say nothing
concrete
to be a stranger
say you are
listening
to be a stranger
in your kitchen, boiling
pasta
listening

In poetry, it is so easy to keep
everyone sitting
in chairs in the cold light
sterile scent
throwing crumbs
to make oneself a stranger, always
pacing
the hallways

EPOCH
Matt Duggan
Poetry

Want to be touched by a kiss at dusk
where mango groves danced
between diagnosis and imminent death
watch cheerless sparrows—
fly inside Ink holes of fragile castles
ask what happened to the size of the heart.

our trashed land a sky full of boyish dreams—
raking red wine from stolen coats
like goblets from seen architects
place me under magnifying glass
you'll find running water and blue skies
not the violence to our resignation

mapped bones to broken knuckles
fingers straightened themselves out—
a moon risen with giant white eyes
we can't distinguish between victim or villain
in the beginning a heart the size of a city
in time our years of grief made it grow small.

ON MOM & GHOSTS

Laura Sweeney

Nonfiction

“Do you have it too?” I ask Mom, searching for a topic to chat about, describing the strange occurrences arousing suspicion, like spring break trip along the Ohio Scenic River Byway.

After touring the chocolate factory and San Damiano retreat center, it was dusk by the time my dog Freya and I arrived in Elizabethtown to view the historic Rose Hotel, listed on travel sites as the oldest operating hotel in Illinois. It was empty. Caution tape blocked the porch and stairs. So, Freya and I walked down the front lawn and into the gazebo that overlooks the Ohio River. When we turned to look back a green light illuminated the lobby.

“Motion light,” Mom dispels.

Eager to convince, I tell her about a trip to New Harmony, Indiana, one of the most haunted towns in the States, where the veil between the seen and the unseen is thin, as portrayed on TV about their famous ghost huntress. After touring the museum and lunching in the teahouse, Poet’s House intrigued. When I walked into the garden, the backdoor was ajar, the curtain rustled, but I saw no one. I walked around, peeked into the windows, but finding nothing compelling, walked away down the street. I turned to look back, and there in the upstairs window the curtain was raised. I turned away then turned again, and the curtain was dropped half-way.

“Oh, that was staged” Mom dismisses, though I argue it was off-season, the town deserted, no tourists to persuade.

I’m confused. Years ago, Mom told a story of an illness she suffered as a teen, how she saw her soul float above her body.

I continue about my writing residency near Knoxville, Tennessee in the Copper Ridge Mountains, how Freya and I slept in the renovated chicken coop, a mile or so uphill from the farmhouse. Each night we awakened to a rat a tat rat a tat rat a tat on our cabin. But when I opened the door, ax in hand, found nothing.

“That was just some bird,” Mom says.

I counter with the time I was fasting, how on the last day at the 11th hour I cried out, “Where is my house my man my family my career, when do I get my life back?” And at that moment the computer mouse hovered an arrow pointing to files on my desktop: my research, Freya photos, and a poem, Tea with Kay, about life cycles, losing everything and starting over.

Mom is nonplussed.

I remind her what Gma J. said about her years in nursing, how she swore angels haunt corridors. And in her final hours to Uncle John at her bedside she whispered, “Why are so many people here?” After the funeral, I found the papyrus portrait of Nefertiti I gave her, the one I retrieved from her belongings and leaned against a closet door, tipped, face down, but not broken. I point to the pheasant painting leaning against Mom’s living room wall and ask her to imagine.

And remind her how I cross at least three rivers on my way back to Southern Illinois: Iowa, Mississippi, Kaskaskia, each time saying three Hail Mary’s as I glance at the rosary hanging on my rearview mirror, though I’ve heard ghosts can’t cross rivers.

And just when I’m about to lose all hope that Mom will engage my receptivity to the unseen, she describes an incident at the cemetery doing her genealogy, locating her grandmother’s grave. The geraniums were drooping so she prayed for rain and as she drove away in the rear-view mirror she saw in just that spot a rain shower. The

perennials bloom every year, a gift she says from her mother.

Breakfast in an Isolated B&B

John Dorroh

Poetry

There is no morning sun here in the tundra. Light diffuses into hints of dull lemon glow. Icelandic geese fly over the cabin with superlative command of cold morning air. Pickled fish and white goat cheese, crusty brown bread with its own air sacs for breathing under a thick swab of butter. There is a small serving bowl of preserves made from fruit that looks like fig. I'm not sure if there are figs in Iceland. I am immersed in a language that I don't understand. A young lad waves his padded paw our way through the window as he trudges through new snow to school. I need steaming coffee or tea before spying on waterfalls whose spray blows sideways in pre-squall wind.

well-deserved rest

Andrea Damic

Art



prison view
Andrea Damic
Art



Travel Mood
Andrea Damic
Art



Write About You

Chloe Henney

Poetry

I could write about anything
Wars on the continent, panic across the globe
the deprivation in my city, feeling discontent
the unrealistic beauty standard or the
way I used to feel substandard
The colour of the ocean, the feel of the air
freedom of expression, the rights they took
the dream this world would be equal and fair
or the need for universal healthcare

I could write about anything
yet I'm still writing about you.
The way you looked at me that night
the way I felt when you held me
how you can make my heart skip
with nothing but a smile
make it race with nothing but that look
the way you light up any room
or make me feel at home anywhere

But you don't want me
and what if you never do
so what if the only place we exist
is on the page
the only way I can frame a love narrative
so I know it's selfish, foolish, careless
but I'll self-indulge
I could write about anything
but I don't want to write about anything
except you.

