

# DOOR = JAR



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Door Is A Jar  
Issue 24

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Cover Image “Mommy Time”  
by KJ Hannah Greenberg



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**Space Station Pandemic**

Jocko Benoit

Poetry

We are all astronauts now, eating  
from packages — the only  
voices and faces from far away.

The upstairs astronauts are measuring  
the decibels of love, although just now  
they are thankfully fighting.

My experiments indicate the soul  
lives in four dimensions, which is why  
we can't prove it doesn't.

I hear a thousand visible ghost bulbs  
fail to illuminate the distant theater stages  
where nothing is happening.

From out here you can see the outline  
of our dystopia that keeps broadcasting  
its optimistic final words.

But I didn't sign up for going round  
and round with no destination,  
no one coming to replace me on increasingly  
pointless keyboards, switches and dials.

**Plunge**  
Jerrold Laber  
Poetry

The curiosity is morbid  
and wrong, imagining  
the needle plunging into

his arm, the smooth and  
elegant form of an Olympic  
diver, a perfect ten,

removing the water from  
his eyes and taking in his  
final view of this plane of

his existence, not an adoring  
crowd or the rose-colored  
dawn as the sun hoists

itself up over the horizon  
but the cracking plaster  
walls of his bedroom.

**Her sacred inheritance**

Jerrold Laber

Poetry

Her eyes were blank  
and her mouth settled  
into its natural frown,  
her soul having vacated  
the premises of her  
body, slowly draining  
the color of her skin,  
that sacred inheritance  
of Adam's flesh, once  
a perfect cream but now  
chalky white and coarse.

**Glass Doorknob**

Bobbi Sinha-Morey

Poetry

Not too long ago a month in my  
life unfastened itself and the glass  
doorknob of my heart having stuck  
in place. Me, left with a rag-bin of  
discarded memories that used to live  
in my daylight hours, now replaced  
by a memory so painful and new,  
wishing there were a prayer so close  
I could touch it with my fingertips.  
I remember his face: his tight, taut  
mouth; hurt puckering inside of  
me knowing I'd been erased from  
the inner workings of his mind and  
the words that would spill from  
his lips. I say let the old cuss walk  
away and let the memory of him  
begin to fade, let it lay buried in  
a mound of dust with a marker  
on its grave.

**Broken Lullaby**  
Bobbi Sinha-Morey  
Poetry

Days have passed and by now  
the lilacs have begun to wither  
by my window, and in the antique  
reflection of the pale afternoon  
I thought of her again and how  
long its been since last I've heard  
from her, wishing she were here  
to go outdoors to listen to autumn's  
violins, feel the crisp air on our  
skin. Now the wind speaks to  
me, knowing its been months  
she's forgotten about me; and in  
remembrance of a past I used to  
know I've kept the dried rose in  
an envelope she'd given me three  
Christmases ago. Her new so-called  
church friends have stolen her away  
from me and I haven't the will to be  
mean. In my dreams I hear a broken  
lullaby, a veiled sky above while  
the night outside my home hides  
the buried sun.

## **The Last Leaf of Autumn**

Talia R. BarNoy

Fiction

I am the last leaf of autumn. I am holding on. I've watched two full seasons go by and I am not ready.

I have seen the blossoms bloom into white pinks, budding, exploding into plump red apples. I have seen my siblings spread themselves out, fanning into shade, growing bigger and brighter with every caress the sun gave.

This half season, I have watched them die, wilt into brown crumbles and fall. Their limp bodies pushed about and ruined by animals. I refuse this fate.

The sun no longer holds me in its arms; warmth no longer floods my veins and I grow a dull red with each passing moment. The sun hides from me as if my eventual fall will hurt them more than me. The sun is a selfish villain. I only want to see it every day, to feel its love like I used to. Yet it hides from me as my skin shrivels and becomes brittle.

I miss the way my siblings and I used to play with the breeze, laughing together as it tickled us without mercy. The breeze and I were friends the way that a predator is friends with its prey. I watched a wolf and a deer walk through my woods until one day the wolf brought the deer's carcass to feast on beneath my tree. Now, the breeze pushes me around, like it did to the rest, begging for me to fall, to just go and save the tree from the trouble of me.

My cousins fell at the simple ask of the breeze's tongue. Their trees, lined up in rows, have already shed themselves as offerings to the worms below. The other trees look at mine, expecting.

When I first bloomed, children ran around my tree, chasing each other beneath its bows, plucking the fruits

of my siblings' summer labor. One child took a bite of a fallen apple and threw the unfinished fruit at the other child. They returned again and again to laugh and play until the wind became cruel and cold and distant.

The clouds are bystanders. They hide the sun, protecting it from the shame of my view. They billow and blow, with the help of the breeze, gaining in size until only filtered light can show me the fluttering wings of a hawk swooping down at a mouse huddled beneath my fallen brethren. The hawk scoops the rodent up in its sharp talons, scraping holes into the sharp edges of other leaves, before flapping its wings, creating a strong gust of air that scatters those I once held dear away from me, and taking to the sky. This is what is to become of me if I fall: nothing more than an impediment and a slice of earth.

The clouds know that it is my time to join the rest of my kin. That is why they have been growing, storing droplets of water from the air, freezing them within their pillowy bodies. They've relinquished their onlooking and chosen a side.

A squirrel skitters past me. My tree made room for it and it's children by way of a hole. There was no such kindness for me. My life was meant to be short, to be spent for the purpose of spring. I've always known this, expected death as an inevitability. But I've grown comfortable on my branch, watching the world live around me as I die. In my foolishness I had thought that my tree might feel the same.

The clouds release what they've been building up, the creations that tear them apart little by little until their gaseous nature takes over. It snows thin sharp icicles that land on my straining skin, pricking me without tearing a hole. Most of them melt, but soon it becomes too much. Soon I am too heavy, and I can no longer grip onto my tree. I fall, as I am meant to do.

The breeze rushes over to help me float down and rest beside the cold bodies of my kin, slowly whitening with snow. I look up at my tree and see how light it looks without me; how ready it is to continue. The clouds thin in their release and I can see the sun's light again. It holds me one last time in the warmth of its arms before the last bits of sugar I had sustained myself on disappear.

It was okay to have not been ready.



**Two Hundred Rocky Square Miles**

Julie Allyn Johnson

Poetry

interstitial constellations  
loosey-goose the Colorado sky  
coyotes signal territorial reign

astride native grasses wild horses  
traverse a long, low valley

under a blistering August sun  
kestrels question skittish winds  
their avian-radar fully engaged

distant mountain goats compete  
for snow-patch relief

scattershot lodgepole pines  
emergent among the charred remains —  
hapless victims of the whims of Zeus

**Settling Into Now**

Hugh Blanton

Poetry

It's a static life now — offering  
the appearance of someone who  
does nothing more than drive to work —  
come home and eat dinner alone.

I was never a worldly man —  
but before I settled into this  
I was quite the traveler.

No — nothing like the undergrads  
between semesters backpacking  
around Europe — fortified with  
mommy and daddy's credit card.  
At first I drifted around Appalachia  
fortified with the fearlessness of a  
seventeen-year-old runaway.  
After a brief visit to a recruiter's office  
I traveled at government expense —  
pitching and rolling in the North Pacific —  
broiling under the sun of the South Pacific.

There's a few mementos in here —  
currencies from around the world —  
photos of a pig roast in Olongapo —  
a citation from the Secretary of the Navy.  
(Nada from Kentucky though.)  
I never fondle them.  
They are the scar between that life  
and this life.

**Carrying Capacity**

Jason de Koff

Poetry

Eerie green radiance  
issued from fissures,  
amongst broken ravel  
and moist surfaces.

The subterranean cave,  
unvisited and undiscovered,  
languished with the power  
of kill switch performance.

Steady and intense,  
soundless and piercing,  
awaiting exact configurations  
for massive apoptosis.

Surface conditions  
and the internal thermostat  
of human relativity  
threatened underworld thresholds.

One last bomb,  
act of prejudice,  
extinction would ...  
The green glow pulsed.

**Stillness of the Season**

Linda Conroy

Poetry

Wandering through this wood  
I watch sun slip  
behind the farthest hill.

The wind has died  
no longer lifts the cedar fronds  
nor sifts the dust against my shin.

Water nearby has ceased its gurgle  
stopped it slap upon the rocks.  
I hear no bird.

The chanting jay has calmed its call.  
A deer shrinks off across the glade  
its shadow barely seen.

A buzzard circles, slowly  
slowly, landing  
on the tallest pine.

**Waterfall**

Linda Conroy

Poetry

The snow-covered summit  
hides veins that leak,  
to travel, trickle, join  
behind a curtain of the green  
and gather, gushing  
from a mountain side  
so bright and loud  
a body's fluid  
could not look more alive.  
I might touch  
this splash  
of life's rush rumbling  
grey, to reach the sea  
unfolding water's role  
an endless round  
the circle of earth's blood.

**Dis/integration**

Linda Conroy

Poetry

On the riverbank  
among a mass of weeds

metal scraps, some bent and scraped  
fallen from a barge, perhaps,

an old brown plant pot,  
cracked across its base

a splintered slat of chair back  
a soiled sack, head of a rake

a single sock, a blackened ball,  
the curved end of a hockey stick

in the wash of rain and mud  
a mess of rot, of rubber, rust,

like all of us, a gathering of fragments  
floating, trying to move past.

**Opossum**  
Zach Murphy  
Fiction

Pete and Richard's orange safety vests glowed a blinding light under the scorching sun, and their sweat dripped onto the pavement as they stood in the middle of the right lane on Highway 61, staring at an opossum lying stiffly on its side.

Richard handed Pete a dirty shovel. "Scoop it up," he said.

Everything made Pete queasy. He once fainted at the sight of a moldy loaf of bread. Even so, he decided to take on a thankless summer job as a roadkill cleaner. At least he didn't have to deal with many people.

Richard nudged Pete. "What are you waiting for?" he asked.

Pete squinted at the creature. "It's not dead," he said. "It's just sleeping."

"Are you sure?" Richard asked as he scratched his beard. He had one of those beards that looked like it would give a chainsaw a difficult time.

"Yes," Pete said. "I just saw it twitch."

Richard walked back toward the shoulder of the road and popped open the driver's side door of a rusty pickup truck. "Alright, let's go."

Pete shook his head. "We can't just leave it here."

"It's not our problem," Richard said. "They tell us to do with the dead ones, but not the ones that are still alive."

Pete crouched down and took a closer look. "We need to get it to safety," he said.

Richard sighed and walked back toward the possum. "What if it wakes up and attacks us?" he asked. "That thing could have rabies."

“I don’t think anything could wake it up right now,” Pete said.

Richard belched, “It’s an ugly son of a gun, isn’t it?”

“I think it’s so ugly that it’s cute,” Pete said.

“No one ever says that about me,” Richard said with a chuckle. “I guess I just haven’t crossed into that territory.”

Just then, a car sped by and swerved over into the next lane. Pete and Richard dashed out of the way.

“People drive like animals!” Richard said. “We’d better get going.”

Pete took a deep breath, slipped his gloves on, gently picked up the opossum, and carried it into the woods.

“What are you doing?” Richard asked. “Are you crazy?”

After nestling the possum into a bush, Pete smelled the scent of burning wood. He gazed out into the clearing and noticed a plume of black smoke billowing into the sky. The sparrows scattered away, and the trees stood with their limbs spread, as if they were about to be crucified.

“Jesus Christ,” Pete whispered under his breath.

Pete picked up the opossum and turned back around.



**Complete Forgiveness**

Corie Feiner

Poetry

Today I am buying my forgiveness in bulk.  
I do not have time to cherry pick evolution  
by forgiving a cracked bag of chips here  
and a dropped ice cream cone there.

I must forgive all of it, as if there were  
no such thing as fault. No labels. No packages.  
We made it all up anyhow.

I pour the bulk buckwheat groats  
from its large paper bag into an airtight  
bucket. Then see the bag never empties  
and the bucket is gone.

**Letting Go**  
Corie Feiner  
Poetry

Today is the funeral  
of my childhood where I toss  
dirt onto the body of all  
I was taught to be —

Let the gravediggers come  
with their thieves' oil and dreams  
of jewels —

They will find the remnants  
of fear, anger, and shame decomposing  
with the pine needles and dirt —

Do not cry too long for the well-meaning girl.  
It was her time to let go. Turn around.  
I am right here.

**Picking Cherries**

Jessica Whipple

Poetry

We stood inside the tree  
crouching close to the trunk  
so its limbs felt like our own  
so we could see its hidden red-back jewels  
dangling like earrings.

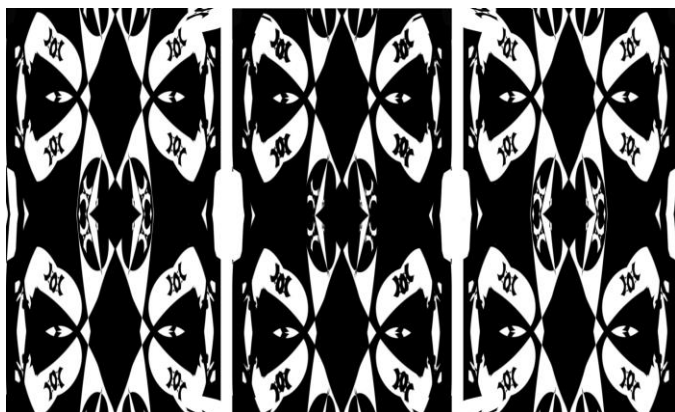
We shared lucky pairs of stems and fruit  
twiddled tinted fingertips  
like purple creature claws  
reached for  
more and more and more.  
Didn't matter they were sour —  
they were free.

