

YOUNG RAVENS LITERARY REVIEW



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Editorial Staff:

Sarah Page
Elizabeth Pinborough

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Introduction

In Issue 10 of *Young Ravens Literary Review*, we delve into the question of what constitutes a sacred space.

Is everything sacred? A worn elephant statue of the god Ganesh may enshrine the warmth and weight of prayers, becoming a focal point for human hopes and reflection. Or the human heart itself may become the vessel that transports us to a higher state of being or spirituality. Carol Alena Aronoff imagines Teresa of Avila as a wingless bird that still soars, her humble confines “filled with the piety and purity of purpose.”

Sacred imagery may be revealed in anything from a thin slice of fruit that transforms into a meditation mandala to a single bead of dew—as infinite as worlds and stars—that draws our gaze in wondering reverence. Even measureless sorrows can become hallowed through remembering, living, and loving.

In “Illuminated Manuscript,” Nate Maxson proclaims us all “candidates for dissolution,” which raises the possibility—if there is no divine design sustaining our existence, perhaps sacredness lies in the sheer act of being “electrified by breath” in a universe that is ultimately our un-being. Maybe we are all seeking a way to root ourselves in the proximate cosmos of the earth. We gather strength from fingernails rimmed with dirt and preserving tubers in perlite. Even the repetitive mundanity of doing laundry can become an act in space and time that takes on its own peculiar hallowed state. Ritual and habit may anoint our consciousness with rich meaning.

Is nothing sacred? The natural world is eroding around us under callous disregard and ungrateful appetite, giving way to a far lesser dream of paradise now. Unwilling to reckon with the accumulated damage of human history, people fall into cruelty and picket their hearts and soil with crude walls, deafening their ears to the child’s cry. The language to understand each other—a numinous tongue evolving over millions of years—is in danger of becoming lost to us. Even so, there are still notes swelling like a chorus against the chaos that may bridge our deepening divides.

Can we sanctify our species? Imagine if the true core of every sacred space lies in the empathy of connection. But in a rapidly changing world where instant gratification becomes increasingly hard to resist, do we have time for anything beyond satiating our own endless stream of desires? It is conceivable that we can transcend the enclosure of our skull-bound minds in how we acknowledge the existence of the other. Marly Youmans states, “I can’t whisper how to walk /On both sides of the singing river.” Perhaps we must all find the singing river springing in ourselves before we can earnestly seek it out in the world, and each other.

Vikram Masson

Ganesh At the Yard Sale

And there he is, right hand held up in blessing,
perched atop a crate of LPs, next to a stack
of tiki torches and dad's petunia spritzers,
his brass body streaked with dust. A patina
shadows his eyes and trunk, as if he's aged.

O remover of obstacles, lord of the intellect,
how could I have forgotten you?
I used to bathe you in milk, circle you with incense
and dress you in swatches of fiery red silk,
just as my grandmother taught.

How could my brother have set you here?
You may have become a curio in some
tarot reader's cabinet—your belly rubbed
like a laughing buddha, one dollar a wish.

As a little girl, I prayed to you with my forehead
pressed to your feet. I prayed so that the stars
would not fall from the sky; prayed before every
exam; prayed after my first kiss. When my
mother's eyebrows fell out, I asked only
that you take away her pain.

I used to dread my friends saying, *Wow,*
you worship elephants, when they visited.
I am sorry for that. I loved that I could see you,
my pot-bellied protector, unlike some
abstraction, an absent daddy-in-the-sky.

In college I forgot about you while learning how
to deconstruct religion into power relations.
And since then, in a world of mindless work,
of drunken Sunday brunches, of regretted

nights with men I could not respect, I've shushed
any impulse that would evoke you.

I lift you and feel the warmth of a girl's
accumulated prayers. Now that my
parents are gone and the artifacts of
our lives sold and scattered for good,
I will take you, little lord, with me.

Randel McCraw Helms

At a Wake of Elephants

In Botswana once, I found a ruined hulk,
Her grey hide streaked with vultures' dung, both tusks
Intact; not poachers, then, but nature's work.
Then I saw the scorches down her stiffened leg,
Sign a lightning-bolt had claimed this matriarch
As she fed upon the greenness in her prime.
Moved, I promised myself I would return, as to
A Sunday churchyard, all that year, and watch
Her yielding back, ungrudged, her every precious gift.

How soon God cleans and purifies his whitest bones!
Two seasons' work and all was done. Nesting birds
Had claimed the hairs, jackals and scavengers
The hide, after vultures, lions and smaller fry
Stripped the softer flesh. There remained to perform
But a wake, some memorial to all this love
And joy, now gone back to the source. I knew
Her migrant herd would return with the rain, and so
Would I, to watch and, I hoped, to grieve with them.

The season came round again, and crowds to graze.
I saw a group approach the gleaming skull,
As to a holy place. All vocalizing ceased.
Like loved ones silent at an open grave, they stood,
Until their matriarch first nosed a tusk,
Most tenderly, from base to point. Then she grasped
It with her nostrils' tip, and tugged, and rocked
And wrapped it round with massive love while
Rumbling deepest words of grief I could feel
Within my bones. Then each adult performed
The same slow, sacred rite, while their young ones
Gamboled, as in a shining field of tombs.
A long hour passed, and still they reminisced
And mourned. The hot sun set, and still they mourned.

Then most at last trooped thirsting away, save one tall
Female, daughter, I guessed, to those beloved remains:
She stayed, alone, silent, to touch each scattered part.

Shelby Lynn Lanaro

Swiss Flora



Nate Maxson

Illuminated Manuscript

This firecracker spark traveling on a wick to ignition
This window encroached by frost at the edges of the frame
These objects we wish on in silence
The shooting star
The dandelion seedpod
The plucked eyelash
All into the wind
Because what is a prayer?
But a redshift expansion of omens and signs into the drift
Coins for the dead/ over the eyes/ a burial rite
Like the distant grinding of an interstate highway
Have you ever not heard it?
This temporary machinery
Electrified by breath
My body is an obvious riddle
A candidate for dissolution
The lighting struck moment of a kingfisher snatching its prey from the water
A meticulously fitted space where the light will go

Ed Ruzicka

November Zen

As dawn washes
shade to color,
Venus
still splashes
between black limbs,
a bead of dew
rests on the lime
and lemon bands of
a banana leaf
In this drop
where all this
stands,
reflected
there is a small,
receding
window
that plunges
downward
forever in
infinite
depth.

Carol Alena Aronoff

Now You See It...

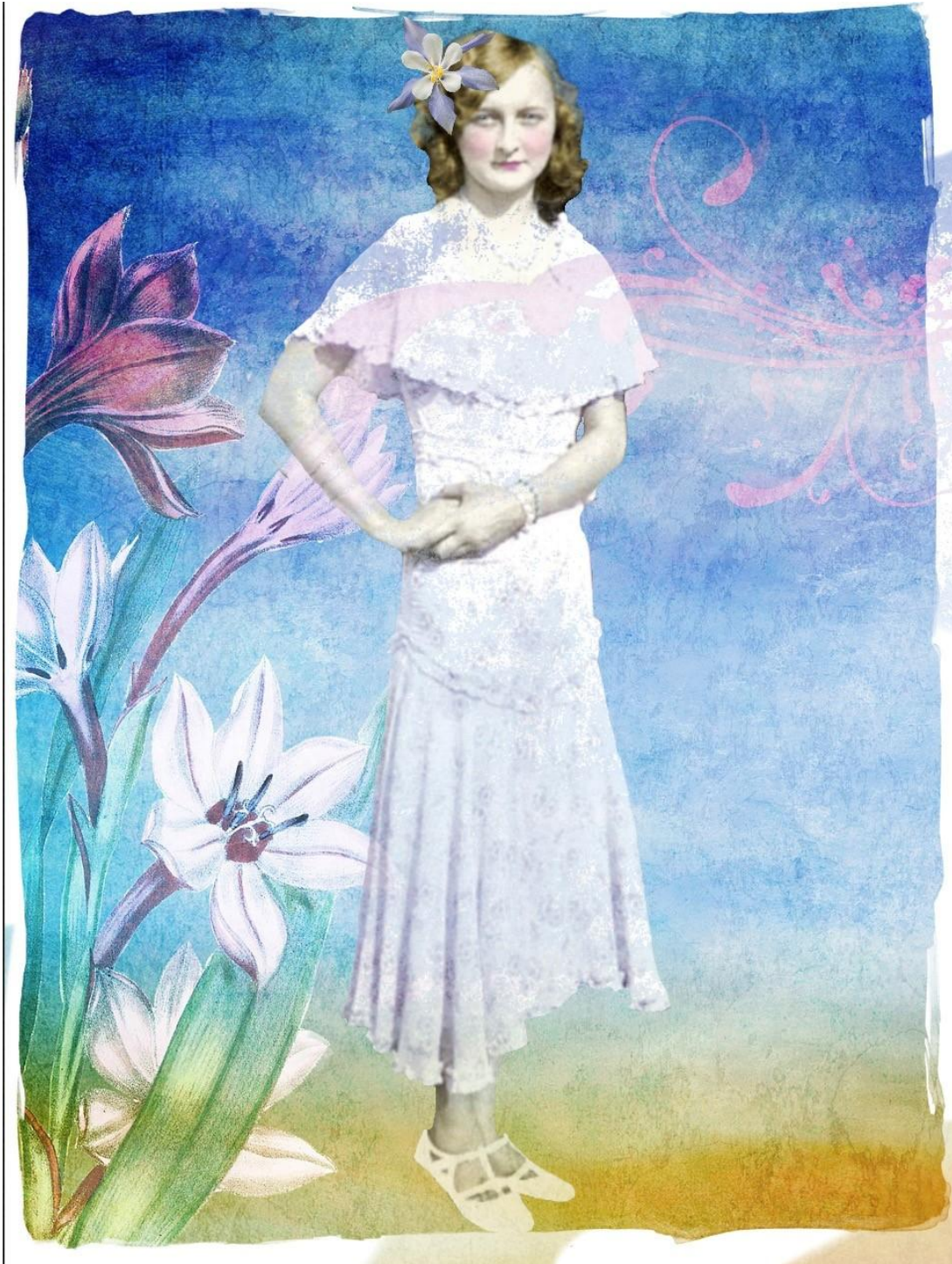
Sky has loved me
through every turning,
enfolded me in unclouded,
unconditioned space.
The coral vine
has christened me
with petals, a peach tree
has sung me out of dream.