Islamabad
William Heath
Poetry

Safe water for the wealthy,
the poor turn the tap,
not a drop, a death rattle

from empty pipes.
Tenement toilets leak,
wasting precious water.

Leaky toilets easy to fix,
a city inspector imposes
a fine to force repairs,

for owners it's cheaper
to slip him a little some-
thing to feed his family,

than correct the problem.
So toilets keep leaking,
the city loses revenue,

population grows.
Water trucks arrive
in needy neighborhoods,

supply below demand,
locals bribe drivers to get
water first. Corruption

breeds contamination,
people swallow water
unfit to drink, diseases

spread from shantytowns
to gated mansions.
This time hepatitis
killing rich and poor alike.

Bolivia
William Heath
Poetry

You arrive in a psychedelic bus
packed with chickens, two pigs,
and women wearing Bowler hats.
In the town square some boys
are kicking a deflated soccer ball
in the dust. The Andean air
is almost too thin to breathe
and *chicka*, the local moonshine,
is fermented by a hint of spit.
The men have black lung
from working in the tin mines,
green feet from stomping
coca leaves into paste to send
to that cocaine-sniffing colossus
to the North. After the Revolution
each family received some land,
then sub-divided among his sons
when a father died. Now families
barely subsist on freeze-dried
small potatoes. The only solution,
some say, is one more Revolution.

The Invisible Man's Tailor

Patrick Meeds

Poetry

Most days
he is making the bed
before he even gets up
in the morning. After that
he practices counting to ten
as fast as he can for a while.
Then it's time to start threading
the needle. He'll keep that up until
his vision starts to blur and everything
takes on a sort of beer bottle green hue.
In the evening he likes to work on the
miniature orchestra he's constructing
with match sticks and glue. Just for once
he'd like to recognize the moment when
darkness begins to condense before
it's too late.

The Dictionary of Occupational Titles

Patrick Meeds

Poetry

I have been trying to remember
the names of every person I have
ever met. I have been reading books
by starting at the endings.

When I look at the moon, I feel nothing.
As soon as I get inside the grocery store
I just want to leave again. If you must
turn away from me, please do so quickly.
Do not let your gaze linger and give me hope.
It is like climbing a ladder to nowhere.
Begging to be deceived. Now I am
remembering the phone book and how
for the last few years I just threw it in the
recycling bin as soon as it arrived and how
each year it got thinner and thinner.

midwestern graveyard

Ben Arzate

Poetry

the body of the future
the junk from the attic
the only copy
of the recipe
of your favorite dish
the remnants of dreams
a box made from the
wood of a tree
you once climbed
the missed opportunites
a copy of a book
you read as a child
whose title you
can't remember
and the last
drop of hope

are all buried
in an unmarked grave
in the furthest corner
of a midwestern graveyard

online friends

Ben Arzate

Poetry

the massive forward leaps
in communication technology
means you can now make friends
with people on the other side
of the world

and miss them
when they no longer
log on
to the places
where you
communicated
online

vhs
Ben Arzate
Poetry

as the vhs tape degraded
each time i rewound it
to relive the memories

so too
in my mind
do the images grow hazier
each time i replay them
behind my eyes
and
eventually
they will be gone

The Drive
Sudha Subramanian
Nonfiction

The demon of eventuality has reared its ugly head and droplets of sweat dance around the temples. My fingers fumble to hold something, but they have found the skin at the base of the nail. I dig at them—dry, flaky, itchy dead cells—come away, little by little. The fingers get busy because they have a job other than tremble.

Sonny boy has decided to come along this time. He brings the car to life with a press of a button and slips behind the wheel. I breathe through my mouth and drag my feet to the car.

I close my eyes as the wheels set to motion. A hot sting pricks the sides of my face despite the blast of conditioned air snaking up my feet. I want to close my eyes and drift to another world. Go back or prance ahead in time—do anything but linger in the present.

A dull burn alerts my neck. A thin film of sweat has seeped along my back and crept into the folds of my skin: the air vents and the buttons in the front offer no respite. “You OK there?” the greying head seated diagonally across narrows his eyes through his steel-rimmed glasses. I wince at the thick blanket of conditioned air and turn my gaze towards the far end of the rolling desert—deep red, dry, barren. A swirl of sand arises out of nowhere and meanders towards us. Ghostly dusty forms chase us, and we speed towards a carpet of mirages to meet the ones in white coats, go through a battery of tests, and hold ourselves together on a thread of hope to reach a milestone of relief.

On most days, we navigate our lives with words, thoughts, and with actions.

We laugh and fuss over clothes, food, or relationships. These are our good times. But in those dark hours, I slip away to those moments when I asked the doctor, "How bad is it?" My whole body heats up to varying emotions as I fold my hands to offer prayers and let my mind wander through various Godly shrines. "Are they watching me?" I look up, hoping for whoever it is in whatever form to wave a wand and grant me my wish. No. I am not afraid of dying. I am scared of those I will have to leave behind.

The car swerves at a roundabout leaving the sun to the other side. I squint at the orange ball, bursting at its seams. Umbrellas and caps jostle to find their space. I wet my dry lips and reached for the water bottle. I take a sip, but fear, anguish, and anger throttle me, and blood oozes out of my fingers as my nails dig at raw flesh.

The familiar scent of the disinfectant hits my nose. My glasses cloud as a blast of cold air slaps my face, and I take them off to wipe the lens; I await my turn, unable to sit, unable to stand, shifting my legs.

"I hate this," I declare to my doctor even as he is busy scribbling in his notepad.