We spat seeds like farmers  
in that orchard.  
Giggling up and down the rows  
we felt a feeling we didn't know had a name.  
Eating, skipping, tossing  
pits and their seeds inside  
swooping like birds  
wild as the wind  
heedlessly planting them for some future time  
when we'd hardly know the feeling anymore.

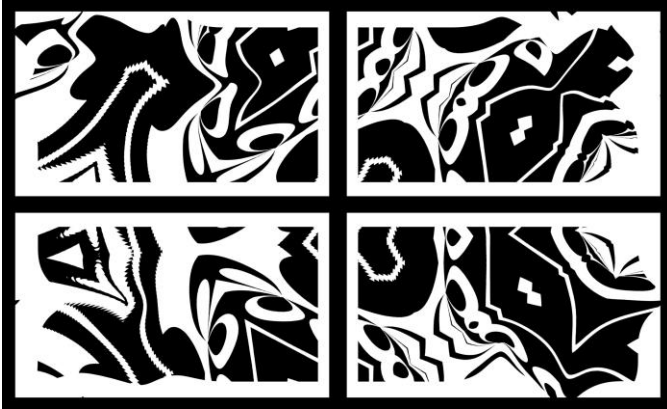
**Scandal 4**

Edward Michael Supranowicz

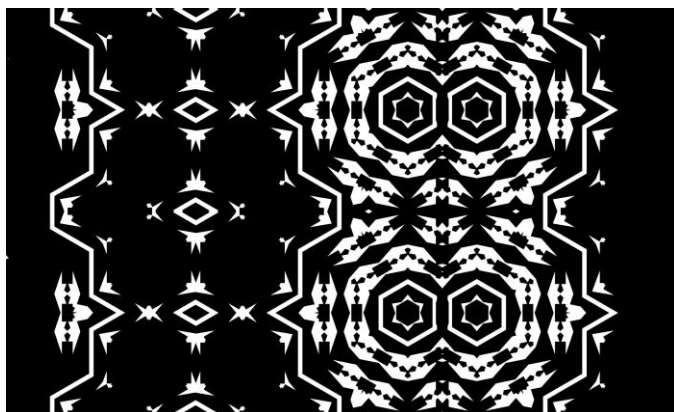
Art



**Watching It All 3**  
Edward Michael Supranowicz  
Art



**Simplicity is Complex**  
Edward Michael Supranowicz  
Art



**Altered Perceptions**

Ceinwen Haydon

Poetry

He gaslit her with his vibrato:  
pitch shifts, barely perceptible,  
that altered every meaning  
in his words. She heard

one thing in her ears —  
another thing entirely, inside  
her arrhythmic heart.

Today she wandered abroad,  
climbed a steep hill and gazed  
into a calm loch. Undisturbed,  
she dared to see her face  
wrecked by self-doubt.

A flickered flame of anger flared  
up and tore through her throat.  
It heated her vocal chords, her tongue,  
her mind, and her expressive mouth.

Back at home, as he approaches,  
she sings him with mined curses  
direct from her lava'd underworld.  
His lies begin to melt and pool  
like tallow-wax. And she moulds  
the stinking mess into pure rage.

Strengthened, she hurls him off  
her stage and changes all her locks.

Listen well: now she can sing  
her own truths, entire.

**Inactive Listening**

Ceinwen Haydon

Poetry

I wasn't present  
when you spoke to me  
you weren't there  
when I spoke to you

both unheard  
absence smothered love

now  
knifed and sterile  
our vivisected hearts  
atrophy

stuffed with silence



**Has he ever died before?**

Sadie Shorr-Parks

Poetry

I wore a black maternity dress to his funereal  
and threw out the milk I pumped that day.

We're still the children we were centuries ago.  
I feel the echo of plural souls expanding me,  
and I will be a child again, and die again.

I believe his death felt familiar  
like a well-worn coat  
slipped on at dawn  
because it is cold once again.

Then the echo of past death revealed themselves  
mundane as old grocery lists  
left in the pockets.

He will be a child again.  
He has grown old before.  
Some lives will be all summer.

**Orpheus Restraining His Lute**

Dianne M. Hunter

Poetry

She stepped on a snake on her way to the altar. I remember the day as hot and humid, the pine pitch scent intense, the sky a deep blue in the afternoon with wisps of white clouds moving overhead. The sea, far off, was a choppy blue-green.

We hadn't thought to clear the grounds of snakes and other crawling and scurrying creatures of the mountain top. The day afterward I found it impossible to believe she was gone. I didn't believe I'd never see her again.

Her family blamed me, I knew. They never understood why she fell for a musician. Everybody says it was my fault I couldn't bring her back. They thought I failed to trust her to follow me, or that I just couldn't keep my eyes off her. But what I understood at the time was her reluctance to leave darkness.

I dreamt she was a girl again, sometime before she met me. Sometimes I wonder whether she preferred to remain forever young. My mother was heartbroken, but my sister used to say, "I suspect you both made a beautiful escape."

Tomorrow I'll revisit the site where I asked her to marry me and sing a song to whoever wants to join me there.

Tonight, while it's raining, I am restringing my lute and looking at you.

**Twilight Time**  
Donna Pucciani  
Poetry

Grandma used to play  
that Delta tune on the old upright,  
her long crimsoned nails clacking  
on the black keys, an ebony miracle.  
Red beans and rice with andouille sausage  
bubbled on the stove, and Uncle John  
sang off key.

Somewhere in Louisiana, crawfish shells  
pile up on newspapers, smelling of swamp.  
Earth-star has forgotten her intermittent songs,  
her cursory magic, as owls and all night  
creatures begin to whisper their transitory  
mysteries, accustomed to the dark.

Meanwhile, up north in the Prairie State,  
the sun is crossing the fields  
of Midwest snow, smooth as Ginger Rogers  
in high heels, backwards. The sun doesn't care  
that the world is frozen in place, iced  
from roof to heaped suburban sidewalks.

Her fanciful gold defies the petrified universe  
of masked dog-walkers, children shivering  
home from school, sparse traffic crunching  
down the salted street, and trees humbled  
by the unaccustomed weight of white,  
their black shadows patterned on buried lawns.

The sun barely remembers  
that she is only a star, having flaunted  
her own ochre for hours, now fading to pink

the color of pale sherry. The world is rapt in dusk,  
breathless, blind.

**The Library**

Kay Miller

Fiction

She couldn't shake the feeling someone else was occupying the library. Ever since Sara Louise Dunvey purchased the old two-story Queen-Anne style home on Rose Hill Lane, she was unable to relax in what should have been the coziest room in the house. The mahogany bookshelves were overflowing with books of all genres, shapes, and sizes, and the massive stone fireplace with raised hearth was a dream come true. She'd never had a fireplace before, let alone her own library. Yet, she found herself uncomfortable in the well-appointed space.

The seller of the property didn't care to keep his grandparents' furniture or the old books lining the library walls, and with Sara's permission, he left them behind. She'd already weeded out the furniture and donated the pieces she didn't want. Sorting through the books in the library was next on her list of jobs to tackle. The first hardbound book she pulled was returned to its place on the shelf. *Rebecca* was an easy decision; Daphne du Maurier was one of her favorite authors. The next was by an unknown author. She googled his name, but the search was unsuccessful, then a strange feeling she'd experienced several times since moving in returned and caused her to feel a bit off-balance. Taking the book with her, she sat on the soft down-filled sofa cushions telling herself she'd read until she felt better, but first Sara looked over her shoulder to make sure no one was standing close by. The feeling was overwhelming.

The book was historical fiction and took place in the mid-1800's. Sara read the first three chapters and was immediately drawn into the suspenseful plot. The main character was alone in her house and unsettled by

clanking noises below her boudoir. That night, she too was awakened with a racing heart. Sara heard banging downstairs and feared an intruder was trying to enter. After forcing herself to investigate the first-floor doors and windows, with fireplace poker in hand, she returned to bed only to experience a restless night.

Daylight streamed through the leaded glass window. She dragged herself out of bed, gulped down a cup of black coffee, and took advantage of the unseasonably warm winter day. Sara gathered piles of fallen tree branches, then cut and bundled them for pick-up. When finished, it was near dusk, and she was cold and exhausted. She made a cup of hot tea, returned to the library, and resumed reading the book she'd started the night before. The story unfolded with the lady of the manor finding a stray dog on the grounds. Sara missed her old dog, Sandy. Too tired and a little depressed after recalling old memories, she skipped dinner and slept in the library by the light of the fire. The bright glow was comforting. She dismissed the feeling of not being alone, as she could clearly see nobody was there, but anxiety and sleeplessness persisted throughout the night.

The next morning, Sara glanced in the bathroom mirror and made a mental note to purchase under-eye concealer on her next trip into town. She wasn't normally a vain person, but the dark circles were pronounced, and she looked years older as a result. A whimpering sound caused her to look away from the mirror to outside the window. A collie was caught on the wire fence separating her property and her neighbor's. After freeing his collar, he licked her face while she looked for identification tags. Unsuccessful, she drove the dog to the closest homeowner a quarter mile down the road. He wasn't helpful but instead was borderline rude. She was certain he'd backed away when she told

him where she lived. She and the dog returned to the old house.

Sara felt compelled to prepare a healthy meal that evening. Although she didn't have an appetite, the dog devoured pieces of boneless chicken offered from her hand when a thought occurred. Sandy had a microchip implanted when he was a puppy. She'd have the collie checked at a vet's office in the morning.

After dinner, Sara and her companion returned to the library, once again, enjoying the warmth of a roaring fire. The collie barked at the sofa before curling up on the floor. A shiver went through Sara's body. She was beginning to have second thoughts about purchasing the home and didn't want to admit it was haunted with a spirit or two. If only she could relax, get a good night's sleep, and establish a routine that would facilitate feelings of being settled. She'd taken a week off from her job as an accountant for that very purpose.

Sara flipped through the unread pages of her book, glanced over the ending, then tossed it into the donation box. "It wasn't an interesting story." The dog whimpered and looked upward, past her head. Now a habit, she looked over her shoulder. "Come on. You can sleep upstairs. Tomorrow, we'll find your owner," she said.

Sara fluffed her pillows and shivered between the cold sheets; an overwhelming uneasiness followed. She missed her healthy lifestyle which had included regular meals, full nights of sleep, and plenty of exercise on her Peloton bike with like-minded individuals. Since moving into her home, that had all changed. She went over the past several days in her mind, hoping to resolve whatever it was nagging at her subconscious. The smell of smoke and the ending of the recently tossed book brought clarity to her foggy thoughts ... the library, the feeling of not being alone, and that book. Had it been foreshadowing her future? First the clanking sounds,

then the dog, and now the acrid smell of smoke. She recalled the ending of the story while collapsing in a heap next to her canopied bed. The dog raced out of the bedroom and down the steps seconds before the roof collapsed. Her loud, frantic screams echoed in the spacious and elegant boudoir and went unheard.



**Enticing the Bite**

Theresa Hamman

Poetry

As you rest naked  
below the limb

my tongue licks  
out of my voice

tempting you.

Innocent eye  
of the green world

I taint you.

Reach up, child  
of my vengeance

with quick and hollow  
knowledge, I hiss

my curse in your ear.

**Migration**  
Theresa Hamman  
Poetry

1.

The eagle blows  
south in a sky

full of blizzard  
and water, she wings

toward a blurred gloaming  
past a hidden world

2.

In the after-storm hush  
winter lays down and sighs,

slumbers with bears in caves  
under the hills and mist

where caravans pass  
along roads, trails blanked out.

3.

The eagle guides  
sleepy horses

she knows how  
to land on the edge

of white out, how  
to sink her talons into fog.

**Caducity**  
Kaitlyn McGowan  
Poetry

I forget that time passes  
unforgivingly,  
uncaring, until  
I fly home after seven months  
and see your skin has become  
worn leather, glazed  
in callouses and lax  
with wrinkles.  
Your voice is stale,  
uncomfortable in your throat,  
enlaced with coughs  
and reticence.  
At least your laugh  
disrupts the air  
and claims attention  
as it used to, bellowing  
through the hallways  
in harmony with mine  
as you chased me to bed  
and sang me goodnight.  
You're frustrated,  
I know,  
that time has been so nonchalant  
in thieving your health,  
your agility, your hair,  
that it will continue  
to take, and take, and take.

**Ode to your blue kurta**

Joanna George

Poetry

From distance, I watch your outfit sway  
with the wind, like the subtle stalk of a blossom.

Is it some gossamer threads of pure blue cotton silk  
that has been tailored to cover your torso —

this knee length airy shirt with pockets on its side  
light as my pressed petals,  
marveling my sight and heart?

O threaded knots of perfect spaces and yarn!

How do you bring culture and tradition  
with a shine of modernity to all places

in unique style of modesty and boldness,  
oozing in the ample gaps left for extreme comfort?

O tumbling sheen of robust allurements!

How could I ever resist the softness  
of your blue kurta, flawlessly rolling  
under my palms persuading my innards  
to secure it for myself —

the blue kurta adorning you  
like a paper poetry envelope.

**On loving cats**

Joanna George

Poetry

No one ever tells you this,  
how easily a cat can squeeze itself  
into your heart by its gentle purr  
cuddling rubs knocking your granite core  
and butting heads to mark you his.  
Never will you notice,  
the way he makes you dance on your heel  
as he weaves a shuffle pattern on your foot path.  
Neither will you realize, the piercing tiny claws  
nailing his tent into your stubborn heart,  
as he hoops itself to sleep on your lap,  
like a garland out of his body for you.  
And no one really knows –  
as well, he will keep you  
perpetually wondering  
what those curious bulbous eyes saw,  
to be so full and vacant at the same time,  
like a funeral home.

