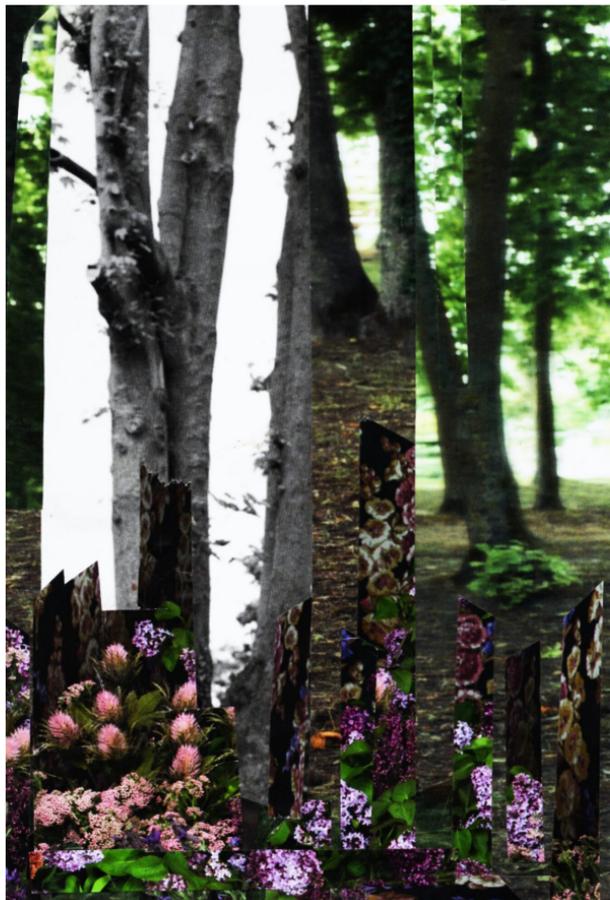


Thimble Literary Magazine



Volume 8 · Number 1 · Summer 2025

When Seasons Transition by Janina Aza Karpinska

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Our staff consists of Nadia Arioli, Editor-in-Chief and Managing Editor: Agnes Vojta, Associate Poetry Editor and Proofreader: Clara Bush Vadala, Associate Poetry Editor: Richard Jordan, Associate Poetry Editor: Melissa McEver Huckabay, Associate Poetry Editor: Aliah Fabros: Associate Poetry Editor, Mark David Noble, Associate Poetry Editor, Izzy Maxson, Associate Poetry Editor, Jeanne Griggs, poetry reader, Chloe Bennett, poetry reader: Sally Brown, Art Editor: Walker Smart, Prose Editor: and Kathryn Haney, Social Media Manager. We also have layout and design editors for our print and web editions: Katie Yacharn, Jonathan Garnes, and Loreena Garcia.

Cover art: *Flames of Liberation* by Nimisha Doongarwal

Thimble Literary Magazine is based on the belief that poetry is like armor. Like a thimble, it may be small and seem insignificant, but it will protect us when we are most vulnerable.

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Brief Guidelines for Submission

We are not looking for anything in particular in terms of form or style, but that it speaks to the reader or writer in some way. When selecting your poems or prose, please ask yourself, did this poem help me create shelter? Simultaneous submissions are accepted, but please notify us if the work is accepted elsewhere. All material must be original and cannot have appeared in another publication, including social media.

Poetry: Please send us two to four of your poems.

Short Stories: Please send a single work of around 1,200 words. It can be fiction, creative non-fiction, or somewhere in between.

Art: Please send us three to five examples of your art, which can include photographs and photographs of three-dimensional pieces.

All work goes to ThimbleLitMagSubmissions@gmail.com with the genre in the subject line.

Table of Contents

Cover Art: *Flames of Liberation* by Nimisha Doongarwal

Editor's Note by Nadia Arioli: 6

Contributor Biographies: 95

Art

When Seasons Transition by Janina Aza Karpinska: 1

Fighter without Color by Nimisha Doongarwal: 15

Raceless Warrior by Nimisha Doongarwal: 17

Colonial Threads by Nimisha Doongarwal: 23

Face of Unity by Nimisha Doongarwal: 29

Shredded by Grief by Janina Aza Karpinska: 31

Pandora's Bowl by Karen Fitzgerald: 35

Safe in the Heart of Nature by Janina Aza Karpinska: 41

Some Comfort by Janina Aza Karpinska: 53

This Day Yesterday by Karen Fitzgerald: 55

Pool by Karen Fitzgerald: 57

As Always by Karen Fitzgerald: 60

Pond by Karen Fitzgerald: 63

Gold Clay Camera Assemblage with Horse by Christine Stoddard: 71

The Seekers by Cheryl Caesar: 76

Raven Watercolor by Dianne Corbeau: 81

Winter Waves by Dianne Corbeau: 83

River Mist on Canvas by Dianne Corbeau: 85
Maria Drawing on Velvet by Dianne Corbeau: 89

Prose

Strawberries by Cole Davies: 8
The Portal by Morgan Brie Johnson: 30
Rhetorical Questions by Andrea Benvenuto: 64
Collage by Sara Winslow: 91

Poetry

A Dream of Learning to Speak by Geraldine Connolly: 12
The Cow Farm by Caitlin O'Halloran: 13
Hanging Around by B. A. Van Sise: 14
Velvet by Anna Ellyn Wagner: 16
Rut by Maureen Egan Riggi: 18
Little Weights by Will Summay: 19
Spectacle by Ashley Gilland: 20
Birds Remind Her by Annette Sisson: 22
do your ancestors know you are the one they are waiting for? by Kerry J Heckman: 24
Lost Faith by Gabriella Brand: 26
Elegy at Wingaersheek by Jennifer Markell: 27
Fury and Annabelle by Angel Rosen: 28
A War Novel by Emma Johnson-Rivard: 32
Baking by Camille Lebel: 33
Sky Watch Update by William Doreski: 34
Uplift by Clare Bryden: 36
Nice Things by Will Staveley: 37
Quiet by Margaret D. Stetz: 38
Hunting Lizards in the Dark by Niels Hav: 40
Lady at the Back of the Pizzeria by Bradley Samore: 42
Second Verse for Bill by Yvette LeClair: 44
Scorecard by Susan Charkes: 45
Our Ocean view by Rochelle Jewel Shapiro: 46
what if they asked these questions in hospital by don Farrell: 47
Cull by Tim Stobierski: 48

Hymn to Eumaeus by R.C. Hoerter: 49
Brian Laundrie Told the Police Gabby Petito Was Crazy by Meggie Royer: 50
The One About the Wolf by Mk Smith Despres: 51
A Brief History of Being Held by Laura Tate: 52
And What If? by Chila Woychik: 54
Timepiece by Susanna Lang: 56
Into Ivory by Lisa Beech Hartz: 58
A Prophecy in Rest by Preston Ham: 60
Erasure as Invitation by Aliesa Zoecklein: 61
Male Loneliness Epidemic by Maria do Carmo Candeias: 62
At the Hamam by Alex Fang: 69
The Same Thing by Sydney Cimarolli: 70
Cunt by Susan Levi Wallach: 72
And Then We Turned by Leath Tonino: 73
Heirloom by Elaine Smartwood: 74
Afterlife by Jacqueline Kolosov: 76
A Room Made to Hold a Hospital Bed by Kathleen Carlton Johnson: 77
Galanthus nivalis (Common Snowdrop) by Jenny Isaacs: 78
Maps Were Not Needed by Michael Cooney: 79
Rusting by Fiona McKee: 80
The Mundanities by Laura Craft Hogensen: 82
Descent by Lance Halberg: 84
The Conversation Area by Leighton Schreyer: 86
Advice from a Tardigrade by Paula Reed Nancarrow: 88
Upon receipt of our Notice to End Tenancy, we consider the lives of birds
by griffin Epstein: 90

Prose Poetry

Yolk by Till Kallem: 21

Editor's Note

by Nadia Arioli

Dear Readers,

I broke my Word. This is not a cosmic or theological statement, but a statement about Mac computers old enough to vote and Microsoft products. The program needs an update, but the update is one my computer can't read. (Same with InDesign, now that I think of it. Although there's a little work-around for that. It involves smashing buttons and swearing.) So, with a broken Word that doesn't spell-check and opens sometimes, I type this out.

What can we say with broken Words? I imagine we can still grunt and point. *Look, look.* Perhaps it is enough to still be able to do that.

Not everyone has broken Words, thank goodness. In fact, in these pages (digital and real) we will find Words doing quite well. Words with a future. Robust words, we might say. Words that can run a marathon.

Take, for example, the *velvet* of deer. Two different poets discovered that in this issue. I placed them side-by-side because I thought that was beautiful. Take, for example, "the things we bind ourselves to: faith, hope, medicine, shoes" from Laura Tate's poem.

I've been working on a long essay in fragments—when my Word is working—about hope. By feeling my way around in the dark, I think

I've come to the quiet realization that hope works by simile. This is like this. And both things can be horrible, overwhelming, dark, and strange—like a portal in one's skin, like too many crabs in your bedroom. That doesn't matter. You noticed this is like this, which means you are still in the world, noticing things. And if you notice a connection that means the world has something to offer, and you have something to offer the world.

What I have to offer is a thimble. No, that's not it. What *we* have to offer is a thimble. And that, too, is a kind of hope. Metaphor: to carry across. The poems and art and prose were carried to me and now we offer them back is a thimble.

May we measure out our medicine by the thimble. May we always find a way to say *look, look*.

Best,
Nadia

Strawberries

by Cole Davies

Reflection 01

The previous weeks, I'd overheard them murmuring about my need for 'Outside time' and Vitamin D. Back then I was a lover of economics, and obsessed at that period of my life, between 60 and 88 months old, with criticizing Milton Friedman's ideas of monetary policy.

Reflection 02

I was difficult on the drive to the coast. I screamed, kicked the back of my father's seat, and sang over their capitalist pop music with an acoustic rendition of *Paranoid Android*. I did not do Thom Yorke justice, and for this I apologize.

Reflection 03

Warm sand. The sound of waves crashing and salt falling onto my skin like summer snowflakes. And yes, even Vitamin D. I did not realize that vitamin deficiency had been impacting my body until I walked into the sun. My parents noticed my cheered up mood and were relieved to sit down while I explored the coast.

Reflection 04

I was ignorant of its existence. A blind spot in my studies of the animal kingdom. I came across it collecting shells. One conical, pink and orange. I still feel the nausea. A pale, meaty thing crawling out. Naturally I threw it. I squatted and it popped its head out. Are there others like

you? I asked. And quickly I picked up the other shells nearby. A new world discovered.

Reflection 05

I couldn't sleep knowing they existed. Crustaceans hidden in plain sight, existing beside ignorant, sandy feet. What else was there for me to uncover? I pestered my parents day after day. The beach I cried, the beach! I screamed about Vitamin D deficiency. The Beach became a Sunday ritual.

Reflection 06

I began to bring them home with me.

Reflection 07

A terrarium. Deep in my closet, hidden by clothes that no longer fit. I feed them strawberries and they go crazy. My Mother, a bit of a nutrition nut, has been overjoyed by my interest in fruit. She has tried to get me into pomegranates, dragon fruit, and blueberries. She goes on and on about the health benefits. All of it, no doubt repeated from some Dr. Oz type figure in her Facebook feed. Over and over again I tell her I only like strawberries. Of course, I detest the fruit, but it makes the hermit crabs frisky.

Reflection 08

They've outgrown the terrarium and roam throughout my room. At night I feel them crawl across my face, my stomach and legs. The ones without shells cause me to cover my mouth so I don't wake my parents up with my screams. Hairless, fleshy creatures all around me. They are out numbering me. Soon they will break out of my room, covering my parents home.

Reflection 09

Father watches the Kentucky Derby, complaining to Mother how much people will spend on horse breeding.

Reflection 10

We race them in the sandpit. Before school, recess, lunch, and even

after class, where their parents have to drag them away screaming. Mother and Father have mentioned a couple times that my backpack is heavy (yes, I am carrying that many) but I tell them that I'm reading *Gravity's Rainbow*.

Reflection 11

What I lose in crab weight I gain in lunch money.

Reflection 12

They tell me I seem happier. Mother cites the Vitamin D, Father cites There's a World Out There Son. I think it's the amount of money I'm making. There is a world I've been shielded from because of a lack of capital, and I'm finally able to participate. No more dino-nuggets and broccoli without consent, bright futures college fund, and authoritarian administration of television stations. I order porterhouse, day trade and have every subscription, even the naughty ones.

