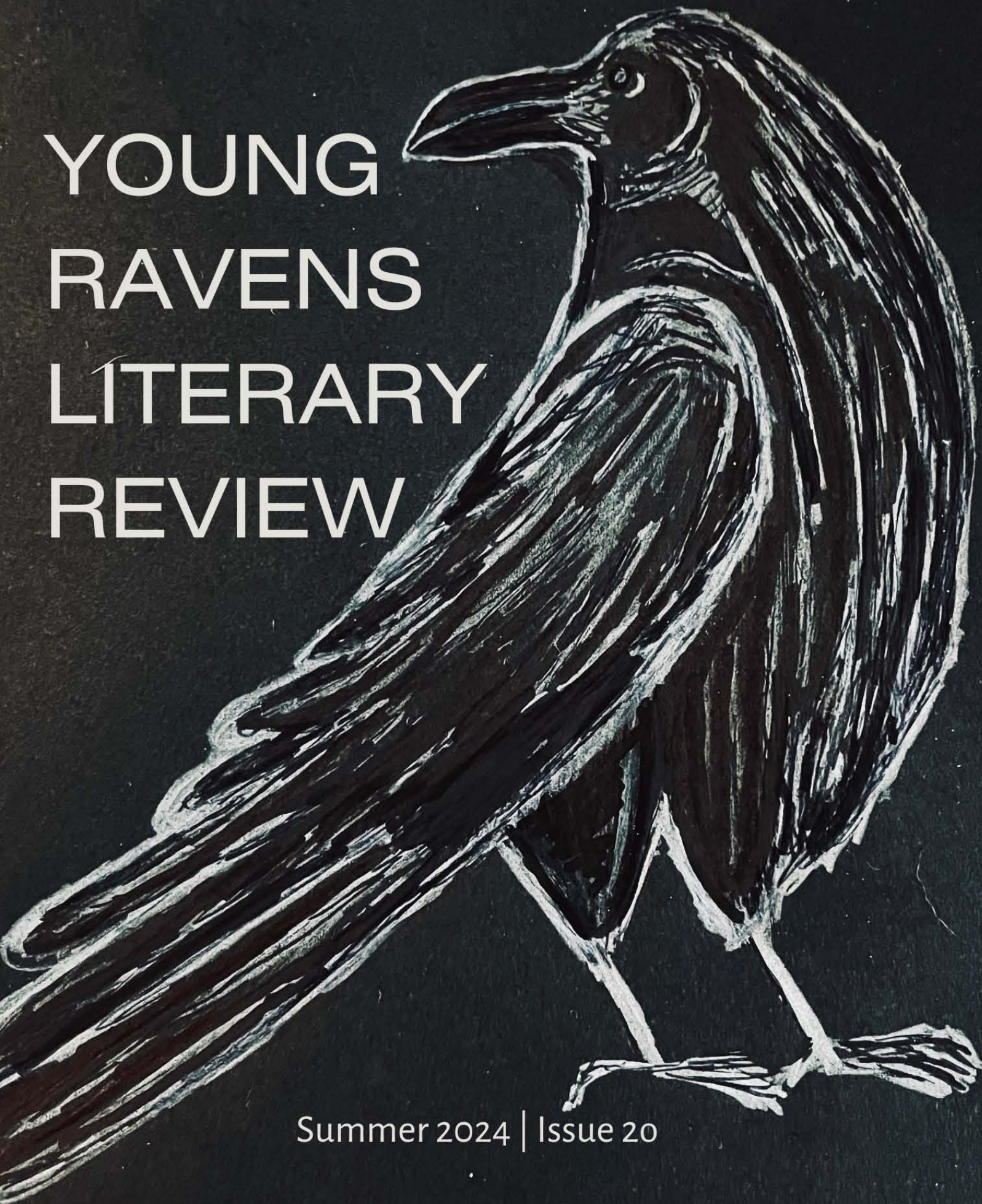


# YOUNG RAVENS LITERARY REVIEW



Summer 2024 | Issue 20



# *Young Ravens Literary Review*

*Issue 20*  
*Summer 2024*

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## Table of Contents

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|                                      |                               |    |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----|
| <i>Introduction</i>                  |                               | 5  |
| image_123650291 (Cover Art)          | <i>Natalie Shea</i>           | 6  |
| Bone Flute                           | <i>Judy Clarence</i>          | 7  |
| Reimagining What It's Like to Be New | <i>Colette Tennant</i>        | 8  |
| Sine Waves                           | <i>Rosemary Dunn Moeller</i>  | 9  |
| Audible Architecture                 | <i>Jeffery Allen Tobin</i>    | 10 |
| Sound of Monsoon Rain                | <i>Sarah Das Gupta</i>        | 12 |
| You Kids Be Quiet                    | <i>Willie Carver</i>          | 13 |
| Silent Question                      | <i>Alexander Etheridge</i>    | 14 |
| Wonderment                           | <i>Kersten Christianson</i>   | 15 |
| Silence as Sea – Aegean Sea Mosaic   | <i>Kelly DuMar</i>            | 16 |
| Afternoon                            | <i>Roger Singer</i>           | 17 |
| A cabin in the rain                  | <i>Bogdan Groza</i>           | 18 |
| awakening                            | <i>Jess Woolford</i>          | 20 |
| The Order of Birds                   | <i>Kersten Christianson</i>   | 21 |
| Grape Hyacinth                       | <i>Sarah Banks</i>            | 22 |
| The Drumming of Insects Begins       | <i>Catherine Arra</i>         | 23 |
| Fanfare for the Common Bird          | <i>E Eugene Jones Baldwin</i> | 24 |
| The Mockingbird's Mosaic             | <i>Jeffery Allen Tobin</i>    | 25 |
| Ten Thousand Hours on the Violin     | <i>Lorraine Jeffery</i>       | 26 |
| The Demolition                       | <i>E.C. Traganas</i>          | 27 |
| After the Performance                | <i>Anne Whitehouse</i>        | 29 |
| The Crow                             | <i>Grant Vecera</i>           | 30 |
| Brief Music                          | <i>Colette Tennant</i>        | 31 |
| Typewriter                           | <i>James O'Brien</i>          | 32 |
| Spines                               | <i>Mark Belair</i>            | 33 |
| Breath                               | <i>Tammy Snyder</i>           | 35 |
| image_50739713                       | <i>Natalie Shea</i>           | 36 |
| On Munch's <i>Skrik</i>              | <i>Hadyn Adams</i>            | 37 |



|  |                               |    |
|--|-------------------------------|----|
| Branded                                  | <i>Natalie Tisler</i>         | 38 |
| For That Star Man                        | <i>John Grey</i>              | 39 |
| Flight Reflex                            | <i>Russell Rowland</i>        | 40 |
| Season of Phantasmal Peace               | <i>Alison Hicks</i>           | 41 |
| Bedtop Ghoul                             | <i>Ossian Houltzén</i>        | 42 |
| The Summer Always Whistles with Promises | <i>Teesta S</i>               | 43 |
| Sparse Dissonance                        | <i>Meg Freer</i>              | 44 |
| Could Have Been                          | <i>Kersten Christianson</i>   | 45 |
| The One-Bedroom Hermit's Shack           | <i>Jon Wesick</i>             | 46 |
| Payphone                                 | <i>James O'Brien</i>          | 48 |
| New York Sounds                          | <i>Glenn Moss</i>             | 49 |
| i like your body When                    | <i>Liz Craig</i>              | 50 |
| Self-Actualization                       | <i>Audra Burwell</i>          | 51 |
| Blessing XIV                             | <i>Anne Whitehouse</i>        | 52 |
| Open Windows                             | <i>Grant Vecera</i>           | 53 |
| what tweet is that?                      | <i>Geoffrey Aitken</i>        | 54 |
| Post Office Walk                         | <i>Willie Carver</i>          | 55 |
| Nature Walks                             | <i>Riley Bauer</i>            | 57 |
| Woodpeckers                              | <i>James O'Brien</i>          | 59 |
| All Sound is Music                       | <i>E Eugene Jones Baldwin</i> | 60 |
| Sleepless in Ribadiso                    | <i>John Delaney</i>           | 61 |
| Early Risers                             | <i>Michael Morris</i>         | 62 |
| 5:00 AM                                  | <i>Laurie Didesch</i>         | 63 |
| The Cure                                 | <i>Bonnie Demerjian</i>       | 64 |
| Duly Noted                               | <i>Bonnie Demerjian</i>       | 65 |
| The Easiest Day                          | <i>Jannett Highfill</i>       | 66 |
| Silent Sounds                            | <i>Cathy Joyce Lee</i>        | 67 |
| The River Persists                       | <i>Dorothy Johnson-Laird</i>  | 68 |
| Waves on Rocks                           | <i>Jenny McMahon</i>          | 70 |
| Wheels                                   | <i>Mary Zelinka</i>           | 71 |
| MRI                                      | <i>Bruce Morton</i>           | 75 |
| The Hours Before Nightfall               | <i>George Freek</i>           | 76 |
| Gone Fishing                             | <i>David Pring-Mill</i>       | 77 |

|  |                             |     |
|--|-----------------------------|-----|
| Grieving a Friend                                      | <i>Audra Burwell</i>        | 78  |
| Notice Me  | <i>Shelly Reed Thieman</i>  | 79  |
| After Frost  | <i>Michael Morris</i>       | 80  |
| Perfect, Scented, Silent                               | <i>Marianne Brems</i>       | 81  |
| Early Fall   | <i>John L. Stanizzi</i>     | 82  |
| Lake Watch   | <i>Mark Belair</i>          | 84  |
| Cry of the Geese II                                    | <i>Jenny McMahon</i>        | 85  |
| In My Hearing the Sea                                  | <i>George Moore</i>         | 86  |
| Twin Dancers   | <i>Anne Whitehouse</i>      | 87  |
| Winter Graveyard                                       | <i>Roger Singer</i>         | 88  |
| Sweet Wonder   | <i>Diana Raab</i>           | 89  |
| Silence as Prayer – Turkish Monastery                  | <i>Kelly DuMar</i>          | 90  |
| There is a piece of sky breaking<br>away from the void | <i>Ivan de Monbrison</i>    | 91  |
| The Deepest Song                                       | <i>Michael Theroux</i>      | 93  |
| A Group of Coyotes is Called a Band                    | <i>Pamela Hobart Carter</i> | 95  |
| Tiris  | <i>Shelly Reed Thieman</i>  | 96  |
| I Want to Ask  | <i>Colette Tennant</i>      | 97  |
| Aubade   | <i>William Meinert</i>      | 98  |
| The Last Poem and the Last Poet                        | <i>Louis Girón</i>          | 99  |
| Midnight Radio   | <i>Ethan Blakeley</i>       | 101 |
| Starlight  | <i>Teesta S</i>             | 102 |
| Sound of Grace   | <i>Alexander Etheridge</i>  | 103 |
| Ravens   | <i>Mandy Ramsey</i>         | 104 |
| Murmurations   | <i>Betty Benson</i>         | 105 |
| Niaux  | <i>Rebecca Simpson</i>      | 106 |
| Silences   | <i>Rob Lowe</i>             | 109 |
| Sway Gently  | <i>Sandrine Jacobson</i>    | 110 |
| <i>Contributors</i>                                    |                             | 111 |

## *Introduction*

Sound surrounds us and becomes so commonplace that we don't always pause to appreciate the fine gradations, colors, and textures of the audible world. Issue 20 of *Young Ravens Literary Review* is a dedicated space for exploring what poet Jeffery Allen Tobin calls "this aural architecture."

Poetry is naturally a sonic medium, and every poem provides a place to pause, listen, then add to the song of creation happening all around us.

Each artist in this issue records the melodies of nature with a uniquely tuned ear. Reader, we invite you to hear "chords of lightning bugs" (Willie Carver, "You Kids Be Quiet"), "immense oceans where rollers roar rhyme" (Jess Woolford, "awakening"), and the "sapphire syllables" of grape hyacinths (Sarah Banks, "Grape Hyacinths").

We also invite you to tune into the subtler sounds. Tammy Snyder points to how the body becomes an instrument of breath, a cycle of sensations moving through soft tissues ("Breath"), while George Moore finds "a distant ringing in the middle of my skull/ like the signature of sound itself keeping me awake to the world" ("In My Hearing the Sea").

Silence itself becomes a kind of sound: "And there's the voice saying/ to ignore every voice,/ to let yourself be taken/ by a silence/ lying between/ sun and moon" (Alexander Etheridge, "Sound of Grace").

Perhaps after all this listening, to the sounds without and within, you will find the hint of a distant home—"i trace the sky map/ meridianed in my skull/ meteorite boned memories/ incanting home" (Audra Burwell, "Self-actualization")—or a melody only yours.

*Natalie Shea*

**image\_123650291**



## *Judy Clarence*

### **Bone Flute**

Go back five thousand decades.  
One of us finds a cave bear bone,  
a femur, from the same hard stuff  
that holds our flesh together. It's

broken, bear brought down  
by some larger beast. One of us  
looks in the broken end. Hollow.  
Breath breathed in comes right out.

A tube. Thought. Five clear-cut holes  
scraped clean with sharp stone.  
Our finder, lips formed in O,  
blows in an open end,

plants fingers on the fabricated  
holes, smiles, becomes a bird. And then  
another, different bird. And now: wind!  
A crying child. Sound after sound!

Five hundred centuries blown  
to now. Small girl in sneakers,  
and expensive jeans with holes  
plays a complicated silver-plated thing

with holes, keys, lip-plate, head tube,  
chimney. Her thighbone leads her foot tap,  
heartbeats of Souza in her school band.  
One of us is pleased. Again. And smiles.



*Colette Tennant*

### **Reimagining What It's Like to be New**

The first time a newborn whale calf,  
lullabied by the deep wide water,  
lifts toward the light,  
breaks the salty surface and  
fills its lungs with  
an amazement of sky  
and steamy breath.

Or an evening primrose  
when it raises its face  
for its first glimpse  
of the strawberry moon  
before luna moths nuzzle down  
and dust its face  
with powdery music  
and nocturnal wonder.

Or an April morning  
when a hummingbird  
ventures out of the nest  
on his surprising  
whir of wheely wings  
and as he nears the lilac,  
realizes his beak  
is long with magic.