**Spring Thaw**  
Cecilia Kennedy  
Fiction

The points of my hiking sticks are sharp for a reason: I'm hoping they'll poke through deep into the snow, and I'll find the body. I'm in charge of finding my cousin's body in the backcountry on acres and acres of family property that juts up next to the state forest, which is absolutely empty when the wind and the snow stick in February. Everyone thinks she got drunk and wandered, and they sent me because we used to play here as kids, so I'd know this place better than anyone else. And so I go, out of duty, or maybe pride.

We used to skate on her pond when the water froze over. If my uncle could get the tractor all of the way out to the middle to clear the snow, without cracking the ice, then we could skate. She had skates. I just slid around on my boots, which was all the same to me. And we'd laugh about everything until it was time to go home, and I'd beg to stay, but there were always important things to do and time to keep.

Sometimes, we rode the bus together and would tell each other our secrets and celebrate each other's birthdays. I loved my cousin — Cousin Laci. We'd hike for miles in the snow, all bundled up, tracing the edges of the pines, staking out a new route each day until our boots, caked in melting snow, iced over and got heavy. We'd trudge home and sleep soundly.

They say she got drunk every night, after she moved down the street and married that jerk. Can't say I blame her — probably helped — probably helped to keep things buried. But then, everything just weighs on you — and with all the drinking, something might still come out.

Somewhere in the middle of fifth grade, a bunch of girls from another county moved into our district. Cousin Laci and I hated them. At first, they seemed fun, but then they turned mean. The leader, Stacia, started fights, and I hated going to school. Laci said we could invite Stacia to ride the bus with us home. Maybe we'd be friends, and I thought that sounded like a good plan, and when Laci packed the hunting knife and the rifle, I thought we'd just take Stacia out to hunt, but Cousin Laci shot her, gutted her, and left her in the snow.

"We're just kids," she'd said. "We don't have a fully formed conscience yet."

I'd believed her, and all of these years, I've kept pushing my conscience far down into my stomach until it disappears, and I picture just a small girl who watched her cousin kill someone. I try to believe that if Laci didn't do it, Stacia would have killed us, but more than Stacia died that day.

The police handled it the way they always did: If they know you, and you grew up together, like they did with my parents, they, and the coroner, give their condolences to the girl's family and say it was an animal or some other act of God, and they look the other way because the people they know can do no harm.

Every step in the snow now brings me back to two bodies: one I've been trying to bury for years. I drive poles in deeper. The wind whistles, then disappears. I wonder how many grisly bits have scattered and held fast to the earth, haunting the family property. When the cold pierces the tips of my ears and burns, I stop for a moment and look out at the untouched expanse of snow that still remains and how Cousin Laci used to come out here with every boyfriend I'd ever had and steal them from me—even marrying Jed, though he turned out to be a jerk.

My poles go deep into layers as my boots sink, and I steady myself. Then, about two miles out, near the edge of the state park line, I feel it. I feel the vibration through the poles. I've hit something, so I begin to dig with my hands until the snow collects in the seams and folds of my gloves. As I push the layers away, I see the pink terry cloth cuff of Cousin Laci's bathrobe, and I tug at it a bit until I pull her arm out of the snow. I start to dig some more and find her face. Her lips are blue, and her skin is gray. I know exactly what I'm supposed to do, according to my training and the charge I've taken. I don't think there's much hope for her, but I check her pulse anyway, taking my gloves off, letting the hardened clumps of snow slide down. Touching the icy skin on her neck, I think I get a faint sign of life that trickles out from her in slow waves of sweeter memories and bitterness. Everyone sent me, with my shiny sheriff's badge to find the body, so they'll trust me when I tell them that I'm sorry. I didn't find her. We'll have to wait for the spring thaw.



**Mommy Time**  
KJ Hannah Greenberg  
Art



**False Ribs**  
Christine Barkley  
Poetry

I go to the hospital  
with a blunt knife in my side,  
right between the last two  
true ribs.

Any lower and the ribs  
would be false,  
and I'd be called a liar.

Still, I'm told that the knife means  
nothing in a clinical sense.  
There is nothing in me.  
I want to say  
can't you see the knife?  
but I'll believe anyone  
who doesn't believe me.

They show me a chest X-ray  
with no knife, no ribs, no name.  
The knife is deemed irrelevant  
to diagnostics, to treatment.  
The knife is noted as  
an exaggeration, a cry for attention,  
a metaphor. A blow to the false ribs.

What was once a wound  
or a lie about a wound  
or a metaphor for a lie  
becomes what they all do;  
a fading bruise, a trick of the light,  
an ache I learn to endure  
and lie about.

They ask me  
to rate my pain today and I say  
zero. There is nothing in me  
and no one finds the lie.  
In any case,  
I feel tender forever  
and never trust myself again.

**Ecological Resilience**

Christine Barkley

Poetry

I will narrate this now as  
something more sanguine, and less bloodied;  
no longer framing loss as a taking-by-force, but as  
my own nature  
taking its course.

I will rebuild  
and forgo fire-proofing, disaster insurance;  
ignore tsunami sirens and earthquake warnings;  
accept that this body itself is a floodplain,  
a fault line. A forest overgrown and overdue for flame.

When I am burned to the ground,  
I will praise these cells for their creative  
self-destruction.

When I overflow my own banks, I will  
reclaim this body as it resurges,  
resurfaces.

A biological legacy.

A becoming.

Somehow a river is reversing, returning from the sea;  
I return to myself.

When I am ruined again, it will be volcanic.

A once-flowering field laid waste —

and more fertile for it.

**With Abandon**  
Christine Barkley  
Poetry

Melancholy starts the same as always  
with a simple wish, formless:  
to be anywhere but here. To go  
or be gone  
(whichever is simpler, leaves me  
more formless);

to move along  
or against  
(as long  
as I am far from  
following, or staying still);

to be left with a place to miss,  
but never to return;  
to set that place ablaze  
and keep leaving as it burns.

No forwarding address,  
no more than one  
glance back —

just a reminder  
that the rearview  
will even make

sunlight through smoke  
look like the golden hour;

that anything left behind  
will feel like a loss,

even if I couldn't bring it with me

or didn't want to

or it was on fire.

## Plausible Reasons to Mollycoddle and Panic

Samuel Edwards

Nonfiction

The date had been circled in the calendar for weeks now, yet the morning of didn't feel as monumental as I thought it would.

It was just another scan.

Another appointment.

What's so special about this one?

That was for me, anyway. My partner didn't feel the same way, an anxious soul who had been counting down to every milestone and hospital appointment as though she was monitoring the doomsday clock. I'd taken to rubbing her lower abdomen and repeating "positive vibes, positive vibes," which had started as a joke to calm her down and pass on good will to a growing embryo no bigger than a poppy seed, but it had grown into a nightly routine not to be missed, ensuring we all stayed calm and upbeat in this process. Besides, she was the one growing the damn thing. That maternal instinct had long since kicked in for her. For me, I felt like something of a spare part at the moment. On standby. In six months, I'd have time to shine. Right now? Rub her back, run a bath, caress her hair as she throws up. That was about it. My own paternal instinct firmly on ice.

That was until I saw it on the monitor. Our baby.

Even typing those words feels weird, like I'm finally acknowledging it. *Our* baby, son or daughter, our first born. What was once a collection of cells and developing placenta, something abstract and intangible that was happening to somebody else, but *not me*, has now got two arms, two legs, a head with a brain roughly half the size of its entire body, veins, teeth, and even a little thumb that it kept sucking, which had the desired effect of breaking my heart into about a thousand pieces.

I'll forego the abundance of feelings that engulfed me when I first saw my child on that grainy monitor - rest assured they were the expected flurry of pride and joy, fettered with a smidge of self-doubt, though all normal - but what surprised me was the overwhelming and almost paralysing protectiveness that overcame me. The baby Edwards happened to roll over in the womb, and my first thought was "Woah, watch that umbilical cord little guy!" Every fibre in my body wanted to protect it, the vigilant urge that deep.

Coming home from the hospital after our twelve-week scan, I had a new perspective and a clearer purpose. I wanted my partner to eat more greens and more vitamins, to make our baby strong while in utero. I was cautious when she climbed and descended the stairs, and I held her steady as she got out of the shower. Getting intimate was out of the question, unless it was slow and delicate, no chance for rough-housing. And don't get me started on car rides.

What concerns me is that I feel this way now. What happens when the miniature sprog is born? I always considered myself the cool, calm collected type. I would *never* become the overbearing guardian, the obsessive one, the helicopter parent.

That was until I started listing the perils and pitfalls that could befall my infant child, a plethora of reasons to justify my panic and worry, which I will now list in no particular order:

- Fall down the stairs
- Stick a finger into a plug socket
- Suddenly stop breathing in the middle of the night
- Get scratched or bitten by a feral fox. Or our pet cat, who in truth is an asshole
- Prefer the live action *The Lion King* over the classic animated version



- Taks a swill of Daddy's coffee while he isn't looking, and develop an early onset caffeine addiction
- Find Jar-Jar Binks funny
- Be the cover model for a Nirvana tribute band's album cover, only to grow up and file an ill-placed lawsuit against the band even after claiming years of fame and fortune from it
- Kidnapped by Nicholas Cage and Holly Hunter
- Accidentally shoot an elderly power-plant owner who has blocked out the sun to capitalise on his own power source, whilst fighting over a lollipop
- Become the target of highly intelligent killer robots from the future to stop their future self from leading a resistance
- Be the focus of a satanic cult who believes their birth is the second coming of Lucifer after we move into an elegant, historic apartment building
- Be an ugly baby

How can I remain calm when any of those very plausible things could happen to my first born?

But then I remember; I was a child once. And I had my variety of accidents and tribulations; I fell out of a tree, I was bullied in school, I put my bare hand onto a scolding hot iron, I ran headfirst into walls in a primary school playground in an attempt to elicit a laugh from a girl I had a crush on, I played in the woods and came back with scrapes and cuts and splinters buried deep in my palms. I wasn't protected in a bubble, and I was allowed to make mistakes and get hurt and embarrass myself in all manner of ways.

And I turned out OK. Right?

**The hunt**  
DS Maolalai  
Poetry

almost as if  
she were under a gunbarrel —  
shots in some distance  
cracking like apples  
against the hard autumn-  
packed earth.

her nose perches high  
and her legs arched and sinking  
in grass in the manner  
of ducks going hell  
underwater. she leaps over barriers  
and the wind moves  
her forward — you see it lap downward  
and scale out like waves.  
trees shake constantly  
but the lawns  
flip low and go up,  
careful as hair in a mirror.  
the breed was made

apparently as a lapdog, but  
she dives all the same. all joy  
and barking at birds  
which take off,  
casually  
and gloriously  
unalarmed.

**A rose smells like most other flowers**

DS Maolalai

Poetry

it's a pity your name though  
is so bad for poetry. it is why,  
when you're mentioned,  
you just get called "fallon",  
and jack gets called "jack"  
even though for him  
"baker" would work.

it's solid — "jack baker" —  
you can brick it in anywhere.  
bears loads, and he plays  
the piano as well – that's true  
and can fit if it wants.  
but "cian"? no. jesus —  
that just won't do  
at all. as names go

it's terrible. bad nearly  
as "diarmuid". how can I  
put you down there  
with me driving west  
out to galway and out  
to see aodhain? the car  
on the tarmac and sun  
in our eyes. it's awkward  
saying "cian"  
was next to me,  
drunk and expounding  
on books and the wars

of napoleon. "fallon" works better,  
even though they both fit

in the rhythm — I don't know why,  
but a lot's  
in a name. a rose  
smells like most  
other flowers, but it looks good  
in print, and it fits in the shape of the line.

**No-one I know reads much poetry**

DS Maolalai

Poetry

there is a time,  
I guess, erstwhile,  
but also now  
sometimes — the time  
you'll look back at  
and say that  
you wasted it. this  
is the time  
when you could  
have been writing —  
outdoing  
quite easily  
what I'm doing  
now. a dog,  
in a kitchen,  
barking at the fact  
that its owners  
have gone  
to a restaurant.  
a flower,  
spending summer  
just thinking of seeds.  
no-one I know  
reads much poetry  
but people who want  
to write poems.  
what are you doing  
reading this one  
when you could  
be writing it.  
don't though.  
I don't need

the competition.

**A Letter to My Stepmother**

Kylie Smith

Poetry

I haven't wanted to write to you.  
I've wanted silence.  
Like the day the judge ordered  
me out of your home,  
and the cop removed  
the yellow you ribboned around my wrist  
to hide the scar.

But then, I went to talk to father,  
and I saw your nightstand.  
On it, a list of things you're sorry for,  
and I remembered

Christmas, age ten, and the way you apologized  
for beating a hole into the wall after  
I burned  
the gingerbread and how  
we covered the spot  
with a golden cross

and you  
braided lace into my hair and  
traced stars onto my skin  
while I wrote to Santa to sort  
through all of my wantings.

## Where is Mary When We Need Her?

Paul Dufficy

Nonfiction

I began school at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic school. Almost daily we were reminded that the school took its name from the visitation that Mary, Mother of Jesus, made in February 1858 to a fourteen-year-old girl called Bernadette near Lourdes, France. In this case sixteen visions over a fortnight were made, in the last of which the white-clad female figure said, in the local Gascon dialect '*I am the Immaculate Conception*' which, it must be said, is a big call.