Reflection 13

Skills I thought would be permanently intuitive faded with a lack of attention. My motive in the beginning was not for profit but to export what I had too much of, and I lost sight of basic economic principles. Even the first graders know a flood of supply creates a drop in demand.

Reflection 14

I made some bad trades too, but rock bottom isn't so bad when you're seven. There's a lot of distractions and I can lose myself in art without people telling me there's no money in it.

Reflection 15

We have this skewed sense of time where every moment lasts an eternity yet we don't dwell on anything. You'd think it'd be the opposite. That the adults would forget, time moving too rapidly to hold on to the past. Yet they carry their problems forward, moment after moment.

Reflection 16

Sand castles are an infantile art form, but it's been soothing for me. I'm into Gaudí lately, and you can see him in my work. That and the Architectural Digests I take from Father's office. My parents seem to be more at ease with this activity, although I can tell there's discom-

fort within the intricacies of my designs. I don't bother with the crabs anymore. There's still too many, and I have nowhere to sell them and I can't bring myself to discard them in the suburbs. I could bring them back to the beach, but it would take hundreds of trips and I worry that my parents would see me. I've gotten back into economic theory, and being grounded would be detrimental to my work at the moment.

Reflection 17

At dinner they said they've been proud of me lately. I assume it's because I'm acting how they want children to act. Obedient and stupid. Father even offered to read me a bedtime story, but I told him I'm still getting through *Krasznahorkai*. Of course I've already read and reread *Krasznahorkai*. I couldn't have him puncture my room, my terrarium. I knew they'd kept their word to not venture in. They wouldn't be able to keep the horror out of their eyes.

Reflection 18

The only image that compares is a swarm of flies on an animal carcass. A concentration of individual particles that create a solid mass, pulsating like a toad's neck. The flies are the crabs, the carcass is my entire room. I am out of strawberries. Not even the cartons of Costco can satiate them anymore. I have not known them to be cannibals, but I'm afraid all animals become so when things get dire.

Reflection 19

The first step I took into the room was a massacre.

Reflection 20

I regret going so far in. I should've yelled for my parents and accepted their scorn with an open heart. There are things worse than being grounded I've come to realize, and now I can't help but regret all the moments where I wasn't a child. I'd searched for life in anything I mistook for sophistication and failed to realize how limiting words and ideas are.

Reflection 21

They begin to crawl underneath my knees and I laugh, because I'm ticklish there.

A Dream of Learning to Speak

by Geraldine Connolly

I had woken up to my lucky number
and in my hand were the few words I was asked
to say at the party in front of grown-ups.
They wanted to hear what I had to say. Their gazes

were smooth and full of wonder. I was learning
to speak out loud. The silence within me had broken.
Even the stained glass windows understood that
I needed to speak. And the fork knew, the plate

of roasted meat and potatoes knew.
The goblets shone like eyes, with approval.
I kept on reading the speech to their praise.
It was if I had received a key, the lock opening
into confidence. I wanted to sing my joy,
I wanted to carry it with me throughout my days.

The Cow Farm

by Caitlin O'Halloran

For many years, the property down the street
was a hobby farm, with no more than five cows
and a small barn that leaned to one side.

Then the new owners came and knocked it all down,
replacing it with a dwelling
that seemed more fit for queens than bovine.

We heard rumors that the owners were Manhattanites
who fell in love with our town
after years of summers in their vacation home.

At the grand opening they welcomed locals
for a tour of the new facilities.
The cows seemed impossibly clean,
thanks to the conveyor belt that moved manure
into bins for organic compost.

Afterwards, they passed around trays
with tiny cubes of cheddar
and toasted baguette crackers,
and told us this was just a preview
of what's to come.

Hanging Around

by B. A. Van Sise

My cousin murdered himself
because he felt. Because
he felt his family
did not care about him. Because
his family did not care
about him. The flight to get
to the funeral was too expensive,
the expansive sea too wide to
cross cheaply on a dime and,
chiefly, I could bury him myself:
stop at every shelf at the Costco,
just go up Vernon Boulevard, spend
an afternoon hanging around
the freezer aisle where I'll
get the supplies to eat
my feelings. Find—while I
try not to imagine his blue body,
the rope, the long futile hour of
his dancing feet still finding the
floor—more food than I could ever
possibly use to atone. And so
I buy a family-size bag of pasta
and take it home, prepare to
sit alone and swallow it all.

But first: boil it and embalm
it in butter, and mutter a little
prayer about being thankful,
to the bag, for reminding me
that *this*, too, is the size of family.



Fighter without Color by Nimisha Doongarwal

Velvet

by Anna Ellyn Wagner

Last September, you taught me how
to identify yellow birch trees by tasting

the bark. I had no idea it would be so sweet
& wintergreen, or that the strips would curl

like paper ribbon in our hands. We jumped
in zig-zags, aiming for unmuddied spots on the trail

to keep our boots dry. We hopped on the river
rocks & eventually, we leapt over moose

tracks that you could tell were fresh.
For a moment I was afraid, imagining

what something so alive & wild could do.
One kick to the chest would leave our lungs

broken like twigs bent too far. We looked at each other,
your doe eyes an amber wonder in the sun. *It's okay. Stay*

close to me, you said, because you knew I was skipping to a nightmare
scenario. I stepped closer to you. The wind whispered to the aspens

& their golden leaves trembled. Still, they trusted their branches, believed
in their leafstalk. I like to think they were cheering for us

in their own quiet language, as if to say, *Keep going,*
there are creatures adorned with velvet

bones so beautiful they could take
your breath away



Raceless Warrior by Nimisha Doongarwal

Rut

by Maureen Egan Riggi

I didn't see him, the young buck in the throes of rutting,
as he emerged with breath steaming in the dawn.
I didn't see the budding antlers wrapped in velvet,
the heaving chest, ribs pressing against air
like moth wings against a porchlight globe.
My foot instinctively switched pedals,
I knew too late the brakes wouldn't catch
and *wham!* the sheer weight of him crumpled
my hood. I had never killed more than a bug,
but something about the angle of the sun
and the fast-twitch of spindly legs driven wild
by the pheromones of a nearby female
came together in blinding chaos that October morning.
Somewhere across the road, the doe moved on,
found another mate.

Now I am haunted by every antlered Christmas decoration
long after the body shop. All I see are wide eyes,
lolling tongue, and lungs deflating inward,
surely punctured by a rib or two.
Now I am the moth, drawn grotesquely to the light.

Little Weights

by Will Summay

the rocks in the river are changing
every day into different shapes, eras
& eons of unremarkable becoming
right there next to my walking path,
& the woods nearby where something
is singing & something is as startled
by the same snapping branch as I. time is
heavy & hanging. how lovely your hips
I cannot see, the mountain of them
beneath the sheet. there is something
of a black endlessness up there, but it is
raining & when I cannot see I wonder
what carries these storms over us.
I often notice more when I am more
language than living: some days
the pebbles giggle, & some days, after
the white-throated sparrows have all
flown southward in their one, squawking
bundle, I cannot stand the silence, the
little waits for something, something.

Yolk

by Till Kallem

when i think of it, i think of luggage packed full of damp towels, of the moisture caught underneath my shirt. i think of tarnished metal, muted orange-green, of the smell of rusted iron, the half dried red in the curl of my fist. i think of babies and yellow phlegm, of the baby that is sobbing inside of my chest, and my chest, perforated by exits. and when i think of it, i think of tonsil stones and runny yolks, i think of my yolk, red and thick, hurting and open, the exposed slit. and when i think of it, i think of running, as far away as possible, scrambling over rocks and skinning my knees on cracked sidewalks, and how i want to hurt and how i want to spill and how i do not know how to want anymore.

Birds Remind Her

by Annette Sisson

She takes the hill slowly, rises to the lake's
rim, counts off the seconds the wood ducks
dip below the surface—twelve or thirteen,
their small lungs suspending breath. They

reappear, cluster, glide away in wavy lines.
Further up the trail the northern flicker
clings to a red cedar, dangles five feet
above the weave of her winter hat.

She stops to study this fist of muscle and air.
The bird's claws clench the branch,
fans of soft foliage sway as beak
plunges into the spine of a seed cone.

Scouring for loose gravel, snags,
she ambles along the shore, shoulder cradled
in sling, knee braced. Blue herons
stalk the perimeter most mornings—

not today. Perhaps the birds have withdrawn
during her long absence, specters lifting
from bank, from high limbs. Yet she knows
they are there, living on—she'll glimpse them

fishing near the marsh, their lightning beaks
clutching perch, ruffle of feathered chests.
She pictures the ducks under water,
hearts thrashing, lungs still, their hunger

for air and movement, recalls the inverted
flicker heedless of sky, fierce hold
on the cedar sprig, devouring seeds,
marrow, every fiber of cone.



Colonial Threads by Nimisha Doongarwal

*do your ancestors know you are the one
they are waiting for?*

by Kerry J Heckman

some have no interest in looking under gravestones for ghosts /
don't look there / there's nothing to see / climb high enough in the
branches of your family tree / there is a witch who narrowly
escaped being burned alive / and a priest who didn't /
laundresses / bright smiths / gandy dancers / rivers of babies
who died in infancy / women who made things with their hands /
men who made war / family resemblance is a mystery / it skips
generations / a ghost child returns from the past / a lost child
is born who can't see her eyes in anyone else's eyes /
nothing is erased / only buried / there are no good old days /
names changed hands like weapons / farmers turned over
more than land / no one escaped the trauma of loneliness

and whiskey was cheap therapy / what if all you had to process
was the pain of this one lifetime? / not you / you've reached
the end of the line / your ancestors speak through the cracks
in your bones like you need each other to heal / they arrange
themselves as airplanes behind a runway waiting to land /
talk to them / ask them to haunt / your dreams / open the past
and walk through it / meet your foremother / more than
a century between / you / but like you left Minnesota for
washington / your house / not far from her little blue house /
meet your great-great-great-great grandfather / his obituary
reads / *hell to him was what men make for themselves here on earth /*
remember him as someone who was given a life and chose
to learn from it / when your father said / *you were born hyperaware /*
it wasn't him who said it / he became a conduit through
which your ancestors summoned you /and they said
other things too / *go where the whales are / find a boat*
that will carry you across the water / it will carry us all home

Lost Faith

by Gabriella Brand

Right there in the kitchen, the wood stove glowed scarlet.
Mama filled the metal tub and steam rose to the ceiling, fogged the window.
The small boy scrubbed himself with Lifebuoy soap, red and foamy,
good enough for the Holsteins, sometimes the goats.
A tight basin for a nine year old, knees bent to his chin,
hair dripping, intent on righteousness and salvation,
he removed hay from between his toes, goose shit from under his fingernails.

Tomorrow would be church, polished pews, cleanliness and godliness,
the preacher's scowl, the rousing hymns,
his sisters with plaid bows in their hair, heads bowed,
then, chicken pot pie afterwards, Papa saying grace.

Now adult and agnostic, he'd go back to the farm in a minute,
curl up again in the Saturday bath,
the warmth and the water like a weekly baptism,
re-live the fire and brimstone along with the love,
if only he still believed.

Elegy at Wingersheek

by Jennifer Markell

for Carolyn Buckley

The beach roses open, turn toward the sky,
where part of you remains. I'm down here
with the finely veined flowers, fuchsia and white.
A thing of beauty, but not forever. How we forget.
Sun scorch, rain on my mind's blind eye.
Where is memory safe?

No stone inscribed. *Take me with you*
to Wingersheek, you said, the shore
of Singing Beach. My cold-water friend,
I want to tell you I carry your heart,
but some days I barely lift my own.
I hear you say *Set it down*.
Here, where the sidestepping crab
shakes off the sand, unburies herself,
we'll ease our feet into the cold Atlantic.

