

DOOR = JAR



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Door Is A Jar
Issue 27

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Coda
David Colodney
Poetry

Needle slides into runoff grooves
stylus bumping the record's label
place cast in a lull except this metronomic
thump. He stands on their balcony: gray
sky mimics the gray of his sweater
until it looks like he disappears.
Occasional throbs & pops cry
from the turntable. No one flips
this vinyl. In the kitchen she packs mugs:
one *Virginia is for Lovers*
another *I Heart NY*. She works
a philharmonic's precision
pauses only when she notices new
lines on her face reflected in the quartz
countertop. They've sung
the standards about *staying*
friends & keeping in touch. In a few years
they pass each other in Aventura Mall's
mezzanine, exchange dissonant *hellos*
& *how-have-you-beens*, one-day-sale
posters & store directories haloing
them in artificial light. And they walk
in separate directions:
piped-in music plays a Beatles song
they both love & each struggles

to remember
the lyrics.

Mirror, Mirror
Shelley B. Smithson
Poetry

You gazed into your bathroom mirror
The reflection showing the hairpin turn
Life had taken
So much at stake
Your love of you

The stunning sadness of it all
Sitting in the corners of your eyes
Could you even cry if you wanted to?
Would the paralysis prevent you curling
Into your well-deep grief?
You asked
“Will I ever get used to my face?”
I sank inside, hearing you try to find yourself
In the collage staring back at you

Cheeks no longer symmetrical
Your eyes like distant searchlights
Drooping lips trapped
In an uncertain smile
The frozen look of surprise
That forged a mask of stupidity you hated to wear

Your question's honesty shattered off the tile walls
I cannot recollect what, if anything, I said
I felt a sorrow for you that deadened my days

But I came to understand
As we all crawled in slow motion through that time
That what you saw was only mere distraction
Like staring into the stirred waters
Of a crystal-clear lagoon

Your reflection would come to soothe itself and
Your mirror would make you whole again

Apathetic
Andrea Damic
Fiction

Turbulent sea yawns around a pontoon lost in the blustering waves. All one can see is a glimmer of silvery colour shimmering in the moonlight; shyly protruding behind the dark massive clouds. Scattered around, their petrified faces mirror the despair, as the sky weeps over their futile sitch. The storm continues its relentless growl, yet their expressions still emanate the belief of salvation. Enthralled by the surreal events unfolding in front of her eyes, Lorelei gets startled by an impatient voice calling her name.

After all these years together, her husband still fails to appreciate her artistic sense. Leaving the gallery, she turns around one more time and sighs.

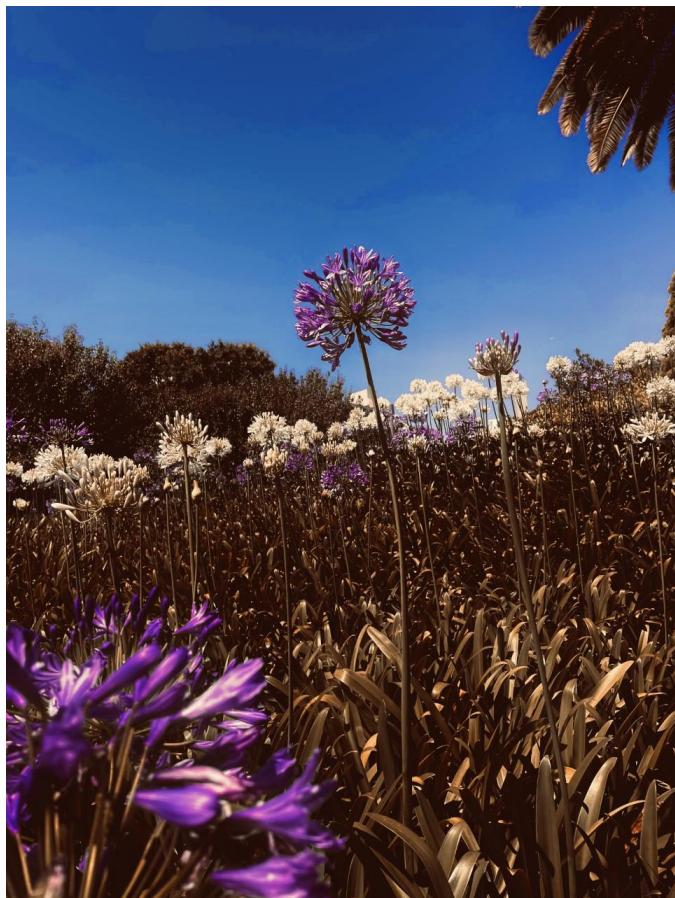
Impossible Choices

Andrea Damic

Art



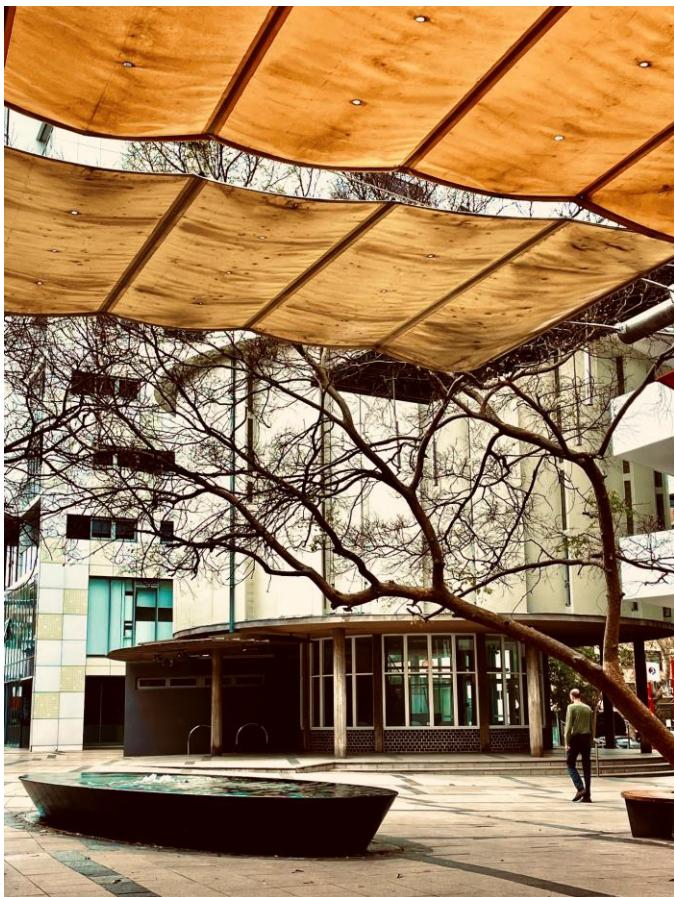
Standing Out
Andrea Damic
Art



Standing Strong
Andrea Damic
Art



Under Cover
Andrea Damic
Art



Morocco
Steve Denehan
Poetry

The little boy reached down
picked up a white stone
held it towards me

Five.

I shook my head
having no change
Two.

I shook my head again
patted my pockets
held my palms to him

he understood
dropped the stone to the ground
walked away

later, walking back to the hotel
I saw him again
standing at the market entrance
we caught eyes
he nodded
I waved
he patted his pockets
held his palms towards me

I wonder where he is now
I wonder
where am I

Civil War
Steve Denehan
Poetry

The sea is at war
with itself

waves, usually in communion
fight for position
for dominance
before being overcome
in crashing surrenders

I stand on the pier
buffeted by a wind
that comes wildly
from all directions

the clouds are dark above me
though there is no rain, and
towards the horizon
the sky is clear, and swirled
with candy pinks
powder blues, and the flaming orange
of the setting sun

I used to come here
with my father
I never will again

Pickpecking
Steve Denehan
Poetry

While the water boils
I look out the kitchen window
there is no breeze and so
little movement

still, as I settle into a trance
I notice small birds flitting
from branch to feeder
pickpecking seed

the kettle clicks
the water, which has been bubbling
stops

in the silence I pour the boiled water
into a mug
that contains a teabag

I stir the teabag until the tea is released
until the water is brown

I remove the teabag and pour
a little milk until the brown
becomes lighter

when I was younger
I would take two teaspoons of sugar
maybe three
now, I take none

I read somewhere once
that there is a certain freedom to be found
in giving up
I have not found this to be true

Remembrances

R. B. Miner

Fiction

In the winter of 1990, I had just begun to make a living as a playwright in New York. My last production, a story about a married man in love with his neighbor's wife, had been well-received by critics, but attendance had dwindled quickly after the first month. My backers believed in my talent but wanted something more commercially viable. I and my rent payments were beholden to their desires.

To satisfy the money men, I decided to write a play about a great hero, a person who would deliver a rousing speech on the eve of some great battle and bring boiling tears to the eyes of my audience, like Henry V or George Patton or Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain. I only had to find my subject.

A week after I began writing my new play, I went to a liquor store in the Village. I spent most of the early stages of any new project drinking and feeling sorry for myself, and it had been especially hard to find a proper hero for my story. No character I considered, real or imagined, seemed quite right.

I wandered the aisles of the store, non-committal, until I came upon an old man staring at a shelf. I stopped next to him and followed his gaze to a bottle of calvados. There was an apple in the bottle—*le pomme prisonnière*—surrounded by the amber liquid, and I assumed he was marveling at the ingenuity it took to get it in there. I couldn't resist my tendency to be a know-it-all.

“They tie the bottle to the end of a branch,” I said, “and let the apple grow inside it.”

“I know,” said the old man, never taking his eyes off the bottle.

“It’s very tasty.”

“I’ve had it.” When he looked at me, I was struck by the youthful sparkle in his blue eyes. He was seventy if he was a day, wrinkled and hunched, but he had the crystal eyes of a twenty-year-old. “Fifty years on and I’ll never forget the taste.”

Then, without prompting, he told me a wonderful story. About a young American G.I. in 1944, who wandered into a *café* in the 16th *arrondissement* the day after the liberation of Paris. About a bartender who apologized that he could only offer this hero a glass of poor-quality wine, the only thing the Germans had left behind. About the pretty girl who had stepped in and offered him a taste of the calvados she had hidden in her apartment for the entirety of the occupation. About the night of passion they spent together in the wake of the ebbing conflict.

When he finished, we were both in tears.

“Do you have any more stories from the war?” I asked.

He nodded and wiped his nose with a cloth handkerchief.

“Would you let me buy you lunch tomorrow?”

The deli bustled with an impatient lunchtime crowd. I had suggested a steakhouse near my apartment but David—for that was the old man’s name—said we should meet here instead. When he greeted one of the white-haired men at the counter by name (“Hiya, Moishe!”), I assumed he preferred to frequent familiar establishments, like many old men I knew.

After we ordered our lunch, we sat at a small table in the narrow dining room, I with my back to the counter. I had told David that I was writing a play about a hero,

and I expected him to regale me with things he had seen and done in battle. But he asked me a question to start.

“Have you decided what sort of hero you would like to write about?”

“Are there different kinds?”

“Lots of different kinds. Many better than the sort you think I am.”

“I’m sure many soldiers feel the way you do, but that doesn’t make them seem any less brave to guys like me. Or my audience.”

“Sure. But there are different sorts of bravery, too.”

“I’d be happy to hear about all of them.”

“Good.”