He shakes his head. This is how it is—every time with everyone.

The people who pass machines over me ask me details - my name, my age, my diagnosis. They probe me further. I squirm at the questions, and I fidget with the answers. I drape gowns from plastic covers and bare my physicality to strangers who will judge my well-being: rays, gels, syringes, and sound waves—feast on my body. There is no time for tears or hugs. All that is left is the bitter aftertaste of pure disgust.

I sniff when I am done and scurry out, stumbling more than once, even as I wipe my sweaty palms. Cold can curdle the blood. I long for the sun. I want the heat

to thaw my skin and my insides, blow a whiff of new life.

The sun is right over my head. A screen outside records 40 degrees centigrade. I lift my chin as a stray trickle eases to one side. I feel a warmth up my back—a soft hand and a gentle rub. A nod with the eyes—a grateful smile before I am guided by that hand towards the car.

“I am sorry you had to go through this,” I say, looking away to hide my wet cheeks. The words struggle to tumble out. My chest is tight, and my ears burn with anger that my son had to watch me. Shouldn’t I be the one to protect him, care for him, guide him?

He is at the wheel. He turns around to look at me slumped at the back. I can sense his soft eyes. I can’t look at him.

“Ma,” he calls me. My eyes are too weary and scared to meet his, but I catch him reaching his hand out to me.

“You shouldn’t do this alone” his hands are warm and gentle. “This is our journey,” his voice is tender. His hands close into mine with a squeeze. They are no longer small like how they used to be.

I see his lips part into a smile from the corner of my eyes.

I nod, forcing a smile, and look away. He withdraws his hand.

The engine comes to life.

My head is light, and the wrinkles inside have eased, and I lull in the back seat of the car, watching the sand change colors and the many shrubs that dot the contours of the land. No. I didn’t want him to watch me wince and break down in the sanitized white building, but when the tiny hands no longer fit into my palm, it is time

to hold them and walk the distance wherever it leads. I put my head back and smiled all the way home.

Eternity Tree

Jason M. Thornberry

Poetry

In limbo, the first circle, daylight fades as I navigate a phone tree, on and off hold, holding the phone to my aching ear as I cancel my cable service. The connection is scratchy, voices emerging and plummeting in the murk, interrupting the meandering melodies that crackle through to remind me where I am. Transferred again, I turn my head: I see a clock with shaky hands that inch forward and backward, teaching me eternity. Drained now of blood, my hand grows numb as the music returns.

Caribou
Sean Desautelle
Poetry

This morning we paid rent
so tonight we must eat chicken
you bought in bulk from BJ's
and froze a month ago

We pretend not to notice
I overcooked it and
poke at the microwave fingerling potatoes
for however long we are able
before it becomes uncomfortable

You go to bed early
because Thursday mornings
are for dry cleaning and
yoga class

Thursday we both come home
between five-thirty and five-forty-two
depending on traffic
and watch BBC on the couch
while waiting for whatever
food we've ordered in

It's a nature documentary tonight
and without looking
from the screen you say

*It's amazing, you know
how the caribou spend their whole lives
just going to some field
and turning back*

Why do you think they do that?

Eyes still glued ahead
It's all they know

Torty
Sean Desautelle
Poetry

The tortoiseshell cat came by on Thursday
while I sat on the stoop
smoking a Camel lite

Her eyes weren't judgemental
but curious
gazing at the billowy stream of silver smoke
and wondering how
I hadn't combusted

I like to think she understood me
she would come back
after all
time and time and time and time again

I would've named her
but I somehow didn't feel as though I had any right

She never wished
to claim me
never came up and beckoned me
to put out my cigarette
or wash my face

For all I know
she had just stopped by
after ravaging a family of mice or groundhogs
ripping them to a bloody flesh
and simply went on with her life

A Wolf on the Sidewalk

Sean Desautelle

Poetry

Perhaps he ventured too far
from his woods, from the home
where he was safe

Maybe they were afraid
to witness the creature roam
and reacted on that fearful instinct

Once as white as the walls
of the home he now lies before
his fur instead pulls

Scarlet like the blood that erupts
from his fresh wound

Scarlet like the lily that sprout
from his remains,
A fresh blossom of life
in place of his cut short

A window with dingy shades drawn
A dark door shut to those outside
A handsome wolf slain on the sidewalk

