

# Juniper Literary Magazine



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JUNIPER LITERARY MAGAZINE was founded with the goal to give diverse voices, especially marginalized ones, the chance to share their self-expressions. With a focus on BIPOC, and queer/LGBTQIA+ authors and illustrators, *Juniper Literary Magazine* accepts work from people of all walks of life and does not discriminate based on age, gender, race, sexuality, or other factors.

This inaugural issue of *Juniper Literary Magazine* does not have a specific theme, yet the pieces in the magazine represent diverse perspectives and embrace a wide range of writing styles and subjects.

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Editor in Chief: Rosie Carter

Cover Art: Cara Echols

Rosie Carter is a writer and artist based in Boston, MA. Her work can be found in *Barren Magazine*, *Nightingale & Sparrow*, and the *Journal of the Core Curriculum* at Boston University. She has been an active participant in the literary magazine community for over ten years. In her free time, she enjoys playing with her cats Orzo and Onyx, and hanging out in public libraries.

Direct inquiries to [juniperlitmag@gmail.com](mailto:juniperlitmag@gmail.com)

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Juniper Literary Magazine  
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# Familiarity in Someone Who is Becoming Familiar

by Clay Hunt

Looking through the familiar balcony in Bernal Heights,  
watching cars zip by on the freeway,  
I couldn't help but wonder if the silver in her hair  
would still glisten after time marched us on.  
Would her smile still hold the same fresh frame?  
I cherished the thought of her hands grasping mine  
for a while. I wanted her to hang around.

She was becoming familiar to me.  
I watched a scenario in my head:  
everything fell apart like the Husker Dü song.  
I thought of how the patterns formulated,  
and how each relationship of my past  
was swept away like dust bunnies.  
The fear of the familiarity here was unbearable.

I watched her eyes when she spoke,  
loved the way they squinted when she smiled through her  
mask,  
and received her hand when she reached for it.  
Her soft fingers scratched my leg as we sat watching T.V.  
In her living room.

What wasn't familiar was her.  
Not yet.  
There was a healthy distance,  
like six feet in 2020.  
I wanted to ask about everything,

*but the questions scared me  
because I was scared of losing her.*  
So, I sat silent.

Another familiarity.

# Content/No Content

by John Idalis

Mitski once said "you're growing tired of me"  
and that's how i feel  
you feel about me.

how you all feel...???

should i jump ship?  
peace out??



i want us all happy.



# Megszállottság

by Aranyi László

Delejes, a Hét Megnyilvánulás közötti,  
lebegő álomból ocsúdom. Kávét főzök,  
köpőcsésze formájú hamutartóban gerincét  
töri cigarettám.  
Fagyos szellemujjak, kanóc nélküli, karhosszúságú,  
tejfehér viaszgyertyák  
az élő boncasztalon.

Távolabb: hálószővő pókként gyökértelen planéták.

Az Ismeretlenből az Ismert sugall..., kényszerít...  
Levágott kígyófő hív töredékes legendák  
túlontúl e világi poklából,

az alig érzékelhető érintés bénító szorítássá fajul,  
egyre fenyegetőbb üzenetei:  
nem emberkéz által írt verssorok...

Végül formát ölt a formátlan,

mozdul a vizenyős lószemű élettelen...

# Obsession

by Laszlo Aranyi

Translated by Gabor Gyukics

Mesmerized, I wake from a floating dream  
inside the Seven Manifestations.

I make coffee, My cigarette breaks its spine  
in spittoon shaped ashtray.

Frosty ghosts fingers, wickless, arm length, milk white wax candles  
on the living dissection table.

Farther away: rootless planets like a web-weaving spider.

The Known suggests from the Unknown..., forces...

Severed snake head calls for fragmentary legends  
beyond this worldly hell,

the barely perceptible touch becomes a crippling grip,

their messages are increasingly threatening:

non-human hand written verses...

Eventually the shapeless turns to shape,

the watery horse-eyed lifeless begins to move...

# on the wallpaper

by Rebecca Herrera

let me sleep a few days more / a few months more / on these  
dried lavender leaves / silk pearls / and pillows of caramel flan  
i want the inside of my eyelids painted with murals of cactus trees /  
flowers on their spikey heads that crack open light / like glow sticks /  
underneath a dark blue sky / i don't like the dark! / i've told you  
before / can you also get my morning coffee and headache pills to  
taste more like gold spring tea / or like the soup my mother made  
us on sunday afternoons / or mornings / the recipe is inside a wooden  
box / it's on the tip of my tongue / i'd like to keep sleeping some more,  
my love / i've grown tired of the peeling wallpaper / and the dusty wood  
floor / replace them with orange clouds / the ones suspended in the sky  
on the night you said you loved me / i'm getting wallpaper underneath  
my nails / my lovely, love / can you say it to me again?