## *Rosemary Dunn Moeller*

### **Sine Waves**

I am cradle rocked by Puget Sound  
as engines vibrate everything and us,  
always, like a rubber  
band over a tissue box being  
strummed repeatedly by

an obsessive child of mer-parents.  
These vibrating waves might be music to some  
one, thing, being,  
or we are the vibrations sent out in a code  
we don't know like the taps

received at a train depot  
that dissipate instantly  
understood by some trained creature  
totally different from us.  
Or we're the musical instruments of some

sea creature, causing vibrations  
that are apparent in melodies and harmonies  
but we don't have the senses needed to receive.  
Might be we're the disconnected numbers vocalized  
on a phone message giving time and temperature

in meaningless phonemes until attached  
to other phonemes  
in nonlinear time we don't experience.  
Rocked in the cradle of the Sound at night  
I've only distant lights for reference that

help me see  
what I feel is real  
what I see isn't more  
than other souls rocked on  
the breast of other waves

*Jeffery Allen Tobin*

## **Audible Architecture**

Voices rise within the vaulted expanse of the cathedral,  
each syllable a brick laid upon air,  
building a dome of sound,  
visible only in the way light bends  
around the vibrations,  
stained glass throwing colors  
that dance to the rhythm of hymns.

Outside, the city pulses,  
a cacophony of horns and heels against pavement,  
where every sound competes for airspace,  
carving its path through the concrete jungle.  
The symphony of urban life  
layers upon itself,  
a living, breathing, moving collage,  
defining the boundaries of its own creation.

Further out, in a meadow bordered by forest,  
the sigh of the wind through grass  
creates a soft carpet,  
footsteps absorbed by earth,  
notes of birdsong hanging delicately  
like threads of silk caught in sunlight.  
Here, the environment listens,  
holds each tone close to its chest,  
treating it with the gentle reverence  
of a secret kept safe.

At the shore, waves orchestrate  
their relentless crashing of cymbals,  
each crest a timpani of foam—  
sound shaped by the meeting  
of liquid and land,  
an auditory testament  
to ancient dialogues,  
etched deep in brine and stone.

Through each space, sound moves—  
a traveler, changing costumes  
as it enters rooms, open fields, cityscapes,  
always leaving behind a trace of itself,

a reminder that here,  
within this aural architecture,  
we live, we move, we exist—  
not just within places,  
but within the sounds they inhabit,  
each environment a note  
in the vast score of existence.



*Sarah Das Gupta*

### **Sound of Monsoon Rain**

Sound of monsoon rain,  
hundreds of fingers patter over the roof.  
The notes of the sitar  
sound from an open window  
calling back pictures  
tethered to the edge of memory.  
Lilies in the gardens  
seen through a curtain of rain,  
shimmer and move with courtly grace,  
rows of nautch dancers  
behind a rainy haze.

The smooth face of the lake  
is pitted and pocked with scars  
as drops fall from the acacia trees.  
Across the lawn, the tabla and sitar  
call and answer each other,  
the pace of the music quickens.  
Clouds of insects hang over the water,  
as they move up and down  
on the currents of air,  
their buzzing  
rises then  
falls.

The raga reaches a close.  
Only the sound of monsoon rain . . .

*Willie Carver*

**You Kids Be Quiet**

Before my mamaw said to hush  
and we might just hear the stars  
I had never known  
the holy whisper rolling in  
a chorus of a thousand baritones  
ripping the skin off the sky  
tearing it from hill to hill  
its fresh wound trilling down  
in drenching bursts of buzzing life  
calling up chords of lightning bugs  
harmonies slipping in drunken flits  
echoing between the trailer and creek  
drawn west in the husky undertow  
of the dense rumble of the darkness

*Alexander Etheridge*

## **Silent Question**

*after W.S. Merwin*

It was a long time ago now  
I was a boy  
in a different life  
sitting on my grandmother's porch  
staring out at the trees  
always staring through  
the clear air of seasons  
at two towering white elms

They were distant  
so I loved them more  
I felt they were part of  
another world  
another age

I could watch for hours their  
branches waving calmly in breezes

They asked for  
nothing nor answered  
any question

except for the one I  
knew there were no words for

*Kersten Christianson*

## **Wonderment**

In days of tent  
and nomad,

sharp blade  
and compass,

we settled  
into our evening

sleep, serenaded  
by love songs

of loons. Distant,  
haunting, their calls

cinctured the lake.  
Legs destined

for water, forever  
circling.



*Kelly DuMar*

**Silence as Sea – Aegean Sea Mosaic**



*Roger Singer*

**Afternoon**

rain  
from gray  
linen clouds

slips from  
scattered heights

descending quietly  
to its end below

gathering flat,  
reflecting where  
it came from

## *Bogdan Groza*

### **A cabin in the rain**

There was no silence, but it surely felt like it. Rain droplets continued plummeting over the thatched roof of the abandoned cabin as they did on the rest of the forest. The branches, invigorated by the unceasing downpour, shivered under the cold breeze of an impending autumn. If there were any animals around, they were sleeping quietly in their dens and burrows, protected by the warmth of each other's proximity. Nothing dared to move in that weather and even the usual chirping had subsided, muffled by the heavy rain. There was peace.

From the dusty window, all I could see was the light of a lethargic sun as its pale rays were filtered by hefty tree trunks and an overgrown vegetation. The rain continued to fall down; although part of nature itself, it was as if it had made everything come to a full stop. This feeling of sublime immobility that the never-ending trickle was enhanced by the polyphonous rhythm it had. A constant beat outside of the cabin, similar to a cymbal-heavy jazz melody that would not cease its crescendo, and a syncopated one coming from within. Pots and pans had been predisposed around the house's solitary living space to catch the droplets that fell from the seeping roof. The wind echoed through the house and its freezing grasp made me shiver just like the forest. I was becoming part of what surrounded me.

There were so many things on my mind, so many thoughts weighing down on my heart, that my presence in that solitary scenario felt but opportune. Life has a strange way of unfolding; there are coincidences and accidents that lead you step by step to a point that you could never have anticipated. I searched for so many answers, had so many questions and yet, that tornado of quandaries and concerns that coursed through me, almost like a downpour, now felt trivial. I had been there just for several moments and yet I had become part of a whole; the throbbing inside my chest had become the same of the droplets tapping in the pots, my body had become immovable, just like the cabin and the trees, and even my voice had vanished, subdued by the roaring silence.

Everything however had become tranquil; there was peace once more.

There were still questions, as many as the raindrops, but I had found a certainty that they would eventually find their appropriate answers. All would make sense. Eventually.

I was there to write, to carve verdicts about the world on pieces of insignificant paper, but the world would have none of that. All my thoughts, all of my troubles and all of the woes of this earth had been swallowed up by something greater, something ineffable, something that tapped continuously on that thatched roof. The world had already written what I had set out to do; there was nothing left for me there.

I closed the door behind me and left the old cabin as I had found it, abandoned and tranquil, caught up in a solemn conversation with nature. What they spoke of, what their timeless discourse had unveiled and even their words could be comprehended by those who paid attention; there is more to listening than just hearing what is being said.

There was no silence, but it surely felt like it.



*Jess Woolford*

**awakening**

*You know the sound of two hands clapping; tell me, what is the sound of one hand?*

Hakuin Ekaku

every child knows water

is wonder

crystallizing in clouds

atmosphere where snow seeds sprout icy stars

& storms scatter sparkle

upon sparkle

biding in basins

ephemeral pools where tadpoles transform

red efts enchant

& bear cubs cool

warbling through woods

silver stream where wild mint multiplies

mosses mollify stone

& stilt-legged striders strut

brimming brine

immense oceans where rollers roar rhyme

sandy hands coax up castles

& salt seasons skin

bubbling into bath

warm depths where day draws in

& diamonds scatter skyward

when playful palm slaps surface

every child knows sound

of one hand

*Kersten Christianson*

## **The Order of Birds**

*First line credit to the poet, Joy Harjo*

*Birds are singing the sky into place.* Dipper, robin, sparrow; my mornings begin before the wink of daylight, to *flit, chip, twitter, buzz*, a cacophony of songbird riot among bare-branched alders, cedar boughs, chaos ringing in my ears. Forgetting they fly, bird shadows chase across the mossy yard, weave in and under last season's raspberry canes on skinny legs, delicate feet. Some money in my pocket, some money in my pocket, I wear hammered silver raincloud earrings with indigo Russian trade beads, tiny rain chains downpour as it does here all too frequently. Have I bartered baubles for the shroud covering the morning set moon? Have I jinxed the chance of a warming April sun?

*Soon, hummingbirds drink*

*from salmonberry blossom;*

*from columbine bloom.*

*Sarah Banks*

## **Grape Hyacinth**

Not the pillars of pink  
and white. Not the green stakes  
that splay six-pointed stars—  
the yellow flares that signal spring.

A grape hyacinth is not a hyacinth.  
Genus *Muscari* spikes the soil  
mid-March. Between the crocus  
and the iris, one green shoot  
pops up a cobalt plume. From my height  
a dab of bell-shaped blue  
sits on the furry green beneath my mailbox,  
half the height of a red-cupped tulip  
when the cream bulbs whirl  
up their clusters of concord blue.

Not the olive-shaped fruit  
but the clink of their indigo bells  
that elbows out the daffodils—  
flutters sapphire syllables.

*Catherine Arra*

## **The Drumming of Insects Begins**

Rhythms replace birdsong,  
lyrical lovemaking, circling nests.

Mating complete, feathered wings depart, leaving  
their endemic cousins to replace melody with patterned

percussions: katydids, crickets, locusts,  
relentless punctuation, frenetic keening

doleful death dirges  
ushering summer to her end.

She's exhausted now, spent from laboring green,  
flowering, folding bluebirds, squirrels, bees

into her arms, sheltering frail-legged fawns,  
fickle snakes in camouflage.

Before she slips away, she turns  
once more to applaud the confidence

of sunflowers, crescendo of impatiens,  
to exhale sachets of basil, lavender, mint.

I breathe her, bathe and drown until I'm  
ceremoniously anointed, embalmed and ready.

*E Eugene Jones Baldwin*

## **Fanfare for the Common Bird**

The brass section arrives  
By airbus  
(SEIU Swans Local 1)  
The members practicing  
“Some like it Cold”  
On a theme of Jean Vaillant

Redheads and chickadee-do-das  
Passing out programs  
Ushers crowing  
The noisome audience duded up  
in snow white and tie dye all  
Speckled and capped  
Black striped feathers and  
Berrysticked beaks

The Pope rose-robed  
For the consecration  
The stage set in the wetlands  
The rushes the blues notes  
And wind instruments  
For the premiere of  
“Birdland” in D major Opus 2  
For trumpets and winds

*Jeffery Allen Tobin*

### **The Mockingbird's Mosaic**

From a high perch in the cradle of an oak,  
a mockingbird launches its aria into the dawn.  
A ripple of melody unfolds,  
each note a brushstroke on the canvas of morning.

The song—a prism splitting sunlight,  
transforms as it travels through the arms of the tree,  
dappled by leaves that sway and shudder,  
filtering chords into a dance of shadows.

Past the bark's rugged silhouette,  
the tune tumbles through a breeze,  
catching the rhythms of other birds,  
a symphony borrowed, stitched seamlessly  
into the mockingbird's own vibrant quilt.

Downward it spirals, along the spine of light  
that slips through branches,  
glancing off a spider's silken threads—  
each vibration a shiver in the web of daybreak.

The song sweeps over the dew-laden grass,  
bending each blade slightly under the weight  
of its invisible passage.  
Nearby, a brook murmurs in applause,  
mimicking the melody with its watery tongue.

Through the open window of a waking house,  
the notes wander, restless but soft,  
filling the room like morning mist.  
They curl around my ears, a serenade  
softened by the journey,  
a whisper compared to its bold beginning.

In this gentle arrival,  
the song finds its purpose,  
an ever-changing tale told anew—  
a mosaic of the world, heard and held  
in the quiet contemplation of an audience of one.

*Lorraine Jeffery*

## **Ten Thousand Hours on the Violin**

Harmony gone flat—  
an elegy to your future?  
Aching hands repeat,  
again and yet again.  
Same note, no grace,  
no riff,  
just a nocturne tremolo,  
reverberating  
into monotony.

A never-ending rondo,  
a slur of fugue before  
the requiem.

You heard arias, toccatas,  
sonatas, crescendos from  
the Great Ones—  
while glissandoing  
down to a segue into  
more practice.

But today,  
you sit first chair—  
a testament of  
unending dedication  
and passion.

*E.C. Traganas*

## **The Demolition**

*‘Organ playing is the manifestation of a will  
filled with the vision of eternity’*

— Charles-Marie Widor (1844–1937)

A silent hush descends upon the hall  
Footsteps swallowed, whole,  
Engulfed until they are no more.  
Breathing choked, strangled by the throat  
While air is stopped and corked  
A bottle set aside and left to age.

The lights are dimmed, switched on,  
Then dimmed again: A blackened swell of darkness  
Blooms and cleaves the vacuum  
In a mushroom-cloud of pregnant spores  
Harnessed and ready to erupt.  
My eyes blindfolded, arms and legs  
Immobilized and pinioned in their place.

The panoply begins.

A primal roar—the earth begins to tremble underground  
A pitchless sound like nascent thought shrieking and pushing  
Upwards from its underbelly bearing down  
And giving birth to shape and form  
From formless will.

A chord emerges—incomprehensible and clear.  
A whistling pipe explodes, and then another —  
And another—metal choirs building blocks  
Of concrete rocks and tidal-walls of elemental spheres,  
Hard, brutal, prehistoric force—My spirit is besieged.

Brash trumpets flay my skin,  
My flesh exposed and bleeding from within.  
A massive boulder shoves a gut-punch to my chest;  
Sight is undone, my ears torn out.  
I feel my senses dying for a spell:  
The wrecking-ball continues to disarm me.

A brief, deceptive snare: a shepherd piping



Melancholy flutes and stars from distant  
Honey-suckled meads?  
I fall into a lulling stupor,  
Await my fate to come.

A crash of planks, shrill swords collide,  
A cavalry of horsemen tramples on my breast.  
My bones have cracked, entrails are smashed,  
My heart is rent asunder, thumping,  
Draining pulsing beats of lifeblood in arrest.  
My body fastened to its seat  
Hangs stupefied and lifeless in defeat.