Fury and Annabelle

by Angel Rosen

I want to travel within a dream and wake up
souvenired I want to have finally reached
an end to my resting I want to find a place
where healing is linear and go there on four wheels,
amused by all of my failed attempts
at sabotage following me with bad names
screaming in synchronicity that I am
on a bad path *this* path was never meant
for a leisure so now I must
get my farewell and my sprinting intact
inch by inch / mile by mile / I am human
-ly unfortunate
-ly wellness is a blank stare consuming me
in a vacuum I say *bonjour* and brag about
the beauty of the horizon & lie about
what time I intend to arrive I will be there
soon or at all I am sure I am only girlsick
and that hardly affects the knees
there is no level of cooling or pressure
that will make the correct animal ooze out
I am damned with this mouth
I want to unwrap an order I can be sure about
and for my home to be nearer to my own
ribcage I want one day to have been filled

with all of the fixtures and I scoop them up
one-by-one in a cartoon pail facing a mirage,
I arrive at my destination carrying a lamp,
a scrapbook without faces,
the leg of a gazelle,
its one final antler



Face of Unity by Nimisha Doongarwal

The Portal

by Morgan Brie Johnson

It came from the hole in her knee, this new feeling. At least that's your theory. So you turn away from the bathroom door and beeline to the safety of the sofa, but you find that the feeling is sitting right there next to you. You stare at it, mouth agape, and it jumps into you uninvited. You swallow on instinct and feel it nestled in your gut, right next to the place it first hurts when you get hungry.

You wonder if you have been accidentally hurtling towards this all summer. For example, you remember trying on your best friend's older sister's jeans in her full-length mirror and the dreadful disconnect that enveloped you. And there was that time you began crossing the street well after the hand started flashing, the thrill of survival as your own choice. You also remember the hours you spent perching hidden in a tree, memorizing the way adults walk through the park when they think they aren't being watched, the power in mimicking their sighs and furrowed brows and distant stares.

Lying on the sofa you think about the weight of everything inside a body. Dense and squishy unknowns floating in too much liquid, mixing with your new feeling, which is still vaguely warm and flashes its origins back at you like a strobe light:

You peek through the slice of the open bathroom door at your mother crying and your own tears are wrung out of you instantly, like the

uncontrollable sponge that you are. Your dad holds large bandages and the bottle that you know stings. He soaks a cloth with a tenderness that startles you. And all the while there's that hole in her knee impossibly staring out at you. Red flesh and bits of gravel peppering it with a connect-the-dots allure. And now, a drop of burgundy (anachronistic, a time traveller, an intruder) falls from that portal in her knee, the one that tears apart the edges between your first ten years and whatever comes next.



Shredded by Grief by Janina Aza Karpinska

A War Novel

by Emma Johnson-Rivard

The story follows two wars and their ripples, the beginning an unseasonable winter as foreshadowing to a particular unseasonable America just as resonant as our own. Everything here stands as foreshadowing and lumbering repetition. We have seen this before. We will do it again for the same words in a different order and someone, somewhere, will write about the winter it began and pray the poetry tells the lesson well enough to end the line.

Baking

by Camille Lebel

A thick, well-measured batter flows
into rectangular loaf, scalloped bundt,
metallic alloyed steel rows,
even and orderly.

But after the high-speed blending,
the meticulous, unyielding sifting of
stubborn clumps through fine mesh wires,
she remains gritty-textured, tough to swallow.
Burnt-skinned crust and too much
salt, she swells the tongue.

Under the heat, expected to rise
beautifully, she's accustomed to offering
herself
as sustenance.

But she is learning to resist,
escaping flames
not as flaky croissant,
delicate lady finger, teasing tart,

but as a brick, hard and solid,
ready to build, to shatter windows,
splinter doors, watch them
choke.

Sky Watch Update

by William Doreski

You thought Jupiter was a drone
spying as you bathed at dusk.

Its focused silver brilliance pours
nail-hard from an elemental forge.

Too distant to peer in our windows,
our neighbor's little unlit drone

wobbles above the woods, battery
so weak it will probably crash.

Jupiter won't crash. It requires
no batteries, no human urges,

nothing but its perch in the vacuum.
As your bath gargles down the drain

a cloud obscures the planet
and the drone falls into a treetop.

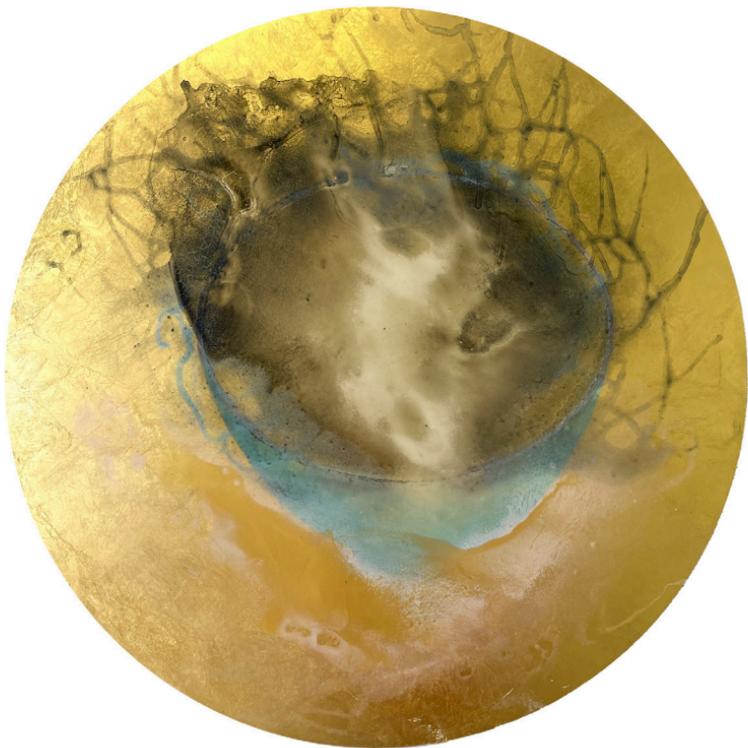
You won't confuse the two again.
If I can prop a ladder maybe

I can rescue that plastic device.
If I can find a longer ladder

maybe I can hook and tear
that bluff and indifferent cloud

and restore Jupiter's glory.
Although from here it's so tiny

I could pin it to my lapel
to wear for the rest of my life.



Pandora's Bowl by Karen Fitzgerald

Uplift

by Clare Bryden

It's tea-time on the solstice when
the shelving winter sun alights exactly
on the pitch to catch my eye—

I, havoring at my dining-writing table,
the sun, reflecting on a row of memoir
and picking out *Wild Swans*.

I've learned to trick the darkest mornings,
waking to the gentle pulsing wind
Adagio from Mozart's *Gran Partita*—

bassoon, horn, oboe, clarinet, each
emerging in its turn to lead
the line, interleaving beat by

syncopated beat the skeins of melody
that stretch to warm and loose
my spine. They bear me up. I dawn.

Nice Things

by Will Staveley

I was not raised on rituals; when I have cake
I do not eat. Have never been carol-singing,

and found you on Halloween where I had left you
to go for a run, found you standing there alone,

grinning with your cloak and basket in the gloam,
children gone, with just a few sweets left. Beetles in boxes

kept away from one another. I must be reminded
to say goodnight and never, never to sleep in pain

after argument, which I disagree with fundamentally,
just as I thought there was no point in making our bed

when we will be sleeping in it again so soon.
I do not see the point in ironing the underwear

which only you will love; saying pleasantries
about relations I have never known. But these are
Nice Things, and I know you like them,

So I will write cards from my critiques,
and if you tell me these are something different,
I will trust you, and run to find you again.

Quiet

by Margaret D. Stetz

his gun was nestled in
an unlocked drawer
his uniform was resting on
a hanger
his club suspended from
a leather strap
lay still inside the closet
and all was
quiet quiet quiet
like every other morning
when he returned
nighttime patrolling over
that was the rule
taught in my childhood
to make no noise
my father needed sleep
to be alert again at
midnight
I played in silence
whispered to my dolls
and told the dog
no barking was allowed just
quiet quiet quiet
but on this afternoon the silence

broke in two
my father's door crashed open
he staggered from his bed
we both rushed to
the kitchen
our neighbor's son
was running round and round
their house
after his girlfriend
as he shouted she
was screaming
he caught her just outside
our window
grabbed her
throat and
punched her in the face
my father stood and watched
said nothing
then walked back to
bed to
quiet quiet quiet
and on this day
I learned that
men were keepers of
the peace
but that the peace they kept
was theirs

Hunting Lizards in the Dark

by Niels Hav

During the killings unaware
we walked along the lakes.
You spoke of Beethoven,
I studied a rook
picking at dog shit.
Each of us caught up in ourselves
surrounded by a shell of ignorance
that protects our prejudices.

The holists believe that a butterfly in the Himalayas
with the flap of a wing can influence the climate
in Antarctica. It may be true.
But where the tanks roll in
and flesh and blood drip from the trees
that is no comfort.

Searching for truth is like hunting lizards
in the dark. The grapes are from South Africa,
the rice from Pakistan, the dates grown in Iran.
We support the idea of open borders
for fruit and vegetables,
but however we twist and turn
the ass is at the back.

The dead are buried deep inside the newspaper,
so that we, unaffected, can sit on a bench
on the outskirts of paradise
and dream of butterflies.

Translated by P. K. Brask & Patrick Friesen



Safe in the Heart of Nature by Janina Aza Karpinska

Lady at the Back of the Pizzeria

by Bradley Samore

You slide a pizza
into the oven then step back
in the wood-fired glow,
black bob gleaming
like a grackle in sunlight.
While the boss rings up
a chatty customer, you hold
the peel as a scepter
and smile upon your creation,
for this is your queendom—
the moment and the pizzas are what
you make them—
no need for a gown of violet
velvet—instead, black pants
dusted with errant cornmeal
and flour. You grab the neck
of the peel, make it your mic-stand,
and sing along softly to the tune
topping the joint, claiming you
can mash potato and do the twist.
They can't keep you down—
whoever "they" are—
be it the you about whom
The Contours are crooning or the family

who owns the pizzeria. You got more
than *a little bit of soul now* as you dance
behind the counter in your Air Force 1s.
There's not a problem in your world,
or at least that's what I want to imagine.
Disheartened after a long workweek,
I'm looking for inspiration wherever
it rises—in the dough you've sculpted
or the moon climbing onto the rooftops—
I'm projecting onto you a carefree
joy I want to know so badly.
The Contours fade,
and a new melody wafts in—
the Beatles playing "Across the Universe"—
John Lennon repeating
nothing's gonna change my world—
and you go back to making pizza,
working the dough
from blob to crust, and I wonder
if you're starting on my pizza.
Your pursed lips tell me
you don't know
the lyrics to this song,
or maybe you're wondering
who or what is gonna change
your world.

Second Verse for Bill

by Yvette LeClair

After the show but before the babies
And long before we knew we could die
Suddenly or otherwise,
You kissed me for the second time,
Under the streetlight by your apartment.
When you pulled away, you were smiling
That gap toothed smile you never did get fixed.
We would always recognize you, you knew
By the space between your teeth.

Before longing, and long before social media
Could tell me you were gone,
There was a streetlight and me on my bike.
Beer happy and twenty-five.
Facing home.
You OK? you asked and meant it.
Oh, don't worry about me. It's downhill
From here. I'll just point,
And coast.

Scorecard

by Susan Charkes

in memoriam N.D.C.

Come, sit.

The cherry trees didn't wait. They're already puffed
with petals. Before long the blooms won't
be here to remark on, gone like
the old hit-and-run play, a thing of beauty
you don't see anymore. Baseball bats used to be ash,
with a banded grain, light and dark,
drought and flood, each year signing its autograph.
You can keep score to record every play,
but you can't recreate the game using the score. Not like
the score for a Chopin prelude, every dot means play this note,
every letter means play this way, and all you need is a piano.
All you need is a piano and years of practice. Every day.
What if you could record a life in shorthand, each day a
grain written in arcs and dashes, a bold dark line for
a job well done, a slash for a dispute, every thought numbered,
from prosaic to profound. Every shade of regret a different typeface.
Those days sitting under a cherry tree—
just blank.

Our Ocean View

by Rochelle Jewel Shapiro

We scooped to the rightmost side
of the bedroom window in our first apartment
to peer beyond a brick building
and see six inches of sea rolling toward
a half foot of shore, the wingtip of a wheeling gull,
a foreboding snippet of sky before a storm,
or a smidgeon of an orange sunset, or a sliver of moon.

When we turned, we saw each other in the long
mirror hung on the closet door, you a foot taller
than me, our lithe bodies against those white walls,
the paint kicked in free by the landlord
when we signed the lease, and right next to us,
the double bed we called our sea where we dove
for each other, tumbled, tossed, and floated
in the days we thought we'd live forever.

*what if they asked these questions in
hospitals*

by don farrell

how soft are the sands your waves roll upon.
when the sky is this clear, can you face the sun.
do ducks dabble in your pond.
do you wear shoes all summer.
do you know
mayfly spinners don't have mouths,
intestines, long to live—are you ok
with that. have you been held
up to the light—could you see
through yourself. have you fallen apart
yet. have you brought all your leaves
into one pile and jumped in—did you invite anyone.
have you found flicker feathers in the grass.
are the sparkles riding ripples on your pond
precious.