He smiled then, but he was looking past me, at someone else. He stood up and borrowed an empty chair from the table next to ours, setting it next to his before sitting again.

Moishe appeared at my side, carrying our lunch, two gargantuan pastramis sandwiches and a bowl of pickles. His sleeves were rolled to the elbow, revealing impressively muscular forearms, especially for an old man. Years of toting two-pound sandwiches for hours a day, I imagined.

“Who’s got what?” he asked. David told him and he set the plates down.

“Got a few minutes, Moishe?” asked David, indicating the empty chair.

“What do you think?”

“For me?”

He looked back at the counter, then at David.

“Alright.”

He sat heavily into the chair and crossed his arms. He and David were a funny pair, and I began to compare them. What, I wondered, had brought them together?

That's when I noticed the tattoo. Right away I became dizzy, as though all the blood had drained from my head. Five numbers, hand-scrawled, faded to mottled gray over time. I couldn't take my eyes off them. They seared themselves into my memory, branding me with their significance forever.

I let out a long, tremulous breath. David watched me, nodded, then turned to Moishe.

"This young man is writing a play about a hero. I thought of you."

Moishe took a pickle out of the bowl and bit the end off.

"That's your area, soldier."

"And I think it's yours. I figured we'd have to talk about each other, otherwise he won't have anything to write about."

Moishe looked at me.

"The pastrami is getting cold, kid."

I picked up half the sandwich and raised it slowly, stopping short of my mouth. I set it back down without taking a bite. David laughed.

"Alright," said Moishe. "Then what can we tell you?"

When I finally found my voice, it came out hoarse. I didn't care.

"Everything."

THE END

When the site of a lynching becomes a park

Jerrod Laber

Poetry

The branches of the tree
hang low and point to the ground

at uneven patches of grass and dirt—
the same dirt that once stained my pants

and buried underneath my fingernails,
adorned elsewhere with old swing sets,

teeter totters and a merry-go-round
with an uneven lean in its spin.

This dirt that sits on top of blood
and piss and skin and shit,

the irradiated fallout from those
murdered souls, those souls

that linger over the site for a while,
waiting to be prayed into the next life,

tamped down by the footprints
of smiling, playful children.

QVC Nights
Jan Steckel
Poetry

She sits in the aquamarine
of the laptop screen, dazzled by crystals
dancing on earlobes and fingers:
emerald earrings, tanzanite rings.
The liquid color's melodies sing
me oh my, I don't want to lose it.
Glitter city, sugar high. A hundred jewels
are not enough to satisfy her magpie eye.

She buys and buys. The unread
book club volumes rise in stacks,
Alphabet Mysteries N through Z.
Someday she'll read again, or else
the earth will shake, the books will fall,
and she'll be caught beneath the flow,
nothing but her cubic zirconium tiara
brilliant like a pond-lily on black velvet water.

The Lay-Low Lay-Me-Down of Sea Cloud

Jan Steckel

Poetry

after Steve Arntson

Through dune lupine and seacliff buckwheat,
wend toward water against the wind.
Sandpipers run before surf on strand.
Holdfast teems with creatures.
Eggplant-colored fuzz still on the sand-dollar.
Husks of hard- and soft-shelled crabs.
Sandcastle architecture slowly softens.
Whitecaps, kelp forests, mussels, razor
and Pismo clams. Barnacles, beloved,
chestnut cowrie, keyhole limpet, Olivella shells
lavender in the morning, avocets lifting knees,
trumpeting in king pelican gliding lordly
over the swell. All my heart is here,
in the salt scent of it, freshening sea,
crash and fizz, bubbles and foam,
dunes to the horizon, bull-kelp tangles,
bladder-wrack, tidal pull, bailed-out
banners, armies of ghosts and oceans.

The Night of Ivan Kupala

Elinor Dinkin

Poetry

1919

I'll make you a crown, Kolya said.
Political treason, even
in camomile and goldenrods.
He said, it's Midsummer,
We'll have food, flowers, vodka! Girls
in candycane dressses, the sun
will never set. Come with us!

He spoke the truth like a holy water spring,
for all that it sounded like miracles and snakes.
In Siberian summer the sun hung
daily like a golden onion dome
And nightly like the moon.
But that was anywhere.

Winter wins in Russia. The ice
fights for us, empires lose wars
to the season. In July
we win by dying slower.

Artillery falls like thunder.
We had all been praying for rain,
but I know that I
never asked for anything quite so solid.
Petersburg said for honor,

the Motherland,
and for the Czar with you.
I never wore a soldier's jacket
that marked me Nikolai's army.

Come with us,
said Kolya from squadron two.

Kolya used to like the views.
Beautiful country, he would say,
kras-ee-vo, just beautiful.

This morning the hills roll
like gentle sea and the barley
sways like waves.
All this wheat and water,
and this place a famine, a desert of men:
among the ships of hollow tents
only the grain mermaids, the dead,
remain, and me.

Little Shots of Hope

Will Musgrove

Fiction

Dad raised two bartenders. Growing up, he mixed cocktails at Eloquent, a fancy pub uptown, and poured milk into my older brother Joe's and my cereal like a gin martini. He'd regale us boys with tales of sophistication, of how the mayor liked their Manhattan with an orange peel instead of a lemon twist. Many arguments were started at playtime about who got to drape a towel over their shoulder and say: "Whatcha having, champ?"

Joe was the first to show some suds-slinging promise. As a toddler, he'd flip his sippy cup like an expensive bottle of vodka before tipping it into a shot glass made of homemade Play-Doh. At the ripe age of twenty-five, he inherited dad's head bartender gig at Eloquent, the youngest to achieve such a feat.

Me? Like most of us, I took the long way around, got a degree in anthropology before realizing people would rather drink their history than read about it. Now, I work at Pair-A-Dice, a bar that is anything but, unless you're a fan of irony or wordplay.

Outside, regulars wait for me to flip the closed sign to open like fans standing in line to buy concert tickets. I unlock the door, and they take their seats around the Formica, leaving behind a trail of muddy boot prints I'll have to scrape off the carpet later. They come from blue-collar and will depart drunk to do it all over again.

Callused hands.

Pit-stained t-shirts.

Poor lighting.

A bunch of road signs leading to nowhere hanging on the walls.

The dive bar, a culture of hopelessness.

I plan to change that, plan to do something Joe could never do serving those born above longing. I'll show him who's the real bartender in the family. I'll show him bartending's more than pricey liquors and garnishes by giving hope to the hopeless.

How?

I've created a drink.

I call my creation a little shot of hope. The recipe consists of well whiskey and a little bit of hope, my hope. This'll be my first time serving any, first time testing their abilities. I whipped up a few at home, but they never tasted right. You can't swallow your own hope, especially when it's outdated and stale. You need inspiration. Sure, my hope has driven off the lot, has depreciated in value, but it'll be new to them.

I grab a bottle of low-tier whiskey. I don't toss it in the air, don't spin it around like a six-shooter. There's no wasted movement in a dive bar. I pour the whiskey into a shot glass and focus on my breath until I'm a kid again.

Joe and I raid the refrigerator. We want to be like dad. We're combining pickle juice and diet soda and milk. Every chilled liquid ever. I add a droplet of hot sauce to my concoction and hand it to him. He sips. He smiles. He asks how much of what I used. We gather my ingredients and off we go to show dad what I'd done.

The first regular takes his shot. His face winces. Maybe, like whiskey, hope burns going down. I stare at him, watching for any signs of revival. A few tears. Sobbing. He drops his head into his hands. When he lifts it, his moans transform into giggles, and he stumbles off his stool, laughing.

“If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands,” he sings, skipping out of the bar.

I repeat the pouring process, feeling light and heavy at the same time, like a bowling ball made of feathers. Whiskey gleaming in the shot glass, I break an alcohol-soaked lineage.

I sit in the back of the classroom. A professor paces up front, claims anthropology's mission is to solve the mysteries of humanity. Opening my notebook, I find a message in dad's messy handwriting. Next to a sketch of a bottle with an X on the label, he wrote: "Let me know why people love this stuff so much, will you?"

The second regular takes his shot. His eyes widen as he wipes moisture from his chapped lips. He holds the shot glass up to the light, gazes through it at every angle. He hops off his stool, oohing like he's wandering a museum or cathedral.

"There's so much to do, to see," he says, jogging out of the bar, his head darting around like a lizard's eye.

Leaning against the Formica, I catch my breath. One left. I pour the last shot, returning me to my ABV roots.

I walk into Pair-A-Dice for the first time. Dad's gone, has been for about a year. At the funeral, Joe blamed me, said dad had wanted me to stay, to become a bartender like him. He apologized, but I know he didn't mean it. I run my hand across the stained drywall. A coat of paint. Some spackle. This place isn't so bad. Not bad at all.

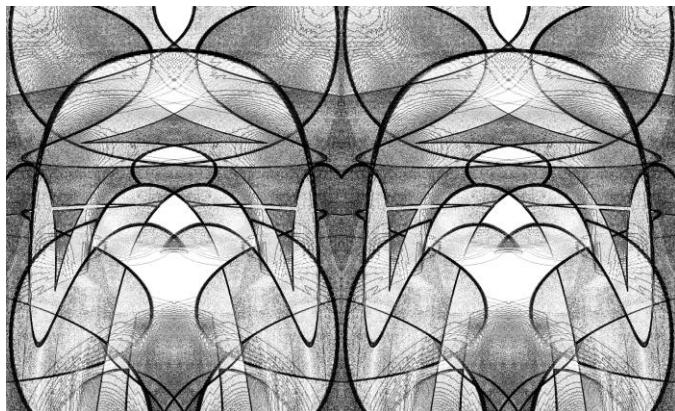
The third and final regular takes his shot. He removes his wallet and shows me a picture of his wife, of his kids. He kisses the clear plastic vinyl protecting them before sliding off his stool. He thanks me, says he won't see me again, and leaves, whispering their names.

When the door closes, I collapse behind the bar. I'm spent, all out of hope to give. I hear the regulars' faint chanting: "Pair-A-Dice, Pair-A-Dice, Pair-A-Dice." It's dusk. What's left of the day's sun shines through the windows, giving the cracked shuffleboard table, the

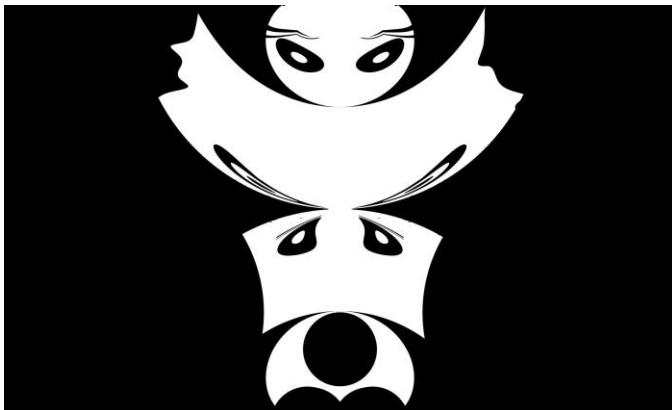
sticky booths, the half-empty bottles a golden hue.
Giving everything a golden hue.

No, not bad at all.

