

Thimble Literary Magazine

Volume 6 • Number 1 • Summer 2023

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Cover art: *Series: Black and White Surrealistic Composition (Verse. 25)*
by Alexander Limarev

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

Thimble Literary Magazine is primarily a poetry journal but invites submissions on related topics such as artwork, stories, and creative nonfiction. 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.

Poetry: Please send us three 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.



Series: Black and White Surrealistic Compositions (Vers. 22) by Alexander Limarev

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Editor's Note

by Nadia Arioli

Dear Readers,

6.1 is our 21st issue. Can you believe it? I think this may also be our longest issue. Every time I would accept a new piece, I would think to myself, *Ah, but I'm giving myself more work*. But then I would also immediately think, *How could I not?*

Robert Creeley had an idea of language, although he would not put it this way, as a necessary and impossible substance, with its own limits and possibilities. So too is a thimble, impossible to shelter more than a finger at a time, but necessary to do the work of mending.

Poetry and stitches come in lines. That probably doesn't mean very much, because banks also have lines. But for what it's worth, this thimble is for words: 21 volumes of them, ten fingers of them.

In this issue, we have a marked trend of loss and absence. We have hospitals, death, snow, aging, funerals, email addresses no longer being used. At first, the idea of a journal of shelter being filled with loss felt like a contradiction, or at least a tension. But I've mulled it over, and I've decided it's apt. After all, we would not need shelter but for living in a fallen world. I don't believe the story of Adam and Eve in a literal sense, but I still think it's true. Once, we were naked in the garden. We fell, and then we needed fig leaves and then huts and then

luxury apartment complexes with designated parking.

Even if the need for shelter is a sad one, at least we have words and interesting things to build. We have tree houses and metro cars—places that can become holy. We have stitches in our fig leaves but the craftsmanship is masterful.

May we all plant a new garden. May we all make a church in whatever shelter suits us best, however impossible it may be.

Best,

Nadia Arioli

Church in a Metro Car

by Katherine Schmidt

Mr. Left says he's had a spiritual awakening just as I enter the metro car. Ms. Right – an elderly woman across from him – talks about her twelve-step program. *It's like what Jesus says*, he explains. *That's why they put it into steps*, she agrees. We're at Girard and the car's mostly empty, so my eyes blur as I watch the cloudy echoes of Philadelphia ripple past me. *It's just, I know he's there, you know? It's all about accountability.* Droplets dance on the windows. I try not to look, but I think Mr. Left is crying. Addiction, sin, depression, grief – it's all out there as we pass 8th Street, then 11th. *You know it's a journey. Exactly, it's a process. We are all out here reassuring each other.* The car becomes a sanctuary.

October

by B.A. Van Sise

You make me want to use month
as a verb. Take you somewhere warm,
where oranges are evergreen. It's obscene
to think of all the wholesome things we
could do together: ride out bad weather on
wooden porches, light garden torches
and read by firelight. Fill cups with
sunsets and drink them in, cocktails
chilled with wisps of widdershins winds.

And, at night, fall asleep in October—
cased in only cracking, creaking wood:
a loud house in a quiet country
snapping and popping among
the low drone of bees. Tell each other
all the quiet lies: that we didn't waste
time waiting to waste this time. That
we can plan to month again and

again. That if you drive fast enough,
you can get anywhere in a day.

Atrophied, *said the Doctor*

by Wendell Hawken

All gone: the geese, the ducks,
the great grays. It has gotten quiet here.
Dry and quiet.

The inner once-upon-a-time
grew tired. Tiredness kept growing,
lugging all that expectation
every which way
in late summer of the mind.

Night sirens
do not find whoever pulls the covers up,
turns to story:
the shadow-seeming crow perched on a fence.
The bush that seems coyote.
Cow that is, black and placid-walking
a second following, calf in line behind,
all nodding yes, yes, yes.

Birds flit in,
check the summer feeder—what has been
might come again.
The black not-a-stick bites the dog,
disappears in a patch of lamb's ear.
In the gratitude desk the gift of solitude
lies in the keyhole drawer.

A dreamed road,

a high-banked ancient path.
Cattle on both sides. White here.
Black there. Wire fence, less impediment
than idea.

Mid-road, a small white calf
I shoo in with the black.
A white cow lies moaning on the verge.
I nudge her up,
find a black calf underneath,
almost herd them to the whites
when a Barred owl wakes me.

Some days
I think: Come back, come back.
Others, not so much, having lived certain
plot points of long marriage.
The dogwood, its bark stripped,
limbs sprouting below the antler damage,
dead above.

Why not a dogwood bush
if it wants that much to live?

Look into the future's open mouth
its uvula waggles like a lure,
a tasty lure that beckons, *Come and get it.*

Sitting with Grief

by Lacie Semenovich

Snow covers the ground
like a worn tarp — holes
where animals trampled
the night — crinkled, uneven.

I cannot fold this winter,
pack it away in a hope
chest to make room
for daffodils and crocuses.

Baseball beckons and fields want
unfrozen to open to seeds,
to do the work of life,
to break the fast of longing.

I am too old to rush these things,
too content, like a dog watching
from the window — waiting for
whatever dark ball, squirrel or bird

flies through the trees, against
the pale cover of the day —
waiting for those moments
I cannot control to pass, to guide

me into a future, a present
where the sun warms my face
and I can again bare my skin
to the wind.

Music Education

by Dorian Kotsiopoulos

One Friday, after we sang *Umiak, Kayak,*
Mukluk, Tupik, and another song
about how Bahama grass killed Cousin Helen
Brown's yams, Mrs. Steinberg taught us
to play a Yiddish lullaby on our recorders.

She told us how her grandfather survived
the Holocaust by crawling onto a pile of corpses,
wrenching one on top of him, faking death.
Even the loud boys held their breath.

Wetness glossed her eyes as she packed
up the instruments she traveled with
from class to class, an autoharp, triangles,
bells for holiday songs, sheet music, extra
recorders for students who forgot theirs.

Something Lost

by Linda Scheller

On the landscape of my body,
an island in the warm sea
within white porcelain cliffs, they lived,
plastic horses, the duck attached
to her ducklings by plastic grass,
the plodding donkey, a chicken,
the collie dog which laughed
its plastic laugh in fragrant air.
Pale mountains disappeared,
then reemerged, steaming,
while outside the window
in another world, snow fell.

Saved

by KateLynn Hibbard

When I was a child I understood
Adam and Eve's fall quite
literally, saw them floating
together in silence through a pure
blue sky, their hair fluttering
away from their faces,
limbs tumbling
through

and through

and through

the air. I did not think of the thud
their bodies would have made,
the ground shaking, their bruised
and shattered bones –

just endless

descent

like the kind of snow
that comes down all day
until the pale of the sky
blurs
into the horizon.

When my cousin fell
from an apple tree and died
on New Year's Day
when we were both ten
years old, I refused

to believe in death,
spent the day of his funeral
watching the snowflakes
falling

and falling,

shrouding the windfall fruit

like grace.

What We Lost Along the Way

by Scott Pomfret

A step on the basketball court. At least seven sets of keys. Innumerable sunglasses. One time, my underwear. Well, maybe more than once. It was a bone of contention with my boyfriend at the time.

My train of thought when I first laid eyes on my future husband at Boston Pride. My inhibitions, when—fortified with a Jäger shot—I accosted him on the dance floor, licked his armpits, and introduced myself as the love of his life. Shortly thereafter, my anal virginity. Contact with college friends. The words to the act of contrition. For our team, the Pillow Biters, the gay basketball championship by just three points.

My breath when my boyfriend proposed. All memories of our joint bachelor party, which ended in a strange apartment presided over by a drag queen named Miss Ann Thrope and a half-dozen coked-up Chelsea boys.

Passports, credit cards, remotes. After burning some sage, bad juju from breaking a mirror at Miss Ann Thrope's. (Miss Ann officiated at our wedding.)

My appetite, at the sight of our son's bloody birth from our surrogate.

My soul, when I accepted a position at a private equity backed tech company, loaded it with debt, and fired half the employees, but got

paid handsomely to support my new family.

After taking our son home, the freedom to party like we used to. By the time he hit two, the energy to party like we used to. Often my kingdom, for want of a babysitter.

In the mail, checks. In the dryer, socks. In the mists of time, my Manray Dance Club Campus Party cargo pants. In the shuffle, my son (then six) at Fenway Park for a few terrifying innings.

Myself in thought, when our son (eight) asked: What would you do if you were in heaven?

Myself in a panic, when he asked, Why don't I have a mother?

After we aged out, invitations to the Pillow Biters' season-ending party. Our mothers, within weeks of each other.