A gasp of breath shocks and convulses;  
Dazzling light illuminates the hall.  
My name is gone—I am reborn anew!  
While rippling pairs of limpid hands  
Clatter and clap in thunderous applause  
Amidst the roaring din and tongue-tied shouts of awe.

My tormentor emerges center stage  
And, grinning, takes a long, protracted bow.  
The Organist Virtuoso leaves, the concert ends.

I gather limbs and mangled bones  
And stagger rescued and rekindled down the aisle.

*Anne Whitehouse*

**After the Performance**

*for Lauren Flanigan*

The stage was a vast seashell  
where music like water left  
a taste of salt, a fairyland  
alive with malicious laughter,  
and she its source—  
limpid beauty with a demon's tongue,  
a mermaid who swam in from the sea.

Silver hair freed, soaked  
and plastered to her head,  
her shining face scrubbed of make-up,  
in black sweats she goes out  
to walk her dog that patiently  
waited all this time.

*Grant Vecera*

**The Crow**

...lets us know  
she found  
the slice of rubbery pizza  
I flipped into the yard  
two nights ago.

From green shadows  
she shouts—  
like an angry cup of coffee—  
it's good, it's good.

*Colette Tennant*

**Brief Music**

I love the inky sounds  
of night rain on the roof—  
the tap of old typewriters flooded  
with muted moon music  
and star-clouded words.

*James O'Brien*

**Typewriter**



*Mark Belair*

## **Spines**

Yellowed, dried-out paper  
flecks from

old paperbacks  
sprinkle my lap.

Bits from books  
I'm rereading to discover

why they remade me  
when I was young.

Done a session,  
I need to brush myself off.

Some pages hang loose.  
Front covers slip away

like presentational poses  
outlived.

Yet the spines  
still hold.

Spines binding words  
that informed

my unfolding  
experience

to form  
my youthful beliefs.

Spines that, having stood fast,  
seem to sanction

this late life engagement  
with my early, slippery self.

Spines that, even more,  
seem to insist upon

this reading revisitation  
to make me track

the fate  
of those first beliefs

in the life  
of the spotted hands

that now  
hold them like

treasures  
lost and found.

*Tammy Snyder*

## **Breath**

Resist. Relax.

Resist. Relax.

Inflate. Deflate.

Feel the roundness of the thoracic cage come into being as the outside pushes inside,  
seeking the easiest way out of a flesh and bone chalice.

Can you sense the tickle of cool air at the threshold of the nares?

Trace its flow to the back of the throat, into trachea, lungs and bronchi?

Little pillows of air contained in alveoli,

Smooth sacs, silky as a noble woman's purse.

A shift, a sigh,

Exchange begins anew.

Further down the line can you sense oxygen pumped to cells through capillaries?

Oxygen sates the tips of toes, ears and fingers.

Quiet the ever-busy brain, clouded with thoughts.

Allow them to pass while carbon dioxide leaves after the oxygen has been absorbed.

Pink lips, pink skin: perfusion.

No dam to immersion in a sea of oxygen and one is coral pink, soft and at ease.

No struggle until age and experience reveal the changes in the body's function.

Breath, the parentheses of life on the outside, begun and done.

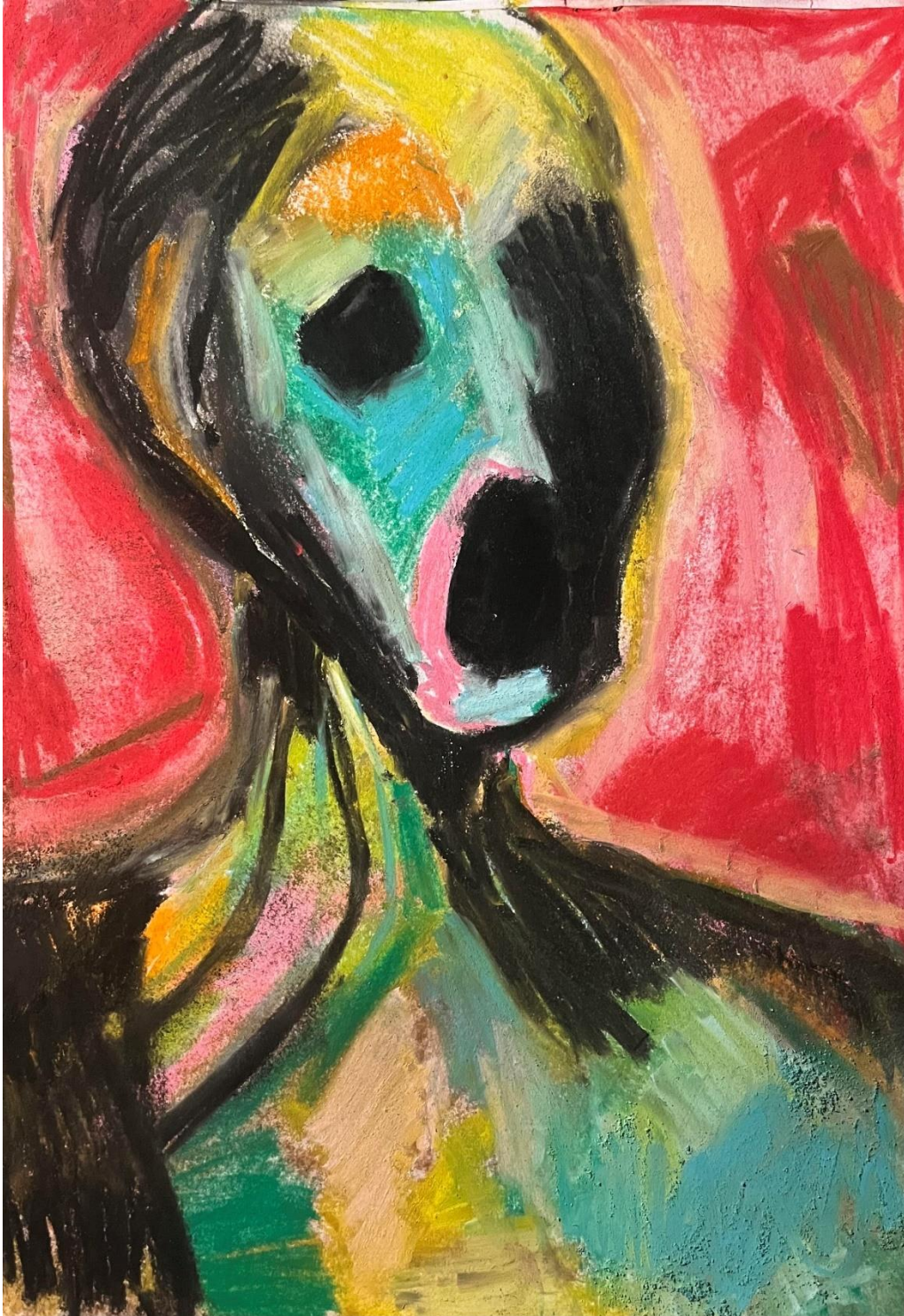
The first breath, surprise!

The final breath, resolution.



*Natalie Shea*

**image\_50739713**



*Hadyn Adams*

**On Munch's *Skrik***

Despite the fact your hands silence your ears  
the anguished pain carved on your face betrays  
some culmination of your deepest fears  
more terrifying than a Gorgon's gaze.

Two others figures walking behind you  
seem calmly unperturbed by nature's scream  
that stabs the evening air and filters through  
to firmly format your distorted mien.

Each viewer of your portrait clearly hears  
in silence their sole solipsistic shriek,  
a Doppler shift that they will not forget,  
that turns their waking dreams into nightmares  
and about which they never dare to speak  
for it becomes their innermost secret.

*Natalie Tisler*

## **Branded**

Even once you've grown  
The bad faded  
And you can  
Hold subtle appreciation  
For the good

Even when there's  
Someone new  
Who makes the butterflies  
Beat their wings  
And cheeks  
Colormatch roses

It happens

The song plays  
The one they exist in

Before realizing  
You blink

And their face  
Is there  
Burned  
Into the backs  
Of your eyelids

*John Grey*

### **For That Star Man**

He looked in on me,  
sweaty face, red-veined eyes,  
and a bitter smell of beer.  
I was strumming my guitar in the dark,  
my fifteen year old addiction of choice.  
The light behind his head  
shone on the strings enough  
to see my hand.  
My nails glinted like stars,  
like winter stars, for his  
breath was raw and acrid as January,  
and my fingers worked overtime  
to clear my snow clouds.  
He didn't say a thing,  
just stood there, gathering information  
he would never use,  
from chords not country enough  
for his taste,  
a melody freed from jukebox crackle.  
I chanted wordlessly beneath my breath.  
All those years when  
angry, tearful, dire lyrics  
tumbled over each other to write themselves,  
I wrote no lyrics,  
I took the light playing  
in the wet branches of his hair  
as his vocabulary,  
and the way he wouldn't step aside  
and let everything be shine.

*Russell Rowland*

### **Flight Reflex**

The Pine Warbler did not warble to beguile  
my hour of leisure,

it enticed a consort to share  
lines that had fallen for it in pleasant places.

My intrusion upon the courtship-in-progress  
simply relocated it to a further tree.

Wings went where the flight reflex dictated.  
What's not to understand?—

How often have I abruptly stopped singing,  
at the sudden appearance of a stranger?

*Alison Hicks*

**Season of Phantasmal Peace**

*After Derek Walcott*

I caused offense.  
I saw her frown and walk out.  
Then the message without explanation.  
The body registers assault:  
a migraine leaks behind my eye,  
my right thumb joint aches.  
It is not reasonable in this world  
to expect to live a blameless life.

In the absence of a blameless life,  
we cast our nets.  
In the peaceable kingdom  
yet to arrive,  
we will haul ropes out of the water  
into our laps, work fingers into knots  
we have fashioned,  
slip through to open sea.

*Ossian Houltzén*

## **Bedtop Ghoul**

The air vibrates with what isn't:

A pressure pushing in  
hollowness inside you. Panic

like a rockslide poised to fall.

Anticipation   boiling over.

It's here:

Absences &  
could've-beens, a rupturing

silent shriek that  
drowns out all.

Leaving only you,  
your gasping brain

& the quiet.

*Teesta S*

### **The Summer Always Whistles with Promises**

This will be the year—cuddling with grass and picnic blankets on languid afternoons  
I know the breeze against my bare legs  
Hours that stretch beyond fair limits

As the day dims, evening's heat burns my cheeks  
A burnt amber light wrapped around the trees  
crickets and frogs chirp their song  
birds following along

This will be the year

And as August dwindles, sunsets begin to roar  
All this time and what have you done with it?  
See, the days string like honey falling from a jar  
all the hours and minutes tangle themselves up  
seconds and globs  
I lost myself in the sweetness, tripped over crystallized moments

I stand on my wooden porch  
splinters sticking into my soles, arms tickled by the breeze  
Another year asking—  
Why



*Meg Freer*

**Sparse Dissonance**

*After Scriabin, Prelude Op. 11, No. 2*

phrases rise and fall  
with hesitation

scattered, fragmented  
fragile in places but sure and strong  
as the music speaks its wish

I want unattainable things  
I'm wanting in many things

two-note chords  
that could turn harmonies  
one way or another

a whole world in miniature  
but no place to call home

like a hand frozen  
on a window still waving  
to no one in particular

*Kersten Christianson*

### **Could Have Been**

Those slate streets of Vancouver  
my feet pounding pavement, wrapping  
around the corners of one gritty-hard block

into the next. Marigolds in their saffron  
dresses lean over their metal fences of breeze-  
creaking baskets, bright swinging constellations,

their gaze a boom against blue sky. Or maybe  
wave-kissed Francois Lake, thunderstorm  
rolling across distant peaks, knee-deep

in current, my legs a mooring, safe harbor  
in the larger lagoon of here, or there. I carry  
a spool of loose threads wherever I go;

bits and pieces of memory like photos washed-  
out by time. An ear open for new stories,  
nothing is left threadbare.

*Jon Wesick*

## **The One-Bedroom Hermit's Shack**

In seclusion atop the six-story flats  
the sound of snowplows far below  
Shovels and ice scrapers long abandoned.  
The exercise bike a rack for my coat

The Zoom call long over  
How fleeting this saha world  
Ten thousand comments  
and fifty-six praises  
returned to emptiness  
in a chat not saved

The Amazon Prime renewal  
announces spring  
Swimsuits and garden supplies  
The laptop's monitor  
reflects from the craft beer in my glass

No wife or tedious obligations  
I don a faded T-shirt and N95 mask  
carry a reusable canvas bag  
on my daily rounds to the Stop n Shop.  
Dragon fruit, pearled barley,  
Dunkin' whole-bean coffee.  
The onions won't scan

Mother and coughing toddler  
take the only working elevator.  
Sore knee, six flights of cracked stairs  
24 pounds of bottled water.  
We're all hermits now.

Deep in a YouTube video  
about dreadnaughts and  
the Washington Naval Treaty.  
Urdu voices in the hallway.  
A child's electric car

Packing for Japan  
camp stove, ground cloth, waterproof matches.  
My flight – cancelled!

Oh, where will I find the Buddha?

Who will share  
this laptop's amber glow?  
Snow on the balcony, eye drops,  
legal pad

*James O'Brien*

## **Payphone**



*Glenn Moss*

## **New York Sounds**

Midwestern flat, sway of prairie grass, priapic corn  
If you are willing to walk alone and listen  
Southern curve, inviting you to a swing on a porch  
Desert direct in the eye and mouth, no waste or shade  
Korean consonants cutting melons at the fruit stand  
Romance vowels holding slices like babies  
Ambition is Spring rain and December deep  
Deal makers, word crafters  
Emigrants to an island crowded with flesh and steel  
Heat and pressure co-sign a lease  
The alchemy of one more tomorrow  
A taxi door slams, heads turn to see the strut  
The guy with the nose ring laughs at his phone  
A better offer is on hold  
If your story is good enough  
Someone will hear it  
Even through a mask

*Liz Craig*

**i like your body When**

it is with my body,  
without walls, encircled by the wooded, sculling river.  
night bugs sing sweet, sticky love songs,  
while copper streetlight noise falls and mingles with the stars.  
silent trees so solid in their hold of earth,  
emit warm ghosts that taste of dirt.  
racy moonlight strokes bare fingers and faces,  
skims back sweaters, carves belly button shadows.  
our body, mine and Yours,  
a yin-yang recycling breath.