Cull

by Tim Stobierski

Last week it was one hundred
thousand ducks over in Aquebogue;
today, my neighbor found three dead
hens—wings limp, heads and combs swollen
like sourdough left on the stove to proof—
when she let her ladies out to forage
so she could meet the morning's clutch.
An hour later and she'd already snapped
the necks of the other twelve, bodies piled
next to the backyard coop in a mass
of feathers—brown, white, dalmatian, beige—
still in a way I've never known them be.
This afternoon, under a penitent sun,
I helped her ready a pit
to accept the downy congregation,
tamped down the soil when we were done.

And what of this fever in me?

Hymn to Eumaeus

by R.C. Hoerter

Unlike Odysseus, I'm no sacker
of cities, no great glory of Achaea.
Once I was bright-eyed,
like Athena, but have you tried
hauling that aegis around the mall
with a screaming toddler?

But like the king of Ithaka
I've been a master of action—
at least at times—like when I flipped
a perfect tortilla española. Though
more often I'm the man in pain,
whining about my knees.

I'm no martyr, like faithful Argos,
flea-bitten on a trash heap,
waiting and waiting
for Mr. Much-Enduring to return.
At least he got a tear from the jerk,
which is more than Penelope got.

My model, O Muse, is Eumaeus instead,
loyal swineherd and slave, who fed
a beggar—disguised Odysseus—no matter
the deerskin he wore for a cloak,
or his unspoken name, or the lies
he told even himself.

*Brian Laundrie Told the Police Gabby
Petito Was Crazy*

by Meggie Royer

When the man who ended my life as I knew it
ended my life as I knew it,
the rain dislodged its weight in snow.
A landscape devoted to bringing itself back,
in a world devoted to burning it.
Still, what I remembered was a well:
stone, filled with red
the whole way down. Someone had brought
a moon to lower in. To quell the light.
The men would ask,
Do you know what this means
This is a heavy accusation to make
This, too, went in the well.
You should go to the hospital
they said. I didn't ask
Why me and not him
The animals made their own shapes
and pulled them behind with string.
Why are you acting like this they said.
Because he fed me the lines
The well was where we put things
that would not be accepted elsewhere.
In it, I sent down my life
hoping someone would send it back.

The One About the Wolf

by Mk Smith Despres

The Ethiopian wolf is a reddish-brown solitary hunter only found in the highlands of Ethiopia...the animals occasionally consume the nectar of a plant called the red hot poker. In other words, the carnivorous Ethiopian wolf may also be a pollinator.

—NPR News

Stop me if you've heard this one:
A wolf walks into a flower. Drinks.
Nectar, straight. The good stuff.

Next day, he's back. This time,
he brings a pup. He drinks. Pup
watches. Pup drinks. Gets pollen

all over its snout. The two of them,
just covered. Adorable. Next day,
same thing. Day after that. After

that. Flower to flower. Year to year.
The wolves grow. The flowers grow.
Everything grows. And the flowers,

they're red. The wolves are red, too.
And yellow pollen all over. Everywhere,
just red and yellow and growing.

A Brief History of Being Held

by Laura Tate

Response to Rosemerry W. Trommer's poem: "One Great Story"

Sometimes it's those tall, thin pines, the ones
with good posture, the way they sway and dance in wind
as if some wild jazz band lives inside their limbs,
but if I'm being honest, it's thick-waisted oaks
that feel like ancestors.

I envy their height, the way they reach
in all directions,
toward light, but also deep underground
where they're held firmly to the earth,
unlike my poor weak bones
that whisper: *do not fall*.

I look down at my shoes,
grateful for the way they cradle my feet,
remind me:
step carefully, stay upright, take your medicine.
Funny—the things we bind ourselves to:
faith, hope, medicine, shoes.

Lately I'm holding onto myself, something
unlearned when my bones were strong,
when falling
was just
one way
of being
closer to the earth.



Some Comfort by Janina Aza Karpinska

And What If?

by Chila Woychik

What if the earth implodes into a fiery ball of heat and heaviness and disgust?
Then I'll have seen enough sunrises and sunsets and blue skies.

And what if the sky turns green and sinks into the sea?
Then the seas will become a lovely shade of turquoise.

And what if the seas dry up, the fishes die, and desert claims the world?
Then my hourglass will be forever filled with sand.

Well, what if evil really does win in the end?
Then I'll remind myself that it was never wrong to count on something better.

And what if there really is no heaven? Imagine.
Then I'll have lived, not in vain, but with endless hope in my millions of moments.

But what if sickness one day scrapes at my body and knocks at the spirit's door?
Then I'll thrill for so many days and hours of soundness.

And what if my mind buckles, lays low, in the bowels of forgetfulness?
Then I'll be glad for these decades of blunt clarity and memories sweet.

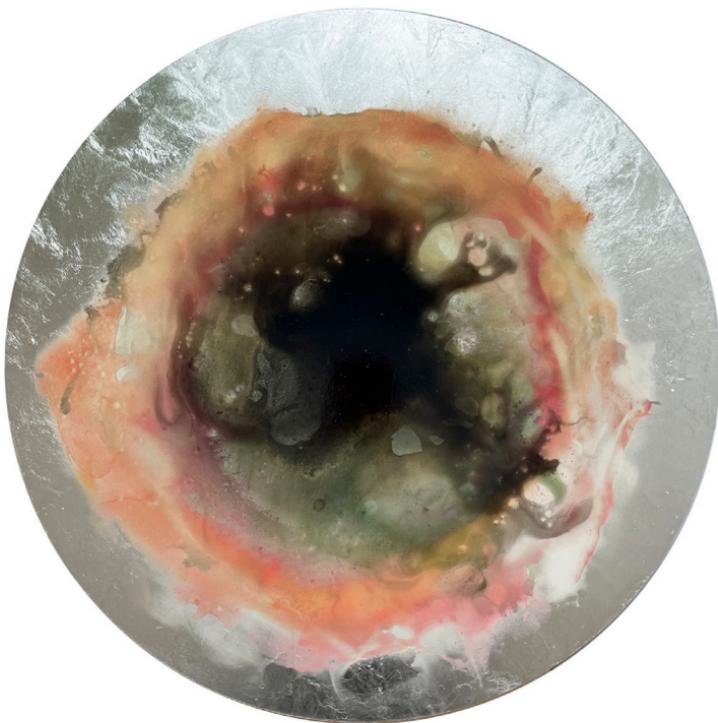
And what if one day shock and awe again upend my solid foundation of heritage certainty and who I am at the cellular level?
Then I'll try to make room, and leave judgment far behind.

But what if, after all is said and done, as a curtain descends down my days and over my eyes, what if I fear or laugh, slump or rise up? What if I babble a strange concoction of 70's pop and early-on praise songs? What if, in utter absence of mind, I swear, then worship, then petition?

And...

...what if I see four living creatures with wings spread wide, and hear them calling "holy, holy, holy" into the farthest heavens, into a crystal-clear eternity, beside a throne of brilliance?

If all these things, when all these things, I'll be glad to have believed.



This Day Yesterday by Karen Fitzgerald

Timepiece

by Susanna Lang

I have an abundance of mothers
for now

Women born in the first part
of the last century

Who know when everything happened
though they do not always
agree on the dates

All have worn through
the soles of their shoes

One painted and two played the piano
a third was a photographer
and another wrote poems
while the fifth grew flowers in the front
tomatoes in the back

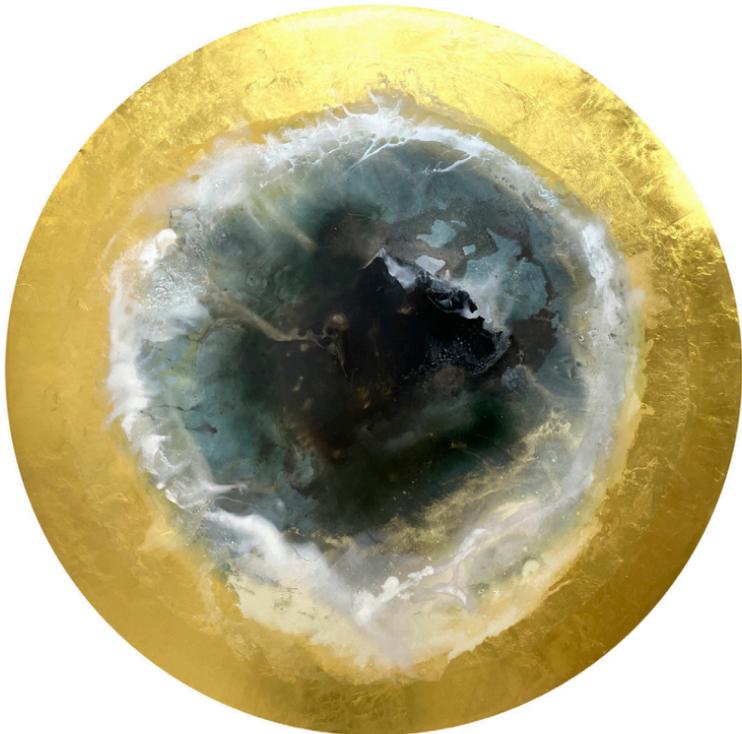
They don't do these things anymore

Two of them revert to Greek
when they are tired
and they are tired all the time now

I can't even recite the alphabet in Greek
but I know what they are saying

It's time they insist
as if they had a plane to catch
but I am studying the clock's inner works

As if the clock were the problem
and not the plane waiting at the gate



Pool by Karen Fitzgerald

Into Ivory

by Lisa Beech Hartz

After Francesca Woodman, Untitled, 1980, from the caryatid series

Caryatid: a stone carving of a draped female figure, used as a pillar to support the entablature of a Greek or Greek-style building.

Here, headless.
Blacked out.
Cleaved below
the knees.
Abbreviated,
undraped. Shaped
for maximum
utility. What is
a woman for?
Take one away
and the whole
collapses, and
isn't she lovely
in her devotion?
Exposed here,
the sepia body
bleeds into ivory.
You couldn't
make it to
the 21st century
Francesca,
rendered yourself
self-less. One hand
clasps the shutter-
release. Cord
spilling out of frame.
The core awash
with light. You are
a woman. You were
a woman.

A Prophecy in Rest

by Preston Ham

Each of us asleep
isolated with a colony inside

little brown bats roosted
in an attic, waiting for sundown
so the hunt can start
low, over calm water.



As Always by Karen Fitzgerald

Erasure as Invitation

by Aliesa Zoecklein

In the glaze of evening, more air between us
than talk. I choose raspberry tea, pour deep pink

into a glass cup, ask questions about whatever she speaks of.
I push the air of conversation back to her,

an invisible volley that people love. Smudged figures wander
the background in not-yet twilight.

Then she willfully unhears me,
talks as if my voice does not reach her ears. And then again.
Now I speak as if from an amulet resting on the sternum of a stranger.
Uncharacteristic. Unrequited.

Whether jeweled or ragged, my unheard talk untethers me.
The “un” prefix soothes me, breathes an erasure that stories

me, splits the seed of not yet deep in the pocket of waiting.
Locket. Un-lock it. See what I mean?

Male Loneliness Epidemic

by Maria do Carmo Candeias

He brought me to a field thinking that would be the ideal place to take
my virginity.

Seventeenth century style, he was nothing if not a History buff.

I was offended by the sight of my first real life penis, poking through
pilling underwear.

A penis in a field—I guess there could be a metaphor there but I'm not
that good a poet to figure it out.

Or maybe I'm just too much of a prude—
let's just say he did not fulfill my bodice ripper fantasies.

It's weird how parents are so weird about sex.
In a trial we would be proof beyond reasonable doubt of their
transgressions.

My parents have always been weird, but never about sex—
which I guess makes them weird about that too.

They talked condoms and abortions at the dinner table,
asked me about boyfriends with smiles, not frowns.

That's why I knew where he was going when he took me to see the
wildflowers,
otherwise referred to as weeds.

He miscalculated my response to embarrassment –
I didn't get confused and in confusion acquiesce;

I was disappointed but not surprised at the lack of effort. I told him to
put it away
and if you could see the look on his face you would cry so much, you'd
die of dehydration.

Poor misunderstood teenage boy.
What a hostile place the world is.