Hopeful
Edward Michael Supranowicz
Art



Not All Ghosts Are Happy
Edward Michael Supranowicz
Art



Family Portrait
J.L. Moultrie
Poetry

Glancing at my
youth the truth
is on the outskirts
the wilderness in
my heart is forlorn
in the way that all
portraits are suspended
their backs against
the wall the halls are
flooded
mirth is being submerged
in experience the lessons
arrive amidst debris
uprooted in the spring the
arbitrary laughter
sleeping in basements if
only I could be as
present as the sequoia an
elder among saplings

The Sanctity of Blinking

Richard LeDue

Poetry

DEATH doesn't dwell in obituaries,
nor linger in gravestone shadows,
marvelling at the moss—
DEATH lives in your coffee mug,
proclaiming you the world's best
something, even if you don't drink
coffee, DEATH breaths in
the potpourri that hides the stench
of everyday smelling the same,
and DEATH drowns in your sweat,
waiting for you to offer
mouth to mouth, and that's why
it's easier to take up birdwatching
on Saturdays, golf on TV
on Sundays, and reading
your boss' face the rest of the week
than to lose a staring contest
with DEATH.

Grocery Store Horror Stories
Richard LeDue
Poetry

Headless angels haunt psychopaths' dreams,
while the ice cream melts
because someone changed their mind again
and left it next to the canned beans.

The person behind you in line
thinking about slitting your throat,
all due to the sign saying
“20 Items or less,” and your cart is full.

The person in front of you in line
doesn't care, as they daydream
about a beautiful face
they saw in the meat aisle.

Wilting lettuce waits
to be paid for with a credit card,
as the produce manager smiles,
like a serial killer, at the greenest bananas.

Reptile of Certain Esteem

Jason Graff

Fiction

The cobra lived in the same corner of the kitchen for years, even after the renovations and that unfortunate freon leak. We sought his counsel and listened to him. He shed his skin of suits regularly like a boss as we liked to say. If he looked nervous slithering around maybe it was because he resented the pressure of being seen as wise. It's hard enough to be human and thought of as merely intelligent but to be a reptile of certain esteem, and insight; valorous and implacable, takes more out of an animal than any of us can imagine.

Once it was decided we'd turn to the snake for help, that was it. We were all the way in. You don't argue with a cobra. How his hood shined on such occasions, probably partially from the freon. He held us in his thrall as though it was the natural order of things. Whatever he concluded was the best course of action, there'd always be digging involved or Earth moving of some kind. The power and cable and gas and internet companies finally wearied of being called out to mark our property. The water authority had shut us off long before.

I'm worried about what happens when this doesn't work, we said, letting another shovel load fly. But the cobra said, the cobra said, always began the reply. Begin the Beguine, we'd start to sing, though we never knew why. So it went for us under the snake's leadership: filthy, without Wifi, mindlessly singing Artie Shaw tunes. Something has to change, we thought but only thought never said or uttered, decried, exclaimed or even whispered.

Eventually, the cobra absorbed enough freon through skin that he died. He lay lifeless and dried out

on the kitchen floor like a stick. We mourned and our mourning turned into a celebration, a blood ritual. The cobra was passed from hand to hand. Some handled him with reverence. Others walked around doubled over with him beneath them like a cane. None were judged. All acted accordingly to the numb desires of their fevered daydreams.

It took some time to realize that without him we were lost. There we stood outside with our pickaxes and shovels waiting for something divine to return and compel us to act upon the land. Studying the shapes of clouds for clues, many were struck blind as though that had all along been their calling. Others picked up a mop and cleaned that sacred corner until it shined. Our physicality became not only our tool but also sole purpose.

We soon became savage waiting for an unnamable return: leader, shaman, boss, father. He had more titles than we ears. That we'd turn on one another seemed inevitable. The house was soon divided. Ables lived on one side, Kane's on the other. Only those well-read enough in the stories of the cobra's ancestor knew which side to pick. Only the literate survived to tell the tales of our near annihilation. In doing so, some earned their own names and became legend's witnesses, while others bathed the tribal lands in their blood across which the lonely God will next slither, his kingdom as barren as his desires.

Speck On The Map

Pat Meusel

Poetry

She was the last of six kids
All alone in the homestead
He found her speck on the map
Gave her a peck on the cheek

They sang in the choir
She was looking away
When he snuck up behind her
With a necklace gold plated

She wore it most days
Especially weekends
In her corduroy curves
He had hoped she would weaken

But he moved in the summer
Teen tears in the airport
Friday night phone calls
From five states over

She let it ring for a lifetime
And before she could speak up
Said he'd fallen in love
Met a cashier at K-Mart

She got her diploma
Lost the necklace gold plated
She found an apartment
Just a couple towns over

Now the K-Marts are closed up
And she has a family
Just a speck on the map
A lot of pecks on her cheek

Sleep is a Lie
Eugene Stevenson
Poetry

In bed,
at night, lights out,
truth comes wide-eyed,
staring at the ceiling.
Outside, rain begins to
freeze, staccato
against the window,
with imminent threats.
Inside, this dark world,
sleep is a lie
& the bed stretches
between us.

Friends. Alas, No.

Eugene Stevenson

Poetry

A scrapbook or journal might
fascinate with its record of
emails & texts that started life
some sixteen years, after.

Oddly similar in their tentative
touch, vague suggestions of
resentment, one to the other,
then back again. No angels, we,
in our individuality, but poison,
we, in our collectivity, poisonous
as peanuts to the sensitized.
Legion, all that we missed.
Your perspective lost on me,
my perspective lost on you,
life together lost to the ether.

Friends. Alas, no. That we still
matter to each other is
treasure to hold for the short
time we have left, before.

Held
Jo Angela Edwins
Poetry

Last night I dreamt I carried you
because you could not move alone.
You were a grown man shrunk small enough
to be held as I walked. The weight of you
was not equal to the weight of knowing
you would not live for long. We sought
a room where I might set you down
in something closer to comfort than
the sharp angles of my stiffened arms.
I won't lie. There was a peace I felt
in at least being able to carry you
when you needed carrying, but still I hated
the weakness that forced you to need so much
you couldn't refuse. This time, you did not resent
such needfulness. You could barely hold
your breath or the water that leaked from every
pore. I begged every stranger we met
to help us find a quiet room, a soft bed.
No one seemed to know the way.
If their faces turned at the sight of us,
I shamed them with a voice so strong
it shocked us both, given our weariness.
You let me defend you. I held you all the tighter.
When at last we found a space—on our own—
where we might rest together, I understood
you would not rise again. The gentle
rattle of our breathing was a music
drowning out the frightened murmurs of this earth.

zoomed
SG Fromm
Poetry

we gather
in zoom
to see
each other's
creased faces

for the
first time
in twenty
blurred
years

eli the
musician
has lost
all his
tunes

walt the
sports sage
roams alone
in fantasy
leagues

marcus the
first married
prays
three is
a charm

pete the
comedian
seeks
joy in
zoloft

and I
see strangers
who were
my last
true friends

12:01am
SG Fromm
Poetry

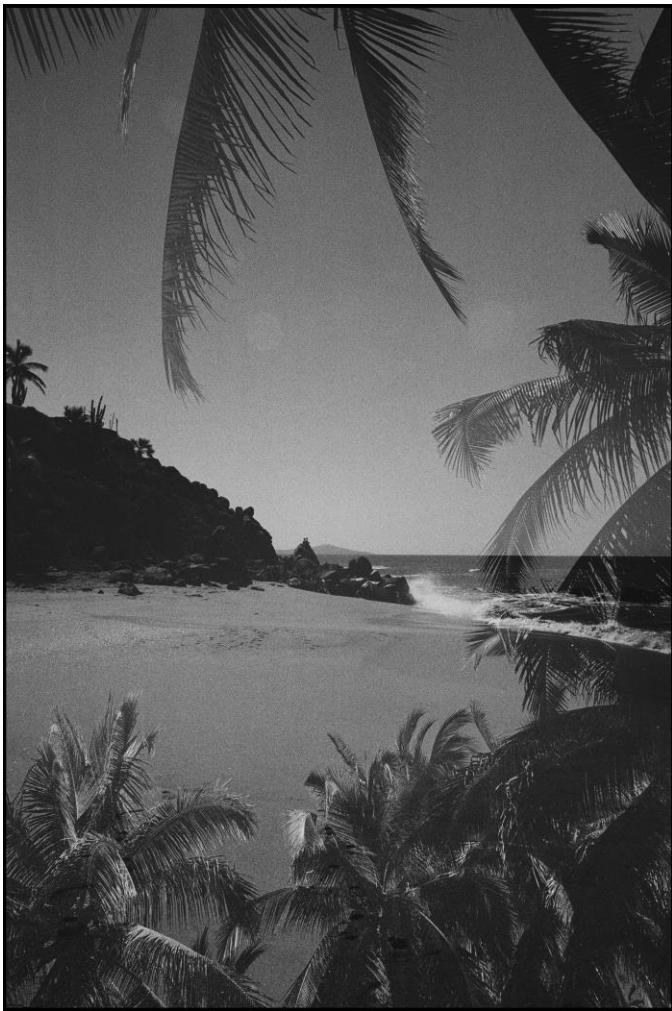
another midnight
ball dropped
without
dick clark
and it made
me feel old

as I watched
confetti
cast down
like tontines
from the year's
fresh dead

flittering
laurels upon
witless heads
before finding
the ground to
be swept away

by crews
with brooms
who are
the only ones
watching the
clock

Untitled 1
Lauren Trific
Art



Untitled 2
Lauren Trific
Art



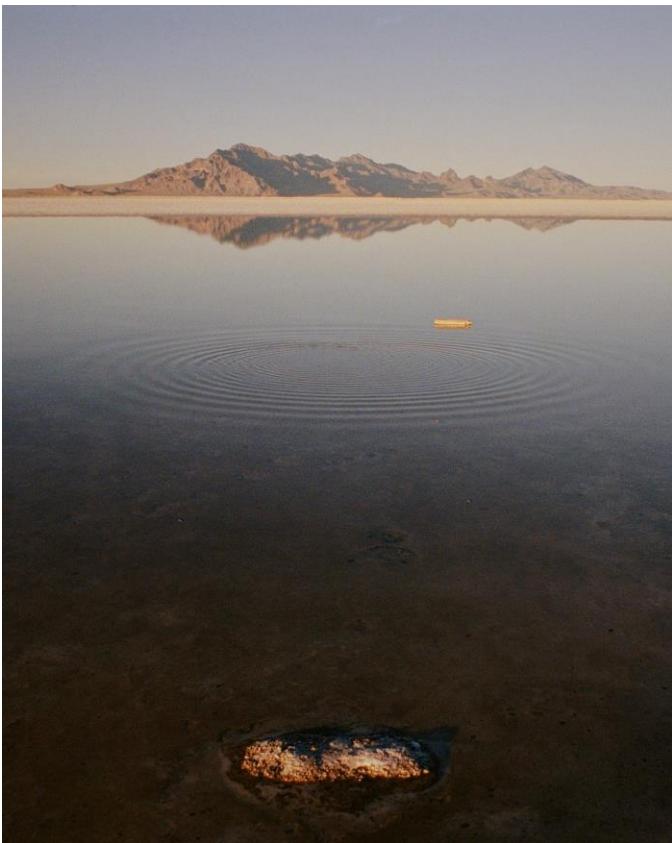
Untitled 3
Lauren Trific
Art



Untitled 4
Lauren Trific
Art



Untitled 5
Lauren Trific
Art



Time To Go
Lynn White
Poetry

I drew up the blinds
and looked out
to where the daylight,
exposed all
before me.
I slid the bolt open
and unlocked the door.
I hesitated
but I knew
it was time,
time to leave this room
time to leave this place
time to leave the shadows
behind,
to put aside my doubts
put aside my veil
expose my face,
show myself
as I am
and leave my fears
behind me.