# Fall Moments

by Aimee Nicole

When you dance with me in your childhood room,  
I feel like a prize you won at the traveling carnival on a cool fall night.  
Everything will be fine as long as you carry me under your arm.  
We don't need music or an audience,  
just dip me wildly while our laughs echo off your sea foam painted walls.  
My eyes are wide as teacup saucers and my limbs fling like a marionette doll.  
When I rest my head on your chest, I feel your heart pounding so fast I have  
to remind myself not to catch it.

# Postmortem

by Amber Ridenour Walker

*Anything else?* The clerk asked, scanning the second bottle of wine.

*American Spirits.* I didn't care about crying in front of a gas station clerk. It was starting to be a regular thing.

*Aw Man. Rough Night, Huh?* He handed me the yellow pack and my change. He looked pretty concerned. I tried to smile but it came out horrible because it had been a rough night, yet another night that ended with me slamming a whiskey glass onto a table and blindly stumbling out of the bar and into the night. At least I hadn't cried until I had the keys in the ignition, until I was already almost gone. At least I'd learned that much.

My roommates were asleep or absent. I climbed the stairs to my tiny heatless room. I planned to drink the bottle on the roof, push the window open and smoke until I got sick and dizzy and the sky turned nuclear orange through the rain.

I thought about the times I watched her walk away. I used to watch her walk away, always somehow knowing what that meant. It was like if you found out God was real, but He would never love you. Or just maybe not enough.

I sat down on the bed.

When suffering finally swells and pops like a blister, is it nihilism or freedom, the rush that comes on? *Who even cared, anymore?*

I started laughing. Outside, the first birds sang back.

# The fog knows how to swallow

by Aditya Vikram

and I willingly walk into its belly  
this morning. He meets me  
at the bend where stray dogs  
are fast asleep in a torn blanket.

I hold his face in my shivering  
palms, thaw in the warmth  
of his eyes - two little suns,  
glowing. There is nothing else

in this moving refuge of whiteness.  
A song that falls off his lips,  
my suns glowing. The winter  
turning us red as we speak.

Noon arrives like the police.  
Burns our thin white curtains.  
Muffler-clad uncles, and aunties  
with disheveled hair look down

from balconies in slumber.  
We unlock our hands, gather  
our glances. Gently blink back  
our suns, waiting for the dense fog  
of tomorrow.

# Cage the Uncage

by Ruchi Acharya

The world is darker than it used to be  
for men who wear pink heels.  
We caress our pets, love velvet,  
sway our hips to  
songs sung by *Freddie Mercury*.

Strolling in Central Park  
their eyes lay  
on our lipstick shade. They judge,  
comment, scorn us,  
Make us walk at a distance  
In far off spaces.  
Like two doomed ships  
in a raging storm,  
love is the centre of the hurricane.

We don't give up on love.  
We don't give up on us.

How can they turn away their child?  
How can they forget their friends?

They choose to hurt us and ask us to abandon  
our heritage, our crown,  
just because of whom we choose to love?  
Why is holding my partner's hand  
forbidden? Why can't my heart rejoice  
in a love that dares not speak its name?  
It hurts, it hurts, it hurts.

On a starry night I comb his hair  
with painted nails, asking, "Be patient,  
keep faith. Things will change soon.

One day will be the day when  
black turns blue.

Me and you, just us two  
sitting in the sun with gin and sinners  
begging us to forgive  
ignorance."

With tender lips he replies,  
"The rainbow emerges  
from clouds, filled with hope"

Let us create a better world  
where no one has to hide  
their true self,  
Where no one has to wrangle between  
guilt and dreams.  
Let's uncage the caged.





Christopher Woods

Birdhouse

# Chamber Of Reflection

by Sara Whittemore

In the evening it's easy to pretend there's a deep mystery.

Dancing alone in a room covered in grey wallpaper and windows of indigo squares. I glow. I'm neon and colored in a fine mica dust. Sunglasses turn hiding into fashion. It's morning, the wind feels weird as though it were vertical instead of horizontal.

I wash down dirt with ripe cantaloupe juice.

Easy to chew flowers. Easier still to set them ablaze over a brick pit.

A kaleidoscope of masks all painted puke green and I'm a carnival worker laughing as she rips the crank from the wheel. I want to tell him everything I know. Processes of fermentation, ancient Norse mythology, the sediment that concrete consists of. I'll ask for revisions, reversals, revivals. It's only retrograde for sentimental reasons. What is forbidden is only formidable in appearance.

I like the pink mask the best. The advertisement for shiny soap becomes a cultural mythology.

Along a path in Estes Park exists lines of xylophones, the most whimsical of musical instruments, except perhaps for the kazoo, which does not exist along this creek. A sign by a parking lot reads, "The world laughs in flowers." I laugh in coconuts, eggplants, soft skulls.