Our son's puppy Lugnut, when our son failed to follow through on his commitment to walk Lugnut regularly, and we wanted to make some sort of statement about personal responsibility. Our poise, when our son (twelve) announced he wanted to meet his mother.

During the Great Recession, everything we'd ever worked for, including the lucrative private equity job. During Covid, my sense of taste and smell. For my husband, ten pounds after his fiftieth birthday, for health's sake.

For the first time ever, a game of one-on-one against my son (sixteen). I wish I could say I let him win.

Trust, when our son first lied to me. My mind, when he stayed out past midnight without texting. My cookies, when I confiscated his Nerf N-Strike, and he in turn lectured me about Second Amendment rights.

Sleep.

Nearly our marriage, when my husband and I began bickering about how best to raise our son (seventeen). My wedding ring, under mysterious circumstances. My powers of speech, when my son featured his gay Dads in his high school valedictorian address (though the elegy was directed mostly at his Papa, my husband).

Most of our illusions. Half our sex drive. Ten percent of the hearing in my left ear. One hundred percent of my ability to read a menu in a dimly lit restaurant without aid from my seeing-eye son.

Sight of the bigger picture, when my son announced on his first college break that he was a closet libertarian. The battle, when I called my son's bluff. In translation, every word my son muttered. My temper. His respect. Count of the times he defied me.

For my husband, another ten pounds, which seemed strange, since he wasn't trying.

I tried to get our son to lose his Trumpy girlfriend, after which we didn't speak for months, and his Papa relayed messages between us.

My ambition. Knowledge of what young people are up to these days. Relevance.

For my husband, another ten pounds, which (along with his family peacemaking) made me start calling him Gandhi.

Our united front, when Gandhi insisted I didn't have to be so hard on my son. Touch with reality, according to my son. Commonsense, according to my father, after Gandhi and I purchased Kartwheel's Go-Kart Emporium with what was left of our savings and moved fulltime to Cape Cod in the foolish hope this new adventure would rekindle our marriage

When Gandhi and I downsized for the move: square footage, age-inappropriate clothing, Lugnut's water bowl, and Miss Ann Thrope's sage-burning abalone shell.

Between my son and me, no love was lost.

After Gandhi was diagnosed with metastatic gastric cancer, our new, downsized Cape Cod cottage, which had too many stairs. My son's faith in me after I didn't tell him the truth about his Papa, because I wanted him to concentrate on finals. My husband's dignity when our son changed his diaper. My marbles, when the home health aide left my husband stewing in his own filth, so she could buy Powerball tickets.

My sense of invincibility. My son's ability to hear a single word I said. My husband's good looks. My job, so that I could care for him personally. The Go-Kart Emporium to pay uncovered medical bills. My dream that we'd sally hand-in-hand into our dotage. Heart, when my son said he preferred not to discuss politics or anything else besides the weather with me (and even on that we couldn't agree).

In the days before the end, track of time. Hope. My shit, when I realized my husband was really going to die.

My husband. My son's Papa. My will to live.

A condolence note from Miss Ann Thrope, whom we hadn't seen in years.

For my son and me, our grudges, our distance, our walking on eggshells.

His habitual reticence, to ask, What do you think Papa's doing, now that he's in Heaven?

Another game of one on one, the first since high school. I let my boy win.

In the Photo

by Gus Peterson

My father's father is preaching,
one palm raised, the book he believed
was the language of creation
held reverently in his hand the way
one cradles a dying thing close,
those long fingers that could sunder
the small, hardened brain of a walnut
to soft meat caressing its leather.
Did he hold my wailing head
this fervently, my supple skull
crammed with its nascent fold
of blank pages? Every time I feel
an urge to pray I remember touching
his icy, powdered face. My sister
ensconced in that highchair of arms.
Her kindergartener's grief. For weeks
I bunked in the bubble gum pink cathedral
of her room, mine so foggy with death
a mural of sailboats across one wall bobbed
atop its water. There on a tide of sheets
my father's father slipped out to sea,
eating the bread of himself until
only a heart shadowed the memory
of body. I didn't understand his desire

to not taste then, why every morning
my mother placed each fresh temptation
of apple atop that book like an offering
to the bed. The vigils the living keep.
I kissed the crackling parchment of him
before school, snuck the gift pressed
to my palm like forbidden knowledge
onto a teacher's desk. What isn't written
about any genesis is how quiet it is
after a flood. The way the skies clear.
Just a few days ago that sodden cradle
in the street had rocked its newborn,
the rain falling and falling outside.
I want to say to him: do not preach
to me of doves. I want to know why
they drowned, lullabies in their mouths.
Why any faithful disciple still follows
the light of their once sun even after
it absconds from heaven.

An Encounter

by Anita Howard

Some days, the child within me
lies inert on the beach
where she would usually play.

I go and find her,
suggest that we inspect
the wonders of the rock pools,
or skim stones through the waves,
even walk in shallow water.

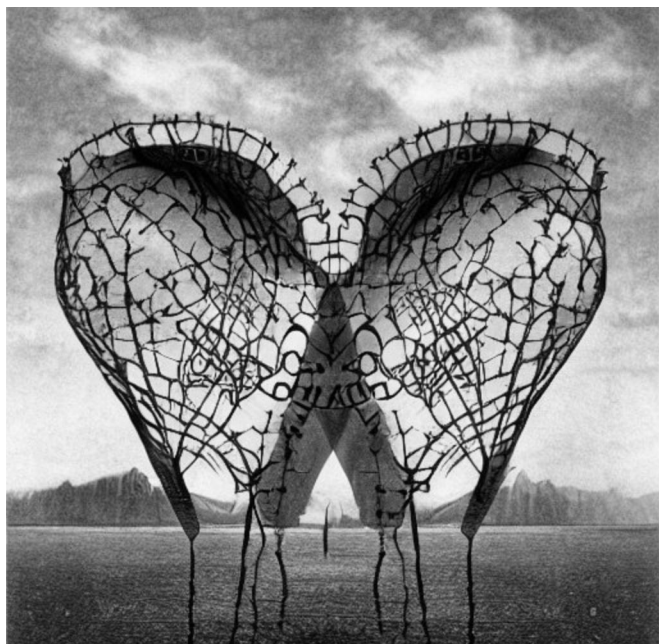
She retreats and rails at me.
Sometimes she lifts a weapon
that comes to hand: a stick,
or maybe a different standard entirely,
won from her mind.

She has learned not to trust
the outstretched hands of grown-ups,
their soft voices ready to turn vicious.

How can she know
that I won't drown her in the rock pools,
strike death blows with a stony word,

force her into the deep
where she can no longer stand upright,
because, in one dark instant,
I think it will be good for her?

So I sit near her and listen.
Let her rage, till she can tell.



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What's Left

by Carlene Gadapee

These mute artifacts of my parents' life
have found a home in my home, silently
judging me. I avert my eyes, move quickly

past on my way from room to room. Why
are they here? I should have sold it all,
removed these reminders of what I did not

do, could not do. A cabinet, photos, a salt
box and paintings, movies. Quilts and guilt:
an overstuffed chair.

Song for Wintering

by Kaitlyn Bancroft

Animal gone to ground, be still
Embrace the sacred hush
The gray is long and velvet-sweet
And you have wounds to heal, rest to keep

There will be a time for wildness — not yet
Now, let the earth receive its chilly baptism
Be swathed in slowing heartbeats
Discover, one dreaming epiphany at a time,
The subtle glory of slumber

Animal gone to ground, be still
Slip wondrously into sleep
And never believe, not for an instant,
That it's better to be awake

Excerpts from the Cloudspotter's Journal

by Dan Wiencek

1.

Today's clouds were low and disgruntled,
my mood ink-washed across the sky.
They were born yesterday and are
already dying, too heavy to bear
their life-giving water another hour.

2.

Each cloud is a conclave of uneasy molecules
and fraught agendas. A pair of clouds may appear
before you with distinct names and personalities
until they collide, from which point they are one
and have no memory to the contrary.

3.

I found wings and sat in a cloud, blinded
on all sides. The cold touched me everywhere.
A strong gust buoyed me beyond the arc
of the silent white globe, where the stars
lay just out of reach.

4.

A cloud weighs tons, more than your car,

more than the house you don't own,
heavier than anything you have felt, hanging
beyond reach in impossible freedom.

5.

Though I have never seen a face in a cloud,
I did smash a beer bottle on the ground making
a supernova of spangled glass and stale foam
that gazed up at me with my mother's eyes.

6.

Deep in its innermost heart, every cloud longs
to live beyond the span of its rain, to respire
and replenish infinitely until nothing that lives
recalls a time before it. A cloud is aware
of the moon, and envies it.

7.