But this was not a one-off as there have been hundreds of apparition events reported although only twelve have been approved by the Catholic Church. In the long run, once an apparition is formally approved, sainthood is almost certain to follow. The most recent induction to this hallowed pantheon happened in 2017. Pope Francis travelled to the rural town of Fatima in Portugal and proclaimed brother and sister Jacinta and Francisco Marto saints. One hundred years earlier, while they were off minding the sheep, Mary appeared to them on several occasions and urged them to pray for peace. As a kind of motivational tool, she showed the children, both of whom were under ten, apocalyptic visions of hell, war and worse yet, communism. If she tried that one on today she'd be arrested. Both children died in the flu pandemic of 1920.

Not to be outdone, the small town of Medjugorje in the south of Bosnia and Herzegovina near the Croatian border, has upped the apparitional ante. Nothing has been left out of this narrative. The apparitions began in June 1981 when six teenagers from the village saw Mary for the first time. In fact, three of the group continue to see her daily while the other three, to their relief I



suspect, only see the Mother of Jesus once a year. Vicka sees the vision daily at 6.40pm. She is now 52, and describes Mary as wearing a grey dress with white veil and has blue eyes which are probably what caught Joseph's attention over two millennia ago given that she was from the House of David. The stories adolescents come up with to camouflage making out are delightful.

The six now call themselves seers and apart from the local tax office looking into some of their shady business dealings things pre-COVID were going pretty well with over two million people visiting the village and surrounds every year. So far, we've had around 50,000 visitations. According to the seers the daily visions will end when Mary has revealed ten special secrets to the group (the Portuguese kids only got three). Once completed she will give three calamitous warnings to the world and this will happen in Mirjana's lifetime.

Clearly, Mary has a lot on her plate. Apart from a lot of astral travelling she is an accomplished polyglot. Along with Portuguese she has the local Gascon language; she has also used Spanish with Mexican Juan Diego in 1531; Irish with the townsfolk of Knock in 1879; and Flemish to a group of children in 1932. It's possible however that Mary could not speak Arabic because in 1968 when a bus mechanic named Farouk Mohammed Atwa saw what looked like an apparition on the roof of a Coptic Church in Cairo, Mary remained forever silent. Because it was seen above an Orthodox building the Vatican let the Coptic hierarchy decide upon the validity. After many apparitions over a three-year period and with considerable police and media investigation the decision was made that it was indeed a Marian apparition. In fact, it is the only one to my knowledge that you can see on YouTube. Oh, and let's not forget that for the last thirty-six years she has been using Croatian on a daily basis.

As I said, my apprenticeship into all this started in Kindergarten where I carefully made room on my school chair for my guardian angel and yet despite an ongoing induction process under Catholic tutelage, I'm no expert in the arcane processes of religious validation of apparitions. Naturally the Catholic Church saw the need for some reasonable guidelines in this delicate area of faith. The most up to date guidelines were set out as recently as six hundred years ago at the Council of Trent. Basically, the initial investigation is to be carried out by the local bishop and the investigation is framed by considerations including accurate facts; the claimant's sanity; the accuracy of the doctrine espoused; the degree of hysterical goings on; and the extent to which a dollar is being made. All I'll say on the matter is that in pre-pandemic times Lourdes was host to roughly eight million cashed up tourists a year - second only to Paris, with Fatima not far behind. Medjugorje was booming. That aside, I would add two additional categories: employment and choice of faith. If a Marian apparition is seen by an Arabic speaking Muslim mechanic, it's a fair bet to be authentic. Being a shepherd on the other hand - someone most villagers prefer to keep at arm's length in the first place - is always going to be problematic and worthy of some pause for thought. Likewise, if one of the visionaries goes on to open a tourist business.

It might be that Our Lady is on light duties or possibly long service leave, and it may have escaped her that the bottom has fallen out of the apparition tourist business. The *Sarajevo Times* reported in March 2020 that Medjugorje is suffering with only a few hundred pilgrims. The town normally hosts millions each year. Religious tourism must be one of the world's oldest businesses and in normal times people make an estimated 600 million trips a year. COVID 19 has

brought the industry to a halt. And as we tentatively make our way back into the world we find Mary's avowed enemy, communism, asserting itself in Europe. Personally, I think it's time for Mary to get back on the job.

**This is the End — Again**

James W. Reynolds

Poetry

Something perverted in me  
loves these dire times  
when hyperbole is impossible.

Where I can be delirious —  
as if my darkest desires  
are about to come true;  
pretend all is black or white  
and be rewarded  
for ignoring the gray.  
Hyperventilate with rage;  
spit darts in eyes and ears  
and face no consequences.  
Cry out for the holocaust;  
crave the apocalypse;  
pursue eschatology  
with the crazed fervor  
of an indignant desert prophet.  
Be breathless —  
full of passionate intensity,  
because this is the new abnormal  
that has been happening  
for thousands of years.

And tomorrow,  
I will wake  
and do it all again,  
because some day  
I'll be right.

**High School Graduation Swing-Out: 1963**

Richard Widerkehr

Poetry

One evening in April, she's running downstairs  
in a white dress, almost like a waterfall.  
I'm out of breath. The next day, it's June —  
we're incandescent in paisley in the sun,  
a parade of Chevy Novas, red Impalas  
tops down. She has the poise of a mirror,  
as if she saw us at our reunion  
fifty years later. Irving will have died  
in Viet Nam. My sister will sleep  
with the moon in a cardboard box.  
Did we once laugh at our old motto,  
*the End of the Beginning*, which we called  
*the Beginning of the End*? It wasn't  
supposed to be this water falling,  
that snow.

**Benediction**

Richard Widerkehr

Poetry

*— in memory of Carol Christopher (1936 - 2019)*

## 1

How can it be, when we visit her in hospice—  
 “America’s Got Talent” turned down low  
 on the TV—a man with tortoise shell glasses  
 twists his torso in and out of a white ring,  
 a toilet seat, yes, a toilet seat.  
 His goofy smile of wonder—we don’t want to,  
 but we laugh. Now a nurse adjusts oxygen,  
 ups the morphine. Out the window, layers  
 of stippled clouds. Last night, you dreamt  
 of bears in your room. The nurse  
 wakes Carol, asks her religion.  
*If I’m anything, I’m Jewish, she says.*

## 2

In the needle-stitch Carol has left me,  
*shtetl* people spell out the word, *Shalom*.  
 The S, a green man dancing; The H,  
 a man and woman, hands entwined.  
 A, they are about to kiss. L, a Litvak  
 carpenter with upraised hammer.  
 O, an oval, two men with arched backs.  
 M, two lovers; their hands meet.  
 May she rest, *Shalom*, may she rest.

# A Holding Action

Richard Widerkehr

Poetry

— *in memory of Irving Widerker*

*I won't bring a Jewish child into this world  
till Hitler's dead*, said my father. Strange to feel  
affection

for this uncle I never met — wounded on an island  
in the Pacific whose name we never knew, his stretcher  
lugged onto a hospital triage plane that would be  
shot down that same day.

In a snapshot, he stands at ease by Schofield Barracks.  
Brown uniform with brass buttons. His sure-fire grin.  
He had made Grandpa's mannequin store on Broome  
Street  
into a business — the best one of us, an athlete, a  
swimmer,  
said our father. *He fought a holding action  
that let us win.*

After the remains were shipped  
to a marked grave in Lexington, Kentucky,  
Dad received a compassionate leave of absence.  
He wanted to call me Irving, but our Mom,  
a convert, didn't care to name her son  
for the dead — my middle name Eric as close  
as we could get to *Iri*, which means *Watchful*.  
Irving, I never thanked you for your gift  
that bought us time, and I was born.

**Poem At Seventy-Five**

Richard Widerkehr

Poetry

*"a tattered coat upon a stick..."* — W.B. Yeats

This off-white candle, almost cream-colored,  
its inner walls an ice cave—a yellow flame  
narrows at the tip. Last night we walked  
down empty streets in the snow, did not speak  
of flesh and what it holds. Did not say much;  
as if we were the last two left on this planet  
to touch each other so, we clasped hands,  
interlocked our fingers. I wanted to say  
there is a flame that licks at ice and shadows.  
As for this candle, well, I don't know.



**Water**

Richard Widerkehr

Poetry

In the tapestry over our table at Laidla Restaurant,  
a woman in red silk plucks her harp  
under moonlit clouds. *Drink lots of water,*  
said my doctor. Yes, I received external beam  
radiation in the Infinity Room  
next to the Synergy Room, that Calypso  
4-D localization system — in the tapestry,  
it's as if cloud lines follow notes  
and scrolls her fingers have unfolded.  
*What are you thinking?* asks Linda.  
We have no son, no daughter.

**Crystal Girl**  
Chester Holden  
Fiction

Less than a minute had elapsed since their first shared sexual experience. And although still disrobed below the waist, Urijah was already on his feet and exploring Jasmine's bedroom.

"You know," Jasmine said, still lying comfortably in bed, "most people don't run away so soon after making love. Most people actually like to enjoy a moment together."

"And I'll be more than happy to enjoy one later," Urijah said. "Your room's just too damn interesting to consider much else right now." He gestured at a lava lamp she had sitting on her dresser and added, "I mean, this has gotta be the first one of these groovy sons of bitches I've seen in action since Bush was in office."

"And they've aged a lot better than his presidency if you ask me," Jasmine said.

Then, shifting his attention to the moon-shaped shelf hung on a nearby wall, Urijah picked up one of the many colorful stones it displayed. And after close examination of its greenish-brown and semitransparent appearance, he brought it over to Jasmine and asked, "What the hell kinda hipster mumbo jumbo is this?"

Jasmine laughed and sat up, exposing her bare upper torso above the covers. "Honestly," she said, "I'm not surprised my moldavite attracted you the most."

"Whaddya mean?" Urijah asked. "I only picked it up because it looked like weed."

"You've got more in common with that crystal than you might realize," Jasmine said. "Okay, so maybe you weren't spawned billions of years ago by a meteorite crashing into modern-day Europe, but—"

“For christ’s sake,” said Urijah, “I guess I never got the memo that all the astrology lunatics are now worshipping crystals.”

Jasmine stole the stone out of Urijah’s hands and began quietly turning it over in hers. And once she’d finally remastered her emotions, she said, “You know, I ordered this thing at one of the lowest points of my life. I’d read somewhere that it was supposed to have special healing powers, that ... that it helped to accelerate personal and spiritual growth. And truthfully, that’s the same effect you’ve had on me. Somehow, getting to know each other these last few weeks has put things in the perfect light to rediscover whoever or whatever it is I am.”

Urijah got back in bed with Jasmine and gently moved a hand all around her back. And after a while, he said, “If you don’t mind me asking, what was it that ever brought you to such a low point?”

“When my ex left me,” Jasmine said, shutting her eyes and sighing with naked shame, “it’s like all the shit I ever failed to deal with suddenly just hit the fan. And I think what most people don’t realize about depression is that it never seems to open the door to anything but more fucked up shades of itself. That’s why I quit caring about other people’s opinions. Or at least, I quit letting them control the way I live. Because at the end of the day, very few individuals will ever have so much as attempted to understand me or what I’ve been through.”

Urijah hugged Jasmine and held her tight until she finished crying what he knew were necessary tears. And finally, in the silence after this, he said, “So I have to know. What’s with the tattoo on your thigh?”

“The one of an elderly gentleman sitting on a tree stump?” Jasmine said, smiling to convey appreciation for the timely subject change.

“That’s the one,” Urijah said.

“Oh, that’s just a little something from a story called *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein.”

Urijah had just settled on his next reply when Jasmine surprised him with a long, wet kiss. “Don’t think I forgot,” she said, aggressively helping him on top of her. “You promised me a moment.”

## S & H GREEN STAMPS

Claire Scott

Poetry

I loved the orderly procession  
 of stamps stepping shoulder to shoulder  
 across the page. I took the green stamps  
 from my mother's purse when she came home  
 from the A&P. She showed no interest, wobbled  
 to her room slugging a bottle of Jim Beam, leaving  
 groceries on the counter. Melting ice cream  
 I spooned from the container.  
 Shredded wheat I fed to the dog. I loved  
 pulling the stamps apart, licking their little backs  
 and pasting them into the pint-sized booklets.  
 I couldn't wait to finish a few books and race to the store  
 to pick out a prize: a set of six wine glasses, a Zippo  
 lighter,  
 a pink ashtray. It didn't matter. It seemed like magic.

I wouldn't mind spending some time each day  
 with familiar sheets of green stamps  
 and a booklet picturing a cheery family of four.  
 No alcohol in sight. No sharp objects or vials of pills.  
 The comfort of always fifty squares on a page,  
 never forty-nine or sixty-two.  
 A meditative practice like the sand mandalas  
 of Buddhist monks sending healing,  
 peace and purification into this worn  
 and weltered world. I could do that.  
 And maybe I could trade some stamps  
 for a Swank Key Ring with a nail clipper  
 or a Bathtub Tray with a back scrubber.  
 No credit card needed. Magic.