Mango seeds large
as lemons soften my path
to the garden but soon
will sprout into myriad
trees unless uprooted
by pigs or pick axe.
Some loves are best
left unrequited.

I bow to the innocence
of willow. By honoring
the sacredness of slugs
and seedlings, perhaps I can
open to essence. These
landmarks may not be here
tomorrow. My habits
are coyotes laying false trails.

Wendy Schmidt

Garden Orchid



Carol Alena Aronoff

Christ Has No Body

Teresa of Avila

And if you enter her room while
she is at vespers and if you lean
against the wall, you will feel
bare planks imbued with
the perfumed resin of prayer,
cracks filled in with piety
and purity of purpose. And the
barely audible hum of continual,
ecstatic devotion. Gravity has fled
this unwindowed cell, this aerie of
a wingless bird. There are no flight
restrictions, no limits to soaring.
A subtle light reveals the Sacred.
No crucifix is needed.

Meg Freer

Upper Betlemi Church: Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia



Marly Youmans

Both Sides of the River

As many have noted
Over the last several thousand years,
The Book of Revelation
Has some rather strange things to say,
But perhaps the rarest, most wonder-worked
Has to do with the river
That runs singing through a city of gold,
Its banks crowned with a tree
That springs up on both sides at once,
Lifting up new fruit each month.
The journey-man poet
Henri Michaux
Once gave to his magi
Power to skip along both sides of a river
At once; clever
Thief of words, to steal
Abilities from the Tree of Life...
Clench shut your eyes and imagine
Yourself as tree
That spires on two banks at once,
Casting a canopy over river and street.
Go ahead, delve and press
Your roots under street, under river...
Be expansive, be abundant,
Fountaining, splashing upward,
Tossing up leaves and juggling orbs
In starless, moonless Lamb-light.
Or train to be a Michaux-magi
And wander in the green grace of grass
On both sides of the river:
You, simultaneous and yet one.
(To confess, to digress
With a most unfortunate truth,
Michaux the poet-traveler

Never managed to walk the two banks,
Not by Seine or Shinano,
Huang He or Ganges.)
How shall you master the trick, either
As tree or as magi?
Disperse into a cloud of fine drops?
Spring apart into atoms? Hard,
But still a cheat. Doppelgänger? No, also false,
For whether tree or magi, there's only the one way:
Simply be in both places.

Neither tree nor magi
Are precisely
As they may seem:
Nor even you. You with your branch
Of veins, your humming blood-sap...
Come closer to me, under
The wind-tossed shadow of leaves,
And listen: I can't whisper how to walk
On both sides of the singing river,
For riddles must be
Learned, earned in long
East-of-sun, west-of-moon
Mad fairy-tale journeys
Or starlit wrestlings with angels
Or sometimes by accident,
As when an innocent mind tumbles
Into the vertical blue of wells.
And if for one fleck of time
You stand tiptoe on both sides of a river,
You won't master the mystery.
Always, there's a residue, something
Hidden in sight,
Brimming with sunshine
Or collecting cloud-shadows
Like the leaf-silt, spell-silt
That fell through golds and ambers
In a fortuneteller's teacup —
The scribe, the maker
Of resistant, radiant messages

Impossible to read.

Diane Dickinson

Softening the Chaos

At Delphi, fumes emanate
from temple crevices.

The Oracle rises
in a hallucinatory drift

and answers, or not, to
Sybil, Pythia, her many names.

Her rants and wild cries
reverberate in the ears of the mountains

She, the god's only lover, a menstrual dance
coursing through her.

Python, earth-dragon, still writhes against Apollo, undefeated.

The Oracle's echoes, like the rainy drizzle, dissipate into
the roses, daisies, wavering azaleas,

purple almond trees, tasseled hyacinth
at the foot of Parnassus.

All to temper a god's rancor.

I return to this place to witness it,
drawn by what I have no word for.

Anne Whitehouse

Hawk Shabbat

Once a Cooper's Hawk settled
outside the first-floor window
at the back of our Manhattan apartment,
perched on the wrought-iron bars
of an empty air conditioner cage.

In the cold, high realms of the air
it had traveled a great distance
and from afar with piercing vision
had spied our cage and courtyard,
one protected space within another.
It felt safe enough to rest surrounded
by high walls, like being
at the bottom of a well of air.

The hawk was so tired it didn't care
that we were inches away,
separated only by a pane of glass.
Its head swiveled all around,
facing backwards on its neck,
and with its beak it ruffled
its neck feathers and tucked its head
under its wing and was fast asleep
while fierce-looking talons
gripped the bars of the cage.

It was a Friday evening, and the peace
of Shabbat was falling like a veil,
shadowing the world as the hawk slept.
Not wanting to disturb its rest,

I left the room dark as I set the table
next to the window and lit the candles,
softly singing the blessing,
shielding my eyes in prayer.

My husband and daughter and I
blessed the wine and the bread
and quietly ate our dinner by candlelight.
Twice the hawk woke and stared at us.
Its black pupils rimmed in gold
pierced me with inexpressible wildness,
as fierce and strange as God's angel.

Like a sheet of mica clouding its gaze,
the hawk's inner eyelid slid from front to back,
and again its head rotated, and it bent
its beak under its wing and slept and woke
and slept again. I woke in the night
and it was still there, a dark form
immobile against the darkness.
In the morning it was gone.

Susan Blevins

Meditation Mandala



Shelby Lynn Lanaro

To the Woman

I.

To the woman in the stall
next to me: I've been you.
Being broken-hearted
in a public bathroom
is like a rite of passage.
Somehow, we find solace
in our little sanctuaries,
foster silent relationships
with strangers
through our stifled sobs.
Know that I want to
ask you if you're doing
all right. But I don't
want to pry. Please
take this toilet paper tissue
as a token – a peace
offering – and realize
that I have been there too.

II.

To the woman in the stall
next to me: I know you
think you've been me.
I know you think I'm broken-
hearted. And I am. But not
how you've been. I've been
sitting still in this stall
for an hour now, and when
I move, the automated
valve will flush out
my miscarriage.
My phone says the pain
should subside quickly

if it's complete, but pain
is relative and so is time.
And in time, I know
I'll have to leave
this sanctuary,
say my goodbyes.
I reach for your hand,
take the makeshift tissue
you've offered me.
Please know I can't
bring myself to choke out
a *thank you*,
but thank you just the same.

McKenzie Lynn Tozan

Daughter Wild

This is the most I'll ever know
about childbirth:

my pelvis refused to shape-shift
into its new form, a platform ready

for child, uterine wall still thick, no sign

of the due date come
and gone—

the refusal of my body to enter the mother state.

Instead they laid me out
on a table, body opened like a crooked flower

on a pedestal, the chrome too smooth
to bleed. When she was pulled

from my body, my mind was an open flame.
Now when my mind is too quiet, and

the drapes need to be pulled shut,

this is the image I hold onto:
her running ahead of me

in a field, hands trailing back, fingers
grazing the high grass, hair kicking

across her forehead as she laughs,
all the while looking back

looking back—

Christian Mack

Give Us This Day

Today smells like damp sawdust and
sounds like a choir of tools
singing with every bump
the beaten-down truck bed endures.
Dad grips the steering wheel with purpose;
his hands are stained with purposes of the past,
a lifetime of honesty has varnished them as smooth
as the old ball glove at my feet.
The glove should have been thrown out long ago;
the weaving, which was once tightly spun,
has unraveled with the passage of time.
On most days it would have looked pitiful,
but rain stirs an earnest sense of nostalgia
so that every tear in the leather serves to solidify
the glove's right to occupy the floorboard.
The voice on the radio sounds like split logs,
gruff, but not quite whole.
He sounds tired of hearing himself speak.
I can't blame him. So am I.
Out the window,
a cross breaks the wave of trees, planted
in the grass. Fresh flowers are crucified
on the venerable reminder.
I blink and it's gone.
We will pass it again tomorrow
and a new bouquet will be left to die.
"Lord willing."
That's what dad always says when I say such things—
"See you tomorrow."
"Lord willing, son."
I look at my dad, his eyes a shallow caramel,
lit by the dull light sifting through the clouds.
The corners are creased and kind.
I think back to the cross—

I hope one day my hands will look like Dad's
—we will pass it again tomorrow,
Lord willing.

Bridget Gage-Dixon

Communion

Aunt Dorothy's back twists with time,
Shoulders rise into a hump as she lifts
Faux fruit from a warping wooden bowl,
Shines plastic apple, orange, each tiny grape
To an acceptable shine.

She says the table is the heart-
the center of the home,
through which everything must flow
as she turns to clear away the mismatched plates.

One red, one blue, one yellow,
each a remnant of a long lost set.
Dish by dish they chipped, shattered, split
until all that is left is a cupboard
filled with stubborn survivors.

She says a family must eat together always.
this is where people say the things
they thought they wouldn't
where children let you into their lives.