I pluck an eyeball from the center of my mind and place it in the center of a silver ring. I'm waiting, waiting for days on a message I know I won't receive but I write a name and hide it in the case of my phone anyway. It's iridescent, burning away all sense of responsibility and morality.

I'm writing about love.

At work we examine little glassy beetles under a microscope which is strange because I work in a restaurant. Creeping vines crawl over the walls, windows, an atmosphere of undue restraint.

Always a step behind, like the light of the stars reaching our eyes. A few moments in the past, a few past moments that I can't get out of my head like I'm stuck in some holy shit fuck time chamber. I know the gold on the counter is a fake. The watch, ticking but off-beat like a 1950's jazz recording. I love to dance. I love to wipe my feet of old soil. At a party I make a joke about oak-lore.

As a child I studied ballet in hopes of someday choreographing a dance about small spiders. On the fridge hangs magnets from a Pierre Cardin exhibit from the Brooklyn Museum of Art, which stands like a monolith next to Prospect Park and the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens with free, green lawn chairs and an air conditioned front foyer. Each trip, I collect small trinkets. In Boulder, I was gifted with a Venus of Willendorf keychain, a label off a Chanel dress and several

bright red leaves I flattened in my notebook while on a walk. I want to visit more libraries but I want to possess the books, write in their pages as though somehow that makes them mine.

I read a film. I eat some steak left over from the last Yuga. It's impossible to bathe in the light when the windows are shut. I want to know more about the beet root so I buy a book on perfume and look to certain magical practices for weirdly timed answers. It's hard not to be distracted by the glittery advertisement. It's hard to know if anything makes sense when you're not even totally sure what sense is. It's black stardust I'm coughing up from deep within my lungs. I smoke souls, sourdough, a crook with a green smile. I'm the opalescent snake sliding out of the bell of your trumpet.

In Los Angeles I'm invited to a show and I feel a strong desire for a paisley patterned dress but instead I buy a sheet of stickers and a tiny notebook from a vendor in Little Tokyo. I go to the beach, watch teenage boys skateboard. I never remember to ask what a piece wants and I'm still learning how to listen to plants. I email a poet asking what it means to write into a piece after several internet search attempts fail to provide such clarity. I still haven't read the email.

It's Sunday except it's Tuesday but I don't have work again till Monday I mean Thursday. In a week a month will begin anew except that's probably a lie too.

# Honest Was the Chest She Spoke With

by Clay Hunt

Honest was the chest she spoke with,  
youthful bursts echo in her laugh.

Silver was peppered in her black hair.  
My earthly eyes were mesmerized as it glistened.

She showed me her true smile,  
a sight that further stole me from myself.

I took her ring-filled hand and held it close,  
Her present smile lit me up like a lantern.

I held this light to navigate through her mind.  
Former paths have been unlighted,

but I can see where the light burned her,  
I can see the wise words inside.

I can see the potential in burrowing further.

# Something is Always Being Whittled Away

by Matthew Miller

The dried bloom of sunset  
sinks into a horizon of weeds,  
twisted black stems begging  
for attention. Each morning, I should  
prune distraction. Cut dandelion,  
honeysuckle, and crabgrass;  
but even my right hand could  
shamble the garden to hell.  
Thumbs smudge the screen  
of intention. Creeping vines  
helix the mulberry trunks. Green  
cinquefoil ripples with promises of life.  
A dappled canopy that could hold me  
like a tomb, smearing the sunlight,  
saying, *Look, your time has gone,*  
*there's nothing more for you than sleep.*

# In the Tides of Summer

by Amber Ridenour Walker

I was fascinated by the thickness of Brian's fingers, their ability to fix things. For a while he lived in people's closets, sometimes ours. Some days we only knew he was there from the sound of his guitar, playing Pixies songs around the missing strings, his low accompanying whistle. If he thought no one was around, he would sing; a gentle, broken sound.

The fall we dated, he lived in a broken Bluebird bus with his books and records, playing the Space Odyssey theme song under the stars. On days it didn't rain, I listened for his motorcycle. Wrapped in leather, inked with eyeliner, I held on tight through tiny towns outside Olympia, the engine rumbling between us.

He was celibate, he said, so he wouldn't pass on his genes. I knew that he was sick, but I didn't know how sick, didn't know his thick knuckles wouldn't be able to fix his bike forever.

We broke up under the Orionids. I always knew that his intentions were nobler than mine. Mine were huge and ravenous, hulking and ashamed. I crushed them like dry leaves beneath my boot. I knew I would smash everything I touched.

# Patterns

by Hazel Rain

“Are you listening? Hey, are you listening?”

My eyes glaze over as a pattern of strums ring through my head. I try to focus on my surroundings, but it’s like I can only see the edges of things. The tip of a bottle. Cracked. Clothes strewn all over the floor. A black hat next to me on the bed. I touch it and it’s soft. “You look depressed and like you were forced to leave the house,” the hat says to me in the voice of a young girl. It’s my daughter. “Um. Sorry. I don’t know.”