**ARIADNE AUF NAXOS**

Claire Scott

Poetry

Why so many myths written by misogynists  
as usual they've got it all wrong  
I wasn't left behind on that island  
abandoned by a lover in a hurry to get home  
watching the wind, checking his sails  
maybe losing interest in me now that  
the he killed the minotaur  
but I know he loved me, after all I saved his life

And I wanted to do it, to rescue girls and boys  
from the blood-fanged monster, my half-brother  
my mother's folly  
but my god! he was so full of himself after  
strutting and boasting  
holding high the horns of the bull as he raced  
his chariot around town, sloshing red wine,  
singing hymns of praise to himself

But I was the one who made it possible  
I was the one who gave him the thread  
who gave him the sword  
who told him how  
why would I want to sail off  
with that blowhard and live far  
from buzzing cities and breathtaking beaches  
I hid high up in the hills

Hearing my name called over and over  
echoing across the rocks  
until his words were lost in a rush of wind  
and I watched the black sails rise  
singing softly as he vanished into the mist

waiting for Dionysus  
the god I seduced  
so I too could be immortal

**WHO ARE ALL THESE PEOPLE**

Claire Scott

Poetry

I tossed them all in the trash, all the photos  
framed on the walls of my sixth-floor walk-up.  
A smiling uncle with midnight hands.  
A spidery aunt who fumbled through depression,

Grabbing every pill she could find. A desolate  
cousin with a collection of DUIs, a skeletal niece  
weighing sixty pounds in college.  
A frumpish mother in mismatched clothes

And rolled down stockings who called the police  
for a case of single malt scotch.  
A father who pretended not to see.  
A photo of four children who look

Like refugees. Uncombed hair, rumpled  
clothes, blue eyes with blank stares.  
I am the second from the left.  
These are not really my family, couldn't be.

I scoured second hand stores, searching  
for framed pictures of regular people. Over time  
my walls once again filled with photos of strangers.  
A woman wearing a stole of Stone Martins,

Legs dangling. Surely my grandmother  
who read me the entire *Wizard of Oz* series  
one summer on Cape Cod. A sporty man  
dressed in whites. My father who spent

Months teaching me to play tennis,  
chasing down the dozens of balls I whacked



over the fence. A graceful young woman beaming  
as she carries a birthday cake. Must be

My mother who spent hours baking for us.  
A photo of four children on a dock,  
sun-touched faces, wide grins, salty hair. I am  
the second from the left.

**HEMATOPHAGES**

Claire Scott

Poetry

*Hematophagy is the practice of consuming  
blood as a source of food.*

Some suck blood like mosquitoes & fleas,  
using a pointed proboscis. Others, like bats,  
slice with sharp teeth & lap up the blood.  
Also lampreys. Ditto some worms & leeches.  
Not only do we donate blood against our will,  
like paying taxes or cleaning up after our dog,  
but we can die from deadly diseases like malaria,  
encephalitis, rabies, typhus and plague.

What was the good-not-great lord thinking when  
he set up this one-way system, a system  
designed with only one winner. Didn't he realize  
despite his dwindling vision, his diminishing wisdom,  
that some mothers would seize the process  
& duplicate it like a Xerox machine or cancer cells,  
sucking the blood of their firstborn sons,  
sons here to heal fractals of loneliness,  
the gaping gaps in love, the missing fervor at night.  
Mothers becoming rounder & ruddier  
as their sons grow pale.

**Hedgehog**  
Kristy Snedden  
Poetry

Dear little hedgehog, do you remember  
when I saw you under the apple tree?  
We gazed at each other, a moment so tender.  
and quills fluffed, you walked away from me.

When I saw you under the apple tree,  
I heard "Thorny Hedgehogs, be not seen,"  
and quills fluffed, you walked away from me.  
I promise you now we aren't so mean.

I heard "Thorny Hedgehogs, be not seen,"  
You are badgered and seem all alone,  
I promise you now we aren't so mean.  
Curl in a ball while I atone.

You are badgered and seem all alone,  
Some of us want to keep you alive.  
Curl in a ball while I atone.  
In burrow or woods you deserve to thrive.

Some of us want to keep you alive,  
whimsical creature, inquisitive.  
In burrow or woods you deserve to thrive.  
Here are the finest grubs and worms to live.

Whimsical creature, inquisitive.  
You know you deserve to be free.  
Here are the finest grubs and worms to live.  
Up close, you aren't so different from me.

You know you deserve to be free.  
Dear little hedgehog, do you remember?

Up close you aren't so different from me.  
We gazed at each other, a moment so tender.

**Word Jars**

Richard Kostelanetz

Art



**Horns**

Robin Arble

Poetry

A man woke up with horns on his head. He wondered if he was dreaming. He jumped out of bed and looked in the mirror. There he was: invisible, nothing but a pair of floating horns. He'd overslept by an hour. He was late for his nephew's birthday party and he didn't have a present. How could he show up with horns on his head? It might be fun, an excuse for being so late. Or it might scare the children. What about the present? He was already so late that stopping to buy a present wouldn't make much difference. And how could he enter a toy store with horns on his head—or worse, as nothing but a pair of floating horns? Was he only invisible in mirrors, or was he invisible to everyone else too? At least he could still see himself. That was all that mattered.

**The Old Woman's Grave**

Robin Arble

Poetry

An old woman woke up in her grave. It was dark. How long had she been dead for? She couldn't remember. She scratched at the lid of her coffin. She bloodied both her fists punching the wood, then laid there waiting for the men who would excavate her grave in a thousand years. She fell asleep and woke up the day they were supposed to come. She dreamed of her past life, of people she'd known, of books she'd read and movies she'd watched—dreams of a fuller life than she'd lived above ground. The men never came. She fell into a dreamless sleep. Her body decomposed rapidly, making up for lost time. No-one will know the lives she lived in her coffin. Her skeleton is proof she lived at all.

**How Our Dead Die**

Robin Arble

Poetry

One day my grandmother stood in my doorway.

“I just died in my bedroom,” she said.

“Oh,” was all I could say.

“Do you want to go in and check?” she asked.

“I don’t think I can. But I’ll take your word for it.”

She started vanishing after that. She went about her business—writing checks, reading paperbacks, knitting in her glider chair—as she slowly got more and more see-through, until one day she was gone.



**Autumn Snow**

Don Noel

Fiction

A thick, blinding snow flurry begins, a mini-blizzard, freak of early fall, a pre-Halloween enchantment. Because he eschews the intrusions of television and radio and so hears no weather forecasts, it is unexpected. He has been wandering in the forest, looking for any edible fruits of the season past, perhaps wild black walnuts or chestnuts or beechnuts. The startling snow thickens underfoot and obscures everything.

It is not a forest primeval. The pilgrims who pioneered New England may have built their log cabins from the original oaks and maple, sycamores and hemlocks, and their grandchildren harvested the second growth for fuel in the days before the hydrocarbon economy. He has himself harvested third- or fourth-growth trees in his quixotic atavism to heat his cabin with fireplaces and pot-bellied stoves.

The result of these centuries' reaping is a woodland with few distinguishing marks. The few native nut-bearers that were spared in each round must now compete in a thicket of undistinguished boles clad in thin, uniform bark, trees that in a dense snowfall all look alike.

He has lived out here three years, has traipsed through and labored in every square yard of the forest's leafy acres, and yet in the brief bluster of this unlikely snowfall he is disoriented. The fat flakes have fallen heavily enough to obliterate his footprints almost as quickly as he created them.

He pauses, makes himself identify the northeast from which the wind has blown all morning. He challenges his mind to visualize the weak fall sunlight that had filtered in from the east before this white

tempest sprang up, to see in his mind's eye the turns he has made since setting out. He has in the pocket of his Levis a cellphone whose electronic toys he understands to include a compass and maps and probably radio beacons, but he chooses not to use any of that modern frippery.

And he does not need it. In another moment he knows where he is, and strikes out for home with complete assurance. In fifteen minutes he can make out, through still-blanketing snow, a boxy shadow that is the looming adumbration of home.

It is, he thinks as he brushes white fluff from his shoulders and hat, almost exactly like the unseasonal snowfall two years ago when she knocked at his cabin door, lost and cold.

\*

The snow on the ground that morning had been just thick enough that, as he opened the door, he was struck by a welter of back-and-forth footprints behind her — as uncertain as fingers exploring a new keyboard — that suggested her hesitation to approach a stranger's rudimentary dwelling so deep in the woods.

He'd drawn a chair beside the stove for her, stuffed slabs of wood into it until it roared with warmth. He reheated coffee atop it and warmed a slab of cornbread.

She let long blonde hair down from a parka hood, then — apparently reassured he was not a forest troll — unzipped the parka to a clinging cashmere sweater. Her too-thin sneakers grew damp as clumps of snow melted; he had her prop them against the legs of the stove to dry, and brought her a pair of his too-big fleece slippers.

They exchanged names; she apologized for intruding. He told her that he welcomed diversion from what had been a moment of writer's block. Intrigued, and relaxed, she wanted to read; he demurred modestly, then let her coax him into reading aloud a few

paragraphs from the screen of the laptop that besides the phone was his sole day-to-day concession to modernity.

His heart leapt at being coaxed by so lovely a visitor; she reinforced her applause with a radiant smile that illuminated the cabin.

It was a promising beginning. She explained that she taught first-graders in the public school not many miles from here. She wanted children of her own, she said, although was unattached and without immediate prospect. He assured her that he was not a hermit, and hoped fate would in time bring him a family life.

She thought she might enjoy living away from modern conveniences. He allowed he might modernize without destroying rustic pleasures, or might even find a new base closer to the hurly-burly. She said she knew a few birds on sight, like the crimson cardinal and the robin red-breast; he had her find them in one of the dozen bird books that graced his shelves. They found more common ground in agreement on the merit of feeling close to the natural world.

Your shoes look dry, he said; let's go out, I'll show you the barn, the chicken coop, the manger and cow.

Snow in October never lasts; they were hardly out the door when it stopped as abruptly and thoroughly as it had started. In bright sunshine, she realized she wasn't lost after all.

\*

His heart had sprung up when today's sudden snow-squall reminded him of her visit. It sinks again in the knowledge that he has heard nothing from her since then, and at the certainty that today's fleece-thick flurry will not bring her back.

-End-

**Venus and Adonis**  
Alexander Lazarus Wolff  
Poetry

You have been pricked. You grasp  
at the one you love. The howl  
of the dual hounds sounds  
throughout the declining day,  
rebounding off the hills that will lead

your lover away and leave you  
to repaint the picture of a life you had before.  
There is no fright. There is only desperation:  
the hands clasping the sinews of an armor-  
clad body. What comfort is there now?

Sunlight seeps through a torn cloud,  
the soft light drifting in the winds, then fading  
as night unveils its tapestry pricked with stars.  
The end of the day is a knell for him to depart.  
But there is still love left.

Love of a phantom, a silhouette disappearing  
over the horizon line, and the arising  
of desire. Look, the footsteps  
in the grass trail off, night has cloaked  
the landscape, and you are left staring on.

**Gameboy at Grandma's**

Morgan Boyer

Poetry

Four in the morning in the living room of  
my grandparents' house on Hawthorne St.

I shoved my ten-year-old toes against  
the box-springs underneath the cushions

I sat with my Gameboy Advance my eyes  
fixed on the mildly dusty screen as I played  
*Ham-Ham Heartbreak*, the patterned wallpaper  
and bird-themed clock in the bathroom watched me

shuffle like a hamster in a shirt-pocket  
in a thin fleece blanket from downstairs  
near the old bicycle workout machine

## The Sea of Tranquility

Lance Romanoff

Fiction

The car, a shabby 1983 Saab 900, expired seven miles south of Eureka, Nevada. Finn and Saoirse O'Malley knew nothing about automobiles. They didn't even pump their own gas.

"I'll walk in. It shouldn't be more than a few hours," Finn said.

"Right. And I'll sit here."

"I'm open to suggestions."

"I'm not comfortable sitting here alone for hours. Who knows who or what could show up?"

They sat, staring out the windshield at the unyielding road.

"OK. I just thought I'd be saving you a long walk. There's no one out here. You're not in danger."

"You don't know what could happen. I don't know what could happen. You're insane if you think I'm just going to sit alone in a car in the middle of nowhere for hours."

"Fine. OK. Fine. I'm not telling you not to come."

Saoirse folded down the passenger visor and stared into the scratched mirror. The mid-afternoon sun illuminated her white-blonde hair in a wild glow around her head. Finn tightened his grip around the steering wheel.

"It's just, there's no reason for both of us to go," Finn said.

"There's no reason for one of us to stay," Saoirse responded.

A day before they were happily gambling in Las Vegas. Saoirse won \$200 playing blackjack. Finn played the slot machines and left the casino a dollar richer.

"I'm not telling you to stay."

"Right, so?"

"I'm just saying that it's going to be a long walk.

You might as well stay here and be comfortable at least.

Nothing's going to happen."

"You don't know that."

"We're alone out here. If we weren't alone out here, I wouldn't have to walk! Jesus."

Finn tugged at his left eyebrow. It was a habit he acquired as a teenager to soothe his migraines. Now he pulled on his eyebrow whenever he wanted to say something but thought better of it.

"There's no need for us to argue about this," Saoirse said. "I don't want to walk for several miles or however far it is either but I'm not staying out here. And the longer we sit here and fight about it the worse it will be."

"That much I agree with," Finn said.

Neither moved. Finn sunk deeper into the driver's seat. He'd decided not to shave during their trip and now wore the early stages of a scratchy, greying beard.

"This is what you do. You know this is what you do, don't you?" Saoirse said. "You're turning this into a situation and making everything worse. You always do this."

"I always do this. OK. Every time we're stuck in the middle of nowhere, I do this," Finn said.

"You know what I am talking about."

"I have no fucking idea what you are talking about."

"No, you probably don't."

Finn sucked in a long breath and opened his door. He took a leaden first step, and then a second and a third. A quarter mile down the road, he hunted in his jacket for his cigarettes. He discovered them, a gently crushed pack of Merits, in his inside pocket paired with a book of matches. The matchbook was glossy black with the logo of the Dunes casino embossed across the cover.