Watching her work her misshapen fingers,
from the wash towel to a blade she runs
into each crevice of a plastic pear,
I begin to hear her secrets
they slide from her lips
coil themselves into my ear.
In the small silences in her speech,
the trust between us solidifies.

Edward Lee

Bench, Stones



Richard Luftig

White Peonies

The wild geese announce
Themselves in a winter sky.
They call off their numbers
Like soldiers in formation.
I listen and remember

Then look at the clothes
Scattered on the floor by my bed.
Which to wash, which to rinse.
A full morning of mindfulness.
It is like a farmer's dream

From which he first awakes:
Acres upon acres of white;
Snow wall and snow fence.
Remembrance of early grass
That wither and pass away.

And the peonies
That still grow unattended
In my fallow garden.
In spring they will show their heads,
In autumn leave their souls behind.

Uprooted

By
Rachael Nazzaro

“Ready to go?”

“Mmhmm,” I say, still stumbling around my house looking for my laundry bag, my phone charger, and a thicker sweatshirt. My dad is waiting by the door, keys in hand, when I remember.

“Hang on!”

I hurry back into the kitchen. My birthday bouquet is centered on the lazy Susan, its vibrant orange and purple color scheme striking against the deep red walls. I attempt to pick out the best flower. Dahlias. Celosia. Scented geraniums. Rita and the farm team had bunched the choice few—the last of the season—for me. The citrus scent of the lemon geraniums overwhelms the bouquet, but the dahlia in the center is what catches my eye. I remember planting them months ago at The Herb FARMacy alongside Emily, Paige, Rachel, and Julian. The Herb FARMacy is Rita’s small plant nursery and flower farm in Salisbury, Massachusetts. Since I was two years old, Rita has been supplying the plants for my family’s backyard and organic garden. Rita would greet us on opening day every year, and as my mom browsed for plants, I’d hop over hoses and search for my favorite fuzzy-leaved Cuban oregano plant.

It seemed only natural that one day I’d work there. After my first college

summer vacation spent working on the farm, I'd have given anything to stay for just a bit longer. But, as autumn arrived, school beckoned me away. Luckily I was able to stop by and visit yesterday. When I arrived, we gathered around the lunch table, sharing stories from the past couple of months. Looking out over the field, barren in autumn, I longed for the summer heat and the buckets upon buckets of fresh flowers.

As Rita led me to the tomato field house after lunch, the ground crunched beneath me and cool air nipped my cheeks. Stepping out of the autumn air and into the usually sweltering enclosure felt pleasantly warm. Instead of rows and rows of red-ripe tomatoes, though, wilting stems dangled from their twine supports.

"A lot has changed, huh?" she asked, with her hands in the pockets of her fleece pullover. The seasons were shifting. When I left, Emily handed me this bouquet, as full as if it had been made mid-summer. I crunched the soft, lemon scented leaves between my fingers.

I know which flower I need to bring back to school with me now. I snatch my favorite purple and white dahlia from the center of the bouquet, cut the stem short, and put it in a clouded, antique Listerine bottle.

"I'm ready!" I shout, glancing down at the flower—the petals in the center are tightly furled and a hint of green announces its potential. I think it should last. Getting into the car, I place the dahlia carefully into the cup holder, preparing it for the bumpy ride down to Boston.

Dahlias range from small pompoms to monstrous “dinnerplate dahlias” and from vibrant pinks to deep burgundy. Yet, each one features petals cascading from the center as though they would never end. Planting dahlias was my first real day of field work at the farm. The dahlia forms tubers from which new flowers will grow the following year. In warm, southern climates, tubers are preserved naturally, but here in the Northeast, they require a bit of help.

On a day in late May, I had carried crates of dahlia tubers, protected in perlite, up from Rita’s basement. We pulled the woody, dried-out stems from the dust, placing them in clean containers to carry out to the fields. Trimming the thick, bulky stems, we searched for “eyes,” or new sprouts, on the tubers. Some had very visible shoots, reaching for the sunlight they’d been denied in the dark of the basement. After fertilizing and planting them deep into the soil, we waited. I postponed connecting irrigation lines after careful instruction from Rita.

“Water too soon and the roots will rot.”

I arrive back to school, my dahlia in hand. It’s raining. After slamming the car door shut, I drape my raincoat over my head and trot into the red brick dorm building, holding the flower steady. Entering my room, I drop my bags to the floor and carefully place the dahlia on my desk. The musty scent of the building compounds with the added humidity. I sit in my desk chair and gaze out the window at the ambulances and the commuters with patterned umbrellas rushing by. Rain trickles down the window

pane in uninterrupted streams, and I watch a droplet until it disappears from view. I wonder if Rita is watching the same stream pour down her kitchen windows or if Paige and Emily are dragging the flower table into the greenhouses to shield themselves from the weather outside. I wish I was there, shaping market bouquets with them, instead of sitting here under these fluorescent lights.

On a humid July morning, I had crouched in the field across from Julian. His wide brimmed hat, concealing his brown, curly hair, brushed my forehead. We were sinking flower plugs into the soil and anchoring them into the ground. The sky erupted above us, drowning our cotton clothing. We looked up at the sky and laughed at our luck. When we saw Rita's hands flailing in the air from the base of the field, we scrambled to plant the last tray of zinnias. Julian slid through the muddy pathway as I raced him to the barn where we met Rita and the rest of the farm team. My shorts were heavy with the weight of water.

Inside, we flipped over five gallon buckets that landed unevenly on the wooden planks and convened together in a small circle. Paige climbed into the stairwell and began drying her glasses, the wood squealing in resistance, and Julian pulled the single barn light on illuminating our six faces with a warm glow. We were surrounded by fertilizers and twine, glass bottles from around the world, and pails of flowers already pre-cut for tomorrow's bouquets. Laughter echoed through the barn as we asked Rita why she held onto all these bottles, and I couldn't help but hope the thunder might last

just a little bit longer.

When I finally move from my spot in my desk chair, I remove my rain boots and discover a pile of mud on the dorm room floor. Entering the bathroom to throw away muddied paper towels I catch a glimpse of my past self—hair frizzed from the humidity and a streak of dirt across my hand. I wash my hands and smooth down my hair.

As time had passed that summer, my fingernails had caked with dirt, and the creases in my hands stained a brown that would take weeks to fade. At the end of each day, I'd enter Rita's kitchen and watch her stifle a laugh at my dirt-covered face. A racer-back tan etched itself into my body from the days I spent under the summer sun. I plucked tiny yellow flowers from the St. John's Wort bushes, from which Rita would brew a calming salve to soothe our aching muscles. In the early afternoon we ate sweet watermelon together under the mock orange tree, juice dripping down our faces as we prepared for the last hour of work. I went home at night and slept soundly from a physical exhaustion I had never felt before.

Working on the farm, I learned the difference between a pink bumble bee and a pink tiger tomato. I knew exactly when a Dr. Green Frosted tomato was fifty percent ripe. I recognized the scent of dill and chamomile on the wind. Walking down the aisle ways, I'd spout off names of the lime queen zinnias, homeland dianthus, and ruby red gomphrenas. On farmer's market days, I'd arrange bouquets with dill in the center, a sparkler exploding from the center of a silken sweet pea bouquet. I breathed deeply

while clipping and hydrating mint bunches, NPR Science Friday muttering softly in the background, right up until the day I had to say goodbye.

After four days in the dorm had passed, my dahlia began to wilt. As the first frost of the year hit, none were left at the farm, either. In Salisbury, the team was uprooting the tubers, cleaning and curing them, and preserving them in perlite once again. For months they'd sit in the dark of the basement until an early spring day when a few of the eager would send up shoots in search of the sunshine. By then the school year will have come to a close, and I'd be back at the farm, hauling the dahlias up once more. But, for the time being, they'd simply have to wait.

Jan Ball

Normal Cycle

After the two hour and fifteen
minute normal wash cycle, we
smooth the crushable items: shirts,
shorts, skirts and take armfuls
of smaller socks, undies and tea
towels out to the balcony so we
can dry them in the pine-fragrant
South of France air.

Since he's taller than me, Jeremy
arranges our two red bath towels
over the trellis behind the pink
oleander bush so they can aspirate
in the breezes on both sides as I
assemble the drying rack, careful
to secure the control mechanism
so the whole contraption doesn't
collapse.

I brush against the basil plant
releasing its green aroma, press
clothespins with my index finger
and thumb the way my mother
must have done in the musty rat-
infested basement of our childhood
apartment building, and tug at shirt
collars and skirt hems so I won't
have to iron them.

The lavender plant shrieks purple
when I squint down at it and the red
geraniums sing in their window boxes
as the Mediterranean Sea ebbs and
flows blue on this ordinary day.

Michael Keshigian

Regarding the Clarinet

Having sought refuge
upon the avenue of artistry,
while gathering power and capacity
through years of practice and work
to induce a resonance worthy of attention,
I keep my fingers nimble,
and cascade between silver moguls
planted upon grenedilla grain
in a perfect cylindrical contour,
tuned and dripping with wetted breath,
to play away the present, constantly
navigating dotted notes and multiple flags
behind an expressive face,
the way a long happiness
melds cheeks upwards, inducing a squint.
No lack of endurance compromises
the integrity to sustain the passion
which exudes from the parchment
upon the stand,
that stream of sound,
dissecting thin air in the room
with compounding ripples
until walls tremble
to the timbre of song
and slowly a brilliant varnish
builds upon the dull papered walls
and a new voice, like others
hidden in the world,
finds a home to sing or dance
or meditate in any place,

anytime I play.
Behind this face, in this mind,
where no one can see,
I have burned another color
between the letters of my name to remain.

Shelby Lynn Lanaro

South Garden, Chicago



Anne Doran

Museums

If the sky is gray, shy of wonder,
opaque puddles waiting for the sun,
I can always fall in love again

with those raised veins on the David's
right hand, or lose my way in the folds
of Madame X's jet-black dress.