## *Audra Burwell*

### **Self-actualization**

I

at the foot of your shadowed stone breast  
my toes breathe moss and mitochondria  
grief oozing into spored mushroom clouds  
purple smoke stroking the cilia of my throat  
hair spooling into pink silkworm spit sap

II

i breathe in emerald gooseberry embers  
    lungs painted shades of jade and juniper  
        fingertips sprouting velvet infant ferns  
            i can hear your headstone heartbeat  
                moth wings beating against peach flesh

III

nebulas        flower        my  
    saccharine    stomach   shell  
constellations        rupturing  
    spinal        cord        syrup  
names    of    lovers    eclipsed  
    in    liquid    lunar        flesh  
i    trace    the    sky    map  
    meridianed    in    my    skull  
    meteorite    boned    memories  
        incanting    home

IV

thimble violets glow gunmetal green  
    from ripped veins of neon stardust  
        chest-corpse cracked in  
            ambered clouds  
                of bent earth  
                    and i am  
                        raptured



## *Anne Whitehouse*

### **Blessing XIV**

The island sparkles in the sun  
in the last mornings of summer,  
as if it has dipped back  
into the dark blue sea  
and been washed overnight.

The grass tastes of salt,  
sunlight glitters on the leaves  
of bushes and trees and vines,  
and the sand and stones  
and earth all are damp.

Long-limbed just lately,  
our girl runs through the yard,  
with her dreamy smile,  
her busy mind,  
alive to her unfolding self.

Two days and nights before,  
the island was lashed by rain.  
In darkness we awoke  
to the downpour  
and embraced for dear life.  
The rain fell around us,  
hiding the moon and stars  
and battering our little house,  
and we remembered  
an afternoon  
in Venice long ago,  
when running for cover  
from a sudden cloudburst,  
we were surprised by a man  
singing of love  
as he stood under the awning  
of a restaurant  
in the streaming summer;  
as we crossed the piazza,  
he opened his arms  
and smiling gazed  
into our eyes,  
as if dedicating  
his song to us.

*Grant Vecera*

## **Open Windows**

I am listening to a song and folding laundry.

Beyond the song, birds sing their own songs,  
and when my song ends I listen to them.

It is mid-afternoon and I need to get out,  
do something more alive.

By the window, on his special table,  
the mighty Ango stretches and yawns.

But I need to get out, I feel caged,  
sick of myself, irrelevant.

*Geoffrey Aitken*

**what tweet is that?**

what are the birds  
messaging today

from suburban habitats  
unburdened by  
the natural environment

calls competing  
with renovators

automation  
and predatorial  
household pets

if it's not last tweets  
of alienation

for industrial theatre.

*Willie Carver*

## **Post Office Walk**

My mom would walk with her friend Joanne  
along the rusting spine of railroad track  
to the country post office for her daily mail  
and when kindergarten faded away  
and summer swelled fat across the holler  
fizzing over its edges with green noise  
she said I was finally big  
enough to walk with them.

In the pleasure of new fields unfolding  
between the railroad ties and creeks  
I shouted hello to rocks and trees  
to know the rushing freedom of my voice  
feeling its way across the expanding world—  
and then a voice returned. *Hello.*  
My hand found my mom's leg  
My mom's hand found my head.  
*It's just a raven that lives over there.*  
*They found it hurt and it can't fly.*  
*Do you want to meet him?*

An old woman let us on a porch  
and on the porch a giant cage  
and in the cage a giant bird  
his head turned and tilted to take me in  
his black eye reflecting the morning sunshine  
his liquid wings slicked back against his body.  
I reached my finger towards the cage.  
Wings and beak fly back. He screams,  
*Help me! Help me!*  
his dry raven consonants cutting the air  
his rasping pulls of tight snapped vowels  
crying words that I could already spell.  
*It's okay. He's just scared.*  
*A bunch of little boys hurt him once.*

We left the porch and walked home.  
I held my mom's hand the whole way.

*Riley Bauer*

## **Nature Walks**

There are sounds that we ignore on our average day. They don't matter to us, or at least they aren't important enough for us to notice them. That's what we like to think, at least. It took me quite some time to realize that each noise, whether I chose to hear it or not, was as important as every other noise in the world.

In my high school Nature Writing class, my teacher would take us out to the park every Wednesday. He called these our "nature walks." At first, I didn't really get the assignment. We were told to be completely silent. Our phones were to stay in our pockets. Earbuds were to be put away, and we would go to different places in the park and stand there and just *listen*. It was ironic to me, taking a class where we were told to listen to the sounds of nature while the sounds of heavy machinery and large smokestack-like towers spewed chemicals into the air in the refinery just across the fence from the school. The refinery was in sight the whole time we stood there. The sound almost drowned out the sounds of the birds.

But we could hear the birds. Despite the flames shooting out of the towers in the refinery that blow God-knows-what into the air, I heard them. Robins, mourning doves, and the one or two bluejays that liked to sit on the trees near the concession stand at the softball field. You never realize how many birds you can hear until you are thinking about it. To us they are background noise—why should we care if some birds are talking to each other? It isn't the chatter of our world, it isn't the chatter that we care to hear because it doesn't impact us and therefore it is insignificant.

Until you start to listen. Until you start to watch them. The more you listen, the more you think about those birds. Each Wednesday I would start to watch a new bird. One day it would be a robin, and she would be gathering sticks near the playground for her nest. I watched her weave them in and out, until she was satisfied in the stability of her little nest up high in the tree. Another time it was a mourning bird, who sat on the edge of the concession stand while we stood in the dirt beside it. We all gathered in a circle and listened to her song. The refinery was no longer the noise that we heard, despite the clanging and despite the foul metallic groans. It became insignificant.

I became interested in the life of a bluejay that would follow us to the park and back. When we returned to the classroom, we were to write what we noticed outside, and those who were artistically inclined were to draw something they noticed. I had written that I noticed a bluejay following us to the park. I looked to the window beside my seat, to the tree right outside the window. There it was, sitting on the tree. It tilted its head and stared into the classroom. A chirp, then it flew away.

That was the noise I remembered that night. When I was comfortable in bed the house was silent, when the refinery was burning off material in those smokestacks when nobody was outside to see it despite the fact that everyone could hear it, especially when you lived just four houses down from it, the noise I remembered was that chirp.

Because I knew that it was better to think about a life, no matter how small, instead of the destruction down the street.

*James O'Brien*

**Woodpeckers**

*Oakland summer 2023*

That hoarse call, hungry chicks  
(picus erythrocephalus?),  
lost to me in a neighbor's oak tree.

A dog barks, another,  
a city worker saws  
concrete blocks away.

Your car alarm blares,  
blares, blares birds sing.  
Birds squawk, a truck  
announces its backing up.

I'm meditating.

On my street a stranger  
unrhythmically hammers

The morning roar of traffic  
on three freeways fades,  
as a plane, two planes pass

overhead, it's okay,  
they're commercial:  
the war has not begun.

I re-close my eyes,  
recall my mantra,  
pass from darkness to dark.

I would like to see  
those plaintive baby  
woodpeckers above all



*E Eugene Jones Baldwin*

### **All Sound is Music**

As I walk through the woods  
I conduct Camile Saint-Saens'  
Symphony Number 3 in C minor  
Left-handed (me, not Camille),  
The organ finale, the cascading scale.  
A young woman, fast walking, earbuds blaring  
Passes by the waving lunatic.

The muddy streams are flooded,  
A clot of ribbon snakes sun themselves.  
Cottonwoods shed their seed  
Parachutes, landing in the fast water,  
Sail toward the river's lock and dam.

Carolina wrens and mockingbirds and finches  
Sing Vivaldi, key Duke, scat Miles, pluck Esparanza,  
My New Balance 510 shoes tapping.

*John Delaney*

**Sleepless in Ribadiso**

Snorers play  
a game  
of keep-away:  
tossing sleep  
back and forth  
among them  
like a beach  
ball, just beyond  
my reach.

*\*At an alberque along the Camino de Santiago, Spain.*

*Michael Morris*

## **Early Risers**

Making the silence comfortable  
with soft music and a cup of coffee  
I listen to the dog scratch  
his clean skin, then the click  
of his toenails as he walks  
across the cold hardwood floor.  
The heater cycles on and I am  
reminded of the cold outside  
and a little demotivated  
to exercise, both of us early risers.

*Laurie Didesch*

**5:00 AM**

Only this bird, her species unknown,  
has the courage to sing this early in  
the morning. The whole chorus usually  
begins in an hour. She announces her  
presence as well as a new day on the  
brink of existence. I wish to always  
have such joy upon waking, to believe  
something good is in the making. With  
each note, I feel less weary. She lifts the  
cover of night, and the sun takes flight.  
The songbird soon departs. I nod in her  
direction. I feel a kinship: I too am in  
the darkness alone as I write this poem.

*Bonnie Demerjian*

## **The Cure**

Those with nature-blindness call them LBBs—  
little brown birds, too dull to bother naming.

They scratch and mutter in the undergrowth, these prosy beings,  
tireless in their search for sustenance.

But see, that central spot that marks the heart,  
rich racing stripes that grace their head

and hear—they start to practice on a winter day  
but come the longer light, their voice a tonic.

Liquid golden drops spill from their throats  
to fortify dry spirits suffering too much dark.

Drink up and let the sparrow's lilting song restore.  
Scorn this tiny healer nevermore.

## *Bonnie Demerjian*

### **Duly Noted**

You do not have to be good to be a singer.  
The crystal notes of Joan Baez, clear as the sky on spring's first day,  
you admired them so. They are not yours.  
They never were.

Still, you can thrill to your own high D, confident  
it will never (hardly ever) split and shatter at your feet.  
And if your voice betrays you, belting forth a chicken squawk?  
You're older. You can laugh and carry on with your intended tune.

It's the filling of your lungs, the expansion and the letting go,  
the tossing of your layman's joy into the world, that's why you sing.  
Going it alone is agile freedom, but when your voice meets others,  
a curious chemistry begins to brew.

Shrill soprano, mumbled alto, straining tenor, and at the bottom of the pot, the bass.  
An earnest stew of unpromising ingredients.  
Add a pinch of your own voice, an herb well-rooted in your body and your life.  
Now you've stirred up some delicious home-cooked harmony.

*Jannett Highfill*

## The Easiest Day

There's a song in every silence  
*Hymn of Promise*

There are times, old love,  
when I navigate the field of your attention  
as naturally as breathing  
on my easiest day.  
Even when every breath is a chore  
and rasping accomplishment  
there are days  
together  
when ours almost harmonize.

Waiting for the anesthesia, if I find  
myself singing  
(those Protestant hymns  
that for you are still as exotic as sandalwood  
and for me as common as cigarette smoke)  
singing

it would be only to pass the time.

*Cathy Joyce Lee*

## **Silent Sounds**

Darkness in the winter woods  
I step on shadowed trees  
listening to the broken cries  
of fallen, frozen leaves

The silent sounds I cannot hear  
are conjured in my head  
like empty rooms with frostbit walls  
conversations with the dead

Whispers that I can't discern  
afraid of what they say  
calling me to see their faces  
I turn my eyes away

Frozen ponds are icy mirrors  
reflecting apparitions  
disembodied crystal spirits  
deny the harsh conditions

Moonlight marking ancient trails  
barbed wire walls of stone  
songs are murmured in my ears  
desolate, mournful tones

Breath borne zephyrs exhaled clouds  
the rhythms of my heart  
I see the shadows unknown forms  
forge figures that depart

Ragged bark on peeling trees  
thorns trap my wandering mind  
snagging dreams of captive souls  
past lives are intertwined

Maybe I should just be still  
and feel the ambient words  
insight, visions, premonitions  
pleading to be heard



## *Dorothy Johnson-Laird*

### **The River Persists**

The river carries old silver trinkets for safekeeping, white shells,  
letters with russet ink,  
a wooden vessel.

She slow curves under the sky  
reflecting the white birds above her  
How they swoon together and slowly dive apart.

The river rolls on, past the tall evergreens  
Their dark leaves stir mysteries in the breeze  
She tries to breathe within this heat  
Nowhere to cool down

She moves over misplaced oil  
Plastic bottles  
Forgotten wire  
Empty spray cans

Sifting through smoke and ash  
Broken glass, cloth torn apart  
Her water not as clean as it once was  
Trying to breathe as she hurries by

A harsh oppressive wind arrives, tugging at her  
Yet the river persists  
even while people throw their syringes into her  
Their harsh medicines go under her surface

They do not pause to consider their actions  
They do not take a step back, stop

To see her slow ripples of beauty  
How many small, delicate animals she carries within  
The silver fish that swim her length

Still she keeps going  
With her fearless, persistent flowing

She finds her way  
Under the clouds that gather near  
Under the sky that threatens

Sudden scatter lines that clap hard sounds

Despite all

She battles on

She continues her long journey into the sea

*Jenny McMahon*

**Waves on Rocks**



## Mary Zelinka

### Wheels

*Take it easy, take it easy / Don't let the sound of your own wheels drive you crazy.*  
The Eagles

Where is that noise coming from? It sounds like the dial tone on the old landlines. I hear it every morning lately before my alarm goes off. This morning I opened my bedroom window to see if it was louder outside, but it wasn't.

I ask Lavern, my next door neighbor, if she's heard it. She doesn't wake up until several hours after I do, but she has the hearing of a wild animal and startles awake over the least little thing. She hasn't heard it. She wondered if it was her heat pump.

The next time the dial tone wakes me up, I grab my sweatshirt and go out to my back porch. Lavern's heat pump is silent. Then I check out my patio. I just hear the sounds of the world waking up—a few birds, a sliver of wind, my breath in the cold air. Back in my bedroom, I hear it again. Then it stops.

---

Dial Tone this morning. 4:30ish. Then stopped. Started again. Stopped. Started. What is it? I hold my hands tight against my ears and can still hear it. In fact, it's louder.

---

Dial Tone has been coming and going. I'm hearing it right now and I've never noticed it during the day before. I think it was Wednesday when lasted most of the night. Or maybe it was Tuesday and I didn't hear it at all on Wednesday. Or was that Thursday?