A cloud followed me home. It shrank itself
into the confines of my kitchen and beaded
the coffeemaker with droplets. It then found
my oldest chair, curled up and went to sleep.

*In my other life my name is Elizabeth,
but I think I prefer to be called Lizzy*

by Heather Stearns

I haven't met my Mom yet,
but when we talked on the phone she told me
that, like me, she is addicted to finding shark teeth,
is also the slowest walker on any beach.
She told me that she and her brothers
(the uncles I've never met)
filled mayonnaise jars
with shark teeth when they were kids.
In the mail today I got a necklace
from her, which of course is a shark tooth,
the biggest one I've never found,
which is now resting between my breasts
the same way it rested between the breasts
of the grandmother I've never met,
the breasts that nursed the mom
I've never met, a black triangle hidden in cleavage,
danger in the deep, unseen,
unspoken of, like me.

Innards

by Angelica Whitehorne

I watch you brush buttermilk on the dead bird in the sink.
The cup of buttermilk is at its end. We are at our end.
The chicken has met its end, already.
I eat my wheat conglomerate and watch you debone.
I don't feel superior— just sad, just a little hungry.
Let us resist, I whisper to my core.
It rumbles back, echoing the Earth's own expiring innards.
The Earth, it will end too, and for us.
If I asked you whether you thought that romantic or wasteful,
you'd say, "I don't understand."
As I so far understand it, some of us
were made to feast; some of us
to survive off the scraps; some of us
to starve off subtractions, abstractions, and art supplies.
I give a silent prayer for the chicken, and then still aching,
all of its children.
You are grasping at a piece of skin, tearing it
with the tips of your glorious, unaffected fingers—
I loved this first about you, your blasé steadiness,
your unfamiliarity with remorse.
I watch you drop the skin into your mouth with precision.
I watch you chew.

Winter Birth

by Ellen Austin-Li

Winter is not a season
but my glacial womb, the blue

ice that festoons my shoes, my toes
tapping as I croon: moon, moon,

send us some snow! I will not be born,
cannot live until a blizzard comes,

my father chopping blocks frozen
by the side door, my mother's contractions

coming closer, coinciding with the strike
of metal on stone. Usher me in—midnight's

hush

deeper still in snow's silence. Feathered
dark, air sharp with chilled clarity.

Winter, my midwife.
Winter, the breathing season.

Littoral

by Karen Head

Somewhere beyond this January fog
that's walled me in against the dunes
are murky, Atlantic waves sneaking
ashore. From where I sit,
toes clenching the cool, white sand,
I can hear the squeaky, kip-kip call
of a stormy petrel surfing the crests.
If I was fifteen, instead of fifty-five,
I would concoct some epiphany
from this solitude, imagine myself
a lighthouse or a mermaid,
but long ago I stopped needing
such clarification, wanting now
only to stretch my legs toward
the inevitable, ebbing tide.

Fast Car

by Stanton Yeakley

All eyes on me.

We walk into the Arvest Bank across from the Sonic where you and I worked, but I go through the door too slow. Cold metal slams into my shoulder on the backswing and I yelp like a kicked dog. The tellers stop typing and look up from their windows. Tie-clad men in offices glance over their computers and the customers turn toward the door.

I lower my eyes and try to shrink—to will an invisibility cloak over my head—but it's hopeless. I've chosen today, of all days, to wear Mom's Clapton tee shirt. It's a faded mustard yellow and it glows like an inconvenient sun. The thing's probably forty years old at this point—twice as old as I am. Even though I thought I would, I never did grow into it. The shirt flaps around my bony elbows like a flag.

Almost as soon as the sound of the door shutting behind me dissipates, my stomach growls and they look again. Jesus Christ. Like idiots, we didn't eat after smoking earlier, but there's never food in the fridge. They keep staring. And why wouldn't they? Along with the shirt, my hair's been dyed the color of honey since you met me a month ago and dubbed me "Bee" without explanation. You saw me, struggling to balance a tray of slushes, shakes, and tater tots, and yelled: "Honey Bee! Let me help with that." From that day on, from the moment you skated over and grabbed my tray, your tattooed fingers

brushing mine, I was your Bee.

You turn around and take my hand. “It’s okay,” you whisper. “You can do this.”

Hand in hand, we walk to the counter and announce we want to buy a house. We need to get pre-approved for a loan, we say. A few tellers smile, but they don’t speak. We wait a full minute before a man leans out of his office and calls to us.

“How y’all folks doing?” he asks in a drawl.

You pull me toward him. Your purse knocks heavily against your leg and I clutch the manila folder holding our documents. This house thing had been your idea of course.

The day after you called me Bee, we had both worked the night shift and when I clocked out, you were sitting on the curb, smoking under the dull lights. I asked if I could have a cigarette and you handed me one. We didn’t speak for a long time, just sat there and smoked, dry paper wetting between our fingers. Then you asked if I wanted to go for a drive.

“I have a car,” you said. “A fast one.”

So we drove. We drove down Main and across Grand, weaving down the back of the Neosho River, its curves unfolding in long, invisible lines of water. The night was clear and the light shone off the river and I wanted so badly for it to mean something but it didn’t. I held your hand anyway.

“If we were in a movie,” I said, “I’d ask you how far we could get in your car—how far away from here it could take us.”

“Oh yeah?” you asked, long hair whipping the headrest, reaching toward the open window while I shouted epiphanies at you.

“Yeah,” I said. “But that was all based on not knowing what else was out there—on thinking the pastures were greener. Now we know bet-

ter.”

You thought about this. “You can’t run away on five dollars an hour anyway,” you said. Then you pulled into a parking lot and kissed me.

Five dollars an hour is what the loan officer sees though. Five dollars plus tips. The man scans our documents with his head down. Occasionally he grunts and shakes his head, but he doesn’t say anything. The papers got jumbled in my folder and are all out of order. My leg shakes. I adjust my shirt and try not to think about the sweat beading under my bra strap.

Since we couldn’t run away on car hops’ salaries, we decided to be content where we were. After morning shifts, I’d slide into your passenger seat, waiting for you to start the engine so we could drive around the lake, searching for quiet streets and cul-de-sacs, sipping spiked sodas and cruising down rows of houses fronted by sycamores and river birch. Your favorite was a house with a porch that wrapped all the way to the backyard; mine was a little yellow one with siding as soft as Easter morning.

“I’m never getting out of here,” I said to you once, idling in front of that house.

When you looked at me, it hurt.

The bank man looks at us. He hands us each a stack of documents overflowing with small print. “Can I get y’all signatures on these?” We each sign names we’ve never really gone by: Bee Parker. Kelly Barrow.

Last night, I walked you through every document we might need. Pay stubs. IDs. W-2s. We didn’t have nearly everything.

“What’ll we do when he realizes we don’t have it all?” I asked.

You scoffed. “By then, we’ll already have him hostage.”

I laughed, but it was a scared laugh. For a moment, I wondered if somehow we could still get that yellow house. After it was all over.

The yellow house with the green lawn, tucked somewhere far away,
engulfed by trees so tall you can't see the tops.

Jesus. Who even does this anymore?

I look at you and nod.

In one jerking motion, you reach into your purse and pull out the gun.
Cocked, you point it at the loan officer. I fish the pistol from under my
shirt and step into the lobby.

All eyes on me.

Poem with no memories in it

by Marlena Maduro Baraf

Instead, there are shaded hollows beneath maple trees thick with fiddleheads rolled tightly. Some fiddleheads are beginning to unfold. The wood and cinnamon ferns are green like photoshopped greens. There is no war. Or blood feuds or who lived in the land when. Or who killed first or how to load bullets in guns or fire anti-aircraft missiles. Or laws. Or studying laws and Talmud and governments back to stoning. No lighting the night. Fiddleheads and junkyards. The cruise ships collapse on the dark ocean floor. The male Blue whale booms its song. Tell me. Will sunsets exist without a memory of sunsets? *What am I* without words? How can *a poem exist* without remembered words?! Is that even possible? Where will the words go?? You caused this mess. You who will no longer hear ghost stories under kerosene lamps with sounds of crickets. And the crashing ocean. *La Llorona* in a flowing white dress and her hair very long covering all of her face and crying for her lost children. You cannot see her face. The wisdom lost from creases and burrows on your face. Not the scent of your father's Aqua Velva, not his death. Not death. No memory of the infant seeking the nipple.