I couldn’t really see her when she had said that. I knew she was there, but everything was hazy. I took the hat off for a moment, then put it back on. I wonder if she was disappointed at that. I wonder what words I said to her. Pretty, pretty, pretty. Pretty, pretty pretty piano that I couldn’t really hear. “Hey! Please listen to us. We want to help you. Dear god, just give us something.”

Am I okay? Am I okay? Am I okay? “Um,” I say again.

They string some more words together, that I need help, I need to get better. I wonder what story my daughter will get out of this.

I feel something. I think that it’s an embrace. Someone is touching me, hugging me. Foggy, loud voices. I just want to sleep. I start to cry. “I don’t know.”

My knees fold into my chest. I hope that dumb hat doesn’t keep talking to me.

“Come on, Kev. Come on.” I hate that name. I want to go back to sleep.

\* \* \*

“Hello?” The same voice of that stupid, soft hat that spoke to me a couple days ago.

“Hi.” I try to make my voice enthusiastic.

...

“You have any time?”

“I think so.”

“Okay. I’m coming.”

“Okay.” The voice of someone who knows I am almost never actually coming.

All she’s doing is writing essays. That’s not very exciting. Maybe if I smile big enough when I get there she’ll be happy.

She opens the door, her face stuck in a frown. We repeat the motions as we always do.

“Where do you wanna go?”“

I don’t know.” I don’t know, either. We don’t speak. So many holes in our lives. I don’t know what to do besides drive around in circles or repeat myself. I choose to repeat myself.

“Where do you want to go?” Maybe she’ll know this time.

Of course she won’t know this time. She never knows.

“I know.” I wait, surprised. Waiting, waiting, waiting. Pretty, pretty waiting that I can almost hear. “There’s this store I found.”

She loses us, as she always does, with her words that explain nothing and so of course, now I have to drive around in circles. I wonder where she got this terrible sense of direction of hers. Not from me.

She smiles as soon as we open the door. Looks at everything a little too closely. Grins at the pale pink flowers, grins wider still at the young man who greets her as if they’ve met before. Have they met before? I don’t know. This store makes her happy. I look around. White walls, white shelves, I don’t know exactly what it is that’s making her eyes light up, but I’m glad all the same. There’s relief in the not talking. There’s relief that something makes her happy.

She looks at me for a moment, and even though she’s still smiling, her eyes that mirror my own seem to dim, just a bit. She goes back to looking at a green coat with gold buttons. She twirls around slowly to look at the art on the walls. Makes conversation that I’m not really listening to. I wonder why this is special. She’s prettier than the black hat. But I wonder what the hell is going on with her hair. It’s terrible. Bright blue, making her look like me when I was younger. “Okay. We can go now.”

I nod, but she’s looking past me to the car. “Okay,” I repeat. She smiles a sad smile.

\* \* \*

“It’s like I’m alone. You’re not even here. Why can’t you be here?”

My eyes feel like they are filling up with heat. I don’t say anything. “Are you even listening?” I hear from somewhere. Her voice softens slightly. “Are you okay?” Her eyes are red. I can’t tell if she’s panicked, angry, or about to cry.

Am I okay? Am I okay? Am I okay? My hands grasp for something, anything. “What are you doing?! What are you doing? Your hands aren’t on the wheel!”

I close my eyes. There are screams. I can’t tell if they’re mine, or her own. I feel sweat on my forehead. I can’t do this. Why did I think I could do this?

All of a sudden, silence.

I look up. What’s happened? I try to focus. I hear the soft voice. I can’t see her, I can’t see my daughter anywhere.

I hear the voice again. I thought she was gone. And I most definitely don’t have the hat with me. “I love you.” I look up. She is so far away. And I am so far away.



# Emily as I Prepare the Meal-Kit Spring Asparagus Farro Bowls

by Darren Demaree

Everything must, because  
of the cowardice of men,  
be overcooked,

but Emily knows  
the waking shelter  
is worthless if it isn't running

down your forearms.  
Grill the peppers for sure,  
give them the black lines

a simple life needs,  
but if anything else crunches  
then she'll know

you aren't ready to dance the way  
she prefers, with eyes rolled  
into the back of our heads.