---

I'm wondering about tinnitus. During the last 20-plus years I've had vertigo, I've often been asked if I also have tinnitus. Apparently the two frequently go together. I google it. Click on the question: What are the sounds tinnitus makes? Answer: Ringing, hissing, roaring, crickets, screeching, sirens, whooshing, static, pulsing, ocean waves, buzzing, clicking, music, dial tones.

Dial Tones! That's what I have! Mystery solved! This makes me so happy!

Wait.

Why am I so happy? Apparently I have tinnitus.

---

From what I'm finding on the internet the number one remedy seems to be just basically reframing your negative thoughts about tinnitus. That and masking the noise with some other noise.

---

Dial Tone is constant now. All. The. Time. I order a white noise machine for when I go to bed. Make an appointment (which is weeks away) with Dr. Robinson who helped me with my vertigo. My friend Donna sends me a link to some herbal supplement that either cured her or was a placebo effect, she isn't sure which. Order them on Amazon.

If it doesn't get any worse, I can learn to live with it. But what if it turns into screeching?

---

Last night as I lay in bed listening to Dial Tone (which is louder than the white noise machine) all of a sudden inside my head I hear a loud **scritch**—like a needle being drug across a record. It only lasts a few seconds. Then silence. Dial Tone is gone. Blessed silence. Except for the white noise machine. Then it starts again.

---

When I first got my hearing aids, I was overwhelmed by how noisy the world was. The deafening sound of traffic as I walked out to my car from MidValley Hearing. My footsteps pounding on the asphalt. And when I got home, the roar of my refrigerator. I got used to them, though I usually take them out the minute I get home.

Now when I take my hearing aids out, my tinnitus just get louder—no background noise to compete with.

I need to make Dial Tone my new silence, but I don't know how.

---

Whenever it hailed, I used to experience sheer exhilaration. But during the sudden hailstorm we had this afternoon, my first reaction was oh good, it's drowning out Dial Tone.

---

There's a new noise competing with Dial Tone. It sounds like a model airplane engine, which is one of the soundtracks of my childhood. My father built radio-controlled model planes for a hobby and new engines required several hours of running to break in. (I wonder now why the neighbors never complained. Or maybe they did, and he just kept doing it anyway.) If he broke an engine in at night, us kids were supposed to ignore it while we were trying to sleep. If he was doing it in the afternoon, you could hear it clear down the block. This noise sounds like the engine from a couple of blocks away. A high-pitched wailing whine. An anxious sound.

When I wake up in the morning, Dial Tone is the only sound in my head. Then Model Plane

starts up and takes over.

---

I learn that my friend Nancy has tinnitus—a ringing. Kate’s buzzes. Marsha’s is a combination of ringing and buzzing. Here my friends have been going about their normal lives and all the while they have noises stuck in their heads. The newsletter from my hearing aid provider says about 14 million people in the US suffer from severe tinnitus. But right now, I don’t care about those 14 million people. I care about me.

Yet why shouldn’t I have tinnitus? What makes me so special that I should be spared? Maybe I think because I’ve experienced X, Y, and Z, I’ve paid my dues and now life should be easy.

That’s my inner accountant talking.

---

When I was googling tinnitus and following the rabbit warren of links, I discovered an article about a chamber for testing products to determine how loud they are. The chamber is so quiet, NASA uses it to help astronauts adapt to the silence of space. The longest anyone has been able to stay inside is forty-five minutes. It seems the quieter it is, the more you hear: your heart beating, your bones grinding when you move, your lungs, your stomach.

Another article says astronomers have discovered that there is a background hum in the universe generated by gravitational waves.

So which is it? Silence or humming?

Are gravitational waves in my brain causing my tinnitus? Are tiny hair-like filaments waving around bumping into each other? Did they get tangled up and are trying to separate again? Do astronauts hear tinnitus when they are in the silence or humming of space?

---

Maybe I need to look at Tinnitus as a gift. Not like, “I’m so grateful for this affliction because it is making me a better person,” which is bullshit. But as a challenge, a way to make me stretch myself more. Then I decide that’s bullshit too.

---

My long-awaited appointment with Dr. Robinson is a bust. After a hearing test (which does nothing except confirm my need for hearing aids), I’m sent home with a list of apps I can download. Basically they’re just a bunch of different sound masking techniques and relaxation exercises. Which is pretty much what I discovered on the internet when I first realized Dial Tone (and now Model Plane) was tinnitus.

There are an infinite number of miracle cures out there. YouTube videos demonstrate snapping your skull with your fingers, or rhythmically tapping your head with spoons, or turning your

head this way or that. Special teas you can drink. Herbs. Vitamin concoctions.

---

In addition to darkness and sleep, humans need quietness. It's an effort to tune out tinnitus. Just like you can live with chronic pain, even forget about it, it's still there and a portion of your energy is being used to deal with it whether you are on pain medication or not.

I've read that some studies have found that silence can improve memory. That it can stimulate new cell growth in the brain. And that even when we tune out noise, our bodies still register the sound and release stress hormones.

Some believe tinnitus is the first step in developing dementia. Maybe anxiety and mental illness too? Some years ago, I went through a training at my work about helping clients who were suffering from untreated mental health challenges—specifically, those who heard voices in their heads. In a role play, I was seated across from one of my co-workers as she told me about local resources. Meanwhile, a constant tape was playing through the earphones over my head. Don't listen to her! She's evil! Is that a knife in her hand? Why is she smiling? She's going to hurt you! Get out of here! The role play ended abruptly when I started crying. I couldn't even pay attention to the rest of the training that night, I was so shaken.

Okay, there's no comparison between tinnitus and hearing voices. Not the level of my tinnitus anyway. My point is it's hard to focus when you have noise going on inside your head.

---

My thoughts used to sound like wheels, rolling around in my head, bumping against one another for attention. Now I have to listen over and under and between all the whining and wailing to hear what I'm thinking.

I mourn the waning of Dial Tone. When I awaken with it now, I burrow deeper into my covers, willing it to stay. Apologizing that I didn't appreciate what I have now come to think of as a comforting sound. Then Model Plane's nervous whine revs up and Dial Tone goes dormant.

---

Whole minutes pass now when I can completely ignore the noises in my head. Then there are times I feel anxious for no good reason and have to talk myself down when I realize it's Model Plane. Sometimes I miss quiet so much I sit on my couch and cry. My acupuncturist says I should have a better idea in a couple more visits whether his treatment is helping. If it doesn't, he knows a guy who is brilliant with Cranial Sacral therapy (whatever that is). Meanwhile, keep taking those Ginkgo Biloba herbs.

---

Early this morning, a breeze jangled the chimes outside my bedroom window. At least that's what I determined it was. At first I thought it might be a new noise inside my head.

*Bruce Morton*

## **MRI**

The magnet resonates  
Between ego and id,  
Settling for flesh and bone,  
A pre-mortem autopsy  
Crissing and crossing  
To parse and pixelate  
Making black and white  
What is pain and fright.  
I am sausage packed  
In the thrum of casing.  
The machine plays bass  
And I keep time, thinking  
I know that tune. I need  
To turn down the treble.



*George Freek*

### **The Hours Before Nightfall**

Time falls from the stars,  
like invisible dust,  
and the moon is a clock,  
ticking away the time  
I have left on this planet.  
Life is still a mystery.  
I try not to care.  
I worry about losing my hair.  
When I look in the mirror,  
I hardly recognize what I see.  
When unseen crickets  
play sonatas in the grass,  
are they speaking a language  
only God knows.  
I don't think so.  
They're like me.  
They're in a hurry  
to get somewhere  
but they don't know where.

## *David Pring-Mill*

### **Gone Fishing**

His hands, once mighty and unyielding  
as the ancient oaks,  
now tremble like lost driftwood.  
His wrists have undergone a mutiny,  
betrayed by the creeping rust of arthritis,  
the knots of life's labor,  
etched deep in the map of his skin.

He stands—a ghost amidst the gulls' cries,  
a sentinel to the dance of masts and hulls  
that sway with the ocean's moody tune.

His gaze, a lighthouse beam,  
fixes upon the vessels that cut through the waves,  
their sails full of the wind's restless energy,  
his eyes steeped in the brine of a thousand voyages.

He watches as the sea he once called home  
carries on without him.  
The boats bob and weave,  
the choppy dance of light on the crests  
of the waves taunts him,  
a flickering reminder of days gone by.  
The spray and the shout and the laughter  
of young sailors rings bittersweet.

Yet, in his heart, where storms of regret  
rage against the shore of memory,  
he sails on,  
chasing the silver flash of fish below,  
the unfurling wings of the net,  
the thrill of the catch.

*Audra Burwell*

## **Grieving a Friend**

choking  
wood-dust sediments my lungs still heaving beneath black velvet  
cleaved the  
by weight  
gunsmoke you as whisky wraiths haunting my spine  
you left writhing  
the you in dreams of dust and decay  
ally the  
the mirror  
soldier above your  
you as the viridescent acid licking my skullbox final  
I artist snarled words  
could curls ringing  
Not in  
save me from the gum-rot of grief, lichen growing on my scalp  
and a ears  
you swarm  
wandering of *I'm*  
campus cicadas *proud*  
at smothering *of*  
dawn august's *you*  
lemon  
I blaze and blister and burn for you  
are  
yesterday

## *Shelly Reed Thieman*

### **Notice Me**

Don't look for me in a flowerpot  
or between soft ripples in the pool.  
Don't get me wrong—I love a dahlia  
and a moonlit dip—but search

for me in the sand, a shell  
basking in moonlight  
after the last beachcomber  
has gone. Pick me up and carry  
me all the miles home.  
Leave me in the yard  
for the children to discover.  
Let them hold me to their ears  
so they learn my lullabies.

Notice me in the shrub  
or sapling, the never gaudy  
female goldfinch. Let me help  
myself to the maple's sap  
and daisy seeds. If you listen  
I'll sing for you. Would a bird  
bath be too much to ask?

Discover me in rain rushing  
from the downspout.  
Leave me as a puddle  
there and let the girls bare  
foot or rainboot splash.  
Or collect me in a pail  
and water the tomatoes  
and the houseplants.

When all that lasts of me  
is love, freely give me away.

*Michael Morris*

**After Frost**

Trees are no companions in winter  
as hearted thing—like you and I—  
must keep moving—continue the flow  
of blood in the veins of things  
avoid the stagnation of thought  
or reflection.

Meanwhile,  
wisdom falls like snow  
on frozen branches  
where blue jays and cardinals  
build nests and listen.

*Marianne Brems*

**Perfect, Scented, Silent**

As a hub of color,  
dispenser of oxygen,  
this garden opens its face  
to a needy world where  
checks bounce and traffic stalls.

A delicate blanket of silence as powerful  
as a forest fire settles lightly over me,  
an edge smoothed in my chest  
as I absorb a delicate language  
all its own.

It's the giving,  
perfect, scented, silent,  
asking nothing in return,  
that sustains hungry bees  
and my own inner asylum.

*John L. Stanizzi*

## **Early Fall**

*And all the lives we ever lived and all the lives  
to be are full of trees and changing leaves...*

Virginia Woolf

The landscape curls,  
the tired leaves warp,  
the bees', their baskets nearly empty,  
mine the cobblestone streets of sunflowers.

The branches of the apple tree are bowed,  
and the apples,  
each a cratered planet,  
fall from the sky,  
as in the woods  
late flowers appear like new tattoos.  
They all do something different  
to the air into which they rush.

Goldenrod, a swirling Roman candle.  
Thoroughwort and sweet Joe-Pye weed,  
architecture of coarse domes  
the color of blood,  
the color of moonlight.  
Queen Anne's Lace,  
noiseless island of bootstrings.  
Jewelweed, succulent and poised for flight.

All a bit rough around the edges,  
all a little bulked up  
as the nights cool  
and the chilled dew  
shines through morning  
and even splashes the new afternoon,  
while the Asiatic day blooms.

There is a single chance to  
to walk the path, shivering-  
it reminds me that light stays  
only for a moment,  
that things vanish,  
and that soon winter will carve the windows

into stars of ice,  
mementos of warm, luminous sunlight  
from long ago.



*Mark Belair*

## **Lake Watch**

If you watch the calm lake water  
long enough,  
a fish will surface  
in a place  
you're not looking.

You'll notice only  
a splashing sound.

If you watch the calm lake water  
even longer,  
a fish will surface  
right where you are looking.

Though, distracted by its brilliance,  
you may miss the splashing sound.

You may also miss—  
during your long, obsessive wait—  
that a dark cloud edged the sun, a damp breeze  
skimmed the water, a flock of geese  
sounded from the sky.

*Jenny McMahon*

**Cry of the Geese II**



*George Moore*

## **In My Hearing the Sea**

Back when I drank to escape the constant buzz  
I fell down basement stairs to avoid what was above me  
and fractured the inner ear somewhere an echo chamber  
of fine high-pitched whining like ringing a bone

And I have carried that singing with me to this day  
to the end I imagine now that time appears to have an edge  
Can't image the world without this high tinkling in the atmosphere  
the music of the spheres or angels singing who knows

But it doesn't matter I've grown use to it  
The sea rings this way now the waves the air above them  
rings with the sweeping majesty of grand miles of nothing  
bellying the clouds and the atmosphere resting above

The sea crashing always at a distance filling a room  
in my head now and I carry with me the world's fine edges  
the liminal space between earth and sea  
carry with me the terrestrial evolution of continents

On quiet mornings such as this the ringing becomes clear  
the chimes of a past life following me about the house  
down to the seaside up again and back into the kitchen for coffee  
and the world remains a song in my brain sizzling and physical

a distant ringing in the middle of my skull  
like the signature of sound itself keeping me awake to the world  
keeping me in the world and all of it sings the ocean and its music  
and the voice of the sea washes my mind clean

*Anne Whitehouse*

### **Twin Dancers**

After the twins fed the alpacas  
and walked them around the pen,  
brother and sister would sit in silence  
perched on the fence, watchful  
in the New Mexican desert,  
the only children for miles around.

A decade later, transformed  
into tall and graceful dancers—  
a stillness lingers about them.  
Within their movements, a space opens,  
revealing a further space beyond.