HE WHO HAS NOTHING

David Summerfield

Poetry

He is a lazy flowing river
That sometimes becomes a torrent,
A steady rain that sometimes becomes a violent storm,
He must mine within him a seam of inspiration each day
To continually reclaim his love for life
Despite accidents, equipment failures, loss of power,
And disappointment. He's that fish that swims,
The Bison that trudges, the bird which labors,
Against the current, through a blizzard, in the wind,
To spawn, to eat, to escape.
The celebrity seeks admiration,
The entrepreneur pursues riches,
The politician lusts for power
He seeks only acceptance
Amid an avalanche of rejection,
An Everest of negative response,
A deluge of indifference.

Nettles
Kristy Snedden
Poetry

All I want to be is courageous
with love. I fall down on the trail.
I lay among the nettles.
The stinging hairs work their way
through my skin into my heart until
it leaks something that attracts
the caterpillars, the tortrix moth
and the red admiral butterfly. I lay
among the nettles, welcome the sting.

Sacrifice

Stephen Zimmerman

Poetry

I'll go alone
You wait here
Stay where it's safe
Let me volunteer

I can't promise
That I'll make it through
But if one of us must die
Better me than you

A greater love
I can't comprehend
Than the one that is willing
To sacrifice life for a friend

Be Kind
Stephen Zimmerman
Poetry

My friend, I know it hurts
When you feel maligned
But please don't give into hatred
Instead just still be kind

Vengeance is never the answer
An eye for an eye makes us blind
So please don't give into hatred
Instead just still be kind

Roux Knows

Kristin Keyes

Nonfiction

Roux knows. Roux knows when you are anxious. Or worried. Or tense with expectation. Roux knows as it shapes and shifts itself to you—an extension of the long-handled spoon you use to stir the flour and oil mixture over low heat until it is *just the right color*. It can't be too light—like too much cream in a cup of black coffee. Nor can it be too dark—chocolate colored perfection quickly slicking to an oily blackness means you burned it. Might as well be burnt. Throw it out and start over.

Approach the stove with confidence, wrapped in the memory of your mother cooking gumbo at the stove in your childhood house in Louisiana. The cookbooks say to have all your chopped vegetables assembled before you begin to cook the roux. Because the roux knows its place as the foundation of a good pot of gumbo. It must be babied, a slow figure eight of stirring as it morphs from a pale blonde slurry to a thick savory hazelnut. It won't wait once it is perfect. *If you screw up the roux, you have to start over.* How many times did I hear that growing up? Ruination to resurrection. *Don't screw up.* I never knew my mother to follow directions, unless it was the Ten Commandments.

She didn't prep—ever. She barreled through life without a question of starting over—a ball of anxiety and hurry. Her gumbo was made in an old stainless-steel pot. Her spoon of choice was a serving spoon—too short for the tall pot. She didn't care. Her life taught her she wasn't allowed the luxury of a wooden, long-handled spoon. "Use what you got," she would say as she tore through the house in mania, suddenly concerned with dust bunnies, the pile of clutter hidden under my bed.

She made do because it *is* what the women in our family do—we make do with what we have; what we have been given. Perhaps ruination is our inheritance. Resurrection is my choice.

She was burned many times in her lifetime, and if she complained, it was into a pot at the stove. She became a magician, muttering incantations about my father, her children, work, people long forgotten. They would bubble and hiss in the pot and she would produce something, a spell to keep us close. When I became tall enough, I would be handed the spoon to stir the hot oil as she frantically chopped the vegetables. Looking back, I'm not sure which was the better choice: a child handling a knife to chop vegetables; a child stirring a mixture of hot oil and flour that people in southern Louisiana affectionately call *Cajun napalm*.

I am no longer afraid of making a roux. I've experienced too many disasters, both personal and culinary, to approach a pot and stove with timidity. I've made too many iterations of gumbo, making do with what I have, to store a fear that would ruin a chance at magic. I have scars on my hand and arm from the roux—lessons when I approached it in a hurry—worried, anxious about some sort of perfection that could never be attained. The worst scars were from a house I hated living in, a too small kitchen where two people were a crowd. I got distracted, a cardinal sin in making roux, and the hot oil seized my skin in three searing drops that left deep scarlet blisters.

Ruination to resurrection. My mother no longer cooks gumbo. She doesn't cook now. She visits her inheritance, though. A rapid mental decline that defies diagnosis, defies easy categorization. It isn't dementia. It isn't Alzheimer's. The depression that was whispered about at my grandmother's gas stove and trickles like a

handed down recipe through my mother's family could be the culprit.

When Melville beckons me with a drizzly November in my soul, I make gumbo. I bought a long handled wooden spoon. The vegetables are neatly chopped on a heavy board. The spices a kaleidoscope of earth tones in a small dish. I pour of glass of wine or bourbon, depending on which headache I want, and pour the flour and oil into the pot. I know by smell and sight now, when the roux is perfect, and my lazy figure eight motions match my slow breathing. I play music as I cook, something my mother never did, and when I hear the *whoosh* and sizzle of the vegetables hit the hot grease, I recall her furrowed brow. Her smile as family and guests ask for seconds of the warming spiced broth, thick with okra, chicken, sausage, and on rare occasions, shrimp.

I am finally settled into a house with a gas stove, and the click of a low flame signals the beginning of my own magic, as I both break and solder my inheritance. Her recipe is mine; her ruin is mine as well. Resurrection is my own, and only mine. I shake off tendrils of sadness, and when I am asked about my day, I am sometimes unsure if I don't remember it on purpose, or if it is the beginning of something to fear—the beginning of a strange ruin. I can't linger on it. Resurrection is mine for the taking. I find it in the slow stirring of what she has given me.

Family Baker
Kristin Keyes
Poetry

We are not a Pillsbury cut and slice family.
My mother's recipes are on stained cards
Tattered from fifty years of marriage,
Marred with blue crayon,
Bearing my kindergarten scrawl

Her crowning achievement:
Springerle
Pale white
Flavored with anise
Pressed from wooden molds
Dried overnight
And then baked in the morning

My friend down the street
Was a slice and bake family.
She took one bite of my mother's
Labor
And spit it out.

“It tastes like black jellybeans.”

She went back to her pale,
Round slices,
Undercooked
baked quickly
from too warm dough

I trace my fingers
Over the wooden molds I keep
Flowers, stars, candles
A manger scene

Think of my mother's
Dusty hands as she
Handled the chilled dough
And made memories
Too pretty to eat.

River Road
Kristin Keyes
Poetry

These houses, derelict
This road, sinuous
These trees, more ancient than
That church: pews, crypts, bones
Would cease to exist
Save for the levee

Experts say—
The gyre of erosion washes
The river land into ox-bow lakes
A covering of
These testaments:
Life. Death. Worship.
A baptism, under water
Erasing these human frailties
Of stone and wood

The levee stops change
Save for sunrise and sunset
—It is its own sacrament—
Against water lapping the shore
Testing its luck
Breaking ox-bows, horse shoes
Against all that is holy

Texas, 1980

Kristin Keyes

Poetry

Webbed orbs once nestled
in gray soil
fine as talcum
now rest on
the lean-to floor
painted gray concrete
cool on my feet
as the humid Texas sun
begins a languid rise.

Knife slice to rind
reveals a firm sweet flesh
an orb of sugar
around a nest of seeds
slipping onto the porch
buffeted by a screen door slam
feet warmed by the gray porch slats
holding
the dripping crescent
to the sun.

Spring Planting
Kristin Keyes
Poetry

A dozen seeds scattered
Will soon be sunflowers
And a scattered packet
Of wildflowers
Are now tiny, green
Hands, fragile against
Dark loam

I see prayer
As I kneel to examine
This life
And how all life
Begins this way
As tender green
Supplications
To the heavens.

Awuru
Deborah Ajilore
Art



Feet
Deborah Ajilore
Art



In Twos
Deborah Ajilore
Art



Sunlit Sundays
Mitchell Boehler
Art



Amongst Shrouded Evergreens

Mitchell Boehler

Art



black widow
Mitchell Boehler
Poetry

you spider
spinning your web
feeling with those legs
eyes of dread
setting traps
and never to beg
waiting waiting
nothing be said
catching me quickly
spinning me round
breaking with the dead
away with me now.

Black Walnuts

Katy Goforth

Fiction

Your mama is bred from a long line of black walnut trees. Tall and straight with a rich-brown heartwood. Attractive and extremely durable.

When surrounded by others, her personality towers over them leaving no low branches to grab hold. Yet they stretch and reach with the hope of touching her leaves. Even grazing them with their fingertips.

If you watch her from afar, all alone, she will branch out closer to the ground developing a personality that is tinged with sweetness but still leaving a bitterness. You might not even detect the bitterness until long after your encounter.

Her roots work the same as that black walnut tree. Taking hold so long ago and reaching into generation after generation after generation. Each mama exuding her juglone just like the black walnut. Inhibiting the growth of anyone around to limit competition. If you get close, she will stunt your growth, possibly even smother it. Emotionally stunt you forever.

But the black walnut tree can provide comfort. Mama can too. Growing fifty feet tall and stretching out beautiful foliage to provide shade and solace to others. Those not coming directly from her body.

Fernlike leaves so light and airy. Light and air for those outsiders. They have taken nothing from her. Required nothing. For their reward, mama's leaves turn bright yellow in autumn. A show.

But you are her fruit, dropping from her on a mid-October day. A love and hate relationship as you are made of a heaviness. You make a mess. She expels you. A nuisance encased in an ugly husk.

Some soul will come along and try to harvest you. Collect you. They will remove your husk immediately as to avoid you festering inside and molding. They will learn to wear gloves when handling you. Your stain, mama's stain she has passed to you, leaving marks on anything that touches it.

You are hard at first. You will soften. Begin to rot. Perhaps this soul will step on your outside with an old pair of shoes, removing it to get to your sweetness. If unsuccessful, don't fret. Someone will come along and try again. Put you in a bucket and hose you down to remove any remaining husk.

You will have a decision to make. Let someone crack you with a hammer to get to your insides. Or become a black walnut tree yourself. Extending your roots and reaching into generation after generation after generation.

By the Docks

Erin Jamieson

Poetry

Wonder bread, torn
crusts tossed carelessly
black-bellied ducks
compete for a bite
as sun sets crimson
a runny egg yolk
stretched across
smokey sky—grills
of dying Summer
charred hot dogs smeared
with mustard—a child
loses their bun, watches
as it falls into the lake
devoured by a lone duck
sending ripples in its wake

Geese
Erin Jamieson
Poetry

I used to run
on winding trails
curving around
a pewter-hued lake
training for a career
that never happened
running until my legs
filled with lactic acid
& the humid air
filled my chest
but whenever I came
across the geese- beady eyes
slender elegant beaks
I turned around
I thought I was afraid
of their hissing but
I was afraid that they
knew their home
& I did not

Things That Can Be Forgotten

Laura Grace Weldon

Poetry

Coffee, till it's cold. Keys, especially
when the door swings shut behind you.
Bills, deadlines, promises.
What started an argument.
How to end an argument.
To-do lists, appointments, abstinence.
First taste of a mango.
Scent of lilacs,
Your grandmother's hands.
The names they called you,
but not how those names made you feel.
Where you put your wallet,
your goals, your hutzpah.
History's stories, even while
they unbury themselves through you.