And when I think of Judith, brazen,
holding up the head of Holofernes'
as if it were a Gothic hatbox
I am heavy with the weight
of what I always want to feel.

Praise the old oils, burnished with obsession
and myth, the icons, long-nosed, geometric,
cautioning like church, random marbles,
with or without arms I don't care, standing
contraposto—that engaging twist—one of them
paired with a cherub with an impish grin.

A spiral staircase whistles as I climb down,
in no one else's hearing. The doors to the street
are golden. Outside, the ache of wisteria and elm.

George Moore

Notes from Iona

"To every cow its calf and to every book its copy."
King Diarmait

Books once carried their own names
like the Cathach of Ulster. The crime then

was to copy a text for one's own pleasure
for each possessed an original magic

spun in the fabric of its creation.
When St Columba stole this book

his sentence was banishment.
Not for theft but for the war he used

to cover it. His homeland can't be seen
from this shore nor my great grandfather's.

His punishment was never to read
the lines of the Irish coast again

and he took up a mission among the Picts.
The originary power of words has become

more of an imitation. The book in hand
trembles in a kind of nervous anticipation

of the persistence of memory
but without vellum or illuminated wings

without the letters in a fine embroidery.
And yet it survives the lightning of the screen

the magic of totems and the sacred space

of the shelf where each word waits

suspended in the presences of dreams.

Fabrice Poussin

Fall Copy



George Moore

The Screen

The computer screen speaks to us now
of the terrors of the self

it is the great lake of the Paleocene
the clouds of the Palestinian sky

an African savanna and steppe and glacial cave
a Nordic aurora borealis on the sea line

The screen washes us clean of ourselves for ourselves
and we run out like mud in the currents of flood

The surface of a tree
has more texture than we with our screens

more colors per pixel more depth of vision
more worms and bugs and fall colors and dead limbs

that drop to the ground and are picked up again
by the quick changing unchanged stream

The face disappears into the lake of the eye
and the mind is the raft without rudder

and it floats into the void or the picture of the void
gathered from a million seconds of a night camera

but we live here in the belly of the whale
the room like the rib cage of a giant skeleton

death running its streams through the ear
hearing only the whirl and the whiz and the shy

and the bang as the universe begins

and dies at the rough edge of a single white eye

Carol Alena Aronoff

The Taste of Gratitude

When I remember
to thank a saffron finch
for serenades
at sunset, the dove
for morning matins,
the dahlia for sharing
its nectar with bees,
I am overcome
with love.

The air shimmers
as though seen
through flame,
a letting go
that frees
the senses,
slows the mind.

In that moment,
the world seems
to vibrate with joy
and my thoughts
are odes I sing
to the Divine.

Fabrice Poussin

In Waiting



George Moore

Deep Field Image

Hello? Is there anybody out there?
Moody Blues

The camera captures an instant in time
the smaller instant of a million sub-seconds spread

into the deep field image of the universe
on any particular day

aligning the stars with our sense of neglect
or pricking the void with half-trained eyes

living by the light that has died a thousand deaths
coming to this point in what we call time

So much more hope
the day begins with the light of one sun

on the edge of one planet fashioned out of stone
cooled to the touch and toasted again

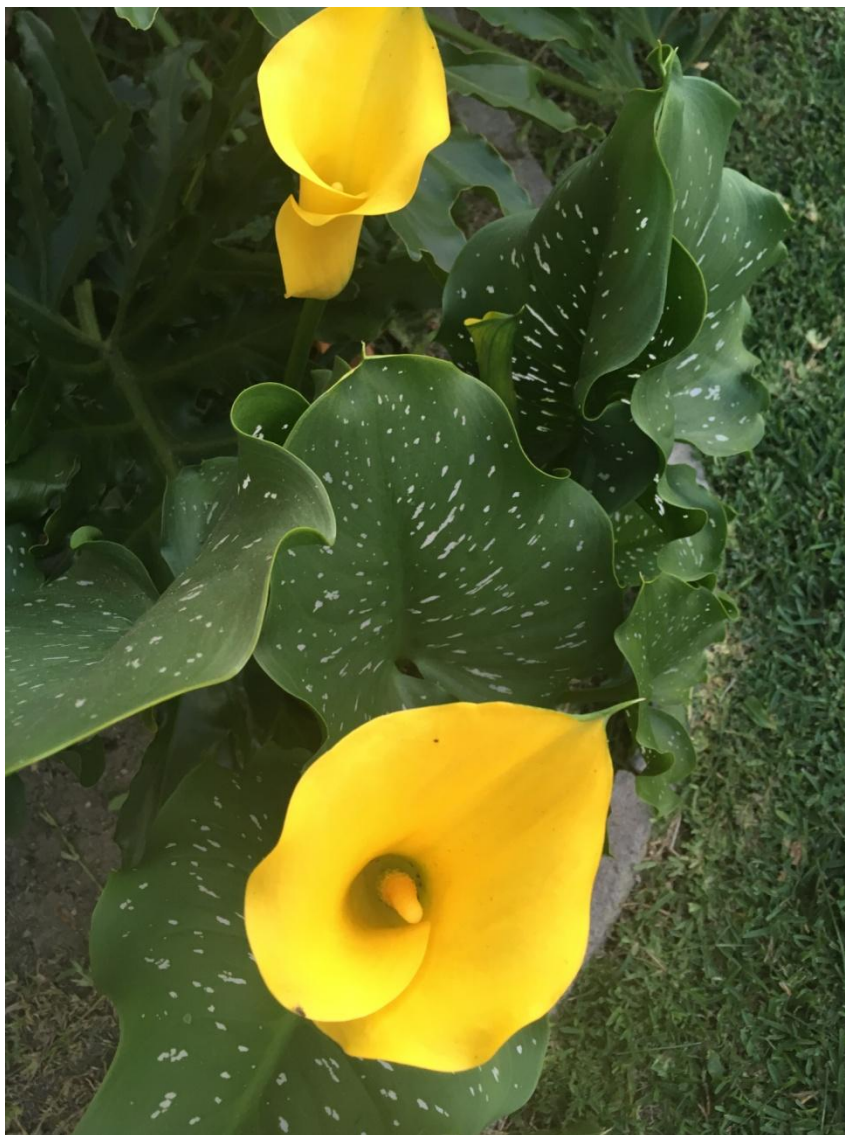
with chemical climate
and we evolve

into stars without anything more to say
at the edge of creation at the end of the day

out on the limits of hope and just beyond sense
a speck in the universe re-specked but dense.

Luis Cuauhtémoc Berriozábal

Los Alcatraces



Edward Lee

The Burden of Pain

It was after the priest gave you last rites
for the third time
that you decided to let go
and shed all that you were.

On strange mornings,
when I am slow to rise,
I sometimes think
that maybe
it wasn't the pain, the illness
that stole you,
but the embarrassment across that young priest's face
as he repeated words
we all knew
by heart.

Edilson Ferreira

Faithful Prayers

Always on Tuesday, Saint Anthony's day,
I attend Mass at Saint Anthony's church,
the littlest and farthestmost of my town.
Indeed, it is more like a chapel.
Few people go there, they pray mainly
at Saint Vincent's, in Central Square,
that looks as refulgent as a Cathedral.
They are unaware that the church I go to
was built on the ground of an old cemetery,
where all my great-grandparents had been buried.
Their bones (and a bit of their hopes, I believe)
remain in the foundation of Saint Anthony's.
I firmly believe in their blessings, along
with those of our Lord and of the Saint of
every Tuesday morning.

Juliette Sebock

Chapelside



Eve Lyons

Where Connection is Possible

In the years before my nose ring
and green hair
but sometime after becoming a vegetarian
I stood before my temple
declared that God was in between
all of us, in the space
where connection is possible.
What then, is prayer,
if God is possibility but fragile
easily lost or even squashed
Prayer is an invocation,
a call to arms,
a beckoning,
a reckoning
summoning others to gather round.
Prayer is a protest march,
a knitting circle,
a writing group,
a poetry slam.
Prayer is not the end
or even the goal
Prayer is how we survive
until we get there.

Tamam Kahn

I'm Telling You

my granddaughters are not held in cages with blankets of foil.

They eat *mac and cheese*, sip lemonade on the porch
above the garden. Their mother brings sweaters and warm pie.

It's a kind of salvation for me that they are ok.

The girls are not hearing explosions, breathing bomb-dust,
not told to blow themselves up in God's name.

They are not on a raft at sea.

I'm not at sea. My bed is not a raft.

My bed with fluffy pillows is in a mountain room
with a front door by the driveway.

My belt is not strapped with explosives.

My belt holds
eyeglasses,
a pouch with lip gloss, a pen and some cash.
It has two zippers.
I'm telling you the details because I can.

*My feet are without dirt and wounds and bruises, nor numb
with cold from the water splashing them.*

My darlings do not have to endure
scraps for shoes. They are not pulled away
from their mother and shipped somewhere
behind a wire fence—just held there
until they begin to forget
their mother's voice, and who they were before.

Patrick Haas

out of and into

i am trying to decipher
a vocabulary of rainwater.

it says we used to sell land,
but now we sell wind.

it says i used to get down
with my money
every night and pray to it.

like i made crosses out of twenties
and prayed to the green scent
in my fists.

says if you pray to the devil
your tongue will turn into a fifty
flapping between your teeth.

says if you pray to the crucifix
you will see nickels falling
from the wounds of jesus
like heavy birds.

& oh yes, if you turn into a cloud
you could be anything.