Pond by Karen Fitzgerald

Rhetorical Questions

by Andrea Benvenuto

It was my second week at Stoneleigh Elementary when I started to notice the letters inked on their palms: *W-H-O*.

I saw them on Avery, ready to catch a basketball in phys ed. Caitlin, with her hand raised during math class. The girl whose name I kept forgetting, at lunch eating French bread pizza. And Jade, in the courtyard, boasting about the rated-R movie she'd seen over the weekend. "It's basically a horror story about, you know, getting your Aunt Flo." The other girls giggled, and Jade caught me eavesdropping. "Lots of blood," she said, watching me out of the corner of her eye. "Buckets."

The following Tuesday, Ms. Sisley paired me with Avery for science review. I pulled my desk up to hers, and we quizzed each other on vocabulary.

"What's who?" I asked after a few minutes. Science was getting boring.

"What?" she said.

"No, *who*," I repeated. "W-H-O. On your hand."

"I can't tell you," she said, snaking her arm behind her back.

“Is it a person?” I guessed.

She shook her head. “Forget it.”

Jade happened to be walking by on her way back from the bathroom. She put her hand on Avery’s shoulder. “Yara looks like she can keep a secret.”

Then she turned to me. “Come with us during recess.”

I’d been sharing a lunch table with this kid Freddy since my first day at school. At first, I thought he was new too, but it turned out he just didn’t have any friends. I couldn’t risk ending up like him. After everyone finished eating, I followed the girls outside: Jade, Avery, Caitlin, and Ryanne. We walked past the blacktop, past the baseball field, to a small grove of trees. We sat in the grass, still damp from the previous day’s rain.

“Everybody hold up your hands,” Jade directed. The other girls revealed their palms, allowing me to view the letters up close. I studied Caitlin’s cutesy lowercase, Ryanne’s bubble writing, and Avery’s precise, thin lines.

Finally, Jade showed me her hand, marked with bold capitals.

“W-H-O stands for...” She paused, relishing in the suspense. “We Hate Olive.”

Olive was in our class, too. I hadn’t thought about her much since she sat on the other side of the room. She had short black hair with bangs, and she’d done her state report on Rhode Island.

I didn’t have any reason to hate Olive, but the other girls filled me in: She wears those ugly red shoes all the time. When you go to her house, her mom is just always there, never giving you any privacy. Her eyebrows are asymmetrical.

“And...?” Jade prompted the others.

“And she stole Jade’s solo in the chorus last year,” Ryanne said.

“How’d she do that?” I asked.

“Everyone who wanted the solo auditioned in front of the whole class,” Jade explained.

Caitlin piped up: “Jade was the best.”

Jade’s mouth curved into a small smile on one side before she went on. “Olive was allegedly out sick that day. When she came back, she had a alleged personal audition with Mrs. Mathers, and Mrs. Mathers gave the solo to her.”

Knowing I was supposed to react, I imagined myself in Jade’s position — thinking I’d gotten something good, and then having it snatched away.

“That sucks,” I said. “It’s not fair.”

Jade nodded and asked the other girls if anyone had a marker. Avery pulled a Sharpie out of her pocket and handed it to Jade.

She uncapped the marker, and I held out my open palm, expecting her to write on it. Instead, she dropped the Sharpie in my hand.

“Who hates Olive?” she asked.

I hesitated for just a moment before declaring, “We hate Olive.”

Every morning, we wrote *WHO* on our hands, and every recess, we gathered by the oaks behind the baseball field. We usually spent the first few minutes trash-talking Olive and then ended up chatting about boys or weekend plans or the new arcade that had Dance Dance Revolution.

“I have an idea,” Caitlin announced one day in November. I’d been

wearing my jean jacket for the past few weeks but knew I'd have to switch to something warmer soon. "Let's elect a club president."

Avery clapped her hands together. "Yeah! Who's the biggest Olive-hater of all?"

"We should do nominations," Jade said, and we all agreed.

"I nominate Jade," Caitlin said.

"I nominate Yara," Ryanne said, grinning in my direction. Like she was doing me a favor. My heart thumped in my chest. *Me?* I didn't hate Olive the most. I didn't even really know her.

If the others were surprised, they didn't show it.

"So how do we vote?" Avery asked.

"Yara and I will close our eyes, and everyone will raise their hands," Jade decided. "Caitlin, you can count."

I hated closing my eyes around a group of people. Before we moved to Stoneleigh, I ate dinner at my friend Christa's house at least once a week. The whole family would close their eyes to pray before the meal, and I'd secretly keep mine open, studying the pattern on the tablecloth.

"Okay," Caitlin said. "You two close your eyes, and don't open them until I say so."

Jade complied, and I followed suit.

"All in favor of Yara for president, raise your hand," Caitlin instructed. I slowly moved my hand out of my lap and into the air. Someone smacked it.

"You can't vote for yourself," Avery said.

I kept my eyes closed. "Why not?"

"I think it's bad manners?" Ryanne said.

“If you both vote for yourselves, you’ll just cancel each other out,” Caitlin said, her voice rising in pitch.

Jade stayed silent.

“The guys who run for president vote for themselves,” I reminded them. “It’s democracy.”

“All in favor of Jade,” Caitlin continued. I heard some rustling, and then Caitlin ordered us to open our eyes.

I opened mine and saw them all staring at me.

“Jade is the winner!” Caitlin sang out. Which was honestly fine. I didn’t want to be president anyway.

Avery and Jade high-fived, and the recess monitor blew her whistle to signal our return to class. Ryanne muttered “sorry,” then hurried to catch up with the others as they raced ahead toward the building.

The next morning, I walked behind Olive in the hallway on my way to the classroom. Her red shoes *were* ugly, and she had a weird way of walking on her tiptoes. I remembered her saying Rhode Island was nicknamed “The Ocean State” and thinking how dumb that was when so many other states have more ocean.

Jade and the others were already in Room 214, huddled next to the computer stations. I hung my puffer coat and backpack at the cubbies and got out a wide-tipped marker from my pencil case. I’d written the W on my palm when Avery came up behind me and snatched the marker out of my hand.

She was a lefty. I watched her mark on her right palm: *W-H-Y*.

And I knew better than to ask.

At the Hamam

by Alex Fang

Then all four of us
are placed
onto adjacent sides of
the octagon.

Geometry-perfect,
I lie between stone-hardness
and froth,
field of vision restricted to

flesh and marble.
Torsos incognito.
Extremities
not conjoined,

nevertheless
behold this giant
lumbricus touristris,
its dead skin peeling.

Pir-ü Pak, “pure pure”—
what’s the ablution
to absolve me for—
the scrub? I purchased it.

The Same Thing

by Sydney Cimarolli

Under trees sparse
with golden leaves,
the cold ground's heavy

push against our backs,
you said, *The Earth*
is growing up too,

just like us,
but at a slower pace.
Around us, baby branches

gaspd spindly breaths,
stretched their collective
into the cold. I shivered.

You turned to me. *We're all*
doing the same thing:
the gulls muscling

across the glass slab sky
where clouds and chemtrails
curl alike into gray-blue

the burrs
which choose our knits
as midwives

the lake that bends
and bends
and bends.



Gold Camera Assemblage with Horse by Christine Stoddard

Cunt

by Susan Levi Wallach

Just go to the gym.
On your way home, buy
coriander and cumin, a bag
of spices that begin with C.

Consider a curried stew,
your mother's recipe, bits
of cilantro dropped on top;
a polenta cake with cardamon.

Call your mother, dead these years.
Into the silence enumerate her failings.
Wait for her to explain.
Wait. Wait forever.

And Then We Turned

by Leath Tonino

There was this time praising trees,
this time drinking lemonade and praising

the junipers at the canyon's rim,
our legs dangling in the emptiness,

one small cloud floating above
the emptiness, when we stopped

speaking *of* them, like they couldn't hear,
like they were not there, and spoke directly

to them. You are wonderful, we said.
You are the best. This world would be

a sorry place without you. And then
we turned our attention to the one

small cloud. And then we turned
our attention to the canyon's rock.

And then we turned our attention,
our voices, our praise, our loving gaze,

to the emptiness itself, and clinking
glass on glass, to the last of the lemonade.

Heirloom

by Elaine Smartwood

My grandmother's funeral is a mason jar.
It's old, stained, clouded, cracked near the lip because
it was left out on the porch all winter
and the cold snaps shocked the glass. Though,
It might have been from the way my aunt dropped it.
That's how it got out on that porch in the first place.
On a gray, indifferent afternoon it had slipped from reddened fingers
and landed on my mother's toes
and she and my aunt stood over it, bleeding together.
They forgot to pick it up when they came back inside.

That's how I found it, small and fat-handed,
and because I didn't understand
I stuffed it with rocks and dirt
to make a home for the worms I tried to keep
from drying out on the driveway when it rained.
Old blood dries black, and it looks a whole lot like earth,
so I couldn't have known my contribution was out of place.
My mother scolded me and emptied the worms in the garden,
setting the jar back where it had been,
standing guard beside the door.
I made a game of hopping over it when I came home.

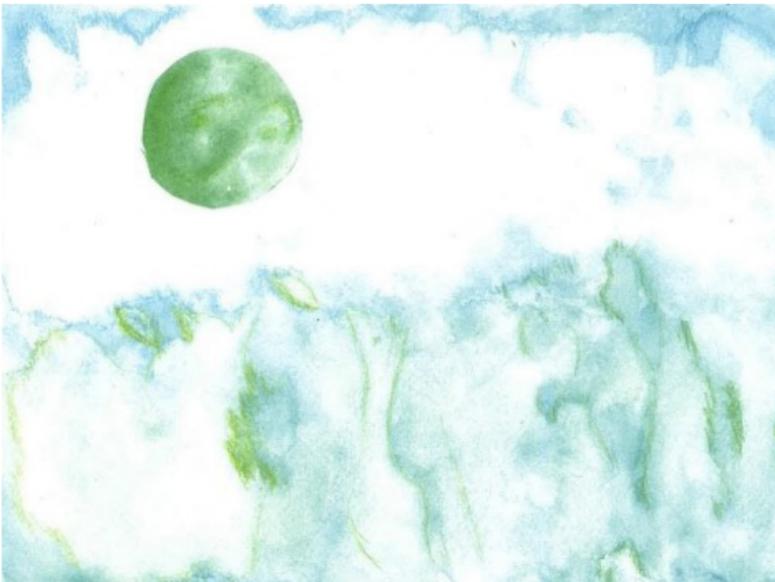
One night it storms, hails, and my mother brings it inside,
spilling red, revived by raging water, over the dining table
and I help her clean it up as best I can.
Sometimes, she says, evil people make young people,
and they use kind people to do it.
It's the worst story in the world,
and it is told again, and again, and again, and
it dries cold on my short-fingered, uncalloused, baby-fat-hands.
I am the one to take the jar outside in the morning,
and in the thin, fledgeling light,
blood is blood once more and
the crack cuts my finger,
running what's mine through its own clear veins.
It's a hungry thing, and my mother keeps it fed,
spilling whatever she can into it,
adding her blood to mine, and hers, and hers, and hers,
all of us smudged around the rim.

On the night I come home to find her leaning over it,
trying to claw her heart out and shove it
through the wide canning-friendly mouth,
I want to scream.
“Leave it empty,” I beg as I pull her inside,
“Leave it empty just this once.”
I smooth over the plough-lines she'd carved in her chest
and lay her down to sleep.
In the dim light weeping through the windows of the house
the jar gleams like something precious,
a dishonest ruby-red.
My still-fat, too-young, un-calloused hands shake
as I raise it over my head and
shatter it on the driveway.
Kneeling, I gather the shards,
determined to leave no trace of this violence.
I'm cut to ribbons and I stain the pavement
with what, I will tell my daughter, is rust.
When I meet her it will be with thin hands,
worn, but soft, because I will work
lotion into my palms each night
to keep her from feeling the scars.

Afterlife

by Jacqueline Kolosov

dare to imagine an archive of the infinitely there
gravity, footfalls, forever's hourglass becoming now
a habit the hands have—devil-take-care
can you imagine an archive of the infinitely there
cobwebs silvering corners, spiders in mid-air
light glancing off windows, heads bowed in prayer
imagine, I dare you, an archive of the infinitely there
gravity, footfalls, forever's hourglass becoming now



The Seekers by Cheryl Caesar

A Room Made to Hold a Hospital Bed

by Kathleen Carlton Johnson

The patient, under a staircase,
in the hall.
The nurse is administering Morphine.
Her qualifications available.
on a plastic badge
pinned to her blue uniform.