I Hope This Email Finds You

Laura Grace Weldon

Poetry

away from your desk, your phone,
your clocked obligations. Hope
instead you're letting a waterfall
course over every inch
of your misunderstood skin
as you scrub your way into peace.
Or spelunking deep inside a book.
Or out in the dark hooting your wild hunger
to owls who surely see sparks you emit.
I hope this email fades from your inbox
and scurries into the crowded oblivion
where forgotten messages mutter
amongst themselves.
May what finds you, instead,
rise from an unknown address
in response to spring storms,
sudden toadstools,
small brown birds,
iridescent beetles lifting into flight.

ILLUSION

Emily Holi

Poetry

and you, I thought

I knew

I believed

you were

permanent.

and you, I thought

I knew

I believed

you would give anything to
stay.

and you did.

and you're here.

but I feel now,

that magic has

faded.

I no longer know
if you're just an illusion.

I'll fix it if I have to.

just tell me I have to.

tell me how to

touch you

to make you real

again.

RED BALLOON

Emily Holi

Poetry

like a shiny red balloon,
new and appealing,
but not all that different
from the rest
[though it seemed like you were],

you were up, and then down, but
stayed close to the ground,
because that's where you wanted
to be.

no one said that you
had a slow leak
[you should have
told me].

I guess I should be glad you didn't
fly away when I
set you free, but it
feels even worse that you

hit the ground and you
knew you would, and now
you're elated because you're
deflated.

[and your
string doesn't
matter
anymore.]

SNOW
Emily Holi
Poetry

It's hard to
step outside when the
snow
is this heavy,
when it covers the
ground, and everything between
my autumn ashes,
my summer skin,
my spring shadows,
trapped inside
a dusty gray glow,
a beauty that comes
and goes,
but a power that remains,
crushing pieces of me
with every passing
blow.

COLLECTING DUST

Caroline Beuley

Fiction

Ursula steps from her cottage into the sky. She pushes off into the night, her skyshoes skimming over the black like skates on a glassy lake. She holds her golden scythe in one hand, adjusting the glass bottles clinking at her waist with her other. Dregs of stardust float in the bottles, making them sparkle. Her fourth trip out today. She sighs. She glances back at the cottage where her younger sisters wait. The cottage's light is already fading as the old generator floating off the back of their house sputters and clanks through the last of the stardust.

Ursula skates towards the patch of stars nearest the cottage, her strides displacing slices of the night. She glides past the sagging, dark remains of an old neighbor's house. Space dust trickles forlornly from the chimney. Soon the house will sink into the stratosphere. All the other abandoned homesteads have. And then, they will be truly alone: Ursula, her two younger sisters, and millions of miles of space.

When Ursula reaches the patch of stars, she removes a glass bottle from her belt, positioning its mouth at the point of the star, scraping along its smoking face with her scythe. A paltry trickle of stardust twinkles into the bottle. She has farmed these stars many times. Ursula thinks bitterly of her childhood - of the rolling, bounteous fields of stars. But her parents had wanted adventure, a chance to build a new life. They had fancied themselves pioneers, flying far from their birthplace in the Milky Way to this dark, celestial frontier.

But now they are dead and gone, and it is Ursula who pays the price. Now it is Ursula who must scavenge for stardust day after day to keep their family afloat.

Ursula caps her bottle of stardust, trapping the swirling contents before skating off again. She ventures farther afield, swiping her skates mindlessly as she flies towards another patch of stars. She lets her mind wander, thoughts drifting like space junk. They could leave, of course, admit defeat, return to the Milky Way. But the house is all they have left of their parents, an embodiment of their mother and father's adventurous spirit, their dreams, their hopes for the family. Ursula smiles, remembering her mother returning home flushed after a long day of farming stars. *She* had loved it, had relished the challenge.

Then, one of Ursula's skates sticks, and she screams as her body jerks in midair. Ursula ricochets back to reality. Her arms pinwheel, and she feels one stick to the sky. Dread rises in her as she peers at the night around her. Sure enough, where an absent eye might only have seen more space, a trained one can spot the pale, milky strands criss-crossing into the black: a Starspider web.

Ursula swears. Starspiders proliferate where stars do. What is one doing this far from the Milky Way? Ursula twists, positioning her scythe so it is poised over the sparkling silk. But as she raises the scythe, Ursula hears a sound like meteor showers raining on her cottage's roof. A rapid pitter patter of eight legs scuttling across the web sends vibrations through her body, rippling her floating hair. Ursula turns.

The Starspider has returned to her web, dropping from another universe on a pellucid, particulate string. The spider is the size of a small comet. Its hundreds of milky eyes stare blindly at Ursula. The spider plucks its way across the web, each footfall sending a vibration through Ursula. A stringed symphony: Prelude to a Death.

As the spider skitters across the web, its bulbous, translucent body bobs in the moonlight. Ursula gasps. She has never seen one this close before, never realized that *this* is how they got their name. For the huge body of the spider is full of swirling stardust - enough to fuel their house for months. Ursula stares as the colossal spider bears down on her. She has only moments to decide: float or fight. She thinks of her mother, her father, and their home.

The spider clacks its pincers. Ursula steels herself, waiting in the webbing, her scythe raised. The spider's jowls drip with gray saliva as it shudders towards its prize. Ursula's hands shake as she eyes the pulsing sack of stardust. She thinks of her sisters as she raises her scythe. The scythe and the pincers spark as they clash, sending stars shooting into the inky night. Make a wish.

BAT GIRLS

Caroline Beuley

Fiction

We wrap our leathery wings round our wasting frames. Sunken breasts, hard bellies, jutting shoulder blades. We are all swaddled in black, cocooned against the wind whistling through the cave. Our wings are soft, softer than any of us expected. They provide some comfort. Our hair drops towards the earth like Spanish Moss. But of course, it isn't. Nothing grows here in the cave. Nothing except us, sprouting from the rock, growing older, growing smaller.

We listen to him all day. That booming voice echoing from the mouth of the cave. It is so much louder now. I think now we finally hear him clearly - his true voice. The voice our girlhood ears could only perceive dimly, as if through a veil. Many of us had worn veils, shrouded ourselves as we made our deals with him.

The man is known by many. He's a one-man bank of sorts. He lends to those in need. But only the most desperate pay his price. We had been desperate once. Desperate enough to offer our bodies as collateral, young enough not to consider the consequences, destitute enough to think it couldn't get worse. Now, in our new forms, eternally paying our debt, we feel little.

Now we listen as he strikes his bargains with more girls, sets his price, his terms and conditions. They sign in blood, their trembling fingers already fluttering like wings. Which most of them will have soon, when they fail to pay, when he comes to collect. Then, they will join us. The fruits of his labor, hanging in his cave. Ripe for the plucking whenever he's hungry. Put back on the branch bitten and bruised, torn flesh dripping. Until we wrap our wings around ourselves again. Huddle in

together. We resign ourselves to his power, the bargain that we struck, the contract come due.

Today, like all the other days, we listen to him deal, but today, something is different. Today, I know the other voice.

The memory bobs up hazily, a leaf floating just below the surface of a murky pond. Girls' voices bouncing over the pond. Laughter ringing out. "You're it!" Hands reaching out, the warm pulse of sweaty palms on summer skin. "Got you!" Arms, not wings, pressed against each other, falling in the grass. That word, as if heard from behind a pane of glass. *Sister*.

Our wings snap. Our talons clack. The word echoes, multiplies, bounces off cave walls. Echoing back amongst us. Sister. Sister. Sister. Hundreds of heads, black eyes, all fixed on me.

I spread my wings wide. My wrecked body hangs upside down from the cave ceiling, shriveled skin glowing in the half-light, paler still against my black wings. For a moment I hang there, a wasted chandelier.

And then I fall. My wings gasp with relief as the wind slides beneath them. And finally my hair is behind my shoulders, not dangling above my brow. My head is lifted, and I am me, and I am flying towards my sister.

We are all flying, our bodies bared, wings flared. We shoot towards the mouth of the cave. Wingtip to wingtip. A rolling, roiling cauldron of bats. We pour ourselves over him like black water, wave upon wave upon wave. We drown him, and when the black sea settles, I see my sister running away, arms pumping.

The Invention of Solitude
Ali Hammoud
Art



Flight of Stairs
Ali Hammoud
Art



Cracked
Ali Hammoud
Art



Green Doorway
Ali Hammoud
Art



Shadowy Entrance
Ali Hammoud
Art



Disinfect
Katrina Kaye
Poetry

perhaps the only
way to heal
is to open the wound

water is not always enough
sometimes fire is needed

let the sting of disinfectant
sizzle and smart until
 toxicity subsides
extinguish the bacteria
that spreads and breeds in darkness
 with water
 and flame
 and antiseptic burn

promises of reform are
not driving cells to rebuild
hopes and prayers and well wishes
do not flush a wound
they merely dismiss it
 leave it coarse
allow the infection to spread
until it becomes intolerable
 untreatable
 consuming
 permanent

the wound is necessary for growth to begin
the wound is necessary to awaken the body
do not be afraid of the scar that remains
 proof of survival,

of healing,
of resilience,
proof that growth is possible,
it defines identity and gifts a narrative
unique to its terrain
scars are a blessing

After He Left
Katrina Kaye
Poetry

They said
I would start
hearing things:

the heater
click-click-clicking
on and off,
cars driving by
at all hours,
the tap, tap, taping of
the dog's toe nails
on the kitchen floor,
a phone call
at two am,
the crash of the ice
from the freezer,
the rattle of wind
knock-knock-knocking
at the front door.

They said
I would hear
remnants of
our life together
in the morning news,
the creak-creak-creaking
of sunken
floorboards,
in the way the
blankets rustle
to the floor,
and the way water

drip-drip-drips
from faucet.
But I don't
hear anything,
only silence.
Nothing but
silence.

What Sad Redemptions

Dominic Marcoaldi

Poetry

Like any boy
I went fishing.

And I hooked
a blue catfish
through the eye.

Like any boy,
I threw it out.
Standing in poison ivy,
my legs grew rash then
blossomed

blistering. In Levitical days
they'd toss me out
to the desert,
a calf's throat slit
on behalf of
my blemish.

Luckily, I live
on a lawn, safer
nature, which I cut,
like any man, because
growth is unappealing.

And I hacked away
a rabbit's cradle,
leaving them
there, like any baby,
sleeping. Now, in their place,
red grass, clawed soil.

Hiving from the ivy,
my skin hardened
like fish scales.
And I watched the starlings
enjoying their banquet
in the neutered grass.