“Miracle of the desert,” Finn thought to himself and lit a Merit.

He stared down the road in the direction of Eureka.

He thought about the six and a half miles left to walk.

He squinted at the horizon.

No town.

Turning back the way he came he saw his wife sitting in the passenger seat of their car — staring at him, daring him to choose a direction.

“Are you coming?” Finn shouted, to no reply.

He marched back to the car and opened her door.

“Are you coming?” Finn asked again.

Saoirse turned to look at him but said nothing.

“Are you coming?” Finn asked a third time.

“Just go if you want to go. I’ll wait.” Saoirse said.

“OK. Now you want to stay. Fine.”

Finn dropped his cigarette into the earth at his feet and stamped it out. He stared at his wife.

“Where did that two hundred dollars really come from?” Finn asked.

Saoirse studied his face. The features she’d known for years were now suddenly unfamiliar.

“What are you talking about?” she asked.

“You don’t know how to play blackjack. How do you win \$200 when you’re playing a game you don’t know how to play?”

“Are you upset I won more than you? Is that seriously what we’re talking about?”

“Is that what we’re talking about?”

“I don’t know. Tell me what we’re talking about.”

“I just don’t understand how someone who doesn’t play blackjack wins \$200 at blackjack.”

Saoirse stood up, pushing Finn aside as she rose.

She took a step toward the rear of the car.

Finn lit another cigarette.



He dropped the lit match at his feet and watched it burn itself out.

"I just want to know where that money came from," Finn said. "I'm just asking where it came from."

"No. No. That's not what you're doing. You're doing what you do."

"What do I 'do'?"

"You're accusing me of something. Except you can't even do that. If you have something to say, just say it."

He stared at the burned match on the ground.

"Miracle of the desert," Finn said to himself.

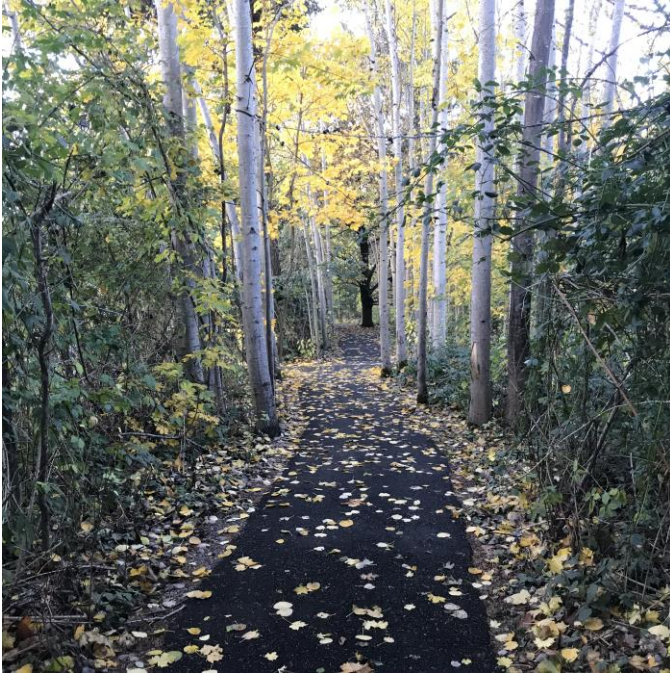
She noticed it first. Recognized it was a truck: maybe a box truck, or perhaps a tow. It seemed to squat there in the distance forever. Suddenly, the flat-fronted Ford resembling a hulking, mechanical bulldog choked to a stop with a squeal of airbrakes.

Saoirse opened the passenger door and spoke to the driver. Finn watched her mouth move. He thought she might have smiled. But he heard nothing.

**Your Home**  
June Levitan  
Art



**My Path**  
June Levitan  
Art



**The Gentle Place**

Natalie Duphiney

Poetry

creekwater like green milk —  
opaque enough to swallow shadows  
drips and streams in the nearby woods,  
where sunlight speckles the surface

a young girl sits by the sandy bank,  
sticking chalk-stained fingers into the homes  
of pollywogs and newborn frogs  
and collecting them in glass bottles

beside the scene, a magnolia tree  
chaperones the shade and drops  
white petals that dapple the water  
like the first freckles of a familiar face

two young lovers share gentle touches here,  
rubbing thighs together in summer sweat  
and getting lost in the skin of the other —  
soft kisses of velvet lips and sticky sunburns

memories soon fade with wintered age, and  
from the magnolia, a rope swing stirs alone,  
nodding in the wind, knowingly and patiently  
it knows its aged daughter will return

but places populate, and forests are floored  
construction is natural destruction;  
the gentle place becomes a concrete space —  
and the creek, a driveway of pavement

**Wilt**

Natalie Duphiney

Poetry

I sprinkle this soil  
I quench the roots of these greens  
I sop the starving stems,  
but roots rot and blossoms decay  
and my lovely leaves will wilt again

**Two Birds, One Rose**

Nikki Williams

Fiction

Vikki frowned at her ankles, then pressed the Space Wagon accelerator to the floor. Her jaw clamped tighter. Fierce green fields whipped past en route to the Estate. Was the woman expecting her? Was she asleep as Billy had been when they found him? His laughter flashed into memory, and her body froze in the moonlight, then remembered. Minutes to midnight, the low window at her back, her feet found comfort crossing carpet. The rifle collection rested along roughly masoned walls. Among them, one Winchester. Eyes and mouth gaped as body bloomed bloody red, last words lodged in ink-black shadows.

**providence on ice**

Sean Selbach

Poetry

i feel like God is losing a fight somewhere  
& we keep praying & asking him  
for things. losing a fight somewhere  
we were supposed to help him with,  
help him & i want to be  
there for you, but everybody lied  
when they told the truth about anything.  
in the Hail Mary, you pray for someone  
to pray for you. in the fight  
between God & not, that won't work.  
in the losing, everyone can catch on fire.  
Hail Mary, full of grace, us sinners.  
i prayed for years before i learned how.  
i feel like God is losing a fight somewhere  
& we're next & we're watching  
it happen & we're praying like everything  
is going to be okay. i don't think  
everything is going to be okay.  
not like i used to. i feel like God is losing  
a fight somewhere & somewhere is here  
for the Father, the Son  
& the Holy Spirit. did you know there's  
a Holy Spirit.

**if there's a beginning & end**

Sean Selbach

Poetry

i can't do this forever, forever said  
to eternity, to eternity  
before it left. before they left.  
before is part of eternity too. if there's  
a beginning & end to forever,  
i don't think we'll see them. i don't think  
we can see them. i think we're  
what the in between is made of.  
i'm made of in between  
& i'm not sure if i can do this forever  
& forever says, i know. i know.  
i've known, known all this time.  
all this time & i couldn't stop leaving.  
all this eternity & i'll never know  
forever.



**CROSSING THE SWISS ALPS**

R. Nikolas Macioci

Poetry

I slouch in a seat on the train to Lucerne  
Across from me a younger man sits stiff  
as a nail. He is wearing a gunpowder-black,  
heathered suit. He says hello in English  
with a heavy, German accent, introduces  
himself as Julian. His fingernails  
are trimmed and clean. He is traveling  
to Kriens to visit his ailing mother whose  
cancer worsens each day. If he were  
a smoker, I could see match light bully  
the dark and reveal hazel eyes. He says  
she has not finished what she can of love  
before her flesh hurries to kill her.  
She is fifty-two. Strange words  
from a stranger, but I accept his trust.

Outside the train window, December sky  
is gray as tin, and a small plane skywrites  
icey scratches. Staring through glass, I  
watch pieces of landscape cut into memory.  
Trees, mountains, and houses smear by  
as if from one continuous brush stroke.

Julian has become silent. We listen  
to the continuous click and clack of wheels  
over steel tracks, a monotonous lullaby.

Dark comes fast and cold as the moon  
climbs like a bracelet around the wrist  
of night. Julian says the moon is a yellow  
trinket, a life-size child's toy. I comment  
on how poetic his words are. He says

he writes poetry, none ever published.

The train burns space as the engine speeds  
through forest after forest as if the locomotive  
were a hunter stalking prey. When we pull  
into Kriens' station. Julian rises.

The power of my attraction to him escapes  
through our handshake. His goodbye  
sobers me to stamp out the sting of infatuation.

**AFTER AUNT LIZ'S DEATH**

R. Nikolas Macioci

Poetry

Stoop-shouldered, I shuffle from room to room,  
note doorknobs, unpolished floors, infinite  
silences where words used to be. Alone now,  
I raise eyes to your absence. Chairs, tables,  
and the dust of my life will only move  
if I move them. Your aging face accompanies  
me everywhere. At night, when I lie down  
on the bed, a lifetime of memories swallow me.

I imagine I understand death, but I don't.  
I understand only what I have lost. Through  
remembrance, a left-over gift of the mind,  
I see sweat of your daily work, your patience  
with monotony, our friendship that understood  
without saying anything.

Eventually, I will adjust to your absence,  
continue to search corners, squint to see  
as far as the room will allow, for any signs  
of you. Of course, you won't be there, and  
I'll accept the nothing I find, while I look  
for the impossible, my heart raw and bare.

**DEATH WITHOUT DEATH**

R. Nikolas Macioci

Poetry

Empty graves are full of light. The day  
you visit under the silver foil of sun, the dead  
will not lie still. They will loosen from their  
drawers in the earth and empty themselves  
from mossy beds.

Just as you arrive past the wrought iron gates,  
dead will trickle like raindrops from trees,  
stain the grass with shadows. They will take  
snapshots of you as you lean on a tombstone,  
draw back the curtain on paranormal and paste  
those pictures in an endless album. You will  
wonder where they actually are, ask questions  
too dark for answers, but they are perfectly  
there without being there, present each time  
you pass a marker. We are their prisoners,  
gouged by deception, not daring to think  
them free, but the dead escape, divest  
themselves of earth's pajamas and sweep  
toward us as fragile grasses. They will  
seek you without tears, thousands of them  
in wildflowers, in the shape of sky,  
in the eternal flying of an early moon.

**RITUAL HUNGER**

R. Nikolas Macioci

Poetry

It is the wish of the lonely to find  
a lifetime partner in a glimpse.  
Flattened against the wall with a drink  
in my hand I see smooth talk but cannot  
hear it. The sound of frustration sweats  
under colored lights. I am at the edge  
of a moment, searching for a person  
or a purpose. The bartender swipes a  
rag across the bar. His crew cut and  
flashing eyes announce his youth. Bodies  
are pressed against the senses, curiosity  
erect. The thump of hip-hop underscores  
longing. How many times have I wanted  
to assert myself against the inertia of  
rejection, against the nagging need of  
fulfilling a Saturday night? The crowd  
stands shoulder to shoulder, less friendly  
then stoic. What are the alternatives  
before the hour of closing? The old ask  
a final question of why they are there.  
The young throw back their heads with laughter,  
secure within the gloss of their taunt skin.  
The old have tossed away their insistence  
on love, settled for a last drink and a  
random smile. All the people in the room  
go home according to pecking order, less  
committed to happiness then when they  
entered from the other world.

**Braided**  
Abbie Doll  
Fiction

My brother Marcus *knew* hair. He was fluent in every style imaginable: from curls to pixie cuts to bangs to layering and on and on; he could part any head of hair with the same magical flair as Moses' miracle out on the Red Sea. It was incredible to watch. Marcus was an all-star dyer too. You want some peek-a-boo highlights? Black exterior with streaks of neon rainbow underneath? Done. Shit, he knew color better than most renaissance artists.

Remember that ridonk beauty trend from the '90s where women overplucked their eyebrows like cleaning a chicken for dinner? Man, that was Marcus — an angel yanked too soon. I curse his absence every damn day but still try to keep my faith. It ain't for me to know all the ins and outs of the Good Lord's operations. The mystery is the hardest part though; no one really knows what went down and I still don't know if he's alive or dead. The one certainty in this tragedy was the lack of clues left behind. Just there one day and gone the next. Even the cops hated to admit it, but that damn cliché "without a trace" fits best. No stray strand left behind.

Five years have passed without Marcus, each longer than the last. I'm still dying to know. Everyone wants me to try and move on already but easier said than done. Since he left, no one's touched my hair but me. I can't have someone else do it; all the trimmings would betray my discarded hope. Even running my own fingers through it feels inappropriate nowadays. I can't touch my head without flooding my brain with memories of Marcus — how he used to play salon with my Barbies or shampoo my scalp a little too rough any time we got into some petty tiff. Or that gorgeous beehive he did on Nana

before we lowered her into the ground. My brother was brilliant and nothing's the same without him. Most days I feel like I'm walking around without a heartbeat. Marcus, if you're out there, please come home. We can do that rose gold dye job you always said I'd look good in, okay? Whatever style you want — you just get your ass home.

**A Routine Checkup**

Abbie Doll

Fiction

Here I am at yet another dentist appointment, stuck in this chair staring at the ceiling. I have a lot of time to think here; it's one of the few places I feel alone with my thoughts anymore. The dental hygienist always asks what I want to watch, but as she lowers the chair, the TV disappears from view. Is this fake privilege a running joke for them? The nonsensical logistics of the matter really throw me off. Christ, mount it on the ceiling if you want patients to watch.