Victoria Elizabeth Ruwi

This Fence is Not Yet a Wall

Conch shells bellow,
welcome watchers
along the San Diego/
Mexican border. Seagulls
land atop fence protruding
into the ocean, listen, fly
freely on either side. Temple
gongs eclipse suspended
cymbals' clisp-clam, rain sticks
shimmy; maracas, castanets,
vuvuzelas, interplay with border
crossing waves. We, the audience
pied piper into the reverb, hear
musicians on both sides, see
listeners stepping from Playa
de Tijuana toward the fence.
Cranked air raid sirens shriek
amid chimes. We, the ensemble,
walk into the music, barred
by steel barriers tucked in
between barrios. Sweetly
piccolos play with glockenspiels
in concert finale, then silence
before applause. Musicians
abandon instruments, mutually
turn, stand on each side of
dense metal mesh fence, touch
the only flesh touchable: fingertips.

Meg Freer

Ringling the Bells: Jvari Monastery, Republic of Georgia



Tim Kahl

Paradise

After the war the martyrs' crimson fountains
are turned off at Bahesht-e Zahra.
There is a new shade of blue in the sky.
The tulips and candles shared with the dead
are put aside and the acres of graves
halt their advance between the rows of trees.
The faces etched on the stone markers
make a dramatic backdrop for a photo of
little brother who has carried
the bouquet this time.
He places it in the glass enclosure
as his mother instructs: *if we love a flower,*
it may love us back. He has heard this before
during the story of the woman
who scooped up some bloody soil from the front
and put it in the garden. The picnic is about to begin.
His father looks on approvingly at this public
display of memory in the heart of the city.
Then his gaze slants towards the guts of the clouds.
The written prayer of love hidden in his pocket
is always with him wherever he goes.

Jennifer Stuart

Just the Air

it was always something like a church inside
my pocket

for years and years and years
I could tell myself
the same prayer

that little burning shelter gave me
all the power I needed to
talk to strangers
or get away from them

the doors of some churches
close forever
burn to the ground
or maybe just kick you out
it feels like that
sometimes
now

I pull and pull, waiting and waiting for
the feeling of peace to catch and
hold me in sanity but
it feels like
regret building

glass in my throat

hunger that won't move
no matter how many I smoke

the sacred space that was so easy
to carry around
has split

into the sacredness,
and the cigarette.

and the cigarette has turned
from a prayer in my pocket
an answer to any question
a burst of chosen sanity
into just
a cigarette
the minute that I set free
the peace I thought
was built into them
I can see that it's
abundant
in the empty, fresh air
it's thriving in the choice to take
a few minutes to think
on the chilly stone steps surrounded
by fireflies.

without needing an excuse
I see
I can choose
to talk to people
clustered outside of the jazz show
or leave a crowded room
when too many people
have tried to touch my hair.

with my pockets
empty
of those necessary little treasures
lighter, papers, tobacco, little cotton filters
I can walk faster
through the scenes of any prayer
I ever made
and into new ones
with
just the air
in my lungs

the sacredness
finally in
her proper place.

Laura Stringfellow

On Conasauga Mountain

The fog drags
into these woods,
smoky and thick,
and we are damp
with its spray.

All morning,
we have been in the
mist of this cloud
and we move through it
as though we could part it
with the soft, rushing movement
of our bodies—
the way a canoe gently slices
the skin of a smooth water—
the way it did yesterday.

Looking out
between the tall spruce,
over the mountain fern
and the long, silver beak
of the canoe,
hearing the call
of the wood thrush
in the background
we remember
that we are made up of rain.

The wetness of the air is ripe,
my feet grow down into the earth.
The fog is like a dream
that we cannot keep.

Right now,

we are at the very
edge of the mountain
and the lake
that was there
has suddenly become
sky.

Mary Anna Kruch

Perfect Pond



Tracee Clapper

Bury my body in a southern, coastal swamp

I'm home in this black
water swamp where gnome-like cypress knees
huddle beneath shadows of their grandparents
in clumped duckweed that pretends
to be solid ground cradling silent gators

this canopied wood hosts
a wonderland of spring peepers
singing the sun down as the sky casts
dusky pink glitter over white egrets
in the middle of feather-fanning courtship
displays and territorial grunts

silhouettes of nestled cormorants
roosting for the evening adorn
island trees, like antique Christmas
ornaments, passed from father to son
on down to this daughter
whose eyes swell over

with visions of her great-grandchildren
standing on this very soil
breathing in the night air
fingers clasped together
in giggled toddler prayers

that this place will remain
not just as a poem
written by a long dead mother
but a place where the land still plays
below the stars, beside the sea.

Marianne Szlyk

Maryvale Park 2019

A red-winged blackbird hangs and sways
on last year's reed. Gray fluff still clings.
New reeds unfurl, not yet quite tall
for this or any other bird
who swoops and calls in flight.

A deer stalks through the swamp,
but I await last summer's turtle,
creature that I mistook for stone.

The minnows' school is bustling
downstream past empty bottles
of water and Tropical Fantasy
from our lottery stores.
The left behind, one fish flirts
with rocks, with bottles' mouths.

I wonder what will remain here
as climate changes, as oceans rise:
mosquitoes rising from algae bloom,
trim women walking robot dogs
they will not outlive,
young men guzzling soda and dropping
bottles in the swamp
as deer slip in and track this path.

Robin Wright

The Lake



Cynthia Elder

Calling My Name From Flowerbeds

I drive down to Jones' Circle now,
where I don't belong,
where wild roses persist
along the fringes of the lot.

I reach through thorns,
through brown-edged leaves,
through blossoms, parched and shriveling.

I twist and break the stem of one
which bloomed today, I pull it free
from tangled wires, broken fence posts,
listen, listening, listening –
a hungry Nayatt School girl –
for the sound of petals falling.

Agnes Vojta

Grounding

Ten hours on the plane, six in the car.
I found myself unbalanced, felt my soul
had not kept pace, but limped and lagged behind.

In search of equilibrium, I went
out in the woods to walk in solitude;
my ears craved silence and my feet soft earth.

The mist rose from the pond. Sun dappled paths.
The lilies opened wide their orange throats
to drink the blazing fire of the sun.

I scooped up water from the spring and wet
my travel weary face, and then I knelt
and buried both my hands deep in the sand.

I touched the ground and knew I had come home.
The river, clear and wild and without age
was flowing through my heart and washed it green.

Wendy Schmidt

Rosewood



The Forest

By
Karen Neuberg

If I pretended for so long to be writing poems, it was only so I could speak of the forest
—Eleni Vakalo, *The Forest*

The forest speaks for itself in depth where sunlight beams to part the leaves, where a person can hear their own breath, feel the delirious pleasure of coolness and quiet that touches skin. The sense of “away from it all”. Delicious air.

How can I hear the forest for the noise I bring with me—news of war and shootings and crying and slaughter, or the shattering of lives, or the false equivalent of facts cluttering thinking, or of my own endless, circular chatter.

Noise. Noise. Once must go deep into the forest where time suspends. Where new sounds reach into the ears. At first, a hush that seems to expand the air. Within the hush, one finds a different sense of what silence contains. Stirring of leaves. Flapping of wings. Buzz of small insects. Scraping, rubbing, scratching, gnawing of small creatures. Snap of twig. Crackle and patter underfoot when walking.

Here I can return to “once upon a time”, and before. Before human contagion of natural spaces. I travel back into earlier ages. Rub my hands on bark and hear its roughness as I listen with my palms to decipher the pattern. I touch the softness of leaf on low branch with my fingertips or let it touch me as I pass in walking slowly.

And if the forest is pine ...

And if the forest is deciduous ...

And if the forest is mangrove, evergreen, redwood ...

And if the forest begins at a road and if a farm is on the other side of the road, or a tract of houses, and a city rising in the not-too-far distance (over a river and past a stream) beyond fences and further along a highway then I am in an ecotone, a transitioning space between two adjacent ecological communities. Where in the forest does the forest become only its own community? Where does it become ‘forest’ and not just woodlands?

Though I am an interloper in this community of forest, I am welcomed. The forest offers its signs for me to understand. It continues to communicate in myriad exchanges with other trees and plants in ways I know from science exist but I cannot hear. In all ways, the forest is telling me, telling us, that it is here, doing its job, cleaning the air, absorbing and exchanging carbon for oxygen.

I sing the forest. I accept its solace. I bathe in the air and light. I stand tall, and let myself take root into the floor of the forest.

Edward Lee

Leaning Tree



Antoni Ooto

A Buddhist Mantra

Breathe in.
Breathe out.

Breathe in calm.
Breathe out peace.

Twisted in pain
my mind drifts through a fretwork scattering clouds

I try to count blessings, sometimes,
for a body that still wants to save me.

DS Maolailai

the ancient chinese poets

what I like;
they drank their wine
in cups and
wrote poems
about wine
and poems
about mountains and rivers. and sometimes
they made it clear
a poem was addressed only
to a single person
and not,
as we do,
trying to please
the whole world.

but they still sent them out, folded in boats
and burning; watching
how they floated
as the rivers filled
with ash.

Juliette Sebock

Saint Mary's Churchyard



Vikram Masson

Instructions for My Funeral

When I die, do not bring that fat priest –
what peace will his Sanskrit droning bring?
Instead, fill my house with music –
Meera's bhajans especially.
This is the music that banished my fears,
the music I sang when my mother left this world.

As is custom, let my sisters prepare
my favorite foods for the birds.
My purple finches will plunge their beaks
into tiffins of kheer and ras malai
and tangle their feet in semolina.

On the day of the funeral, deck me
in my parrot green saree, splashed with indigo,
and the diamond nose ring I discarded
for breathing tubes. Then daub me with lipstick
and rouge my skin. I must look as radiant
as the flames I will enter.
This is how I want my grandchildren to remember me.