Pants
Dominic Marcoaldi
Poetry

Stained by couch and barstool,
worn by fleeting moments,
I am not fit for weddings or caskets,
not fit for sawdust or barbells.
Because you sweat and bleed,
you force my weekly baptism
as if Jesus died for Downy,
a rough cleansing that forced
the button out of town.
Every bent knee tear drop, I caught
in my pockets where you hid
your identification, money, and condoms.
Yet you refused pictures
in your youth, no recognition of how
you could not be seen without me.
Now I am tired. My stitches ache
for their future as the frayed
veins of bird's nests and worm homes,
a useless banner in a landfill, or
a dead flag frowning in a thrift store
from some shapeshifting country.

To the bartender who tends to more than just the bar

Annie Marhefka

Nonfiction

For Jenn

You think no one notices the way you remember everyone's orders, the Corona (no lime) for the guy with the Zeppelin shirt, the sweet tea vodka iced tea blend with extra fruit for the girl with the blue earrings, the cheap wine in the plastic bottles for the woman in the corner. You think we don't see the way your silhouette dips behind the bar, that your voice is drowned out by the clinking of the bottles and the creaks of the barstools sliding on old hardwood slats, and the locals trilling along to *Up on Cripple Creek*.

You think we don't notice the way you tend to our secrets, when I told you I was pregnant before I told my friends, the way you winked and concocted a drink that looked exactly like my regular drink but wasn't, for all those weeks. The way you hugged me when no one was looking, the way you whispered to me that I would be a great mom, as if you had sensed my uncertainty.

The way you tend to the band, too, clearing empty glasses from the ledge near their mic stands, refilling their water glasses, reminding the patrons between sets to tip the musicians.

The way you tend to your fellow bartenders, a gentle hand on the lower back as you scoot behind to clean up a spill, the way you restock the cooler before it's empty, the way you smile.

The way it doesn't even feel like we're in a bar, more like someone's living room, like there should be a recliner in the corner and a colorful macrame rug at our feet. The way you make us forget what we're escaping from.

Anarchy Tree

Rachael Hughes

Poetry

I used to think trees buttressed
against power lines—adjusted
grew ‘round their trials and oppressors
Until someone told me that the power
companies come and
prune / hack /saw
their limbs to protect
power lines
Now I’m rooted in the belief
that those types of trees
Still grow
in spite of their obstacles

Old '86
Rachael Hughes
Poetry

Shortbread-colored Volkswagen Jetta
1986 VW radio, no tape deck
We drove to the beach with a boombox
In the floorboard, avoiding potholes
So the CD wouldn't skip
Breakfast before band camp
Sneaking cigarettes before after school jobs
"Crash the car and I'll kill you," I said to my
First real love
As I unzipped his pants
Midnight moons shone down on the cream-colored hood
Reminding me that curfew didn't exist
I drove through my depression with this

Something metal—strong enough to get me through
The beginning of college, that broken-hearted breakup
Something that didn't last
Because nothing ever does
And then
I met
you.

Memories I Savor or Wish to Forget

Alicia Hilton

Poetry

Waiting for you beside a stolen boat.
Smoke from an explosion drifts closer.
The passing minutes crushing my hope.
A lone seagull squawking as I wept.
Hearing gunfire and screams.
Fearing you were a mirage when I glimpsed
your shimmering armor in the distance.
Your steel claw gently grasping my hand.
Hearing you say, “Everything will be okay.”
Casting off the line tethering us to land.
Sailing to a country where robots can be family.
Waking with you watching over me.
Hearing you say, “I love you.”
Standing at the helm together.
Watching a pod of dolphins flee a shark.
Seeing a ship materialize on the horizon.
Realizing it was impossible for us to flee.
Hearing you say, “I love you.”
Watching you leap into the sea.

17 Tamarak Lane

Alicia Hilton

Poetry

A yellow cottage
at the end
of a deserted
lane.

The pentagram
that guarded the gate
stolen
a hex in its place.

Herbs in the yard
shudder and weep.
Bog blueberry
whispers about treachery.

Belted kingfishers
rattle and scream
trying to summon
help.

Three cats
trapped in the cottage
scratch at the door
pleading for freedom.

A spider weaves a web
across the bedroom
snaring
shattered dreams.

In the dark cellar
a yellow-haired witch

is stuffed
in the washing machine.

Medusa Seeks a Talent Agent

Alicia Hilton

Poetry

The Gorgon Queen
had been deemed woefully passé.
Her talent agent quit.
Carnegie Hall would not
take her calls.
The Moulin Rouge refused
to let her slither on stage.
Even a dive in Topeka, Kansas
cancelled her one-night show.
A horrific plight
for a broke monstrosity.

Medusa contacted my agency
Dragon Entertainment LLC
with a flurry of desperate texts
HISSING in ALL CAPS
flanked by woeful emojis
oozing serpentine misery.

I scheduled our Zoom for noon
and donned a mirrored eyeshade.
When I told her my fee,
the cobras writhing around her face
spit venom on her computer's screen.
Of course she agreed to shed
half of her future earnings.
Reanimating a putrefied career ain't easy.

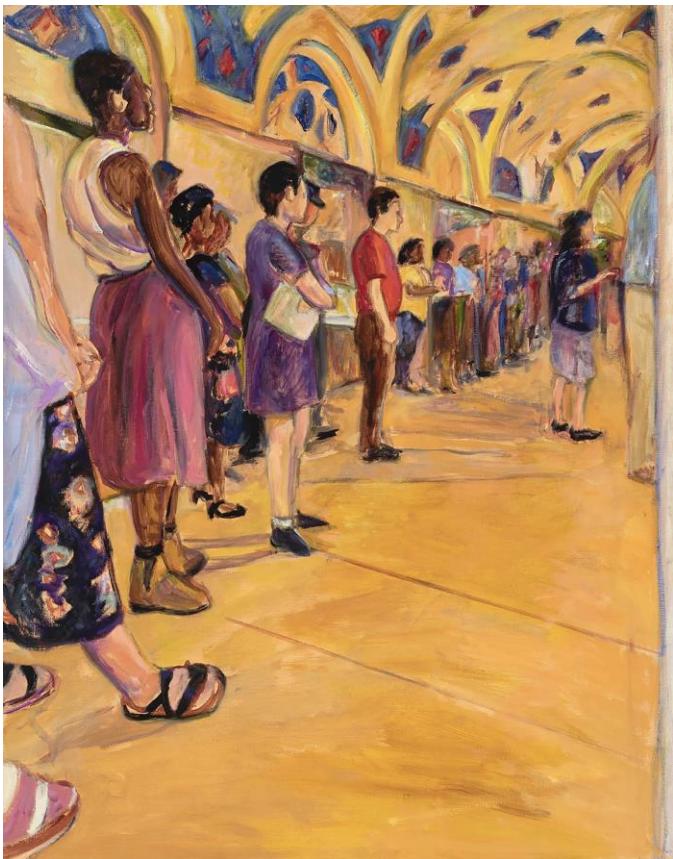
The solution—an undead double-header.
Zombified Elvis sang love songs
while Medusa *hissed* and gyrated,
wowing audiences in Vegas and Monaco.

Her pasties and thong were silver
to match the King's mirrored eyeshade.
Even zombies can turn to stone.

Pomegranates
Diana Kurz
Art



Waiting
Diana Kurz
Art



Helena and Rosie
Diana Kurz
Art



Lola
Diana Kurz
Art



cooking
Corey Bryan
Poetry

I walk into the kitchen
to grab another beer.
She's cooking orange slices
With brown sugar and honey
and it smells like her love

FISHING POLES

Mark Belair

Poetry

We have the Hudson River, but
since I don't fish it
there's no reason
to store two rods and reels
at the back of our coat closet.

They belonged to my dad
and me when I was a boy
(we fished most every week),
but neither of my sons, raised in the city,
had cause to take up the sport.

So the poles represent
a generational
endpoint, encode
rowboating, hook-baiting, wide-casting
days only I
can give the dignity
of a parting—even elegiac—
moment.

Later, the poles, absent my gaze,
would fail to gaze back
with their history
of father and son
catches and releases—
all unspoken
but lake-water clear.

THE BREAK

Mark Belair

Poetry

Leafless winter
trees

rise
from a mountain

like hair
bristled in fear.

Rows
of jagged, harvest-stripped

cornstalks
stretch

like streets
tornado-swept.

Dry riverbed
rocks

crack
like skulls

exposed
to the merciless sun.

You can keep bedside
watch

over the incrementally
dying

only so long, then you must
take a break,

take a drive,
get a change of scenery.

STAIRS
Mark Belair
Poetry

The subway stairs
I climb every day after

my dark little journey
home received, upon the pressure

of my first step,
a luminous light,

as if my return
had caused

the sun to sneak
out from behind the clouds

and wink
a welcome back.

Then I rose into
leaf-patterned light

that, as I walked
my usual route,

dappled the sidewalk,
sun and shade

delineating the fragile, surface
balance

that defines
my daily way.

Bars
Sandra Hosking
Poetry

I have become so good
At welding bars
The seams at each corner
Are perfect waves
Each fillet adds strength
To my structure
This prison I have made myself.

Snow
Sandra Hosking
Poetry

Crystalline snow blankets the earth
As your transient love covers me
It rests on fir branches,
Obscures red ash berries.
It sparkles in the waning sun
Drawing your veiled gaze
Making me believe I am wrapped in care
Until its coldness seeps through every pore
And the shivering begins.
When the fleeting substance finally melts,
I realize how it provided no warmth
And only kept me from the spring.

I am Apex
Sandra Hosking
Poetry

I am Apex
Flying high above.
I see movement in the tall grass
And dive, talons ready.
I love the feel of soft flesh
As they dig in
The taste of blood
On my tongue.
This constant hunger
Leads me only to hunt again.

Home For Eid

Shireen Hakim

Fiction

“There you go.” Mehreen smiled and handed the blond boy the book from behind the register.

“What do you say to the pretty lady?” His tall dad prompted the boy.

“Thank you.” Piped the little boy, clutching his newly purchased middle-grade graphic novel.

“You’re welcome! Have a great day!” Mehreen smiled warmly as the two walked out of No Shelf Control, the independent bookstore she worked at. She glanced to her left and saw that the customer queue was empty, so she reached for her Android phone in her right pocket. Mehreen scrolled through her text messages. She sighed as she saw her last question to her younger brother from last night still went unanswered.

Zayd: Hey, we'll be at mom's place Tuesday morning for Eid prayer and gifts. Jannah said she made something for you in her art class.

Mehreen: I don't want to see Dad. Maybe I can meet you someplace else?

Mehreen shook her head. She thumbed over to pictures and scrolled through the photo she'd taken with her 10- year old niece Jannah last Eid.

Buzz, buzz. A text message! She thumbed back over to the text app.

Zayd: We only have time to make one stop at Mom's house to see everyone.

I don't think I can make it, she started to type, then noticed a customer had appeared in line. She placed her phone on the counter and slapped a smile on her face. “I can help you over here!”

On her break, she stared at her phone and noticed her last message from her mom was two nights ago.

Wait a minute, she didn't text me last night. Did something happen? Heart pounding, Mehreen called her mom. Pick up. I hope she's not in the hospital.

“Hello?” Her mom boomed on the phone. Mehreen yanked the phone away from her ear.

“Oh hi mom. You didn't text last night.”

“Salaams. Oh sorry. I was so busy wrapping gifts for Jannah! I got her everything on her list, and of course a couple extra.”

Mehreen laughed. “Oh ok.” She took a deep breath.

“How are you?” Her mom asked loudly.