Here are five wrinkled fingers.
white space
where I swim
cavernous hole of his mouth

pounding rhythm
rippling rise and fall
of voices
the press of snow

This is just to say.
The Blue whale sings

*/after Claire Wahmanholm:
Poem with No Children In It*



Series: Black and White Surrealistic Compositions, (Vers. 24) by Alexander Limarev

As Early as I Can

by Susan Grimm

Standing in front of the closet, their twin beds shaggy
as two dogs. Dark wood and dark shoes. Working

on abundance. They've assembled this room from air,
each piece conceived and floated down, hooks

for the things to come. The silence of the room allowing
everything to be. The walls are papered with cash. Real

life is ground and cooked in the kitchen, applying the heat
and the knife. But back here is another system, the closet

like a cave in the woods. The ironed lines of a shirt, some
blue lace hiding. They take off their shoes in their own

particular dance. Twinkle lights not yet on. His glasses
set down. Her hair still a beacon. Before they commence

their starched rest, a breeze out of the closet. Birds.

The Year of Loose Balloons

by Pamela Annas

When I drop you off at drama school
elevators will shoot to the top floor
and keep going. A thousand crows
will explode from dense foliage to circle,
croaking a good-bye.
Dust balls will gather under the chairs
and I won't notice. In the blue of evening
a stone blanket unwinds.

The splintery mountains of North Carolina
will hiss at you to call home
as demographers disappear daily
into the kudzu vines. LPs float out of boxes,
the night fills with jitterbugs rocking.
Still, it will be way too quiet. So think of me
as purple apostrophes linger in the corners,
as balloons nibble boldly at the wind.

A Consultation

by Bracha K. Sharp

1.

The room

is so busy with
the bright ceiling lights,
the green board,
filtering chalk dust off
Of itself, into the square room,

That maybe it is hard to see a **person**
teenager sitting there,
installed motionless in the blue seat, because
the windows are opened to let in
The sun,

and the human heart, nestled in its cave
is extraordinarily hard to hear, even
Above pencils and pens, writing the numbers
down on paper,

And even with the noise going to silence,
if you would
bend

awkwardly, listen closely, you
can still hear it,
wrapped in such fluttering,

that I know nothing else but our fear.

2.

Once, I saw a video of how they caught a fish.
Beautiful, sinuous: I didn't know its name.
It was shiny and smooth, fluttered like a wave.

It flapped the air with its tail;
there was a cruel hook stuck in its lip,
and when it moved, thumping
the floor, there was no sound that it could make, that would do it any
good.

Trust me, I did not look, but I know:
how it closed one eye, to shut
out the fear, but it kept one open, to cling to—
Whatever.

3.

Look, the fish knew that to struggle was not the point—
silence; anonymity in its death throes, how it
arced, hard with concentration.

4.

It was so large and heavy, (medium-sized, really)
that any movement caused pandemonium,
so, naturally, they had to hold it down.

5.

Is there no other way to let it go,

to let it go?

6.

I was not that fish.

7.

Maybe nothing ~~more~~ to say, but—
~~everything~~.

8.

But truthfully, I am interested, so tell me:
What would you have had me do—

9.

Scream?

Birthday Mediations

by Haro Lee

Midnight is blue on your face. Your phone screen draws from you the first fireflies. Happy Birthday texts lightening the eyes, bloom heart-shaped mushroom clouds, and settle. So they settle. Burdens of love dissolving. Thoughts take their eternal postures in the mind. The bones say, how you must do better. There are good things you must do for your mother, who calved you so exquisitely. Took grief from you for years so you could be cleverer. Fed you milk for brittle thoughts. You wonder what she would tell you with Christ's blood raised high. Take better vows than mine. Straighten your spine. Bathe consistently. Idle less time listening to men. Indulge in sugar, beware sugared lips. Life is beautiful with your darkened knees. Look back at your sloppy nights in parking lots with love, for you were brought here to do it all. Dare to be doomed to repeat it again. Simply scrub your underwear with peroxide to remove the stains. In your house there is no shame. You will shed something today. In hours, the ancestors will take their tongues and lap the sky clean, leaving your future buoyed with the satellites and those one or two remaining stars. Grieve, and you will be better. Every day, you will rise.

At the Last

by Carol Sadtler

she plants herself in the shadow
of the Wasatch Range—
not that she could still
clamber up the steep
trails to Gobbler's Knob—
but to recall the clear air
at the tree-line—
and the snow.

Her arid valley holds
everything—two daughters—
one granddaughter—
the Oquirrh Mountains
and what is left
of the Great Salt Lake.

Her kitchen window frames
the sunrise as she rotates
a numbered block each day
in a hand-carved rosewood
calendar on the sill.

In the front room—spread
on calm white walls

and warm maple floors—
a traveler's colorful treasures.

Deep blue cushions comfort
her thinning form—
her mind still here.

She lives—as always—
for the sunsets—seeking
a panorama—not this
living room's stingy view—
she wants to blast the bricks
in the northwest corner
for a picture window.

Her hand-woven rug—
pictorial—with one
thin horizontal line—
different from the rest—
that runs from center
to edge—at the end—
an opening out

The Old Stories

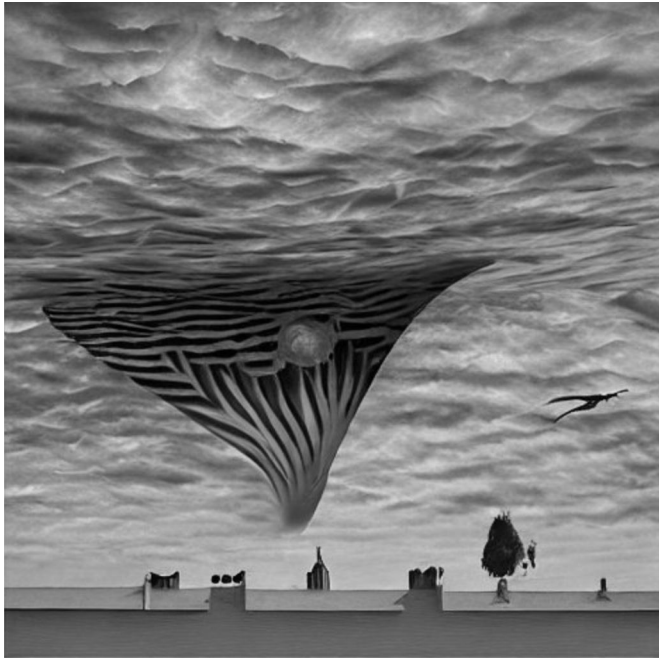
by Geraldine Connolly

I'm going back to the past
the way the wren goes back to the tree
back into the faceless past.
I remember the story of diamonds
sewn into the hem of grandmother's skirt,
the tale of uncle hidden among the hay bales,
the story of Stanislaus sent ahead to
find a job in America, then gone back
to bring friends and cousins, to bring
his bride to Pennsylvania.

The old tales, those lost worlds,
those words whispered into the breeze,
twisted like ribbons in the wind.
How I never got tired of hearing them,
their danger, their drama.
Back into the faceless past I'd head
like a diver heading into salty waves,
when one of the aunts would whisper
the old world names—Stanislaus, Adela,
Vladja—they echoed in my ears.
each of the stories always a little changed
with each telling, an ornament
borne by a different character,

so much more colorful
than my life in America

each told at a different time,
in a hushed voice, changing
in the sleet, in the rain.



*Series: Black and White Surrealistic Compositions, (Vers. 26) by Alexander
Limarev*

Dolphin

by Jessica D. Thompson

At low tide on a barren beach,
a sun-bleached dolphin skull.

Nothing left but bone.
Strewn nearby,

weathered vertebrae—
medallions,

each shaped
like a uterus with ovaries.

I slide one onto the silver
chain around my neck—

a crucifix for an old woman
with a young heart.

Relentless, the breakers roll
about like a die cupped

in the defiant fist of an aged
mariner. The dolphin's

one-hundred teeth
scattered in the deep

like a broken strand of pearls.

On Marriage

by Anne Gregory

I

When we met you had already kept your brothers alive. You were nine, hopped up on the kitchen counter with a twirly green phone cord wrapped once around each finger. Across the city your mother stood by the window in the office above the factory floor, door closed to the noise, she explained how to feed boys.

When we met you had snuck past the border guards: back seat shallow breathing, nostrils flaring, stare straight ahead, holding hope in your mouth. If they had asked you a question, it would have escaped like a moth into the night air.

When we met you had already carried bricks up ladders nine hours a day until at last your shoulders turned to marble, and new ropes of muscle bound your waist. The immigrant Atlas.

II

I rumble through the rooms of this red house, double back for a pair of crumpled socks and up the stairs to the laundry room. Then, a bathroom. Straddling the toilet to reach-behind-retch at the sticky rust-coloured dust. I pull pillows out of cases and prod the shredded wad of bloody tissue from a nosebleed brown-blood-ago that a kid tucked

behind his bed post why-who-knows. My web is weaving, twisting behind me, thick like an umbilical anchor I turn back on myself ten times in a day. My late night thoughts are a fog holding up this roof. Shuffling, tinkering, fluffing, I press dust into deeper corners. I hold-see-behold but as I revel, I hide, I tire. If you listened you would hear the rattety-tap of me rickety-picking my way along, getting it done, glass-eyed.