I read Psalm 139.
Word flags of salvation,
all present, standing at attention.

The daughter's false eyelashes,
decorating a plain face.
Slim and tattooed,
Walked me to the door.

The air thin, quiet, growing distant.
settled on a blue clapboard house
The porch light breathing
like a pulse,

Galanthus nivalis
(Common Snowdrop)

by Jenny Isaacs

in memoriam D.S.

The snowdrops round the treetrunk in her yard
the last day of the first month of the year
eye-white, drooped as if ashamed
to flourish so relentlessly

their unrefusable profusion caught
in my throat as this poem did, for months
imitating the secrets of the brown earth
this burying, emerging, closing

this double or triple seeing, massed slow-fast
perenniality, each “solitary,
pendulous bell-shaped flower, held
on a slender pedicil”

as we maneuvered up the steps
to the grieving door

Maps Were Not Needed

by Michael Cooney

Maps were not needed to discover where we were.
The man who was speaking said he was a poet.

The very old woman mistrusted wind chimes.
When she spoke of dragons and angels, we applauded.

The laboratory test displayed numbers and letters I could not understand.
I drank large quantities of water and read my own notes.

In the darkness two faces appeared to be one.
In my arms you said that nothing could happen.

At other times you were simply present.
You had never gone away.

Rusting

by Fiona McKee

The silence in our mother's home
Is what she scolded us, always, for breaking,
And which we broke anyway.
It is thick and heavy and dark, like the air that is Florida
Right before a thunderstorm,
When we ran home in the downpour
And arrived, inevitably, soaked to the skin.

My brother thrums guitar strings,
Rusting in the humid air.
They leave red stains on his fingertips,
But he plays as though the warped notes
Were whispered to him by Orpheus.

I shattered a ceramic vase when I was nine
And tried to glue back it together, to
the way it was when my mother carried it
Across an ocean, wrapped lovingly in a purple tapestry.
The vase fell apart again, of course.
She was furious at me, our mother, and
Cried when she thought I could not see.

Eurydice never did leave the underworld.
My brother's knuckles are tight on the steering wheel,
Traces of rust are stuck in both our nails.
In the rearview mirror, fireflies swallow a home.
To love is to not look back.

The purple tapestry hangs in my apartment now.
I carried it across seven states with me,
Wrapped in a plastic bag in the backseat of my car.
My mother never used it but kept it folded
In a drawer, neat, for me to use one day,
And every time I look at it
I hear the shattering of a ceramic vase.



Raven Watercolor by Dianne Corbeau

The Mundanities

by Laura Craft Hogensen

Spring catches me like an ambush
The trees are a riot of pink and green
I raise my head and straighten my shoulders and set my eyes forward
 like I'm facing down
an enemy volley

Lately, I've been shrinking from punishment
Curling in upon myself
Kneeling in empty bathrooms, keening, with my face in my hands
Leaving salty puddles spattered on the floor

Grief is a season I've discovered
It's a place—Eliot's wasteland—unreal and underwater-silent

It's where I've made my home
A creature of hollow cheeks and ragged nails,
I tread trackless sands, black depths
A city of woe, of sparse winter light

My bed is narrow
My meals are meager, and the taste of ash fills my mouth

Yet the vernal call reaches me, buried as I am
The sunlight, dropping down like gold coins, glimmering in dark
water
Above, the earth is verdant, stirring

One day, we'll sit in the soft sunshine and you'll ask me what I lost
I'll take your palm and put it to my chest
Covering up the hole that the spring breeze blows through

It was here, where your hand is now
I had it all, right here



Winter Waves by Dianne Corbeau

Descent

by Lance Halberg

Though the plow has come, our drive is uncleared,
all the more forthright of the deer who have made themselves
familiar in these woods: hoof prints relieved in snow
like the hollow molds of a white rose. My boots leave

tracks, broad heels and toes that weave
with the feeding paths, and never more have I felt
the fact of my mammalian stock. Like an act of procreation
I am urged back to the shores of the Saint Croix,

a bone-deep dance between bear and den. Our house
stands low from above, as if huddled against the hillside
in escape of the winds that now break over me,
though they find no purchase in deep roots, unstripped

from this soil. Five generations have yet quickened
on this hill, and even as I mourn the memory of leaves
on these bare branches, I know that one day
I will exist for my children. They too will descend

these creaking steps and enter this house, welcomed
by the naked winter sunlight that paints the timber
window trims a wondrous gold. The double-panes will shed
kaleidoscopes across the room, casting strips of the colored heavens

onto my grandfather's pottery. And though the river will lie
frozen beyond their reach, they will build a fire
and take their rest as I do now, letting the smoke climb high
above the trees and into the atmosphere, like an offering

to their numberless forebears.



River Mist on Canvas by Dianne Corbeau

The Conversation Area

by Leighton Schreyer

(Silence hung heavy) (between us as we)
(ate the sandwiches we stacked) (like lego blocks for lunch) &
(tended to the tulips you planted last spring) (but the rabbits ate)
& (walked through the suburban streets) (where houses stood)
(sidebyside shouldertoshoulder) (like prim, proper gentlemen)

(Silence hung heavy) (between us as we)
(drove to school (me) and work (you)) (faulting fatigue for our stillness)
& (read the newspaper you insisted) (on having delivered to our door)
(then complained, each morning)(about it not being delivered on time)
& (sat on either side) (of the sofa)
(the middle section sanctioned a sanctuary)

(Silence hung heavy) (between us as we)
(talked about the weather) (sunny or snowy or windy and wet) &
(nodded off (you) while working (me)) (both avoiding bedtime)
& (dusted off the starry smiles) (trapped in cheap plastic frames)

The good ol'
days, before
things got
complicated.

(*Nah Teddy?* you said, patting Teddy on the head) & (I remember being) (jealous) (of the way you cradled his head in your lap) (the way you ran) (your fingers through his hair) (when was the last time) (you held me) (like that?) (the last time I let you hold me like that, I should say) (when) (does a mother's touch become shameful?)

(*Gassi gassi gehen?* you asked) & (Teddy's ears tilted forward) (you claimed he was bilingual) (like me, you said proudly) (fluent in both English and German) (but my German's wilted) & (withering) (the seeds you so diligently planted) (decimated) (by drought)

(*Should we go for a walk?* you asked again) (in English this time) (in case I hadn't caught on) (that you were actually talking to me) (we both did that) (used Teddy as our telephone) (a way to talk) (to each other) (when the tension ran high) (it was safer that way)

(*We should go to the conversation area,* you said) & (I heard wrongness) (in *v* switching places with *s*) (in turning *-serv-* into *-vers-*) (as if service) (was a matter of speech) (as if words) (could heal wounds) (as if stories) (could save lives) & (maybe you were right)

Because halfway up to Rattlesnake Point, as we stumbled past Chokeberry, Bunchberry & Barberry bushes & drew cautious circles around plants with three-leaflet compound leaves, as we marveled at the ancient cedars scaling escarpment walls & the turkey vultures soaring through the sky, we had a conversation—a real conversation, for the first time in a long time.

Advice from a Tardigrade

by Paula Reed Nancarrow

The thing that they're famous for is being champion animal survivors. - Dr. Paul Bartels, "Tardigradology," *Oologies* podcast hosted by Alie Ward, September 18, 2024.

Be a slow stepper. Favor
sediment over sentiment.

Don't be picky about your food.
Carry your sleeping bag everywhere.

Enjoy sex. Enjoy sex a lot.
If you can, change genders.

Cherish your microcosm.
Let people think

you come from another planet
That you and the vacuum

are on a first name basis
That you could survive

an atomic bomb. Don't worry
about the mistakes they make

on the Internet. Much will be wrong
in a world too big for its britches.

A world that can't be bothered
to question a meme will not care

that you have 1400 ways of being.
If you can, biofluoresce.

Ignore the names they call you
you know who you are.

Move away from the light
as needed. Enjoy a long nap

Four year. Eight years.
Whatever it takes. Remember to hydrate.

Maria Drawing on Velvet by Dianne Corbeau



*Upon receipt of our Notice to End
Tenancy, we consider the lives of birds*

by griffin epstein

The alpine swift, for example,
stays aloft 200 days

The bar-tailed godwit goes 7,000 miles
without water or rest

Swans take off from the pond
tiny eggs in the mud on their feet
and the puddle on the sidewalk
fills with fish

Meanwhile, pigeons roost for a season
in the Os of storefront signs

ShOppers
LOblaws
FreshcO

Their nests of sticks
serviceberry leaves
and paper straws bent by wind
into improbable shapes
of perfect softness
that disintegrate in the rain

Collage

by Sara Winslow

When I was a teenager, my mother took up painting. Wednesday evenings, she attended watercolor classes at my high school, through our town's adult education program. She set up an easel in the spare bedroom. At first, she painted whatever the teacher had them do for class. Later, she branched out and liberated her talent. Her favorite subjects were flowers and lighthouses.

My stepdad died when I was 30, and my mom's desire to go anywhere died with him. She retreated into her aloneness, choosing to go out only when she absolutely needed to. I encouraged her to resume her watercolor classes. But she didn't absolutely need to take a painting class. Nor did she absolutely need to visit me, thousands of miles away. On my annual visits to her, we sat around the wooden table in the kitchen, or on mesh folding chairs in the back yard. I'd nag her to get out more. In response, she'd grow angry. Nagging and anger often seemed to be our only shared activities.

My nagging never resulted in Mom taking more watercolor classes, but she still painted. My husband and I continued to receive her art as gifts. Our walls were filled with her still lifes and landscapes, flowers and lakes, lighthouses and boats. Muted blues and greens and pinks and grays.

On my own after a divorce, I lived as I wanted. I began collecting art

that spoke to me as an independent, single woman in her forties. A collage of San Francisco Victorians, reds and purples and oranges. A huge batik, orange giraffes eating green trees. An oversized canvas with stenciled coral birds soaring over painted mountains. A piece of wall art made from vibrant bottle caps. This pivot to bold, new art crowded out my mom's gentle watercolors.

My mother's life was nearly over when it finally occurred to me that her withdrawal from the world decades before had been her pivot. Her version of my art collection. On her own for the first time, no parents, no kids, no husband, she lived as she wanted. In solitude.

By the time Mom died, I was almost 60. Just one of her paintings – three blue irises with softly curving green leaves—still hung on my wall. The rest were in a closet, with all the other things that didn't fit in my little house. My mother, never visiting me, never knew.

When I went through her big house after she died, I found unused pads of textured white paper, jars of paintbrushes, ancient tubes of paint. Stacks of paintings, unframed and unsigned. She had always signed the watercolors she gave away, in one or another of the bottom corners. These, she hadn't thought good enough to give anyone. Many were painted back and front, as if they were only practice, and she just hadn't gotten around to throwing them out. Mom never believed in her own talent. They were all quite good.

Remembering the watercolors in my storage closet, I hesitated to keep any of this newfound stash for myself. Even so, two called to me. A mountain lake with pink flowers clustered in the foreground. A lone sailboat near a pier, cloudy sunrise in the background. I put them aside, gifted others to relatives and friends.

The day we celebrated my mom's life, the sky was a vivid blue and the sun warmed her back yard. I set up a table outside, filled it with snacks and drinks, plates and cups and napkins. Even though Mom had barely left her house in decades, there were still people who loved her, people who would come pay their respects. Relatives and friends from before. Neighbors who chatted over the fence. Folks who helped

maintain her house and yard. I made room on the buffet table for a stack of her paintings, the ones that still needed homes. I encouraged the guests to take any they liked. By the end of the afternoon, none remained.

After the celebration was over, after I got back to my house on the opposite coast, I pulled out Mom's old watercolors from my closet. There were 11. The two I'd just brought home made 13. While I still had my mother, I didn't think twice about hiding her paintings away. Now that she was gone, her things had taken on significance. It no longer seemed possible to keep her creations in the closet. Should I take down the art I'd acquired and replace it with my mom's watercolors? Or crowd everything together on the walls? Or could I figure something else out?

Some of the non-Mom art pieces I'd collected were collages, one beautiful thing layered on another. I didn't inherit the artist gene, but I could study what I liked about the collages that hung in my house. I could buy a massive canvas—24 by 48—and some Mod Podge. Some wrapping paper with multicolored daisies. I could pry my mom's watercolors out of their frames. I could tear pages from a book written in Italian, the language of our ancestors.