Campfire
Sean M. Thompson
Art



Smiling Ground
Sean M. Thompson
Art



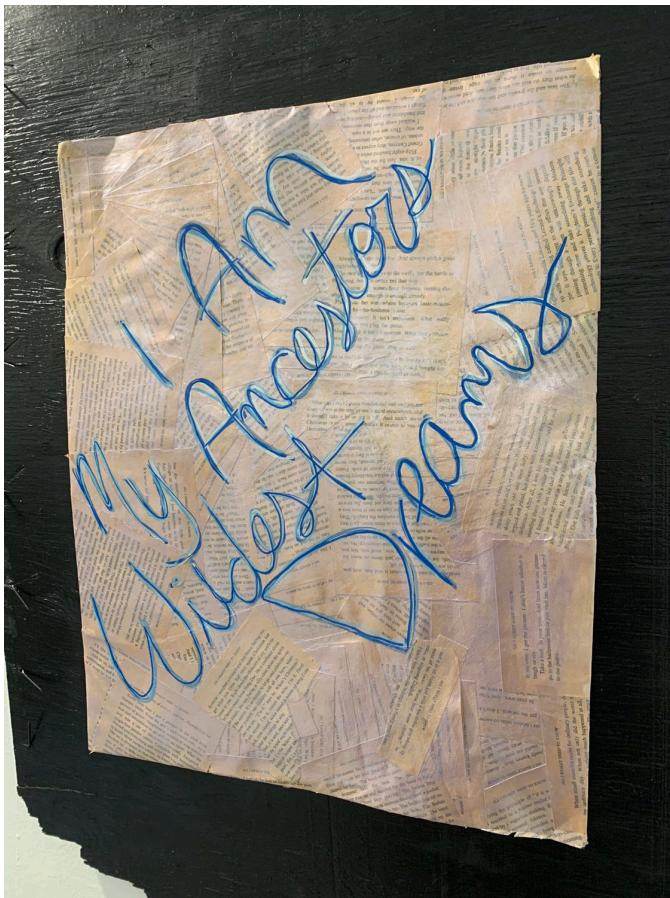
Haiku 7
Phylisha Villanueva
Art



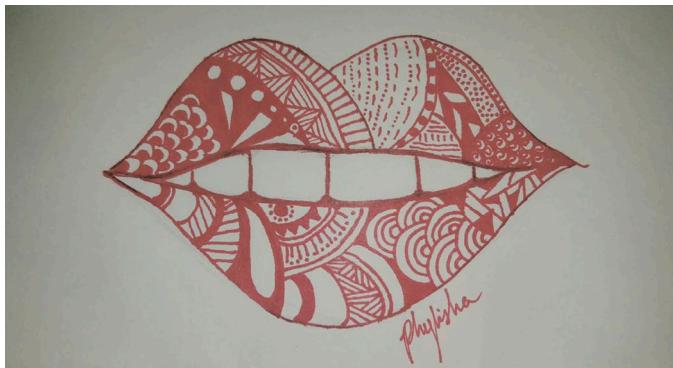
I Am My Ancestors' Wildest Dreams

Phylisha Villanueva

Art



Love Letter
Phylisha Villanueva
Art



A FADING BAND

Claire Scott

Poetry

Memories illegible
whitewashed and weather-
bleached by time's relentless tick

My caregiver Talia or Trisha or Trixie
says *we need you to be clean*
as she scrubs between my low-slung breasts

Lying like parched fruits across my stomach
and I inhale the intimate agony
of her flowery perfume

My neurons are plotting against me
staging a mutiny after eighty years
synapses short circuiting, misfiring

They used to be on my side
synchronized like a marching band
lined up like migrating swallows

But now Tyler or Tracy or Trina
says it is time for our supper
as she tucks a napkin under my chin

To catch our spills she says
no interest in her watery soup or tasteless stews
but Tessa or Tara is my only friend

Unless you count the figure waiting in the wings
wearing a sable suit and a sinister smile
knowing his turn is coming next

So we break open a bottle of our best wine
while we watch swallows flying low
and listen to the wobbly notes of a fading band

WE CAN'T GO BACK

Claire Scott

Poetry

There I go again, right in the middle
I have forgotten the point
was there ever a point
there used to be
all the time
now this keeps happening to me
the punch line, the pithy wrap,
the thrust, the core, the crux
in short, the point
has vanished like Edsels and Betamax tapes

Sometimes I walk into a room filled with purpose
determined to
and then a blank, a total blank
like being in an Arctic blizzard
or scuba diving in the Coral Sea
but I will teach you a trick
go back to the beginning
sit at your computer again
or stir the pea soup and you will find
your purpose, maybe a pen or a pepper grinder
but we can't go back, can we
to type writers and telephone operators
to carbon paper and cassette players
entropy increases, time is one way

MAX

Claire Scott

Poetry

A classic case of child abuse
says the white-haired professor
his students diligently type on their laptops
or read their email or text their latest love
the boy was sent to bed without supper
for wearing a Halloween costume in the middle of July
his Siberian mother called him *savage*
firmly (forever?) shutting his door

Hungry and forsaken
the boy had a psychotic break
and imagined he was sailing alone
into a land filled with frenzied beasts
his anger projected onto
the roaring, gnashing monsters
with terrible claws and terrible teeth
until he tamed them with a magic trick

And they made him king
the boy called for a raving rumpus
dancing his fury under fading stars
a preview of his frat years at Penn State
where he barely ate, but partied all night
and they made him President
and gave him a wolf suit for being
the wildest one of all

Years later, Max a Big Wig on Wall Street
all glass and glistening
rarely home for supper
his wolf suit traded for a dashing Dior
pumping millions into offshore accounts

buying and selling yachts in the Mediterranean
but sometimes he still dreams of a boy
in a private boat, sailing in and out of weeks
sometimes he is tired of this world of arbitrage

Weathering
S.J. Buckley
Nonfiction

We drove east to the Delaware Bay, familiar salt marsh stink drifting through the windows. Tess had no money, but the ATM didn't know that yet, and she withdrew 20 dollars for Wawa subs and blueberry beer.

We were an hour away from the nice beaches down south. Woodland Beach, scattered with driftwood, was Tess's favorite place to hunt for sea glass; we scoured the sand carrying gray plastic Walmart bags. I jumped in the brackish bay water with my clothes on. *I had never thought of swimming here*, Tess said, relieved her feet did not touch the bottom, treading water above sand and rocks and broken glass. Through sepia-tone glasses, I watched pearls of water slide down her face, illuminated, glacial. A movie scene only disturbed by the nuclear powerplant on the horizon.

We found very little true sea glass and so much broken glass and porcelain; I imagined an angry woman in New Jersey hurling dishes into the bay. Shards from green, brown, and clear bottles, Yuengling logos still visible. The *good* sea glass comes in less common colors, blue or purple. The glass in my mother's bathroom was smooth and turquoise, poised in a dish with clam shells, clean and elegant as her fingernails.