III

I eat my lunch at the counter and fill the room with my breath. The sun strikes a wood beam and I can taste those caramel colours. Tiny bright birds flit by the window as they patter and jab around a big blue Jay. They play. You play too: basketball games and new tattoos, beers after work and motorcycle lessons. You make crisis look like fun. I have no minutes in my day, but you seem to pluck them from the air between us like coins from behind my ear, you magician. Where once I said: I'll be the water sloshing in the bathtub when you stand up and step out steaming – Now I'll say: Here hold this. Tether me to you because once I've wandered by the bird feeder and farther than the maple tree, once I've dredged my hands through wet clay spinning and shaken loose my painter's eye, once the electric winds catch my sails — you'd better hang on tight, my gossamer kite can travel oceans and I won't be left behind.

Writing on Mother's Day

by Emilie Lygren

The runner bean I planted at dusk
formed tight coils of vine by morning,
green circles grasping a nearby pole
like a newborn's firm-handed grip.

A parent's sturdy arm says
*"I am here
to help you grow.
Reach around me,
and follow me up.
This way, this way."*

In time, the bean plant grows
and tops the pole.
Unfolding a hundred
broad leaves she says,

*"Look, I found the light.
It is here,
and here,*

The Gathering

by Brian Duncan

At the funeral of the father of my childhood friend
we watched the priest wave the thurible around the casket,
the incense purifying his hundred and one year old soul.

The smoke drifted up into the light coming through stained glass
high on the wall of the church, the colors separating
into components, coming apart, the way his friends did

in the war, sometimes. The way the prism I had on my windowsill
as a boy did to the sun's rays, back when we were all still whole.

In the Spirit of Mary Oliver

by Joe Barca

Ed Keefe, a selectman in Provincetown,
said he would often see Mary Oliver
walking around the village
plucking poems from pine trees.

Wearing a tank top, khaki shorts,
and Birkenstocks, Mary would stroll
down Commercial Street
watching tourists and townies.

Coffee from The Wired Puppy.
Newspaper from Adams pharmacy.
Give a biscuit to the Golden Retriever
in front of East End Books.

Arrive at Race Point Beach.
Watch the geese form chevrons.
Terns divebombing for minnows.
A wooden sailboat gliding along.

On a Thursday in September,
Mary arrived at Race Point.
She smelled the salt stench
of a humpback whale.

Forty feet of black shale.
The whale was named Basket.
The coroner indicated that she died
of chronic entanglement.

Mary touched the pectoral fin,
then she rubbed the underbelly.
The police asked her to move along.
A team pushed the corpse into the sea.

Rumor has it that Mary updated her will.
*When I'm gone, please bequeath
my inheritance to the whales,
then toss my ashes into the sea.*



Will It Go Round by Donna Vorreyer

First Date

by Amy DeBellis

He thinks I like it because I'm smiling.
The expression slides oilily,
slicker than water, something chemical
& porous & unreal.
It's sliding off my face and I'm sliding off of my-
self. My voice echoes a soundscape.

Each movement shifts the latticework
of my bones. Hollows me out,
digs a tunnel straight up to the heart of me.

His face is smiling too, but beneath
it is like mine, and beneath it is mine:
vile & violent, sharp like acid
and I'm no realer than a dream.

Suburban Landscape Post-Rapture

by Meg Walsh

In a cyclist's testament after a crash,
dying is like the hollow seen through one
shut eye. When we disappear, the world
fills that space in. Fine-mowed lawns
grow into grasslands. Birds stir
in their mailbox roosts. Stray cats cross
the vacant roads, gutter to dry gutter.
Opossums swing their long tails
around bike racks. Tennis court fences
rust. Cars hide in garages. The walls
that separate suburbia from the silent
freeway drown in ivy. Four-bedroom
houses yield to dust. Families of mice
move into the piano, chew out
the strings. Snake spines twist
up the staircase. Fox pups curl
up in wardrobe drawers, wake later
to claw at the carpet. The only sign
of us is in the bookshelves. The dishwashers.
The DVD cases. The bathtubs. The
basement fridges. The medicine cabinets.
The tiny baseball gloves. Every empty
thing. Everything meant for holding.
Everything we let go of.

Borrowed

by Elizabeth Ranieri



In art school the professor told me
that

I was not suited for 2D art.
Something about not using the
correct "white" in a painting. I made...

I took up ceramics.
Trust me when I say that I'd
rather be throwing pots right now.

I love the story of when
the Pope called Michelangelo to Rome
to paint the Sistine Chapel
and Michel was all,



"Bro, I'm a sculptor."





The notion of "High Art"
has its roots in the Renaissance



Ol' Giorgio was all,
"This art is good...
This guy's a genius..."



And everybody was like,
"Okay, that checks out.
Sounds legit."

If I can be like Giorgio in
one way: may I always
help my friends out.
Give them great reviews...





Vasari tells us that Michelangelo's
wet nurse was the
wife of a stonemason.

And so, baby Mikey drank the
marble dust

as an infant. Straight out of her breast.
Like a protein shake for genius.

I wonder what flavor my kids got.



The thing about the Ninja Turtles is

they have the exact wrong
personalities.



1965 Mikey was

more accurate? maybe?

Not quite. More complex?

Poor Mikey.





At the height of the pandemic
I was reading about creativity.

Women
were trying to work from home.

Women
said their productivity suffered.

Stolen moments:
Sometimes that's all we get.

Sometimes
the moments are not stolen
at all but rather

Borrowed.

Like these supplies,
Borrowed from my child.



Turtle

by Ockert Greeff

You couldn't remember how Dad died
You were there
But you had many different stories

All of them different
But in all your stories
You would say that there were three men outside
Who came to help

And now that you are shedding your memories
Like an old skin that has become too heavy to carry around
Now you're pulling back into your shell
So that we can see nothing of you, not even your old head
Wrinkled and slightly deformed from all the time that has passed
And all the experiences you've had

Now,
I want to think you're not retreating
Into that shell
Never to stick your old head out again
I want to think you're heading out to sea
Like a baby turtle with legs full of spastic life
And there are three men at the ready
At the edge of the waves

Watching over you as you wade into the blue.



Enid's Gone Again by James Diaz

We are birthed in music

by Lucretia Voigt

Our mamas and aunts whisper weathered quilt lullabies as they rock us to sleep. Heady honeysuckle breezes tousle our hair. In the staccato calls of cardinals, the trills of Kentucky warblers, the shrill half-notes of chickadees, we hear songs before we learn to talk. We are told stories of coal mines and collapses, of thistled dirt roads and hard-scrabble farming. We are taught to pray—for forgiveness, for gratitude, for existence. Creek water is a passage to redemption. We dream of promised mockingbirds if we hush and don't say a word, or diamond rings as a consolation present. We learn early to be cautious of boughs breaking. We hold our breath when hearses go by to keep ourselves from laughing, listen for salvation in bluegrass notes
that wrap around us
like brackish muck
in a coal slurry pond.

Timing the Thunder

by Jason Ryberg

We were waiting for
a storm to brew while the moon
played accordion

and wore a paper-
boy hat (rakishly angled),
looking down on the

empty streets of our
nameless little town that most
people only seemed to

remember because
of something horrible that
happened here a long

time ago. But it's
just another Friday night
down here and nothing

to do but watch the
lightning on the horizon
and time the thunder.

Miles

by Rosa Sophia

I remember you—my little brother—rolling tobacco from the butts of other people's cigarettes. Mama taught us not to waste. When I'm out to dinner with friends, if someone doesn't finish, I'll ask, *are you going to eat that?*

I'm sure you remember how I pride myself on being somebody who will eat whatever others leave behind. When I lived in the trailer park on the Treasure Coast, I picked up all the bruised mangos that fell from the tree. No one else wanted them. It was six years ago, when you were still alive, and I've moved 70 miles north, but I still have some in my freezer because I don't want to know what it's like to be without them.

When people die, they leave food behind. I still have your jar of dried kidney beans in the kitchen. The jar was among your belongings after they found your body in Philadelphia. A friend packed everything in the trunk of your car, which trapped the scent of your corpse. She warned me about this because no one knew how long you'd been lying in your apartment before the police found you. I remember the smell. This is what I think of when I see your jar of kidney beans.

I remember the rice, but I don't remember whether or not it was in a jar. We held the memorial at our old high school and someone decided to cook the rice from your apartment. They couldn't cook all of it. One

container had weevils. It felt like eating a part of you.