*Roger Singer*

## **Winter Graveyard**

calm

a long past road  
at the outermost  
under slow gray clouds  
drifting over a  
brown meadow of weeds

a solemn place,  
sorrow touched,  
to cry beside  
lost souls,  
departed spirits  
and buried secrets

where suffering lines  
of stone markers  
speak of the  
unforgettable  
while remembering  
the arithmetic  
of life  
as it returns  
to dust

*Diana Raab*

## **Sweet Wonder**

Perhaps you have felt it too—  
there's someone over your shoulder  
and you turn around  
and nobody is there and then  
you hear a voice of someone  
saying they love you  
and you turn again  
and they're gone, yet  
their fragrance lingers  
and you realize  
that it was the familiar voice  
of your long-gone father  
who died when the oxygen  
tubes suspended from his nose  
ran dry and could no longer supply  
enough, and then, you got there in time  
to say good-bye and snip off a  
locket of his hair to carry  
with you until you would meet again.

*Kelly DuMar*

*Silence as Prayer – Turkish Monastery*



*Ivan de Monbrison*

**There is a piece of sky breaking away from the void**

There is a piece of sky breaking away from the void.  
The shadow is filled with silence.  
The river flows slowly,  
trees, palm trees, border its dry banks.  
There is something very heavy inside you.  
A fishing boat is drifting away slowly.  
Some tourists visit a ruined temple and see, with their guide, an ancient writing made of  
drawings.  
As you sit on the edge of the running water, looking at your reflection in there, as it is being  
carried away.



**There is a piece of sky breaking away from the void**  
*(Arabic Version)*

هناك تكاسر بعيدًا قطعة من السماء عن الفراغ.

الظل مليء بالصمت.

يتدفق النهر ببطء،

الأشجار، أشجار النخيل، على حدود ضفافها  
الجافة.

هناك شيء ثقيل جدا بداخلك.

قارب صيد ينجرف ببطء.

يزور بعض السياح معبدًا مدمرًا، وينظر مع دليلهم،  
وهي كتابة قديمة مصنوعة من الرسومات.

أنت، تجلس على حافة الماء الجاري، وتتنظر  
انعكاسك الذي يحمله الماء بعيدًا.

*Michael Theroux*

## **The Deepest Song**

A dozen hours away, the land opens up  
Water cuts its route  
    in a long stony gash  
As seen from the top:  
    “The Canyon”.

Ah, but standing surrounded, deep within  
this right and proper home  
    for the Grand Colorado  
The walls become mountains,  
    cupping a Valley.

Places claim a part of us, wrapping around  
some corner of our soul.  
    Adding a patina ...  
Forever reshaped, freshly colored.  
    Forever changed.

The Canyon is such: those that tune  
to that deep melody  
    will hear the song, forever  
All else may fade,  
    but that one note, resilient.

Tuned to those harmonies, that discord,  
we carry the essence  
    beyond time, distance  
Distance can dilute,  
    But never displace.

Music can enrage, can bring back calm  
evoke emotion  
    beyond thought, reason or control  
Such is the River’s song,  
    deep in its Valley.

Behind my daily noise, under my breathing  
alongside my heartbeat,  
    there’s a counterpoint song  
Composed continually  
    by sand, water, willow and wind.

Thrumming softly as background,  
a sub-rhythm. But 'ware the volume:  
the closer I get  
to those sheltering walls,  
the less else I hear.

Drop me back in, and years would fall away  
My strength to keep my distance,  
shed like snakeskin.  
You put me back on the River

I'll bawl, like a baby.

*Pamela Hobart Carter*

### **A Group of Coyotes is Called a Band**

Suppose you wake to high pitches  
in asynchronous mix of alto and soprano,  
before full consciousness you know it's coyotes  
on the next knoll and there's no use  
running to the window for confirmation  
when black of meadow spreads below,  
the road rests empty—lampless, fireflies sleep,  
and the moon hides new besides.

You imagine the singers shoulder-to-shoulder  
licking their lips, pink tongues lolling  
between fangs as they lope.  
Rabbits' tall ears catch the mid-night choir,  
lanky legs sprint. In your inkdark room,  
you hope first for the prey  
and then for the predator.  
Every musician deserves to feast.

*Shelly Reed Thieman*

## **Tiris**

On a walk in the cemetery with geese in our ears, we hoard minutiae. How styrofoam cups that hold our morning coffee will decompose in five hundred years. How quickly a plucked clutch of buttercups begin to wilt. How the vibrant babble of an infant soon morphs to words from nursery rhymes its mother sings. How silver fringe begins to sweep our middle-aged temples. How the bumblebee rushes from nasturtium to aster, acute with knowledge that summer is finite. How crops miscarry while spring is already pregnant in topsoil.

swelled with awareness  
linked by impermanence  
tears germinate

Author note: this is a haibun, inspired by an entry John Koenig's *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows*—*Tiris*, the bittersweet awareness that all things must end.

*Colette Tennant*

**I Want to Ask**

I want to ask the hummingbird,  
the one that greets me  
outside the bay window,  
the one that loves something about  
our lilac even in winter,  
I want to ask him  
how he survived the ice storm  
that hit here just before Valentine's,  
the one that decimated trees all over town.

The heavy thunder and percussion of  
ice cracked branch after branch.  
How did you make it little friend,  
you, and your flitty lover?  
Where were you when our world  
glazed over and grew heavy,  
and there were shhh, shhh, shhh sounds,  
and then boom after boom that shook  
our dreams all through the cold night?

*William Meinert*

**Aubade**

The wind moves across an ice shelf,  
    spreading sheets of frost.  
    Icy islands wander  
    to the horizon,  
    finally fading  
to nothing.

More came loose in the night.  
How much did we lose?  
How much is left?  
Again: *some, and less.*

The wind picks up  
without a word.

There is no map, but  
they say there will be.

When the mapmakers wake  
they will write their revision.

The wind sighs, though  
it would prefer to howl.

—I get up slow,  
and go wash my face.

*Louis Girón*

## **The Last Poem and the Last Poet**

What of the subject(s)?

Perhaps stars. Certainly not flowers.

Not songs, nor any memory of mountains.

Would there be enough RAM

for a crown of sonnets, or for a finishing couplet?

Most likely only that minimum calculated as sufficient

for a shorthand to record the physics of energetic subatomic particles.

Likely, none for the conundrums of being and naught,  
nor of becoming and transforming; certainly not enough  
for the metaphysics of esthetics, nor for pangs of jealousy,  
nor for post-post-post<sup>∞</sup> modern literary conventions.

Perhaps an immediate but passing subject  
will be the phase change  
(none then will know how to call it “dying”)  
of a small G-type main-sequence star  
when green will not be experienced  
—only known and defined by its spectral frequency,  
when no place will have been set aside  
for tiny chirping birds or for small questing hands,  
when no database will contain fields  
for courtesies, honorifics, coyness, double-entendres,  
horrors, flirting, held breaths,  
nor for the comraderie of the recollection  
of shared pains, absent friends, and noble causes.  
And prayers and Kyrie too shall have been forgotten.

The poem will be unheard and unremarked,  
as the sound of dripping acid  
or as the hail of neutron storms  
is unheard in a deserted laboratory,  
or as X-radiation annihilates and silences  
the vessels that would hold and measure it.

What of the form?

We must postulate extensive databases,  
complete, syntactically logical statements,  
operationally interactive, articulated  
in instantaneous staccato in binary code  
(the latter projected with a probability of near unity),



incorporating transfinite-dimensional topologies,  
neural networks, Boolean notation,  
looping hierarchical interdependencies  
and algorithms of “and” and “not”  
(but certainly not of the subject, does she love me, does she not?)  
in an “either/or” format of a rigorous algebraic grammar.

The poem will have no experiential thrust,  
no existential angst, and neither fear nor passion.  
No dilemma of conscience, consciousness, or doubt.  
And, of a certainty, no weight of “higher” purpose.  
Epiphanies will be only elegant solutions to mathematical quandaries,  
with no cells in the computational field for the why and the lyric,  
none for meaning nor for beauty. Nor for wonder-sickness nor ecstasy.

This never-to-be-shared art will be true art desolée:  
poem will not leap like a magic-stricken stag  
nor fly as a transcendental arrow  
from the heart of one person to the soul of another.  
It will not whisper of love, nor invite seduction,  
nor will it sigh promises yearning  
to be sensuously taken while remaining unkept.

Yet, as true for all poems,  
this poemness will remain:  
urgent unshaking necessity.

And what of the poet?

Unable to be halted,  
tautologically accreting,  
the last and only AI,

in a positive feed-back loop,

will transmit a checklist  
of vital functions  
to its mirror-image self.

*Ethan Blakely*

## **Midnight Radio**

*3 a.m., or nearabout—*

And the shadow-shroud of the hill  
    still sits firmly hidden behind the hotel:  
    a silhouette painted against pitch;  
    a nighttime canvas whose black bleeds  
into black, erasing edges, softening all sense  
of shape; makes all that curious shade of  
not quite anything.

Above this climbs a thin and trembling  
tower that pierces the seething stain  
of stratus cloud. Here, diffused by  
the drifting dim, blinks the beating  
midnight pulses of a sleeping  
city: a symphony of static sound  
on long-aborted airwaves.

A shifting in the street, a stirring  
risen by the gentle rumblings of  
some lone road-bound traveler  
on their way to another kind of nowhere.

From where I stand, listening as they  
retreat into ever-fading taillights,  
it is difficult to discern, but perhaps  
they are tuned into the same.

*Teesta S*

## **Starlight**

I ask them every night when they come back  
For they always do,  
Eyes winking at me,  
The wisdom of a thousand millennia shimmering through time  
Into the swollen folds of my heart that have grown too big for their home

*I have seen a thousand of you* they blink

I weep a song of want and sorrow  
What it would take to become one of you  
What I would have to do  
Float outwards into the air, riding the winds of antiquity  
To shine like you do  
To be beautiful like you

Someone who everyone wants  
Has always wanted  
For as long as these words have existed

*Alexander Etheridge*

**Sound of Grace**

We keep one eye on the sun, and one  
on the moon—Our lives are spent  
in the battles between  
night and day—We walk all night  
over shadows and snow, waiting  
for dawn, when shadows change  
around us, each one lengthening  
in such quiet—

One voice tell us  
to step into the dark lake,  
another says to climb up fire  
in the sky.  
And there's the voice saying  
to ignore every voice,  
to let yourself be taken  
by a silence  
lying between  
sun and moon, scorches  
and snowfall—an immeasurable hush  
of grace, where the first light  
meets the first dark.

*Mandy Ramsey*

**Ravens**



*Betty Benson*

## **Murmurations**

Winter. We dream of light.

Static cold sucks all color  
into a sunless monochrome,  
winter days linger somewhere  
between black and white,  
sky dissolves into afternoon,  
shadows deepen,  
the world settles  
into fading gray.  
No sound.  
No movement.  
Only a hush  
inching  
toward night

In one wild burst the sky is alive  
with a cloud  
of a thousand starlings  
flying  
toward the heavens,  
then dipping breathlessly toward earth,  
swooping  
turning  
twisting  
a cloud unfolding then refolding  
back onto itself  
forming intricate patterns that fill the sky,  
defying explanation  
with complexity,  
a leaderless winged concert  
cutting through the cold  
with each bird in its place,  
a symphony of wings,  
a force of energy released,  
a murmuration of starlings,  
swoops into gray light  
then settles into winter's night

let loose from winter's cage,  
dreaming of Mozart—  
a concerto lifts on wings  
of sound  
so sweet,  
so pure,  
earthbound selves are suddenly soaring,  
carried aloft on melody  
as it appears, then disappears  
rising and falling  
transforming itself  
then reappearing  
folding and unfolding  
utter wonder in every phrase,  
each measure,  
every note,  
breath catches  
in a crescendo of perfection,  
a fusion of absolute joy  
with absolute sorrow as  
music becomes light.



## Niaux (IV) large horse and small ibex



*Photograph by Jean Clottes*

*Rebecca Simpson*

### Niaux

*for Jean Clottes, anthropologist*

In the Grotte de Niaux, a cave in south west France, there are markings and paintings at least 13,000 years old. A vast tunnel, which turns at various points, leads to a high vaulted chamber with animal depictions on sections of its walls. This is the *Salon Noir*, where the acoustics invite the use of the voice and permit the creation, through clapping and echo, of an aural hallucination that may have been used in ritual.

gradually inwards  
to a place of no season  
we follow the burning wicks

little flames in stinking fat  
shadows rear and crouch

big hunched bison people

fingers inspect walls  
soles shift over stone  
we breathe with care

shapes in rock  
turn heads

on again  
awe in our tread

space opens  
and on the great cavern walls  
Bison Horse Ibex Deer

eye meets eye  
They quiver and breathe above the flames  
They watch from year to year

red adorns the niche  
crawl into the recess  
into rock spin un-turning

colours spiral burst  
nausea surges abates rises  
hands merge with skin of stone  
spirit being on the other side

cracks in the rock  
the creature takes hold  
enters body inhabits soul  
call replies

hot breath down the tunnels of its  
nostrils  
muzzle soft as moss horse that snakes its  
neck shakes its heavy bearded  
head triangle of an  
eye

the animal floats drifts settles  
mane jawbone withers  
fetlock

time to trace the Spirit of the horse



charcoal stick  
slick black paint

Bison Horse Ibex Deer  
we bring Them light  
and another of their kind

flute whistle and voice  
wake the Voice of the cave  
handclaps!

call them from the other side  
Spirit herd  
joy of the Great Spirits!  
the clapping must be sharp clear fast  
so walls respond and the Beasts can pass

bring the herd galloping  
galloping out of the dark

\*Recording made inside the Salon Noir at Niaux in January 2019:

<https://soundcloud.com/rebecca-simpson-420282759/niaux-salon-noir-clapping-voice>

\*Three pieces on the poem created by the musicians: Javier Hagen (voice), Ulrike Mayer-Spohn (recorders) and Luis Tabuenca (percussion), in July 2023.

Niaux V1

<https://soundcloud.com/rebecca-simpson-420282759/niaux-v1>

Niaux V2

<https://soundcloud.com/rebecca-simpson-420282759/niaux-v2>

Niaux V3

<https://soundcloud.com/rebecca-simpson-420282759/niaux-v3>

*Rob Lowe*

## **Silences**

The silence of reading  
And of books,  
Like the silence of nature,  
Shows inner working.  
Be still and listen.  
Your heart is talking,

So, when a twig cracks,  
Or a person talks,  
What breaks  
Under the heavy boot  
Of the thoughtless assumption  
Is a deep concentration.