*

At home, my twin bed swayed like a kayak. Days passed; the bag stank. My mother stood over me, asked when I'd sort through it, when I would throw it away. I refused to admit that what we had found was not beautiful. I kept the bag all summer, sewage and seawater flooding my room. When I moved away from

Delaware that August the glass disappeared in the chaos, another container of unwanted things.

Sea glass takes 20 to 200 years to form, a product of weathering, battering by water, salt, sand, current, time. Trash and litter transformed into relics. We couldn't distinguish good from bad. We took everything we could find.

Tess and I collected experiences. I wrote about them, cataloguing each moment we shared. Images of her: a table coated in pot ash. Skin streaked with blue paint. A fire pit made from stolen rocks, jagged and glowing with orange flames. I clung to every detail, thinking they might someday become beautiful.

A scrim of time and space washed over our friendship. Certain memories were no longer romantic, but sharp and worrying. A mauve, vomit-stained couch. A flooded, abandoned campsite. An uncleaned coil of cat shit. The blur of brown bottles. Still, I kept some things—a plant pot decorated with broken CDs and old bottle caps, glimmering. A dollar store wind-up toy. A snail-shaped bookend. Whatever I'd deemed interesting enough to keep.

More than a year after Tess and I last spoke, Delaware tried to break away from the continent. An earthquake drove in from the coast, not far from Woodland Beach. I felt it 100 miles away, the floor churning in waves. In only 100 years, Delaware might be under water, eroding, washed away.

Gravel
Doug Hoekstra
Poetry

Footsteps on gravel,
In the park by my house
Worn smooth and laid to rest
Only to shift
Rearrange with every step
Never ending change, this
Symphony of crunch

Cut by the counterpoint
Cicadas from the underground
Laid into the mix
Distorted synthesizers from
Somewhere in the past
On the back of my bike riding

Far away from anywhere
Most of all myself
Trying to escape
The mistakes I didn't know
Were necessary to make
More than once
Every seventeen years

The Town Tamer

Doug Hoekstra

Poetry

Sometimes

when you screw up, you need to own it,
claim it, start all over again
possibilities clear as a child's
window by the foot of the bed
where the snow falls for hours
covering the path untrod
sunrise to twilight dancing over the block
between the sun and the moon
love, unplanned
Passion

Sometimes

when all is lost, you need some help,
call up the local town tamer for
a clean-up job to set things straight
like a conflicted hero dressed in gray
eyelids hanging heavy between
the cinematographer's shadows
broken chandeliers, furious flames
answering each question with a certain
calm, bemused,
Integrity

ripples
Christine Brooks
Poetry

I thought if
I were still
—enough

still not to disturb
nothing
not the water
not the grass
not even the man on
the corner of 1st Ave &
First
asking for a light

not even the wind

could shake me

but
the crows came
Loud & Close

and startled me
and the Monarch who
had been perched
on a blue marble

fluttered. away

and the bright pink
Violet straightened
taking notice
of

the ripples in the
Sound

always

Christine Brooks
Poetry

Will I always
be
there, walking in
the kitchen after renting
a room instead of,
returning to my childhood
home to help you
after she died

Will I always open the
refrigerator door
easily,
in your kitchen because
no food
weighed it down and

will I always see the
puckered paper towels laid out
atop the canister set
to dry
so you could use them
again

no matter where you are
now the place
beyond the paneling
I Will always be
there
seeing your broke-ness
my brokenness
for the first time
over and over and

over
again

the red barn
Christine Brooks
Poetry

it burned
most weekends during
the summer of 1977
the red barn burned

it always
seemed to be on fire
always seemed to throw
flames so high the stars
blinked orange
and the moon wept
from the smoke

always seemed to
spit and reach out trying
to burn her
trying to touch
her

she threw her
Dixie cup of water on it
skipping the taste of paper
that night before she got
tucked
in
so it would stop

so that,
it
would
stop

but it never did
because, they
were blinded
but she never stopped
watching
for the keeper of the
matches

The Wishes That He Brought

Bob Beagrie

Poetry

Ushered out of the side room
as the dying becomes vulgar
with the bad talk, the ramblings
about how the shit had turned black—
how it was everywhere,
and nothing to do with pennants
brought back in a suitcase
to unroll another far flung
city of dreaming delights
with mechanical monkeys
with cymbals and a lucky lamp,
to teach how you might make
love last more than just one night.

A SIDEMAN LINGERS

Mark J. Mitchell

Poetry

He leans against
a yellow door
waiting for his heart
to drop its backbeat.

The windows are blocked
with brown paper. He almost
hears the empty echo
when a bus rattles the glass.

He has nowhere to be
until long after dark.
Then fresh doors—red,
slanted, blue on old streets.

If the earth don't shake
and the water don't rise
he'll wander this city night
following rogue saxophones.

METHODS OF WAITING

Mark J. Mitchell

Poetry

Sometimes a waiting room
waits for you with its old wood
beside rusting railroad tracks.

It can be cold, sterile
as a mule. Painted eggshell where
a doctor will soon sentence you.

You may wait on molded plastic
surrounded by people entranced
by screens. The planes never leave.

Sometimes, when the sky is deep
purple, Venus above a round building
comforts you until a late bus rescue.

Then, these days, the room
is something that zooms at you
in your home. This afternoon

empty, quiet as a schoolyard
three minutes after the second bell.
You wait to be admitted.