I remember how you listened, how you nodded while sharpening a switchblade on a whetstone, a cigarette hanging from the corner of your mouth. You were always hurting yourself.

Remember that time you were drunk and high and you sliced your hand open on a ninja star? Mama screamed but she wouldn't let anyone call an ambulance because the house was full of underage kids drinking booze. At some point you recovered, your hand wrapped in a duct-taped t-shirt. Remember how you always said, *if you can't 'duck' it, fuck it?* We found you eating a large pizza on the floor of the bathroom.

I remember the beginning, which feels like the end. When I was six and you were four, Mama made us run away from home. The three of us hid behind a shed in the woods, our backs to the corrugated metal wall.

Fifteen years later I decided to find our father's side of the family, even though Mama didn't like it. Do you remember? She told us Grandmom and Grandpop didn't really love us, but that Thanksgiving, they welcomed us into their home—we were strangers—and we ate mashed potatoes, corn, steamed broccoli, pie and Jell-O desserts and Grandmom's famous cherry-cheese.

It was too late. I remember how we got to know our father, and then he was crushed by a four-wheeler. They kept him alive for a year. He was a vegetable.

When I tell the stories, I laugh because I have to. I tell people I fabricated everything from a *Days of Our Lives* episode, but it isn't true. I've never even seen the show, so maybe I'm totally and completely off-base and nothing like it could've ever happened on a sound stage.

I remember how you sat still against the wall of the shed in the woods that day when you were four years old, your eyes dry, your face expressionless—do you?

Site 7: Photo Stream

by Laurie Filipelli

An artist I meet at the mahogany table helps abandoned buildings breathe with light. *Industrialia. Camera suspicion.* I show him a glove made of marigolds, a 24-foot statue of my old neighbor, leather-clad with fringed sleeves in that 70s style. (Roadside America removed his glasses, et voilà—Daniel Boone.) Also, the broken Loblaws where I learned to bike. Even now I feel it was all my fault: cracks in the sidewalk, rocks in my hand, hazmat suits, for sale signs, a city ordinance waving in the breeze. Another artist calls this ruin porn. But I'm from here, I insist. I have a cape. *Then wear it when you write.*

The Dead Man's E-Mail

by Ken Farrell

A man dies: nobody knows
his password, least of all
his ex-wife, who, settling affairs,
sits at the keyboard for hours
strumming guesses— captainamazing;
Clipper75; 1wshuwrhre1;
RiTALiN. With each
scavenged computer file
or rummaged box
she finds a moment of him
that fits no others—
a .pdf on ancient aliens;
a book of poems inscribed
with My Love, Mary;
a Bible with dozens
of crooked corners;
ticket stubs for shows
she's sure he'd never seen.
After uncovering each whimsy
she gives his e-mail another try—
black_knight_satellite;
MyLoveMary; doGearedGod;
XxXLuciusXxX...
She knows him so well

yet she will never know
the *him* of him.

Late one night,
long after giving up
her search for his essential,
she composes an e-mail
and fills it with all the meant
-to-says and frosty
secrets and wrangled truths
she can muster, sends it
Urgent! a hopeless letter
pitched to his mailbox
through the cyberspace maelstrom.
She gets an instant reply:
Undeliverable.
His mailbox is full.

20 Pages, 100 Questions

by Johanna Demay

APPLICATION for NATURALIZATION

In Ciudad Juarez pretty girls are prey.
Twenty-five years ago Alma fled north.
Volunteer tutor, I help her fill in the blanks.

Have you ever been a habitual drunkard? _____

*Have you ever committed a crime,
served a prison sentence?* _____

*Engaged in, or compelled someone else to engage in
Prostitution?* _____ *Armed insurrection?* _____

Are you a Nazi? Communist? Terrorist? _____

(When my teen-aged Russian-Jewish father
reached Ellis Island, did the gate-keeper ask,
Are you an Anarchist? Socialist? Bolshevist? _____)

I drill Alma for the final hurdle—her person-to-person
interview with la Migra, daunting as Class V rapids—
boulders, whirlpools, thundering chutes.

*Applicant must demonstrate English proficiency,
knowledge of US History and Government.*

The 20-page USCIS study guide—blue, like my American passport—contains 100 questions. How many home-grown patriots could pass this exam? I quiz Alma on Zoom,

frown when she slips into Spanish. On bus rides—
—lunch breaks—late nights at her kitchen table—
she squints at her blue booklet's small print.

Sprawled beside the TV like seals on a sun-warmed rock,
her US-born teenagers nudge each other, mimic the way
Mamá cracks her knuckles, how she gnaws her lower lip.

On Becoming Art or, Living in the Shadow of Van Gogh

by Mary McMullen-Light

What does the grasshopper
Know of Van Gogh?

Did he leap into a deep dollop
Of sea green paint
And drown in the wild, long strokes
Of a master?

Did dark blue hues
Signal a cool respite
From the searing summer heat?

Did the arc of the artist's arm
Sweeping across the canvas
Invite him to play?

Did he fly into radiant textured grasses,
Determined to chew
On the promise of plants?

Or did he simply seek to disappear
In the camouflage
Of newly imagined earth tones

Tempered by much white and light?

And only then, did he guess he would die
In this other world,
Suspended on a wall
And in time?



8859 by Richard Hanus

White Sofa in the Woods

by Margie Duncan

Like a toadstool springs up
overnight from a dead log,

it was simply there, pure white
against early greening brush

and charcoal trees, crystalized
perhaps from melted snow.

No tracks in surrounding mud,
no sign of its trek from civilization.

No scratch or snag from thorns
despite wild rose and briar already

twining around its legs. It faced
the lowering sun while every tree

in the acre leaned away – beech,
sweet gum, scrubby oak. It took

its place like spring's
first ashen flower.

Contributors' Biographies

Pamela Annas grew up in the Navy, lived for two years in a village in Turkey and graduated from high school in Yokohama, Japan. She is Professor Emerita of English at UMass/Boston where she taught working-class literature, modern and contemporary poetry and writing, coached UMB's ballroom dance team and directed its English MA Program. She is a member of the editorial collective and poetry editor at *Radical Teacher*, and has published books and articles on poetry, literature, and pedagogy, and poems in various journals and anthologies. Her chapbook *Mud Season* was published by Cervena Barva Press.

Ellen Austin-Li's work has appeared in *Artemis*, *Thimble Literary Magazine*, *The Maine Review*, *Solstice: A Magazine of Diverse Voices*, *Rust + Moth*, and other places. *Finishing Line Press* published her two chapbooks—*Firefly* (2019) and *Lockdown: Scenes From Early in the Pandemic* (2021). A Best of the Net nominee and a Martin B. Bernstein Fellowship recipient, she earned an MFA in Poetry at the Solstice Low-Residency Program. Ellen co-founded the monthly reading series, "Poetry Night at Sitwell's," in Cincinnati, where she lives with her husband in a newly empty nest. You can find more of her work at www.ellenaustinli.me.

Kaitlyn Bancroft is a reporter in Salt Lake City, Utah. Former and forthcoming publication credits include Hole In The Head Review, Tiny Seed Literary Journal, Agape Review, The Ocotillo Review, The Dread Machine, Bez & Co., Fleas on the Dog, and The Ana. Follow her work on Twitter @katbancroft or on Instagram @katbancroftreports.

Joe Barca is a poet from New England. He has a partner, two children, and a Wheaten Terrier named Brady. He is a fast talker and a slow runner. He grew up with the Atlantic Ocean at both ends of his street. His father loved boats, so he spent a lot of time on the sea. He is a fan of the Oxford Comma, and he is lobbying to have the em dash added to the keyboard.

Geraldine Connolly is the author of four full-length collections, most recently, *Aileron* (Terrapin Books, 2018). She's received two N.E.A. creative writing fellowships, a Maryland Arts Council fellowship, and the W.B. Yeats Society of New York Poetry Prize. She has had residencies at Yaddo, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts and The Chautauqua Institute. Her work has appeared in *Poetry*, *The Georgia Review*, *Cortland Review* and *Shenandoah*. It has been featured on *The Writers Almanac* and anthologized in *Poetry 180: A Poem a Day for American High School Students*, *Sweeping Beauty: Poems About Housework* and *The Sonoran Desert: A Literary Field Guide*. She lives in Tucson, Arizona. Her website is <http://www.geraldineconnolly.com>

Amy DeBellis's debut novel *All Our Tomorrows* is forthcoming from CLASH Books (2024). She has also had a novella and a collection of poetry published by Thought Catalog Books. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Shore*, *Pithead Chapel*, *Maudlin House*, *Luna Luna Magazine*, and *Anti-Heroine Chic*.