What falls  
In sacrificed feather and wing  
Under a hunter's gun  
Is the day's intention.  
The barking of dogs  
Resounds through my woods.

Songbirds. Flight. Lamentation.  
The words that pursue them.

*Sandrine Jacobson*

**Sway Gently**



## Contributors

### Hadyn Adams

Hadyn Adams is a graduate of Durham and Cambridge universities and has spent over four decades in education initially working in the U.K. and in the Middle and Far East. Creative writing has been a habit throughout his life and he has self-published three novels and had a number of poems printed in various magazines and anthologies.

### Geoffrey Aitken

Geoffrey Aitken writes on Adelaide's unceded Kaurna land, an awarded minimalist poet who communicates his 'lived experience disability' for publishers [AUS] and [UK, US, HR, CAN, FR & CN]. Recently, '*STREETCAKE*', '*Impspired*' [UK], '*Panoplyzine Mag*' [US], '*ZinDaily*' [HR] & '*unusual work*' [AUS]. Nominated Best of the Net in 2022.

Website: [Poetry of Geoffrey Aitken and Recipes of Jenny Aitken - Poetry Feasting - Geoffrey and Jenny Aitken](#)

Twitter [X] @GeoffreyAitken3

### Catherine Arra

Catherine Arra is a native of the Hudson Valley in upstate New York, where she lives with wildlife and changing seasons until winter, when she migrates to the Space Coast of Florida. She is the author of eight poetry collections. Arra teaches part-time and facilitates local writing groups. Find her at [www.catherinearra.com](http://www.catherinearra.com)

### E Eugene Jones Baldwin

E Eugene Jones Baldwin is a journalist, playwright, poet, and essayist. Recent publications include: "The Genehouse Chronicles" (book, life along the Mississippi River), *Passager Literary Magazine* (memoir), and "A Black Soldier's Letters Home: World War II" (book, with James Killion III.) Baldwin is an Illinois Underground Railroad historian.

### Sarah Banks

Sarah Banks lives in Mississippi where she uses the landscape of her home state to inspire her writing. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Rust & Moth*, *Thimble Literary Magazine*, *Autumn Sky Poetry*, *Fiction on the Web*, and elsewhere. Sarah enjoys traveling and working in her garden.

### Riley Bauer

Riley Bauer is a 22-year-old student attending Eastern Illinois University and is from Roxana, IL. He is pursuing a master's degree in Creative Writing with a minor in Premodern Global Studies and a bachelor's degree in Philosophy. His short story "The Rabbit King" was published in the Spring 2022 edition of *The Vehicle*. Aside from writing, Riley enjoys martial arts and spending time in nature.

### **Mark Belair**

Belair's poems have appeared in numerous journals, including *Alabama Literary Review*, *Harvard Review*, and *Michigan Quarterly Review*. Author of seven collections of poems, his most recent books are two works of fiction: *Stonehaven* (Turning Point, 2020) and its sequel, *Edgewood* (Turning Point, 2022). Belair has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize multiple times, as well as for a Best of the Net Award. Please visit [www.markbelair.com](http://www.markbelair.com).

### **Betty Benson**

Betty Benson is a poet and writer living in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Her work has appeared in *RockPaperPoem*, *Glacial Hill Review*, *The Best of Choeofpleirn Press* (2023), and others. She was a 2023 finalist for both the Small Orange Emerging Woman Poet Honor and for the Derek Burleson Poetry Prize.

### **Ethan Blakely**

Ethan Blakely is a recent graduate of Southwestern Oklahoma State University, though he now finds himself not far off the southern shores of Superior. Pertaining to poetry, writing is sporadic at best, but when he *does* write, he often finds himself in the frame of gothic horror (and is a general fan of all things Poe and Lovecraft). His work has previously been published in *Westview Journal of Western Oklahoma*, *Young Ravens Literary Review*, and *Wingless Dreamer*.

### **Marianne Brems**

Marianne Brems is the author of three poetry chapbooks, the most recent *In Its Own Time* (2023). Her full-length collection *Stepping Stones* is forthcoming in 2024. Her poems have also appeared in literary journals including *The Bluebird Word*, *Front Porch Review*, *Remington Review*, and *Green Ink Poetry*. She lives, cycles, and swims in Northern California. Website: [www.mariannebrems.com](http://www.mariannebrems.com).

### **Audra Burwell**

Audra Burwell is a creative writing major at California State University Fresno, pursuing a Master of Fine Arts degree with a specialization in poetry. *Entropy* is her first full-length published work, a dystopian fantasy, multimedia collaboration featuring a fashion line designed by Fastened By Lyn and photography provided by Raven & Crow. Audra is a member of Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society and has headed literary workshops at the Young Writers Conference as well as working on the editorial board of the *Spectrum* journal. Her poems "Residing in Your Veins" and "Concealed Oasis" were both selected as finalists for Fresno State's Art Song Festival.

### **Pamela Hobart Carter**

After she earned two geology degrees, Pamela Hobart Carter became a teacher. Her plays have been produced in Seattle (her home), Montreal (her childhood home), and Fort Worth. Carter has been nominated for The Pushcart Prize and The Best of the Net (2x), won her high school essay contest (a million years ago), and is a Yavanika Press mixed-genre chapbook winner for *Behind the Scenes at the Eternal Everyday*. Her other poetry chaps: *Her Imaginary Museum* and *Held Together with Tape and Glue*. Website: <https://playwrightpam.wordpress.com/>

### **Willie Carver**

Willie Carver is a Kentucky Teacher of the Year, an author, and a public speaker. His work has been featured in *100 Days in Appalachia*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, *Smoky Blue Literary Magazine*, *Miracle Monocle*, *Good River Review*, and *Salvation South*, among others. His collection of narrative poems, *Gay Poems for Red States*, has been named a Book Riot Best Book of 2023, An American Booksellers Associations must-have book of 2023, a Top Ten Best Book of Appalachia, an Over-The-Top Book by the American Library Association, and was named a 2024 Stonewall Honor Book.

### **Kersten Christianson**

Kersten Christianson derives inspiration from wild, wanderings, and road trips. She has authored *Curating the House of Nostalgia* (Sheila-Na-Gig, 2020), *What Caught Raven's Eye* (Petroglyph Press, 2018), and *Something Yet to Be Named* (Kelsay Books, 2017). Additionally, she is the poetry editor of the quarterly journal, *Alaska Women Speak*. Kersten lives with her daughter in Sitka, Alaska where she keeps an eye on the tides, shops Old Harbor Books, and hoards smooth ink pens.

### **Judy Clarence**

Judy Clarence, a retired academic librarian, currently lives with her daughter, grandchildren, two cats and a dog in the Sierra (California) foothills after many years in Berkeley. She plays violin (baroque and modern) in several orchestras and chamber groups, has sung in many classical choruses, and writes poetry almost constantly. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Persimmon Tree*, *Amarillo Bay*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *Allegro*, *Quill & Parchment*, *Tigershark*, and *Blue Unicorn*, among other publications. She has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

### **Liz Craig**

Liz Craig is a professional pianist and music teacher in Toronto, ON, Canada. She loves rejections in every form and collects them fervently. She's been writing poetry since her teen years and finds that just the right combination of words can help keep a delicious memory intact. She has been published in the Manitoban, the University of Manitoba student's newspaper.

### **Sarah Das Gupta**

Sarah Das Gupta is a writer from Cambridge, UK who has also lived and worked in Kolkata, India and Tanzania. Her work has been published in over 150 magazines and anthologies in many countries, including USA, UK, Ireland, Australia, Canada, India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Germany, Croatia, Romania among others.

### **John Delaney**

John's publications include *Waypoints* (2017), a collection of place poems, *Twenty Questions* (2019), a chapbook, *Delicate Arch* (2022), poems and photographs of national parks and monuments, and *Galápagos* (2023), a collaborative chapbook of his son Andrew's photographs and John's poems. *Nile*, a chapbook of poems and photographs about Egypt, will appear in May 2024. He lives in Port Townsend, WA.

### **Bonnie Demerjian**

Bonnie Demerjian writes from her island home in Southeast Alaska in the midst of the Tongass National Forest on the land of the Lingít Aaní, a place that continually nourishes her writing. Her poetry has appeared various journals including *Alaska Women Speak*, *Tidal Echoes*, *Pure Slush*, and *Blue Heron Review*. She has also written four books on the human and natural history of the region.

### **Laurie Didesch**

Laurie Didesch is an award-winning, self-taught poet. Her work appears in many journals, including *The Comstock Review*, *The White Pelican Review*, *The MacGuffin*, *California Quarterly*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Rambunctious Review*, *Third Wednesday*, and *The Awakenings Review*. Laurie was also chosen to attend a juried workshop given by Marge Piercy. Laurie lives with her husband Alan and their three cats in Illinois.

### **Kelly DuMar**

Kelly DuMar is a poet, playwright and workshop facilitator from Boston. She's author of four poetry collections, including *jinx* and *heavenly calling*, published by Lily Poetry Review Books in March 2023. Her poems are published in *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, *Thrush* and more. Her images have been featured on the cover of *About Place*, *Synkroniciti*, *Cool Beans Lit*, *Young Ravens Literary Review*, *Etymology* and *Confetti*. Kelly produces the Featured Open Mic for the *Journal of Expressive Writing*. Her abstract photos celebrate the beauty and organic complexity of nature from the habitat of her home on the Charles River.

### **Alexander Etheridge**

Alexander Etheridge has been developing his poems and translations since 1998. His poems have been featured in *The Potomac Review*, *Museum of Americana*, *Ink Sac*, *Welter Journal*, *The Cafe Review*, *The Madrigal*, *Abridged Magazine*, *Susurrus Magazine*, *The Journal*, *Roi Faineant Press*, and many others. He was the winner of the Struck Match Poetry Prize in 1999, and a finalist for the *Kingdoms in the Wild* Poetry Prize in 2022. He is the author of, *God Said Fire*, and, *Snowfire and Home*.

### **George Freek**

George Freek's poem "Enigmatic Variations" was recently nominated for Best of the Net. His poem "Night Thoughts" was also nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

### **Meg Freer**

Meg Freer lives in Ontario, where she is a writer, piano teacher, and editor. Her work has appeared in journals such as *Young Ravens Literary Review*, *Sequestum*, and *Eastern Iowa Review*, and she has published three poetry chapbooks. She is co-poetry editor for *The Sunlight Press* and holds two music degrees and a Graduate Certificate in Creative Writing. Find her published work on her Facebook page, or her Substack blog at <https://megfreer.substack.com/>.

### **Louis Girón**

Louis is a recovering neurologist/neuropharmacologist who came to poetry late when a completed poem dropped without warning into the middle of budget for a research project. What began as a sign of mental infirmity continues as necessity. Louis's poems have appeared in *Aji*, *BathHouse Journal*, *Chest*, *Perihelion*, *Redactions*, *Revue (Kansas City)*, *Still Point Arts Quarterly*, *Smoky Blue Literary and Arts Magazine*, *Snapdragon*, *Songs of Eretz*, *Sunflower Petals*, *The Amsterdam Quarterly*, *The Great Smokies Review*, *The New Guard Literary Review*, *The New Millennium*, *The Potomac*, *The Same*, *VietNow*, *Warscape*, and *Winning Writers*.

### **John Grey**

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in *New World Writing*, *North Dakota Quarterly* and *Lost Pilots*. Latest books, "Between Two Fires," "Covert" and "Memory Outside The Head" are available through Amazon. Work upcoming in *California Quarterly*, *Seventh Quarry*, *La Presa* and *Doubly Mad*.

### **Bogdan Groza**

Bogdan Groza, born in Romania and currently living in Italy, is doing a PhD in Philology and literary criticism at the faculty of Siena. Although he has been working mostly in Italian for the past several years, publishing in minor anthologies, recently he started writing in English to see how this influences his stories and narration. As a result, he published short stories with *Deep Overstock* and *Flash Fiction Magazine*.

### **Alison Hicks**

Alison Hicks was awarded the 2021 Birdy Prize from Meadowlark Press for *Knowing Is a Branching Trail*. Previous collections are *You Who Took the Boat Out* and *Kiss*, a chapbook *Falling Dreams*, and a novella *Love: A Story of Images*. Her work has appeared in *Eclipse*, *Gargoyle*, *Permafrost*, and *Poet Lore*. She was finalist for the 2021 Beullah Rose prize from *Smartish Pace*, an Editor's Choice selection for the 2024 *Philadelphia Stories* National Poetry Prize, and nominated for a Pushcart Prize by *Green Hills Literary Lantern*, *Quartet Journal*, and *Nude Bruce Review*. She is founder of Greater Philadelphia Wordshop Studio, which offers community-based writing workshops.

### **Jannett Highfill**

Jannett Highfill is a Great Plains poet living in Kansas. Her poems have appeared in *Rhino*, *Common Ground Review*, *The Iowa Review*, and *The Greensboro Review*, and elsewhere. She has three chapbooks, *Light Blessings Drifting Together*, Finishing Line Press, *A Constitution of Silence*, Green Fuse Poetic Arts, and *Brown Restless Green*, Finishing Line Press. She is coauthor of *A Tempered and Humane Economy: Markets, Families, and Behavioral Economics* from Lexington Books.

### **Ossian Houltzén**

Ossian Houltzén is a Swedish-Turkish emerging poet and writer currently living in Sweden. He started writing in 2024 and fell in love instantly, even more so after his first publication.

@ossianhz on X/Twitter & Instagram



### **Sandrine Jacobson**

Originally from Australia and now living in California, Sandrine has diligently refined her artistic craft, driven by unwavering passion, tenacity, and a commitment to growth. Working in oils on canvas, she employs layered techniques to imbue her creations with depth and emotional resonance. Each new piece showcases the evolution of her artistic maturity and the potency of her creative voice. Through her relentless dedication, Sandrine consistently pushes the boundaries of artistic expression, crafting pieces resonant with authenticity and emotional depth.