Of all the snakelike things I *could* notice in this office, the fluorescent lights capture my attention first. Their snakeskin-textured panels make me think of fangs and then I'm onto sharks, wishing new teeth would magically emerge in my mouth, so I didn't have to waste so much time here trying to make small talk with half a dozen instruments poking out of my open mouth like some metal bouquet. I'm not one for talking generally, so for me, this is torture. But I can't risk being rude; when the tide of saliva recedes, I mumble toward the hygienist, telling her what I do for a living — the same conversation we have every visit, even though it's displayed in bold caps in my file's header. A long line of drool trails down my chin. I laugh a little, apologizing when she wipes the spittle from me as if I'm a newborn. When she flosses, the gums bleed. I then get accused of not flossing, even though I do whenever I eat. Why can't the staff just believe in my good hygiene? I follow their recommendations with religious fervor, but cavities keep popping up. Then somehow, I'm the one responsible. I don't want to be here anymore than I want new holes drilled in my lungs. My adult mouth already feels riddled with craters — like a pink moon.



“Oops.”

The anesthetic’s got me numb. I can’t feel any pain from her botched move (yet), but I *do* see the blood trickle out. She sprints out the room, hollering for the dentist, leaving me and my unhinged jaw with these hissing lights, waiting for this snake of a place to try and digest me.

**Ravished**  
Marjorie Sadin  
Poetry

*A Ghazal*

My love is like an earring of amethyst worn forever.  
But the blaze that consumes us will not burn forever.

When I wrote down your name, I pressed  
pen to paper so hard it tore forever.

I cannot put you down. You are like the pages  
of a book of poems, I turn forever.

If you leave me behind on a one-way ticket to Rio,  
never to return, I will bestow upon you scorn forever.

We are like a cigarette lighter briefly flickering.  
We act as if we could endure forever.

You dress so beautifully in your new white tux.  
I am nervous, yearn for forever.

To protect me, you fly in the face of my fear  
with the wings of a bird forever.

You enrapture me so completely,  
it is as if I were repeatedly being born forever.

When I lose you, thank God I, Marjorie,  
will not go on forever.

**Second Sight**  
Marjorie Sadin  
Poetry

*A Villanelle*

I dream of you as my second sight.  
You are part of me like tears.  
I see you hold me in the black of night.

You are my good eye, my right.  
Like the 3D glasses I wear —  
you surprise me as my second sight.

When color turns to blinding light,  
I dream of you as my near  
vision. I see you hold me in the black of night.

Your hands run over me like a freight  
train. I do not let you see my fear.  
Still, I dream of you as my second sight.

You will grow old as a withered rose might.  
I see your future in the rear  
view mirror. I see you holding me in the black of night.

I love you asleep or in the daylight  
with desire that appears  
to me as second sight —  
You hold me in the black of night.

**Your Breath**  
Marjorie Sadin  
Poetry

*A Sestina*

I know there will be barely  
enough time. At night I listen for your breath.  
We kiss, shivers like wind through willows  
down my neck and breasts.  
You hold me like an umbrella in a storm  
so tightly rain won't fall. But sometimes

there are moments when time  
pulls me away from you, bears  
down on me. I storm  
out leaving you breathless.  
You try to understand the heaviness in my breast,  
the ache of my highs, my lows.

Still, when I rest my head on you, a pillow,  
it's as if there was no time.  
We are waves that lie abreast  
of the shore, bare  
bodies between sheets. You are the wind breathing  
through the eye of the storm.

You hold me like a cloud holds a storm,  
caress me like rain through willows.  
Your breath was gentle as a child's breath  
that grew labored over time.  
You gather me up in a bear  
hug and hold onto my breasts

like you would the warm body of a robin redbreast,  
or how a rainbow holds the sky after a storm.

I cannot be without you. You lay bare  
my love. I am strong as the willow.  
Let me grow old with you. Sometimes,  
you struggle to find your breath.

I'll never leave you until you stop breathing,  
hold you close as death to my breasts.  
Even through the blackout when sometimes  
the lines are torn down by a storm,  
I am yours as much as you will allow  
for as long as we can bear.

There is no passing of time, only the sound of our  
breathing  
which bears the rising and falling of my breasts.  
I bend like a willow in a storm over your gasps.

**Belladonna**  
Marjorie Sadin  
Poetry

*A Sonnet*

My life is wrapped around yours like a gift.  
But who's giving and who's receiving?  
You're complicated — a Rubik's cube.  
I think I know you, and then I don't.

You're most demonstrative in the morning,  
the blush on your cheeks. By noon,  
you grow taciturn as clouds. In the evening,  
you're dangerous as deadly nightshade.

Sometimes, you're in the other room  
and we're apart. I talk to you and you can't hear.  
You're not the only person in my life. But no one  
else has a way of turning me inside out.

You're near and yet far.  
Loving you is like touching stars.

**your HMO does not cover opera tickets**

Andrew Ketcham

Poetry

I promised myself I would never write a poem about being bipolar just like I promised myself I would finish even the sour wedge of my morning orange. I once promised myself I wouldn't covet men that weren't mine and later made a promise to be less of an object which compromised my promise to be more singular. I'm always making promises to drink less and save more and fuck more and love less and stop touching myself in month old dirty bedsheets. Lately I've been promising to say faggot less often unless I really mean it or if it's worth the punchline. Long ago in church I promised I'd never lie, cheat or steal and I've broken all three of those promises more than I'd anticipated. There are days I still promise a younger me with a meaner heart I haven't forgotten our promise to each other. Other days I barely remember it at all. Slow barges down the Mississippi. Nothing so warm but our hand in mine.

**holding court**  
Andrew Ketcham  
Poetry

i waited i plotted i made significant use of my time i  
played footsie i lit a match i stroked your hair and ego  
equally i took my coffee black and my whiskey neat i ate  
ice and smoked and i confessed a suspicion of anemia i  
did not reach for your hand reflexively i texted back i  
played risk i was trying to be your cool girl your bad boy  
your gritty A24 BRATZ live action film star i used a hot  
knife to give myself an eyebrow scar i got to talking  
about my two spells in a psych ward i said sure a lot and  
carved deep pockets of space into my life for the things  
most likely to dirty them up i summoned sucker punch  
after sucker punch and went back for more beatings i  
licked boots i groveled i wore all black on easter i  
arranged myself like feathers around you determined to  
draw blood should you preen us away



**Mary Sanctifies the Roses**

D. Walsh Gilbert

Poetry

After we carved the Easter  
Sunday lamb into bite-sized pieces,

and topped the peas with mint,  
we washed the Springdale plates,

rinsed the Waterford, polished silver,  
and put it all back in the cupboard.

The roses stayed fresh a few days.

They're dry now after I wrapped  
their stems in paper towels and let

them rest on the sideboard, sighing.  
Pink has deepened into fuchsia, yellow

into gold, and the white has lost  
its purity—a mellow beige spotted

with tan freckles. Still, so lovely.  
A god has invented virgin after-colors.

*They're as brittle as my skin,*  
whispers Mary as she touches the fragile

petals now bundled with satin ribbon  
nothing like the pillow in a coffin.

She places them beside her straw peacock,  
says one can recognize the other.

**Mary Views “Still Life with Jewelry Box”**

D. Walsh Gilbert

Poetry

— George Gillis Haanan (Netherlands) 1867

an open-lidded music box  
solid footed  
string of pearls  
spilling  
a cast-bronze candlestick  
burned wick smoldering  
filigree  
and turnings  
a hand-chased sterling urn  
unbroken pitcher painted Rococo  
hard-paste porcelain  
a hanky folded carelessly  
a cocktail ring  
enameled hairpin  
cuff bracelet  
loose charms  
velvet drapery  
2-inch braided fringe  
twisted  
a mantel clock  
silver bezel  
polished crystal  
Roman numerals  
two minutes until midnight  
objects man-made  
nothing living  
black and gray  
a white echo  
in attic shadows  
a tossed silk blouse

**Mary and the Deadbolt**

D. Walsh Gilbert

Poetry

Childhood visits to the city: each of us  
paired up with a favorite kinsman —

my mother with her father, my brother  
with our grandmother, and anxiously, I

waited to hear the keys jangle at the door.  
The clear sign Mary was finally home.

Once again delivered by the gritty subway  
from midtown to the Bronx. She climbed

three flights of the six-story walk-up.  
Fingered keys for the knob and deadbolt:

jimmy-proof, with an angle strike, keyed  
double cylinder. She smelled of Estée Lauder,

of roasting chestnuts, of Manhattan working-  
woman success. I wanted to be her —

home after dark, a folded newspaper, a scarf  
that felt like raw silk even though it wasn't.

Today, I adjust her bulky sweater over  
her narrow shoulders, and we edge across

low-pile carpet toward the door of Unit 215  
which she swears won't lock. I show her

how the thumbscrew turns. We mark  
the direction to twist the latch in pencil, but

the arrow rubs right off. I show her how  
the bolt slides — handle fastened in the hallway —

but inside, she can't lock herself in or out.

She doesn't need the key to leave.  
Her new home's door will always open.

**Bloodhound**

Stephen Zimmerman

Fiction

*They're counting on me. A child's life is at stake.* She's been missing since noon. The sun is setting; darkness falls; the temperature is dropping. If I don't find her – I don't have time to think about that.

I've trained my whole life for this. They told me I am the best there is. I have to succeed. I don't want to disappoint my human — or fail the child who's counting on me.

The tall grass I'm running through is filled with so many tantalizing smells — a rabbit, sweet black-eyed Susans, a discarded tire. *No! I've got to focus.* The only scent that matters is the child's. I have to find it. I plunge ahead.

*There it is!* I'm sure that's the scent: an alluring mixture of sweat, dirt, shampoo, and, what I think is probably grape jelly. I sniff trodden blades of golden grass and let out a long baying howl to signal to my human I've found the trail. I'm torn between meticulous caution to be sure I have the right scent and then not to lose it, but I'm also racing the waning sunlight that casts wild shadows on the forest before me. *No time! Run!*

The forest is dense and dark, but my eyes were made for this. I can see every creature that moves in the undergrowth. *Squirrel! No! There's time for that later.* One day I'll catch Max, the chattering demon who taunts me from the fence in the yard and steals my dog food whenever I turn my back.

My human has fallen far behind, unable to move as deftly through the gnarled trees the way I can, but there's no time to slow down. I have to hurry. The scent grows stronger with every sniff from my wrinkled snout.

*Wait! I've lost it.* Where did the child's scent go? My eagerness to complete my mission has made me careless. I circle back, painstakingly sniffing the musty forest soil. I've now backtracked at least ten lengths of my body. I can't locate it! How could I have lost it so completely?

I close my eyes, blocking out all other smells and sounds that swirl distractingly around me and concentrate on the child's scent I've been entrusted with. Duty. Training. Instinct.

My eyes pop open. *I've found it!* I turn sharply right and there at the tree line beneath a towering spruce is a child's shoe. The scent is unmistakable. This belongs to the child. I emit another sustained bay.

Seven steps farther, I discover a second shoe lying on its side as if hastily discarded. A few more sniffs and strides and I find a pair of socks, one inside out, the other rolled in a ball. I've got to be close.

I scan the clearing before me. My ears are filled with the babbling sounds of a creek or stream, and the smell of water, wet wood, and moss mingle with scent of the child. It's nearly dark. I want to dash forward again and find her now, but sensibility wins — I don't want another mistake. Sniff. Sniff.

I exit the forest in the direction of the scent and the sound, stepping through short grass. The dirt turns to cool mud as I near the water's edge. The scent of the child is overpowering.

*There!* Crouched next to the stream I spot the child — I'll be certain once I've sniffed her shirt. She's holding a stick, digging random patterns in the mud and then watching them disappear, washed away by the water.

I let out a short bark, as friendly as I can manage, and she turns to look at me. "Doggy!" she cries with excitement. I amble over, tongue out, doing my best to "smile" like humans do. She reaches out gingerly to pet

my floppy ear. I sniff her shirt. *It's her! I've found the child.*

I nuzzle her stomach, her leg, and her neck, causing her to giggle and fall back on her bottom in the mud. “Doggy, you got me dirty,” she says with a laugh. I’m relieved — I smell no blood.

I look at the moon, half-covered with thin clouds, and belt out one final, drawn-out howl, and wait for my human to take us home.

**At Bella Verace**

Mea Andrews

Poetry

My husband watches every pizza  
paddle turn in the brick oven, left  
tilt, right. Eyes the owner tossing fresh  
dough translucent with envy; I know  
he wants to ask if they grow their own  
fennel and basil, to know what it  
feels like to paw circled perfection.  
He swears they use coconut oil, puts  
his hands in my face to sniff until  
I agree. I imagine him as un petite  
garçon, running between his grandma's  
legs in the kitchen, leaning over  
her hip to watch the oil bubble pop.



**I Watch My Daughter Smoke**

Linda Hughes

Poetry

On a chair outside my window,  
she leans back into the shadows  
of the eaves.

A jacket pulled half on as though she can't decide  
or doesn't care.  
Her long hair flows over her shoulders.  
Slim, tapered fingers tipped  
with short pink painted nails  
bring a cigarette to her lips.

Each time she inhales, knives bury  
into her precious throat,  
giving a rasp to her silk on velvet voice.

There is odd beauty in this daring of destiny.  
Her lips part artfully to take the poison,  
leave a smudge of red  
on white paper,  
and a sepia stain on her pale fingers.

Smoke curls in the air  
through the waves of her hair,  
leaves its sultry, acrid scent.  
These ribbons, so thin, so binding.

If only I could gather her in  
hold her safe from this hateful vice  
that taunts and threatens.

She takes another from the pack,  
draws deeply to chase away

some emptiness.

Smoke dances about her.  
A curse from her own lips.