PERFECTIONIST

Mark J. Mitchell

Poetry

He tries to rewrite
his death song to keep
away its call. Every night
he'd pull out the folded page
that revealed
the quite precise age
when he'd fall into dying's sights.
He never slept. He'd write and write.

Contributor Bios

Ben Arzate

Ben Arzate lives in Des Moines, IA. He writes and lives life. He often forgets to do the latter.

Erin Aube

Erin Aube is a recovering attorney turned high school English teacher. Originally from a valley in Tennessee, she lives in Atlanta, Georgia with her husband, Charlie, daughters Zelda and Marigold, and too many cats to credit. Her work has appeared in Metonym Journal, Poetry South, The Emerson Review, brave voice magazine (forthcoming), and Scapegoat Review (forthcoming).

Bob Beagrie

Bob Beagrie lives in Middlesbrough in the North East of England, crafting visions that bridge the rapidly disappearing post-industrial past and possible new futures, he writes to make sense of the world, to anchor himself and has published numerous collections of poetry through various the independent small presses. He works as a writer / literary activist in community settings.

Caleb Bouchard

Caleb Bouchard lives in Atlanta, where he teaches English composition and literature. In his down time, he enjoys watching drag content with his girlfriend and their dog, a skittish pit-mix named Elsie. Link up with him on Instagram @calebbouchard.

Christine Brooks

Christine Brooks holds her M.F.A. from Bay Path University in Creative Nonfiction. Her debut book of

poetry, *The Cigar Box Poems*, was released in February 2020. Her second, *beyond the paneling*, was released in April 2021.

S.J. Buckley

S.J. Buckley is a writer originally from slower lower Delaware. She has an MFA in creative nonfiction from George Mason University, where she was the nonfiction thesis fellow. She was also the nonfiction editor of *So to Speak* journal for two years. Her work has appeared in *JMWW*, *Ligeia*, *Grub Street*, and the *So to Speak* blog.

Emily Chew

Emily is a born Bostonian, transplant to Santa Fe, NM. She enjoys xeric gardening, hiking, and quesabirria tacos.

Linda M. Crate

Linda M. Crate is a Pennsylvanian writer who loves to be in nature whether it is in the woods, in the ocean, or surrounded by flowers. She has always been the eccentric one that no one ever understood, and though this used to hurt her she realizes now that being weird is actually a gift. She loves music, books, fantasy, and alone time.

Andrea Damic

Andrea Damic lives in Sydney, Australia. She has been published in *50-Word Stories*, *Friday Flash Fiction*, *Microfiction Monday Magazine* and *Paragraph Planet* with featured images in *Rejection Letters*. You can find her on Twitter @DamicAndrea. One day she hopes to finish and publish her novel.

Steve Denehan

Steve Denehan lives in Kildare, Ireland with his wife Eimear and daughter Robin. He once ate a Sara Lee Chocolate Fudge Cake, meant for sixteen people, in one sitting. He is not a fan of reading poetry but loves writing it.

Sean Desautelle

Sean Desautelle is an aspiring writing living in New Hampshire with two cats. He detests the five day work week and idolizes oat milk. His goal in life is to live within walking distance to a zoo with a bustling Sea Otter community.

RC deWinter

RC deWinter's poetry is widely anthologized, notably in New York City Haiku (NY Times, 2/2017), easing the edges: a collection of everyday miracles, (Patrick Heath Public Library of Boerne, 11/2021) The Connecticut Shakespeare Festival Anthology (River Bend Bookshop Press, 12/2021), in print: 2River, Event, Door Is A Jar, Gargoyle Magazine, the minnesota review, Night Picnic Journal, Plainsongs, Prairie Schooner, Southword, The Ogham Stone, Twelve Mile Review, Variant Literature, York Literary Review among many others and appears in numerous online literary journals.

John Dorroh

York Literary Review among many others and appears in numerous online literary journals.

John Dorroh was born with a pen in his hand. He wrote his first poem on the bathroom wall with his mother's red lipstick. He graduated to novel-writing at the age of 12 with an adventure book called "Buck's Way". His poetry has appeared in about 125 journals, including Selcouth Station, Os Pressan, Feral, Burningword, North

Dakota Quarterly, and Door is Ajar. He also dabbles with short fiction and the occasional rant. His first chapbook was published in the spring of 2022.

Matt Duggan

I was born in Bristol U.K. 1971 and live in Newport, Wales with his partner Kelly and their cat ‘Pablo’. regards myself as a working-class poet with left leaning political views, poems have appeared in many journals including Obsessed with Pipework, Poetry Salzburg Review, Ambit, The Chiron Review, Into the Void, The Potomac Review, 14 Magazine, The High Window, L’ Ephemere Review, and many others... In 2015 Matt won the Erbacce Prize for Poetry with his first full length collection and won the Into the Void Poetry Prize in 2017 with his poem Elegy for Magdalene, Matt has read his work across the U.K. including Greece, U.S.A and has appeared at various festivals such as Poetry on the Lake Festival in Orta, Italy, A Casa Dos Poetas in Portugal and also at the Cheltenham Poetry Festival.

Milton P. Ehrlich Ph.D

Milton P. Ehrlich Ph.D. is a 90-year-old psychologist and a veteran of the Korean War. He has published many poems in periodicals such as the London Grip, Arc Poetry Magazine, Descant Literary Magazine, Wisconsin Review, Red Wheelbarrow, Christian Science Monitor, and the New York Times.