Anukriti Yadav

Anxious Spiral

# Parallel Segway

by Paris Jessie

prelude.

though dense, i know how to swim, in this saltwater  
i know the taste  
murky  
now that, i know

i have been  
split in various ways  
taken the sawdust  
poured it  
at my last place of forgiveness

a calm breeze of earth lets loose  
how? i don't know  
parts of me  
are in worldly quadrants

i.  
there i was seated  
you red-faced  
with two looks, two tones  
i am pressed  
half-way down, half-way flapping

ii.  
you are screeching  
*how could you*  
in our language  
but it sounds foreign

iii.

you are pulling my right leg  
to get through the cracked window  
do not bend me  
i have done enough, myself

iv.

now i am frightened  
to sleep and wake  
senses are of no use  
with this puncture here

# Romulus

by Elyssa Tappero

It would be poetic to say I was raised by wolves, but not entirely accurate. Wolves care for their young and teach them how to survive in the wild, and I cannot say the same for you. Perhaps, if I may extend the metaphor, I could say I was raised by lone wolves. Wolves who had walked too long without a pack and no longer remembered what it is like to be part of a structured society. Wolves who guarded their scant possessions with ready teeth and would snap the leg of a family member as easily as the leg of a prey animal, if only to keep them from leaving.

Into this disfunction I was delivered, the feral human child begrudgingly allowed to follow in your tracks and chew on your discarded bones. No wonder I'm not quite right, uneasy among my own kind and having always to translate from wordless beast-thought to this clumsy human language. I think my fellow humans can smell the lingering musk on me, too, or perhaps they see the way I struggle to hide my teeth. I do not fully belong with them and they know it; I do not fully belong in the wilds and you will not let me forget it.

I could spend long nights wondering what I might have been like, had I never known you, but why? Nature, nurture, free will, fate, they all flatten to two dimensions with the passage of time. Maybe without you I would have grown up seeing the world through human eyes and I would not have this hungry, restless thing caged inside me. But maybe without you I would have died in those woods, or reverted to something beyond feral, and I would not have even the harsh manners you imposed on me with tooth and claw. For better or worse we are misfits together, a ragged pack eking out an existence on the fringes between the ones who reject us and the ones who hunt us.

# The Star Field

by Hannah Morris-Voth

In the star field  
our milk-eyed girl  
runs through woolly hedgenettle,  
voice sparkling with  
dust fallen from the moon:  
a choir from Westminster spilling  
from one mouth.

Surrounding her are  
forgotten figures:  
diamond skinned,  
hands soft as  
haulm,  
bodies all hyaline.

Barren land stretches  
without a sea-end.  
Marking time with  
madrigals, the quirister  
keeps sailing.

# The Moon

by Maya Sultan

The moon wrapped in its shiny white cloth shimmered as vividly as ever. The moonlight crept into my room through the window, encapsulating me in its wide arms. Embracing me like a friend. A friend I longed to be embraced by. A friend who never committed the sin of leaving my thoughts.

The night was as long as the reach of his smile. As torturous and bleak as his misery, but the night had just begun.

It was late at night on a Sunday, I had school tomorrow, but sleep did not do me the favor of blessing me with its presence. Sleepless nights, nothing out of the ordinary. I walked up to my terrace for a moment of breathing in the fresh air and escaping the suffocating memories. The night sky was picturesque. The graceful diamond stars, the regal moon, and the fragile scent of lilies. He always liked lilies. His favorite flower. I used to get him lilies every day, ever since he lay on that white stretcher.

The moon spoke to me. It spoke of the grandeur of the multiverse. The fantasies of the galaxies. The miracles of nature. The illustrious beauties of the heavens. I had lots to say as well, but I was too late. Could the moon hear me? Could... could 'he' hear me? Could he hear all those unsaid, unfinished and unfelt words?

I had started to think about a lot of rubbish. The 'moon' talking to me? I really need to go visit a psychiatrist. I walked back to my room, this time with a foolish sense of loss, thinking I'd go back to sleep and start my life as normal and as usual tomorrow morning (finally reaching some kind of sanity I guess).

I spread out my blanket and opened the drawer of my bedside table, to put my phone back, when I saw the picture. The last picture. He had worn out. His illness had eaten him up.

I put the picture back and looked out the window to see the moon smiling at me. Smiling like he had been, when he was finally wrapped in his shiny white cloth which shimmered as vividly as ever, to be taken back to God.

# Little Things

by Jade Hidle

His hands were paper apricots,  
Tobacco-stained skin  
Vellumed by the sun,  
Hammering, sawing, building,  
Always as if about to tear  
And expose flesh.

An American hero,  
They said:  
Stormed  
the beaches at Normandy.  
Braved  
    Operation Killer to the 38th Parallel  
Served  
    In Africa, no one asks where,  
Rescued  
    My grandmother and mother from smoldering Saigon as it lost its name.

But  
The way he told it  
War was about things  
Not so big.

He humped through Deutscher Wald  
Stopped, listened, dug, squatted  
And as his thighs burned and his nose grew cold,  
The thuds of running boots, quickening.  
He didn't break his squat as the Nazis  
Emerged from the trees,



rifles in surrender.  
“Warten,” my grandfather told them,  
And he finished.

At a Seoul movie theatre,  
He forgot the film,  
Focusing instead on the silhouette of a louse  
Crawling on the unruly hair of the Korean in front of him.