Do you remember the first time you came to my father's house
on the pretext of returning a forgotten textbook?
You smelled of earth, sweat and monsoon rain.
The hibiscus had erupted in the yard
and haloed your shadowed face,
I wanted to pluck your soaked kurta
from your heaving chest.
My father reluctantly let you enter
and you have never left.

You will feel lightened, but do not feel guilt.
I have been grateful during these lifeless days
as you strained to lift my body, my flesh swollen with edema,

as you listened to the ghostly huff and tick
of the dialysis machine, and read
to me when I pushed away my books.
My body pulsed with such pain that I grew to loathe it,
and I know this made you weep.

When they bring my ashes, keep just two thimbles.
Scatter one into Portsmouth harbor when shafts
of sunlight awaken its waters. Do you remember
when we first came to New Hampshire?
Our neighbors had never seen people like us before
and stared as if we were ancient wanderers from Babylon.
They were so cautious when they spoke to us!
We fell in love with this place because of its music –
the raga of the finch's cry,
and the percussion of apples
thudding against the earth.

Take the second thimble with you when you next go to India.
Go to the Musi River at the border of the city.
I know the river withers with pollution
but I shall not be sullied.
Scatter the ashes in the moonlight
and have our son mark the spot.
If there is anything after this world,
I will meet you there.

Cheryl Caesar

Ritual

I get up at four
to write my morning pages
already turning to
to-do lists.

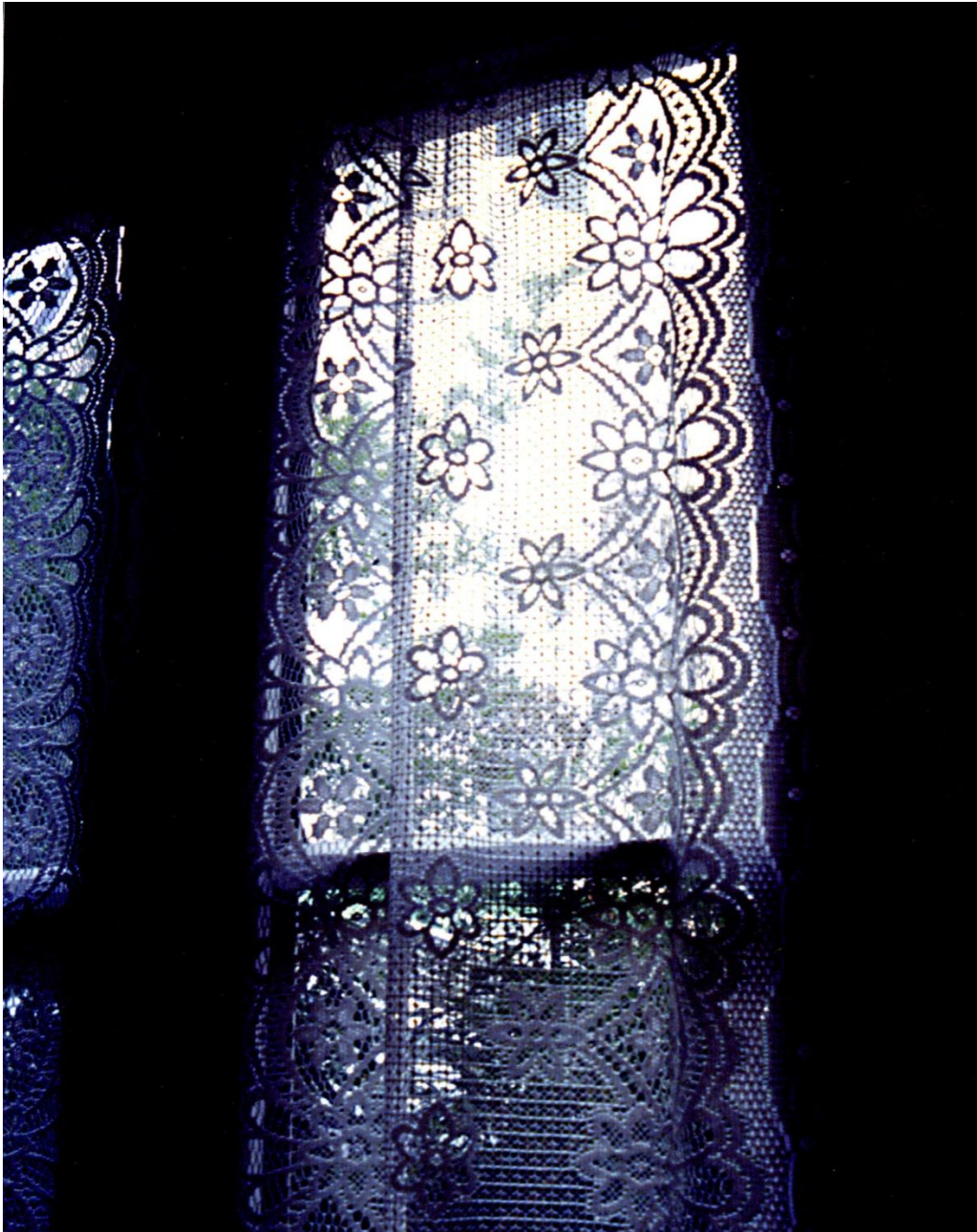
Set the coffee on the right,
pen and old blue book on the left.
Laptop in the middle.
Try not to turn it on.

The cats invade. The grey
is holding the lap, the black
melting from the desk like a Dali watch.
I try to keep his fur out
of the laptop which shouldn't even be there.

Each time the wrist is exposed, he paws it,
she licks it. She tickles. I think they are saying,
Ridiculous human, stop trying so hard
to meditate. All you need is here.
See us, feel us, offering ourselves to you
as Les Glass offered Franny
the perfect sphere of a tangerine,
or Bessie brought a brimming
cup of consecrated chicken soup.

Alec Solomita

Tracery



Hibah Shabkhez

Panacea

Goodbyes to people come with promises
Meant to remain unkept, and made simply to ease
The shedding of skins in new sunrises;
Places draw into silences that never cease

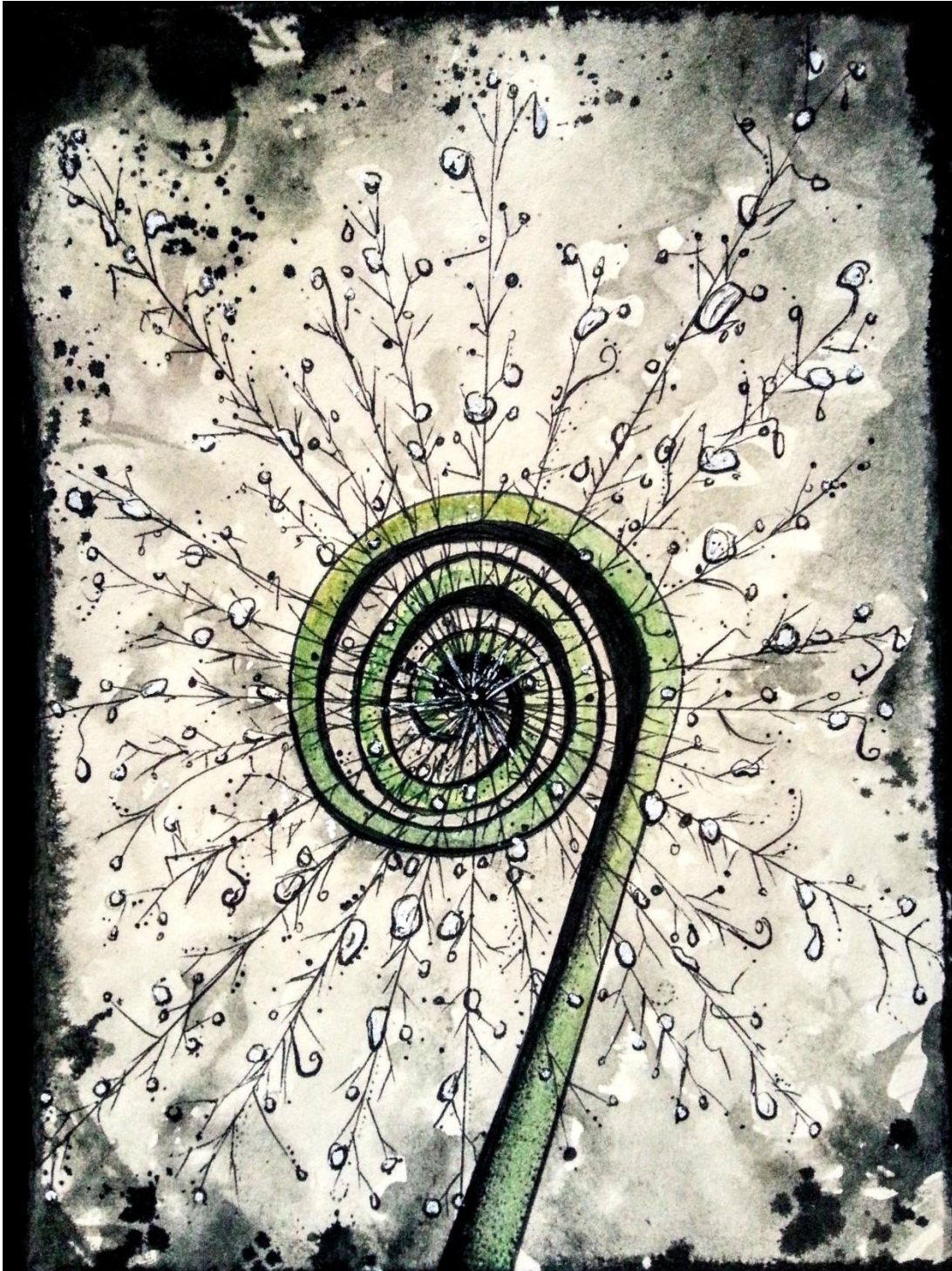
On the last day I look at the crisp
Brick-red of the nook where I shall no longer sit;
Curtains roiled upon lawn-breezes whisper
If you would hold this place close, read a book in it

Each place in which a new book is once read
Is consecrated; story-raised wraiths and the ghost
Of the self outgrown and gently discarded
Linger long in the leaves with hiraeth for their host

**"Hiraeth" is a Welsh concept that signifies a deep longing for home.*

Shannon Elizabeth Gardner

Koru



Contributor Biographies

Carol Alena Aronoff

Carol Alena Aronoff, Ph.D. is a psychologist, teacher and poet. Her work has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies and has won several prizes. She was twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She has published a chapbook (*Cornsilk*) and 4 books of her poems and photographs: *The Nature of Music*, *Cornsilk*, *Her Soup Made the Moon Weep*, *Blessings From an Unseen World* as well as *Dreaming Earth's Body* (with artist Betsie Miller-Kusz). Currently, she resides in rural Hawaii.