Johanna DeMay grew up in Mexico City, the bilingual child of American parents. In love with the power of language, she began writing poems to bridge the gap between her two worlds. Resettled in New Mexico, she made her living for forty years as a studio potter. Now retired, she divides her time between writing and volunteering with the immigrant community. Many of her poems reflect experiences of dislocation—her own and those of the people she serves. Her work has appeared in numerous literary journals and two anthologies. “Waypoints,” a full collection of her work, was released by Finishing Line Press in 2022.

James Diaz (They/Them) is the author of *This Someone I Call Stranger* (Indolent Books, 2018) *All Things Beautiful Are Bent* (Alien Buddha, 2021) and *Motel Prayers* (Alien Buddha, 2022) as well as the founding editor of *Anti-Heroin Chic*. Their most recent work can be found in *Corporeal* lit mag, *Wrongdoing* mag, *Rust + Moth*, *Sugar House Review*, and *Thrush Poetry Journal*.

Brian Duncan lives in Kendall Park, New Jersey with his wife Margie and two cats. He worked in a virology laboratory at Princeton University for many years and is now happily retired. He enjoys devoting his time to poetry, gardening, and hiking. He has been writing poems for many years, but has only recently started submitting.

Margie Duncan lives in Kendall Park, New Jersey, with her husband, Brian, and two tuxedo cats. She recently retired from Princeton University and returned to writing poetry and looking out the window. She spends the rest of her time hiking in the woods and reading for pleasure.

Ken Farrell's work is forthcoming/published in various anthologies and in journals such as Pilgrimage, Book of Matches, Watershed Review, Coffin Bell, and Panoply. Ken holds an MFA from Texas State University and an MA from Salisbury University, and he has earned as an adjunct, cage fighter, pizzaiolo, and warehouseman. Responding to his daughter's challenge, Ken is currently writing his first novel, about a world where ghosts are jurors, the sky is off limits, and shards of souls are commodities.

Laurie Filipelli is the author of two books of poems—Elseplace (Brooklyn Arts Press, 2013) and the 2019 Writers' League of Texas Discovery Prize winner, Girl Paper Stone (Black Lawrence Press, 2018)—as well as Mighty Writing's College Application Essay Guide (Mighty Writing, 2017). She lives in Austin where she coaches, edits and blogs as Mighty Writing.

Carlene M. Gadapee lives in northern New Hampshire where she teaches English and is the Associate Creative Director for The Frost Place Studio Sessions. Her work has been published by Waterwheel Review, Smoky Quartz, Margate Bookie, bloodroot, Wild Words, and elsewhere. Carlene resides with her husband in Littleton.

Ockert Greeff, a South African Canadian drummer, uses drums and words to create rhythmic poems, relying on some of the earliest oral and musical traditions – drumming, storytelling, chanting and rhymes. Born in Namibia and raised in a small town in the Kalahari Desert in South Africa, he earned his BA Hons. in Afrikaans Literature before settling in Johannesburg where he was the co-founder and drummer of the Afrikaans cult band Die Brixton Moord en Roof Orkes. In Montreal, Canada, he has recorded with underground bands such as Light Bulb Alley, Sawtooth and Death Drive. His solo poetry and drumming work has appeared in Ons Klyntji and has been shown at various poetry film festivals, including the Raleigh Film & Art Festival and the Small File Media Festival (Simon Fraser University).

Despite having lived and worked in various countries Anne Gregory has not made the required space and time in her life to write about it, yet. If she has any say in directing her midlife crisis, it will be aimed at showing up as just herself, and changing that fact.

Susan Grimm has been published in *Sugar House Review*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *Phoebe*, and *Field*. Her chapbook *Almost Home* was published in 1997. In 2004, BkMk Press published *Lake Erie Blue*, a full-length collection. In 2010, she won the inaugural Copper Nickel Poetry Prize. In 2011, she won the Hayden Carruth Poetry Prize and her chapbook *Roughed Up by the Sun's Mothering Tongue* was published. In 2022, she received her third Ohio Arts Council Individual Artist Grant.

Richard Hanus had four kids but now just three. *Zen and Love*.

Shannon Elizabeth Hardwick's work has appeared, or is forthcoming, in *MAGMA Poetry*, *Missouri Review*, *Salamander*, *Poetry London*, *Salt Hill*, *Plume*, *The Texas Observer*, *Four Way Review*, and *Passages North*, among others. A graduate of Sarah Lawrence College's MFA program, Hardwick is Editor-in-Chief of *The Boiler*.

A Washington DC native, Wendell Hawken (she/her) came to poetry late in life and earned her MFA in Poetry at the Warren Wilson College Program for Writers, decades after her BA degree. Her publications include three chapbooks and five full collections: *The Luck of Being* (2008), *White Bird* (2017) a sequence about her husband's battle with cancer, *Stride for Stride: A Country Life* (2020), *After Ward* (2022), and *All About* (January 2023). Hawken lives on a grass farm in the northern Shenandoah Valley where the first meaning of AI is Artificial Insemination. Two dogs keep her company.

Karen Head is the author of five books of poetry, including *Lost on Purpose*, *My Paris Year*, and *Sassing*. She is the Poet Laureate of Fulton County (GA), the Poet Laureate of Waffle House, the editor of *Atlanta Review*, and a professor at Missouri S&T.

KateLynn Hibbard's books are *Sleeping Upside Down*, *Sweet Weight*, and *Simples*, winner of the 2018 Howling Bird Press Poetry Prize. Some journals where her poems have appeared include *Barrow Street*, *Ars Medica*, *Nimrod*, and *Prairie Schooner*. Editor of *When We Become Weavers: Queer Female Poets on the Midwest Experience*, she sings with *One Voice Mixed Chorus*, teaches at Minneapolis College and lives with many pets and her spouse Jan in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Please see katelynnhibbard.com for more information.

Anita Howard is a writer, storyteller and actor living in Passage West, Co. Cork, Ireland. Her work features in many publications including *HeadStuff*, *Poetica Review*, *The Green Shoe Sanctuary*, the *Querencia Press Autumn 22 Anthology*, the *December 2022 Mslexia Moth* and the *Boundless 2023 Anthology of the Rio Grande Valley International Poetry Festival*. She is on Twitter as [@AnitaHowardSto1](https://twitter.com/AnitaHowardSto1).

Dorian Kotsiopoulos has featured at various poetry venues in Massachusetts, including the Brookline Public Library, the Loring-Greenough House in Jamaica Plain, and the Fuller Art Museum in Brockton. Her work has appeared in literary and medical journals, including *Poet Lore*, *Salamander*, *Slipstream*, *New England Journal of Medicine*, *JAMA*, *On the Seawall*, and *Smartish Pace*. She is a member of the Jamaica Pond Poets.

Haro Lee lives in South Korea with her grandmother. Her poems appear or are forthcoming in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Zone 3 Press*, *The Offing*, *The Indianapolis Review*, and elsewhere. She was the recipient of *Epiphany Magazine's Breakout 8 Writers Prize*. You can find her [@pilnyeosdaughter](https://twitter.com/pilnyeosdaughter).

Emilie Lygren is a nonbinary poet and outdoor educator whose work emerges from the intersections between scientific observation and poetic wonder. Her first book of poetry, *What We Were Born For*, was chosen by the Young People's Poet Laureate as the February 2022 Book Pick for the Poetry Foundation. She lives in California, where she wonders about oaks and teaches poetry in local classrooms. Find more of her work and words at emilielygren.com.

Marlena Maduro Baraf's stories and poems have been published in *Sweet Lit*, the *Ekphrastic Review*, *On the Seawall*, *Night Heron Barks*, *Poets Reading the News*, and elsewhere. She immigrated to the United States from her native Panama and is author of the memoir *At the Narrow Waist of the World* and co-author of *Three Poets/Tres Poetas*. She writes the blog, *Breathing in Spanish*, that features conversations with Latinos from all walks of life.

Mary McMullen-Light has worked in various roles in higher education for over thirty years. For 21 of those years, she directed a nationally recognized Writing Across the Curriculum program at Longview Community College, regularly presenting at conferences and writing articles on topics related to academic and professional writing as well as writing assessment. Singing in choral groups and writing poetry has fed her soul since she was in junior high. She is a recovered blogger, avid bird-watcher, and Midwesterner to the core.

Gus Peterson lives and writes in Maine. Work has appeared online with *Rattle's Poets Respond Series*, *Black Nore Review*, *Bracken*, *Panoply*, *Rust + Moth*, and *Hole in the Head Review*. He serves on the board of the Maine Poets Society, a nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing poetry to all Maine residents.'