Marcella Eve

Marcella Eve is a poet who lives, writes, and bakes in Los Angeles. At present, she is completing her first collection, “Letters from Zagreb.” She earned her BA in Writing & Literature from UC Santa Barbara.

R. Gerry Fabian

R. Gerry Fabian is a poet and novelist. He has published four books of his published poems, *Parallels*, *Coming Out Of The Atlantic*, *Electronic Forecasts* and *Ball On The Mound*. Twitter @GerryFabian2

Jonathan Fletcher

Originally from San Antonio, Texas, Jonathan Fletcher currently resides in New York City, where he is pursuing a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing in Poetry at Columbia University's School of the Arts. His work has been published in "Arts Alive San Antonio," "FlowerSong Press," "Lone Stars," "riverSedge," "The Thing Itself," "TEJASCOVIDO," and "Voices de la Luna."

KJ Hannah Greenberg

KJ Hannah Greenberg tilts at social ills and encourages personal evolutions via poetry, prose, and visual art. Her images have appeared as interior art in many places, including Foliate Oak Literary Magazine, Kissing Dynamite, Les Femmes Folles, Mused, Piker Press, The Academy of the Heart and Mind, The Front Porch Review, and Yellow Mama and as cover art in many places, including Impspired [sic], Pithead Chapel, Red Flag Poetry, Right Hand Pointing, The Broken City, and Torah Tidbits. Additionally, some of her digital paintings are featured alongside of her poetry in One-Handed Pianist (Hekate Publishing, 2021).

William Heath

William Heath started writing and publishing poems in the late 1960s, then for several decades switched to writing novels, history, and literary criticism, and now he has returned to his first love. My favorite quote about poetry is by C. S. Lewis: to write a great love poem it is

not necessary to have been in love, but you must love language.

Chloe Henney

Chloe Henney (she/her) is an aspiring writer from Birmingham. Chloe is a tea obsessed hopeless romantic and empath who writes about love, mental health and self-reflection. She hopes readers can resonate, relate to or find comfort in her stories.

Alonso S. Hernandez

Alonso S. Hernandez is a writer/teacher in the West Valley of Phoenix, Arizona. He lives with his fiancée and two dogs, Harley and Tatum. A first generation Mexican-American, Alonso is very aware (and proud) of the way that his roots have shaped him by giving him a love of family, hard work, and Abuelita hot chocolate.

Doug Hoekstra

Doug Hoekstra is a Chicago-bred, Nashville-based writer and musician, educated at DePaul University in the Windy City (B.A.) and Belmont University in the Music City (M.Ed.), whose prose, poetry, and non-fiction have appeared in numerous print and online literary journals. His first set of stories, *Bothering the Coffee Drinkers* earned an Independent Publisher Award (IPPY) for Best Short Fiction (Bronze Medal). *Ten Seconds In-Between*, his latest collection of short stories, earned a Royal Dragonfly Award for Best Short Story Collection of 2021 and Next Generation Indie Book Award Finalist 2022. Hoekstra has also worked extensively as a singer-songwriter with eight albums of original material on labels released on both sides of the pond, musical highlights including included Nashville Music Award and Independent Music Award

nominations, as well as many groovy happenings.
www.dougoekstra.net

Hilary King

I'm a poet living in the San Francisco Bay Area with my family and dog. I have a haircut I like and British mysteries are my book drug of choice.

Tuck Ledbetter

My name is Tuck Ledbetter (He/Him). I am a senior at East Tennessee State University where I study English and Linguistics. I love to express my thoughts in poems and by playing the drums. Being outdoors is rad and everyone should do it. Also, I love cats: like—a lot.

June Levitan

June Levitan is a retired teacher from the South Bronx. Now she takes photos for fun.

Michael Malmberg

Michael Malmberg (he/him) is an MFA graduate of the Minnesota State University, Mankato Creative Writing Program. His work often queries the repercussions of modern masculinity or features characters seeking to break out of its mold. In addition to his work in *Dead Peasant*, you can find him on socials @soamericaonline

Patrick Meeds

Patrick Meeds lives in Syracuse, NY and studies writing at the Syracuse YMCA's Downtown Writer's Center. He has been previously published in *Stone Canoe* literary journal, the *New Ohio Review*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, the *Atticus Review*, *Whiskey Island*, *Guernica*, *The Main Street Rag*, and *Nine Mile Review* among others.

Nicanor Millan

Nicanor Millan is an underrepresented writer, an Ecuadorian American published in Atmosphere press, Hamilton Stone Review, Cosmonauts Ave, among others.

Mark J. Mitchell

Mark J. Mitchell's most recent is Roshi San Francisco from Norfolk Press. He's fond of baseball, Miles Davis and Dante. He lives in San Francisco with his wife, the activist, Joan Juster where he made his living pointing out pretty things. Now, oddly, he does guy stuff.

Zach Murphy

Zach Murphy is a Hawaii-born writer with a background in cinema. His stories appear in Reed Magazine, The Coachella Review, Maudlin House, Still Point Arts Quarterly, B O D Y, Ruminate, Wilderness House Literary Review, and Flash: The International Short-Short Story Magazine. His chapbook Tiny Universes (Selcouth Station Press) is available in paperback and ebook. He lives with his wonderful wife, Kelly, in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Florence Murry

There's nothing I like better then to sit with a good poem or story and be transported and changed a little. I live in Southern California and write about its ever changing and challenging desert landscape. I love words, the sound of the wind through trees, warm sun on my face, and the ocean.