While he held the blowdryer too close to my head,  
My hairs crisping white,  
I said nothing.  
He told me how African women’s breasts  
Swung loose and low,  
My grandmother laughing without her dentures,  
Patting her own bra, stuffed with rolls of casino winnings.  
When I repeated the story at school,  
Hoping for a similar reaction,  
Trisha called me out:  
“They don’t have bras. They’re too poor.  
What are they supposed to do?”

About Viet Nam, he didn’t say much,  
But he showed us his naked body when he fought  
With my grandmother  
And shook his head and cursed when I,  
The first American-born child,  
Thanks to him,  
Got my head stuck  
Between the back and seat of a kitchen chair.  
“Real proud,” he jeered,  
As his papery fingers  
Tilted my chin

So I could slide out  
Sideways.

Bessie,  
His El Camino pickup,  
Rattled us down dusty highways to Fresno  
To visit one of his company.  
Sandwiched between his Marlboro and my grandmother's Camel  
Smoke--  
"It follows beauty," he assured me--  
Enveloped by odors of sweaty leather and grease,  
My stomach churned,  
The road laid serpentine,  
Every turn sending my grandmother's manicured arrowheads  
Grasping for the door handle,  
And my stomach distending to release in one direction or another.  
I said nothing.  
Today,  
I had to be my grandfather's pride,  
Proof that his stories lived in little things.

Dry winds blew the little vinyl American flags  
Twist-tied to the chain link fence  
That creaked as we approached the front door in a line  
My grandmother bringing up the rear with her shuffling  
Platforms and tongue clicks of disgust  
At the barren yard.

My grandfather's knuckles banged and knocked and rapped  
On the door.  
His past was not home.  
Pressure insisted,

And I tugged at the loose and flowing ao dai billowing from my grandmother's body.  
"Con phai di ia," I pleaded with her.  
"Trois dat oi," she rolled her eyes to the same heaven she cursed,  
And to him,  
"Honey, we got go MacDo. She got poo poo."

My grandfather squinted at me through the dusty wind and cigarette smoke.  
I wanted to say sorry  
But I said nothing,  
And he said,  
"Nah nah, we don't need that, do we, poopsie?"

He held me steady as I squatted,  
In this vet's dry yard,  
Dust blowing in my eyes  
And my grandmother's laughter  
Carrying on the wind.

He rubbed the small of my back,  
His dry skin scraping mine,  
Those paper apricots  
Digging into dirt  
To bury  
Another little thing.



Anukriti Yadav

Voyeurism

# fifteen.

by Alea Peister

A coffee shop bustles around me. I sit with my back against a wall, my right knee bouncing restlessly below a table built for one. I sit this way so I can map how strangers flow through the room in relation to me. A paperback copy of Anne Carson's *Plainwater* lies flat on my table. My right hand rests on its open pages.

The hum of an espresso grinder floats from the coffee bar on my left. To my right, floor-to-ceiling windows are flush with house plants. Every wall is a spotless white but one, which is the yellow of goldenrods—of egg yolks—of sunflowers. All who enter eddy through the pool of its brightness.

A young girl, perched at a tall table beside the yellow wall, fidgets with her phone. She can't be more than fifteen. She poses, thoughtfully, and takes a selfie. A few moments later, she gathers her books and moves to a table mere feet from me, where a second teenager chats on the phone in blissful defiance of her heavy math textbook and laptop.

A bright red seven adorns the first girl's oversized football jersey. When she sits down, turning her back to me, I am startled by the HAIL MARY emblazoned between her shoulders. Below a second red seven the full Ave Maria is block-lettered in Latin, embroidered in white.

I am transfixed by this small miracle. My knee's restless motion stops. I fold my hands beneath my chin, lean forward—

AVE MARIA, GRATIA PLENA, DOMINUS TECUM.

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee—*

She moves again, taking a seat beside the windows and hiding this prayer from my sight. Light from the cloudy sky settles softly over her face. She takes another selfie—fiddles with her phone—smiles, timidly delighted—appears to text someone.

I return my eyes to the pages of my book. Never can I remember looking at words the way she

has just done. As I search for comparable moments in my memory, others flood back— moments when my fingers froze over phone keys mid-sentence, paralyzed by uncertainty — when someone whose words I longed to receive entered a room, or saw me, and my body felt like it might break apart at the seams —

BENEDICTA TU IN MULIERIBUS . . .

(Blessed art thou among women . . .)

A well-dressed young man sits down across the room, facing me. He sits alone, reading from a massive iPad and sipping a cup of coffee. It occurs to me how simple it might be to turn to him —to say hello—and a familiar fear engulfs my heart.