Mehreen moved her phone slightly from her right ear. “I'm good. Just on a break at work.”

“I have gifts for Jannah as well...” Mehreen began.

“Oh that's nice! She always asks for you when she visits.”

“Yeah but I don't know—”

“What?” her mom asked.

“I don't know if I can get tomorrow morning off work for Eid prayer, but I should be able to come in the afternoon so I can give Zaynab her gifts.”

“That's wonderful.” Her mom said. “It will be good to see you. And I have gifts for you too of course.”

“Thanks. Okay, my break is over. I'll see you tomorrow.”

“Great.”

Mehreen pressed End call, sent out one more text, and then stuck her phone in her pocket. As she opened the door to the break room into the bookstore area she felt her phone buzz.

Mohamed: You sure you're ready to tell them about us?

Mehreen: Yes I'm ready. I want to do it in person.

The next afternoon Mehreen stood in front of her parents' house.

Her mom opened the front door. "Eid Mubarak!" They hugged.

"Where's Zayd and Jannah?" she asked as she stepped in the house.

Her mom replied, "They're not here yet. Your dad is upstairs in his office. Go and say salaams. Tell him about your article."

Mehreen sighed as she trudged upstairs. Mehreen peeped in the office. "Salaams Dad."

Dad turned in his swivel chair. "Walaikum Asalam. How are you?"

Mehreen replied, "Good, how are you?"

Dad replied, "Alhumdulilah. Where did you go for Eid prayer?"

"I didn't go. I had to work."

"Just at a bookstore. You should have taken the time off."

"My job is important to me. I'm going back downstairs." She walked into the kitchen.

Her mom looked up from her cell phone. "Your Phooipi said she knows a guy for you."

Mehreen sighed. "Mom, I told you I don't want to be matched up."

"You have to get married soon! You're 35. There is no harm in talking to him. I got his email address and picture. He's 35 and divorced."

Mehreen blurted out, "Mom, I'm talking to someone already about marriage!"

Her mom gasped. "Who?"

Mehreen said, "His name is Mohamed. He's a Doctor at UCLA hospital."

"That's great! I wonder if your dad knows the family."

Mehreen sighed. "I doubt it."

Her mom jumped up from her chair. “Let's go tell your dad!”

“Wait Mom.”

Mom turned around. “What?”

Mehreen replied, “He's Black.”

Mom fell back onto her chair: “Oh my God. Are you sure he's Muslim?”

Mehreen rolled her eyes. “Come on Mom. His name is Mohamed for God's sake.”

Mom frowned. “Don't curse.”

Mehreen said. “Muslim people have Muslim names. And most Muslims in America are Black.”

Her mom shook her head. “I don't think it will work. The cultures are too different.”

Mehreen: “Mom, Mohamed and I are already engaged!”

Mom got up from the table again. “I need to tell your father.”

“No, don't. He'll get mad and it will ruin Eid.”

“Don't worry.” Her mom hurried upstairs.

Mehreen walked to the living room.

Zayd and his family walked into the house. He looked at Mehreen's long face and laughed. “So you told them about Mohamed huh?”

“Shut up. Mom freaked out and now she is telling Dad.” She turned to Jannah, who was wearing a jumpsuit and matching headband.

“Eid Mubarak!” She gave her a big hug.

That night after eating dinner, taking photos, and opening presents, her mom asked, “Do you want to take some nihari with you? I saved it for you.”

Mehreen nodded. “Okay.”

She followed her into the kitchen. Dad joined them. “So we will meet Malek next Eid, insha' Allah?”

Mehreen laughed. “It's Mohamed, and yes.”

The Blank Signature

Donna Pucciani

Poetry

for René Magritte

Not the non-pipe painting,
nor the huge apple on the head of a man,
not the hand painting winged clouds,
or Pisa's tower leaning on a feather, but

a medieval woman garbed in purple
atop a brown horse, riding through
a forest of grayish green
under a lush canopy of leaves.

I thank Magritte for losing me
in the surreal woods of varied verdure,
and for the green gift shop socks depicting
the slow step of the chestnut steed,

the noncommittal face of a regal female
who sits upright on its back, staring down
at one lifted hoof, or inward at her
unconfessed sins, or searching for

René's invisible ink.

Staying Whole

Donna Pucciani

Poetry

Ten green bottles, hanging on a wall,
the song Uncle Peter sings to baby Alessandro,
all ten verses counted backwards as he pushes
the stroller towards a storefront daycare
on a sidewalk in Madrid.

A song of imminent disaster:
If one falls, it shatters into a million shards
of irredeemable glass, chunks smelling of beer
and nonchalant drunkenness.

What were these vessels, either full or empty,
doing anyway, hanging on a wall?
Who put them there, and why? Such a song
to sing to a little boy who may or may not
learn from it his first words in English.

Alessandro laughs, not knowing why
some bottles break and others remain whole,
hearing only a song of things that accidentally
crash, the inevitability of broken pieces,
the peace of an uncle's deep voice
holding him safe, for now.

The Balance of Trees

Andy Perrin

Poetry

Sometimes | the tree | dies
by wind | and weight of snow,
instantly.

Other times | the tree | dies
by stress | or lack of foliage,
slowly.

However, | the acorn | breaks
by new life | warmth and light,
instantly.

And, | the roots | seek
nutrients | while foliage flourishes,
slowly.

When He Stops By

Andy Perrin

Poetry

When he stops by
time's marked and passes.

Once clung to bended
salt marsh grasses.

Then onto summer-sweet's
highest branches.

Most joyful drifting
along coastal air,

but the earthy swamp
seems just as fair.

That red-winged blackbird
is everywhere and here.

Love, Books
Deron Eckert
Poetry

There are dozens of books in our house.
I keep a stack by my bed and some in my bag.
There are rows of them on the kitchen counters.
More rest atop mantles and at our feet.
Occasionally, we read the same ones,
but never at the same time.

I like it better when you describe them
in your own words than when you read aloud.
If you find one really important, you tell me
to read it myself, but when I listen,
I only hear your voice.

Contributor Bios

Deborah Ajilore

Deborah Ajilore, Frontier XII, is a Nigerian writer and photographer. Her works have been published in Hennepin Review, Mud Season Review, Salamander Ink, Stanchion Magazine, Shallow Tales Review, and elsewhere.

Mark Belair

I write a poem to find out why I needed to start it. Which is when something happens that I sense is meaningful but don't know why. Writing a poem is how, bewildered, I try to find out that why.

Caroline Beuley

Caroline Beuley is a high-school English teacher and writer based in Washington, D.C. When she's not teaching or writing, she enjoys taking her dachshund, Dumbledore, on walks and throwing bits of paper around for her cat, Eloise. Apart from being a writer, she aspires to be a French-speaking, skateboarding pianist.

Mitchell Boehler

Art offers means to meaning. It's an adventure worth every step, so might we dare to take as many as our hearts can hold. Cheers to creativity and the process.

Corey Bryan

Corey Bryan is a fourth-year student at Georgia State University majoring in Rhetoric and Composition. He is currently writing daily poetry prompts, along with some original poems, with a friend of his at poetryispretentious.com. He's a huge fan of tattoos and William Carlos Williams.

David Colodney

David Colodney realized at an early age that he had no athletic ability whatsoever, so he turned his attention to writing about sports instead of attempting to play them, covering everything from high school flag football to major league baseball for The Miami Herald and The Tampa Tribune. The sports stories turned to fiction then to poems. And he kept writing.

Andrea Damic

Andrea Damic, born in Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina, writes from Sydney, Australia. She is an amateur photographer and self-thought author of micro fiction, flash fiction and poetry. Her education is on the opposite side of artistic expression (she's an accountant with a master's degree in economics). She feels that there's something cathartic about seeing your thoughts and art out in the world. She tries not to take life too seriously, though is not always successful at it. You can find her on <https://linktr.ee/damicandrea>.

Steve Denehan

Steve Denehan lives in Kildare, Ireland with his wife Eimear and daughter Robin. He is the author of two chapbooks and four poetry collections. Winner of the Anthony Cronin Poetry Award and twice winner of Irish Times' New Irish Writing, his numerous publication credits include Poetry Ireland Review and Westerly.

Elinor Dinkin

Elinor Dinkin is a Richmond, Virginia native. After graduating from the University of Virginia, where she first studied poetry writing, she began a career in refugee immigration services. In her spare time, Elinor writes

with her local workshop group, paints, gardens, and runs a thriving side-business as a pet sitter.

Deron Eckert

Deron Eckert is a writer and attorney who lives in Lexington, Kentucky. His writing has appeared in Rattle Magazine, Fahmidan Journal, Sky Island Journal, Boats Against the Current, Swim Press, Treehouse Literary, and Rue Scribe and is forthcoming in Ghost City Review and Querencia Press' Winter 2023 Anthology. He was a flash fiction finalist in New Millennium Writing's 54th Writing Awards. He is currently seeking representation for his Southern Gothic, coming-of-age novel, which explores how personal experiences change our preconceived notions of right and wrong, while working on a collection of poetry and prose.

Jo Angela Edwins

Jo Angela Edwins is the inaugural poet laureate of the Pee Dee region of South Carolina. She teaches college writers and feeds a lot of cats, hers only three among them. Aside from poetry and cats, she loves mysteries, chocolate, and fuzzy socks.

SG Fromm

SG Fromm is a Detroit native, and currently a broke writer living in Jersey. He's interested in stripped down, minimalist work and really doesn't get prose poetry. He seeks to illuminate the smallest corners of our lives because they are invariably the most interesting.

Katy Goforth

Rather than go to therapy, Katy Goforth writes stories and hopes that her friends and family don't realize they've become her characters. When she's not writing,

she's traveling the country following her favorite musicians and collecting oddities. She was born and raised in South Carolina and lives with her spouse and two dogs, Finn and Betty Anne. You can find her on Twitter at MarchingFourth and katygoforth.com

Jason Graff

Jason Graff's debut novel *Stray Our Pieces*, published in the fall of 2019, concerns a woman extricating herself from motherhood. *heckler, about* lives colliding at a struggling hotel, was published by Unsolicited Press in January of 2020. He lives in Plano, TX, with his wife and their son.

Shireen Hakim

"Home for Eid" has personal meaning for Shireen, since she comes from a mixed heritage family: half-Mexican and half-Pakistani. Shireen wants to see more inclusivity within her community, and believes that her piece will help that process. Mixed heritages bring beauty and insight to the world, and that's why she even has a half Siamese/half Tabby cat.

Ali Hammoud

Ali Hammoud (B. 1972) is a filmmaker, producer and visual artist with a BA in Communication Arts from the University of Alabama in Birmingham. His short documentary, *About Those Who Have Gone*, had its premiere at Dubai International Film Festival in 2009 and his feature documentary, *Asphalt*, had its world premiere at Visions Du Réel in 2016 and went on playing in other major festivals. He also served as executive producer and co-producer on a number of feature documentaries. After relocating to US in 2019, he started to focus on his visual artwork as part of new expression discoveries. He had his first artwork group

show in 2021. He is currently preparing for his next essay film.

Alicia Hilton

Alicia Hilton is an author, editor, arbitrator, professor, and former FBI Special Agent. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in Akashic Books, Best Asian Speculative Fiction, Channel, Daily Science Fiction, Lovecraftiana, Modern Haiku, Neon, NonBinary Review, Star*Line, Unnerving, Vastarien, Year's Best Hardcore Horror Volumes 4, 5 & 6, and elsewhere. Her website is <https://aliciahilton.com>.