As I pulled on my mother's faded Mount Holyoke sweatshirt and spread the materials over my dining table, it dawned on me that she and I were finally doing something together. Something other than nagging, other than anger. It took longer than I would have guessed—the cutting, the arranging, the imagining her with paintbrush in hand, the rearranging, the listening to her voice inside my head, the rearranging again, the gluing, the sealing. The better part of a week to create a collage that now covers my bedroom wall, where I wake to it each morning and say, "Look, Mom, look what we made together."



Contributor Biographies

Nadia Arioli is the editor in chief and managing editor of *Thimble Literary Magazine*.

Andrea Benvenuto is a feminist writer, guardian of two fluffy cats, and co-creator of the podcast *Lit Mix*. Find her at andreabenvenuto.com and on social media @dreabenvenuto.

Gabriella Brand's poetry, short stories and essays have appeared in a wide variety of publications, including *Syncopation*, *Cordite*, *Echoes*, *The Globe and Mail*, and *Shiuli*. She has read her work by invitation at the Poisson Rouge in New York and on OPEN MIC of the AIR. A Pushcart Prize nominee in both fiction and poetry, Gabriella teaches in the OLLI program at UCONN. She is married to the son of a Maine potato farmer. Gabiellabrand.net

Clare Bryden is a writer, artist and web developer based in Exeter, UK. Her interests are wide-ranging, but primarily the place of humanity within the natural world of which we are part, and the related theology and psychology of connectedness. Her poetry has recently been published in *The Christian Century* and *Time of Singing*. clarebryden.co.uk @clarebryden.bsky.social @ClareBryden

Maria do Carmo Candeias is a young writer from Portugal. She currently resides in Lisbon, but she lived in the UK for a year in 2019. She is fluent in English and Portuguese and read many books in both languages, therefore it has become natural for her to also write in both languages. She also has a degree in Marine Biology and another in Political Science and International Relations. In addition, she is a big advocate for mental health awareness. Therefore, her poems reflect my interest and personal experience with a variety of social issues that happen to also be personal to her, in particular her struggles with mental health and her experiences as a woman in a patriarchal society.

Cheryl Caesar is an ex-expatriate, having returned from Europe to her native Michigan after 25 years. She's a poet and artist who teaches writing at Michigan State University, using a multimodal approach. Her artwork has appeared in local exhibitions and numerous literary magazines, including on the covers of *Recollections of Our Common Places*

Susan Charkes is a poet and writer who lives in southeastern Pennsylvania. She has two poetry chapbooks: *Nursling of the Sky* (Plan B Press, 2024) and *sp.* (The Operating System, 2017). Her poems, fiction and nonfiction have been published in a variety of media. More at susancharkes.com.

Sydney Cimarolli is a writer and educator living in St. Louis, Missouri. She can be reached at smcimarolli@gmail.com.

Geraldine Connolly has published five poetry collections including *The Red Room* (Heatherstone), *Food for the Winter* (Purdue University Press), *Province of Fire* (Iris Press) and *Aileron* (Terrapin Books). A new book is forthcoming from Terrapin Press in July 2025: *Instructions at Sunset*. She has taught at the Writers Center in Bethesda, Maryland, The Chautauqua Institution, and the University of Arizona Poetry Center. She has been awarded fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Maryland Arts Council, and Breadloaf Writers Conference. Her work has appeared in *Poetry*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *The Georgia Review*, and *Poetry Ireland Review*. Her work has been anthologized in *Poetry 180: A Poem A Day for High School Students*, *A Constellation of Kisses*, and *The Sonoran Desert: A Field Guide*. Her website is www.geraldineconnolly.com

Michael Cooney has published poetry in *Badlands*, *Amethyst*, *Second Chance Lit*, *Bitter Oleander*, *Big Windows Review* and other journals. His short stories have appeared in *Sundial Magazine*, *Bandit Fiction* and *Cerasus* and two of his novellas were published recently by *Running Wild Press* and *ELJ Editions*. He taught in public high schools and community colleges of New York City for forty years and more recently facilitated a writing workshop with the New York Writers Coalition.

Dianne Corbeau graduated with an MFA from The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts Philadelphia, PA in 2002. Since 2002, Ms. Corbeau has exhibited her paintings nationally and internationally. Dianne was a professor of Anatomy for over a decade and teaches writing classes on Cape Cod. Her first novella, *Six Days in Detox*, received excellent reviews and recommendations. While her second book, *16 Stories About 16 Therapists* is being published by Vanguard Press, Winter 2024. The intent of her work is to give a voice to underrepresented voices that are misunderstood in today's society and bring unity into a divided view.

Cole Davies is a writer from Hobe Sound, FL currently based in Brooklyn, NY. He received his MFA from the University of San Francisco, served as the Non-Fiction Editor for *Invisible City*, and has work previously published in *Four Leaf Collective* and *In Parentheses*. He's the father of two orange cats, Lychee and Papaya.

Mk Smith Despres writes, teaches, and makes art in Massachusetts. Their poems appear or are forthcoming in *Frozen Sea*, *Hunger Mountain*, *Meat for Tea*, and *Radar*. Mk also writes for kids. Their picture book, *Night Song*, was a finalist for the 2024 New England Book Award.

Nimisha Doongarwal is an Indian immigrant and sociopolitical artist. She moved to US for higher education in science but in 2014 decided to study art history and art psychology at Stanford University, followed by an MFA at Academy of Arts University. Nimisha's work is inspired by her surroundings and finding identity as a global citizen. Her work has been featured in many publications and magazines including *Forbes*, *Suboart*, *Maake*, and *Artmarket* magazine. She exhibited at 80+ group and solo exhibits including the DeYoung Museum, SF International Airport, UCSF Hospital, San Mateo City Hall and Library, San Ramon City Hall, San Francisco District Attorney's Office, Museum of Northern California. She recently painted her first public art, San Francisco's iconic Hearts sculpture.

William Doeski lives in Peterborough, New Hampshire. He has taught at several colleges and universities. His most recent book of poetry is *Cloud Mountain* (2024). He has published three critical studies, including *Robert Lowell's Shifting Colors*. His essays, poetry, fiction, and reviews have appeared in various journals.

griffin epstein (they/they) is a settler working in education and community-driven research in *Tkaronto* (Dish with One Spoon/Treaty 13). They are the author of the chapbook *so we may be fed* (Frog Hollow Press, 2021). griffin plays with the bands LOST UNIT and SPOILS and is a member of the Biophilia Collective and shrunk studios. Their poetry has appeared in *CV2*, *Grain*, *Muzzle*, *The Maynard* and *Plenitude*, among others. They believe in harm reduction, disability justice, and a free Palestine. Find them at: <https://griffinepstein.com/>

don farrell lives in Cambridge, MN with 3 sons, 2 dogs and other critters where land transitions from forest to prairie. He writes daily, obsessively. He holds a monthly open mic at The ARC Retreat Center in Stanchfield, MN and a bi-weekly zoom poetry critique group. He has poetry published in *Bodega Magazine*, *ExistOtherwise*, *Shoegaze Literary*, and *New Sqaure*, a literary journal of Sancho Panza Literary Society. He hopes to leave this planet without getting what he deserves.

Alex Fang is an attorney and writer based in Brooklyn, New York. Her most recent project, a new English translation of Shen Fu's *Six Records of a Floating Life*, is forthcoming in 2025.

Karen Fitzgerald was born and raised on a dairy farm in the Midwest. It is this early, close relationship with the natural world that informs her work. She has an active exhibition history in the US and abroad. The Queens Community Arts Fund, Women's Studio Workshop, and New York Foundation for the Arts have supported her work. The work is in private, public, and museum collections. Heavily influenced by poetry, her work delights in the energy of gardens, mysteries and all things invisible.

Ashley Gilland is a writer, musician, and multimedia artist from Missouri currently pursuing her MFA at UW Bothell. Her work is published in *Dishsoap Quarterly*, *Haven Speculative*, *Quail Bell Magazine*, and *The Waxed Lemon*, among others. When not writing poetry and philosophical flash fiction, she also loves composing music and embroidering mixed media art projects. Find her music on Spotify and Bandcamp, her art on Instagram (@pocketsnailart), and her tweets at @earlgreysnail.

Lance Halberg is a writer based in Minneapolis. He studied English at St. Olaf College, where he edited and contributed to several undergraduate journals.

Preston Ham is a poet, photographer, and school psychologist in Washington State, where he has the privilege of helping students who are often marginalized navigate physical, social, and emotional boundaries. He finds inspiration in the narratives we construct about ourselves and how we can shape those narratives to affect change in our mental health. He is a graduate of the Eastern Washington University MFA program. His poems have been published in *Manastash*, *Braided Way*, *Sybil*, and are forthcoming in *Abstract Magazine*. He was nominated for the Orison Books 2025 Best Spiritual Literature Anthology.

Lisa Beech Hartz is the author of the ekphrastic collection, *The Goldfish Window* (Grayson Books, 2018) and *These Kismets* (CutBank Books, 2025) a chapbook exploring the life and work of artist Lee Krasner. "Into Ivory" is taken from a working manuscript responding to the life and work of photographer Francesca Woodman (1958-1981). Lisa directs the non-profit Seven Cities Writers Project which brings cost-free writing workshops to underserved communities. She guides poetry workshops in two city jails. Erasure and ekphrastic poems are among her writers' favorite ways to create new work.

Niels Hav was awarded the Danish Literature Prize 2024 from Ragna Sidéns and Vagn Clausens Foundation. He is the author of ten volumes of prose and poetry. His books are widely translated into languages including e.g. Portuguese, Dutch, Arabic, Turkish, English, Serbian, Kurdish, Albanian and Farsi. Frequently interviewed by the media, as he has travelled widely in Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America and participated in numerous literary events. His poems and stories have been published in a large number of journals, magazines and newspapers around the world. Niels Hav was raised on a farm in western Denmark. Today he resides with his wife the concert pianist Christina Bjørkøe in the most colourful and multi-ethnic part of the Danish capital, Copenhagen. His new English poetry collection *Moments of Happiness* is published by Anvil Press in Vancouver. Frank Hugus, in *The Literary Review* described Hav as: "...one of Denmark's most talented living poets..."

Kerry J Heckman (she/her/hers) is a psychotherapist in private practice and writer based in Seattle, Washington. She is currently pursuing her MFA and Creative Writing at the Rainier Writing Workshop at Pacific Lutheran University where she currently serves as the assistant editor and contributing writer at *Soundings*. Her poetry has appeared in *Sonic Boom*, *Whiptail*, and *The Heron's Nest*, among other publications.

R.C. Hoerter's poems have previously appeared in *Mid-American Review*, *Whiskey Tit Journal*, *Cacti Fur*, and *The Mountain* anthology from Middle Creek Publishing. He has an MFA from Colorado State University, where he won the AWP Intro Award. He lives in Carrboro, North Carolina.

Laura Craft Hogensen is a writer and pastry chef who lives in Los Angeles. Her work focuses on the ways that memory can shape who we are as individuals, lovers, and partners as well as how our personal narratives influence our interpretations of past, current, and future relationships.

Jenny Isaacs graduated long ago from Johns Hopkins University with a B.A. in poetry. She ended up marrying the first person she spoke to there. While raising three daughters she founded & directed several nonprofits, including a Montessori school and an immigrant rights organization. Now retired, she lives with her husband on a creek off the Chesapeake Bay, just down the street from her parents. Her poems have appeared in various journals including *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Mad Poets' Review*, and *US 1 Worksheets*, and online in *Pedestal* and *Up the Staircase Quarterly*.

Morgan Brie Johnson (she/her) is an award-winning theatre creator, performer, and playwright. She lives in Tkaronto where she is co-artistic leader of Animacy Theatre Collective, a physical theatre collective dedicated to strange, ecological, and feminist storytelling (www.animacytheatrecollective.com). She also holds a PhD in Environmental Studies from York University.

Kathleen Carlton Johnson, poet and painter, lives in northern Michigan along the shore of Lake Superior. Her work has appeared in many small press reviews, including *Aji*, *Rattle*, and *Pheobe*. She has also published work appearing in the volume *Yoopier Poetry* and has a new book of poems, *Roots in Water*, available on Amazon.

Emma Johnson-Rivard is a midwestern writer of poetry and weird fiction. Her work has appeared in *Strange Horizons*, *Coffin Bell*, *Moon City Review*, and others. She can be found at Bluesky at [@blackcattales](https://blackcattales) and at emmajohnson-rivard.com.