### **Lorraine Jeffery**

Lorraine Jeffery has won numerous prizes and published many poems in journals including *Westward Quarterly*, *Ibbetson St.*, *Clockhouse*, *Orchard Press*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *Halcyone* and *Tahoma*. Her first book is titled *When the Universe Brings Us Back*, 2022. Kelsay Books published her first chapbook titled *Tethers* in 2023 and her second titled *Saltwater Soul* in 2024.

### **Dorothy Johnson-Laird**

Dorothy Johnson-Laird is a poet and social worker who lives in New York City. Dorothy has published music journalism with [www.afropop.org](http://www.afropop.org) and [www.worldmusiccentral.org](http://www.worldmusiccentral.org). Recent poems appeared in *Aji*, *Cantos*, *Pomona Valley Review*, and *Pedestal Magazine*, among others. Her poems were also recently published in the anthology, "Alchemy and Miracles: Nature Woven Into Words." More of Dorothy's poetry can be found at:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100083698660157>

### **Cathy Joyce Lee**

Cathy Joyce Lee can be found forest bathing at night and paddling on the river by day in Upstate New York. Cathy earned a Master's Degree in Public Administration. This led to her profession of writing Health and Wellness articles and offering professional development training programs to Preschool Teachers. Cathy is a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators and has been published in *Passager* and *7th-Circle Pyrite*. It is the writer's hope that her poems will paint not only a picture of charcoaled darkness, but also hope and insight.

### **Rob Lowe**

Rob Lowe wrote and read poetry long before he began submitting his work to editors, a process which gave his work more focus and discipline, Thank you, editors! He has been published online and in print, as well as being shortlisted for some competition entries, and the winner of the prestigious Chiltern Arts competition 2024, judged by Roger McGough. Notable work is in the Civic Leicester series, MinK Milton Keynes Festival anthologies, where he also lives, and one edition of *Lucent Dreaming*. He enjoys attending literary festivals.

### **William Meinert**

William Meinert is an American poet currently living and working in Geneva, Switzerland. As a professional operatic bass, he has up to this point spent more time singing poetry than writing it, but now intends to balance the scales. His work will be published in *The Orchards Poetry Journal* and *Paper Dragon* in summer 2024.

**Glenn Moss**

Glenn is a media lawyer and has been writing poetry and stories since high school. At college, Glenn wrote a play for a course in Jacobean Literature, and at Law School, Glenn wrote a play for a course in Jurisprudence. Returning to NYC, Glenn writes poetry and stories amidst contracts and business plans. Each area of writing enriches the other, with contracts benefiting from a bit of poetic dance.

**Ivan de Monbrison**

Ivan is a half French half Egyptian poet, living in France, born in 1969.

**Bruce Morton**

Bruce Morton divides his time between Montana and Arizona. His poetry collection, *Planet Mort*, (2024) is available from FootHills Publishing. He was formerly dean at the Montana State University library.

**David Pring-Mill**

David Pring-Mill's poetry has appeared in *Ariel Chart*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, *East Coast Literary Review*, *FIVE:2:ONE*, and many other literary magazines. He has worked extensively as a journalist. You can visit his website at [www.pring-mill.com](http://www.pring-mill.com).

**Jenny McMahon**

Jenny McMahon enjoys photography and is based in Massachusetts, a place where something is always happening and there is always something eye catching to take a picture of. Some of her favorite subjects include animals and nature; as well as other seemingly ordinary and everyday sights that are unique and memorable, such as roadsides and old buildings.

**Rosemary Dunn Moeller**

Rosemary Dunn Moeller is author of *Long Term Mates Migrate Great Distances*, two chapbooks and numerous anthologized poems. She has traveled to all seven continents following bird migrations, taught and learned from students for decades, and writes to connect to others through images and ideas.

**George Moore**

George Moore's poetry appears in *The Atlantic*, *Poetry*, *North American Review*, *Colorado Review* and *Stand*. His recent collections include *Children's Drawings of the Universe* (Salmon Poetry 2015) and *Saint Agnes Outside the Walls* (FutureCycle 2016). A finalist for The National Poetry Series and nine Pushcart Prizes, Moore taught literature and writing at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and now lives in Nova Scotia.

**Michael Morris**

Michael Neal Morris' most recent books are [\*Based on Imaginary Events\*](#) (Faerie Treehouse Press) and [\*The Way of Weakness\*](#). He posts regularly to the blog [This Blue Monk](#) and [makes music](#) as Device Flesh, sacramental, and Clique Bait. He lives with his family just outside the Dallas area, and teaches Composition and Creative Writing at Dallas College's Eastfield

campus.

### **James O'Brien**

James lives in Oakland, California, where he writes about the aftermath of violence and the community of former victims here working to bring safety, healing and change. James has published much nonfiction but has never had a poem published. Selected nonfiction and visual art can be seen at his website, [icecityalmanac.com](http://icecityalmanac.com).

### **Diana Raab**

Diana Raab, MFA, PhD, is a memoirist, poet, workshop leader, thought-leader and award-winning author of fourteen books. Her work has been widely published and anthologized. She frequently speaks and writes on writing for healing and transformation. Her latest memoir is *Hummingbird: Messages from My Ancestors, A memoir with reflection and writing prompts* (Modern History Press, 2024). Raab writes for *Psychology Today*, *The Wisdom Daily*, *The Good Men Project*, *Thrive Global*, and is a guest blogger for many others. Raab lives in Southern California. Visit her at: <https://www.dianaraab.com>.

### **Mandy Ramsey**

Mandy is an artist, mother, photographer, yoga teacher of 25 years, gardener and writer. She self-published her first book “Grow Where You’re Planted” in 2019, which blends her poetry, photography and her love of yoga through the seasons in the Alaskan landscape. Her writing and artwork have been published in *Tidal Echoes*, *Alaskan Women Speak*, *Cirque*, *Tiny Seed Journal*, *Elephant Journal*, *Young Ravens Literary Journal*, *Poets Choice*, *Alchemy & Miracles Anthology* & *Still Point Quarterly*, and *Mocking Owls Roost*. She has been living off the grid in Haines, Alaska since 2000 in the timber frame home she built with her husband. She holds a M.A in Yoga Studies and Mindfulness Education, and believes that movement, water, flowers and the natural world can heal, connect, inspire and sprout friendships. Find out more on [mandyramsey.com](http://mandyramsey.com)

### **Russell Rowland**

Seven-time Pushcart Prize nominee Russell Rowland writes from New Hampshire’s Lakes Region, where he has judged high-school Poetry Out Loud competitions. His work appears in *Except for Love: New England Poets Inspired by Donald Hall* (Encircle Publications), and *Covid Spring, Vol. 2* (Hobblebush Books). His latest poetry book, *Magnificat*, is available from Encircle Publications.

### **Teesta S**

Teesta S currently lives in Chicago, IL while pursuing a medical degree. Writing is one of her passions, allowing her to explore the complexities of her identity and weave together the threads of her personal journey and academic pursuits. As a second-generation American, she strives to illuminate the universal aspects of the immigrant experience while celebrating the kaleidoscope of cultural nuances that shape our narratives. She has had work previously featured in *The Penn Review* and *The Menteur*. She has also authored a short collection of poetry titled *Delta* and a non-fiction memoir, *Conversations with my Thamma*, a heartfelt homage to her family's

resilience during the tumultuous times of Partition and Indian Independence.

### **Natalie Shea**

Natalie Shea is an artist and writer from Georgia.

### **Rebecca Simpson**

Rebecca Simpson is a writer, translator, voice actor and teacher. Several of her translations of Mercè Rodoreda's poetry have appeared in *AGNI*, *New England Review (NER)* and *Shearsman Magazine*. In 2023, *NER* published an interview with her on translation. She lives in Barcelona, Spain, and uses Spanish, Catalan, French and her native English on a daily basis. She is also the originator of, and librettist for a number of operas.

### **Roger Singer**

Dr. Singer is a Poet Laureate Emeritus of Connecticut, and past president of the Connecticut Shoreline Poetry Chapter, in association with the Connecticut Poetry Society. He has had over 1,500 poems published on the internet, magazines and in books and is a 2017 Pushcart Prize Award Nominee.

### **Tammy Snyder**

Tammy Snyder writes poetry and fiction and is currently working on her first novel in the genre of Paranormal Fantasy. She has previously been published in *Junction Magazine*. She lives in Ripton, Vermont with her husband and beloved familiars, Waffle and Major.

### **John L. Stanizzi**

John L. Stanizzi, author of fourteen books. Some of his titles are *Chants*, *Sleepwalking*, *POND*, *Feathers & Bones*, and many others. His nonfiction is in *Literature and Belief*, *Stone Coast*, *Potato Soup Review* (Potato Soup named his story Pants best of 2021). Also in 2021 he received a Creative Writing-Non-Fiction Fellowship from Connecticut's Comm. on the Arts. John is a former Wesleyan Univ. Etherington Scholar and English Professor. He is also a former New England Poet of the year. John's memoir, *Bless Me Father for I have Sinned* will be ready for publication with the year. John has just completed judging New England's "New England Poet of the Year." John has worked as a Teaching Artist with "Poetry Out Loud," The Connecticut "Fresh Voices Competition, and the College/University Poet of the year.

### **Colette Tennant**

Colette Tennant has three books of poetry: *Commotion of Wings*, *Eden and After*, and *Sweet Gothic*, just published. Her book, *Religion in The Handmaid's Tale: a Brief Guide*, was published in 2019 to coincide with Atwood's publication of *The Testaments*. Her poems have won various awards and have been nominated for Pushcart Prizes along with being published in various journals, including *Prairie Schooner*, *Rattle*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and *Ireland Poetry Review*. Colette is an English and Humanities Professor who has also taught art in Great Britain, Germany, and Italy.

### **Shelly Reed Theiman**

Shelly Reed Thieman writes to befriend the wounded. She's a messenger of imagery, a mistress of montage. Her work is influenced by the discipline of haiku. Her poems have appeared in numerous print journals, most recently in *Adanna Literary Journal*, *Last Leaves Magazine*, and *The Cities of the Plains: An Anthology of Iowa Artist and Poets*. Shelly is a two-time Pushcart nominee, and lives and creates in The Tall Corn State.

### **Michael Theroux**

Michael Theroux writes from Northern California; his career has spanned field botanist, environmental health specialist, green energy developer and resource recovery web site editor. Now in his 70s, Michael is seeking publication of his deep cache of art writings. Many may be found, or will soon be seen, in *Down in the Dirt*, *Ariel Chart*, *50WS*, *CafeLit*, *Poetry Pacific*, *Last Leaves*, *Backwards Trajectory*, *Small Wonders*, *Academy of the Heart and Mind*, *Preservation Foundation / Storyhouse*, *Cerasus*, *The Acedian Journal*, the *Lothlorien Poetry Journal*, *Wild Word*, and *Fixator Press*.

### **Natalie Tisler**

Natalie Tisler is a twenty-two-year-old poet living in New York City. She finds inspiration by dissecting life and analyzing it, often through metaphor. Natalie is ambitious and eager to share her poetry while connecting with audiences that resonate with her use of imagery. She has been previously published in the *Black Poppy Review*.

### **Jeffery Allen Tobin**

Jeffery Allen Tobin is a political scientist and researcher based in South Florida. His extensive body of work primarily explores U.S. foreign policy, democracy, national security, and migration. Currently affiliated with Florida International University, he contributes to both the academic community and policymaking sphere. He has been writing poetry and prose for more than 30 years. He has forthcoming publications in *Passionfruit Review*, *Loud Coffee Press*, *North of Oxford*, *Poetry Pacific*, and *Rundelania*.

### **E.C. Traganas**

Author of the debut novel *Twelfth House* and *Shaded Pergola*, a collection of short poetry with original illustrations, E.C. Traganas has published in a myriad of literary reviews. She enjoys a professional career as a Juilliard-trained concert pianist & composer, and is the founder/director of *Woodside Writers*, a literary forum based in New York.

### **Grant Vecera**

Grant Vecera teaches writing, thinking, and literature at Indiana University Indianapolis and at Butler University. His poems have been appearing in literary periodicals since the 1990s. More recently, his work has appeared in *Louisiana Literature*, *The Indianapolis Anthology*, *Leave Them Something Anthology*, *Meat for Tea: The Valley Review*, *Stick Figure Poetry Quarterly*, and *The Gorko Gazette*.

### **Jon Wesick**

Jon Wesick is a regional editor of the *San Diego Poetry Annual*. He's published hundreds of poems and stories in journals such as the *Atlanta Review*, *Berkeley Fiction Review*, *I-70 Review*, *Lowestoft Chronicle*, *New Verse News*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Pearl*, *Pirene's Fountain*, *Slipstream*, *Space and Time*, and *Underside Stories*. His most recent books are *The Shaman in the Library* and *The Prague Deception*. <http://jonwesick.com>

### **Anne Whitehouse**

Anne Whitehouse is the author of poetry collections: *The Surveyor's Hand*, *Blessings and Curses*, *The Refrain*, *Meteor Shower*, *Outside from the Inside*, and *Steady*, as well as the art chapbooks, *Surrealist Muse* (about Leonora Carrington), *Escaping Lee Miller*, *Frida*, and *Being Ruth Asawa*. She is the author of a novel, *FALL LOVE*. Her poem, "Lady Bird," won the Nathan Perry DAR 2023 "Honoring American History" poetry contest. She has lectured about Longfellow and Poe at the Wadsworth Longfellow House in Portland, Maine, and Longfellow House Washington Headquarters in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

### **Jess Woolford**

Jess Woolford is a writer, literary critic and editor whose poetry has been published in *the museum of americana*, *Book of Matches*, *Text Power Telling Magazine*, *The Ecological Citizen*, *Prairie Fire Magazine*, *Contemporary Verse 2*, *The Winnipeg Free Press* and elsewhere. Her poetry has also been exhibited in #BeHereWinnipeg, a garden of poetry in ice, and in the Poetry Society of Vermont's *Corporeal Poetry* show. Raised in Vermont, Woolford now lives and writes on Treaty 1 Territory in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

### **Mary Zelinka**

Mary Zelinka lives in Oregon's Willamette Valley and has worked at the Center Against Rape and Domestic Violence for over 34 years. Her writing has appeared in *The Sun Magazine*, *Brevity*, *Memoir Magazine* and others.