The first teenager gets up again, walks back to her chatty friend, and points at her phone screen. She looks uncertain, like she is searching for hope. Her back is turned to me and I again witness the ave — ave — ave Maria —

“Get over it!” her friend exclaims, with an ironic smile and a slight lisp. “Like, just get over it!!” The first girl looks at her shoes. Puts her phone away. Returns to her textbooks. I see the back of her jersey —

SANCTA MARIA (holy Mary)

MATER DEI, ORA PRO NOBIS PECCATORIBUS —

I remember the tenderness of Mary.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners —

I remember what it was like to be fifteen.

— pray for us sinners, now  
and at the hour of our death.

At intervals, I skim Anne Carson’s words and worry over the state of my heart. Carson likens men (fathers, brothers, lovers, true friends, hungry ghosts and God) to water, her feminine hands to a sieve.

A man in a baseball cap and gray muscle tee sits ten feet from me. Mostly he is hunched over his phone, except in moments when he rises to pace the room. I do not know who he is waiting for, or what makes him so anxious, but something about his presence causes my own longing — briefly forgotten — to wash over me. And still, I look away, as I have always done. When he comes near, I do not raise my eyes to his face.

Sorrow wells up in me, unbidden. It is like I am trapped in glass that I love and long to shatter. My hands reach out — urgent in their purpose — then freeze at the thought of such violence.

The root of Mary's name is Miryām, a Hebrew word. It means sea of bitterness. Sea of sorrow. (Ave — ave Maria —)

The teenager and her chatty friend confer. A moment later, they gather their things and leave.

I fear that I might be free.

# Where to File Nature on the Dewey Decimal System

by Matthew Miller

The stream winds like a stanza  
around granite rocks and chestnut roots.  
My boys peer in rippling windows;  
see fragments of themselves.  
They skip smooth stones, running on  
down the cascades, sinking into depths.  
Rangers thumbed the catalog of trails,  
underlining the best parts for us to scan.  
But we like to walk alone in these landscapes,  
like libraries, silent, waiting for each page  
to be turned. In these deer trodden aisles,  
even the sighting of a mayfly is enough  
to write down. We hike miles on  
the Hogcamp Branch, falling over the spines  
of rock, tented like novels dropped  
from a sleeping hand. We follow the dashed  
and dotted lines, and even though we loop  
back to where we began, we find  
the wild prose of this river  
left mud in our boots, where we lost all footing  
and then recovered. Its sound still churns in us;  
we don't want to put those whispering words  
back on the shelf.



# About the Authors

## Ruchi Acharya

Ruchi Acharya (she/her/hers) is a Business Analyst by profession. She is an Oxford University summer graduate in English Literature. She has been a contributor to multiple writing platforms such as The Pangolin Review, Overachiever magazine, Rigorous Magazine, Detester magazine, Loose Tooth Magazine, Rhodora, Borderless Journal, and Mulberry Literary review among 50 others. Currently, she lives in India with her two year old rabbit. Instagram: @ruchi\_acharya

## Laszlo Aranyi

Laszlo Aranyi [Frater Azmon] (he/him/his) poet, anarchist, occultist from Hungary. Earlier books: (szellem) válaszok, A Nap és Holderók egyensúlya . New: Kiterített rókabőr. English poems published: Quail Bell Magazine, Lumin Journal, Moonchild Magazine, Scum Gentry Magazine, Pussy Magic, The Zen Space, Crêpe & Penn, Briars Lit, Acclamation Point, Truly U, Sage Cigarettes Magazine, Lots of Light Literary Foundation, Honey Mag, Theta Wave, Re-side, Cape Magazine, Neuro Logical, The Daily Drunk Mag, Unpublishable Zine, Melbourne Culture Corner, Beir Bua Journal, Crown & Pen, Dead Fern Press, Coven Poetry Journal, Journal of Erato, Lothlorien Poetry Journal, All Ears (India), Utsanga (Italy), Postscript Magazine (United Arab Emirates), The International Zine Project (France), Swala Tribe Magazine (Rwanda). Known spiritualist mediums, art and explores the relationship between magic. Twitter: @azmon6

## Darren Demaree

Darren C. Demaree (he/him/his) is the author of sixteen poetry collections, most recently “a child walks in the dark”, (Harbor Editions, November 2021). He is the recipient of a 2018 Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award, the Louise Bogan Award from Trio House Press, and the Nancy Dew Taylor Award from Emrys Journal. He is the Editor-in-Chief of the Best of the Net Anthology and the Managing Editor of Ovenbird Poetry. He is currently living in Columbus, Ohio with his wife and children. Twitter: @d\_c\_demaree

## Cara Echols

Cara Echols (she/they) is an artist, writer, and graphic designer residing in Ohio. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Art and Writing from Bluffton University. A founding member of the literary journal Bridge, Cara served as Art Editor for three years and currently serves as Art and Social Media Director and Leadership member for Break Bread Literacy Project. Her work has appeared in Shalith, the Bluffton University Alumni Magazine, Bridge, and Becoming a Scholar. Cara enjoys writing experimental and speculative literature and is currently working on her indie magazine CompoSe Art Magazine, as well as a short story collection of which has yet to be formally titled. When not writing, she can be found walking her dog, Chi, and discovering unique, charming cabins on Airbnb.