Emily Holi

Emily Holi is a PB/MG/YA author, mom of five, and grilled-cheese-connoisseur living in the suburbs of Chicago. As a newly-diagnosed MS-Warrior, she is extremely passionate about chronic illness research, fundraising, and disability advocacy. Emily also writes literary / speculative short fiction, poetry, and gross-out stories with heart and humor.

Sandra Hosking

Sandra Hosking is a Pushcart-nominated poet, playwright, and photographer based in the Pacific Northwest. Her work has appeared in Red Ogre Review, The Elevation Review, Havik, Black Lion Review, and more. She holds M.F.A. degrees in theatre and creative writing.

Rachael Hughes

Rachael (Goetzke) Hughes earned her MFA in Creative Writing from Wilkes University. Her memoir, *Us Girls: My Life Without a Uterus* was published by Big Table Publishing in 2018. She loves art, cats, and Pearl Jam.

She blogs about everything music and writing at <http://kindalikeapoet.wordpress.com>. You can learn more about her and her memoir at: <https://rachaeljhughes.wixsite.com/shewritesforyou>.

Erin Jamieson

Erin Jamieson holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Miami University of Ohio. Her writing has been published in over eighty literary magazines, and her fiction has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She is the author of a forthcoming poetry collection (Clothesline, NiftyLit). Twitter: erin_simmer

Katrina Kaye

Katrina Kaye is a writer and educator seeking an audience for her ever-growing surplus of poetic meanderings. She hoards her previous published writings, links to publications, and additional information on her website: PoetKatrinaKaye.com. She is grateful to anyone who reads her work and in awe of those willing to share it. Find her on twitter: @poetkatrinakaye Instagram: poetkatrinakaye Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/poetkatrinakaye>

Kristin Keyes

Kristin Keyes writes with a keen eye and ear towards family relationships and sense of place. She lives and works near the Texas Gulf Coast. Her spare time is occupied with writing, her family, and cooking the foods she remembers eating when she lived near New Orleans, Louisiana.

Diana Kurz

Diana Kurz was born in Vienna, Austria and lives in Soho, NYC. She has exhibited in museums and galleries throughout the US and Europe and has work in

important collections including Corcoran Gallery; Rose Art Museum; Smith College Museum; Wien Museum, Vienna; Jewish Museum, Vienna; Yad Vashem Museum, Jerusalem; Bezirksmuseum Josefstadt, Vienna; Brooklyn Botanic Garden; Rowan University, US Holocaust Museum, Wash. DC among others. Awards include: Fulbright Fellowship to France; American Center Residency, Paris; NYSCA CAPS Grant; Artist Residency, Vienna; and residencies at Yaddo, McDowell, Hambidge, VCCA, ACA. She received her B.A. from Brandeis University and M.F.A. Columbia University.

Jerrod Laber

Jerrod Laber is an Appalachian poet and writer. He lives in Virginia with his wife and dog. Twitter: @four_godot.

Richard LeDue

Richard LeDue (he/him) lives in Norway House, Manitoba, Canada with his wife and son. He has taught high school English for 12 years, where he instills knowledge of words like “stanza” and “irony” on generation after generation of students.

Dominic Marcoaldi

Dominic Marcoaldi is an Ohioanboy bloomed from booze and Frank Sinatra. Baptized with hospital and Florida swamp water, he currently resides in Nashville. After ditching beach for attic bedroom in old guitar town, he works in a deli. Instagram: @dom_marcoaldi

Annie Marhefka

Annie Marhefka is a writer in Baltimore, Maryland whose writing has been published by Lunch Ticket, Fatal Flaw Lit, Literary Mama, Pithead Chapel, HAD,

and others, and her work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Annie is the Executive Director at Yellow Arrow Publishing, a Baltimore-based nonprofit supporting and empowering women-identifying writers. She has a degree in creative writing from Washington College, and is working on a memoir and a flash nonfiction collection. Follow Annie on Instagram @anniemarhefka, Twitter @charmcityannie, and at anniemarhefka.com.

Pat Meusel

As a child, I traced my finger on a map along the creek running through my hometown and followed it to a stream and then a river until my finger was in the Atlantic Ocean. I knew I could build a raft and load it with sandwiches and a flashlight and find adventure. My writing comes from that place.

R. B. Miner

R. B. Miner is a New York City native, West Point graduate, and occupational dilettante. He lives in Kansas City with his wife, daughter, and dog. The three of them make that first bit okay.

J.L. Moultrie

J.L. Moultrie is a native Detroiter, poet and fiction writer who communicates his craft through words. He fell in love with literature after encountering James Baldwin, Hart Crane and many others. He considers himself a modern, abstract expressionist.

Will Musgrove

Will Musgrove is a writer and journalist from Northwest Iowa. He received an MFA from Minnesota State University, Mankato. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *TIMBER*, *Cleaver Magazine*, *Oyez*

Review, Tampa Review, The McNeese Review, Vestal Review, and elsewhere. When he isn't writing, he's often wishing life was like a 1990's Saturday morning cartoon.

Andy Perrin

Andy Perrin is a writer/photographer/cyclist/teacher from southern Rhode Island. Andy often explores the roads and trails near his home on one of his bikes. On occasion, while he is out exploring, he is moved to stop to take a photo of some inspirational thing. On the best days, the thoughts of the things photographed turn into words and the subjects of his writing.

Donna Pucciani

Donna Pucciani, a Chicago-based writer, has published poetry worldwide in Shi Chao Poetry, Poetry Salzburg, Frogmore Papers, Agenda, Gradiva, and others. She taught English and music at various high schools and colleges in the East and Midwest before retiring to write poetry, travel, teach herself Italian, and pursue her genealogy in Italy.

Shelley B. Smithson

Shelley B. Smithson is an emerging poet who spends her professional time as a full-time psychotherapist. She craves time to read and write poetry. She lives in northern Michigan. She is proud of having lived in two of the five most cloudy places in the United States (Syracuse, NY and East Lansing, MI), because she happens to love cloudy days and thinks there are wondrous grays that are highly underrated.

Kristy Snedden

Kristy Snedden has been a trauma psychotherapist for forty-plus years. She began writing poetry in June 2020. Her poem “Dementia,” was awarded an Honorable Mention in the 90th Annual Writer’s Digest Writing Competition. She is a 2023 Pushcart Prize nominee for her poem, “soft girl, sharp edges”. Her work appears in various journals and anthologies, including Snapdragon, The Examined Life Journal, Open Minds Quarterly, Pensive, and Anti-Heroin Chic. In her free time, she can be found hiking in the Appalachian Mountains near her home or hanging out with her husband listening to their dogs tell tall tales. You can see her work on Instagram@kristy_snedden_poetry and on Facebook at Kristy Snedden-Poetry.

Jan Steckel

Jan Steckel’s poetry book *The Horizontal Poet* (Zeitgeist Press, 2011) won a 2012 Lambda Literary Award. Her poetry book *Like Flesh Covers Bone* (Zeitgeist Press, 2018) won two Rainbow Awards. Her fiction chapbook *Mixing Tracks* (Gertrude Press, 2009) and poetry chapbook *The Underwater Hospital* (Zeitgeist Press, 2006) also won awards. Her poetry and fiction have appeared in *Scholastic Magazine*, *Yale Medicine*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Canary*, *Assaracus* and elsewhere. Her work was nominated four times for a Pushcart Prize and three times for Sundress’s Best of the Net, and won the Goodreads Newsletter Poetry Contest, the Friends of the Dominican Republic Short Story Contest, a Zeiser Grant for Women Artists, the Jewel by the Bay Poetry Competition, *Triplopia’s Best of the Best* Competition, and the Marguerite Rush Lerner Award. She lives in Oakland, California.

Eugene Stevenson

Eugene Stevenson, son of immigrants, father of expatriates, lives in the Smoky Mountains of North Carolina. Eisenhower Fellow, Pushcart nominee, & author of *The Population of Dreams* (Finishing Line Press, 2022), his poems have appeared in *Atlanta Review*, *Delta Poetry Review*, *The Hudson Review*, *Red Ogre Review*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, & *Washington Square Review* among others. More at eugenestevenson.com

David Summerfield

David Summerfield is a graduate of Frostburg State University, Maryland, and a veteran of the Iraq war. He has been an editor, columnist, and contributor to various publications within his home state of West Virginia. His work has appeared or is due to appear in *The Journal of Expressive Writing*, *Carmina Magazine*, *The Rye Whiskey Review*, and *El Portal (EUNM) Literary Journal*

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*, *The Door Is A Jar*, *The Phoenix*, and *The Harvard Advocate*. Edward is also a published poet who has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize multiple times.

Lauren Trific

Howdy, my name is Lauren and I'm a film photographer based in Salt Lake City, Utah. All of my photos are self-developed and scanned.

Laura Grace Weldon

Laura Grace Weldon lives on a small ramshackle farm where she works as a book editor, teaches writing workshops, and maxes out her library card each week. Laura served as Ohio's 2019 Poet of the Year and is the author of four books. Connect with her at lauragraceweldon.com and on the twits @earnestdrollery.

Lynn White

Lynn White lives in north Wales. Her work is influenced by issues of social justice and events, places and people she has known or imagined. She is especially interested in exploring the boundaries of dream, fantasy and reality. She was shortlisted in the Theatre Cloud 'War Poetry for Today' competition and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize, Best of the Net and a Rhysling Award. Find Lynn at:

<https://lynnwhitepoetry.blogspot.com> and <https://www.facebook.com/Lynn-White-Poetry-1603675983213077/>

Stephen Zimmerman

Stephen Zimmerman is a disabled US Air Force veteran, pastor, published author of "The Missing," poet, and true crime blogger. His work has appeared in Celestite Poetry Journal, Door Is A Jar Literary Magazine, and The Baptist Times. Stephen is married, with four children, and is currently assembling his very own "zoo" with two dogs, two birds, two guinea pigs, a pair of frogs, a lizard, and six fish tanks. When not working, Stephen enjoys video games, documentaries, and studying psychology.

Door Is A Jar Staff Bios

Maxwell Bauman

OWNER/ EDITOR-IN-CHIEF / ART DIRECTOR

Maxwell is an M.A./M.F.A. graduate from Wilkes University. He is a contributor to Chicken Soup for the Soul. He is wizard with Legos. He plays guitar and banjo. Maxwell has never had a strawberry. You can learn more about him on his website.

maxwellbauman.com

Jack Fabian

MANAGING EDITOR / FICTION / NONFICTION EDITOR

Jack Fabian is a queer writer of horror fiction and lives in Wiltshire, England with his partner. He has a Master's degree in Creative Writing. In his spare time, he can be found playing video games and reading things that make him scared to turn off the light.

Corinne Alice Nulton

POETRY / DRAMA EDITOR

Corinne Alice Nulton is the Writing Center Coordinator at the University of Scranton. Aside from being the Poetry and Drama Editor for Door Is A Jar, she's written for each of the Night Bazaar anthologies published by Northampton House Press. She had her play "14 Symptoms" produced at the Brick Theater's Game Play Festival back in 2014. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Composition and Applied Linguistics at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

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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 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.

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