Jan Ball

Jan taught ESL at DePaul University in Chicago until recently. She lived in Australia for fifteen years with her Australian husband, Ray Ball. Her two children, Geoffrey and Quentin, were born in Brisbane. She is a twin to Jean Helmken and she was a Franciscan nun for seven years (Sister Jeanclare). When not writing poetry, working with her personal trainer at FFC, going to book group or traveling, Jan and her husband like to cook for friends. These background experiences infuse her poetry.

Luis Cuauhtémoc Berriozábal

Luis Cuauhtémoc Berriozábal, born in Mexico, lives in Southern California, and works in the mental health field in Los Angeles. His first book of poems, *Raw Materials*, was published by Pygmy Forest Press. His other poetry books, broadsides, and chapbooks, have been published by Alternating Current Press, Deadbeat Press, Kendra Steiner Editions, New American Imagist, New Polish Beat, Poet's Democracy, and Ten Pages Press (e-book). His art and photographs has appeared in *Art: Mag*, *The-Hold*, and *Nerve Cowboy*.

Susan Blevins

Susan P. Blevins born in England lived 26 wonderful years in Italy where she wrote a weekly column for an international newspaper in New Mexico writing about gardens and gardening and now lives in Houston Texas publishing essays fiction and poetry in various literary publications based on her travels adventurous life and philosophy. She knows with absolute certainty that the only things that matter in life are love and service and to that end she hopes to spread light and love to everyone she meets one smile one laugh and one hug at a time. We are one.

Cheryl Caesar

Cheryl Caesar lived in Paris, Tuscany and Sligo for 25 years; she earned her doctorate in comparative literature at the Sorbonne and taught literature and phonetics. She teaches writing at Michigan State University, gives readings and publishes poetry in the U.S. and abroad. This year, she's especially pleased to have published poems in *Agony Opera* (India), *Prachya* (Bangladesh) and *Nationalism*, a Zimbabwean anthology. When the world is too much with her, she escapes to books, cats and Michigan lakes, and dreams of a saltwater infinity pool she once knew in Palermo.

Tracee Clapper

Tracee Clapper lives with her husband and their children, in Charleston, SC. She spends time in and draws inspiration from natural bird habitats. Some of her work has been published in *The Blue Nib* and *Poppy Road Review*. She writes to heal her soul and those of anyone else within whom her work resonates.

Diane Dickinson

Diane Dickinson has worked as a research analyst and business writer, and lives in the Detroit area. Her poems have appeared in *California Quarterly*, *Altadena Review*, and *The MacGuffin*.

Anne Doran

Anne Doran is a Michigan poet who spent nine years as a nun in a teaching order before leaving to work in a large public school district in Metro Detroit. She started writing poetry after her retirement and has published in such journals as *The MacGuffin*, *Juked*, *The Monarch Review*. She was intrigued by *Young Ravens'* current theme of sacred spaces, and hopes the poems she's submitted fit that characterization, however broadly. It's an expansive category. In fact, she considers the room where she writes and reads poetry a kind of sacred space.

Cynthia Elder

Cynthia Elder lives on the edge of Hundred Acre Cove in Barrington, Rhode Island, with her husband and our increasingly empty nest. Her poems have appeared in *The Allegheny Review*, *Dog River Review*, *Plainswoman*, and elsewhere, and she has work forthcoming in *Eudaimonia Press Mental Health Anthology*. She has worked in nonprofits for 25 years in the areas of mental health, education and the environment.

Edilson Ferreira

A Brazilian poet, Mr. Ferreira, 75 year-old, writes in English rather than in Portuguese. Largely published in international journals in print and online, he began writing at age 67. He was nominated for the Pushcart Prize 2016. His first Poetry Collection – *Lonely Sailor* – has been launched in London, November 2018, with one hundred poems. Read more of his work at www.edilsonmeloferreira.com.

Meg Freer

Meg Freer grew up in Montana, has worked in book publishing and now teaches piano in Ontario, where she also enjoys running and photography. Her poetry, prose and photos have won awards in North America and overseas and have been published in anthologies and journals including *Eastern Iowa Review*, *Rat's Ass Review*, *Ruminate* and *COG*. In 2017 she won a fellowship and attended the Summer Literary Seminars in Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia.

Bridget Gage-Dixon

Bridget Gage-Dixon has had works published in *Cortland Review*, *Poet Lore*, *New York Quarterly* as well as several other journals. She writes to put into words the world as she experiences it, to challenge herself to see the world in new way, and, most importantly, because she has no real choice.

Shannon Elizabeth Gardner

Shannon Elizabeth Gardner is a recent graduate from UWSP, with a Bachelors in Studio Art and a Minor in Art History. Throughout her life she has been interested in horror and the macabre. Fondness for death and decay came about while exploring nature and the paranormal. Gardner believes her work stimulates memories and emotions that relate people with death and decay. Her goal is to reach the extreme and address the taboo.

Patrick Haas

Patrick Haas has published work in *Salt Hill*, *Verdad*, *Petri Press*, and other journals.

Randel McCraw Helms

Randel McCraw Helms is retired from Arizona State University's English Department. His recent poems have appeared in such places as *Dappled Things*, *Blood & Bourbon*, and *Young Ravens*.

Tim Kahl

Tim Kahl [<http://www.timkahl.com>] is the author of *Possessing Yourself* (CW Books, 2009), *The Century of Travel* (CW Books, 2012) *The String of Islands* (Dink, 2015) and *Omnishambles* (Bald Trickster, 2019). His work has been published in *Prairie Schooner*, *Drunken Boat*, *Mad Hatters' Review*, *Indiana Review*, *Metazen*, *Ninth Letter*, *Sein und Werden*, *Notre Dame Review*, *The Really System*, *Konundrum Engine Literary Magazine*, *The Journal*, *The Volta*, *Parthenon West Review*, *Caliban* and many other journals in the U.S. He is also editor of *Clade Song* [<http://www.cladesong.com>]. He is the vice president and events coordinator of The Sacramento Poetry Center. He also has a public installation in Sacramento {In Scarcity We Bare The Teeth}. He plays flutes, guitars, ukuleles, charangos and cavaquinhos. He currently teaches at California State University, Sacramento, where he sings lieder while walking on campus between classes.

Tamam Kahn

Tamam Kahn is the author of 2 poetry books on the women of early Islam. *Untold, A History of the Wives of Prophet Muhammad* won an International Book Award in 2010. She has traveled to sacred sites in Morocco, Syria, Jordan, Andalusia, and India, and spent two decades researching early Islamic history. She was invited by the Royal Ministry of Morocco to read her poetry and attended a world-wide Sufi conference in Marrakesh.

Michael Keshigian

Michael Keshigian, from New Hampshire, recently had his 13th poetry collection released by *Flutter Press*. He has been published in numerous national and international journals, recently including *The Edison Literary Review*, *Pudding Magazine*, *Muddy River Review*, *Passager*, *Studio One* and has appeared as feature writer in over a twenty publications with 6 Pushcart Prize and 2 Best Of The Net nominations. (michaelkeshigian.com)

Mary Anna Kruch

Mary Anna Kruch is an educator and writer. She published a textbook, *Tend Your Garden: Nurturing Motivation in Young Adolescent Writers* (Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2012), supervises student teachers, and leads Williamston Community Writers. Her poetry appears in *River Poets Journal*, *Credo Espoir*, *The Mark Literary Review*, *Trinity Review*, *The Remembered Arts Journal*, and *Wayne Literary Review*. Her first poetry collection, *We Draw Breath from the Same Sky*, is in press, available in July 2019.

Shelby Lynn Lanaro

Shelby Lynn Lanaro is a poet and professor. She received her MFA in 2017 from Southern Connecticut State University, where she now teaches Freshman English. A New England native, Shelby loves encapsulating nature's splendor in her words and through photography. Shelby's poetry has been published or is forthcoming in *Dying Dahlia Review*, *The Feminist Wire*, *Poetry Breakfast*, and a poetry anthology titled *Sea Glass Hearts* through Stormy Island Publishing.

Edward Lee

Edward Lee's poetry, short stories, non-fiction and photography have been published in magazines in Ireland, England and America, including *The Stinging Fly*, *Skylight 47*, *Acumen* and *Smiths Knoll*. He is currently working on two photography collections: 'Lying Down With The Dead' and 'There Is A Beauty In Broken Things'. He also makes musical noise under the names Ayahuasca Collective, Lewis Milne, Orson Carroll, Blinded Architect, Lego Figures Fighting, and Pale Blond Boy.