Scott Pomfret is author of *Since My Last Confession: A Gay Catholic Memoir*; *Hot Sauce: A Novel*; the *Q Guide to Wine and Cocktails*, and dozens of short stories published in, among other venues, *Eco-tone*, *The Short Story (UK)*, *Post Road*, *New Orleans Review*, *Fiction International*, and *Fourteen Hills*. Scott writes from the cramped confines of his tiny Provincetown beach shack, which he shares with his partner of twenty-one years. He is currently at work on a comic queer *Know-Nothing* alternative history novel set in antebellum New Orleans. www.scottpomfret.com.

Elizabeth Ranieri is a multidisciplinary Clinical Assistant Professor at the University of North Texas where she teaches courses in Art Appreciation, Renaissance Studies, and Creativity. Her doctoral research focused on the art and architecture of early modern Italy and Sacred Space. She has spent the last three years trying to balance being a good teacher and a good mom.

Jason Ryberg is the author of eighteen books of poetry, six screenplays, a few short stories, a box full of folders, notebooks and scraps of paper that could one day be (loosely) construed as a novel, and, a couple of angry letters to various magazine and newspaper editors. He is currently an artist-in-residence at both The Prospero Institute of Disquieted P/o/e/t/i/c/s and the Osage Arts Community, and is an editor and designer at Spartan Books. His latest collection of poems is *The Great American Pyramid Scheme* (co-authored with W.E. Leathem, Tim Tarkelly and Mack Thorn, OAC Books, 2022). He lives part-time in Kansas City, MO with a rooster named Little Red and a billygoat named Giuseppe and part-time somewhere in the Ozarks, near the Gasconade River, where there are also many strange and wonderful woodland critters.

Carol Sadtler is a writer and editor. Her poems and reviews have been published in *River Heron Review*, *One Art*, *RHINO*, *Minerva Rising*, *Big City Lit*, *The Inflectionist*, *Rise Up*, *The Humanist*, *Pacific Review* and other publications. She lives in Chicago with her family.

Linda Scheller is the author of two books of poetry, *Wind & Children* (Main Street Rag, 2022) and *Fierce Light* (FutureCycle Press, 2017). Her poetry, plays, and book reviews are widely published with new work forthcoming in *Colorado Review*, *Poem*, *The Museum of Americana*, and *Colossus: Body*. Recent honors include Best of the Net and Pushcart Prize nominations. Ms. Scheller serves on the board of Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center and programs for KCBP Community Radio. Her website is lindascheller.com.

Katherine Schmidt is a researcher currently based in Washington, D.C. Her poetry is published in *3Elements Literary Review*, *Unbroken*, and *New Note Poetry*.

Lacie Semenovich is a poet and fiction writer living in Cleveland, Ohio. Her work has appeared in *B O D Y*, *Sheila-Na-Gig* online, *Qwerty*, *Chiron Review*, and *The Best Small Fictions 2020*. She is the author of a chapbook, *Legacies* (Finishing Line Press).

Bracha K. Sharp was published in the *American Poetry Review*, the *Birmingham Arts Journal*, *Sky Island Journal*, *ONE ART: a journal of poetry*, *Wild Roof Journal*, *Rogue Agent*, and *The Closed Eye Open*, among others. She placed first in the national Hackney Literary Awards, and she was a finalist in the New Millennium Writings Poetry Awards. She received a 2019 Moonbeam Children's Book Awards Silver Medal for her debut picture book. As her writing notebooks seem to end up finding their way into different rooms, she is always finding both old pieces to revisit and new inspirations to work with. She is a current reader for *The Baltimore Review*. www.brachaksharp.com

Rosa Sophia is a candidate for an MFA in Creative Writing. "Miles" was a finalist in *Bellingham Review's* 2021 Annie Dillard Award for Creative Nonfiction, and semifinalist in the Sandy Crimmins National Prize for Poetry. Her work has appeared in *Philadelphia Stories Magazine*, *Limp Wrist*, and *Islandia Journal*, among others. She holds a degree in automotive technology and is the managing editor of *Mobile Electronics* magazine. Rosa lives in Palm Bay, Florida. Visit her online at: www.torquesgarage.com.

Heather Stearns is a potter, bird lover, and writer based in the northern woods of Wolcott, Vermont. She is the author of three chapbooks: *Virtue, Vise, and Cicadas*. Her new work is forthcoming in *Willawaw Journal*. She spends her days making pots, spinning poems in her head, and teaching others how to move the earth at her community pottery studio, Muddy Creek Pottery.

Jessica D. Thompson lives in a stone house at the edge of a classified forest in Southern Indiana. Her poetry can be found in journals such as *Appalachian Review*, *Atlanta Review*, the *Midwest Quarterly*, *Still: the Journal*, and the *Southern Review* as well as in many anthologies, including “Women Speak, Vol. 7,” Sheila-Na-Gig Editions. Her first full length poetry collection, “Daybreak and Deep,” (Kelsay Books, 2022), was a finalist in the American Book Fest Best Books of 2022 for Narrative Poetry and has been nominated for the Eric Hoffer award. As part of the Lunar Codex Project, her poem entitled, “The Grandmother Who Fell from the Sky,” has been published in the *Polaris Trilogy* (Brick Street Poetry) scheduled to be launched in a time capsule aboard the Space X flight headed to the South Pole of the Earth’s moon in 2023.

B.A. Van Sise is an author and photographic artist focused on the intersection between language and the visual image. He is the author of two monographs: the visual poetry anthology *Children of Grass: A Portrait of American Poetry* with Mary-Louise Parker, and *Invited to Life: After the Holocaust* with Neil Gaiman, Mayim Bialik, and Sabrina Oran Mark. He has previously been featured in solo exhibitions at the Center for Creative Photography, the Center for Jewish History and the Museum of Jewish Heritage, and numerous group exhibitions; a number of his portraits of American poets are in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery. His short nonfiction and poetry have been featured extensively in an array of literary magazines, and he has been a finalist for the Rattle Poetry Prize, the Travel Media Awards for feature writing, and the Meitar Award for Excellence in Photography. He is a 2022 New York State Council on the Arts Fellow in Photography, a Prix de la Photographie Paris award-winner, winner of the Lascaux Prize for Nonfiction, and an Independent Book Publishers Awards gold medalist.

Lucretia Voigt was born and bred in the Appalachian mountains of Eastern Kentucky. She currently resides in the small town of Wyoming, Ohio. A graduate of Eckerd College, she is currently enrolled in the Masters Program in Creative Writing at Queens University of Charlotte. She has previously published poems in *Women Speak: Women of Appalachia Project* anthology, as well as the *Sheila-Na-Gig* online journal.

Donna Vorreyer is the author of *To Everything There Is (2020)*, *Every Love Story is an Apocalypse Story (2016)* and *A House of Many Windows (2013)*, all from Sundress Publications. Her work appears or is forthcoming in *Ploughshares*, *Waxwing*, *Poet Lore*, *Cherry Tree*, *Salamander*, *Harpur Palate*, and other journals. She lives in the suburbs of Chicago where she serves as an associate editor for *Rhino Poetry* and hosts the monthly online reading series *A Hundred Pitchers of Honey*.

Meg Walsh is an MFA candidate at North Carolina State University. She is originally from Baltimore, Maryland, and currently resides in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Angelica Whitehorne is a writer living in Durham, NC with published work in *Westwind Poetry*, *Mantis*, *Air/Light Magazine* and the *Laurel Review*, among others. She is the author of the chapbook, *The World Is Ending, Say Something That Will Last* (Bottle Cap Press, 2022). Besides being a devastated poet, Angelica is a Marketing Content Writer for a green energy loan company and a volunteer reader with *Autumn House Press*. You can find more of her work on Instagram at [a.w.ords](#).

Dan Wiencek is a poet, critic and humorist who lives in Portland, Oregon, and whose work has appeared in *Sou'wester*, *New Ohio Review*, *Timberline Review*, *Carve* and other publications. His first collection of poems, *Routes Between Raindrops*, was published by *First Matter Press* in 2021.

Stanton Yeakley is an attorney who lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma and writes between cases. He has been previously published in BULL, Epilogue Magazine, Haunted Waters Press, Meat for Tea: The Valley Review, New Plains Review, and Poydras Review, among others. His forthcoming work will appear in Evening Street Review.

Cover artist:

Alexander Limarev, freelance artist, mail art artist, curator, poet, photographer from Siberia / Russia. Participated in more than 1000 international projects and exhibitions. His artworks are part of private and museum collections of 71 countries. His artworks as well as poetry have been featured in various online publications including Undergroundbooks.org, Boek861, Killer Whale Journal, Bukowski Era-sure Poetry. Utsanga, Anthology(Silver Birch Press), NOKTURNO. FI, Treehouse Arts, Zoomoozophone Review, Backchannels, Briller Magazine, and many others.