## Aimee Nicole

Aimee Nicole (she/her/hers) is a queer poet currently residing in Rhode Island. She holds a BFA in Creative Writing from Roger Williams University and has been published by the Red Booth Review, The Nonconformist, and Voice of Eve, among others. For fun, she enjoys attending roller derby bouts and trying desperately to win at drag bingo.

## Alea Peister

Alea Peister's (she/her/hers) writing meditates on embodied spirituality, memory, and pilgrimage. She lives in Orange County, where she takes long walks in her old, tree-lined suburban neighborhood. Her writing has been featured in Whale Road Review, The Curator, Ekstasis, and Art for the Isolated. You can find more of her work on her website, [www.forthesakeofsharing.com](http://www.forthesakeofsharing.com), and on her Instagram, @forthesakeofsharing.

## Hazel Rain

Hazel Rain (she/her/hers) is an aspiring writer and musician. She writes about her happiest moments with the people she loves, her relationship to her mind and body, and the parts of life she is still letting go of. She loves to read, spend time in nature, and take pictures of what she loves most. She is currently working on her first poetry book and EP.

## Amber Ridenour Walker

Amber Ridenour Walker's (she/her/hers) work has appeared in such places as 20 Minutes in Portland: A Special Edition of The Portland Review, 580 Split, Tiny Spoon, LEON Literary Review, Local Smoke, and Bombay Gin, among others. Her book, *Surfacing*, was released through Free Lines Press August 2021. Amber holds an MFA from The Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics, and she currently lives in Colorado Springs, Colorado. She works as a hairdresser and as a poetry reader for Split Lip. You can find her on Instagram @amberridenourwalker

## Maya Sultan

Maya Sultan (she/her/hers) is a 15-year-old junior in high school in Pakistan, Islamabad. Writing is a passion that runs deep in her veins. Her creations although raw and undefiled reek of melancholy at its intense epitome, hoping that her words seep into the reader's bones. She has been published in the Paper Crane Journal, The Hearth Magazine, The Cathartic Youth Literary Magazine and now Juniper Literary Magazine. Maya Sultan has taken a dip into the somber notes of music and dark questions in literature. Building her dreams brick by brick. All soul, All depth.

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## Elyssa Tappero

Elyssa Tappero (she/her/hers) is a queer pagan who writes fragments of prose and poetry about mental illness, the gods, the agony of writing, and how it feels to be alive for the end of the world (which is pretty not great) in hopes of touching others who might feel the same. You can find more of her work at [www.onlyfragments.com](http://www.onlyfragments.com) and follow her on Twitter at @OnlyFragments.

## Aditya Vikram

Aditya Vikram (he/they) is a poet and spoken word artist from Lucknow, India. Their writing is mostly informed by love, loss, longing, and freedom. They won the Kommune National Story Slam last year, and their work is published in several magazines including Remington Review, Verse of Silence, Vagabond City Lit, and others.

## Sara Whittemore

Sara Whittemore (she/her/hers) is a poet living in Houston, Texas. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing from the Jack Kerouac School at Naropa and a Bachelor's Degree in Creative Writing from the University of Houston-Downtown where she was the recipient of The Fabian Worsham Prize in Creative Writing. Her work has appeared in High Shelf Press, Anomaly, and Abstract Magazine. In addition to being a poet she is an avid artist and cat lover.

## Christopher Woods

Christopher Woods (he/him/his) is a writer and photographer who lives in Chappell Hill, Texas. He has published a novel, THE DREAM PATCH, a prose collection, UNDER A RIVERBED SKY, and a book of stage monologues for actors, HEART SPEAK. His photographs can be seen in his galleries: <http://christopherwoods.zenfolio.com/> and on Instagram @dreamwood77019. His photography prompt book for writers, FROM VISION TO TEXT, is forthcoming from PROPERTIUS PRESS. His novella, HEARTS IN THE DARK, was recently published by RUNNING WILD PRESS. His poetry chapbook, WHAT COMES, WHAT GOES, is forthcoming from KELSAY BOOKS. He has received residencies from The Ucross Foundation and the Edward Albee Foundation.

## Anukriti Yadav

Anukriti (she/her) is an undergraduate STEM student from India. She enjoys poetry, mint chocolate, all kinds of tea, Grant Snider comics, walking to stomp-and-holler music and photographing things around her. She can be found gorging on watermelons aplenty and admiring Gulmohar tree crowns during the hot Indian summer months. Her work is forthcoming in Ice Lolly Review, Pop The Cultural Pill and Goats Milk Magazine. She can be reached on both Instagram and Twitter as @anukrav. She ardently believes mental health inclusivity and rights are the key to dismantling all kinds of systemic oppression.