Till Kallem, Ph.D. (they/them) is a transmasculine biochemist from San Francisco who currently lives in Liverpool. Their poetry explores the tender and brutal moments that accompany queerness and otherness in young adulthood. Their work can also be found in *The Broken Teacup Department*, *Adult Groceries*, and *Corporeal*.

Janina Aza Karpinska is a multi-disciplinary Artist-Poet from the south coast of England. Poetry informs her collage-making with an eye for the 'chime' of pattern and colour, and rhythm of line. She works quickly and intuitively in making disparate elements work together. Her collage-work has appeared on the cover of *Heart of Flesh*, and in *Bath House Journal*; *Young Ravens Literary Review*; *Grim & Gilded*; *The Empty Mirror*; *3 Elements Review*, and *Blue Mesa Review* among others.

Jacqueline Kolosov's 4th poetry collection, *Talons, Wings*, is forthcoming from Salmon Poetry later this year. *Exit, Pursued by a Bear*, a collection of stories, won the Prize Americana and was published by Hollywood Books last fall. Her work has recently appeared or is forthcoming in *The Southern Review*, *december*, *Fourth River*, and *Copper Nickel*. Originally from Chicago, she now lives, writes, and teaches on the high plains of arid and very windy West Texas.

Susanna Lang divides her time between Chicago and Uzès, France. She is the 2024 winner of the Marvin Bell Memorial Poetry Prize from *December Magazine*, and her most recent chapbook, *Like This*, was released in 2023 (Unsolicited Books), along with her translations of poems by Souad Labbize, *My Soul Has No Corners* (Diálogos Books). A new collection of Souad Labbize's poems, *Unfasten the Silk of Your Silence* is now available from Éditions des Lisières. Her fourth full-length collection of poems, *This Spangled Dark*, is forthcoming from Cornerstone Press. Her poems, translations and reviews have appeared in such publications as *The Common*, *Asymptote*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, *American Life in Poetry*, *Rhino Reviews*, *Mayday*, and *The Slowdown*. Her translations of poetry by Yves Bonnefoy include *Words in Stone* and *The Origin of Language*, and she is now working with Hélène Dorion and Christine Guinard on new translations. More information available at www.susannalang.com.

Camille Lebel, mother to seven, lives on a hobby farm outside of Memphis. She's published in *Rogue Agent Journal*, *Literary Mama*, *Sledgehammer Lit*, *Black Fox Literary Magazine*, *Inkwell*, *Hidden Peak Press*, *Last Leaves Literary Magazine*, and more. *Writers Resist* nominated her poem, "The First Time, Reclaimed," for a 2023 Pushcart Prize. She enjoys traveling, horse-whispering, and making people uncomfortable. You can find her writing about child loss, parenting, purity culture, and more on Insta @clebelwords

Yvette LeClair is a workers' rights activist and a compulsive note-taker. She grew up in the suburbs of the seventies. Thankfully, there was a library across the street. Her poetry appears in *Pinhole Poetry*, *Queen's Quarterly*, *Working Title Lit*, *The Dalhousie Review*, *Contemporary Verse 2*, and *The Literary Review of Canada*. She has a day job in downtown Toronto, Canada, where she lives with her husband and calico cats. Find her on Instagram @yvetteclair

Jennifer Markell's first poetry collection, *Samsara*, (Turning Point, 2014) was named a "Must Read Book" by the Massachusetts Book Awards. Her second collection, *Singing at High Altitude*, was published in 2021 by *The Main Street Rag*. She has received awards from the Chester H. Jones Foundation, *The Comstock Review*, The New England Poetry Club, and the Rita Dove Prize in Poetry (International Literary Awards.) Her poems have been included in numerous publications, including *The Bitter Oleander*, *Consequence*, *Diode*, *RHINO*, *Storm Cellar*, and *The Women's Review of Books*. Jennifer served on the board of The New England Poetry Club for five years and is a long-standing member of the Jamaica Pond Poets. In her work as a therapist and writer, she continues to believe in the power of words to help us feel and know.

Fiona McKee is an undergraduate student minoring in creative writing. Her work has appeared in the *Tuscarora Review* and on the *Free Flash Fiction* website.

Paula Reed Nancarrow's poems and flash fiction have appeared in *Sugar House Review*, *BlazeVox*, *Willow Springs*, *Ballast*, and *The Southern Review*, among other journals. She lives in Minnesota. Find her online at paulareednancarrow.com.

Caitlin O'Halloran is a biracial Filipino-American writer living in Rochester, New York. Her poetry has been published in literary magazines, including *ONE ART*, *Third Wednesday*, and *The Metaworker*. Her fiction has been published in *Twin Bird Review*. www.caitlinohalloran.com

Maureen Egan Riggi is a poet living and writing in Central New Jersey. She shares her home with her husband, son, and two cats. Maureen studied literature and poetry at Stockton University, and presently writes about motherhood, loss, and self-identity. Recent works have appeared in *The Kelsey Review*, *US1 Worksheets*, and a self-published chapbook, *A Mother's Heart*. Maureen received a Pushcart Prize nomination from *The Kelsey Review* for her poem, "Casting the Stone", in 2024. She is currently working on a chapbook that explores her postpartum depression titled *Crying Over Spilled Milk*. She is very excited to be included among the authors of this issue!

Angel Rosen (she/her) is a queer, neurodivergent poet on the outskirts of Pittsburgh. She is the winner of the 2025 Maureen Seaton Poetry Prize. Angel is passionate about drag, musicals, and loving her friends loudly. Find her work through *Rogue Agent*, *Talon Review*, *JAKE*, and others at angelrosen.com.

Meggie Royer (she/her) is a Midwestern writer and the Founder and Editor-in-Chief of *Persephone's Daughters*, a journal for abuse survivors. She has won numerous awards and has been nominated several times for the Pushcart Prize. Her work has been published in *The Minnesota Review*, *The San Antonio Review*, *The Rumpus*, and more. She thinks there is nothing better in this world than a finished poem. Her work can be found at <https://meggiroyer.com>.

Bradley Samore has worked as an editor, writing consultant, English teacher, creative writing teacher, basketball coach, and family support facilitator. His writing has appeared in *The Florida Review*, *Carve*, *The Dewdrop*, and other publications. He is a winner of the Creative Writing Ink Poetry Prize. www.BradleySamore.com

Leighton Schreyer (they/them) is a writer, poet, and critically Mad queer activist from Kitchener, Ontario. Their writing often explores themes of gender, sexuality, mental health and the human condition as they strive to unsettle norms and critically engage with the world around them. Leighton's writing has been published in *The Sun*, *Hippocampus Magazine*, and *Redivider*, amongst others, as well as some of the world's leading medical journals. More information about their work can be found at www.leightonschreyer.com.

Rochelle Jewel Shapiro has published in the *New York Times (Lives)*. Nominated twice for a Pushcart Prize and for Best of the Net, her short stories and poetry have been published in *Prism*, *The MacGuffin*, *Euphony*, *The Iowa Review*, and many more. She teaches writing at UCLA Extension. <http://rochellejshapiro.com> @rjshapiro @rochelle.jshapiro

Annette Sisson lives in Nashville, TN, and teaches at Belmont University. Her poems appear in *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Rust & Moth*, *Citron Review*, *Cumberland River Review*, and many other journals. Her second book, *Winter Sharp with Apples*, was published by Terrapin Books 10/1/24. Her first book, *Small Fish in High Branches*, was published by Glass Lyre Press (5/22). In 2024 one of her poems was a finalist for the Charles Simic Poetry Prize and two were nominated for The Pushcart Prize.

Elaine Smartwood is a poet.

Will Staveley's work has been featured in journals including *Poetry Quarterly*, *Dawn-treader* and *The Poets' Republic*. He is an *Acumen* Young Poet, was runner-up for the 2021 *Erbacce* Prize, and has recently finished a book-length epic poem about Edinburgh's Royal Mile.

Margaret D. Stetz is the Mae and Robert Carter Professor of Women's Studies at the University of Delaware, as well as a widely published poet, and also the Poetry Editor of *The John Steinbeck Review* (a Pennsylvania State University Press journal).

Tim Stobierski writes about relationships, presented through the lens of his own experiences as a queer man. His poetry has been published in a number of journals, including *Gay & Lesbian Review*, *Chiron Review*, *Ghost City Review*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *Anthropocene*, *Stanchion*, and *Connecticut River Review*. His first book of poems, *Dancehall*, was published by Antrim House Books in July 2023. Check him out on Instagram (@timstobierski) or his website (www.timstobierski.com) for more.

Christine Stoddard is a filmmaker, artist, and writer named one of Brooklyn Magazine's Top 50 Most Fascinating People and has won the Brooklyn Paper's Best of Brooklyn's "Best Artist" award. Her feature films include "Siren's Gallery" (Tubi, Amazon), "Her Garden," and "Mi Abuela, Queen of Nightmares," not to mention award-winning shorts like "Bottled," "Uncontested," and "De Colores (A Chorus of Melancholy)." She runs the YouTube channel Stoddard Says, where she's known for her comedy character Art Bitch, talk show "Badass Lady-Folk," and non-fiction series "Christine Stoddard's New York." She is a member of Solas Studio in the Flatiron District and had her last solo exhibition at the Queens Botanical Garden.

Will Summay (he/him) is a poet and psychotherapist based in Pittsburgh, PA. He has been previously published in the *Michigan Quarterly Review* (forthcoming), *Seaford Review*, & *Change*, *Volume Poetry*, *Stone Of Madness*, among others.

Laura Tate (she/her) is a retired elementary school teacher and grandmother whose work has appeared in such journals as *One Art Poetry*, *Sky Island Journal*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, and *Halfway Down the Stairs*. She recently published a collection of poems with two other women poets, titled: *Casting Shadows*, which focuses on the theme of women aging. She is currently working on a first chapbook.

Leath Tonino is the author of two essay collections, most recently *The West Will Swallow You*. A freelance writer, his poetry and prose appear in *Orion*, *The Sun*, *New England Review*, *Outside*, and many other magazines.

B.A. Van Sise is an author and photographic artist with three monographs: the visual poetry anthology *Children of Grass* with Mary-Louise Parker, *Invited to Life* with Sabrina Oran Mark, and *On the National Language* with DeLanna Studi. He is a two-time winner of the Independent Book Publishers Awards gold medal, a two-time Prix de la Photographie Paris winner, an Anthem Award winner for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, a finalist for the *Rattle Poetry Prize* and *Kenyon Poetry Prize*, and a winner of the *Lascaux Prize for Nonfiction*.

Anna Ellyn Wagner is a Minnesotan poet and librarian. She graduated with a BFA in creative writing from Hamline University and has been nominated for Best of the Net, Best American Essays, and a Pushcart Prize. Her work appears in *Faultline Journal*, *Reed Magazine*, *Eastern Iowa Review*, and elsewhere. Although she can't stand the cold, she braves it for her dog, Samwise, whose unbridled joy at the sight of snow makes every day worthwhile.

Susan Levi Wallach has been published in such journals as *Solstice*, *Rivanna Review*, *The Moth*, *Southern California Review*, and *The Thomas Wolfe Review* (as a winner of the Thomas Wolfe Fiction Prize). Her opera, *Elijah's Violin*, was performed in San Francisco in 2018. She has an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts. Website: <https://lingolit.wordpress.com>

Sara Winslow is a repenting (a.k.a. retired) government lawyer turned creative writer. Her short stories and essays have appeared in several literary journals and anthologies. Most recently, a creative nonfiction piece she wrote was included in the Winter 2025 issue of *Passager*. Sara lives in San Francisco. She has visited all 50 states and is working on the seven continents (two to go).

Chila Woychik is originally from the beautiful land of Bavaria but has lived in the American Midwest most of her life. She is widely published, and has an essay collection, *Singing the Land: A Rural Chronology* (Shanti Arts, 2020). Her impressive barn is currently home to an old cat named Sweet Pea and four young strays, Shadow, Skitter, Suzy, and Scamp. Chila is the founding editor at *Eastern Iowa Review*, and also reads for *Birdcoat Quarterly* and *The Upper New Review*. www.chilawoychik.com

Aliesa Zoeklein's chapbook *At Each Moment, Air* won the Peter Meinke Poetry Prize and was published by YellowJacket Press. Aliesa also has poems published in *River Heron Review*, *About Place*, *Seventh Wave*, and elsewhere. She taught writing at Santa Fe College in Gainesville, Florida for twenty-five years. She lives with her wife in Gainesville where she writes, gardens, and studies Spanish.