### Contributor Bios

Mea Andrews

Mea Andrews is a writer from Georgia, who currently resides in China. She has just finished her MFA from Lindenwood University and is only recently back on the publication scene. You can find her in Vermilion, Rappahannock Review, and others. You can also follow her on Instagram at [mea\\_writes](#) or go to her website at [meaandrews.com](#)

Robin Arble

Robin Arble is a poet from the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts. Their poems have appeared or are forthcoming in Overheard Magazine, Anti-Heroine Chic, Pøst-, and Brazos River Review, among others. They study literature and creative writing at Hampshire College.

Christine Barkley

I am an artist and writer based in the Pacific Northwest. My poetry explores the intersecting themes of chronic illness, trauma, the natural world, and existential horror. When not writing, I can be found wandering in the woods, drinking way too much coffee, and baking endless batches of cupcakes.

Talia R. Barnoy

I am a Queer Jewish writer from New York City, with an unhealthy obsession with a local deli's bagels, currently studying Creative Writing and Classical/Near Eastern Archaeology as an undergraduate at Bryn Mawr College. I am very interested in herbalism in practice as well as Judean history, both of which tend to emerge heavily in my work. I also enjoy fiber crafting and have made too many cardigans as well as one dolphin-man stuffed animal with bendable legs.

### Jocko Benoit

Jocko Benoit is the author of three collections of poetry, the most recent of which is *Real Estate Deals of the Apocalypse* (Poems About Donald Trump). His poetry has appeared in *Gargoyle*, *New Ohio Review*, *Rattle Poets Respond*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Spillway* and many other journals.

### Hugh Blanton

Hugh Blanton is an Appalachian expatriate now living in San Diego, California. He grew up in the hills of Eastern Kentucky before wandering and ending up on the American West Coast. He has appeared in *The American Journal of Poetry*, *The Scarlet Leaf Review*, *As It Ought To Be*, and other places.

### Morgan Boyer

Morgan Boyer is the author of *The Serotonin Cradle* (Finishing Line Press, 2018) and a graduate of Carlow University. Boyer has been featured in *Kallisto Gaia Press*, *Thirty West Publishing House*, *Oyez Review*, *Pennsylvania English*, and *Voices from the Attic*. Boyer is a neurodivergent bisexual woman who resides in Pittsburgh, PA.

### Linda Conroy

Linda Conroy, a retired social worker, likes to write about the connection between human nature and the natural world, and to observe the changing times. Her poetry has appeared in various journals. She is the author of a poetry collection, *Ordinary Signs*.

### Jason de Koff

Jason de Koff is an associate professor of agronomy and soil science at Tennessee State University and lives in

Nashville, TN with his wife, Jaclyn, and his two daughters, Tegan and Maizie. When not writing, he is teaching farmers and anyone who will listen about drones.

#### Abbie Doll

Abbie Doll is an eclectic mess of a person who loves exploring the beautiful intricacies of the written word. She has an unhealthy obsession with ducks and goats, all things food-related, and bingeing Japanese programs on Netflix. Beyond that, a few of her favorite things are grapefruit-flavored beverages, bull terriers, and the astoundingly gorgeous San Francisco garter snake.

#### Paul Dufficy

Paul Dufficy is a writer who has lived for long periods of time in Pakistan, Japan, Thailand and Indonesia. He opened an architecture walking tour business in Sydney a week before the borders closed for two years. He is currently looking for work.

#### Natalie Duphiney

I'm an editor of *Feminist Spaces*, an academic and creative journal—published biannually by the University of West Florida. I have also had my poem "A Body" exhibited in a juried show in the Pensacola Museum of Art.

#### Samuel Edwards

Samuel Edwards was born and raised in Leeds, England, and no matter how far away he gets, he is always compelled to return to Yorkshire. He has a Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree from the University of Leeds, and enjoys dark coffee, even darker chocolate, and long walks. Samuel writes mainly to impress his pet cat, a feat he will never accomplish. Previously published in

Vestal Review, The Birdseed and Fairfield Scribes, among others. Tweets at @Sam\_Edwards1990.

Corie Feiner

Corie Feiner is the Poet Laureate Emeritus of Bucks County, PA and international performance poet and slam champion with an MFA from NYU. Called "wonderful" by The New York Times and "absorbing" by Backstage Magazine, Corie has won awards for her poetry, performances, and educational workshops. Currently, she is a homeschooling, gardening, cook-from-scratch yoga mama and founder of the Re/embody Poetry Workshop focusing on body image and somatic healing.

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 for 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).

Joanna George

Joanna George (She/Her) writes from Pondicherry, India. She enjoys sleeping and drinking coffee, rather than being at the PV lab where she is supposed to be. She majorly retweets at j\_leaseofhope.

D. Walsh Gilbert

D. Walsh Gilbert writes because in the words of Gwendolyn Brooks, “Poetry is life distilled.” Her current series concentrates on her aunt, Mary, who recently moved into assisted living and who is emerging as the wise matriarch of the family. Gilbert has recognized how marginalized elderly women can become and wants to squeeze out some of their stories, drop by drop.

Theresa Hamman

Theresa Hamman is a writer and poet who lives in La Grande, Oregon. Born in 1963 in Michigan, she moved with her family to Arizona when she was nine years old. Unable to cope with the Arizona heat, she and her two daughters relocated and settled in La Grande, a rural community in northeast Oregon in 1998. She teaches undergraduate composition and creative writing courses at Eastern Oregon University and Southern New Hampshire University. Although she enjoys writing in all creative genres, her first love is poetry. She gets lost in its musicality and enjoys how it bends language to create new objects.

Ceinwen Haydon

I turn seventy next month, Inside, I hide a rebellious teenager prospecting for words to describe the reasons why. Mirrors don't tell all truths.

Chester Holden

Chester Holden is from Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania. So far in 2022, his works have been published in *On the Run* and *Across the Margin*. You can follow him on Twitter @ChesterHolden9.

Linda Hughes

I have Oklahoma roots and now growing shoots in the wonderland of Florida. I absorb sunshine and poetry, enjoy painting on the lanai, meditating under palms, running here and there. I love being surprised by animals that wander out of the jungle and pass through my yard.

Dianne M. Hunter

Dianne M. Hunter, Emeritus Professor of English at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, writes about drama, family history, and psychoanalysis. Website: [trincoll.academia.edu/DianneHunter](http://trincoll.academia.edu/DianneHunter)

Julie Allyn Johnson

Julie Allyn Johnson, a sawyer's daughter – the eldest of six girls - from the American Midwest, loves long solo walks in the woods. She digs Halloween, photography, gravel-travel, art, poetry and haiku, reading and hiking in the Rocky Mountains. Julie favors black licorice over red, cigarette-length Tootsie Rolls and Hot Tamales, practically the perfect candy.

Cecilia Kennedy

Cecilia Kennedy (she/her) taught English composition/literature and Spanish language/literature in Ohio for 20 years before moving to Washington state with her family, which includes a very demanding cat. Since 2017, she has published her stories in literary journals, magazines, and anthologies in the United States, Canada, Ireland, and England. Additionally, she thoroughly enjoys being a volunteer adult beverages columnist for The Daily Drunk, a proofreader for Flash Fiction Magazine, and a concept editor for Running Wild Press. Twitter: @ckennedyhola



Andrew Ketcham

Andrew Ketcham is a paranoid set of eyebrows in Chicago, IL. He loves boyfriends and breakups and always orders his eggs fried. He is not licensed to operate a motor vehicle.

Richard Kostelanetz

Individual entries on Richard Kostelanetz's work appear in various editions of Readers Guide to Twentieth-Century Writers, Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of Literature, Contemporary Poets, Contemporary Novelists, Postmodern Fiction, Webster's Dictionary of American Writers, Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians, Directory of American Scholars, Who's Who in America, [NNDB.com](http://NNDB.com), [Wikipedia.com](http://Wikipedia.com), and [Britannica.com](http://Britannica.com), among other distinguished directories.

Jerrod Laber

Jerrod Laber is an Appalachian poet and writer, currently living in northern Virginia.

June Levitan

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

R. Nikolas Macioci

R. Nikolas Macioci earned a PhD from The Ohio State University. OCTELA, the Ohio Council of Teachers of English, named Nik Macioci the best secondary English teacher in the state of Ohio. Nik is the author of two chapbooks as well as nine books: Critics and judges called his first book, *Cafes of Childhood*, a "beautifully harrowing account of child abuse," but not "sentimental" or "self-pitying," an "amazing book," and "a single unified whole." *Cafes of Childhood* was submitted for the Pulitzer Prize in 1992. In 2021, he has been

nominated for a Pushcart Prize and The Best of the Net award. More than two hundred of his poems have been published here and abroad in magazines and journals, including *Chiron*, *Concho River Review*, *The Bombay Review*, and *Blue Unicorn*.

DS Maolalai

DS Maolalai has been nominated nine times for Best of the Net and seven times for the Pushcart Prize. He has released two collections, "Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden" (Encircle Press, 2016) and "Sad Havoc Among the Birds" (Turas Press, 2019). His third collection, "Noble Rot" is scheduled for release in April 2022.

Kaitlyn McGowan

Kaitlyn McGowan is an undergraduate English major at the University of Florida and uses poetry to comprehend and amplify the world around her. Born in the quaint city of Safety Harbor, she harbors deep appreciation for the small and seemingly insignificant. She spends avid amounts of time dancing around her dorm room, finding cool lyrics in songs, and taking photographs of the people who make her happy.

Kay Miller

Kay wakes up early to write. She tries with all her might. At the end of the day, she puts everything away, before she says goodnight.

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, Ruminant, Wilderness House Literary Review, Flash: The International Short-Short Story Magazine, and more. His debut chapbook *Tiny*

Universes (Selcouth Station Press, 2021) is available in paperback and e-book. He lives with his wonderful wife Kelly in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Don Noel

Don Noel is retired from four decades' prizewinning print and broadcast journalism in Hartford CT. He took his MFA in Creative Writing from Fairfield University in 2013, and has since published more than five dozen short stories, all of which can be read at his website, <https://dononoel.com>

Donna Pucciani

Donna Pucciani, a Chicago-based writer and retired English teacher, has published poetry worldwide. She is currently sitting at her desk and watching the snow fall.

Lance Romanoff

Lance Romanoff is a short story writer, novelist, and software engineer. A New England native, he now lives in Los Angeles with a hairless Sphynx cat and a motorcycle.

James W. Reynolds

James W. Reynolds is a bankruptcy lawyer. Realizing that bankruptcy is a metaphor for everything, he started writing poetry and hasn't stopped — even though his family and friends have asked him to. Frequently.

Marjorie Sadin

I am a happily married senior who has written poetry my entire life. I have struggled with mental health issues and overcome them. My writing comes from the heart.

Claire Scott

Claire Scott is a recently retired psychotherapist who is enjoying having more time to write, take long walks and try to stay ahead of the weeds. She is excited to be spending more time with her five grandchildren who are scattered over the country.

Sean Selbach

I am a poet living in Chicago, IL. My favorite Deep Space Nine characters are Kira Nerys, Jadzia Dax, and Rom. For Next Generation it's Ro Laren, Data, and Geordi La Forge.

Sadie Shorr-Parks

Sadie Shorr-Parks is the author of the poetry collection HONEY MONTH (Main Street Rag). Her poems have appeared in: Aquifer: The Florida Review, Blueline, Painted Bride Quarterly, and Southwest Review, among others. She currently teaches writing at Shepherd University where she is the director for the Society for Creative Writing.

Bobbi Sinha-Morey

Bobbi Sinha-Morey loves aerobics, pilates, knitting, and cooking. She's also a fan of "Charlie's Angels" and rock music from the sixties. Her favorite writers are Phyllis A. Whitney and Joyce Carol Oates, and among her favorite poets are Margaret Atwood and Robert Hass.

Kylie Smith

Kylie Smith is a writer based out of Logan, Utah.

Kristy Snedden

Kristy Snedden has been a trauma therapist for the past thirty-plus years and continues to love her work with humans of all ages. She is obsessed with identity, human

nature, and relationships and how these interact with the natural world. She can be found hiking near her home in the Appalachian mountains, usually with a canine friend by her side.

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 other journals. Edward is also a published poet.

Jessica Whipple

I write poetry for adults and children, and children's picture books. My debut picture book titled *ENOUGH* will be published this year by Tilbury House. I live in Lancaster, PA, and have always enjoyed writing and reading poetry.

Richard Widerkehr

Richard Widerkehr's poems have appeared in *Door Is A Jar*, *Rattle*, *Atlanta Review*, and many others. His third book is *At The Grace Cafe (Main Street Rag)*. His next book is forthcoming from Shanti Arts. He reads poems for *Shark Reef Review*.

Nikki Williams

Nikki is a multimedia journalist and writer. Her work appears in *The Citron Review*, *Ellipsisazine*, *Sublunary Review*, *LEON Literary Review*, *Literary Yard*, *PreeLit* and *Sky Island Journal*. She munches trail mix and takes stunning photos when not busy writing. She tweets: @ohsashalee / See more: [linktr.ee/writenowrong](http://linktr.ee/writenowrong)

### Alexander Lazarus Wolff

Alexander Lazarus Wolff is a student at the College of William & Mary. His work has been published or is forthcoming in The Best American Poetry website, The Citron Review, Black Fox Literary Magazine, South Florida Poetry Journal, Main Street Rag, Serotonin, and elsewhere. You can find him on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/wolffalex108/> and on Instagram @wolffalex108

### 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.

Upload your submissions to Submittable. Label your file with your first and last name and the genre of your work.

In your cover letter please include your full name, 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 more information on how to submit to our magazine visit [doorisajarmagazine.net](http://doorisajarmagazine.net)