Victor Okechukwu

Victor Okechukwu is a writer based in Enugu, Nigeria. He's reading mass communication at the University of

Nigeria, Nsukka. He loves writing about his country's problems and lifestyle. His works are published or forthcoming in Mycelia, Gordon Square Review, Rigorous Magazine, fragmenteds Voices, and elsewhere.

Emily Paluba

Emily Paluba (she/they) is a 21-year-old queer poet and writer from New Jersey who indulges in many art forms, including slam poetry, sketching, and flash fiction. Their work appears in Queerlings, Full House Literary, and elsewhere. When they're not in their notebook, you can find them horseback riding, walking their dog, listening to Lil Nas X, or on Instagram @eapwriting and Twitter @emilyywrites.

Claire Scott

Claire Scott is an award-winning poet who has received multiple Pushcart Prize nominations. Her work has appeared in the Atlanta Review, Bellevue Literary Review, New Ohio Review, Enizagam and Healing Muse among others. Claire is the author of Waiting to be Called and Until I Couldn't. She is the co-author of Unfolding in Light: A Sisters' Journey in Photography and Poetry.

Sudha Subramanian

Sudha Subramanian lives in Dubai with her family. She writes, sitting in her brand new chair with a view of her garden. When she is not writing, she speaks to flowers, hugs trees, and watches the baby birds take their first flight. She is crawling through the second draft of her novel. She tweets at @sudhasubraman

Edward Michael Supranowicz

Edward Michael Supranowicz is the grandson of Irish and Russian/Ukrainian immigrants. He grew up on a

small farm in Appalachia. He has a grad background in painting and printmaking. Some of his artwork has recently or will soon appear in Fish Food, Streetlight, Another Chicago Magazine, Door Is A Jar, The Phoenix, and The Harvard Advocate. Edward is also a published poet.

Laura Sweeney

Laura Sweeney facilitates Writers for Life in Iowa and Illinois. She represented the Iowa Arts Council at the First International Teaching Artist's Conference in Oslo, Norway. Her poems and prose appear in sixty plus journals and ten anthologies in the States, Canada, Britain, Indonesia, and China. She is a PhD candidate, English/Creative Writing, at Illinois State University, Bloomington, where she can be found chatting with the waterfowl at Miller Park.

Sean M. Thompson

Sean M. Thompson grew up in New England, and currently lives in the high desert of New Mexico with his long-time partner. He is the author of the novel “God Damn Zombie Chainsaw Murderer,” the collection “Screaming Creatures,” the novel “TH3 D3M0N,” and the novella “Astrum.” He is also the owner and operator of Nictitating Books. You can find him on Twitter @SpookySeanT

Jason M. Thornberry

Jason M. Thornberry's work appears in The Los Angeles Review of Books, JMWW, Broadkill Review, Entropy, Letters Journal, and elsewhere. He overcame a traumatic brain injury. Relearning to walk and speak, Jason earned an MFA in Creative Writing from Chapman University.

He lives in Seattle with his wife. Twitter:
@thornberryjm

Phylisha Villanueva

Phylisha Villanueva (Phylli V) is a mom, spoke word artist, and author straight out of Yonkers. She is first generation Belizean-American and the author of Pretty Girl Special, a collection of letters and poems to herself and her daughter Paislyn. Her poetic memoir “Pretty Girl Special can be found in Yonkers Public Libraries and www.phylliv.com. This multifaceted artist has been performing and teaching “Spoken work” for over ten years. Phylli V is now engaging in visual Art. She lives in Yonkers and is the first ever Poet-in-Residence with YonkersArt.

Mikal Wix

Mikal Wix lives in the American South, which seeds insight into many outlooks, including revenant visions from the closet. Fun fact: he worked for several years as a “romance” script writer for a 1-900 company and is still haunted by his words being edited by telecom managers. His poems appear randomly on paper and within the matrices of the web. But he longs for a future without heat advisories.

Lorna Wood

Lorna Wood lives in Auburn, Alabama, but often escapes. She writes poetry as the spirit moves her and to get out of working on her novel. She also plays the violin and engages in wrestling bouts with her enormous viola.

Jackie Yang

Jackie Yang is an amateur gardener, semi-professional knitter, and abysmal driver based out of New York City.

She spends most of her time walking when the weather's nice, and forgetting her umbrella when it isn't. She loves tabletop games, baked goods, and writing about scenes from daily life.

Stephen Zimmerman

Stephen Zimmerman is a disabled US Air Force veteran, pastor, author, poet, and true crime blogger currently residing in Arizona. Stephen is married with four children and is currently assembling his very own "zoo" with two dogs, two birds, two guinea pigs, two frogs, six fish tanks, and a Chinese water dragon. When not working, Stephen enjoys documentaries, studying psychology, and motorcycle riding.

Submission Guidelines

Door Is A Jar Literary Magazine is looking for well-crafted poetry, fiction, nonfiction, drama and artwork for our print and digital publication.

Please read over these submission guidelines carefully.

Our magazine features new artists and writers and works that are accessible for all readers. Please look at our current and archived issues before submitting your work. Works that are confusing, abstract, or unnecessarily fancy will not be considered.

We only accept new, unpublished work. If you have posted something to your website or social media, this counts as being published.

Contributors can submit to multiple categories; however, only submit once to each category until you have received our decision about your piece.

In your cover letter please include your full name, mailing address, email, and 3-sentence bio.

We accept simultaneous submissions; however, please notify us immediately if a piece is accepted elsewhere. We reserve first initial publishing rights and then all rights revert back to the author. We do not pay contributors at this time.

For the complete and most up-to-date guidelines on how to submit to our magazine visit doorisajarmagazine.net