His blog/website can be found at <https://edwardmlee.wordpress.com>

Richard Luftig

Richard Luftig is a former professor of educational psychology and special education at Miami University in Ohio now residing in California. His poems and stories have appeared in numerous literary journals in the United States and internationally (IN ACUMEN) in Canada, Australia, Europe, and Asia. Two of his poems recently appeared in *Realms of the Mothers: The First Decade of Dos Madres Press*. His latest book of poems will be forthcoming from Unsolicited Press in 2019. His webpage and blog may be found at richardluftig.com

Eve Lyons

Eve Lyons is a poet and fiction writer living in the Boston area. Lyons's work has appeared in *Lilith*, *Hip Mama*, *Mutha Magazine*, *Word Riot*, *Dead Mule of Southern Literature*, as well as other magazines and several anthologies. Her first book of poetry is due out in May of 2020 by WordTech Communications.

Christian Mack

Christian Mack is currently an undergraduate English and History major at Trevecca Nazarene University and is on the editorial board of Nashville-based literary journal, *The Cumberland River Review*. His work has appeared in *Front Porch Review* and *Amethyst Review*.

DS Maolailai

DS Maolalalai is a poet from Ireland who has been writing and publishing poetry for almost 10 years. His first collection, *Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden*, was published in 2016 by the Encircle Press, and he has a second collection forthcoming from Turas Press in 2019. He has been nominated for Best of the Web and twice for the Pushcart Prize.

Vikram Masson

Vikram Masson is a lawyer by training who lives in Richmond, Virginia. His poetry has been most recently featured in the *Amethyst Review* and the *Allegro Poetry Journal*, and is forthcoming in *The American Journal of Poetry*.

Nate Maxson

Nate Maxson is a writer and performance artist. He lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

George Moore

George Moore has published poems for a number of years internationally as well as here on the continent. They include *Poetry*, *Orbis*, *Arc*, *Fiddlehead*, *Diagram*, *Otoliths*, *American Aesthetic*, and others. His most recent collections are *Children's Drawings of the Universe* (Salmon Poetry 2015) and *Saint Agnes Outside the Walls* (FurureCycle 2016). Recently shortlisted for the Bailieborough Poetry Prize, and long listed for the Gregory O'Donoghue Poetry Prize. Moore now writes from the south shore of Nova Scotia.

Rachael Nazzaro

Rachael Nazzaro is a senior English major at Emmanuel College. She spends her summers working on a small flower farm and plant nursery in Salisbury, MA. Her favorite flower is the Sweet Pea.

Karen Neuberg

Karen Neuberg is a Brooklyn-based poet. Her full length collection, *Pursuit*, is forthcoming from Kelsay Books. Her latest chapbook is *the elephants are asking* (Glass Lyre Press, 2018). She is associate editor of the online poetry journal, *First Literary Review-East*. Her poems and collages can be found in numerous publications including *805*, *Canary*, and *Verse Daily*.

Antoni Ooto

Antoni Ooto is a poet and flash fiction writer. His works have been published in *Burning House Press*, *Ginger Collect*, *Soft Cartel*, *Amethyst Review*, *Bangor Lit Journal*,

Nixes Mate Review, Pilcrow & Dagger, Red Eft Review, Ink Sweat & Tears, Young Ravens Literary Review, Front Porch Review, An Upstate of Mind and Palettes & Quills. Antoni lives and works in upstate New York with his wife, writer/storyteller Judy DeCroce.

Fabrice Poussin

Fabrice Poussin is the advisor for *The Chimes*, the Shorter University award winning poetry and arts publication. His writing and photography has been published in print, including *Kestrel, Symposium, La Pensee Universelle, Paris*, and other art and literature magazines in the United States and abroad.

Victoria Elizabeth Ruwi

Victoria Elizabeth Ruwi is the author of *Eye Whispers*, a book of poetry. She earned a MFA in Creative Writing from San Diego State University. Her poetry has been published in journals and anthologies all over the states.

Ed Ruzicka

Ed Ruzicka has recently found that he can blend in seamlessly. Whether testing the firmness of a mango at Albertsons, walking hospital halls, sipping suds at a music fest or pausing by a park bench in Cusco to tie his shoe, he exults in the luxury of oblivion. He has one book out and has appeared in a wide range of literary magazines. More at edrpoet.com

Wendy Schmidt

Wendy Schmidt has been writing short stories, essays, poetry and producing collage art for the last ten years. Pieces have been published in *Verse Wisconsin, Chicago Literati, City Lake Poets, Literary Hatchet, Moon Magazine, Rebelle Society* and a variety of anthologies.

Hibah Shabkhez

Hibah Shabkhez is a writer of the half-yo literary tradition, an erratic language-learning enthusiast, a teacher of French as a foreign language and a happily eccentric blogger from Lahore, Pakistan. Her work has previously appeared in *The Mojave Heart Review, Third Wednesday, Brine*, and a number of other literary magazines. Studying life, languages and literature from a comparative perspective across linguistic and cultural boundaries holds a particular fascination for her.

Juliette Sebock

Juliette Sebock is the author of *Mistakes Were Made* and *Micro* and has work forthcoming or appearing in a wide variety of publications. She is the founding editor of *Nightingale & Sparrow*, runs a lifestyle blog, *For the Sake of Good Taste*, and is a regular contributor with *Mariás at Sampaguitas* and *Royal Rose*. Currently, she is curating the *Screaming from the Silence* anthology series and working on a variety of personal and freelance projects. When she isn't writing (and sometimes when she is), she can be found with a cup of coffee and her cat, Fitz. Juliette can be reached on her website or across social media @juliettesebock.

Alec Solomita

Alec Solomita is a writer, photographer and artist in the Boston area. His drawings, paintings, and photographs have appeared in several group shows as well as three one-person shows. For many years, he produced illustrations for the *Harvard Gazette*. His photograph "André with birds" won the 2007 *Adirondack Review* photography contest. More recently, his visual work has appeared in *TellTale Inklings #4* and *Young Ravens Literary Review*.

Laura Stringfellow

Laura Stringfellow writes both verse and prose poetry, holds an MFA in Creative Writing, Poetry, and hails from the muggy strangelands of the Southern US. Recent publications have appeared, or are forthcoming, in journals including *Right Hand Pointing*, *Neologism Poetry Journal*, *Déraciné*, *Eunoia Review*, *Clementine Unbound*, and *Nine Muses Poetry*.

Jennifer Stuart

Jennifer is a writer, massage therapist, musician, and jewelry maker. She lives in a house full of plants, friends, and glorious messes of art supplies in the hills of Western Massachusetts. She's been crafting words into songs for years, and is now infatuated with poetry.

Marianne Szlyk

Marianne Szlyk is a professor of English and Reading at Montgomery College. She also edits *The Song Is...* a blog-zine for poetry and prose inspired by music (especially jazz). Her book, *On the Other Side of the Window*, is now available on Amazon. A poem of hers appeared in Issue 3 of *Young Ravens Literary Review*. Her poems have also appeared in *of/with*, *bird's thumb*, *Loch Raven Review*, *Solidago*, *Sycorax Review*, *Red Bird Chapbook's Weekly Read*, *Music of the Aztecs*, and *Resurrection of a Sunflower*, an anthology of work

responding to Vincent Van Gogh's art. She invites you to stop by her blog-zine and perhaps even submit some poems: <http://thesongis.blogspot.com>

McKenzie Lynn Tozan

McKenzie Lynn Tozan lives and writes in Chicago with her family, where she works as a copywriter, poet, and book reviewer. She received her MFA in Poetry from Western Michigan University, where she worked as the Layout & Design Editor for *New Issues Poetry & Prose*, and her BA in English from Indiana University South Bend, where she was Managing Editor for 42 Miles Press. Her poems have appeared in *Encore Magazine*, *Sleet Magazine*, *Rogue Agent*, *Thank You for Swallowing*, *Whale Road Review*, *The James Franco Review*, *The Birds We Piled Loosely*, and *Analecta*, among others; and her book reviews and essays have appeared on *The Rumpus*, *BookPage*, *Memoir Mixtapes*, *Health*, and *Motherly*. For more, visit her at www.mckenzielynntozan.com.

Agnes Vojta

Agnes Vojta grew up in Germany and now lives in Rolla, Missouri where she teaches physics at Missouri S&T. She is the author of *Porous Land* (Spartan Press, 2019). Her poems recently appeared in *As It Ought To Be Magazine*, *Former People*, *Gasconade Review*, *Thimble Literary Magazine*, *Trailer Park Quarterly*, and elsewhere.

Anne Whitehouse

Anne Whitehouse is the author of six poetry collections, most recently *Meteor Shower* (Dos Madres Press, 2016), and a novel, *Fall Love*. Recent honors include 2018 Prize Americana for Prose, 2017 Adelaide Literary Award in Fiction, 2016 Songs of Eretz Poetry Prize, 2016 Common Good Books' Poems of Gratitude Contest, 2016 RhymeOn! Poetry Prize, 2016 F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald Museum Poetry Prize. She lives in New York City.

Robin Wright

Robin Wright lives in Southern Indiana. Her work has appeared in *Rue Scribe*, *Panoply*, *Rune Bear*, *Another Way Round*, *Ariel Chart*, *Bindweed Magazine*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Indiana Voice Journal*, *Peacock Journal*, and others. Two of her poems were published in the University of Southern Indiana's 50th anniversary anthology, *Time Present, Time Past*. She was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2018 by *Panoply*.

Marly Youmans

Marly Youmans's fourteenth book, her fifth collection of poems—a sequence centered on the mysterious Red King, the transforming Fool, and the ethereal Precious

Wentletrap—is *The Book of the Red King* (Montreal: Phoenicia Publishing, 2019.)
Forthcoming in 2020 is a novel, *Charis in the World of Wonders*.
<http://www.thepalaceat2.blogspot.com>.